

## A Further Investigation into Time

Time is a construct of the mind, used by the mind to structure the flow of experience – perceptions, memories, thoughts, intentions etc. We imagine that time really exists, but if we look carefully at our experience, it becomes obvious that it doesn't:

We divide time logically into three segments: past, present and future. It is fairly straightforward to conclude that past and future do not really exist but as notions in our minds. After all, the past is but a memory, while the future is but an expectation. Only the present stands a chance of being really 'out there.' This much is pretty clear, isn't it? So only through the present can time be said to be real. But where precisely is the present?

We could say that the present is today, while the past is yesterday and the future is tomorrow. Yesterday is a memory and tomorrow is an expectation, so both exist only in mind. But today is really there, isn't it? Well, if you come to think of it, today is quite a long period of time. Within today there is last hour, this hour, and next hour. Last hour and next hour only exist in mind. Only this hour is really there. Or is it? After all, within this hour there is last minute, this minute and next minute. Well, you know where I am going with this.

You could say that the present is a very short moment squeezed in between a growing past and an approaching future. But even that would be too generous to the present: it isn't merely very short; *it is shorter than anything you could state it to be*, because any period of time, of any length whatsoever, would still contain past and future. The present is *infinitely* short, so it isn't really there. If you try to pin down the present moment by saying 'Now!', by the time your mouth begins to move to say it, it's already gone into the past and exists merely as a memory. The conclusion is inescapable: the present doesn't exist but as an *idea* in our minds.

So we find ourselves arriving at an interesting conclusion: the past is a *memory*; the present is an *idea*; the future is an *expectation*. They all exist merely in mind. None of them is real in the sense of really being 'out there.' And since there is nothing to time but past, present and future, clearly time doesn't exist 'out there,' but is merely a mental construct. *Mind invents time*.

[Bernardo Kastrop: [www.bernardokastrop.com/2014/04/time-time.html](http://www.bernardokastrop.com/2014/04/time-time.html)]

Here is a more detailed explanation from Rupert:

Every experience that has ever occurred always occurs Now. The past and the future are never actually experienced. Thoughts and images *about* the past and future are experienced, but they always appear Now.

In fact, time is never experienced. Only Now is experienced. Time is a concept, albeit a useful one, but it is not an experience. The *concept* of time is an experience but time itself is not.

Now is ever-present. Was there ever a time that was not Now? Now is not a moment. A 'present moment' is never experienced.

A 'present moment' implies an infinitesimally short duration of time. Duration implies a before and an after, a past and a future. The 'present moment' is normally considered to be one of innumerable such moments that arise in succession ad infinitum.

The concept of time has been created to 'house' these apparent moments, which are considered to arise *in* time. And time itself is considered to have existed 'forever', outside and independent of the Consciousness that apparently experiences it.

However, if we look at our experience and refuse to admit concepts that do not correspond directly with it, we see clearly that this model of time simply does not reflect its nature.

All experience is Now, and Now is ever-present.

However, language is so conditioned by abstract and erroneous views of time and experience that it is impossible to use it to convey the reality of our experience. For instance, the term 'ever-present' is used to describe the Now, but 'ever' already implies duration in time, and 'present' implies a past and a future.

'Eternity' is a word that is used to indicate this ever-present Now, and although it has become associated with an infinite amount of time, in its original meaning it is perhaps the closest word that is available to convey the immediacy and reality of Now.

Divested of its false association with an imagined time, the Now is experienced simply as it is, timeless Presence.

When an experience is present, it is the Now that has taken the shape of that experience. It *is* that experience.

When the object vanishes the Now simply remains what it always is, Presence, Consciousness.

The Now is the substance and container of all experience.

Time, divested of the illusion of duration, is Consciousness.

Consciousness creates the appearance of time by bestowing its own continuity on objects and then forgetting that it has done so.

However, just as Consciousness chooses to forget itself, it also chooses to remember itself. Consciousness stops pretending to be other than itself. It withdraws its projection from objects.

