



First line

<http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Reln270/SYL270.HTM>

Chapter 1

The tao that can be told
is not the eternal Tao
The name that can be named
is not the eternal Name.

The unnamable is the
eternally real.
Naming is the origin
of all particular things.

Free from desire, you realize
the mystery.
Caught in desire, you see
only the manifestations.

Yet mystery and
manifestations
arise from the same source.
This source is called
darkness.

Darkness within darkness.
The gateway to all
understanding.

Chapter 21

The Master keeps her mind
always at one with the Tao;
that is what gives her
radiance.

The Tao is ungraspable.
How can her mind be at one
with it?
Because she doesn't cling to
ideas.

The Tao is dark and
unfathomable.
How can it make her radiant?
Because she lets it.

Since before time and space
were,
the Tao is.
It is beyond *is* and *is not*.
How do I know this is true?
I look inside myself and see.

Chapter 29

Do you want to improve the
world?
I don't think it can be done.

The world is sacred.
It can't be improved.
If you tamper with it, you'll
ruin it.
If you treat it like an object,
you'll lose it.

There is a time for being
ahead,
a time for being behind;
a time for being in motion,
a time for being at rest;
a time for being vigorous,
a time for being exhausted;
a time for being safe,
a time for being in danger.

The Master sees things as
they are,
without trying to control
them.
She lets them go their own
way,
and resides at the center of
the circle.

Julia Annas (2001),
—*Voices of Ancient Philosophy: An Introductory Reader*—
New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press

COMMENTS

Epicurus is the only major ancient philosopher to reject teleology and hence to claim that our philosophical and scientific accounts of the world we live in should make no appeal to goals or ends in nature. The Epicurean theory of the universe is very economical: all there ultimately is are atoms and void, and our world is the product of random, non-goal-directed collisions of atoms in the void. Moreover, we have no reason to think that our world is the only one that there is; atomic collisions are likely to have produced other worlds, too—in fact, infinitely many. This is a worldview that is designed to stress to would-be Epicureans that the world was not created for their benefit and hence to get them to realize that they should take responsibility for their own lives and happiness.

How good are the arguments, however? Lucretius stresses that we do not have good reason to think that the world was created by the gods for our benefit. Aristotle's teleology, however, does not include such a view. Lucretius also gives us arguments against the idea that animal parts or behavior were designed to fulfill a function. Again, though, this is not what Aristotle is arguing. Are the Epicurean arguments here effective against Aristotle's arguments, in *Physics* II, 8–9, for teleology in nature?

D. Time

Ancient philosophy contains many fascinating discussions of metaphysical questions about problems, such as time, place, the infinite, motion, and the question of what the basic entities in our universe are. This selection gives you an idea of the richness and variety to be found.

Physics IV, 10–11, 14

ARISTOTLE

10. Next for discussion after the subjects mentioned is time. The best plan
30 will be to begin by working out the difficulties connected with it, making use of
the current arguments. First, does it belong to the class of things that exist or to
that of things that do not exist? Then secondly, what is its nature? To start, then:
218^a the following considerations would make one suspect that it either does not
exist at all or barely, and in the obscure way. One part of it has been and is not,
while the other is going to be and is not yet. Yet time—both infinite time and any
time you like to take—is made up of these. One would naturally suppose that
what is made up of things which do not exist could have no share in reality.

From Barnes, Jonathan (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Copyright © 1984 by
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moves little in a long time; but time is not defined by time, by being either a certain amount or a certain kind of it.

Clearly then it is not movement. (We need not distinguish at present
20 between movement and change.)

11. But neither does time exist without change; for when the state of our minds does not change at all, or we have not noticed its changing, we do not think that time has elapsed, any more than those who are fabled to sleep among
25 the heroes in Sardinia do when they are awakened; for they connect the earlier "now" with the later and make them one, cutting out the interval because of their failure to notice it. So, just as, if the "now" were not different but one and the same, there would not have been time, so too when its difference escapes our notice the interval does not seem to be time. If, then, the non-realization of the
30 existence of time happens to us when we do not distinguish any change, but the mind seems to stay in one indivisible state, and when we perceive and distinguish we say time has elapsed, evidently time is not independent of movement
219-1 and change. It is evident, then, that time is neither movement nor independent of movement.

