



DOI: 10.18523/2313-4895.12.2025.54-64

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## AN OUTLINE OF WITTGENSTEIN'S INVESTIGATION OF TIME: A GRAMMATICAL APPROACH

### Abstract

This article is an exposition of the problem of time in the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951). It focuses primarily on the works from his so-called middle to late period (1930–1951), which are explicitly concerned with the problem. The aim is to clarify how time is presented in his philosophy and what consequences can be drawn for the question of the reality of time from employing Wittgenstein's approach. Wittgenstein's thoughts on time during this period are marked by the distinction between memory-time and information-time, based on the principle of verification: the former is verified by recalling an event from memory, while the latter is obtained from an external source. From the perspective of the grammatical approach, which he developed at the time, the distinction is shown to be superfluous. Memory-time can be reduced to information-time, and inquiry into the nature of memory requires devising phenomenological descriptive language, which is contrary to Wittgenstein's philosophical stance. Thus, only instances of information-time can be used to investigate time. However, this investigation demonstrates that the convenient philosophical approach to the problem of time is prone to misconceptions about its nature, which stem, first, from misunderstanding the language and, second, from deriving theories of time from its grammar.

**Keywords:** philosophy of language, history of philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, phenomenology, Wittgenstein, philosophy of time, philosophical grammar.

### Introduction. The problem and structure

The relevance of the time problem is twofold. First, on the one hand, inquiry into time-space remains at the forefront of scientific discussions in physics, and particularly astronomy. On the other hand, this is a problem

of utmost importance to metaphysics, since its very beginning. In both cases, the hope is that revealing the true nature of time would be the key to understanding the most general laws of the universe. The task of philosophy is to bring clarity to the notion of time, so that no misconceptions that stem from the ordinary use of the word "time" could find their way to

proper scientific investigations, thus undermining them.

Second, time is crucial for a modern human, since their life is structured by clocks, deadlines, timetables, etc. During the war, "weight of time" is especially notable due to uncertainty about the near future and constant waiting for the war to end. It is hard to imagine a more essential feature of existence than time. Thus, the philosophical importance is apparent.

An application of Wittgenstein's philosophy from the middle to late period (since 1930) may provide a unique perspective on the problem. It is not a coincidence that, while *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) does not explicitly elaborate on the problem, his middle to late philosophy is avidly concerned with it. However, in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), he largely abandons the problem. Some of the reasons for this will be suggested later in this paper. Consequently, the middle to late period is the focus of the present article.

Concerning time, Wittgenstein tried to elucidate the traditional philosophical question of the *reality of time*. However, his investigations into the subject matter are marked by two features. First, the development of the new approach, which he will eventually call "grammatical." Second, his remarks on time were mainly done outside of both the contemporary philosophical context of the problem of time, shaped primarily by McTaggart's *The Unreality of Time* (1908), and the traditional philosophical context of the problem. However, the latter may be a feature of the former. Although references to this context may be helpful in certain instances, the present discussion will proceed mostly in the vein of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Thus, the questions this article tries to answer are *how* the problem of time is *presented* in the middle to late Wittgenstein's philosophy, and *what* possible conclusions *can be drawn* by applying his later philosophical approach.

Therefore, the structure of this investigation is the following. Firstly, a crucial distinction, which shapes Wittgenstein's understanding of the problem, will be introduced, namely that of memory-time and information-time. Secondly and thirdly, these conceptions will be investigated in accordance with his middle to later "grammatical" philosophy.

