

Research Essay

Now

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Abstract

The Now is not of time but of Being, dis-closure. Time is continually stretched (Heidegger's temporal ekstases) whereas Now is a match "between-two." The now is unfolded anew in the dual mode match of each segmented Moment. There is no universal creative Now, as Nixon (2010) suggests, but unique fragmented Nows, monadological Nows, discreet dis-closures of Being within scattered monads of sufficient complexity.

Keywords: Now, time, being, moment, consciousness.

Introduction

"Now," "Time," "Consciousness," "Being" ... these crucial terms are replete with philosophical confusions. Assimilating "Now" into "Time" is the greatest detriment, for Now is properly *presence*, Being, the palpable fullness of being-here-now. The Now is *disclosure*—Heidegger's (1962) dis-closure, or, positively phrased, a lighting-up of a clearing (*die Lichtung*). The Now is actually segmented presencings. Hiley (2001) calls the segments "Moments" while Freeman and Vitiello (2006) liken them to a roll of individual "frames" in a movie film, which when run fast enough lose any hint of segmentation. Stapp (2009) attributes the seeming continuity of what is an actually segmented Now to a "quantum Zeno effect" in which rapidly repeated measurements sustain continuity of the quantum preparation measured. The Now is "where" we always already find ourselves, amidst phenomena of some kind or other, whether percepts, feelings or thoughts. The Now, as disclosure, is the key to understanding Consciousness and Time. The idea will be developed below that the Now is actually not of time but a Moment "between-two," between dual quantum thermofield modes of a dissipative system.

Heidegger developed the fruitful idea that time is not a container, as in Einstein's block space-time universe, but is dynamical, stretched anew at every moment. That is, Now is spontaneously created at every Moment (bringing together Heidegger and Hiley). The past moment, the past day, the past year, the past century – the past is differently stretched at different moments, and the same for the segmented stretching of future too. Heideggerian time is a fluctuating horizon whose time metric is continually dimensionalized. The stretching of the time dimension, along

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with other types of stretching (e.g., space), leads to a dynamical situatedness that is Dasein's own doing. Dasein's intentional actions stretch and thereby situate. Time is Dasein's creation. For the present discussion the Now is the state of thrownness, an eruptive being amidst a world of pragmatic presencings or mental contents. A life is disclosed in the Now for each of us.

Heidegger's conception of *now* fails to make a crucial distinction, however, which ends up confusing. Heidegger considered the Now stretched too (now as you read this, now in the 21st century), just as past and future are stretched. But when Now extends past the Moment, presence is lost. In the context of "now this year" the distinction is lost between that part of the now-this-year that presences ("right now") and the previous part of the year and the part of the year yet to come which do not presence. In the strict sense the Now cannot be stretched.

Consciousness and the Now

Consciousness is to my mind the greatest bone in the throat of contemporary philosophical thought, and scientific thought too. Despite a monumental amount of discussion, there is absolutely no agreement on what the term actually means (Nunn 2009). Some are even moved to cry with respect to Consciousness: *Ignoramus et Ignoramibus* (e.g., McGinn 1991). We are ignorant regarding Consciousness and shall remain so. Etymologically con-consciousness is to "know-together," a cognition that is social. There is nothing perceptual in the original meaning of Consciousness; the infiltration of the perceptual into Consciousness is a poisoning by metaphysics (which lives in language, philosophy and science to this day).

In Hiley's (2001) view, *time becomes nonlocal* in the Moment, so there is no particular momentous now. The movement of explication in which Being unfolds is outside of Time, holds Time not in abeyance but nihilates Time. There is no *ontological* before and after within the Moment; Moments are sequences of creatings. Heidegger calls the attunement of such creatings "pro-jects" (*Entwerfen*). In the Moment there is explication of Presence, Being as such.

Without memory there would be no past as such. Indeed, intention toward memory dimensionalizes time: now, past and future. This intention is a self-tuning. Without memory there would be no future. Expectation is a function of self-tuned trace. Intentional self-tuning towards traces stretches future too. Shortly the dis-closure of a Now which is not of Time will be considered.

To summarize, we have put Consciousness aside, as having to do with cognition. Time as past and future is stretched by self-tuning pro-jective intentional acts and is dependent on trace. Now is orthogonal to Time. Now is disclosure, dis-closure, lighting-up, revelation (re-velation, which reverses veiling). To think Now within Time is to continue metaphysics, which is what the present discussion urges against.