We must take this as our starting-point and try to discover—since we wish to know what time is—what exactly it has to do with movement.

Now we perceive movement and time together; for even when it is dark and
5 we are not being affected through the body, if any movement takes place in the mind we at once suppose that some time has indeed elapsed; and not only that but also, when some time is thought to have passed, some movement also along with it seems to have taken place. Hence time is either movement or something that belongs to movement. Since then it is not movement, it must be the other.

10 But what is moved is moved from something to something, and all magnitude is continuous. Therefore the movement goes with the magnitude. Because the magnitude is continuous, the movement too is continuous, and if the movement, then the time; for the time that has passed is always thought to be as great as the movement.

15 The distinction of before and after holds primarily, then, in place; and there in virtue of relative position. Since then before and after hold in magnitude, they must hold also in movement, these corresponding to those. But also in time the distinction of before and after must hold; for time and movement always correspond with each other. The before and after in motion identical in substratum
20 with motion yet differs from it in being, and is not identical with motion.

But we apprehend time only when we have marked motion, marking it by before and after; and it is only when we have perceived before and after in
25 motion that we say that time has elapsed. Now we mark them by judging that one thing is different from another, and that some third thing is intermediate to them. When we think of the extremes as different from the middle and the mind pronounces that the "nows" are two, one before and one after, it is then that we say that there is time, and this that we say is time. For what is bounded by the "now" is thought to be time—we may assume this.

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When, therefore, we perceive the "now" as one, and neither as before and 30
after in a motion nor as the same element but in relation to a "before" and an
"after," no time is thought to have elapsed, because there has been no motion
either. On the other hand, when we do perceive a "before" and an "after," then
we say that there is time. For time is just this—number of motion in respect of 219^{b1}
"before" and "after."

Hence time is not movement, but only movement in so far as it admits of
enumeration. An indication of this: we discriminate the more or the less by
number, but more or less movement by time. Time then is a kind of number. 5
(Number, we must note, is used in two ways—both of what is counted or count-
able and also of that with which we count. Time, then, is what is counted, not
that with which we count: these are different kinds of thing.)

Just as motion is a perpetual succession, so also is time. But every simulta- 10
neous time is the same; for the "now" is the same in substratum—though its
being is different—and the "now" determines time, in so far as time involves the
before and after.

The "now" in one sense is the same, in another it is not the same. In so far
as it is in succession, it is different (which is just what its being now was sup-
posed to mean), but its substratum is the same; for motion, as was said, goes 15
with magnitude, and time, as we maintain, with motion. Similarly, then, there
corresponds to the point the body which is carried along, and by which we are
aware of the motion and of the before and after involved in it. This is an identi-
cal *substratum* (whether a point or a stone or something else of the kind), but it
is different in definition—as the sophists assume that Coriscus' being in the
Lyceum is a different thing from Coriscus' being in the market-place. And the 20
body which is carried along is different, in so far as it is at one time here and at
another there. But the "now" corresponds to the body that is carried along, as
time corresponds to the mention. For it is by means of the body that is carried
along that we become aware of the before and after in the motion, and if we 25
regard these as countable we get the "now." Hence in these also the "now" as
substratum remains the same (for it is what is before and after in movement),
but its being is different; for it is in so far as the before and after is that we get
the "now." This is what is most knowable; for motion is known because of that
which is moved, locomotion because of that which is carried. For what is carried 30
is a "this," the movement is not. Thus the "now" in one sense is always the
same, in another it is not the same; for this is true also of what is carried.

Clearly, too, if there were no time, there would be no "now," and vice versa. 220^{a1}
Just as the moving body and its locomotion involve each other mutually, so too
do the number of the moving body and the number of its locomotion. For the
number of the locomotion is time, while the "now" corresponds to the moving
body, and is like the unit of number.

