

The Time of Our Life

Our experience of time is subjective, yet we can agree on aspects of it. Everyone knows that an enjoyable weekend vacation can pass in a moment. Being put on hold for 10 minutes can stretch into infinity. Apparently, the way we experience time has little to do with the passing of seconds on the clock and more to do with our internal perception of how we are spending it.

Time for Change

Time has become a commodity, something that many cannot afford. Capitalism has successfully commoditized it, which is something like putting a price on sunshine. But who owns it? Who owns time? The ingenious corporate concept of "time is money" implies that time is a product that we can buy or sell. Once we have internalized that idea, we can believe that selling our time is a rational act. In reality, this is absurd, but it happens every day.

We have all said at some point, "I don't have time for that" or "I'll have to make time for it." Time is the medium in which we do things. Not having it implies that we don't have control of our lives to do what we want. We are "time poor." Having to "make time" implies more work: we have to create some so we can squeeze in what we want to do. Like this, life passes. Yet, neither of these ideas — not having time nor having to make time — reflect existential reality. They are shadow realities that exist only in our minds, but we live as if they are real and that our desires are the shadows.

Real Time

Before exploring an alternative perspective, let's first investigate the reality of time. Some of the greatest minds in science and religion, like Einstein and Buddha, have claimed that time is an illusion. They have no way of proving this of course, at least to the satisfaction of our senses. Usually, thinkers prove their point by explaining it verbally. However, at some level of reality, they are probably right — time is an illusion. Our experience is different though: for events to happen, they must happen in order. We need a sequence of actions (or thoughts) to perceive life, and nothing can move without time. Experience, then, tells us that it's real.

Time is an essential element of material reality. It allows the universe to unfold so third-dimensional creatures can live in it. If this is so, then we don't need to "make time": God or the universe has already made it. And to "not have time" is impossible: it is always *here now*. This may sound like simple semantics, but each of these ideas has a distinctive psychological effect that anyone can test. Say, "I don't have time" and "I'll have to make time." Each has a different feel. Our relationship with time, then, is defined by our subconscious, psychological and physiological conditioning and not by an objective view of time itself.

Free Time

Is there an alternative to these ideas? There is, although it too may sound like semantics. What we can do is *take*, or better, *use* time to do what we want, but psychological barriers can stand in the way of this. We can feel guilty or fearful, as if we are stealing or perhaps wasting it. However, taking something as all pervasive as time isn't stealing. In fact, no one *can* steal it. We can't save, squander, sell, or own it either. Time is not a commodity — it exists everywhere and nowhere — and no one can control it. We exist in the midst of it, like fish in water.

By believing the lie "time is money," the idea of owning or selling it becomes "reasonable." At best, though, it is no more than a social convention. It exists as a dominance/submission-based pseudo-reality that people accept as "the way that it is," however grudgingly. Once we understand this and act accordingly, time frames can open for us like magic.

By "taking" time, life becomes more to our liking. Anyone can experiment with this. We can start by using small frames for ourselves. Little by little, those actions add up and life becomes more our own. Like any core psychological change, the first steps are usually the most difficult. A more expansive view is that taking time is an evolutionary act. It opens the mind and society to a freer way of life. By taking our fill and sharing it, we can make it the time of our life. □