

## Essay III | On Time and Cadence

### 第三篇 | 时间与节律篇

Why Ancient Cultures Thought in Seasons, Not Schedules

为何古老文化以节气思考，而非日程表

On time, fatigue, and the quiet cost of living out of rhythm

关于时间、疲惫，以及失去节律的隐性代价

Author: Zhenjiang Zhi

Affiliation: HanFlow Initiative

ORCID: 0009-0004-3176-4764

作者：智振江

单位：HanFlow 发起项目

Version: 1.0

Year: 2026

License: CC BY 4.0

版本: 1.0

年份: 2026

许可: CC BY 4.0

#### Abstract:

This essay explores the paradox of modern time-management: the more meticulously we organize our days, the more a certain quality of exhaustion persists. It examines how we have come to treat time as a resource to be allocated—linear, uniform, and manageable—while the body experiences time as an environment to be inhabited, responsive to rhythm and cycle rather than deadlines and schedules. Drawing on traditional practices such as Tui Na, it proposes an alternative framework: seasonal thinking. Rather than imposing consistency upon a system that naturally fluctuates, the body is understood as a creature of rhythm—its energy ebbing and flowing like tides, its needs shifting with inner and outer seasons. By reframing time as a living medium rather than a metric, the essay situates Tui Na within a cultural and non-clinical context: not as a technique for managing the clock, but as an invitation to re-inhabit time as a series of breaths, cycles, and seasons—each complete in itself, each an opportunity for full presence.

2026 HanFlow. Licensed under CC BY 4.0.

Part of the HanFlow Series: Tuina for Gentle Self-Care

2026 汉风 HanFlow. 采用 CC BY 4.0 许可。

属于 HanFlow 系列：推拿自我调养模块

**摘要:**

本篇探讨了现代时间管理的悖论：我们越精细地安排日子，某种疲惫感便越挥之不去。它审视了我们如何将时间视为可分配的资源——线性的、均匀的、可管理的——而身体却将时间体验为待栖居的环境，回应的是节律与循环，而非截止日期与日程。借鉴推拿等传统实践，它提出一种替代性框架：节气思维。身体并非在一个为波动而设计的系统中强求一致，而被理解为节律的造物——其能量如潮汐般涨落，其需求随内在与外在的季节而变化。通过将时间重新定义为活生生的介质而非度量标准，本文将推拿置于文化与非临床语境之中：不是作为管理钟表的技术，而是作为一份邀请，邀请我们重新栖居于时间——将其体验为一系列呼吸、循环与季节，每一个本身即是完整的，每一个都是全然临在的契机。

## Main Text

### 正文

#### Introduction | The Paradox of the Exhausted Calendar

#### 引言 | 疲惫日程表的悖论

Our days have never been more meticulously organized. Calendars are color-coded, tasks are tracked to the minute, and our very rest is often scheduled as a block labeled “self-care.”

我们的日程从未如此精细地组织过。日历被标上不同颜色，任务被精确到分钟追踪，甚至连我们的休息，也常被安排为一个名为“自我关怀”的区块。

Yet, beneath this surface of impeccable order, a peculiar form of exhaustion thrives. It is not the acute fatigue of a single, demanding effort, but a chronic, low-grade depletion that persists despite—or perhaps because of—our efforts to manage it. We rest, but we do not always feel restored. We pause, but the sense of renewal is elusive.

然而，在这无懈可击的秩序表面之下，一种特殊的疲惫却蓬勃蔓延。它不是单次高强度努力后的剧烈疲劳，而是一种慢性的、低度的耗竭，它持续存在——尽管，或者恰恰因为——我们努力管理着它。我们休息，但并不总能感到恢复。我们暂停，但焕然一新的感觉却难以捉摸。

This raises a gentle, disquieting question: what if the issue is not the amount of time we allocate for rest, but the very structure of time we have imposed upon our lives—a structure that our bodies, in their ancient wisdom, do not inherently understand?

