

The Problem of Prediction

Nobody asked but ...

Time is an abstraction. It is not a thing. More of us should understand this idea, and its implications. I would recommend, highly, the book, *Time: The Familiar Stranger*, by J. T. Fraser for the beginning of understanding this idea. (I first read this book about 10 years ago, but I continue to realize ideas from it frequently.)

There are events, each being an instance of the things that happen in time. An event is both an abstraction AND a thing AND a set of things (people, places, connections, points in time, and other things) which help us to answer the questions who, what, when, where, why, and how.

The important individualist, voluntaryist idea is to take your proper place in the space-time continuum. A few days ago, I was listening to the wonderful interview of Donald Boudreaux by Russ Roberts, presented as part of the Voluntaryist Voices podcasts on EVC, among other places. These two definitely have handles on locating things (including themselves) economically in the space-time continuum.

Another way to describe this type of orienteering is to say that one must know where and when you are in order to reference where and when anything else is. If we are connected to reality, we have reasonable contact with facts, nature, and laws. But the use of “reality” in this context refers to reality, not so much to news reports, books, movies, tv shows, and internet fare — the most confusing feedback we get is referred feedback. Think about it ... if you are a deer in the sights of a hunter’s rifle, you are experiencing reality, probably. If you are watching *Bambi*, not so much reality. First of all, one must shed the idea that “reality tv” bears any relationship to reality — other than it has some concrete, although perhaps misleading, parts.

Where is your portal to reality? It is in the here and now, directly as accessed through your five senses? The present is the only time and space you can sense as it unfolds. You can only recollect the past, remembering with a fast fade the factual feelings you had just a few moments ago, and you can reconstruct that which you have been told — some correct, some accidentally wrong, and a great deal absolutely wrong (often with malice of forethought). Then it is with sensations of the present, and guidance from the past, that you can make fallible predictions about the near future, the very near future. For instance, in traffic you know that a green light proposes a relatively safe passage ... but not perfectly. As soon as you try to go further into the future, your chance of being incorrect ascends exponentially. A minute, an hour, a day are rapidly widening gaps. In the end, all seers are totally wrong in substantial ways.

— Kilgore Forelle