

Time in Kant's philosophy: An Analysis

Khalilullah Farzam

Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, Bamyan university, Afghanistan

DOI: [10.55559/sjahss.v2i07.129](https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v2i07.129)

Received: 15.06.2023 | Accepted: 20.07.2023 | Published: 28.07.2023

Electronic reference (Cite this article):

Farzam, K. (2023). Time in Kant's philosophy: An Analysis. *Sprin Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(07), 26–33. <https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v2i07.119>

Copyright Notice:

© 2023 Author(s). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), allowing third parties to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format and to remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially, provided the original work is properly cited and states its license.

ABSTRACT

One of the most important ideas in Kant's philosophy is the idea of time. It might be argued that Kant is the true creator of the metaphysics of time given the significance and prominence of the idea in his system of thought. This essay's goal is to support such an assertion. Anyone who reads Kant's writings—especially the "Critique of Pure Reason"—will quickly see that his philosophy is, in fact, a philosophy of time. The "Critique of Pure Reason" serves as the study's foundation, although other works by Kant have also been taken into consideration. Heidegger's understanding of and interpretation of Kant has some bearing on our strategy. In reality, Heidegger was the one who first understood the crucial part that time plays in Kant's philosophy. Kant establishes a two-way interaction with time. On the one hand, Kant's philosophy is built on the idea of time, but on the other, Kant's philosophy presents us with a concept of time that is entirely distinct from any philosophy that came before it. The concept itself has inspired all of Kant's philosophical theories, and Kant has altered its meaning.

Keywords: *Time, Metaphysics, Judgment, Necessity, Universality*

Introduction

Many great philosophers have an essential concept that influences all of their thought in various areas, including art, ethics, politics, and metaphysics. For instance, the theory of forms serves as the axis in Plato's philosophy, the theory of substance does so in Aristotle's, the theory of mind does so in Descartes', and the dialectical theory occupies this space in Hegel's philosophy (Kenny, 2019).

Contrarily, the central issue in Kant's philosophy is the problem of time; as a result, it may be stated that Kant altered the focus of metaphysics from existence, which was its exclusive subject in Plato's time, to time. Because of this, it is possible to claim that Kant is the creator of a novel branch of metaphysics called metaphysics of time. Martin Heidegger is one among

many who recognized the significance of this issue. "The schematism chapter of critique of Pure Reason, although not more than eleven pages, is, in a sense, the central core of Kant's entire thoughts in the revival of base of metaphysics." According to Heidegger (Karim, 2019, p. 130).

By concentrating on the problem of time in his philosophy, Kant makes a significant shift in various areas of metaphysics. Kant thus becomes the source of fresh ideas in numerous branches of modern and contemporary philosophy. Heidegger places his conception of time in the existential setting in a number of his books, particularly *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 2019), *Parmenides* (Magee, 1994), *Nietzsche* (Townsend, 1991), and *introduction to metaphysics* (Heidegger, 2014).

Despite to popular belief, Kant does not only explicitly discuss time in his transcendental aesthetics and transcendental analytic works. The fact is that time is at the center of everything of Kant's critical philosophy, particularly his critique of Pure Reason. In reality, Kant shifts the focus of metaphysics from existence to time in his criticism of Pure Reason by establishing a unique type of metaphysics known as the metaphysics of time. In reality, Kant holds that because humans are temporal beings, they can only think temporally about temporal issues.

Let's examine some of Kant's ideas that support the aforementioned presumption.

Time and Space as a Type of Vision

The central tenet of Kant's argument in the transcendental aesthetic section of his critique of Pure Reason is the demonstration of Time and Space as a priori. By being a priori, he means that neither the representation of Time nor the representation of Space has been attained through experience or mental abstraction; instead, they are two forms and structures of the human mind, which are nothing more than mental processes that organize sensory inputs. The a priori/a posteriori dichotomy refers to two different types of knowledge: information that is known before experience or knowledge that is known independently of experience, and knowledge that is known after experience or knowledge that is dependent on experience. According to Kant, the only mental constructs that give our ideas of space and time are time and the human mind. They already exist independently of the objects they contain. To put it more plainly, vision is a form of time and space. To demonstrate this, he makes several moves.

