

Original Paper

Time as a Prerequisite of Being When Expressed through the Present Variant: An Analysis of Time's Relationship to Being

Theodore John Rivers^{1*}

¹ History Department, John Adams High School, NY, USA

* Theodore John Rivers, History Department, John Adams High School (retired), NY, USA

Received: January 1, 2026

Accepted: January 14, 2026

Online Published: January 25, 2026

doi:10.22158/jrph.v9n1p1

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/jrph.v9n1p1>

Abstract

Continuity describes time as a continuum that is indistinguishable from any other occurrence. Since being is confirmed through time, for time to be accurately expressed, its continuum can only be expressed as a temporality. Although time can be understood as an expression of the presence of being that confirms its existence, the notions of duration (Locke and Descartes), succession (Leibniz), and continuum (Brentano) cannot confirm its existence. Neither is time confirmed through presence (Heidegger) as a simple manifestation of being. There must be something else that affixes time to being and that is time's present variant as a confirmation of itself. This is to say that the presence of being is not a confirmation unless the latter is subject to a timely variant; otherwise, time would be merely added to complete being as if overcoming a deficiency.

Keywords

time, being, presence, present variant, prerequisite

1. Introduction

Can any being exist without time, or does time confirm the being of being? The answer to the first question we presume is no, and the answer to the second question we presume is yes. There is no being without time because all beings are temporal, that is, being is bound by time by way of realization. Time gives actuality to being because being is essentially impossible without it. The ancient Greeks laid the groundwork for this distinction but promoted different interpretations that varied from the conclusions of Democritus who advocated time's eternity and the conclusions of Plato who tied time to the motion of the celestial bodies, but who also said that time did not preexist them. It is to be expected that a topic as commonplace as time would be subject to many different interpretations. As the realization of being, time is expressive of a presence, that is, time is the confirmation of what is in

relationship to itself and to everything else. It is represented by its proximity to the being to which it is bound, by a closeness that attests to the fact that it is temporally present. Although one of the most fundamental topics of metaphysics and human reality, time is a topic that is predominantly evident but unmistakably perplexing.

It is one thing to inquire into the complexity of the relationship between being and time, but it is another thing to inquire into the deeper complexity of the relationship between time and being. It is time, not being, that manifests the state of the universe and the latter's foundation in everything. As a result, this paper is presented as an analysis of time that may be understood as a manifestation of the presence of being because presence can only be expressed and confirmed within the present variant of time. Although it is not an historical analysis of the philosophical thinking about time, it does acknowledge the contributions of many others. From Parmenides to Aristotle, from Augustine to Descartes, from Leibniz to Kant, from Brentano to Husserl, and certainly from Heidegger, it may not be advisable to refer to time without referring to these thinkers as well. Time is an essential topic that remains inspiring and captivating for anyone who wishes to pursue it. It lies at the foundation of being both with our own earthly existence and with the universe.

If we were to ignore the effects of change as a notable characteristic of time, we could support the idea that time is characterized, noted, and established by presence as an affirmation of the underlying reality to what is. And disregarding Aristotle's notion of time as affiliated with the numerable aspects of motion (Note 1), Kant's notion that time relates to intuition (Note 2), and Husserl's idea that time may be understood as an intuitive unity of duration, coexistence, and sequence (Note 3), we must also criticize Augustine's notion that time is an extension to being in so far that an extension is an attribute (Note 4). Although often described as the fourth dimension, time is not a dimension, coordinate, concept, or attribute. And yet, it is tied to being for being to be. It may be described as more than a causal relationship to being, but relativity as popularized by Einstein does not address the essence of time or its relationship to being because scientific explanations are supplemental to time's influence. Science attempts to explain what is but does not explain its underlying reality.

The predominant effect of time must be the affirmation of the state of being itself, whether being means the totality of everything wherever and whenever they appear (einai, Latinized as esse) or individual beings that are singular entities (ousia, Latinized as essentia) within the plenitude of being itself, that is, the former must be distinguished from existence because existence is traditionally assigned to objects, persons, things, or particulars, and the plenitude of being is assigned to the underlying state or nature that establishes existence. The first designation emphasizes being over existence, and the second emphasizes existence over being.

