ForeWord Reviews

SELF-HELP

Perfect Timing: Mastering Time Perception for Personal Excellence
Von Braschler
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The passage of time is often seen as fixed and inevitable. What if this were not the case? When Michael Jordan executes a "slam dunk," shoving the basketball into the hoop, everything about his movement seems to slow down. He seems to hang in the air just a moment longer than could ever be possible. He seems to defy gravity. What if it were not the laws of gravity that he bent, but the essence of time?

The philosopher Immanuel Kant asserted that we create time both to perceive the outside world, and to measure change. In this book, the author goes even farther, stating, "time is totally invented and an arbitrary rule established as a convenient measure of agreement." Braschler takes the reader through the musings of philosophers of bygone eras, through the "string theory" hypotheses of modern-day physicists, and to a number of events in his personal life that convinced him that we "hold the world together with our joint attention." This joint attention, he says, includes the human creation of time.

His arguments are compelling, not only because he has done his research, including the writings of Ouspensky and Krishnamurti, and the conviction of Julian Barbour and other physicists who describe the "multiverse," but because he offers a number of exercises to the reader-simple experiments which will demonstrate the complete elasticity of time. One experiment requires only a ball, a bat, and a pitcher. Another requires a straight-backed chair, a dimly lit room, and solitude. Each exercise allows the reader to experience the core of what Braschler himself learned when he avoided a life-threatening car accident at the edge of a cliff by a series of decisions and movements that to the author seemed to take hours, but must have happened "in the twinkling of an eye" for him to have avoided certain death.

The message Braschler offers is that time is a social and cultural agreement, and that it is a shared concept that some people-particularly athletes-manipulate, shape, and, to a certain degree, bend to their liking. This book shows how anyone can stretch and bend time, and in so doing, participate in one of the great unfolding mysteries of this new century.

Carol Lynn Stewart