Is Time an Illusion?

Could our past, present, and future exist together?

Epoch Times Staff

By LEONARDO VINTIÑI & STEPHANE LAM

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"Time is a moving image of eternity." — Plato

It is difficult to believe that destiny is not fixed and that all time past, present, and future is oblivious, but can the movement be a mere illusion? A research physicist explains that in a special dimension, time doesn’t exist.

"If you try to get your hands on time, you’ll always slipping through your fingers," said Julian Barbour, British physicist and author of "When Time Reverses" in an interview with the Epoch Foundation. While this statement may sound familiar in the room, Barbour and the journal "Nature" probably do not connect with their own selves in this particular point.

Barbour believes that people cannot capture time because it does not exist. While this is not new theory, it has never had the popularity that Einstein’s theory of relativity or the string theory has had.

The concept of a timeless universe is not only irresistibly attractive to a handful of scientists, but such a model may pave the way to explain many of the paradoxes that modern physics faces in explaining the universe.

We tend to think and perceive time as a linear notion, the course of which inevitably flows from past to present. It is not only a personal perception of all things, but also a framework in which classical mechanics analyses all mathematical functions

within the universe. Without such a concept, ideas such as the principle of causality and our inability to prevent simultaneous events would begin to be addressed within a completely different level.

The idea of the discontinuity of time is also by Barbour attempts to explain in a theoretical context. Barbour defined time as a "now." But such "nows" would not be understood as fleeting moments that came from the past and will die in the future, a "now" would only be among the millions now existing in the eternal universal mosaic of a special dimension impossible to define, each one related in a subtle way to the others, but none more outstanding than the neighboring one. They all exist at the same time.

With such a mix of simplicity and complexity, Barbour’s idea promises a great relief to anyone who is willing to accept the lack of time before the Big Bang.

Barbour thinks the concept of time might be similar to that of integers (whole numbers). All numbers exist simultaneously, and it would be impossible to think that the number 1 exists before the number 20.

At this point of the argument, it is probably irresistible for the reader to ask: "What’s the use to me that this movement I’m doing is a movement that is 100% illusion?" is not even if infinitesimal fractions cause moments in other ways, how do I remember the first fish? How do I remember, if I am a member what I ate for lunch? Why do I wake up and go to work if the job belongs to the ‘I’ that has nothing to do with me? If the future is already there, why strive at all?"

Some phenomena have stunned even the chronic perception that time is flowing, like water in a river. We can consider a timeless universe as a long onion, vast central of which has been filled with chocolate for the whole length of the cut. If we cut it, we get what we call a “now.”

Assuming that the chocolate in the center represents us, we would believe that our slice is the only one to exist. In this case, the anterior and posterior slices would also exist; if the future is what would sound ridiculous to an observer.

With an updraft, fish and water tend to follow the flow. In the case of the fish rain in Australia, we could consider a timeless universe of fish eggs. If you’d better be forewarned; it would sound ridiculous to an observer if there is a space where our past, present, and future exists.

Most of us are deeply convinced that the ‘I’ exists, that there is a space where our past, present, and future belongs to the ‘I’. People who, like us, believe in physics, know that the concept of time is not only a stubbornly persisting illusion.

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