



The
Human Organization
of Time

TEMPORAL REALITIES AND EXPERIENCE

Allen C. Bluedorn

STANFORD BUSINESS BOOKS

An Imprint of Stanford University Press

Stanford University Press
Stanford, California

© 2002 by the Board of Trustees of the
Leland Stanford Junior University

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free, archival-quality paper

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bluedorn, Allen C.

The human organization of time : temporal realities and experience /
Allen C. Bluedorn.

p. cm. — (Stanford business books)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8047-4107-7 (alk. paper)

1. Time—Social aspects. 2. Time—Sociological aspects. I. Title.

II. Series.

HM656 .B58 2002

304.2'3—dc21

2002001375

Original Printing 2002

Last figure below indicates year of this printing:

11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02

Designed by James P. Brommer

Typeset in 10.5/14.5 Caslon

To those who have brought such exquisite meaning to my times;
may their times be the best of times always:

To my wife, Betty;

To my sons, John and Nick;

To my brother, Ralph;

To my mother, Evelyn;

To my father, Rudolph, 1905-1988.

Preface

This book's road to publication was long and circuitous, and its history describes a course that only a chaos theorist could appreciate properly. That history will not be chronicled here; instead, I will acknowledge freely that like time itself, this book is truly a social construction, one whose existence is due to the thoughts and ideas, to the questions and research, and to the assistance and goodwill of many, many people. And as such, it is appropriate that I acknowledge as many of those people here as my memory permits.

I wrote this book in my office at home, which leads me to think of several home teams that have helped me with this project. And I will begin by acknowledging the team closest to home, my wife, Betty. Betty read *every* word in an earlier version of this manuscript and offered many cogent comments about both the ideas and the way they were presented. Betty is a registered nurse, a good one, and as one would expect from the ministrations of a good nurse, the "patient's" health definitely improved as a result of her efforts.

A second home team consists of several people at the University of Missouri-Columbia whose aid was invaluable. Two research collaborators, Steve Ferris and Gregg Martin, each gave me permission to conduct original analyses on data we had collected together and to publish the results in this book. I am grateful not only for their permission to do so but also for their enthusiastic interest in having me do so. Another member of this home team is Rhetta Standifer, who served as my research assistant during the last year leading up to the day that I put the final revised version of the manuscript into the mail to Stanford. Rhetta read the entire manuscript and helped me check the references, the accuracy of quotations, and so on. These jobs were extremely important, and Rhetta did them very well.

Jack and Cathleen Burns are colleagues here who helped in two very diverse ways. A critical series of conversations with Cathleen helped me clarify for myself that this was a project that I really should do, and Jack, Cathleen's astrophysicist husband, helped me avoid stepping into a theoretical black hole from which my credibility would never have reemerged. He was also kind enough to check the physics I present in Chapters 1 and 2 and to provide an introduction for me to his collaborator at the University of California, Irvine, Gregory Benford (results from

Preface

this introduction appear in Chapters 5 and 7). In a similar vein, my friend Carol Ward, a physical anthropologist, was good enough to check an earlier version of Chapter 2 and provide some suggestions for upgrading the account of hominid evolution presented in it.

A special component of this home team is the staff of the University of Missouri-Columbia's library system. A large amount of library work takes place in any book project, but this is especially so when the project is cross-disciplinary and involves many historical materials. Although everyone I worked with at my campus' libraries was very helpful, I especially benefited from the assistance of librarians Gwen Gray, Michael Muchow, Nancy Turner Myers, Geoffrey Swindels, and John Wesselman. I should also thank the staffs at three other libraries: Cornell University, Rutgers University, and the University of Iowa. All three treated a visitor with exceptional courtesy and competence, and in the case of the University of Iowa, I discovered that I could go home again—having received all three of my degrees there—for late in the project I needed a particular edition of *Plutarch's Morals*, and they were kind enough to let me find it in their collection. Librarians are good people.

And so are graphic artists. The final versions of all of the figures in this book were prepared by Liz Priddy, a graphic artist in the Graphic Arts Services unit of the University of Missouri-Columbia's Academic Support Center. Not only did Liz prepare the final versions, but she also worked with me to help develop several of them conceptually. She even helped me with a decision about epigraphs!

Before moving beyond the boundaries of my university, I would like to acknowledge one more form of support it provided. I have conducted several original data analyses for this book and report the results in several chapters. All of the research projects from which data were used for these analyses were supported by one or more sources at either the University of Missouri System or the University of Missouri-Columbia, including a University of Missouri Research Board grant, a grant from the Research Council, an Alumni Association grant, Research Fellowships from the Center for the Study of Organizational Change, a grant from the Financial Research Institute, and several College of Business Summer Research Fellowships. This type of tangible support is greatly appreciated.

