

The Flow Of Time

Time has been a major subject of religion, philosophy, and science over thousands of years.

Man's deep need to understand time, its origin and nature, stems from the fact that he sees events, both inside and outside him, structured into a reference of time: past, present, and future.

Ancients first saw time as a part of nature, therefore, a mystery. As the human consciousness grew incrementally, man thought of time as a manifestation of God; therefore, eternal. Further elucidation progressed. Hindus thought that time was cyclical. It went through the phases it called yugas, of creation, destruction, and rebirth of mankind. Judea-Christian thinkers believed time to have started with God's act of creation and Christians believed it would end with the end of the world. For Buddhists time was an illusion.

Philosophers dwelt deeply on time. Plato considered time to be ingrained in the motion of the heavenly bodies. Kant thought time to be the effect of the human mental framework which puts in order sense impressions of reality, in order to gain its understanding. It was not a thing by itself, only a mental tool. To Bergson time was the concept of duration developed by human memory and creativity revealing an important aspect of reality. For Heidegger time was a device built in human beings which allows past and future to exist in present, in which life is actually experienced. Man has the ability to live in time qualitatively, without having to touch its temporal sequential aspect.

Scientific thinking of time started with Newton, who said, "Absolute, true and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature flows equably without regard to anything external, and by another name is called duration: relative, apparent and common time, is some sensible and external (whether accurate or

unequable) measure of duration by the means of motion, which is commonly used instead of true time....” In other words he believed that there was an absolute time which was flowing eternally and perfectly, which could be only understood mathematically. Human beings were only able to perceive time in relationship with other objects. This is called Newtonian time. For the next 250 years this concept of time held sway in the world of science.

Then came Einstein who showed that there was no absolute time. Time was relative with the position and velocity of the reference frame of the observer taking the measurement of time. If the reference frame moved faster than before the events measured from it would register slower speed for the same event.

So, modern science dispelled not only the absoluteness of time but also that it was a part of a structure of universe. Nature has nothing to do with time in its workings. It works as a process, regardless of past and present, though human concept of time can be used to understand it. Time being a human mental construct, there was no flow associated with it.

But time remains an absolute in human life and it flows for mankind. Time is an axis of human life because human brain interpreting reality through senses experiences it in the framework of time. Without this sense of human time it would not be possible for human beings to experience life. Without it life would lose some of its form, structure, and meaning. That is why, from the earliest times, human consciousness has seen life as a flow of time, and as in a lot of religious concepts of life it is eternal, therefore, so is time.

Human time accompanies us in pain and joy, failures and achievements, and in all activities because we reckon life's experiences with reference to entire life. Because human life is finite, that too very brief - an un-recordable blip on cosmic scale - it is invaluable to us. Therefore time is as precious to us as our breath.

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