Notwithstanding, time continues to attract the attention of all of us in its expression of everydayness, in its significance to relativity and quantum mechanics, and in the conflicting views of thinkers from the pre-Socratics to the present day. And contrary to Parmenides who said that being must be both immovable and continuous, we can agree with him that past and future as time variants do not exist, but

we cannot agree with him that they are meaningless (Note 5). Although it is true that the only time that exists is present time because there is only a perpetual present that represents time, being may still be created and still be perishable otherwise change as a characteristic of being would be impossible. And change seems to be everywhere, that is, time is everywhere. Nevertheless, the idea of change as a characteristic of being exists in a continuous present for even the sun someday will manifest an extreme form of change by collapsing upon itself when all its fuel has been consumed.

The greatest difficulty concerning time is proof of its existence, that is, verification of its nature in reference to its presence. And despite the tremendous effort made by many thinkers on the nature of time, fundamental questions remain. Emphasis upon succession as noted by Locke in which a present moment is followed by an infinite number of other moments does not verify the presence of time because it puts too much emphasis upon movement or duration (Note 6) and not upon the simple reality of its recurrent effect, nor do the views of Leibniz clarify Locke's interpretation in which time as the succession of one moment followed by another without interruption does not attest to the essence of time (Note 7). The one major interpretation of Leibniz having far-reaching consequences is his view that time as a relational concept is the result of our perception of reality, but a perception that is based upon an abstraction that is commonplace but questionable (Note 8) for even McTaggart questioned the reality of time.

Every perspective of time is hindered by the idea that the past as a general description of time gone by and no longer current is characterized by every little detail, every happening, every irritating event as part of a vast and seemingly endless sequence of occurrences, of every ebb and flow of choices ever undertaken. But according to Brentano, time is not composed of separate instances that are representative of a construct but is a continuum of what is present (Note 9). Therefore, an analysis of the present as a variant of time, in fact as the only variant, must be real, actual, and present. What we have just said is all that is needed to be said indicating how time is tied to being. Such a thought strongly connects the existence of any individual being and the existence of being as a plenitude to time. Simply expressed, there would be little need for time, little need for a continuum of any sort without the manifestation and confirmation of the presence of being as a verification of what is. It is presence that verifies time not as duration as assumed by Descartes when connected to motion (Note 10), but as proof of being within the existence of anything. Presence defines reality. Thus, time is not a singularity, but a continuity, and that is where the expression of "now-time" (Jetzt-zeit) is relevant. Although it seems that time is made up of a sequence of "now-times," "now-times" are simply an interpretation of the continuity of time which gives the impression of being nearly endless and unlimited in any appreciable way. Thinking of the past as no longer present and the future as not yet present augments the importance of the present, an importance that assigns to the past the idea of movement posited within human consciousness that projects, extends, and promotes a reality beyond itself, implying that consciousness would not be self-aware at all unless there is the feeling of what is to come, that is, the

feeling of a future that implies additional projections. Consciousness is anticipatory of time because humanity as we know it could not exist without it.

Regardless of how we understand time, it appears to be constant to everything we know, and yet its more accurate meaning must be expressed through the present variant of time because a variant signifies one phase, one feature, or one segment while giving the impression and thereby the possibility that there are others. The present variant is the only true variant, although past and future variants are conceived by way of explaining time as continuous to being. Continuity helps to explain the world because it seems to present itself in that way. And yet without humanity, being would not need to be defined by any variant because time reckoning would not exist without us. Before the invention of the clock in any of its forms, from the sundial to the water clock to the mechanical clock with its escapement, there must have been an awareness of time even if the sole measurement was the observation of nature with the changing of the seasons and the rising and setting of the sun. Time reckoning is supplemental to time awareness, but it is not essential; it is a technological development. It is by means of time awareness that time's importance is enforced.

Furthermore, there is nothing ecstatic about time. Everything about time is within itself, that is, time is enstatic. To describe time as ecstatic means that it is either outside or beyond itself, but nothing could be further from the truth. Time is self-enclosed, never beyond, never outside anything because it would have no effect if this condition occurred. Time represents being because its absence represents nothing, and yet it is not part of it. The universe is a timely affair set in place when brought into being. Time is suitable, appropriate, and favorable for being to be.

2. Time and Presence

There should be no question that alternate meanings of "presence" either as immediate proximity, or the bearing of royalty, a sovereign, or a celebrity should not distract us from understanding its impact because presence whether being as a generality and being as a particularity are related because presence emphasizes that being is revealed. Moreover, it can be revealed only within the present variant of time when expressed within a current moment as if it encompasses all time, as if posited as a totality beyond time itself. What would be the function of time without its immersion within the present? What need would be served if time was not essential to affirm what requires affirmation? Time would remain merely an artificial appendage to being like the coccyx which is an appendage at the end of our spine that indicates a tail long lost.

