TIME TO MESS WITH YOUR HEAD

The Clocks They Are A-Changin'

by Joshua Roebke

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When the ball dropped on New Year's Eve, were you paying attention? Because you might have missed the last extra second of revelry. The earth's rotation is slowing—thanks, moon—and each day grows longer. So every year or two, the International Earth Rotation and Reference Systems Service, a little-known cabal of geophysicists, tells the world to add a leap second to civic time so it can catch up. But the Service has some competition: A consortium of corporate interests wants to end our clocks' connection with the natural world by 2007—mostly because their global positioning satellites weren't programmed to deal with leap seconds. If they have their way, the earth will spin gradually out of phase with watches, until night becomes day (well, in 5,200 years sunrise will be just an hour later, but still). More immediately, astronomers and other scientists who rely on the coordination of times for experiments are outraged that corporate interests might hijack time for their own purposes.

Loop Quantum Gravity is Killing Time

In any event, a physicist at the University of the Mediterranean, Marseilles named Carlo Rovelli says that time may not exist, which would, among other things, render all of this moot. In an era when time has become the most accurately-measured physical quantity in our universe, the theory of loop quantum gravity states that it is the "changing of things that makes up time," as Rovelli puts it—not vice versa. Rovelli wrote the textbook on the subject, and has done much to make the resurgent underdog theory a viable contender for the title of "Theory of Everything." Time doesn't figure into the equations in loop quantum gravity, because it just isn't that important. Or as Rovelli states, poetically, "time is our ignorance."

Is Daylight Savings Good for Your Health?

According to periodontists, George W. Bush is good for America's teeth. Beginning in 2007, daylight-saving time will be extended by about a month because of Bush's Energy Policy Act of 2005. This might mean more exposure to sunlight, which would mean more vitamin D, thus better teeth and bones. But the real catalyst wasn't Bush's concern about the nation's pearly whites; the extra hour will purportedly save energy. During the 1970's oil crisis, DST was similarly pushed back, though there are now strong doubts as to its impact on consumption—as we see it, daylight in the afternoon was probably offset by having to turn lights on in the morning (like, duh). What is certain: US airlines aren't happy about the change, as they'll be further out of sync with Canada and Europe. Nor are parents whose kids will be walking to school in the dark. But, hey, at least they'll have strong teeth.

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