

## A Critique of Aristotle on 'Time'

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## Abstract

The study examines Aristotle's submission in his work on 'Time', that time is unreal. His major premise is that since none of the parts of time is in existence, its whole cannot be said to exist. However, the study argues that since Aristotle's grounds and claim undermines the reality of *time*, his argument has not made the reality of physical 'time' itself implausible. Nevertheless, this study will conclude or concede that (i) Aristotle's claim that time is unreal commits the error of hasty generalization; and (ii) the concept of *time* has a logical (using the law of contraposition and entailment) and social (human experiences) ways of being established. The methods of philosophical exposition and analysis will be employed.

**Key Words:** Synecdoche, Law of Contraposition, Past, Present – 'now', Future

### 1. Background Analysis

In an attempt to discuss Aristotle's conception of time, I shall not take for granted the notion of a propositional qualification and definition of time (that is, of a non-linguistic bearer of truth-value), together with certain allied notions such as entailment and the law of contraposition. Nothing in this paper will exclude the special features of Aristotle's account of time. It may be the case that the submission of this study on time is different from that of Aristotle, it may function from possible worlds to truth-values, provided the submission of this study will have its own special features and concessions.

Our definition of time will also involve the notion of the state of the entire physical world from the perspective of how it has come to present itself to us and the way we are preparing our programmes to meet certain needs or for the future, starting from the present. I shall not leave the concept of 'time' largely unexplained, since the argument for its unreality has been premised on syllogism by Aristotle. Hence, the unreality of time has caused a major setback for its ontological and physical existence, where social plans and relationship are not considered. Thus, the argument of this study is very nearly independent of the content of many works that may have been done on the nature of 'time'. Provided the following two conditions are met, the reader may flesh out 'the state of the concept of time' in any way desirable:

- (i) Our concept of 'time' must be such that, given that the world is in a state at a certain time (whether 'earlier' or 'before' or 'present'), something must follow logically about its operation, but we may tend to have problem about the status of 'present or now'. For example,

we must not attempt to choose a description of 'time' that will eliminate the notion that time never existed and that it does not exist. If anyone argues in such manner, a sufficient justification might be required.

- (ii) If there is some observable change or means of expressing what the scope and extent of 'time' is, (e.g., if the 'present' become the 'past' or that we have a problem with the coming of the 'future' because it has not come, it does not sufficiently presuppose that 'time' does not exist), there is a way it must entail some change in the state of the world.
- (iii) I shall endeavour to analyze Aristotle's philosophy of time vis-à-vis McTaggart's conception of time. The reason is to assert that they are both mistaken.

## 2. Aristotle on *Time* and its Conflict with Other Discourses on Time

Aristotle presented his thesis on the unreality of time, using the following argument:

Premise I: For time to exist, it must be made in parts

Premise II: None of its part is in existence

Premise III: From something which its parts does not exist, a whole cannot be said to exist

Therefore, Time does not exist.

Aristotle's attempt to expatiate on the nature of time is a classic example of a metaphysical and literal analysis, where reductio ad absurdum and synecdoche as a figure of speech are taken into consideration. The former is presented using an argumentative format, e.g., premises and conclusion, while the synecdocheic explanation of time lay in his usage of the words parts and whole. Synecdoche, as a figure of speech, means using the parts for the whole, individual for a class, or vice versa; whereas, an argument is a string of sentences with a set of premises and a conclusion. However, it is presumed that Aristotle's usage of the word 'whole' with respect to time could have represented the mindset of a thorough going linguistic metaphysician. This explains why Aristotle considers the concept of time from the holistic point of view. He managed not to escape from this framework, which is, explaining the nature of time as whole, and starting the discussion using its parts. Similarly, his reduction of time to absurdities lay in the way he established its nature using parts and whole, and rejected the reality of time because of the inherent problem found in its nature; the whole cannot be found, because its parts exist as still-births. The problem (absurdity), he found, also lay in the abstractness of the concept of time itself. Thus, the synecdocheic analysis helps him to reject the nature and the ontological basis of time. The success of Aristotle's presentation of what the nature of time entails is what a philosopher might need to inquire about.

In order to address the ontological status of time, Aristotle sets out to review two things. One, does time belong to the class of things that exist or to that of things that do not exist? Two, what is its nature? In the attempt to understand the first question on the class of things that time can be said to belong, Aristotle started with the definition of time and its figurative analysis. Aristotle's definition of time is that '*it is clear, then, that time is 'number of movement in respect of the before and after', and is continuous since it is an attribute of what is continuous*' (Aristotle, 1968; 15). Though he (Aristotle) sees time as what is continuous, he moved to reject the synecdocheic characterization of time

through the aspect that is known to people. For him, ‘time, on the other hand, is not held to be made up of ‘nows’” (Aristotle, 9). This assertion presupposes that time can be known through before, now, and after. Before, according to him (Aristotle) has gone out of what we can ascribe existential status to, while the ‘after’ (future) has not come into existence. Though the word now, according to him, is what seems to bound the past and future, it is hard to say or conclude that it remains one and the same (Aristotle, 9). In what way, does he define ‘now?’ Now, for Aristotle, is an end and a beginning of time, but the end of that which is past (before) and the beginning of that which is to come – that is, the future (Aristotle, 18). What this definition suggests, as this study would show, is that the term now has a unique problem; it is a mirage or stillbirth. Does this aspect of Aristotelian conception of time conflict with the views of other philosophers (whether in logic, science, ethics, epistemology, and so forth)? I think it does conflict. Let us examine some views of other philosophers as different from the Aristotelian perspective on time.

