

Section 3. The Film Analogy: Why Time Feels Like Flow

To clarify further why time is so widely experienced as though it were a flowing entity, this section introduces a concrete analogy previously developed in CUWF Time Theory: the film reel analogy. Its purpose is not decorative. It functions as a structural aid for separating perceptual ordering from ontological structure. By doing so, it helps explain why temporal flow feels compelling even if flow does not belong to reality in the way common intuition assumes.

3.1 The Film Reel Analogy

Consider a complete film reel. The entire movie exists as a fully encoded structure. Every frame—beginning, middle, and end—is already present as part of the reel. There is no sense in which later frames must be created after earlier ones in order for the film to exist as a whole. They coexist as parts of one static structure.

The sensation of motion, progression, and narrative development arises only when the film is projected frame by frame. Sequential exposure generates the appearance of flow. Motion does not reside in the reel as such; it appears through ordered access to its contents.

This distinction is crucial. The film itself does not flow. The reel does not become more complete as projection proceeds. What changes is not the underlying structure, but the state of exposure relative to the viewer.

3.2 Viewer Position Versus Film Structure

From the standpoint of the viewer, events appear to unfold dynamically. Characters act, causes seem to precede effects, and outcomes seem to arrive irreversibly. Yet this experienced sequence reflects the viewer's access-position relative to the film, not the ontological structure of the film itself.

The viewer progresses through the frames; the frames do not progress through time. Ordering is introduced through the act of viewing, not through the existence of the film as structure. This distinction mirrors one of the deepest confusions in time theory: the tendency to conflate the ordering of access with the generation of reality.

Perception encounters sequence. But structure does not require sequence in order to exist. Once this point is missed, the experience of ordered exposure is easily projected backward and mistaken for proof that reality itself must flow.

3.3 Why Irreversibility Appears to the Viewer

Irreversibility arises naturally within the viewing process. Once a frame has been projected and passed through experiential access, the viewer cannot re-enter the same experiential state in exactly the same way. The sense of a receding past emerges from the accumulation of already exposed frames relative to the present point of access.

Importantly, nothing in the film itself has been destroyed. No frame has vanished from the reel. The irreversibility belongs not to the existence of the structure, but to the process of exposure and record accumulation from the standpoint of the viewer.

This makes the analogy especially relevant to the present paper. What feels like irreversible temporal flow may arise not because reality itself is moving forward, but because access to realized states is cumulative and non-symmetric. In this sense, irreversibility is a property of ordered realization or record exposure, not necessarily of time as an ontological entity.

3.4 Mapping the Analogy to CUWF

Within the CUWF framework, the analogy maps directly onto the structure of realization. Collapse corresponds to the selection of a frame, that is, a definite realization from a structured space of possibilities. History Records correspond to exposed frames: realized states that remain structurally

encoded but are no longer identical with the present point of experiential access. Time corresponds not to a substance that flows, but to an ordering index labeling the sequence of realized collapses.

Under this mapping, time does not generate events. Collapse generates records, and temporal order is introduced through the accumulation of realized states. The arrow of time therefore reflects the directionality of realization and record creation rather than the motion of time itself.

The analogy will continue to serve as a conceptual reference throughout the remainder of the paper. Whenever temporal flow appears irresistibly obvious, the reader should recall the film reel: structure may be static, realization may be directional, and flow may arise from access rather than from ontology.