## Two ideas of time

Ludwig Wittgenstein made a crucial distinction early on in 1929 between two meanings of "time" based on the method of verification. In his conversations with Friedrich Waismann of the Vienna Circle, he distinguished the *time of memory* from the *time of physics*: "Where there are different verifications, there are also different meanings. If I can verify a temporal specification – e.g. such and such was earlier than so and so – only by means of memory, 'time' must have a different meaning from the case where I can verify such a specification by other means, e.g. by reading a document, or by asking someone, and so forth" (Waismann, 1979, p. 53). A bit later Wittgenstein in his 1930–1933 lectures, written down by George Edward Moore, made distinction between *memory-time* and *information-time*, claiming that "in the former there is only earlier and later, not past and future, and that it has sense to say that I remember that which in 'information-time' is future" (Moore, 2013, p. 319). This distinction is reminiscent of McTaggart's between B-series, which is defined in terms of *earlier* and *later*, and A-series, which has the *past-present-future* structure (McTaggart, 1908, pp. 458–459). However, it could be argued that Wittgenstein was inspired to formulate the memory-time conception by Bertrand Russell, who, as Richard Gale (1978) claims, is the "father" of the B-theory of time, and the ideas embedded in this theory "has been popular with... logical atomists, logical positivists, and rational

constructivists" (Gale, 1978, p. 70). Regardless of Russell's role in the formulation of the B-theory, since similar notions had been floating in the air of the philosophical discussions of the time, it is safe to assume that Wittgenstein did not make his distinction completely out of the blue.

Nevertheless, while the B-series bears resemblance to the memory-time, the A-series, apparently, has no similarity to the information-time. It is essential for McTaggart that if time is real, then the A-series is also real (McTaggart, 1908, p. 459). However, Wittgenstein's idea of verification has nothing to do with reality in the metaphysical sense (whatever this sense is), but rather *how* time is manifested in language and life. However, this does not mean that information-time, which deals with data about time, cannot be used to inquire whether the time is real. On the contrary, there is no better candidate for such an inquiry.

The presence of this rather obscure distinction in Wittgenstein's philosophy is vindicated by Alice Ambrose's notes (2001) of the lectures of Wittgenstein of the same period, although her account is slightly different: "In information time, there will be past and future with respect to a particular day. And in memory time, with respect to an event, there will also be past and future... If you are going to talk about both information and memory time, then you can say that you remember the past. If you remember that which *in information time* is future, you can say 'I remember the future'" (Ambrose, 2001, p. 15).

The question is: what does the method of verification have to do with such properties as being earlier or later, in the past, present, and future? Memory-time, which has no past and future, is verified merely by recollection of which event happened before/after the other. Thus, for the sake of refinement of the philosophical language, it makes sense to say that its only coordinates are "earlier" and "later," for, as Ambrose notes, it is concerned

with *events*, or to be precise, with their temporal arrangement. Events do not exist without a human witness, for otherwise, they cannot be "imprinted" in human memory as events. In memory, events happen *in relation* to one another – a relation that can be roughly defined using "before," "early," "later," "simultaneously," etc. For example, in the expression "early this morning, *A* happened before *B*," the temporal coordinates of the event *B* are defined with respect to event *A*. However, the sentence "the event *B* happened in the past" does not establish any such temporal coordinates: there is no event in relation to which the temporal place of *B* can be understood, for "past" is not an event.

Now, information-time is concerned with *days*, as mentioned before. It is safe to assume that other calendar units – weeks, months, years – can be equally taken into account here, for what seems to be the case is that Wittgenstein is talking about identifying a moment in the calendar or any other time-measuring system. Thus, a document with a date or a person with a clock can provide an account of information-time, for they use a certain time-measuring system. For example, if a detective knows that a person, *x*, was born on 1 July 2025, then they have precise *information* on which register book entry to look for more details on that person. The crucial difference from memory-time is the following: the events of the latter are never ordered in terms of a time-measuring system, i.e., we do not *identify* the time of an event in memory by some precise date, for memory is not a journal entry or archive. That is why something that is in the future in information-time – say an event *B*, which is planned to happen in 2026 – can be in the past in memory-time, for the *event* of "obtaining" and "storing" this piece of information about event *B* happened *before* another event in memory.