Time, for Plotinus, starts with the succession of early and late. Early and late, as he contends, is a stage of Time. Time, ends upon a certain Now or Time begins from a Now (Plotinus, 1968; 29). This is different from what Aristotle proffer of what ‘now’ entails. According to Aristotle, “for what is ‘now’ is not a part; a part is a measure of the whole, which must be made up of parts. Time, therefore, is not held to be made up of ‘nows’” (Aristotle, 9). What Plotinus and Aristotelian views of time suggest is a kind of conflict of what makes time to begin at a certain point, in which Aristotle sees time as non-existent and Plotinus sees time as existent. It is noteworthy that they both have some things in common, and at the same time, they both differ on what the nature of time entails.

Plotinus admits that number does not apply to time. It is, also, not the magnitude that accompanies the movement. For him, time started when the All-Soul stirred from its rest, and the Cosmos stirred with it. Time is not itself a measure, as he asserts, but the interval at which we support ourselves when we see sun rise and sets. Time is primary to every other thing, and it is a definite order by which movement and rest exist smoothly. Time, as Plotinus contends, is a subject of knowledge but in itself does not produce anything. Furthermore, he posits that time cannot be broken apart just like eternity (Plotinus, 24-37). Plotinus’ view strongly differs from the Aristotelian perspective, and since they differ, it cannot be sufficiently asserted that time is un-existent if we follow Aristotle’s syllogism.

In Paul Davies’s view, time is the dimension in which events can be ordered from the past through the present to the future, the measure of durations of events and the intervals between them (Davies, 1996; 31). As different from Aristotle, Davies (in the order of Einstein) seeks to define time, so as to show that it has long been a subject of study, but it has a way of identifying it or know it. As it can be recognized, whenever time is defined, it ought to be noted that the error or problem of circular reasoning should either be recognized or avoided. That is, it should be defined in such a way that it will be applicable to all fields. This problem of circularity has eluded all scholars or philosophers. They have one way or the other defined time in such a way that the problems of circularity and slippery slope have not been considered. These problems affected the conception of time by Aristotle and McTaggart, while Plotinus, Davies, Moritz Schlick, Rudolf Carnap, and so forth assert a simple, relatively uncontroversial definitions of time, which include the following, “time is what clocks measure”, and “time is what keeps everything from happening at once.” These two definitions, in a way, differ from the Aristotelian perspective.

There are two contrasting schools or views on time. Philosophers, in the history of philosophy that have dwelt on time belong to these schools. The realist school – where time is part of the fundamental structure of the universe – a dimension independent of events, in which events occur in sequence. Sir Isaac Newton is one of the proponents of this school. The second view or school has Leibniz and Kant as major proponents. Time, for the second school, is held to be neither an event nor a thing, and thus, it is not itself a measurable nor can it be travelled. These views, however, differs from the Aristotelian perspective on time, and as time is considered in physics, it is one of the seven fundamental physical quantities in the International System of Units. Time is used to define other quantities such as velocity and so forth. Thus, the Aristotelian view of the unreality of time will not hold because it differs from the views of other philosophers, even from the philosophers of science.

In Book 11 of his *Confessions*, St. Augustine of Hippo ruminates on the nature of time, asking “What then is time? If no one asks, Augustine said, I know: I wish to explain it to one that asketh.” He defined time in using the negative approach. Time, for him, is a distention of the mind (Confessions 11.26) by which we simultaneously grasp the past in memory, the present by attention, and the future by expectation. The Augustinian view of time differs from the Aristotelian view. Similarly, as different from Aristotle, Isaac Newton believed in absolute space and absolute time, while Leibniz believed that time and space are relational (North John, 2004; 29). Kant described time as an (a priori) intuition that allows us (together with the other a priori intuition, space) to comprehend sense experience. It suggests, however, that without time and space co-relational, we cannot understand or comprehend sense experience (McCormick, 2006; 4). Whatever was observed or seen (sense experientially) which has gone into the past was made so by time, the present has its aid in time, and the future is set to appear from what time dictates. Time and space, for Kant, are real. They are intuitional derivatives but they are not substances, rather time and space are elements of a systematic mental framework that necessarily structures the experience of any rational agent. Kant thought of time as a fundamental part of an abstract conceptual framework, together with space and number, with which we sequence events, quantify their duration, and compare the notions of objects (Mattey and Davis, 1997; 58).