这引出了一个温和却令人不安的问题：如果问题不在于我们分配给休息的时间量，而在于我们强加于生活的时间结构本身呢？一种我们的身体以其古老的智慧，所无法天然理解的结构。

#### Section 1 | Time as a Resource vs. Time as an Environment

#### 第一节 | 时间是资源，还是环境？

The modern mind has mastered the art of seeing time as a resource. It is finite, quantifiable, and—most importantly—allocatable. We speak of “spending” time, “investing” it, “wasting” it, or “managing” it. In this worldview, the calendar and the to-do list are the supreme tools of a rational life. Their logic is one of division, optimization, and maximization.

现代心智已精通将时间视为资源的艺术。它是有限的、可量化的，并且——最重要的是——可分配的。我们谈论“花费”时间、“投资”时间、“浪费”时间或“管理”时间。在这种世界观里，日历和待办清单是理性生活的至高工具。其逻辑是分割、优化和最大化。

But consider the body’s relationship to time. It does not allocate. It inhabits. For the living

system that you are, time is not a currency to be budgeted; it is the very medium—the environment—within which all processes unfold: digestion, cell repair, hormonal cycles, the consolidation of memory, the subtle dance of nervous system arousal and calm.

但请思考身体与时间的关系。它不分配时间，它栖居于时间之中。对于你这个生命系统而言，时间不是待预算的货币；它是所有进程得以展开的介质——是环境：消化、细胞修复、激素周期、记忆的巩固、神经系统兴奋与平静的微妙舞蹈。

You can manage a resource.

你可以管理一种资源。

You can only live within an environment.

你只能栖居于一种环境中。

When we mistake the environment for a mere resource, we attempt to impose a grid of abstract, uniform units upon a reality that is inherently fluid, cyclical, and responsive. The body's intelligent, non-linear rhythms—its need for expansion and contraction, activity and integration—must then contort themselves to fit the rigid squares of our schedules.

当我们误将环境仅仅当作资源时，我们便试图将一种抽象的、均匀的网格，强加于一个本质上是流动的、周期的、具有响应性的现实之上。身体那智能的、非线性的节律——它对扩张与收缩、活动与整合的需求——于是必须扭曲自身，以适应我们日程表上僵硬的方格。

## Section 2 | What the Body Actually Responds To

### 第二节 | 身体真正回应的是什么

The body is a creature of rhythm, not of deadlines. It understands crescendo and decrescendo, the swell of spring and the quietude of winter, the pulse of day and the depth of night. Its energy is not a constant battery level to be monitored, but a tide that naturally ebbs and flows.

身体是节律的造物，而非截止日期的奴仆。它理解渐强与渐弱，春日的勃发与冬日的静寂，白日的脉搏与黑夜的深沉。它的能量不是一块需要监控的恒定电池，而是自然涨落的潮汐。

It responds to change, to contrast, to the qualitative shifts in its surroundings and inner state. A genuine sense of restoration often comes not from a quantified “break,” but from a felt transition—the satisfying closure of one activity, the spacious emptiness before the next, the slow, unforced return of alertness after true rest.

它回应变化、对比，以及周围环境和内在状态的质性转变。一种真正的恢复感，往往并非来自量化的“休息”，而是来自被感知到的过渡——一项活动圆满的结束、下一件事之前空旷的留白、真正休息后缓慢、不费力的清醒感的回归。

Modern schedules, however, are often designed for consistency, not rhythm. They assume that our capacity for focused work, social engagement, or physical exertion is the same at 9 AM on Monday as it is at 3 PM on Thursday. They treat fluctuations in mood, focus, and physical vitality as 2026 HanFlow. Licensed under CC BY 4.0.

Part of the HanFlow Series: Tuina for Gentle Self-Care

2026 汉风 HanFlow. 采用 CC BY 4.0 许可。

属于 HanFlow 系列：推拿自我调养模块

“noise” to be ignored or overridden, rather than as informative data—the very language of the body’s needs.