Time, then, also is both made continuous by the "now" and divided at it. For 5
here too there is a correspondence with the locomotion and the moving body.
For the motion or locomotion is made one by the thing which is moved, because
it is one—not because it is one in substratum (for there might be pauses in the

movement of such a thing)—but because it is one in definition; for this determines the movement as “before” and “after.” Here, too, there is a correspondence with the point; for the point also both connects and terminates the length—it is the beginning of one and the end of another. But when you take it in this way, using the one point as two, a pause is necessary, if the same point is to be the beginning and the end. The “now” on the other hand, since the body carried is moving, is always different.

15 Hence time is not number in the sense in which there is number of the same point because it is beginning and end, but rather as the extremities of a line form a number, and not as the parts of the line do so, both for the reason given (for we can use the middle point as two, so that on that analogy time might stand still), and further because obviously the “now” is no *part* of time nor the section
20 any part of the movement, any more than the points are parts of the line—for it is two *lines* that are *parts* of one line.

⌘ { In so far then as the “now” is a boundary, it is not time, but an attribute of it; in so far as it numbers, it is number; for boundaries being only to that which they bound, but number (e.g. ten) is the number of these horses, and belongs also elsewhere.

25 It is clear, then, that time is number of movement in respect of the before and after, and is continuous since it is an attribute of what is continuous.

14. It is also worth considering how time can be related to the soul; and why time is thought to be in everything, both in earth and in sea and in heaven. It is because it is an attribute, or state, of movement (since it is the number of movement) and all these things are movable (for they are all in place), and time and movement are together, both in respect of potentiality and in respect of actuality?

Whether if soul did not exist time would exist or not, is a question that may fairly be asked; for if there cannot be some one to count there cannot be anything that can be counted either, so that evidently there cannot be number; for number is either what has been, or what can be, counted. But if nothing but soul, or in soul reason, is qualified to count, it is impossible for there to be time unless there is soul, but only that of which time is an attribute, i.e. if *movement* can exist without soul. The before and after are attributes of movement, and time is these qua countable.

COMMENTS

Aristotle begins his discussion of time, as he often does in introducing philosophical problems, by bringing together difficulties that arise from our ordinary view of time and use of temporal expressions. His own solution is supposed to solve these problems and to be helpful in showing why they arise.

For Aristotle, difficulties about the nature of time involve the question of whether time exists, or is real, and this question is connected with problems about the past and future, as opposed to the present. Intuitively, the present seems to be real in a

way that the past and future are not of time, so we are not concerned with them.

Aristotle's solution is that “now,” which is a part of time. Rather, “now” is rather than a part of time. In fact, the number of parts of time about the “now” is continuous, and change is continuous.

Aristotle does not say that time is continuous. He also considers that human beings are not at rest, since we have a sense of time. Later Augustine discusses the nature of time and its measurement.

The Stoics

1. Chrysippus of Soli, a Stoic philosopher, said that time is continuous and that it is in accordance with nature. He said to be present, future, and past. He said that actuality obtains that actuality, walking around, (Stobaeus, *Eclogae*).

2. It is contrary to nature and past time exists. Other day subsists. The Stoics, who do not think of time as partless, but as something that is partly past, partly present, and partly future. It is distributed into three parts.

Hence one of the Stoic arguments is that “time will be” the same as “time is” which part was present, what obtains partly earlier and a part no longer now but yet now. If they do not think of time as partly yesterday

way that the past and future are not. But the past, present, and future are all "parts" of time, so we are faced with the problem that if time exists, its parts do not.

Aristotle's own solution, though difficult in detail, stresses two main points. One is that "now," which we use to pick out the present, does not mark out a period of time. Rather, "now" divides past from future at an instant, which is a boundary, rather than a period. The other point is that time is dependent on change; it is, in fact, the number or measure of change. Hence (this connects with Aristotle's views about the "now") time is continuous, since it is dependent on change, which is continuous, and change is, in turn, dependent on magnitude, which is continuous.

Aristotle does not doubt that time is a feature of the natural world that we study. He also considers the issue that time seems to be dependent on the existence of human beings to count or measure times. For Aristotle, this is not deeply problematic, since we humans are part of the natural world and subject to study like the rest of it. Later Augustine will draw a radically different kind of conclusion from the relation of time and the human mind.

