

The Enigma of Felt Time

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Abstract

During an event, time passes more or less quickly, according to the event and the person concerned: we don't feel time; instead, we feel events, and we call it "felt time" which is a concept.

Keywords: *Felt Duration; Heterochrony; Speed of Time*

Introduction

Everyone is convinced that time is a phenomenon and that it passes. In addition, everyone feels like it passes more or less quickly, depending on the activity in which one engages: it is one among many forms of heterochrony (from the Greek "heteros": other).

This conviction as well as this feeling are caused by a deception of nature about which we have introduced the concept of "technical effect of field": the resulting confusion vanishes thanks to the introduction of the more accurate concept of "felt time".

A phenomenon

Among various topics like "power", "love", "villainy", the English dramatist William Shakespeare (1564-1616) attaches great importance to temporality [1]. In "The Merry Wives of Windsor" we can read: "the hour draws on" (Act V, Scene III, 10), "the minute draws on" (Act V, Scene V, 2). In "The Comedy of Errors" he says: "Time comes stealing on by night and day" (Act IV, Scene II, 59). Shakespeare asserts that time is a phenomenon, but he fails to explain why and how; he does not even seek to know the nature of time, whereas he has a good knowledge of Greco-Latin literature. Indeed, Latin scholars, such as Cicero (106-43), Cæsar (101-44), Livy (59BCE-17CE) (CE = Common Era; BCE = Before Common Era), show how time has been gradually conceptualized [2].

The heterochrony

The Latin poet Horace (65-5 CE) and Shakespeare assert that time passes at a varying speed. In "Odes", Horace proclaims: "Fugaces labuntur anni!" (the years pass quickly) (Book II, XIII) [3]. In "As you like it", Shakespeare makes Rosalind say: "the lazy foot of Time as well as a clock... Time travels in divers paces with divers persons" (Act III, Scene II, 321). Shakespeare is talking about a kind of heterochrony. In his time, clocks are accurate enough to show that time is the same for everyone.

The speed of time

Asserting that time passes, whether slowly or quickly, is assigning a speed to time. Actually speed is always expressed in relation to time; but of course the speed of time in relation to time is a sophism; it's confirmed by the mathematical formalism which ends in a dead end:

$$v(t) = dt/dt = 1.$$

This senseless result is totally incongruous because $v(t)$ is constant and it is expressed with no unit; whereas a speed has always a unit. Consequently time doesn't pass: it must be admitted that the metaphor fails in a grave deception and a failure of common language.

The concept of "felt time" allows one to explain what is exactly happening.

The felt time

Meteorology distinguishes between temperature (T) indicated by a thermometer and the "feel like temperature" (felt temperature: $T - "dT"$) due to wind and (or) humidity; when it's windy, the temperature seems lower: the apparent drop in temperature " dT " depends on the wind speed, but it has no action on the thermometer; therefore it cannot be estimated with a thermometer.

WINDLESS WEATHER (phenomenon) >>> TEMPERATURE (T) (concept).

SAME WEATHER, WINDY (phenomenon) >>> TEMPERATURE FELT LOWER ($T - "dT"$) (concept).

Dry air makes the heat more endurable by increasing evaporation: the temperature felt is reduced. In a wet atmosphere, the lack of evaporation increases the temperature felt.

We make the same approach by introducing the felt time (or the felt duration).

It must be kept in mind that events pass, instead of time or duration. An unpleasant event seems obviously to pass less quickly than a pleasant event of the same duration, because painfulness makes us suffer. This is why felt time and felt duration are in the realm of psychology: indeed, it comes to events that we feel like more or less pleasant, or else, more or less unpleasant.

PLEASANT EVENT (phenomenon) >>> SHORTER PERCEIVED TIME (concept).

UNPLEASANT EVENT (phenomenon) >>> LONGER PERCEIVED TIME (concept).

This is why, in "Love's Labour's Lost", Shakespeare writes: "I'll stay with patience, but the time is long" (Act V, Scene II, 842). Waiting for something strongly desired or highly dreaded makes the time appear more or less long, depending on the sensitivity of the person.

Conclusion

Felt time (or felt duration) results from technical effects of field, because it depends on the psyche and the physical state of the person concerned, closely related to its surrounding and the nature of the event. The concerns of several Shakespearian characters provide a lively and varied illustration of the involvement of sensitivity.

Identifying and naming accurately this imaginary consequence of the psychology of time allow us to assert that felt time is not a particular enigma: it's a psychological concept that cannot be felt; instead, we only feel events.

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