

Phantom time theory



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Ryan Archer Eddy Period 1 6 May 2010 Do We Live In the 18th Century?

There are a few German scholars who believe that a 300 year time period was just written in the history books, without actually existing. The gap in history has been coined the Phantom Time Theory or Phantom Time Hypothesis. Although it is not a very widely accepted theory, there is a fair amount of evidence to back it up. Time itself has very many definitions, the historical records of the time don't coincide, and astronomy and dendrochronology can't definitively prove the theory wrong. What exactly is time?

One of time's many definitions is " the system of those sequential relations that any event has to any other, as past, present, or future; indefinite and continuous duration regarded as that in which events succeed one another," (Time 784) Basically, this means the order of events occurred in relation to each other. Since there are numerous other definitions time is very subjective and who is to say that time even really exists. Different countries have different calendars and started counting years at other various times. For example, the Islam calendar started in the year we know as 622 AD.

Niemitz asks " How was it possible to insert this phantom time into history? "(8), which has no easy answers. One might respond in a way as to say that we made a mistake when changing from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. If that were to be the case, then how would it have been a 300 year oversight? Maybe, the switch in calendars may just be a small part of the problem; could it have been the start of the falsified history? If so, then where else could the gap have come from? Most of the historical documents of the time seem to have either been falsified or just don't exist.

For example, Heribert Illig believes "...Charlemagne was a fictional character," (Bellows 1). If Charlemagne was a made-up figure in history, than what else has been made up about that era? Maybe all of it has been fictionalized by some mass conspirators, or maybe certain documents of the time have just been translated incorrectly and certain historical feats did not actually happen. Also, there are large gaps in historical documents like "... the doctrine of faith, especially the gap in the evolution of theory and meaning of purgatory....," (Bellows 3).

With gaps in historical documents like this, it leaves a doubt in the mind of anybody that ponders the existence of this time period. If there are gaps in historical documents like this, then maybe there are gaps in the history itself, as well. John states in his narrative that " Often, historiography just consisted of archiving anything at all..." (John 5). So, maybe most of the history as we think we know is nothing but false assumptions. But, this whole theory is built on the word maybe. Other scholars might give Illig more respect for his findings if he could come up with more specific answers that tell both sides of the story.

Astronomy is neutral, for the most part, when it comes to the Phantom Time Theory. For example, Beaufort writes " Ultimate evidence against Illig's hypothesis, based solely on historical solar eclipses can possibly not be found," (Beaufort 25). So, if solar eclipses can't prove the theory wrong, then what can? Methods like Dendrochronology, carbon dating, might hold the answer. Unfortunately, " Despite of calibration a high degree...antique period typically up to +/-150 years," (Beaufort 26). This leaves us once again with no definitive answer on the validity of the hypothesis.

At the moment, there is no scientific way to prove the theory valid or invalid, but maybe, some day in the near or possibly distant future, there will be a way to accurately pinpoint the dates when certain historical events happened to put this talk of the theory being a "conspiracy" to bed. 300 years of our history may just have been thought up in someone's head and written in the history books, or maybe it is true. There are a few things for certain though: time is very subjective and we could be living in any time period imaginable, depending on when you start counting years.

Some historical documentation of the era has been proven to be forged, so we can never distinguish what has actually happened in history and what some writer of a history book just made it up. Lastly, astronomy and dendrochronology don't give a definitive answer to the questions of when exactly these historical events happened. So, maybe this theory is just some wild thought a few German scholars had, but maybe, in the coming years more and more evidence to prove the theory valid may come out and these crazy scholars would look like geniuses. Works Cited Bellows, Alan. "The Phantom Time Hypothesis." Damn Interesting. 04 Oct. 2006. 7 May 2010. ; <http://www.damninteresting.com/the-phantom-time-hypothesis>; Beaufort, Jan. "Illig's Hypothesis on Phantom Time-FAQ." 06 May 2010. ; http://www.korthweb.de/PhZT/FAQ_E.html#1; Kneis, Phil J. "Philjohn.com - Essays: Illig the Magician." Philjohn.com - Internet Diary, Poetry, Serial Photography. 20 Dec. 2002. 08 May 2010. ; http://www.philjohn.com/papers/pjkd_h04.html; Niemitz, Hans-Ulrich. "Did the Early Middle Ages Really Exist?" 03 Apr. 2000. 07 May 2010. ; <http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/~mgk25/volatile/Niemitz-1997.pdf>; "Time." Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 11th ed. 2003.