The other question is whether the conception of *information-time* is distinct from the earlier Wittgenstein's idea of the *time of physics*. It is

tempting to equate both of them based on the similar, if not identical, method of verification: for example, to get an account of information-time as well as the time of physics, one has to ask someone what time it is (Ambrose, 2001, p. 15; Waismann, 1979, p. 53). However, Joachim Schulte claims that the difference between those ideas is a "logical one," for Wittgenstein "was very much inclined to distinguish between all kinds of logical and grammatical 'spaces', pointing out analogies and disanalogies between them, and stressing that what could be said of the members of one space could not meaningfully be said of the members of another space" (Schulte, 2005, p. 565). While it is previously demonstrated that what can be said about memory-time cannot be said in the same sense about information-time, a similar "logical" or "grammatical" difference between information-time and the time of physics, which is only hinted at by Schulte, has to be outlined.

The point that there is a *grammatical* difference can be expressed in the following fashion. Though the method of verification is virtually the same, it is one thing to consider time as an observer-independent physical "force" or dimension, and another thing to grasp it in the *multitude of uses*, that may or may not stand in relation to anything observer-independent. In contrast to the latter use, the former is rather crude, for it leads to imagining some physical force that pushes the world from the past into the future. However, it is a foremost point of concern for Wittgenstein after 1930 that the misleading power of certain word use lies in false analogies and images they can produce, and expressions about time certainly are an example of such misuse (Moore, 2013, p. 319). It might be true to say, for instance, that the time of physics is a sort of dimension, but it would be wrong to suggest something like that about information-time. Therefore, it can be argued that the investigation of the information-time is fitting in a more

nuanced grammatical approach to philosophy that Wittgenstein took after 1930.

The distinction between *memory-time* and *information-time* fell out of use in Wittgenstein's later works. Schulte claims that the very move from the idea of physics' time to information-time illustrates Wittgenstein's shift from a logical (grammatical) to a *language-games* approach, which resulted in the fact that any time conceptions completely lost significance (Schulte, 2005, pp. 565–566). There is some truth to that, since from the perspective of his later philosophy, any situation concerned with "time" can be treated as a separate and unique "game." However, it is too far-fetched to assume that the notion of grammar gave way to the idea of language-games. Rather, it has lost its Tractarian *logical* sense, acquiring new use in his later philosophy, which he explicitly calls *grammatical* for this reason (Wittgenstein, 2009, § 90). Thus, it makes sense to preserve the distinction between the two ideas of time for the sake of approaching the problem of time methodically.

### Memory-time and phenomenology

Although *Tractatus* does not have an explicit theory of time, Jaakko Hintikka claims it has an implicit *phenomenological* idea of time, namely that of memory-time, since simple objects, which comprise facts, "exist *both* in our consciousness *and* in reality, in other words "there is a genuinely direct awareness of them" (Hintikka, 2005, p. 542). Since time is a *form of an object*, it is (1) embedded in objects of reality, thus, in this sense, *real*, and (2) is *experienced* as a feature of an object, i.e., sense-data (Hintikka, 2005, p. 541). Now, this deduction can be made from the philosophy of *Tractatus*, though no phenomenological teaching is explicitly present in that work. Therefore, Hintikka, to support this theory, has to rely heavily on the lectures and writings of Wittgenstein from his so-called middle period (1930–1935), when the



latter's philosophy turned in the direction of the development of his later thought. Thus, to justify his phenomenological interpretation of memory-time, Hintikka argues that "though Wittgenstein's semantical priorities changed in October 1929, his ontological ones did not" (Hintikka, 2005, p. 544). Though it may seem to be a leap, such a deduction can be vindicated by the fact that Wittgenstein's philosophy of this middle period is a direct consequence of his early thought.