然而，现代日程表的设计常常是为了保持一致性，而非顺应节律。它们假定我们在周一上午 9 点与周四下午 3 点的专注工作、社交互动或体力消耗能力是相同的。它们将情绪、注意力和身体活力的波动视为需要忽略或克服的“噪音”，而非作为信息数据——这正是身体需求的语言。

## Section 3 | Seasonal Thinking: A Different Relationship with Time

### 第三节 | 节气思维：另一种时间关系

Many ancient cultures, including the Chinese tradition from which practices like Tui Na and Tai Chi emerged, developed a different way of relating to time—one modeled not on the ledger, but on the observable patterns of the natural world.

包括孕育了推拿、太极等实践的中国传统在内的许多古老文化，发展出了一种不同的与时间相处的方式——一种不以账本，而以可观察的自然界模式为蓝本的方式。

Here, time is not a line divided into equal segments, but a cycle characterized by seasons. Each season is not just a meteorological fact; it is an archetype of energy, a quality of being. Spring is associated with expansion, upward movement, and new beginnings. Summer with peak activity, fullness, and outward expression. Autumn with contraction, harvesting, and turning inward. Winter with rest, storage, and deep preservation.

在这里，时间不是一条被分割为等份的直线，而是一个以季节为特征的循环。每个季节不仅仅是一个气象事实；它是一种能量的原型，一种存在的特质。春关联着生发、向上运动与新开端。夏关联着鼎盛活动、充盈与外向表达。秋关联着收敛、收获与转向内在。冬关联着休憩、储存与深度的涵养。

This is “seasonal thinking.” Its power lies not in prescribing specific actions (“eat this in autumn”), but in offering a **relational framework**. It invites us to ask: Does the quality of my energy right now align more with the outward push of spring, or the inward reflection of autumn? Does my current need call for vigorous expression, or gentle consolidation?

这便是“节气思维”。其力量不在于规定具体动作（“秋天要吃这个”），而在于提供一个**关系框架**。它邀请我们发问：我此刻能量的特质，是更接近春日向外的生发，还是秋日向内的收敛？我当下的需求，是呼唤旺盛的表达，还是温和的整合？

Health, in this view, becomes less about adhering to a fixed daily regimen, and more about harmonizing one’s internal state with the broader rhythm of the cycle one is in. It is a dynamic, responsive art of attunement.

从这个视角看，健康变得不那么关乎遵守固定的日常规程，而更关乎将个人内在状态，与自身所处的更广阔的循环节律相协调。这是一门动态的、回应性的调谐艺术。

## Section 4 | Why Schedules Exhaust Us

## 第四节 | 为何日程表会让我们疲惫

The exhaustion born from living against our natural rhythms is not merely physical; it is existential. It is the fatigue of a system constantly working to translate its native, cyclical language into the foreign, linear grammar of the schedule.

违背我们自然节律生活所产生的疲惫，不仅仅是身体上的；它是存在性的。它是一个系统不断试图将其本源的、周期性的语言，翻译成日程表那陌生的、线性的语法时，所产生的疲惫。

When we force consistency upon a system designed for fluctuation, we ask it to perpetually override its own intelligence. The nervous system must dampen its natural call for rest when the calendar says “productive hours.” The digestive system must adapt to eating by the clock, not by the subtle cues of genuine hunger. The mind must generate focus on demand, ignoring its natural waves of clarity and diffusion.

当我们对一个为波动而设计的系统强求一致时，我们就是在要求它永远压制自身的智慧。当日历显示为“高效工作时间”时，神经系统必须抑制其对休息的自然呼唤。消化系统必须适应按钟点进食，而非响应真实饥饿的微妙信号。心智必须在需要时强行产生专注，忽略其自然存在的清晰与弥散波动。

This constant translation—this silent civil war between the body’s time and the clock’s time—requires a steady expenditure of energy. It is a background drain that no amount of scheduled “self-care” can fully replenish, because the very act of scheduling it often reinforces the same linear paradigm that caused the drain in the first place.

