

Clocks, the present, and the interval of reversal

An anthropology of temporal measurement in NAPFRL

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Abstract

This paper transfers the packet theory of clocks into anthropological phenomenology. Clocks are treated as culturally and psychologically meaningful only insofar as they fix the interval of the reversal operator and thereby shape the experienced present.

1 Clocks as an anthropological object

Clocks are not neutral instruments. They express the way in which a culture or a subject organizes the interval between action and its return. Their meaning therefore depends entirely on the interval of reversal.

2 The psychological radius of the present

Definition 2.1. The psychological radius of the present is given by

$$R_{\text{present}}(t) = \frac{\epsilon}{\|\nabla_{\text{psy}} D^*\| + \delta}.$$

Proposition 2.2. *When the reversal operator reinforces the inner connectedness of experience, the present expands; when it is suppressed by stress or overload, the present contracts into an almost point-like regime.*

3 Anthropological conclusion

The anthropology of time should therefore study not “time in general” but the regimes in which the reversal operator becomes accessible to experience, memory, and the institutions of measurement.