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An Experiment With Time



Synopsis

It might, perhaps, be advisable to say here, “since the reader may have been glancing ahead, that this is not a book about “occultism, and not a book about what is called “psycho-analysis. It is merely the account of an extremely cautious reconnaissance in a rather novel direction, an account presented in the customary form of a narrative of the actual proceedings concerned, coupled with a statement of the theoretical considerations believed to be involved, and the dramatic, seemingly bizarre character of the early part of the story need occasion the reader no misgivings. He will readily understand that the task which had to be accomplished at that stage was the “isolating (to borrow a term from the chemists) of a single, basic fact from an accumulation of misleading material. Any account of any such process of separation must contain, of course, some description of the stuff from which the separation was effected. And such stuff very often is, and in this case very largely was, rubbish. The fact which has emerged in the present instance is precisely what, on theoretical grounds, we should have expected to find. It fits very nicely into its little niche in the system of knowledge ; and it seems, moreover, to possess the attribute against which nothing can ever permanently contend the attribute of being clearly and directly observable by everyone interested. It is hoped that the present reader will take steps to satisfy himself upon this point.

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Customer Reviews

This book is interesting not only in theory but in presentation. Although Dunne seems excited about his discoveries, his enthusiasm does not muddle the preciseness of his observations. It is an

exposition of wonders, geared to explain away phenomena like clairvoyance, telepathy, etc., but he is confident and professional all throughout, at times playing his own skeptic, chicanery-free. Given the burden of empirical proof, the scientific validity of the book will always be called into question. A previous reviewer believes that "the main problem arises with the writer's assumption of time having an unlimited number of dimensions. This is a statement that Dunne does not even try to prove at any point of his otherwise rather meticulous analysis." In other words, Dunne conceives of time as being another dimension of space. He has no recourse but to assume that time has dimensions like space because humanity has rather limited tools of perception for the purpose of such a study. If time has dimensions, then it will take time to measure any unit of time, and one will need another unit to measure the measuring time, and so on, until infinity. In such a model, real time would be the unattainable border of this infinite series. What this reviewer regarded as "mind-boggling philosophical statements" I found to be charming intuitive gems: "Evolution has worked for possibly eight hundred million years towards the development of the brain. Today, as Professor McKendrick points out, nearly all the functions of our bodies are operating towards the end of the adequate nutrition of the grey matter. And it now appears that, apart from its self-sustaining and self-developing activities, the brain serves as a machine for teaching the embryonic soul to think." My opinion of the book is best summed up in a preface written for the second Spanish edition by Jorge Luis Borges. It can be found in BIBLIOTECA PERSONAL (Emecé, 1998). Borges later wrote an essay incorporating elements of the preface called "Time and J.W. Dunne" (1940), which is included in his SELECTED NON-FICTIONS (Penguin, 1999). Since the essay can be found easily enough, here is my translation of the preface, written in 1934: "A literary historian may one day write the history of a most recent genre in literature: the title. I recall none more admirable than the one on this volume. It is not merely for show; it ignites our interest in the text and sure enough the text does not disappoint. It is conversational in character and opens up marvelous possibilities for our conception of the world. J.W. Dunne was an engineer, not a man of letters. Aeronautics is indebted to him for an invention which proved its efficiency in the First World War. His logical and mathematical mind was opposed to all things mystical. He arrived at his strange theory via a statistical study of his nightly dreams. He explained and defended the theory in three volumes that provoked a clamor of polemic. H.G. Wells accused of him of taking the first chapter of his "The Time Machine" (pub. 1895) much too seriously; Dunne responded in a note to his second edition, which is now in print. Likewise, Malcolm Grant refuted him in A NEW ARGUMENT FOR GOD AND SURVIVAL (1934). Of the three volumes that constitute his completed work, THE SERIAL UNIVERSE is the most technical. The last, NOTHING DIES (1940), is downright

popular science, meant for radio dispersal. Dunne proposes an infinite series of times that flow in and out and because of one another. He assures us that upon our death we shall be handed the happy reins of eternity. We shall recover all of the instants of our lives and compose them in whatever manner is most pleasant to us. God and our friends and Shakespeare shall collaborate in this." And the closing line of the essay: "So splendid a thesis makes any fallacy committed by the author insignificant."

I read this book for the first time in 1948 and subsequently, over a number of years, found myself re-living dreams which I had had before. More, I have had dreams, or actions, which coincided with the event. As a result of this I am sympathetic to Dunne's hypothesis, but find it a bit difficult to swallow un-questioned. Dreaming about the past, or modifications of the past, I can accept. Dreaming about the future seems to defy all logic. However Dunne has put forward his possible explanation. That, and "Deja Vue", are open to a great deal of conjecture, but no real explanation is available to this day.

_The author of this book admits that if anyone else had told him of their precognitive dreams he would have had no difficulty dismissing them as coincidence. However, the fact that he himself spontaneously experienced a number of striking examples of such phenomena changed everything. As well it should have, for if we can make contact with the future it means that the entire foundation of our shared conventional assumptions about reality and existence are simply wrong. _The author, one of Britain's first aeronautical engineers, designed a series of experiments to attempt to repeat such contact with future events by way of dream. First he used himself as subject, and then he brought a larger number of ordinary friends and acquaintances in. He found that if careful attention was paid to documenting the details of one's dreams immediately after waking, and carefully reviewing and comparing those dream records with later events, then almost everyone has this ability to some extent. Most of us tend to ignore this fact out of some ingrained habit of thought. Later, it was found that this ability to contact the future isn't strictly limited to dream consciousness. It was found that while waking, people could open themselves up to seemingly random impressions that were later documented to agree with future events (such as concentrating on a book that one had never read before- and receiving definite "hits" on the contents and specific words and phrases- that go way beyond chance.) Further analysis of dream material also showed that we made "contact" with past events in our lives about as much as we did future ones. Once freed of our habitual way of assuming time as linear (and one way) and the world as strictly three dimensional,

the mind seemed to be capable of intermittently ranging past and future in an unfocussed state. The conclusion was that both past and future exist in a higher dimensional framework- and since we can access them- then probably so do we._The first part of this book is primarily empirical, while the second is primarily logical (an elaborate model- complete with diagrams- explaining multidimensional mechanics.) The first part is much more readable. As for the second, as ingenious as it is, I cannot but help think that a cerebrum concentrated in third dimensional consciousness is inadequate to explain higher dimensional realities. We can experience the fact that there must be more to our ordinary conception of reality, but to truly understand it is another matter. Yet, the day will come for us all when we no longer intersect with this three dimensional world- and then we will be free to focus our concentration on the higher dimensional extent of our being._The only restriction in breaking free of our conventional time-consciousness is shaking our selves free of our ingrained habit of seeing the world. Once you have personally experienced such precognitive events, or perhaps synchronicity, then this is much easier- and their frequency increases. It isn't enough to wish or believe- you have to KNOW....

Very interesting and thought provoking ideas from a technical minded person on his personal experiences and experiments with time.

This is the most interesting, accessible and convincing book on the nature of time that I have ever read. I would recommend it to everybody (and I do). The only thing I can say is read it and try Dunne's experiment for yourself (no equipment required except for a pen and paper). If you believe the future is inaccessible, prepare to be stunned.

A great book, the book itself was in very good condition and looks like an interesting read once I find the time to sit down and do so.No visible signs of damage or wear was new as expected.

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