Between-two

It is widely accepted that, as Neisser (1976) succinctly put it, “Perception is where cognition and reality meet.” Cutting-edge thinkings in cognitive and brain science today gussy-up Neisser’s dictum in the guise of Bayesian theory. A leading proponent of the Bayesian view is Friston (2010), who has developed a highly regarded “least energy” brain dynamics. This “energy,” which is mathematically formulated in elegant fashion, is interpreted as “surprise.” *Self-organizing brain states spontaneously evolve so as to minimize surprise*, according to Friston, where zero surprise is the perfected matching of cognitive expectation and sensory input. The organism responds to surprise in two ways: by changing its behavior in search of less surprising input and by tuning its expectations to better match the input actually available. The match in effect amounts to hypothesis confirmation. (This conception is the dynamical successor to Helmholtz’s 19th century idea of “unconscious inference.”)

Least energy brain dynamics is a thoroughly cognitive theory. Expectations are confirmed by the match. Perception is a matter of hypothesis confirmation, which makes perception cognitive rather than disclosive. The Now for the least energy proposal is a succession of hypothesis confirmations in the stream of time. The relation of the cognitive now of least energy theory to time is along the lines of traditional representation theory where the brain builds a temporal succession of models of the world from sensory input, memory and intention. Whether hypothesis confirmation or representation, the Now remains within time in traditional fashion.

The theory of the between-two (Globus 2009) has the Now orthogonal to past and future time. Here there are two quantum modes, one relating to sensory and self-tuning inputs and the other to traces of sensory and self-tuning inputs. The match between these two modes (which takes place in the quantum ground or “vacuum” state) is no longer like the match of a lock and a key but like the match of complex conjugates, $a+bi$ matching to $a-bi$, with the result real. *Dual imaginary modes disclose phenomena in the ground state between-two in virtue of their match*. Presence/Being is created/explicated/unfolded in the belonging-together of dual modes—which is fundamentally different from both hypothesis confirmation and construction of representations. *Now is between-two in the match of complementary complex conjugates*. Sensory and self-tuning inputs together with traces are participants. To revise Neisser’s dictum, perception (world-thrownness) is where cognition and reality are complementary, hence disclosive.

The view developed here is rather Bohmian in spirit (Bohm 1980). The fundamental dynamic or “holomovement” is pre-space and pre-time. Space-time Now is repetitively explicated each Moment, unfolded from the holomovement simultaneously with a reenfoldment of the previous Moment back into the plenum that is the holomovement. Of course, as Pylkkänen (2007) discusses, consciousness figures prominently in Bohmian theory. Bohm’s philosophy was Spinozan, consistent with Whitehead, and also influenced by J. Krishnamurti; there was no existential turn. However Bohm and Whitehead have been recently assimilated to Heidegger

(Globus 2009). Along such lines the existential state of world-thrownness is continually unfolded such that the Now is the match of the between-two.

The fragmented *nows* of monads

Nixon (this issue) conceives time as moving through a recurrent and reiterating now. There is a universal conscious now which hosts the passage of time. It is an uncreated creative source of past and future on Nixon's view (with its Aristotelian overtones). The present claim in contrast is that the Now is also created in the same Moment as past and future, rather than being their metaphysical receptacle. The Now is furthermore fragmented into monadic Nows in parallel (here somewhat reminiscent of Leibniz). These fragmented Nows in parallel are disclosures between-two. No metaphysical subject is permitted to stand outside all of them. The Now consists in Moments of becoming.

Leibniz was not to be trapped in the notion that God is responsible for good and evil. After all, God operates an optimization principle that would result in the greatest good for the greatest number, but God is not responsible for individual monadic actions that meet his emanations. There is choice within monads, or, in the present context, self-tuning that constrains the between-two. Self-tuning can bring selfish evil against the Leibnizean God's loving intention to optimize the Good. Each monad is responsible for its Now, which lets God off the hook.

An hierarchical fragmentation of the Now operates also. There is a halt in the descent into the Now beloved of panpsychists, who find the Now in every particle. To the contrary, Now does not go all the way down into fundamental matter (Globus 2009a). A large quantity of quanta, on the order of Avogadro's number, must be available before cooperative quantum dynamics (coherence) might take place. A gas does not have cooperative dynamics in its between-two. A crystal does—but its between-two is static. It is the dissipative brain's achievement to sustain a between-two whose fluctuating dual mode matchings are disclosive of particular Nows. So the disclosive Now is scattered among rich enough Monads; the rest of them are stuck each in its same Now or having no Now at all.

Conclusion

The Now is freshly conceived in the context of dissipative quantum thermofield brain dynamics. The Now to our surprise does not sort with time but with Being, dis-closure. Thinking Now with time is a continuation of the metaphysics that postmodernism attempts to overthrow. Now is not a unity (not even a relativized unity), but is deeply broken, indeed multiplexly monadological, disclosive, existential Moments in parallel. Now thus understood no longer grounds quotidian life in a reassuring unity right now but is terrifying in the fragmentation of each to their own Now.

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