



Time, in COVID Times

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Complete List of Authors:	Posina, Venkata; National Institute of Design - Research and Development Campus, ; Poornaprajna Institute of Scientific Research, Center for Foundational Study
Keywords:	Agency, Perception, Behaviour, Time, Conscious Experience
Abstract:	Human behaviour is a presentation of its experience (not unlike presentations of an idea in different words). Upon recognizing that understanding human experience--the subjective experience of humanity as a whole [and individually, along with their mutual determinations] considered as one person--is a first step in a rational passage towards changing human behaviour, here I show how Time is a basic-shape of human experience in COVID times.

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3 1 **Title:** Time, in COVID Times
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9 3 **Abstract:** Human behaviour is a presentation of its experience (not unlike presentations of an
10 4 idea in different words). Upon recognizing that understanding human experience--the subjective
11 5 experience of humanity as a whole [and individually, along with their mutual determinations]
12 6 considered as one person--is a first step in a rational passage towards changing human behaviour,
13 7 here I show how Time is a basic-shape of human experience in COVID times.
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25 9 W. E. B. Du Bois's study of racism brought into figural salience--for all to see--a universal of
26 10 human experience: seeing oneself through the eyes of others (Du Bois, 1897). Gender studies
27 11 revealed how gender is no less of a show than drag shows, albeit participation in the practice of
28 12 one's gender is not necessarily a conscious act for many. In this spirit, one immediate question,
29 13 in light of humanity as a whole experiencing COVID, is: How is human experience in the time of
30 14 COVID different (if it is)?
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43 16 Here I highlight an invariant of individual and collective COVID subjective experiences: Time!
44 17 Before I elaborate on what it means to experience Time, let me first restore the dignity that
45 18 subjectivity is entitled to. Simply put, subjective is more than objective. In subjective
46 19 experience, we not only have a view (of whatever it is), but also the viewpoint from which we
47 20 are viewing (Posina, 2022). Every view--including sciences in general and mathematics in
48 21 particular--is necessarily from a viewpoint, which is the self in the case of individual conscious
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22 experience and a doctrine in the case of sciences, as Maxwell recognized, and as F. William
23 Lawvere established with his functorial semantics (see Posina, 2020). From this perspective,
24 algebra is a subjective reflection of the geometry of figures (Lawvere and Rosebrugh, 2003, pp.
25 193-195, 239-240; Lawvere and Schanuel, 2009, pp. 84-85, 180-182, 306-309, 369-371).

26 Having recognized the non-arbitrary nature of subjectivity, we can discern the sense in which
27 human experience in the time of COVID is Time.

29 Time is routinely objectified as a one-dimensional continuum. Although eminently useful, there
30 is more to time than all that is given in a straight line.

32 In the time of COVID, our conscious experience got reduced from the two metaphorical birds
33 signifying: Acting and Looking (at the act), which together constitute our everyday conscious
34 experience, to one: spectator [looking]. Spectator-mode in and of itself is not necessarily
35 undesirable; in fact, it is sought after in the conscious practice of arts (d'Amboise, 2006; Posina,
36 2017). However, COVID turned our lives into a spectacle, which we are allowed to watch as
37 spectators, but not permitted to participate in, i.e. not allowed to exercise the defining attribute of
38 being human: agency (see Figure). Deprived of our agency, our experience--individual and
39 collective--is that of: 'tumultuous unraveling of events over which we have little control', which
40 is how Time is described in Indo-European languages (see Lawvere, 2002, p. 278). Unlike the
41 points constituting one-dimensional line (objectifying time), the basic shape of Time is different
42 from a point, but has one point (geometric objectification of CONSTANCY) corresponding to
43 'not moving/changing', while the difference corresponds to the 'urge to move/change' (Lawvere,

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3 44 2017). Thus, another invariant of the human experience of the COVID pandemic is the basic
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5 45 shape of time: urge to change AND not changing. These universals of human experience of the
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7 46 COVID pandemic can help make sense of the corresponding human behaviour, which in turn can
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9 47 help design COVID-appropriate behaviour without diminishing the humanity embodied in each
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11 48 and every one of us.
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For Peer Review

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66 **Figure:**



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56 69 **Figure legend:**
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9 70 **Spectator-mode of experience:** In the time of COVID, the participating-watching complex
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12 71 constituting our--individual and collective--ordinary experiences got reduced to spectator-mode
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14 72 of experiencing the spectacle that our lives became. With our human agency on hold, we find
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16 73 ourselves dissociated from our lives--lives unraveling according to a script entitled: Social
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18 74 Distancing and Sheltering in Place, as exemplified in this figure with a lone spectator sitting still
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21 75 and watching an out-of-view (as in 'kept in the dark') spectacle.
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76 **Competing interests:** The author declares no competing interests.

