

DELAY

Examining the idea

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Delay means that time has passed and an expected event has not happened. The length of the time that has passed can be specified. There is a reason for this. The starting point must be known. not merely surmised or guessed must know the time for the event which we expect or expected

The idea of a delay entails the specification of a particular time for an expected event. If I expect an event to occur after the passing of a particular length of time, and it does not, then I may logically speak of delay. So when Mr Brown goes off to town, he expects that his train will arrive at a specified time, 8.21 a.m. If it does not, he will count from that moment and so reckon the length of the delay. So also if you tell me the task will be finished in two hours and it takes three. Then I may speak of an hour's delay, since I have a known starting p[oint].

Delays may of various lengths of time. They may be reckoned in minutes or hours or weeks or months or years or decades or centuries or millennia. For the train it may be minutes, or hours. For the mail, it may be days. For a crop, it may be weeks. For due recognition it may be years, and so on. But whatever the case, if no time for the event is specified, there can be no logical talk of delay. So if you have no idea of when he would be coming, and so no idea of when you may expect him, you cannot logically speak of delay, since you are in ignorance of the starting point. It is obvious that I cannot measure a period of time from a point of which I know nothing. Since I have no point from can measure the length of time to the expected event. All I can say is that if he should have been here at a particular time, there has been a delay of such and such a length. But that would be pure speculation.

So when Macarthur made his celebrated statement of promise after the defeat \t Singapore by saying, 'I will return', no one knew how long it would be before the promise would find fulfilment. He himself n did not know. He could have speculated of course. But such speculation often turns out to be wrong. o we can state a logical principle: If you cannot state in specific temporal terms when you expect the event you therefore cannot speak of a delay. The contradiction can be easily stated as follows.

You have no idea when he might come or when but the event might happen, but you go on saying that there has been a delay, since he has not yet come. But if you do not know when to expect an event, you cannot speak of a delay, since you have no reference point to give your claim its starting point and so anchor its reference. In that case it has no secure content. Should you then attempt to speak of delay you would be making an empty and so a meaningless claim. The claim would be hypothetical. 'If you assume that the event was to have taken place at such and such a time, then there has been a delay of so and so many hours, years decades or whatever.' You surmise a starting point. To surmise a specific time point for the event does not provide a firm basis for speculation about delay, let alone length of delay. A surmise is not sufficient.

What you can say reasonably is that it is taking longer than you expected. But then you are not speaking of your expectation, s personal and subjective matter. You should not speak of an extended expectation as a 'delay'. We have all had unfulfilled hopes' When we analyse the situation after the non-event we may wonder why we hoped! Our problem was that we could not anchor our reference to a particular time,. Or specify a specific length of time before fulfilment could take place.. What we may say is that we expected the event to have already taken place and may even specify how much times has passed since that time of expectation. So we mazy say, 'I expected him five hours ago!' ' We anticipated finding a cure fifty years ago.'. 'WE waited six months for the co-operation that was promised earlier.'

So how does all this; relate to our capacity to make predictions? What we are prepared to predict will happen will ;depend on a number of factors,
for example,
our predispositions I want to believe, I do not want to believe. I want to impress,.

our reliance on social pressure, the influence of the group, of family, peers, institution etc.

whatever we consider relevant evidence

For example a quite different situation, Mr Brown who goes to town regularly on the 8.15 can speak of the delay of his train if it does not arrive on schedule. At 8.25. he can speak of a delay He can do this because he has knowledge of a definite temporal point of reference to start the assessment..

When an expected event does not happen at the times expected there are two alternatives. One can go on hoping for it to take place. One can give up the expectation realising that it will not happen. These are the options of anticipation and abandonment. Due consideration of the appropriate evidence will determine whether one or the other is the rational thing to do. Psychological motivations may well play a crucial role in framing the decision to continue anticipating or to abandon the expectation.

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