The Stoics on Time

1. Chrysippus most clearly says this—that no time is wholly present. Since continuous things are infinitely divisible, every time is also infinitely divisible in accordance with this division, so that no time is present exactly, but is broadly said to be present. Only the present, he says, obtains, while the past and the future subsist, but in no way obtain, just as only those predicates are said to obtain that actually belong—e.g., walking around obtains in my case when I am walking around, but does not obtain when I am lying down or sitting down. (Stobaeus, *Eclogae* I, 106, 13–22)

2. It is contrary to our common [intuitive] conception to hold that future and past time exist while no present time exists, to hold that *just now* and *the other day* subsist while *now* is in no way at all. But this is what happens to the Stoics, who do not allow that there is a minimal time and don't want *now* to be partless, but assert that whatever you think you have grasped as present in your thought is partly future and partly past, so that nothing is left corresponding to *now* and no part of the present time is left, if whatever time is said to be present is distributed into parts that are future and parts that are past.

Hence one of two things follows for them. Either in positing "time was" and "time will be" they destroy "time is." Or if they keep "there is present time," of which part was present and part will be present, they also have to say that of what obtains part is future and part is past and that there is a part of *now* that is earlier and a part that is later—and hence that what is not yet *now* and what is no longer *now* both *are now*, since the past is no longer *now* and the future is not yet *now*. If they divide things this way, it follows that they have to say that today is partly yesterday and partly tomorrow, this year is partly last year and partly

next year, and simultaneously is partly earlier and partly later. They muddle things and can produce nothing more reasonable, once they identify *not yet* and *already* and *no longer* and *now* and *not now*. All other people assume that *recently* and *soon* are parts [of time] distinct from *now*—the former before *now*, the latter after it. That's what they think. That's how they usually proceed.

But among the Stoics, Archedemus says that *now* is a kind of joining and connection of the past and of what is coming. He fails to notice that he has destroyed all of time. For if *now* is not time but a limit of time and if every part of time is like *now*, then it appears that there is no part that the whole of time has; it is completely dissolved into limits and connections and joinings.

But Chrysippus, wanting to make a good job of the division [of time into parts] says in *On the Void* and some other books that the part of time that is past and the part that is future do not obtain, but subsist, while only the present obtains. However, in *On Parts*, books 3, 4, and 5, he posits that of present time part is future and part past. So it turns out that he divides the part of time that obtains into parts of what obtains that don't obtain! Or, rather, he leaves nothing at all obtaining of time if the present has no part that is not future or past. (Plutarch, *On Common Conceptions* 1081c–1082a)

COMMENTS

We learn of the Stoic view of time partly through a later account and partly through hostile criticism of it. Plutarch, who was a Platonist, finds the Stoics dislikable and fundamentally misguided. This passage is from a work in which he tries to show that Stoic theories are grossly counterintuitive, although they claim support from our intuitions. Rather than just read the Stoic view from these passages, the reader has to do some work and come to a conclusion as to whether Plutarch is right or whether the Stoics can say all the things he ascribes to them without conflicting with our ordinary views about time.

Chrysippus, an influential early Stoic, held two views about time. One is that only the present exists (or "obtains") while past and future do not exist (though for the Stoics they can still "subsist" as conditions for the existence of things that do exist). The other is that the present is what has been called "retrenchable." If we say that something is happening now, the extent of time that we indicate by "now" may vary a great deal, depending on what exactly it is that we focus on. By "now," we may indicate today—or a smaller part of today, such as the present minute, or a larger span than today—this month, this year, even this century. Plutarch complains that Chrysippus, in holding both these positions, is trapped into holding that there is no such time as the present, a conclusion that is grossly counterintuitive. Another Stoic, Archedemus, seems to have concluded that Aristotle was right and that "now" picks out a boundary of time, not a period. But is Chrysippus' position in fact viable? Plutarch says nothing of the point we find in the first passage, that no time is present exactly, but is said to be present "broadly." What difference is made by paying attention to this distinction?