Therefore, there is some confusion between the meaning of presence as an indication of time, particularly when described by Heidegger, and its relationship to presence in reference to a present moment as a variant of time, although Heidegger's interpretation is closer to my own than either that of Locke, Leibniz, or Kant. A presence is not confirmation of being unless that confirmation falls within the mode of a presence expressed as a timely variant; otherwise, time would describe what is supplemental or even unnecessary to being. The present as a variant of time affirms the existence of

anything, and when that variant is expressive, being is. In the Heideggerian sense to say that being is determined by time as presence (“Sein wird als Anwesenheit durch die Zeit bestimmt.”) as given in *Zur Sache des Denkens* (published in 1969) (Note 11) is a tautology and ignores time ultimately as the affirmation of being, although Heidegger does state that beings are affirmed in their being when they are understood with regard to a definite mode of time, that is the present (“Seiendes ist in seinem Sein als ‘Anwesenheit’ gefaßt, d.h. es ist mit Rücksicht auf einen bestimmten Zeit-modus, die ‘Gegenwart’, verstanden.”) as given in *Sein und Zeit* (published in 1927) (Note 12) which seems to conflict with his later *Zur Sache des Denkens* quoted above.

Although sometimes criticized by others, even when finding fault with the Greeks (Note 13), everything must have a presence if it is to be. Being is not confirmed by being there (*Dasein*) as described by Heidegger. Rather, it is confirmed by being temporally bound that then affirms its being there that makes its being there possible. Nevertheless, being temporally bound does not mean that it is limited in its ability, but that it is bound as a way in which it can exert its influence. The affirmation of being must be aligned with time when time itself is aligned within a temporal presence. Time affirms being when being is present since time is nonessential and irrelevant without being. Not by being confirmed by being there, it is time itself that is compelled to be so. Time is temporal for it to have any influence which is proof that time is real because it verifies the being of beings, confirming the einai of any ousia. As we said above, presence is not confirmation of being unless expressed within a timely variant, and this relationship indicates a substantial difference between presence and present, in fact, it indicates all the difference in the world, and the world reveals their differences. The world emphatically is a manifestation of their differences because it is expressive of being when being presents the world, when time bestows its innate capability that would not exist at all without the possibility of the state of being as something to attach itself to.

3. Time Is Bound

Time is a presence simply because presence is temporally fixed which indicates that being would not exist without a foundation bound by a concurrence that is affirmed entirely, thoroughly, and completely. The best affirmation for the proof of being is time because it indicates a recurrent inevitability of being anywhere. Time is tethered to the present as the only true variant, even when confirmed historically in relationship to the past or technologically in relationship to the future. This is to say that history and historical consciousness as one type of activity need the hypothetical past (praeteritum tempus) as an affirmation of what was in relationship to the present, and technology and technological development as another type of activity need the hypothetical future (futurum tempus) as an affirmation of what might be in relationship to the present. Both the past and the future humanly and cosmologically persist in relationship to the present, otherwise there would be a disconnect. The present needs more than fleeting moments, more than in any Lockean sense, because it is confirmed in relationship both to what went before as a past present and what may occur as a future present. Time is a dependency that

remains groundless without a relationship both to the past and the future which can occur only when the latter is tied to the former, a connection that is true for all beings since all relationships are presently bound, presently founded, presently applicable regardless of any long-term effects. It is commonly assumed that the elimination of the past and the denial of the future erases the present, and because time is expressed through the present since the present is bound by time, both being and time function as a directive that ties them together making it impossible for one to exist without the other. The universe would be empty without time because there would be no being.

Consequently, time variants are bound. A variant is identified when tied to something, either to reality as present time, remembrance as past time, or anticipation as future time. In general, a present time variant is bound by a wide range of conditions: 1) of what is real, 2) of what can be assessed by clocks and watches that augment the mechanization of time and the perpetuation of time reckoning, and 3) of being itself that shows the effects of the boundaries of time. Although variable, time variants are meaningless unless they are limited in some way, unless they are subject to boundaries that define them not so much by what they are but by what they are not, by being defined through a periphery that sets the conditions into which all time variants are delineated, necessitated by the realization that the past excludes any liveliness and the future excludes any accomplishments. Since the only real time variant is the present, it is meaningful even for past actions unsuccessfully completed and future possibilities successfully eliminated. The fact that time has no divisions to designate what it is does not exclude that it has boundaries, and therefore it is not contradictory to say that the boundary of the present is its openness, the description of the bottomless depth where, at least for humans, freedom resides. Without going into more detail about the nature of a boundary except as describing it as a limit of some sort, it may be said that openness defines everything human. It is the fountain from which humanity and human behavior come forth.