In his lectures during 1931–1932, Wittgenstein made the following remark, which can be treated as a concise expression of this phenomenological approach: "There is a tendency to make the relation between physical objects and sense-data a contingent relation. Hence, such phrases as 'caused by', 'beyond', 'outside'. But the world is not composed of sense-data and physical objects. The relation between them in language – a necessary relation. If there were a relation of causation, you could ask whether anyone has ever seen a physical object causing sense-data" (King & Lee, 1982, p. 81). Therefore, it is meaningless to speak of the object as causing an impression in our experience, for it would presuppose that the object itself is something different from this experience. It is possible to claim that this view is not completely dissimilar to those of Edmund Husserl, for, in both cases, the experience of a thing is inherent to the thing itself (Kebuladze, 2011, pp. 106–107).

Therefore, the idea of things existing in some objective 'timeflow' becomes superfluous, for time itself becomes a property either of a phenomenon or conscious subject: "Isn't it like this: a phenomenon (specious present) contains time, but it isn't in time? *Its form is time*, but it has no place in time (emphasis mine. – N. M.)" (Wittgenstein, 1975, § 69). This philosophical standpoint is virtually indistinguishable from the one where Husserl begins his phenomenological project. The difference is in the methodology. By introducing phenomenological *epoché*, Husserl attempts

to inhibit any preconceptions about the phenomena to influence his philosophical procedure, thus proceeding to the "description" using devised science-like "exact" language (Husserl, 1971, pp. 78–80). No wonder, then, that he ended up with the idea that the "time flow" is produced by retention-modified consciousness, which retains every "now" one by one to produce a retention continuum – so-called *primary memory* (in contrast to the *secondary memory*, which is reproduction of an event) (Husserl, 1991, pp. 30–32). Although Wittgenstein provides no details that would indicate whether he is talking about memory in the sense of this primary memory or some other sense, he also talks about "memory as source of time" (Wittgenstein, 1975, § 49). Nevertheless, the very idea of an "exact" description of "consciousness" is alien to Wittgenstein's method.

Therefore, Hintikka is right to conclude that despite some similarities between phenomenologies of Husserl and Wittgenstein, the latter "had something easier in mind than Husserl's elaborate construction" (Hintikka, 2005, pp. 540–541). This easiness is the "grammatical" approach, which may be argued Wittgenstein developed from his early idea of investigating logical form: indeed, in most of his writings of this middle period, the word "grammar" can be interchanged with "logical rules." For example, in 1930, he writes that "a proposition is completely *logically analysed* if its *grammar* is made completely clear (emphasis mine – N. M.)" (Wittgenstein, 1975, § 1). He specifies that phenomenology presents a form of investigation into the *possibilities* of language, i.e., into the "grammar of those facts on which physics builds its theories" (Wittgenstein, 1975, § 1). Therefore, for Wittgenstein, phenomenological inquiry is a type of investigation into language, which is concerned with grammar of phenomena. Time, though not a phenomenon, must take part in virtually any phenomenon or the logical form used to represent it.

Earlier that year, Wittgenstein remarked that propositions are verified "by the present," though in experience, it seems like a stream of life or world (contains no discrete moments that can be pictured by a proposition); thus, he concludes that the "difficulty stems from taking the time concept from time in physics and applying it to the course of immediate experience. It's a confusion of the time of the film strip with the time of the picture it projects" (Wittgenstein, 1975, §§ 48–49). In other words, the idea that we experience a "time flow" derives from the physical notion of time that imposes itself on our reflection about experience. It is not a trivial misunderstanding to overcome, for arguably, there is no other "mental" or "inner" concept of time. Therefore, any investigation of the memory-time presents a challenge to the very language we use. No grammar would allow any "exact" statement of the "inner" experience, and there is no clear way, if at all, to verify any such statement. The phrase "I experience time" is a sort of word salad. It is quite different from some other statements about experience, e.g., "I am in love" or "I feel pain," for those statements have a meaningful *use* in certain situations.