- a. In his critique of Pure Reason, Kant notes that time and space are not experimental ideas since they have objective examples outside the mind and are not like those that are learned by sensory experience. According to Kant, these two conceptions are individualistic entities (a concept is an expression of unity among a group of representations). Because we cannot sense any sensible item and no sensible object will have any significance to us until we have an a priori understanding of time and space. We don't experience time in a time and space in a space; we only sense sensible objects in time and space. Time and space should, if they are empirical notions, have an instance and referent in the physical world, just like any other scientific concept, yet they do not. We cannot conceptualize something before, after, or concurrent with something else until we have an a priori understanding of time. Additionally, without the concept of space, we are unable to understand if something

is smaller, larger, or equal to another object (Kant, 2008). In fact, Kant disproves the idea that time is objective in this stage, along with thinkers like Aristotle and Newton. According to Newton, there is an absolute, uniformly moving time within which all movements occur. He believed that time is a reality that is independent of the human mind. According to what he believes, time and space are both empty containers that existed before any material content.

- b. Time and space are not discursive conceptions: In his critique of Pure Reason, Kant also acknowledged that the concepts of time and space are not universal or abstract ideas that can be obtained by mental abstraction like the concept of the human. Conversely, the ideas of time and space are prior to their constituents since universal and abstract notions succeed their ideas of referents (Kant, 2008). The explanation for the issue is that we start off with examples of people (like John, Sara, and so on) and then, based on the similarities we notice between them, arrive at the concept of people as a whole. With time and space, however, such is not the case. Our ability to imagine moments for time and sections for space is dependent on the notions of time and space that we have from the very beginning. Moments of time and sections of space are not universal ideas because we view them as their components rather than their referents (Kant, 2008). In this instance, Kant really disagrees with the views of thinkers like Leibniz, Lock, Barkley, Hume, and others. In a nutshell, Kant considers space and time to be intuitions rather than conceptions. He contends that time and space are made up of pieces. They are not generic abstractions that come from the capacity of knowing, but rather distinct persons connected to the faculty of sensibility (Wicks, 2008).
- c. Time and space are required representations because they must be assumed in order to have any experience at all. Unlike empirical notions, time and space are not abstracted from sensory experience in the same way. Kant has outlined his position in many paragraphs. Among them, these are just two instances: "Space is an essential a priori representation that serves as the basis for all extrasensory perceptions. Though we may quite well envision that there should be space without any items to fill it, it is hard to think that there should be no space. Space is consequently seen as a prerequisite for the possibility of appearances rather than as a factor that depends on them. It is an a priori picture that must come before any outward manifestations. (Kant, 2008, p. 24) "Time is a representation that is fundamental to all intuitions. Although we may remove all appearances from time, we cannot remove time generally from appearances. As a result, time is assigned a prior. All reality of appearances is possible in time alone. All of these manifestations may disappear, but time itself cannot be reversed (Kant, 2008). Time and space, in Kant's view, are two essential mental conceptions that we cannot do without. In other words, we may conceive that nothing exists outside of our thoughts, but we are unable to envision something existing outside of our minds that does not exist in space or time.

As a result, Kant concluded that time and space are neither universal or abstract notions nor are they based on empirical concepts. Time and space, on the other hand, are the shape and structures of the mind because they are a necessary depiction of it and cannot be eliminated. In

other words, they are a form of vision since the human mind (the faculty of experience) is designed to detect reasonable objects in space and time.

Kant argues that a propulsion is scientific if it is synthetic and a priori. This is the existence of time in scientific assertions. Being synthetic serves the purpose of indicating objective reality, while being a priori serves the purpose of indicating objective reality in a general and essential way. "All events are caused" is an example of a synthetic a priori proposition, whereas "all effects are caused" is an analytical proposition that is true by definition (the validity of the proposition can only be ascertained by examining the relationships between the meanings of the words). Geometry and mathematics are, in Kant's opinion, the two best examples of synthetic a priori judgments.

How is a priori synthetic knowledge possible? In other words, where does the indisputable universality and need of science come from? We have two epistemic faculties, according to Kant: the faculty of sensibility and the capacity of understanding. Since sense and experience do not reveal any uniformity in the outside world, the faculty of sensibility cannot be the source of universality and necessity (Kant, 2008). Understanding cannot produce universality because it does not provide us with representations of the outside world or of outer reality; rather, it serves the purpose of authenticating by combining the representations gained through the senses and transforming them into judgments.

