

Hyperpolitics, or, The End of History and the Endless Self

Anton Jäger's [Hyperpolitics](#) is an innovative and stimulating work, particularly in its synthesis of temporality, media, attention, and political action. Yet, for me, many of its underlying concerns have been explored elsewhere and some of the arguments assume facts not entirely agreed upon. Its originality lies less in identifying an entirely new condition than in offering a compelling temporal framework for understanding it.

The unit that increasingly matters in contemporary political life is no longer primarily the institution, the policy, or the program. It is attention: what can be seized, held, reactivated, and converted into action. As attention becomes scarce and contested, politics takes the form of a recurrent present: an endless sequence of now-moments in which history remains informationally available but temporally inert. The problem is not that people have forgotten the past, but that the past no longer binds the future in durable ways. Each new cycle demands renewed justification; each response competes with the last for attention and dominance. Under these conditions, collective political life begins to resemble less a project unfolding over time than a loop that repeatedly restarts itself.

Jäger's *Hyperpolitics* helps name the outcome. The diagnosis is not merely that politics is intense or ubiquitous, but that politics becomes extreme while political consequences fail to accumulate. That is, politicization spreads; moral contestation, identity conflict, scandal, protest, and spectacle proliferate; yet the public sphere does not produce stable conversions of anger into lasting leverage. Hyperpolitics is characterized by visibility without consolidation: people remain highly engaged, but engagement is routed into forms that rarely harden into durable power. This is why the phenomenon feels simultaneously omnipresent and strangely ineffective. The political consequences are not neutral: when demands for change must repeatedly begin again, existing structures of power retain the advantage. In this sense, a politics of perpetual disruption can produce a radically conservative outcome.

To see why attention generates this pattern, it helps to consider the political work of calculation. Calculation is often treated as a technocratic virtue, an impartial method for making the world legible. But calculation

has always been a governmental art. A modius of annona, an old grain-measure, is not a neutral thermometer as I have written about Solvej Balle's fictional [*On The Calculation of Volume*](#). It transforms abundance into a quantity that can be inventoried, transferred, taxed, rationed, and compared. Measurement makes resources governable; it converts living variability into a grid or into data that institutions can act upon. "Empire," on this view, is not only conquest. It is the capacity to render the world enumerable so that control can travel through numbers. Calculation thus creates a political order by turning experience into administrable units.

Yet calculation-by-measure is only one temporality. It addresses *what* the world is made of: grain, land, labour, output, risk. Hyperpolitics adds a different mechanism: it re-organizes *when* political life happens. Attention economies do not simply deliver information; they impose a rhythm. Feeds and notifications deliver politics as an ongoing queue of present-tense stimuli. The past can be "known" in clips and summaries, but it functions more like background texture than like historical constraint. What matters is not the narrative that accumulates but the update that breaks through. The present is recurrent not because the world repeats, but because attention is engineered to re-select the newest emergency. History becomes a warehouse of content rather than a force with temporal authority.

This temporal regime produces a distinct kind of mass politics, one that resembles action while undermining its consolidation. Collectives require time to become collectives: time for trust, for organizational learning, for deliberation, for negotiating internal differences, for maintaining commitments that outlast the immediate outrage. When attention is constantly pulled away, collective life cannot thicken. Participation becomes easier than persistence. It becomes abundant in expression and poor in carryover. Hyperpolitics therefore yields exactly Jäger's paradox: extreme politicization without political consequences, because the conditions that normally allow consequences to accumulate, such as continuity, institutional reproduction, and shared orientation toward a future, are weakened.

The recurrent day is a political form of time. It is the experience of living inside a loop where each moment claims total relevance. Such loops do not abolish time; they hollow it. They keep politics perpetually at the point

of recommencement, so that the costs of organization never get amortized across a genuine future. The day is replayed, and therefore the future is perpetually postponed. Postponed, not by censorship, but by tempo. Even memory is converted into a new present: past events are resurfaced, but they do not bind action in the way history binds reform, strategy, and policy.

Joyce's relation to this problem clarifies what is at stake. [James Joyce's](#) *Ulysses* can be read as staging a world in a day: the whole universe compressed into measured form. But the day in Joyce is not merely a loop; it is a constructed totality, thick with recurrence that carries meaning rather than simply refreshing itself. Joyce's measured "modern" present demonstrates how a bounded duration can be made world-making. In his work, recurrence is not necessarily the negation of history; it is a technique for assembling experience so that it coheres. Where hyperpolitics tends to convert recurrence into churn, Joyce converts recurrence into structure. One can feel the universe in a day because form knits the day into a meaningful pattern; one can feel the universe as a perpetual now because the attention economy keeps re-initiating the day without allowing durable synthesis.

Hyperpolitics can therefore be understood as an aesthetic and administrative failure to turn attention into form. Calculation gives the world a grid through which it can be governed; hyperpolitics gives the public sphere an endless feed through which it can be endlessly reacted to. In both cases, time is disciplined, but differently: calculation organizes the world into units, while hyperpolitics organizes the subject into cycles of activation. The result is a political field saturated with conflict but institutionally thin, where genuine moral intensity fragments into episodic performance rather than accumulating into durable power. People are not absent; their time is.

Political effectiveness, then, cannot be secured through persuasion or better arguments alone. It depends upon the temporal conditions through which collective life can endure: forms capable of preserving memory, sustaining commitments, and converting attention into persistence. Joyce shows how recurrence can accumulate through memory, history, and anticipation; Balle asks what remains possible when repetition no longer carries experience forward. Hyperpolitics suggests, pace Fukuyama, a

different end of history: not the resolution of political conflict, but its endless recurrence; not the disappearance of politics, but the present's inability to consolidate into a durable future. It also demands an impossible political subject: a citizen-self continually called upon to attend, respond, judge, and mobilize, despite the finite demands of work, care, family, and ordinary life.

The problem, then, is not simply that attention is captured, but that it is continually recaptured, repeatedly returning politics to an intensified present while leaving the work of world-building unfinished. The endless self is an impossible political subject. The political challenge is therefore to create forms of continuity capable of making the present consequential: institutions, memories, and commitments through which collective action can outlast the cycle that produced it. This is not an escape from the present, but a refusal to be perpetually confined to it. Without such structures, the storm continues. With them, repetition might become something more than recurrence, and politics something more than the endless experience of beginning again.

Source: <https://www.idonthaveacoolname.com/hyperpolitics-endless-self/>