However, time-related memory statements can be meaningful. At least two general examples can be made. First, in case of a recollection of an event, it comes to mind as a more or less trustworthy "picture." For Husserl, memory reproduction, or secondary memory, as he puts it, of an event *mutatis mutandis* is constituted by the *same* temporal features as the primary memory (Husserl, 1991, pp. 37–38). Contrary to that, Wittgenstein concludes that such a picture, though *imagined* as preserving a past event, has nothing to do with experiencing change in time, for it is a *metaphor* that, whilst not taken for what it is, "tyrannizes" us to think of it as past correlate to a presently observed image, while it is not an image at all (Wittgenstein, 1975, § 49). That illustrates the difference between the phenomenological approach, which is

concerned with *how* phenomena are presented in consciousness, and the grammatical approach, which is concerned with *what* misconceptions drive us to think about phenomena in the way we do.

The second instance is memory as the "source of time." Now, the philosopher does not give a comprehensive example of this type of memory; he merely hints that such memory "isn't a picture, and cannot fade either" (Wittgenstein, 1975, § 49). The use of the definite article suggests that memory is either the only or at least the crucial "source of time." Of course, this is not enough to draw any conclusions, although it is still possible to speculate, for there is a candidate that can provide an idea of how memory can be the source of time, namely the notion of memory-time as constituted by such words as "earlier," "later," "before," etc. as Wittgenstein suggested in other place (Moore, 2013, p. 319). Such words are used not to "picture" an event, but to identify its place in a sequence – in relation to other events.

Now, it is hard to see how this, essentially, is not an account of information-time. For Wittgenstein, the difference lies in the fact that one receives information from an outside source (Waismann, 1979, p. 53; Ambrose, 2001, p. 15). In the case of recalling a sequence, the "source" may be our mind. Still, ignoring the psychological aspect, it is hard to see any difference between us saying "an event A happened earlier than event B" and someone else saying the same sentence. The idea that in one case such a sentence is *essentially* different, for it is formed out of one's mind, and not obtained externally, pushes one to investigate psychological aspects of memory, as did Husserl, where no clear language can be used. It can be suggested that such an entanglement led Wittgenstein to abandon the idea of memory-time later: inquiry into memory in *Investigations* does not deal with the problem of time.

So far, the time has successfully escaped the trial to grasp its nature from experience. One

may argue, following a string of transcendentalistic thought, that it *must* escape the gaze, since it is an a priori form of our consciousness that enables any experience in the first place. But the issue with such a position is that it leads to the invention of a metaphysical descriptive language, which Wittgenstein tried to avoid while developing his later philosophy.

### Information-time and the grammatical approach

From a philosophical, “observer-independent” standpoint, the idea of time suddenly receives a veil of depth and difficulty: “Something that one knows when nobody asks one, but no longer knows when one is asked to explain it, is something that has to be *called to mind*. (And it is obviously something which, for some reason, it is difficult to call to mind)” (Wittgenstein, 2009, § 89). Wittgenstein, referencing Augustine’s analysis of time, demonstrates his new “grammatical” method, which involves illustrating how we ordinarily talk about time, and specifies that “our investigation is directed not towards *phenomena*, but rather... towards the ‘possibilities’ of phenomena” (Wittgenstein, 2009, § 90). (Note that previously Wittgenstein referred to an investigation into the possibilities of phenomena as “phenomenological” (Wittgenstein, 1975, § 1)) That is to say, the aim of such an investigation is not to *explain* the philosophical entanglements, but to *show* that properly understood ordinary use makes no meaningful room for the entanglements in the first place. Surely, it does not show that for the sake of philosophical investigations it is somehow illegitimate to impose precise meanings upon words, for it is rather the contrary: those precise definitions are subjects of grammatical investigation (Hommen & Albersmeier, 2019, pp. 85–86).

The information-time is shaped by all the words used to provide data on time, but Wittgenstein in 1930 singles out *past* and *future*

(Ambrose, 2001, p. 15). Not the *present*, however, for, probably, he is thinking here in metaphysical terms, but not grammatical. The present, which, according to his earlier elucidation, is *timeless* (Wittgenstein, 1963, § 6.4311), is connected to the idea of *existence* rather than time. Even concerning information-time, the idea of the past seems naturally to refer to memory. The question, therefore, is *how do we know* that memory “pictures” the past, and not the present or future? (Wittgenstein, 1975, § 50).

