



The Event Horizon of Achievement

It's All Now

By John David Mann

All this reflection on Gen Y (and back through Gens X, W, V, U, T, S and the rest) has got me thinking about the passage of time—or rather, the passage of us.

I am coming to realize—not just to know intellectually, as insights from Einstein and Heisenberg and the other guys, but actually to perceive—that the passage of time is a trick of perspective, an illusion. Time is not a string strung between two tin cans, a mountain ridge across which we perilously creep. It is simply a shift in the relative ripeness of the idea you represent.

In actuality, we do not move away from point A and toward point B. It is more that points A and B slip in and out of us.

In youth everything has an urgency to it. As babies, we amplify that urgency to the point of hilarity: *coo-giggle-cry-scream-sleep*—comedy and tragedy, all in the span of ten minutes. As a teenager, it is hardly less intense. But with the ripening of age things gradually seem to feel less urgent. The tyranny of must-have-right-now eases off. Like glimpses of far-off galaxies, memory's event horizon stretches out and out, and the illusion of time begins to hold less sway.

In fact, we simply *are*, and the *we* right this moment includes within it all that we ever have been and all that we ever will be.

My parents, both deceased, are alive right here and now; the follies of my youth (and oy, they are many) make me blush, laugh, and learn, all right now, because they are here right now. I look at my wife and see the adorable, precocious, vulnerable 6-year-old perched just millimeters below the surface and often spilling out directly onto the surface.

This is hard to put into words. It is a visceral perception that we are not moving "through" time at all. The future is not something that is "going to happen," it is simply another layer of the onion of our present existence, our existent presence.

I often forget this. The more the urgencies of the moment claim my attention, the more I am drawn back into that infant state: "I want my bottle, and I want it now—waaaaah!"

But then (more often, these days) it floats back, especially in those moments when my attention drifts to events and people long past or to circumstances long future. Then it becomes clearer that I am not projecting the architecture of hypothesis out along a rickety temporal framework, but am reaching my senses out (or is it *in*?) to touch larger dimensions of this glorious, already-occurring moment.

Writing a book, budding a relationship, growing a business, carving out any achievement over time, feels less like building something out of little pieces and more like unearthing a thing that already exists, whole and of a piece.

And you know, I think that's exactly what it is.

JOHN DAVID MANN is Consulting Editor of Networking Times.

STRAIGHT TALK

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