

The FATE-TIME PARADOX

Understanding time, at least philosophically, is difficult. By experience, we know that the past does not exist. If you've enjoyed a weekend get-away, then you know that the day after you return, the trip has dissolved into no more than a perforated, tissue-thin memory, dream-like at best. Looking in the opposite temporal direction, we know the future is no more than a hope or a fear. When we wake up in the morning, it is still *now*. We can wait forever, but tomorrow never arrives. Regardless of what the clock or calendar says, the time is always Now.

Einstein may have had it right when he said that time does not exist, but we need it — or some alternative — to experience life. Without it, nothing can move. Nothing can change. Time, whether it exists or not, is a medium in which material life evolves. If we think about it, it becomes apparent that our minds are dimensionally challenged. We cannot fathom this mystery.

The "Fate and Free Will" paradox is similar and appears equally unsolvable. Nature designed our brains so that we can understand and survive in the physical world. Apparently, unraveling these puzzles isn't necessary, at least at this stage of our evolution.

Here's the problem with this particular paradox: If fate exists, then free will does not. If free will exists, then fate does not. It's an "either/or" proposition. We could make a good argument for the existence of each one, but no one can prove either. Some religions side with fate (like Islam), others side with free will (like Christianity, although they accept Providence). Countries, too, lean one-way or another (Russia to fate; the US to freewill). To complicate matters, both fate and free will may exist simultaneously or in tandem (Hinduism), or both may be illusions (Buddhism).

Regardless of which position we take, our choice has real-world effects. Believing that free will is true can lead to detachment from nature and a desire to create a secure and independent existence divorced from the natural world. On the plus side, it makes us active participants in the world. Believing in fate disallows conscious co-creation, but releases us from the responsibility of circumstance and considers us an integral part of the world.

Science takes us in another direction that could fall into the "both" *and* "neither" categories. Newton's mechanics led to mechanical determinism (fate), which influenced the social sciences. Natural laws, the idea went, were embedded in the fabric of existential reality. They functioned in a fate-like fashion: Drop a stone, and it will fall at the speed science has determined. It worked every time.

Figuratively, they saw the universe as a colossal clockwork (per Rene Descartes, who was seeing through the eyes of the manufacturing period). We lived in a "Wind-down

Universe." God, before His untimely death, wound it up, and it has dependably ticked away the eons since then. Life unfolded predictably within it. The clock's destiny was predictable too. Eventually, it would wind down, in strict accordance to these laws. Finally, sadly, and without reprieve, it would tick . . . tock . . . stop. Once you knew how all the clock parts worked, you would know what would lead to what and you could predict the future -- the future of everything to be exact. Socio-economically, Marx believed in the destiny of Communism, just as neoliberals proclaim the inevitability of globalization — the monopolistic control of global capital, ecological resources (nature), and labor. ("There is no alternative," Margaret Thatcher.) The moral: Don't trust destiny until it happens.

Mechanical determinism eventually collapsed during the 20th century, its fate put to rest by the development of the quantum, chaos, and super string theories. The universe, at its most fundamental levels, does not behave like our machines. Rather, the subatomic realm is a mystical alien world, apparently oblivious to (and in radical violation of) the laws of the clock. It nonchalantly shrugs at our rational, ever-so-smart ideas about reality and, to our astonishment, flaunts the impossible every day with impunity. Although hard to imagine, these irrational energy/particle fields saturate — *saturate* — every sub-micronanometer of our world, our very existence a mere probability. Now, science realizes that we are not fated, just confused.

Conjunction

The two paradoxes, "time" and "fate/free will," intersect in our reality. *Reality is the multi-dimensional Now, consisting of the existential conditions of the moment (including other-plane events)*. This includes the fact that we are an integral part of the universe, no less than the moon and the stars and the sun. In any specific Reality/Moment/Now, this law applies: Whatever is, is.

For example, say you are standing in the bathroom. The row of vanity lights above the mirror illuminates the room. White tiles shine brightly. Steaming water thunders from the faucet, filling the bathtub. In that instant, that's how it is. Essentially, the moment is fixed (fated), like an errant footprint embedded in a cement sidewalk, frozen in time. You cannot change anything. If you want to turn off the water, you can do so in the "future" — another Now — but not in this one. Within this context, free will is relegated to effecting only future events.

What can we do in an It-Is-What-It-Is moment (which is all moments)? Reduced to the basics, we have two choices: we can either accept it or reject it. Simple. Logically, you would think that having this choice would finally indicate the triumph of free will. "I have made a decision!" Yet, do we really have a choice? If in that instant we are accepting the Now, then that's what it is: acceptance. Our acceptance is fated in that moment and we cannot change it. If we are rejecting it, then that's what it is too. Period. It is what it is.

Although we can do nothing about it, accepting or rejecting the moment does shape and color the experience. For example, say that you sitting on a public bench, not exactly uncomfortably, by a lightly traveled street. You are waiting for a bus. A boy shuffles up besides you, turns on his vintage black and silver boom box, and starts blasting "ugly music." (Where's the earphones and MP3 player?) Your eyes narrow. Your nostrils flare almost imperceptibly. You feel annoyed. What is happening? You are rejecting the moment and in doing so, you are rejecting reality, because reality is what the moment is.

Rejecting reality usually involves *reacting* rather than acting consciously, and reacting rarely produces optimal results. Psychologically, you disconnect from the Now. You resist and "go negative." The brain pumps fight-or-flight chemicals into your bloodstream causing you to experience a degree of shock. You notice that the more you resist the moment, the less happy you are. What's worse, this often happens when thinking about past or imagined future events, which has nothing to do with the present situation. This is being out-of-touch with reality.

Perhaps the most we can gain from these experiences is to become aware that we *are* resisting the moment, although it is easier to notice when other people are resisting. Seeing it in ourselves is difficult. When we act out of habit, we are asleep.

On the other hand, if you accept reality, then you have a choice of how to act (in consciously shaping future events). This is as close to free will as we get. Free will is available to those who accept reality, while those who say No to it are subject to fate — a fate perhaps of their unconscious making, karma-like. While both awareness and non-awareness uniquely shape and color experience, only awareness can transform us.

The path of maximum fulfillment would be one where our free will molds our future in positive and loving ways. Developing good habits of thought and action would support this. Unfortunately, the future doesn't exist. Instead, we find ourselves suspended in the divine white light of the CEFEN — the Cosmic Energy Field of the Eternal Now. But then again, as we co-create our life, we do see the results. The paradox....

Where can we go in that sacred field? Precisely nowhere. Consciousness doesn't move. It's always Here. The best we can do is wake up and be here consciously, unless the time for that "is written" as well. There's nowhere to go and nothing to do, except take the next step that Spirit leads.

"Who can wait quietly while the mud settles?
Who can remain still until the moment of action?
Observers of the Tao do not seek fulfillment.
Not seeking fulfillment, they are not swayed by desire for change."
Tao Te Ching - Lao Tzu - chapter 15