Wittgenstein, through pointing out that there is discrepancy between how, in ordinary life, we are unconcerned with phenomena “slipping away” from our gaze, and how, while philosophising, it is suddenly becomes problematic, tries to point out that philosophical investigation of time is prone to mixing several different notions that, arguably, has nothing to do with the genuine (ordinary) idea of time (Wittgenstein, 1975, §§ 50–52). Two given conceptions of time, e.g., memory-time and information-time, may not only reflect different views on time, but also conceptualize different objects altogether that, for some reason, use the same word “time”: in reality, they may relate to each other like a starfish to a star.

In *Confessions*, Augustine argues that, though the past and future do not exist in the same sense as the present does, they do *proceed* “secretly,” for the flow of time must run *from* the past *to* the future (Augustine, 1961, pp. 247–251). Augustine blends two ideas of time, for on the one hand, the past and future must in *some sense exist* for time to “flow” from the past to the future, but on the other hand, he is naturally forced to proclaim that only the present *truly exists*. Wittgenstein provides us with a simile: it is like mixing a film strip, which contains a sequence of all the frames of the movie, with actually watching the movie (Wittgenstein, 1975, §§ 49, 51). It is the case of mixing the observer-free *metaphysical theoretical* “existence” with *perceived real* existence. In the former case, it exists in the same sense in which any metaphysical theory “exists.” The twain ideas

shall never meet, but they do since Augustine is not free from the prejudice of thinking of the time as some "flow," or rather *perpetual change*. It is a common philosophical understanding of time that its prime characteristic is that it involves change, and McTaggart grounds his highly consequential analysis of time on that very notion (McTaggart, 1908, p. 459).

What is the relation between change and time? It is not as straightforward as it seems. Time is, of course, not a *reason* for the motion of objects – every motion has its own reason. Then, one may suggest that "time" is the *fact* or *feature* that they change. Well, the fact that an object is so and so is something contingent for objects: if one can think of an object as being so and so, one can think of it as being different. If everything changes, then discussing change becomes redundant. Therefore, the possibility of change presupposes that change may not occur. What would an object look like if it were stripped of the possibility of change? In metaphysical terms, it is *unthinkable*. However, in ordinary language, it is legitimate to say that something is not changing – the world under the sun, someone's youthful appearance, etc. – it does not mean that it will never change (that would be a statement of prediction, not of perceived change). At what moment of such considerations does the idea of time play *any* role? Therefore, it may be the case where some ordinary "careless" notions of change are taken too philosophically serious to be features of reality, as Wittgenstein remarks: "Philosophical troubles are caused by not using language *practically* but by extending it on looking at it. We form sentences and then wonder what they can mean (emphasis mine. – N. M.)" (Ambrose, 2001, p. 15).

Why, then, do the ideas of change or motion seem so naturally intertwined with time? The culprit may be a watch or any other means of measuring time. We say, "something changes over time," and indeed it is possible to measure change in terms of the *time of physics*. The results of such measurement would be presented as pieces of *information-time*. It is

worth noting that there is a variety of ways that "time" enters expressions, including words like "sometimes," "time and again," use of tense forms in particular situations, etc., which are worthy of separate discussion (Wittgenstein, 2004, pp. 217–218). A piece of information about time may not be linked to any idea of physical time at all. A list of expressions containing the word "time" is such an example. Nevertheless, this article is concerned with those pieces of information-time that are metaphysically relevant, i.e., those that are considered to be linked to the measurement of the physical time.