It should be well understood that anything included within a space-time continuum must have boundaries that define what a thing is, except for time itself that gives the impression of slipping from one variant to another but in fact it is limited and bound. The most important phenomenon, if it is one, is not being, but time. The boundaries of time are what make the past a non-present, and it is also applicable for the future. This continuum is temporally posited as if it moves that seems to constitute a flow like a moving river that never stops because of continual motion which gives the impression that time moves as an uninterrupted flow from the undisclosed future to the disclosed past. But realistically, there is no flow, no yesterday, no tomorrow, only today. And there is only today because time manifests the presence of being when presently expressed, that is, even if the past and the future are real, they would not be known unless they are drawn into the present. And when presently expressed, time may be perceived as a totality. Time stands as a totality only when being coexists with it, but of the two, time is more confirmative of being than being is of time. In a sense, it is this feeling of continuum that has been described so eloquently by poets and philosophers. Because time may be equated with many ideas that include movement, passage, progress, change, flux, action, progression, and revolution,

ironically it is not movement that defines time, but boundary. Technically, time is defined not by what is moving, but what is still. In this sense, time is a contradiction of what seemingly moves but is fixed and unchanging. Therefore, boundaries are not meaningful if they are not connected to a continuum because time constitutes a presence that is the effect of the present variant, a variant that reveals what is current even when perceived to be connected to the past and the future.

4. Time as a Prerequisite

Because being is present in the universe, its dependency upon time makes the latter a necessity. Although subject to boundaries, time is more than this because it enables being to become what is needs to be. We must conclude therefore that time is more than just a feature, measure, or concept of being. It is predominantly a prerequisite, that is, it is something that is required or necessary that allows being to be. This idea introduces additional opportunities for inquiry which for us concerns the importance of the present as the essential requirement for being. Why would being not exist without time, that is, what is it about time that makes it the essential component of being? Although a prerequisite, time cannot be explained as non-being because it can only be when being is. Otherwise, there would be no logical explanation for it, and yet we cannot say that the greatest explanation of non-being is time. We do not know if this explanation is provable, although there is a direct and relevant connection between being and time.

There is an appreciable difference in meaning when time is described either as an attribute or a prerequisite, and this difference helps to explain the ambiguity of the nature of time. An attribute is a quality ascribed or assigned to something, one that belongs to or is inherent as a characteristic, for even in logic, an attribute may be predicated or used to affirm a proposition. Above all, an attribute must be a consequent to its being because it concerns what follows it, but a prerequisite must be an antecedent to its being because it concerns what precedes it. A prerequisite is required beforehand. Because it is requisite to a condition, it is indispensable to its being as if time hovers somewhere waiting to give its support to being while remaining in an indeterminate state. Therefore, there are fundamental differences between the two.

Furthermore, it is one thing to say as does Heidegger that being is determined by time as presence. It is another thing to say that time's present variant supersedes any presence because presence must be posited within the present variant. If there is no presence, then there is no present variant which means that the absence of time obliterates presence. It is the present variant that for all practical purposes represents time itself which became the basis for Augustine's notion of time as being's extension, for the idea of duration as suggested by Descartes, for the understanding of time with succession as proposed by Locke and Leibniz, for the idea that time is a continuum as described by Brentano, and for the belief of time interpreted as a priori put forth by Kant. The present variant represents time as a now, exhibited as the current point in a series of events, rendered as an activity taking place immediately. But this is not to say that time preexists being for being to be, but that being is a dependency upon time as if

time is the spark for any being. This spark does not mean that time can exist without being. Rather, it means that being cannot exist without time. In fact, time cannot influence anything without the being of being as a way of affixing itself and thereby bringing itself “into being.” Nor is this idea to be aligned with Kant’s interpretation noted above which described time as an a priori, but an apriority that is phenomenologically, not ontologically metaphysical. Kant’s interpretation limits the understanding of time to anthropomorphism, and is terrestrially, not cosmologically based.