In other words, thinking is the process by which the faculty of understanding produces judgments by combining representations. Sensibility provides the concepts that give meaning to the intuitions that the first faculty has arranged in space and time, while understanding provides the individuals and intuitions. When sensibility and understanding work together, these faculties' components can successfully come together to generate judgments of the type "S is P" (Wicks, 2014). "Neither of these abilities' attributes is better than the other. We wouldn't be given items without sensibility, and we wouldn't think about them without comprehension. Without content, conceptions are meaningless, and without concepts, intuitions are blind.

Making concepts sensual, or giving them an intuitive object, is therefore just as important as giving intuitions an intellectual foundation, or bringing them under concepts. The functions of these two capacities of faculties cannot be swapped. The senses are incapable of thinking or understanding anything (Kant, 2008). According to Kant, neither faculty is independent.

It is therefore equally important to make our conceptions sensual, or to give them an intuitional object, as it is to make our intuitions intelligible, or to subsume them under concepts. These two capacities of faculties cannot switch roles. The senses cannot think or understand anything, according to Kant (2008). Neither faculty exists alone, as Kant himself states. According to Kant, there is no other option but to accept that the temporal form of mind (which is a priori) is the source of universality and necessity when the origin of these two ideas is neither the faculty of sensibility nor the faculty of understanding, and on the other hand, if we cannot deny the existence of these two in scientific propositions and scientific knowledge. This is explained as follows:

From Kant's perspective, there is a certain period of life during which the human mind's form and structure (the faculty of sensibility) is determined and has certain characteristics. The time inclusion domain is one of the four general properties for time that Kant finds in his investigation of this matter in the argument over schema in the transcendental analysis of the Critique of Pure Reason (Kant, 2008). He claims that these aspects of time are represented by

categories of modality. The categories of modalities, possibility, reality, and necessity, which describe how objects are realized in time, are the essence of the time inclusion domain.

"The determination of the depiction of a thing at a moment of times is the schema of possibility. The emergence of a thing at a specific moment is the schema of actuality. The constant existence of a thing is the concept of need. Kant asserts in *Critique of Pure Reason* (2008, p. 184). According to Kant, if we are aware of the origin of a phenomenon or a thing—for instance, if we know that heat is the cause of metal expansion—then the phenomenon or matter will occur every time the cause is removed. As a result, a situation or phenomena in this circumstance will not only be necessary but also universal, meaning that it will always happen. In other words, time is a form or structure of mind (the faculty of sensibility), and as a result, the temporal form of mind is the source of necessity and universality.

The Conditions of Knowledge and Their Relationship with Time

According to Kant, there are two requirements before knowledge can be realized. The first is that sensible manifold facts must be grasped in terms of time and space before becoming sensible representations. The second prerequisite is that judgments must be formed by the combination of reasonable representations and cooperative notions or categories of understanding. It is important to keep in mind that each category or notion has a temporal component, which means that each one represents a characteristic of time (Kant, 2008). "Concepts without content are empty, and intuitions without concepts are blind" (Kant, 2008, p. 51). To stress that knowledge is the result of cooperation between the two faculties of sensibility and understanding, we repeated the sentence.

In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant covers the first prerequisite in the chapter on transcendental aesthetics and addresses the second condition in the chapter on transcendental analytical. As a result, it appears that time is crucial for both diseases.

Thinking has a Temporal Circumstance

At the outset of "Metaphysical Inference," Kant makes the claim that thinking is nothing more than making decisions and judgments, and that judgments are nothing more than combinations of representations. The distinction between the responses of concepts and matters of fact is upheld by Kant. He goes on to claim that every judgment follows the S is P format, which means that both the relationships between concepts and the facts follow this format. According to Kant, we can extract and infer a range of categories or pure notions of understanding from a variety of judgments and propositions (Kant, 2008). On the other hand, Kant attempts to demonstrate how each of the pure ideas has a schema and is, thus, the determination of time, that is, each of the pure conceptions reflects one of the features of time, in the topic of the schematization of the pure concepts of understanding.