It gives itself back to itself. [*The Transparency of Things: Time Never Happens*]

One of the reasons we have difficulty understanding that time doesn't really exist is that we regard memory as being evidence of time. 'I know time exists because I remember what I did yesterday, I remember my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, I remember getting married' etc. But as Rupert explains, a memory is just a thought that arises Now. The mind uses time to place these thoughts in a logical context:

Memory seems to validate time, but if we look at it closely we see that it in fact validates the timeless changelessness of Consciousness.

Memory creates the appearance of time, in which objects are considered to exist independently from one another, and through which they are considered to evolve.

However, we have no experience of a past that stretches out indefinitely behind the 'present moment'. And we have no experience of a 'present moment' rolling forever forward into the future.

The idea that time is like a container that houses all the events of our lives is in fact a temporal representation of Consciousness in the mind.

Likewise, the idea that space is like a container that houses all the objects in the world is a spatial representation of Consciousness in the mind.

Events do not appear in time and objects do not appear in space. They both appear in Consciousness. [*The Transparency of Things: Time and Memory*]

It is our memories together with our desires that the mind uses to create an image of a separate self which it projects onto consciousness. For example: 'I am an engineer. I am 63 years old'. I have brown eyes. I am a kind person. I'm hopeless at mathematics. I like chocolate. I don't like curry.' All these are, in one way or another, based on memory. Jean Klein gives this advice to help us see and feel that this is so:

The personality is nothing other than a projection, a habit created by memory and nourished by desire. Ask yourself the question 'Who am I?' and lucidly observe that the questioner, thinker, doer, sufferer are all forms that appear and disappear within the consciousness of 'I am,' the ever-living background. They have no reality in themselves. What we call the person is due to a mistake. Thoughts, feelings and actions appear and disappear indefinitely, creating an illusion of continuity. The idea of being a person, an ego, is nothing other than an image held together by memory. [*I Am*, ch. 2]

Much of our thinking relates to the past or the future, thus reinforcing the habit of thinking and feeling ourselves to be a separate self. Once we fully understand that time has no real existence and take that understanding deeply into ourselves, the illusion of being a separate self vanishes. Here is Rupert's explanation:

Awareness knows itself alone, and all experience is its knowing and being itself.

When this becomes clear, it is understood that no experience need be resisted or sought. It is only the imaginary self in the image or movie that resists what is present and seeks what is not present.

In fact, the separate self is not an entity that resists or seeks; it is the very activity of resisting and seeking.

That activity projects an imaginary separate self into time – into a past or a future – in search of an object, state or relationship that it imagines will bring about the fulfilment or happiness for which it longs.

In fact, time is created by thought to accommodate the seeking/resisting activity that is the separate self.

Time is the separate self's playground. In fact, the only place the separate self cannot stand is Now. Conversely, the only place Awareness can stand is Now.

Awareness knows Now; thought knows time. In fact, thought doesn't know time; it imagines it.

The separate, thought-made self is at home in time; Awareness is at home in and as the Now. For this reason, they never meet.

If we know our Self as ever-present, infinite Awareness, there is no question of making a choice. However, if we think and feel that we are a separate, inside self then we will, by definition, believe and feel that we have a choice.

As such, we should make a choice: to stand as a separate, temporary, limited self or to stand as ever-present, infinite Awareness. These are the only two real choices that the apparently separate self has.

Our life will manifest in direct correspondence with, and as an expression of, whichever choice we make. [*The Light of Pure Knowing* ch 9: Awareness Only Knows Now]

We need to use the model of a 'line of time' occasionally for practical purposes – when catching a train, planning a holiday, keeping an appointment ... but there's no need to lose ourselves in a world of time and space and objects. We may be planning a future activity but that planning is happening Now. We can use the model of time without believing in its absolute reality, in much the same way as we might use a map to plan our route but we would never mistake the map for the reality (relatively speaking) of the landscape. And when the concept of time isn't needed for practical purposes, what could be nicer than simply resting attention in the Now, allowing experience to be as it is, and standing as the Now of pure Awareness?

## Contemplation

*We never truly desire an object for its own sake; we desire only to be relieved of the agitation of resistance and seeking that takes us away from the Now into time. Thus, all we ever truly desire is to be desireless.* [Rupert Spira]