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From Augustine,
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Aurelius Augustinus (A.D. 354–430), from Thagaste in North Africa, is the first major ancient philosopher to write in Latin without knowledge of Greek, and his work forms in many ways a transition from ancient to early medieval ways of thinking. Trained in oratory, Augustine restlessly went through a series of intellectual conversions to philosophy and forms of religion, until in 386 he was finally converted to orthodox catholic Christianity, the subject of his well-known *Confessions*. Augustine spent many years as bishop of Hippo in northern Africa and produced a vast range of works, ranging from philosophy to pastoral concerns. The *Confessions* is an unusually personal work for the time, giving us insights into his individual personality, but it is also a work of religious philosophy. In the section on time, we can see that Augustine finds intense and inward meaning in a philosophical problem in a way that makes it quite unlike Aristotle's more detached treatment of the issue.

Confessions IX, SELECTIONS

AUGUSTINE

xiv (17) There was therefore no time when you had not made something, because you made time itself. No times are coeternal with you since you are permanent. If they were permanent, they would not be times.

What is time? Who can explain this easily and briefly? Who can comprehend this even in thought so as to articulate the answer in words? Yet what do we speak of, in our familiar everyday conversation, more than of time? We surely know what we mean when we speak of it. We also know what is meant when we hear someone else talking about it. What then is time? Provided that no one asks me, I know. If I want to explain it to an inquirer, I do not know. But I confidently affirm myself to know that if nothing passes away, there is no past time, and if nothing arrives, there is no future time, and if nothing existed there would be no present time. Take the two tenses, past and future. How can they "be" when the past is not now present and the future is not yet present? Yet if the present were always present, it would not pass into the past: it would not be time but eternity. If then, in order to be time at all, the present is so made that it passes into the past, how can we say that this present also "is"? The cause of its being is that it will cease to be. So indeed we cannot truly say that time exists except in the sense that it tends towards non-existence.

From Augustine, *Confessions*, translated by H. Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Reprinted with the permission of Oxford University Press.

xv (18) Nevertheless we speak of "a long time" and "a short time," and it is only of the past or the future that we say this. Of the past we speak of "a long time," when, for example, it is more than a hundred years ago. "A long time" in the future may mean a hundred years ahead. By "a short time ago" we would mean, say, ten days back, and "a short time ahead" might mean "in ten days' time." But how can something be long or short which does not exist? For the past now has no existence and the future is not yet. So we ought not to say of the past "It is long," but "it was long," and of the future "it will be long." My Lord, my light, does not your truth mock humanity at this point? This time past which was long, was it long when it was past or when it was still present? It could be long only when it existed to be long. Once past, it no longer was. Therefore it could not be long if it had entirely ceased to exist.

Therefore let us not say "The time past was long." For we cannot discover anything to be long when, after it has become past, it has ceased to be. But let us say "That time once present was long" because it was long at the time when it was present. For it had not yet passed away into non-existence. It existed so as to be able to be long. But after it had passed away, it simultaneously ceased to be long because it ceased to be.

(19) Human soul, let us see whether present time can be long. To you the power is granted to be aware of intervals of time, and to measure them. What answer will you give me? Are a hundred years in the present a long time? Consider first whether a hundred years can be present. For if the first year of the series is current, it is present, but ninety-nine are future, and so do not yet exist. If the second year is current, one is already past, the second is present, the remainder lie in the future. And so between the extremes, whatever year of this century we assume to be present, there will be some years before it which lie in the past, some in the future to come after it. It follows that a century could never be present.

Consider then whether if a single year is current, that can be present. If in this year the first month is current, the others lie in the future; if the second, then the first lies in the past and the rest do not yet exist. Therefore even a current year is not entirely present; and if it is not entirely present, it is not a year which is present. A year is twelve months, of which any month which is current is present; the others are either past or future. Moreover, not even a month which is current is present, but one day. If the first day, the others are future; if the last day, the others are past; any intermediary day falls between past and future.

(20) See—present time, which alone we find capable of being called long, is contracted to the space of hardly a single day. But let us examine that also; for not even one day is entirely present. All the hours of night and day add up to twenty-four. The first of them has the others in the future, the last has them in the past. Any hour between these has past hours before it, future hours after it. One hour is itself constituted of fugitive moments. Whatever part of it has flown away is past. What remains to it is future. If we can think of some bit of time which cannot be divided into even the smallest instantaneous moments, that alone is what we can call "present." And this time flies so quickly from future

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into past that it is an interval with no duration. If it has duration, it is divisible into past and future. But the present occupies no space.