Through the use of time and space as intermediaries, the categories or pure notions are applied to sensory experience. In accordance with Kant's arguments, pure conceptions are not sensory; instead, they relate to time and space, which are both sensory-receptive and unique, and these unique kinds of sensibility relate to the intuitions of the senses. Time and space are also required, but individual and then sensory intuitions are individual and not necessary. Pure notions are conceptual and necessary. Time is more significant in Kant's view since it relates to all experiences, inner and outward, whereas space solely applies to outside experience (Wicks, 2014).

Now it is evident how, in Kant's perspective, thought is limited to objects that can be perceived temporally and has temporal circumstances. Kant also rejects the possibility of metaphysics, according to the same argument. In other words, he holds that knowledge of matters of fact and outside reality cannot be acquired through speculative reason. To put it another way, since thinking is the act of making judgments, and since judgments are combinations of representations based on categories of understanding, only representations that are received temporally (i.e., in the form of categories) can be considered to be pure concepts. As a result, thinking can only be about things that are temporally perceivable.

Awareness and Self-awareness are Temporal.

Kant distinguishes between transcendental and empirical perception (Kant, 2008). He considered that the empirical perception is the sense of "I am" or existence. He asserts that I am directly and indirectly aware of myself. And this life continues throughout time (Kant, 2008).

When Kant says, "I understand my own existence in time," he indicates that the only thing that constitutes our existence or being is the perception of consecutive judgments that come to affect us over the course of time. Kant identifies with Hume in this situation. Hume believes that I am nothing more than a series of representations and ideas. It is obvious from what was mentioned that time is directly and fundamentally present in empirical experience, which is really just our consciousness of ourselves.

Transcendental perception is defined as "I think" (Kant, 2008). Kant asserts that each judgment is accompanied by a "I think" statement. Until this friendship is not established, our awareness will not come into being. Since "I think" is the foundation of our awareness. According to Kant, the underlying principle of all notions is transcendental perception, often known as pure unchanging consciousness or the fundamental awareness of oneself as being "me" at all times (Kant, 2008).

The phrase "I think" appears just as a judgmental idea is about to arise. Therefore, until we do not form an opinion or judgment, there will be no transcendental perception. Since the development of judgment in us only occurs over time, the emergence of awareness or "I think" also occurs with time. As a result, consciousness or awareness has temporal context.

The Impossibility of Knowledge on Non-Temporal Affairs

The examination of the difficulty of knowledge about non-temporal affairs serves as the focal point of transcendental dialectic, which is why Kant does not think metaphysics is feasible (Kant, 2008). In other words, he thinks that speculative reason cannot provide knowledge of objective reality for the following reasons:

According to the aforementioned fundamentals, knowledge has two prerequisites: first, a variety of sensory input must be experienced in the form of space and time in order to generate representations. Second, in order for these sensory representations to be converted into judgments, categories of understanding must be applied. Therefore, metaphysical concepts do not satisfy the first criterion since they are not sensible and cannot be perceived in space and time; also, because they do not satisfy the first condition, they do not satisfy the second condition either. In other words, they can't be combined or synthesized using categories that take into account temporal context.

On the other hand, a proposition is synthetic a priori is scientifically and epistemologically constructive, as it passed. This means that metaphysical claims cannot

advance knowledge in any way. Because it has previously been shown that a statement is synthetic and a priori due to necessity and universality, which stand in for the time span of inclusion. They can only be applied to propositions that can be understood in a temporal format because that is how things are.

The Separation of Phenomenon from Noumenon Based on the Centrality of Time

This distinction between thing in itself and thing of phenomenon is one of the most crucial issues in Critique of Pure Reason, Critique of Practical Reason, and even Critique of Judgment. Transcendental aesthetics and conflicts of pure reason are the terms used to describe this topic in the Critique of Pure Reason. In the Prolegomena, Kant also addresses the object in its entirety (Kant, 2008). This topic is also covered in Practical Reason (Kant, 2008).

Kant takes his time to distinguish phenomenon from noumenon on multiple occasions. According to Kant, a noumenon is a reality that does not take the shape of time and is not perceivable in terms of time or space. He contends that there is no way we can have any understanding of the noumenon. The reverse is a phenomenon. According to Kant, phenomena or appearances can be understood by personal experience, but things themselves are merely noumena and are therefore completely unknowable. According to Kant, the term "noumenon" may only be used negatively to denote the extent of our knowledge and not positively to denote an object's inherent qualities. The fact that this distinction has a chronological foundation is crucial for us in this situation.

