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Mini Review

Misstatements About Time

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Abstract

The theory of time starts usefully by a prior inventory of the main mistakes that are commonly made, such as the pleonasms, the confusion between events and time, the duration of the present, the use of metaphors, time considered a cause of diseases and aging, time considered a phenomenon instead of a concept.

Pleonasms

Time is often defined by duration and, in the wake, duration is defined by time. These are fallacies, because time and duration denote the same concept, and they are both expressed with the same units.

Time and duration are semantic nuances of the same concept; therefore the one can't be used to define the other.

Confusion Between Events And Time

Past, present, future does not teach us anything, because in the usual way of speaking, these three terms are commonly used to refer to events, rather than time, e.g., past means past events. As a matter of fact, past time does not mean anything, insofar as we do not know the meaning of the word time. The Latin poet Horace (68-8 BC) [1] mocked the old man who praises past time (*laudator temporis acti*); of course, Horace meant past life or past events, instead of past time as such. The Latin poet Ovid (43 BC-18 AD) [2] rejoiced: Others praise the past; for myself, I am pleased to be born in this century. The Latin historian Tacitus [3] used the expression succession of times instead of succession of events. However, this basic distinction between time and event is not taken into account, probably due to the persuasive habits of everyday language.

History tells of events, not time. The Greek historian Diodorus of Sicily (c.90-30) [4] stressed the fact that history has valuable lessons to teach us: the history that Diodorus was talking about concerned past events and present events, rather than past time and present time. The Greek founder of historical science Thucydides (c.465-c.395) [5] observed the conflict which opposed Athena and Sparta from 431 to 404 BC, pulled into conflict by their various alliances. He did not study present time, but present events. He followed the sequence of events in order to understand, and to accomplish his work as a historian. During one of his famous speeches Pericles (495-429) warned the audience; [...] the events of war are uncertain [5]: Pericles did not refer to times of war.

The French word avenir (from Latin *advenire*: to arrive) is self-contradicting if it is translated by future events, because future events do not exist. Forecasters try to predict future events, i.e. their predictions refer to events rather than time. The word *fatum* (fate, destiny) names the belief according to which the future, including even the most inconsequential events, is written or decided in advance. Pericles observed that people thought fate was the cause of their failures. We can easily determine future time, but not futur events. For example, it is possible to calculate what day will be April 12, 2076, but it's impossible to predict the value of the Dow Jones index as well as what is going to happen in Outer Mongolia that day. The confusion between the events and time has disastrous consequences, espacially with the use of innumerable metaphors.

Duration of the Present

In a conference hold in 1911, Bergson [6] described the present, as a duration thickness located between our immediate past and our imminent future. The philosopher did not explain what a duration thickness was. Perhaps he did not understand that thickness is a spatial concept and that past, present, and future have to do with events, not time. In *Le temps et sa flèche* [7], Michel Paty points out that the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) thought

that a duration had a temporal thickness (1919). In the same work, J. M. Lévy-Leblond claims that there is a width and a thickness between future and past. There is something strange about the idea that the present should have duration:

a) Either the present designates a present event, in which case the duration of the present is given by a stopwatch.

b) Or the present designates the present time; but the duration of the present time is a pleonasm of the first order.

Use of Metaphors

All metaphors are misleading; their use in physics must be restricted because they don't allow one to demonstrate anything. On the contrary, they are the source of many errors:

a. Time flies is a metaphor commonly used. It supposes that time has a velocity ; but the velocity of time related to time is a sophism, which has no place in a physical theory.

b. The arrow of time [7] means that time is physically oriented like a vector in mathematics.

Instead, it's the events that are oriented; time is a scalar.

The arrow of time is a consequence of the confusion between events and time.

Cause of Deseases and Aging

An investigation carried out by Reinberg and Halberg about people suffering from brain death in France between 1962 and 1967 observed a greater fragility during winter seasons [8]. Jacques Attali takes this as an action of time on individuals, whereas in fact there is no action of time, merely a seasonal climatic impact. Thucydides avoided this mistake, when he talked about the season, in August, during which people's health grows weaker [5]. His translator Denis Roussel notes that physicians of the Côs School (that of Hippocrates c.460-c.377 BC) were taking the influence of climate and seasons into account. The aging of the skin is not caused by time: wrinkles result from the action of sun rays and a lack of protection. The proof is that in some areas, young people can be wrinkled.

Time Considered a Phenomenon Instead a Concept

A phenomenon is characterized by physical properties. In a certain way, experiences can be done on it: for example it can be observed and measured. In *L'évolution créatrice*, Bergson [9] asserted that time was a flux, but on the following page, declared that time was a kind of force. However, flux and force are mutually exclusive; it is either one or the other, or else it is neither. Bergson did not describe the nature of the flux; furthermore the qualifier "kind of" is never used in physics. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger [10] postulated the existence of time and the phenomenology of time. He thought of time as a being, and confused time, events, and historiality; he wondered why the flux of time could not be reversed. Despite his baroque phraseology, Heidegger has never been able to explain the nature of time.

A concept is the idea that one has about a phenomenon. It is therefore a construction of the mind. A concept has no physical properties, so it does not exist physically, and it is neither observable nor measurable. The Greek historian Plutarch (c.50-125) [11] emphasized the effectiveness of an explanation drawn from a principle of nature. Thus we observe the movement of the Sun, which is a phenomenon, rather than the day and the year, which are concepts. Remember the erratic values of the year. For example, in Song II of the Odyssey Homer [12] wrote : when the fourth year came, and when the seasons began again. According to this verse, four years are equal to four season; therefore, during the 8th century BC the year had three months in Greece.

Conclusion

Time is not a natural phenomenon; instead, it's a concept. In other words, time does not physically exist. The thorough study of geo historical origins allows one to demonstrate that time was invented; An invention of thought. Ultimately, it opens the way to the theorization of time [13,14].

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