Where then is the time which we call long? Is it future? We do not really mean "It is long," since it does not yet exist to be long, but we mean it will be long. When will it be long? If it will then still lie in the future, it will not be long, since it will not yet exist to be long. But if it will be long at the time when, out of the future which does not yet exist, it begins to have being and will become present fact, so that it has the potentiality to be long, the present cries out in words already used that it cannot be long.

xvi (21) Nevertheless, Lord, we are conscious of intervals of time, and compare them with each other, and call some longer, others shorter. We also measure how much longer or shorter one period is than another, and answer that the one is twice or three times as much as the other, or that the two periods are equal. Moreover, we are measuring times which are past when our perception is the basis of measurement. But who can measure the past which does not now exist or the future which does not yet exist, unless perhaps someone dares to assert that he can measure what has no existence? At the moment when time is passing, it can be perceived and measured. But when it has passed and is not present, it cannot be.

xviii (23) Allow me, Lord, to take my investigation further. My hope, let not my attention be distracted. If future and past events exist, I want to know where they are. If I have not the strength to discover the answer, at least I know that wherever they are, they are not there as future or past, but as present. For if there also they are future, they will not yet be there. If there also they are past, they are no longer there. Therefore, wherever they are, whatever they are, they do not exist except in the present. When a true narrative of the past is related, the memory produces not the actual events which have passed away but words conceived from images of them, which they fixed in the mind like imprints as they passed through the senses. Thus my boyhood, which is no longer, lies in past time which is no longer. But when I am recollecting and telling my story, I am looking on its image in present time, since it is still in my memory. Whether a similar cause is operative in predictions of the future, in the sense that images of realities which do not yet exist are presented as already in existence, I confess, my God, I do not know. At least I know this much: we frequently think out in advance our future actions, and that premeditation is in the present; but the action which we premeditate is not yet in being because it lies in the future. But when we have embarked on the action and what we were premeditating begins to be put into effect, then that action will have existence, since then it will be not future but present.

(24) Whatever may be the way in which the hidden presentiment of the future is known, nothing can be seen if it does not exist. Now that which already exists is not future but present. When therefore people speak of knowing the future, what is seen is not events which do not yet exist (that is, they really are future), but perhaps their causes or signs which already exist. In this way, to those

who see them they are not future but present, and that is the basis on which the future can be conceived in the mind and made the subject of prediction.

Again, these concepts already exist, and those who predict the future see these concepts as if already present to their minds.

Among a great mass of examples, let me mention one instance. I look at the dawn. I forecast that the sun will rise. What I am looking at is present, what I am forecasting is future. It is not the sun which lies in the future (it already exists) but its rise, which has not yet arrived. Yet unless I were mentally imagining its rise, as now when I am speaking about it, I could not predict it. But the dawn glow which I see in the sky is not sunrise, which it precedes, nor is the imagining of sunrise in my mind the actuality. These are both discerned as present so that the coming sunrise may be foretold.

So future events do not yet exist, and if they are not yet present, they do not exist; and if they have no being, they cannot be seen at all. But they can be predicted from present events which are already present and can be seen.

xx (26) What is by now evident and clear is that neither future nor past exists, and it is inexact language to speak of three times—past, present, and future. Perhaps it would be exact to say: there are three times, a present of things past, a present of things present, a present of things to come. In the soul there are these three aspects of time, and I do not see them anywhere else. The present considering the past is the memory, the present considering the present is immediate awareness, the present considering the future is expectation. If we are allowed to use such language, I see three times, and I admit they are three. Moreover, we may say, There are three times, past, present, and future. This customary way of speaking is incorrect, but it is common usage. Let us accept the usage. I do not object and offer no opposition or criticism, as long as what is said is being understood, namely that neither the future nor the past is now present. There are few usages of everyday speech which are exact, and most of our language is inexact. Yet what we mean is communicated.

xxi (27) A little earlier I observed that we measure past periods of time so that we can say that one period is twice as long as another or equal to it, and likewise of other periods of time which we are capable of measuring and reporting. Therefore, as I was saying, we measure periods of time as they are passing, and if anyone says to me "How do you know?" I reply: I know it because we do measure time and cannot measure what has no being; and past and future have none. But how do we measure present time when it has no extension? It is measured when it passes, but not when it has passed, because then there will be nothing there to measure.