My extended home team begins with the people at my publisher, Stanford University Press. Let me begin with my editor, Bill Hicks. Bill has been an enthusiastic supporter of this project for many years, and his steadfast interest has spanned several salient events in both his career and mine. It is reasonable to say that without Bill this book would never have been written. For his enduring confidence and enthusiasm I shall be ever grateful. Another important member of this team is Kate

Wahl, my assistant editor. Not only was Kate tremendously helpful, but she would get things done and answer questions amazingly fast—a well-appreciated virtue in several situations. The devil is rumored to be in the details; if so, Kate kept the devil at bay. It was simply a delight to work with someone so competent, diligent, and enthusiastic. Such virtues also describe my production editor, Janna Palliser, and my copy editor, Mary Ray Worley.

Thousands of miles from Stanford are two colleagues who read the manuscript critically and helped me develop it. These colleagues are Ramon Aldag and Jean Bartunek. Not only did they give me good advice, but their overwhelming support for what I was doing was nothing less than inspirational. They have no idea how often I revisited their comments as a pick-me-up when the going was slow. Such support from such colleagues is truly manna from heaven.

And not only did Ray and Jean give me great advice and support, they also gave me permission to use some of the ideas in their comments and to cite them as the source of those ideas. So did several other colleagues and friends to whom I am very grateful and would like to say thank you to now for doing so: Robert Backoff, Gregory Benford, Betty Bluedorn, John Bluedorn, Nick Bluedorn, Jack Burns, Joseph Kasof, Carol Ward and Francis Yammarino. In a similar vein I would like to thank Cason Hall & Co. Publishers and Elliott Jaques for permission to use the quotation from *The Form of Time* as the epigraph for this book. It describes the point of the book perfectly (hence it is repeated in several of the chapters), and I am grateful they allowed me to use it. I would also like to thank Deloitte Consulting and Aileen Stacy for permission to quote their statement about multitasking.

Finally, there are the many people who sent me papers and articles, who answered my questions, and, often, who simply brought things to my attention because they knew I was interested in time and was writing a book about it. This is assistance it is impossible to buy, and it is amazing how many people helped me in this way. To the best that my memory and records allow me to acknowledge, I would like to thank all of the following people for helping me in this way: Yochanan Altman, Deborah Ancona, Neal Ashkanasy, Gregory Benford, Joel Bennett, Leonard Berry, Joseph Blackburn, Sally Blount, Betty Bluedorn, Evelyn Bluedorn, John Bluedorn, Nick Bluedorn, Cathleen Burns, Jack Burns, Todd Chiles, Yumiko Cleverger, Jeff Conte, T. K. Das, Paul Davis, Tom Dougherty, Randall Dunham, Ronald Ebert, Tracy Everbach, Michelle Fleig-Palmer, Fernando Galindo, Annabelle Gawer, Harrison Gough, Barbara Gutek, Mark Hayward, Stephen Horner, John Howe, Mary Hurt, Quy Nguyen Huy, Gregory Janicik, Joe Kasof, Carol Kaufman-Scarborough, Stephen Kern, Mark Kriger, Paul Lane, Herbert Lefcourt, Jay Lindquist, James March, Jim Mattingly, Marci McPhee, Kathy Neighbors,

Preface

Loren Nikolai, Ellen O'Connor, Greg Oldham, Wanda Orlikowski, David Palmer, J. P. Palmer, Leslie Perlow, Gil Porter, Lyman Porter, Michelle Reznicek, Bruce Rollier, Rakesh Sambharrya, David Schencker, Tom Slocombe, Rhetta Standifer, Scott Standifer, Kristine Stilwell, John Stowe, Paul Swamidass, Dan Turban, Jon Turner, Michael Tushman, Jean-Claude Usunier, Pierre Valette-Florence, Wendelien van Eerde, Carol Ward, Francis Yammarino, and JoAnne Yates.

To all whom I have thanked here publicly, let me say thank you again. You have helped produce much of what is good in the pages that follow. To anyone I have omitted, I can offer only my apologies and the wish that my memory had been better. For any shortcomings or failings that occur in the following discourse, the responsibility is, of course, my own.

But allow me to comment on one failing I have tried to avoid. Over thirty years ago, E. P. Thompson commented about the writing on the sociology of industrialization, describing it as “like a landscape which has been blasted by ten years of moral drought: one must travel through many tens of thousands of words of parched a-historical abstraction between each oasis of human actuality” (1967, p. 94). Whatever failings this volume may have, the kind of writing Thompson criticized should not be one of them. Instead, you will find real people in the pages that follow, occasionally speaking in the form of statistical aggregates, but much more frequently telling their stories from the pages of history; from newspapers, magazines, books, and journals; and from my own story as well. For what follows is the story of a human construction, time, and how it shapes the set of experiences we call life. And to tell this story requires human voices. They begin speaking on page 1.

In the form of time is to be found the form of living.

—Elliott Jaques, *The Form of Time*