For Peer Review



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Perception - Decision on Manuscript ID PEC-22-0032

1 message

Perception <onbehalf@manuscriptcentral.com>

Fri, Feb 18, 2022 at 5:21 PM

Reply-To: t.s.meese@aston.ac.uk

To: posinavrayudu@gmail.com, vf29@nid.edu

Dear Posina - I now have a detailed review (attached) of your piece submitted to Short and Sweet at Perception which I hope you will find useful. The reviewer and I both see merit in your submission but we have a shared concern that while concision is commendable (particularly in this section of the journal), many of your points will be just too dense for our readers (mainly sensory scientists) without reference to your other works. Therefore, I would like to encourage you to expand on these - the reviewer has provided particularly helpful direction for where clarification is needed. I might also add emphasis to the reviewer's final point - after reading your article, I struggled to see what it is I am to learn from the COVID crisis as a perceptionist. In sum, I think there are some interesting points in your submission but in their current form they do not speak to me (or the reviewer) as they should. I do look forward to receiving your revision and reply.

Best wishes
Tim

18-Feb-2022

Dear Mr Posina:

Manuscript ID PEC-22-0032 entitled "Time, in COVID Times" which you submitted to Perception, has now been reviewed. The comments of the reviewer(s) are included at the bottom of this letter.

The reviewer(s) suggest some revisions to your manuscript. Therefore, I invite you to respond to the reviewer(s) comments and revise your manuscript.

To revise your manuscript, log into <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/perception> and enter your Author Centre, where you will find your manuscript title listed under "Manuscripts with Decisions." Under "Actions," click on "Create a Revision." Your manuscript number has been appended to denote a revision.

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Note that, if accepted, your paper will use the figures as already submitted unless you upload high resolution figures with your revision.

Because we are trying to facilitate timely publication of manuscripts submitted to Perception, your revised manuscript

should be uploaded as soon as possible, but at the latest within 90 days. If it is not possible for you to submit your revision in a reasonable amount of time, we may have to consider your paper as a new submission.

Once again, thank you for submitting your manuscript to Perception and I look forward to receiving your revision.

Best wishes,
Professor Tim Meese
Action Editor, Perception
t.s.meese@aston.ac.uk

Reviewer(s)' Comments to Author:

Reviewer: 1

Comments to the Author
See attached file.

 **Comments to author.pdf**
27K

NB I am using the author's own line numbers:

This paper presents a valid idea, but is too brief and would benefit from some elaboration and explanation of the ideas therein, which I hope will make it more immediately accessible to readers not familiar with the author's previous work.

First, the paper *seems* to take a behaviourist approach to consciousness (lines 3, 6, 46 and 47 – and perhaps lines 32-34?), which is contentious to say the least, and not consistent with the author's other papers, in which arbitrary but systematic mental symbols and internal representations are accepted as relevant and real existents. For example:

Line 3: "Human behaviour is a presentation of its experience" is unclear – does "its" refer to behaviour? And what does "presentation" mean here? Do you mean 'Human behaviour is an *expression* [or *external manifestation*] of human experience'? (The word 'presentation' is used in phenomenology to describe the manifestation of an apparently external object in experience or in consciousness -- so that word as used here is likely to be misunderstood by certain perception researchers.)

Lines 18-22: you contrast views with viewpoints, but there seems to be a potential confusion in this paragraph between 'viewpoint' as meaning a single, particular physical/geometric location (from which one might have a 'view' of, for example, a cat) and as a semantic/epistemological system or framework. How can the self *be* a viewpoint rather than having one (line 21)? Posina (2020, p. 77) puts the answer in terms of set theory -- the self is a (potentially empty) set of all (current?) experiences -- but it's not obvious without that explanation, for example that a 'viewpoint' here refers to a framework that defines the semantics/meaning of the individual representations/experiences/terms in a theory.

Line 23: what is "functorial semantics"? Adding some minimal explanation, such as "the mathematics of representation" (Posina 2020, p. 89) would help here ... or should it be "one approach to the mathematics of representation"? The general thesis in these papers overall seems to be holism.

Line 24: what is the relevance of algebra and "the geometry of figures" to subjectivity? This is explained in Posina 2020, where it is argued to be an analogy, but this needs to be explained (if only briefly) here too.

Line 26: why is subjectivity described as "non-arbitrary"? This is a crucial point but needs more explanation (i.e. a succinct summary of Posina 2017; e.g. perhaps: 'mental representations are basically arbitrary symbols but these are not random but

systematic because their semantics is defined or determined relative to a holistic network, framework or viewpoint’).

Line 26 also: “we can discern” implies ‘following this explanation we can now see’; but I think you mean to say ‘we can now go on to explain’?

