



Movement in Time

"Time is the distance of movement."

Zeno of Citium

What does time mean to us?

Zeno of Citium (Zeno of Citium, 334/333 BC – 262/261 BC), an ancient Greek philosopher and founder of the Stoic school, asserted that "Time is the distance of movement." The next question immediately arises: the distance of movement from which point to which? In the calculation of time, everything is clear from the microsecond to infinity. But what about human life, from birth to death?

From a scientific perspective, time is a form of flowing, successive changes in phenomena and states of matter. It is within this flow that the world emerges, becomes, and disintegrates. Anaximander (Ancient Greek: Ἀναξίμανδρος, c. 610–546 BC) considered boundless time to be the beginning of everything, believing that movement and multiplicity are inherent in existence. He believed that the birth and death of worlds occurs according to the order of time.

Past, present, and future are modes of time. They correspond to three states of consciousness: memory, contemplation, and creativity. Philosophers distinguish two fundamentally different images of time. In Buddhist philosophy, it is perceived as an eternal flow in which everything undergoes aging and turns to nothing.

Erich Fromm (1900–1980) demonstrated the difference in the interpretation of time as it applies to the two modes of human existence. Being exists only "here and now." Having exists only in time—in the past, present, and future.

Time cannot stand still; it moves inexorably forward. "Here and now" is only a moment. The present is the moment when the past meets the future. We experience how time, like an unstoppable current, carries each moment into the past.

Time is not absolute, as Newton (1642–1727) and 20th-century scientists believed. Modern units of time measurement are based on the periods of the Earth's rotation around its axis and its revolution around the Sun, as well as the Moon's revolution around the Earth. This choice of units is driven by both historical and practical considerations: the need to coordinate human activity with the change of day and night or the seasons. Axis, curvature, and number are used for measurement.

Well, who can argue with that—concepts change depending on time?

Cultural studies distinguish mythical time. This is "initial," "historical," and "preceding" ordinary, real time. In mythical time, people, the surrounding world, and nature are created by totemic ancestors—demiurges and cultural heroes. This act of creation is reflected in various myths. Sacred time—the time of primordial creations, primordial causes, and primordial events—is associated in mythology with the activity of divine forces. It differs from historical time, which characterizes human actions and cultural creativity.

Oh, time, little time! It moves constantly, and man is powerless to stop it. Heraclitus (ancient Greek: Ἡράκλειτος ὁ Ἐφέσιος, c. 544 BC – c. 483 BC), nicknamed Heraclitus because of the dark meaning of his speeches, said very instructively: "One day is equal to every other." Let us therefore manage time wisely!

Schopenhauer (1788–1860) also warns of the same thing. "An important point of worldly wisdom is the correct distribution of our attention between the present and the future, so that neither harms the other. Many live too much in the present: these are the frivolous. Others are too absorbed in the future: these are the anxious and preoccupied" (Arthur Schopenhauer. *Aphorisms of Worldly Wisdom*).

In his book *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Baudrillard (French Jean Baudrillard, 1929–2007) retells a parable, imbuing it with profound meaning. It goes something like this: High in the

mountains stood an old monastery. The monks of this monastery were committed to a doctrine that claimed that God had nine billion names. And the monks who professed this religion had been reciting the names of God for many centuries. They slowly pronounced one name after another. They knew that when they named all the names of God, the end of the world would come.

One day, word somehow reached the monks that there were machines that could speak words for them. They ordered an IBM computer and invited specialists. They arrived, calculated the cost, and reported that the machine would complete the job in three months. Without delay, the specialists decided to go home—perhaps the monks' predictions would prove wrong. And when they left the monastery, they saw the stars fading one by one.

"Time is the relation of being too non-being," Fyodor Dostoevsky philosophically declared. To me, this sounds like the question: have I accomplished everything within my power before my death?

A tortoise lives three times longer than us because all its senses are slowed down. When a person passes by it, it feels as if you are speeding past on a motorcycle. But we don't know what a tortoise thinks about time or how it understands its life within time. Human life is limited. "The deep abyss of time will hide us all," reminds Seneca (Latin: Lucius Annaeus Seneca minor, 4 BCE – 65 CE).

Time frightens and torments us with its mysteries, and our imagination conjures up dire future consequences for some situations we face in the present. Or, conversely, we can't imagine the outcome of our actions, and this rash act could have dire consequences. Therefore, we are prone to make various assumptions based on unfounded arguments, easing our conscience.

Humans, however, as rational beings, must be guided not only by selfish principles, but also decide what they can do for the benefit of the world, society, and their country, for the benefit of future generations—their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Our time calls us to be prudent, for much depends on each of us. Each of us, in our place, can bring both benefit and harm.

Bionote:



Raisa Melnikova is a poet, novelist, journalist, essayist, translator, editor and publisher. She lives in Vilnius, Lithuania. She holds a Master's degree in Educational Studies and is the author of 40 books. Her works and biography have been published in over 400 publications in anthologies in Lithuania, Azerbaijan, Argentina, Belarus, Bulgaria, Bangladesh, the UK, China, India, Latvia, Russia, Serbia, the USA, Japan, and other countries, and have been translated into many languages. She is an Academician of the International Academy for the Development of Literature and Art. She has received 6 Nika statuettes, the Literary Unity and Keeper of Traditions orders, and has been awarded the following awards: the Golden Pen of Russian Literature, the Living Pen of Poetry, the Literary Phoenix, the Art of Words, the Rising Word, and other titles. For her literary work in the spirit of Russian cultural traditions, she was awarded three Imperial House decorations: the "Heritage" star, 18 medals, and other distinctions.



She is a laureate of 18 international literary festivals and competitions. Raisa Melnikova is included in the Encyclopedia of Great Literature.

She is a member of the "Creativity and Potential" club and the Eurasian Creative Guild (London). She is a member of the following international writers' unions: the Union of Writers of Russia, the International Writers' Union, and the Writers' Union of North America. She is also an Honorary Member and member of the Presidium of the International Literary Association Creative Tribune (ILACT).