The Temporal Direction of Kant's thoughts in the Critique of Practical Reason and the Critique of Judgement:

As is well known, Kant distinguishes between three different types of judgment: analytic a priori, which is true merely by virtue of the meanings of its words, synthetic a priori, which refers to an external object, and synthetic a posteriori, whose predicate is not logically contained in the subject and whose truth can be independently verified. All of Kant's efforts in the Critique of Pure Reason and the Critique of Practical Reason can be said to be directed toward demonstrating his thesis that all propositions of science, ethics, and art (aesthetical judgments) are synthetic a priori.

According to Kant, a judgment is only a priori if it has not been formed by experience. All a priori judgment and knowledge, in Kant's view, are essential and universal. These two components, in Kant's opinion, demonstrate the time inclusion domain characteristic. According to Kant (2008), the necessary schema always depicts the realization of anything. And it is obvious that, if such a thing exists, it will also be something that applies to everyone. Kant considered universality and necessity to be two sides of the same concept (Wicks, 2014).

Ethics relates to the Realm of Ought

Kant believes that ethical judgements belong to realm of ought not realm of be (Kant, 2008). that is why moral judgements are issued on ought and oughtn't format. this ought and oughtn't to exhibit the necessity of moral judgements. And because necessity is one of modality categories, so it shows the temporal feature (Kant, 2008).

Conclusion

Since all of Kant's discoveries and creations somehow rest on the centrality of time, time in Kant's philosophy is a master key that may open numerous doors. In addition to establishing time as the cornerstone of his own works, Kant also modifies the idea of time. The concept of time that Kant discusses is entirely different from what others think of it. In contrast to earlier philosophies, time is not a natural phenomenon in Kant's view. Time is said to be subject to nature, to something other than itself, such as movement, according to all previous philosophies. According to Kant's philosophy, time is not only a subject of nature but also a subject of time itself.

Leibniz and Newton are at odds over the meaning of time, while Kant chooses the middle ground. Kant argues that, as far as we can tell, time and space are just functions of the human mind that give order to our experiences, in contrast to Newton's idea of absolute time. Kant, in contrast to Leibniz, understands that time must exist before the objects they contain, giving time a reality separates from their material contents.

One could argue that Kant's philosophy is nothing more than a metaphysics of time because of the central role that time plays in his philosophy and the fundamental transformations that the idea goes through. Kant is critical of traditional metaphysics, which includes Aristotelian and Rationalist conceptions of metaphysics as the general science of being as such and, in a more expansive and wider concept, as a science concerned not only with the existence and nature of God but also with the distinction between mind and body, the immortality of the soul, and the freedom of the will. In opposition to this idea, Kant argued that classical metaphysics aimed to go beyond the boundaries of human knowledge.

However, Kant believed that there could be a valid form of metaphysical knowledge. Its objective is to identify the broadest patterns driving our worldview. We refer to it as "metaphysics of time" since that is how metaphysics is conceptualized.

References:

- Ewing, A. C. (1996). *A Short Commentary on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. University of Chicago Press.
- Heidegger, M. (2014). *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Yale University Press.
- Kant, I. (2008). *Critique of Pure Reason (Penguin Classics)*. Penguin Classics.
- Kant, I. (2015). *Critique of Practical Reason*. Cambridge University Press.
- Loux, M.J., & Crisp, T.M. (2017). *Metaphysics A Contemporary Introduction*. Routledge.
- Wicks, R. (2014). *Kant: A Complete Introduction: A Teach Yourself Guide (Teach Yourself: Philosophy & Religion)*. McGraw-Hill.
- Magee, Glenn. (1994). Parmenides by Martin Heidegger, Andre Schuwer & Richard Rojcewicz. *Classical World: A Quarterly Journal on Antiquity* 87, 504-504.
- Heidegger, M. (2019). *Being and Time*. Martino Fine Books.
- Heidegger, M. (1998). *Parmenides (Studies in Continental Thought)*. Indiana University Press.
- Kenny, A. (2019). *Immanuel Kant: A Very Brief History*. SPCK.