First example: a piece of time information can contain measurements made by a stopwatch, say, of a runner's speed. In this case, the time of the run from one point to another is measured by counting how many "seconds" the hand of the watch surpasses from the start to finish. To ask *what* is measured by the stopwatch in this example is misleading, for no object is measured: no ruler is put against an object. What happens is that the work of one object (the stopwatch) is used to measure the change of another object (the runner). Similarly, one can use a melody, counting at which point of the melody the runner finishes. Although it would be inconvenient, the point still holds: no supposed physical entity, such as time, is measured by the stopwatch in the example. Therefore, "we cannot compare a process with 'the passage of time' – *there is no such thing* – but only with another process (such as the working of a chronometer). Hence we can describe the lapse of time only by relying on some other process" (emphasis mine – N. M.) (Wittgenstein, 1963, § 6.3611). Therefore, one change is measured by another change. The only difference is that the second motion is more uniform, i.e., *practical*.

Second example: a work of a clock itself can be imagined to bear information about the "passage of time," as if it "measures time flow." However, this is merely a bunch of metaphors. First, it is rather banal to point out that if



suddenly time would “flow” faster, the watch would speed up accordingly, so (1) no supposed change in the time flow would ever be perceived and, therefore, (2) the watch does not measure some physical time, for to be measured, that is obtain *certain* value in a given system, it should be presupposed that an object can obtain *different* value. In other words, in relation to *what* would the time speed up? The system of measurement, such as the one used in the clock, cannot acquire different values – it cannot measure itself. In this example, the clock is counting *nothing*. Wittgenstein clarifies that “to say time passes more quickly, or that time flows, is to imagine *something* flowing” (Ambrose, 2001, p. 14). That is to say, the philosophical confusion that some real time is apparent in the motion of things stems from confusing an ordinary-language *metaphor* for a *description* of a phenomenon.

Third and final example: if one measures the work of one clock, say *A*, with the work of a different clock, say *B*, and notices that *A* goes faster, how, then, does one decide which clock is correct, if they are measuring *nothing*? Well, *B* measures *something*, namely *A*. The idle answer would be that *B* works according to some arbitrary standard. The intricate answer is that the standard of time, and, thus, the ordinary perception of time, is socially *practical*. It is useful, and often vitally necessary to live according to the “same time” as other people in a community, and, arguably, to this truth all the meaningful ordinary talk about time can be reduced. As Wittgenstein remarks on the exactness of time measurements, “‘Inexact’ is really a reproach, and ‘exact’ is praise” (Wittgenstein, 2009, § 88). Regardless of other issues of the later Wittgenstein’s approach, it is quite true that for it, “in the final analysis, the concepts we employ derive from our basic human condition and are not in any way answerable to an objective reality” (Hommen & Albersmeier, 2019, p. 86).

All our practical notions of time are very earthbound: the idea of “change over time”

and the metaphor of “flow” are dictated by the biggest of clocks – the planet itself. But imagine a person, born and raised alone in an empty capsule in the open space – a person that has had no experience of any motion at all, except for his body motion – would he have any idea of “time flow”? Doubtfully. Though not because of the absence of planet movement (he could still infer how to count time from his heartbeat, for example), but simply because in such an impossible situation, there would be no *use* in counting time: no social situations, no need to conform to other people’s living, thus, no language, and no information-time.

One consequence of this conclusion is that the idea of direction of time appears to be another misleading metaphor, for, essentially, one talks not about the direction of time, but of the direction of the imagined “flow” or “arrow” of time (Ambrose, 2001, p. 14; Moore, 2013, p. 319). If something has one direction, then it is possible to take another direction. However, this is inapplicable to time.

Another consequence is that the threefold time structure loses its depth, for it hangs on the idea of the direction of time: in essence, the past is a “tail” of a time-arrow, while the future is an “arrowhead.” To say that the past is what *ceased to be* the case, the present is what *is* the case, and the future is what *will be* the case – is to make a *grammatical* remark on *how* one *talks* about these things. Thus, the possible answer to Wittgenstein’s question, how we know that things that have passed *are in* the past, is this: for we use the past tense, and typically cannot use other tenses to express the idea that something is no longer the case.