It is not a redundancy to say that time is characterized not by eternity, but by temporality, and temporality must be noted as the most important characteristic allowing anything to be. Time represents imperfection because being is not eternal and can never be. Therefore, the most basic description of time is that of a reckoning which confers the possibility of being for anything. And as a reckoning, time is both beyond and within the reach of being. It is an all-encompassing description of the universe and everything it contains. By reckoning is not meant an accounting, computation, calculation, or summing up, but a description of the essential and most fundamental quality that being needs to be. Contrary to Parmenides, being is temporal, limited, imperfect, and subject to change when it presents itself.

Is it a nonsensical question to ask if time has a purpose, or is it unaffected by any result that may be intended? Cosmologically, time attests to the notion of change as an essential feature of being. It validates being through a process of internalization when compared with space through a process of externalization. It enables the establishment of the idea of eternity, however limited. Collectively, it asserts many ideas about being that would be impossible without it. Humanly, it intensifies the intuitive sense of duration, even if deniable. It affirms awareness in general within one’s own life. It confers a pattern or structure to the world that otherwise would be unsubstantiated. It confirms historical consciousness as the means of affirming history. It proposes a generational matrix of a presumed destiny. It affirms the notion of human frailty by making perfection unattainable. It tolerates every excuse because too many options are possible. Within all these features cosmologically and humanly lie the manifestations of a phenomenon that seems to be open-ended and everlasting and yet is defined within itself when not transcending. Thus, being is not determined by time as presence, but determined and limited by the present variant that is restricted to itself because it cannot be anything else. The present is always identified by what it is, but this identification also implies what it is not. Therefore, the present is defined by a whole range of possibilities that in themselves seem to be beyond number. It is these possibilities that reveal the past as a creation of the present when speculating about opportunities undisclosed in the future.

Notes

Note 1. Aristotle, Physics, 219b1-5 in The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols., Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1984, vol. I, p. 372.

Note 2. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. & ed. Paul Guyer & Allen W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 162-65 (A31-36, B46-53).

- Note 3. Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, rev. & ed. Ludwig Landgrebe, trans. James S. Churchill & Karl Ameriks, Introduction by James S. Churchill, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973, p. 165.
- Note 4. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. William Watts, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols., Cambridge [MA]: Harvard University Press, 1960-1961, vol. II, pp. 236-45 (bk. XI, chap. 14-16).
- Note 5. Hermann Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th rev. ed. Walther Kranz, 3 vols., Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1951-1952, vol. I, p. 238 (B8 36-40). Also see Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A complete translation of the Fragments in Diels, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Cambridge [MA]: Harvard University Press, 1983, rpt. 1996, p. 43.
- Note 6. John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, collated and annotated with prolegomena, biographical, critical, and historical by Alexander Campbell Fraser, 2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894, rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1959, vol. I, pp. 238-56 (bk. II, chap. 14).
- Note 7. *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, ed. C.I. Gerhardt, 7 vols., Berlin: Weidmann, 1875-1890, rpt. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1960-1961, vol. II, p. 269 and vol. IV, p. 394. Also see G.W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, ed. & trans. Roger Ariew & Daniel Garber, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1989, pp. 179 and 251.
- Note 8. Richard T.W. Arthur, 'Leibniz's Theory of Time,' in Kathleen Okruhlik & James Robert Brown, eds., *The Natural Philosophy of Leibniz*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985, pp. 282-85.
- Note 9. Franz Brentano, *Philosophical Investigations of Space, Time and the Continuum*, trans. Barry Smith, London: Croom Helm, 1988, pp. 15-17 and 114-15.
- Note 10. René Descartes, *Principia philosophiae*, part I, sect. 21 and 57 in *Oeuvres de Descartes*, eds. Charles Adam & Paul Tannery, 13 vols., Paris: J. Vrin, 1965-1973, vol. VIII(1), pp. 13 and 27. Also see *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham et al., 3 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, vol. I, pp. 200 and 212.
- Note 11. Martin Heidegger, "Zeit und Sein," in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, Gesamtausgabe, 14, Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 2007, p. 6. Also see Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, New York: Harper & Row, 1972, p. 3.
- Note 12. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 7th ed., Gesamtausgabe, 2, Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 2007, p. 34. Also see Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 7th ed., trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, New York: Harper & Row, 1962, p. 47.
- Note 13. Frederick A. Olafson, "The unity of Heidegger's thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 102-03.