When time is measured, where does it come from, by what route does it pass, and where does it go? It must come out of the future, pass by the present, and go into the past; so it comes from what as yet does not exist, passes through that which lacks extension, and goes into that which is now non-existent. Yet what do we measure but time over some extension? When we speak of lengths of time as single, duple, triple, and equal, or any other temporal relation of this

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kind, we must be speaking of periods of time possessing extension. In what extension then do we measure time as it is passing? Is it in the future out of which it comes to pass by? No, for we do not measure what does not yet exist. Is it in the present through which it passes? No, for we cannot measure that which has no extension. Is it in the past into which it is moving? No, for we cannot measure what now does not exist.

xxvi (33) My confession to you is surely truthful when my soul declares that times are measured by me. So my God, I measure, and do not know what I am measuring. I measure the motion of a body by time. Then am I not measuring time itself? I could not measure the movement of a body, its period of transit and how long it takes to go from A to B, unless I were measuring the time in which this movement occurs. How then do I measure time itself? Or do we use a shorter time to measure a longer time, as when, for example, we measure a transom by using a cubit length? So we can be seen to use the length of a short syllable as a measure when we say that a long syllable is twice its length. By this method we measure poems by the number of lines, lines by the number of feet, feet by the number of syllables, and long vowels by short, not by the number of pages (for that would give us a measure of space, not of time). The criterion is the time words occupy in recitation, so that we say "That is a long poem, for it consists of so many lines. The lines are long, for they consist of so many feet. The feet are long for they extend over so many syllables. The syllable is long, for it is double the length of a short one."

Nevertheless, even so we have not reached a reliable measure of time. It may happen that a short line, if pronounced slowly, takes longer to read aloud than a longer line taken faster. The same principle applies to a poem or a foot or a syllable. That is why I have come to think that time is simply a distension. But of what is it a distension? I do not know, but it would be surprising if it is not that of the mind itself. What do I measure, I beg you, my God, when I say without precision "This period is longer than that," or with precision "This is twice as long as that"? That I am measuring time I know. But I am not measuring the future which does not yet exist, nor the present which has no extension, nor the past which is no longer in being. What then am I measuring? Time as it passes but not time past? That is what I affirmed earlier.

xxvii (34) Stand firm, my mind, concentrate with resolution. "God is our help, he has made us and not we ourselves" (Ps. 61: 9; 99: 3). Concentrate on the point where truth is beginning to dawn. For example, a physical voice begins to sound. It sounds. It continues to sound, and then ceases. Silence has now come, and the voice is past. There is now no sound. Before it sounded it lay in the future. It could not be measured because it did not exist; and now it cannot be measured because it has ceased to be. At the time when it was sounding, it was possible because at that time it existed to be measured. Yet even then it had no permanence. It came and went. Did this make it more possible to measure? In process of passing away it was extended through a certain space of time by which it could be measured, since the present occupies no length of time. There-

fore during that transient process it could be measured. But take, for example, another voice. It begins to sound and continues to do so unflaggingly without any interruption. Let us measure it while it is sounding; when it has ceased to sound, it will be past and will not exist to be measurable. Evidently we may at that stage measure it by saying how long it lasted. But if it is still sounding, it cannot be measured except from the starting moment when it began to sound to the finish when it ceased. What we measure is the actual interval from the beginning to the end. That is why a sound which has not yet ended cannot be measured: one cannot say how long or how short it is, nor that it is equal to some other length of time or that in relation to another it is single or double or any such proportion. But when it has come to an end, then it will already have ceased to be. By what method then can it be measured?

Nevertheless we do measure periods of time. And yet the times we measure are not those which do not yet exist, nor those which already have no existence, nor those which extend over no interval of time, nor those which reach no conclusions. So the times we measure are not future nor past nor present nor those in process of passing away. Yet we measure periods of time.

