

# The Shape of Now

## *A Different Starting Point for Understanding Reality*

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Right now, you are reading these words. Whatever else you might doubt, you cannot doubt that *something is happening*. This present experience is the one thing you never have to take on faith.

Most science starts elsewhere—with matter, particles, forces. It assumes an external world exists independently, then tries to explain how conscious experience emerges from it. Absolute Relativity starts from the opposite direction: if we begin with the present moment as our foundation, what must reality be like?

Three ideas follow from that starting point.

### 1. Nothing Exists Alone

Pick up a cup. What makes it *this cup*? The usual answer points to atoms, matter, composition. But those atoms are defined by how they relate to other atoms, to forces, to the space around them. Pull on any thread and the whole fabric comes with it.

*Pure relativity* means nothing has an identity all by itself. Everything is what it is only through how it relates—not just connected to other things, but *constituted* by those connections. Relations go all the way down.

This has a surprising consequence. If everything depends on everything else, contradictions cannot spread freely—they would dissolve all distinction. So the whole relational network must hang together without contradiction. The whole, as a coherence condition, is implicitly present in every part.

But that wholeness cannot be captured as information. Information can be copied and sent elsewhere. The coherence condition that makes anything definable at all cannot be detached that way. It must be present as something simply *there*—not representable, just present.

This is what we call *qualia* or *presence*. The redness of red is not inside the word “red” or a wavelength description. It is the kind of property that resists capture—and in this framework, it follows directly from the logic of pure relativity.

## **2. Time Is Not a Container**

Close your eyes. Notice the flow—the sense that each moment gives way to the next. The usual picture treats time as a dimension that exists independently, through which events move like beads on a string.

But if pure relativity is fundamental, this picture smuggles in what it claims to explain. Time cannot be a background “out there” that reality moves through.

Instead, time is how the present relates to itself. Your experience right now holds traces of what came before—memories, afterimages, the lingering sense of the previous moment. It also faces forward—anticipations, possibilities, openings. The past is folded inside you. The future is implicit as possibility.

When you hear a melody, each note contains echoes of the notes before and anticipation of what comes next. Without that internal relating, you would hear only disconnected sounds—no melody, no music. The flow is the present, understood as a structure that orders different configurations inwardly.

## **3. The Objective World Is Stable Coherence**

You lean on a table. It does not give way. You put a cup down, leave, come back—the cup is still there. Other people can see it, touch it, move it. Where does this stability come from if reality is pure relativity and the primitive is experience?

From non-contradiction. Relations that contradict one another cannot cohere—contradiction dissolves identity. So objectivity does not arise from “winning patterns,” but from the way coherence forces a stable, layered relational structure. Within that layered structure, certain regularities reappear across moments and perspectives—and those stable regularities are what we call objects.

A table is one of those stable regularities. It is so consistently re-encountered within the layered coherence of experience that we stop seeing it as a regularity at all—we simply experience it as a thing.

That stability also has depth. The same table can show up as if it has microstructure—molecules, atoms, particles—because your present can relate into deeper nested layers of the same coherent structure.

In AR these are not additional primitives “behind” the table. They are the way those deeper relations present when the conditions of relation are tightened (as in measurement and instrumentation), so that particle-like properties become repeatable and shareable.

Objectivity is not “the world as it is without experience.” If experience is fundamental, that phrase misfires. Objectivity is the stabilized face of layered coherence: things endure because the same relational structure reappears; laws describe the invariances of that structure; and shared reference points arise because this layered map is consistent across perspectives.

## What This Changes

These three ideas—pure relativity forces qualia into existence; time is internal ordering, not an external container; objectivity emerges from coherence constraints—form the philosophical core of Absolute Relativity.

The framework is also a technical program. Formal models and simulations translate these principles into physics-facing predictions that can be tested against data.

If the ideas hold, they change what we think time is, what a “world” is, and what it means for something to be real. They suggest that consciousness is not a strange addition to a material universe—it is woven into the structure of reality from the start.

— Kent

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