Lines 32-34: the notion that conscious experience is normally only of two types, acting and looking, seems rather limited. Do thinking and feeling, for example, not count as two further aspects of conscious experience? And does “Looking (at the act)” mean observing your own actions (if so, how – introspection, reafferent processing?) or the acts of others (via empathy, mirroring?)?

Lines 38-40: you seem to be referring to existence as a continuous flow -- firstly as experienced and then as physical reality. But in the next sentence you say the latter is an error – so would it be clearer to begin that next sentence (lines 40-44) with ‘In contrast’ or ‘However’?

Lines 40-44: “Unlike the points constituting one-dimensional line (objectifying time), the basic shape of Time is different from a point, but has one point (geometric objectification of CONSTANCY) corresponding to 'not moving/changing', while the difference corresponds to the 'urge to move/change' (Lawvere, 2017).”

I find this sentence difficult to analyse; does it mean:

Unlike objectified time (a series of points constituting a one-dimensional line), the basic shape of Time is different in that it has both a point (the geometric objectification of CONSTANCY), corresponding to 'not moving/changing', and a corresponding 'urge to move/change' (Lawvere, 2017).

Or perhaps:

Unlike objectified time (a series of points constituting a one-dimensional line), the basic shape of Time is different in that it is just a single point (the geometric objectification of CONSTANCY), corresponding to 'not moving/changing', but also an 'urge to move/change' (Lawvere, 2017).

Or something similar?

Lines 45-48: finally, it is not clear how this overall point of view has any implications for life under lockdown. Under lockdown, we have no ability to move (which is not the same as no urge to move!), and can only spectate . How does this have implications for the “design” of behaviour – design by whom (governments or psychologists manipulating our thoughts, individuals controlling their own psyches)?

To,

Professors: Tim Meese, Peter Thompson, and Frans Verstraten

Chief Editors

Perception

Dear Professor Meese, Professor Thompson, and Professor Verstraten,

I hope and pray you and your families are all well.

If I may, in my submission entitled:

Time, in COVID Times

I begin with what we are given:

Human behaviour and experience are interdependent. As such, discerning the nature of human experience in the time of COVID can help us make sense of the attendant human behaviour. In my article, I show that our conscious experience of the pandemic is that of Time:

tumultuous unraveling of events over which we have little control, compounded by an urge to change but not changing.

I'd be truly grateful to you if you would consider my article for publication in your esteemed journal: Perception as a Short & Sweet (SAS) article.

To place my article in perspective, palpable universals of our everyday experience include the metaphorical pair of birds factoring conscious experience into a dual: participating-spectator. Waking conscious experience also has negative properties: we do not see colorless shapes or shapeless colors. Towards the exotic end of human experience is the dissolution of the primordial subject-object divide, as experienced by Proust: "I myself seemed actually to have become the subject of my book: a church, a quartet, the rivalry between François I and Charles V" (please see Tattva - Journal of Philosophy 9, 1, 2017). Inspired by these universals, upon reflecting on the COVID pandemic, we find that the human experience of COVID is that of Time--tumultuous unraveling of events over which we have little control--as described in Indo-European languages (Journal of Pure and Applied Algebra 175, 278, 2002). Unlike the points constituting the one-dimensional time-line, the basic shape of time is different from a point, but has one point corresponding to 'not moving/changing', while the difference corresponds to the 'urge to move/change' (Categories and General Algebraic Structures with Applications 6, 9, 2017). Thus, an invariant of the human experience of the pandemic is the basic shape of time: urge to change but not changing. Another universal of the subjective conscious experience of

COVID is: living one's life in a spectator-mode, with one's life being the spectacle that's out-of-view (as in 'kept in the dark'; please see Figure in my article). These universals of human experience of the COVID pandemic can help make sense of the corresponding human behaviour.

I earnestly hope that you will find my submission: "Time, in COVID Times" suitable for publication in your highly respected journal: Perception. I sincerely thank you for your kind consideration of my article and eagerly look forward to hearing from you.

Happy New Year :-)

Thanking you,

Yours truly,

posina

P.S. For your ready perusal, the papers alluded to are linked in my manuscript file (Time_Covid_SAS.docx).

P.P.S. Please note that the figure used in my article is not mine; my cousin Ramana shared it on our family WhatsApp group, and I felt that it captures all that my article is trying to convey. I'd

be truly grateful to you on how to proceed in this regard (please note that my cousin is engaged in Mouna Vratham, which translates to vow of silence/minimal communication, which is supposed to make one sensitive to oneself).

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Google scholar: <https://scholar.google.co.in/citations?user=cnMxV9MAAAAJ&hl=en&oi=ao>

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Conflict of interests: None.