(35) "God, Creator of all things"—*Deus Creator omnium*—the line consists of eight syllables, in which short and long syllables alternate. So the four which are short (the first, third, fifth, and seventh) are single in relation to the four long syllables (the second, fourth, sixth and eighth). Each of the long syllables has twice the time of the short. As I recite the words, I also observe that this is so, for it is evident to sense-perception. To the degree that the sense-perception is unambiguous, I measure the long syllable by the short one, and perceive it to be twice the length. But when one syllable sounds after another, the short first, the long after it, how shall I keep my hold on the short, and how use it to apply a measure to the long, so as to verify that the long is twice as much? The long does not begin to sound unless the short has ceased to sound. I can hardly measure the long during the presence of its sound, as measuring becomes possible only after it has ended. When it is finished, it has gone into the past. What then is it which I measure? Where is the short syllable with which I am making my measurement? Where is the long which I am measuring? Both have sounded; they have flown away; they belong to the past. They now do not exist. And I offer my measurement and declare as confidently as a practised sense-perception will allow, that the short is single, the long double—I mean in the time they occupy. I can do this only because they are past and gone. Therefore it is not the syllables which I am measuring, but something in my memory which stays fixed there.

(36) So it is in you, my mind, that I measure periods of time. Do not distract me; that is, do not allow yourself to be distracted by the hubbub of the impressions being made upon you. In you, I affirm, I measure periods of time. The impression which passing events make upon you abides when they are gone. That present consciousness is what I am measuring, not the stream of past events which have caused it. When I measure periods of time, that is what I am

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What happens when we measure silences and say that a given period of silence lasted as long as a given sound? Do we direct our attention to measuring it as if a sound occurred, so that we are enabled to judge the intervals of the silences within the space of time concerned? For without any sound or utterance we mentally recite poems and lines and speeches, and we assess the lengths of their movements and the relative amounts of time they occupy, no differently from the way we would speak if we were actually making sounds. Suppose someone wished to utter a sound lasting a long time, and decided in advance how long that was going to be. He would have planned that space of time in silence. Entrusting that to his memory he would begin to utter the sound which continues until it has reached the intended end. It would be more accurate to say the utterance has sounded and will sound. For the part of it which is complete has sounded, but what remains will sound, and so the action is being accomplished as present attention transfers the future into the past. The future diminishes as the past grows, until the future has completely gone and everything is in the past.

xxviii (37) But how does this future, which does not yet exist, diminish or become consumed? Or how does the past, which now has no being, grow, unless there are three processes in the mind which in this is the active agent? For the mind expects and attends and remembers, so that what it expects passes through what has its attention to what it remembers. Who therefore can deny that the future does not yet exist? Yet already in the mind there is an expectation of the future. Who can deny that the past does not now exist? Yet there is still in the mind a memory of the past. None can deny that present time lacks any extension because it passes in a flash. Yet attention is continuous, and it is through this that what will be present progresses towards being absent. So the future, which does not exist, is not a long period of time. A long future is a long expectation of the future. And the past, which has no existence, is not a long period of time. A long past is a long memory of the past.

COMMENTS

The tone of Augustine's *Confessions* is deliberately different from that of previous discussions of time; for Augustine, the discussion is part of an intensely personal account of his intellectual and spiritual life, and he is writing for God, rather than for participants in a philosophical debate. Nonetheless, he is concerned about working through problems about time and coming to a satisfactory conclusion.

Augustine takes up more seriously than Aristotle the connection between time and the human mind. He also presses the importance of the point that we found in the Stoics, that the present is retrenchable. Augustine draws the conclusion that time is radically subjective; the different parts of time are simply mental states that can

coexist in a human mind, although no coherent account can be given of how they can exist outside it.

Why does Augustine draw such a different conclusion from Aristotle from the dependence of time, as a measure of change, on human minds to do the measuring? Augustine and Aristotle differ not only in their accounts of time, but in their more general views of the place of humans in nature.

Does Augustine's account of time make sense of our ordinary views about time, as those of Aristotle and the Stoics are intended to do? If not, is this a problem for Augustine or for our ordinary views about time?

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