Therefore, the conclusion of this article is mostly in agreement with much earlier piece by Arnold Boyd Levison, who analyzed McTaggart’s A-series (though from a completely different standpoint), namely: although it does not mean that grammar is not expressing some temporal reality, but from the occurrence of tensed facts it *does not imply* that there *is* such a reality (Levison, 1987, pp. 352–

353). Furthermore, it is even safe to assume that philosophical misconceptions, such as the inherent threefold nature of time, are, as it seems, *grounded in imagining* the “past” and “future” as some temporal “places,” where past and future events are “stored.” In other words, they may be *grounded in grammar*, or rather, its misuse, but not in some observable or theoretically necessary reality.

## Conclusions

The problem of time in the middle to late period of Wittgenstein's philosophy was conceptualized through the distinction between *memory-time* and *information-time*. The criterion for this distinction is the principle of verification, for in the former case, a temporal place of an event is recalled from the memory, and is characterized by events being sequenced in terms of “earlier,” “later” and other designations, used to place an event in relation to other events; in the latter case, an information on the temporal place is obtained from an *external source*, and is determined primarily by measurement data and being in the past or future because information-time has a relation to the idea of physical time, and, thus, in contrast to subjective memory, an external information presents an objective view on time, concerned with measurements and grammatical forms.

This distinction is superficial because, first, the recalled event from the memory, once

spoken, becomes information, and, second, another person's memory can serve as an external source. Moreover, the only way to inquire memory-time as it is, that is, as a faculty of mind or consciousness, is *phenomenological*, which requires inventing a specialized language, and this is contrary to the so-called *grammatical* approach Wittgenstein took in this period. Therefore, the only viable subject of inquiry is instances of the information-time.

The use of pieces of information-time reveals nothing about the nature of supposed real physical time and whether it actually exists. Rather, the philosophical thought, which is based on the patterns presented by the grammar of our language, is prone to form misconceptions about time. The most consequential misconception is *imagining* time as a “flow.” From this misconception, a number of other prejudices arise. First, the idea of an inherent link between time and change or motion. Second, an idea that time has direction. Third, and most important, that physical time has a threefold past-present-future structure, while it can be demonstrated that it is merely a pattern of grammar, from which it *does not follow* that it somehow reflects the nature of physical time. Therefore, the principal problem of any philosophical investigation of time is that we are tempted to *infer ideas about time from the grammar of our language*, but not from investigating relevant phenomena.

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### Анотація

Ця стаття є експозицією проблеми часу у філософії Людвіга Вітгенштайна (1889–1951). Вона стосується передусім праць, створених у так званий середній і пізній період його творчості (1930–1951), в яких порушується ця проблема. Мета статті полягає в тому, щоб з'ясувати, як постає у Вітгенштайновій філософії проблема часу та які наслідки щодо питання реальності часу випливають із його філософського підходу.

Роздуми Л. Вітгенштайна про час упродовж цього періоду позначені розрізненням між часом-пам'яттю і часом-інформацією, яке ґрунтується на принципі верифікації: перший тип отримується через пригадування подій, другий – через звернення до зовнішніх джерел. Із перспективи граматичного методу, який він розробляв у зазначений період, це розрізнення виявляється зайвим. Час-пам'ять може бути зведений до часу-інформації, а дослідження сутності пам'яті вимагає розроблення феноменологічної дескриптивної мови, що суперечить Вітгенштайновій філософській настанові. Отож лише приклади часу-інформації придатні для дослідження часу. Втім, таке дослідження показує, що звичний філософський підхід до проблеми часу схильний до хибних уявлень про сутність часу, які походять від хибного розуміння мови і виведення теорій про час з її грамматики.

**Ключові слова:** філософія мови, історія філософії, метафізика, епістемологія, феноменологія, Л. Вітгенштайн, філософія часу, філософська граматика.

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