这种持续的翻译——这种身体时间与钟表时间之间静默的内战——需要持续地消耗能量。这是一种背景性的损耗，再多的日程化“自我关怀”也无法完全补充，因为将其日程化这一行为本身，往往就强化了最初导致损耗的那种线性范式。

## Section 5 | Small Practices That Restore Rhythm (Without Teaching How)

### 第五节 | 重建节律的微小实践（非教学指引）

Restoring a sense of rhythm is not about adding more items to the schedule, not even “good” ones. It begins with a shift in attention: from managing intervals of time, to noticing the qualitative texture of the time we are in.

恢复节律感，并非是在日程表上添加更多事项，哪怕是“好”事项。它始于注意力的转变：从管理时间的间隔，转向觉察我们所身处的时间的质性肌理。

It might look like pausing for three breaths before transitioning from one task to another, simply to mark the ending and the beginning—creating a micro-season in itself.

它可能看起来像是在从一项任务转换到另一项之前，暂停三次呼吸，仅仅是为了标记结束与开始——这本身就在创造一个微型的季节。

It is present in the principle underlying a practice like Tui Na, where touch is used not to “fix”

a problem in a hurried five minutes, but to meet the body with an attentiveness that itself operates on a slower, more receptive timescale—a miniaturized version of patient, seasonal observation.

它存在于诸如推拿这类实践所依据的原则中：触摸并非用于在匆忙的五分钟内“修复”问题，而是以一种本身就在更缓慢、更接纳的时间尺度上运作的专注力，去与身体相遇——这是一种耐心、季节性观察的微型版本。

It is reflected in the way Tai Chi movement follows the body’s readiness and balance in the moment, not an external count or pace.

它亦体现在太极拳的动作跟随身体当下的准备状态与平衡，而非外部的计数或节奏。

These are not techniques for time management. They are subtle disciplines in **time perception**. They are ways of re-inhabiting time as a living medium, rather than just a metric.

这些并非时间管理的技巧。它们是时间感知上精微的修炼。它们是重新将时间作为活生生的介质来栖居，而非仅仅作为一种度量标准的方式。

## Conclusion | Returning Time to the Body

### 结语 | 将时间归还给身体

This is not a call to abandon plans or renounce the modern world. It is an invitation to examine the silent assumptions we hold about time itself, and to consider the cost of imposing a purely linear, managerial framework onto our cyclical nature.

这并非号召放弃计划或摒弃现代世界。这是一份邀请，邀请我们检视自身对于时间所持的静默假设，并思考将一种纯粹线性、管理性的框架强加于我们周期性本质之上所付出的代价。

Perhaps a measure of true well-being is not how full or efficient our calendars are, but how deeply we can feel the natural, rhythmic current of our own energy—and how willing we are to sometimes let it, not the clock, guide our pace.

或许，衡量真正健康的尺度，不在于我们的日历有多满或多高效，而在于我们能多深刻地感受到自身能量那天然的、有韵律的流动——以及我们多愿意有时让它，而非时钟，来引导我们的步伐。

To live in this way requires a particular kind of sensitivity—an ability to notice the faint whispers of our needs before they become screams of exhaustion. It requires re-awakening a sense that modern life has often numbed: our capacity to truly feel our own presence. But that is a matter of perception, and perception begins with the senses.

以此种方式生活，需要一种特殊的敏感——一种在需求变成疲惫的尖叫之前，便能觉察其微弱低语的能力。它需要重新唤醒一种现代生活常使之麻木的感知：我们真实感受自身存在的能力。但这关乎感知，而感知始于感官。

This work is archived at Zenodo.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18678302>