In Henri Bergson’s description, time was neither a real homogenous medium, nor a mental construct, but possesses what is called Duration. Duration, as Bergson posits, was creativity and memory as an essential component of reality (Bergson, 1907; 32). Martin Heidegger, on his part, asserts that we do not exist inside time; we are time (Heidegger, 1962; 425). Hence, the relationship to the past is a present awareness of having been, which allows the past to exist in the present. The relationship to the future is the state of anticipating a potential possibility, task, or engagement. It is related to the human propensity for caring, being nurtured, and being concerned, which causes “being ahead of oneself” when thinking of pending occurrences. Therefore, this concern for pending or a potential occurrence also allows the future to exist in the present. The present becomes an experience, which is qualitative instead of quantitative (Heidegger, 427-9). Heidegger’s assertion is predicated on the view that we are not stuck in sequential time. For him, we are able to remember the past and project into the future – we have a kind of random access to our representation of temporal existence --- we can, in our thoughts, step out of ecstasis -- sequential time (Heidegger, 430).

What does Aristotle think of the nature of time as different from the philosophers which I have considered above? The nature of time, for Aristotle, is in two

senses; what is counted or countable, and that with which we count. This explains the first Aristotelian view that time is continuous. What is continuous, according to Aristotle, may be what is moving or at rest. But, what then, is the inherent tendency of time? The inherent tendency of time, for Aristotle, is simply the *number of continuous movement*; where it is of each movement qua movement that time is the *number* (Aristotle, 20-21). He asserts that ‘time, itself, does not work change, for change takes place incidentally in time’ (Aristotle, 20). He likened incidentally to ‘suddenly’. ‘Suddenly’ refer to what has departed from its former condition in a time imperceptible because of its smallness; but it is the nature of all change to alter things from their former condition (Aristotle, 20). This is how Aristotle resolves the question; does time belong to the class of things that exist, or to that of things that do not exist.

The above discourses aim to remove the pretension that Aristotle is the final authority on what the nature of time entails. If Aristotle is considered as the final authority on what the nature entails, we would be asserting a conclusive authority. There is the need to consider what other philosophers have said on ‘*what there is*’ with respect to time coupled with its social and physical significance.

### 3. Aristotle and the Unreality of ‘Time’: A Critical Analysis

Contemporary philosophy or metaphysics of time must endeavour to choose between the implications which Aristotle’s unreality of time has on human plans which McTaggart upheld, coupled with the relevance of the unreality of time for modern mathematical, epistemological and metaphysical discourses. This have something to do with the main objective of this study which will be to understand, as deeply as we can, the way in which the law of contraposition helps in undermining the nature of the unreality of time. However, we may now define time, and shall apply it to the propositional qualification, certain allied notions such as entailment, in consonance with the law of contraposition. Similarly, the thesis that “*for every instant of time, there is a proposition that expresses the state of the world at that instant*” (Inwagen, 1975; 186) shall also help in taking cognizance of what we want to arrive at in this study. It is, in a way, admissible that no philosopher whether on the unreality of time (Aristotle and McTaggart) or its reality (Carnap, and so forth) has denied the above thesis. Would this have meant a new version or creation of the concept of time? If it does so at the end of this discussion, it will serve well.

Apart from the Aristotelian usage of *reductio ad absurdum* and the figurative *synecdoche*, another classic case against the reality of time is found in McTaggart. The Aristotelian and McTaggart’s unreality of nature of time amounts to saying that the fluctuation of each parts of time (before, now and after) clause on our definition does some work: whether time is consistent and being able to be tied to one place or event depends on the character of these parts. However, the wholeness of time and its parts are always there but they fail to work symmetrically. This is a sort of realism. This, I shall call *spatio-temporal realism*. It asserts that events that once occurred in time (past) expresses the state of the world at time *t*. Also, this study opines that an event is true since it has happened and that a specific aspect of the world was contained in that state of event. As Peter Inwagen opines, “we could, without any restriction build sufficient information about the past, now and future into each propositions that expresses the state of the world at an instant, that for every pair of propositions (formed) – about the events in the past, now and future, each by itself entails the other” (1975; 186). In this case, Inwagen’s analysis could help in propelling this study to assert that time is not a

tautology, because time would be equally applicable to every state of affairs that falls within before, the one that falls within now, and the ones that we await to happen in the future. It seems appealing to agree with Peter Inwagen that “our concept of ‘state’ (by this, he meant to assert that there exist each point in time) must be such that, given that the world is in a certain state at a certain time (before, now, future), nothing follows logically (or empirically or through abstraction) about its states at other times” (1975; 186). Does this assertion mean that the World War I of 1914, the World War II of 1939-1945, the Emergence of United Nations Organization in 1945, the Economic Recession of 2008, the Genocide in Rwanda, and the Victory of Nelson Mandela in the election of 1994 were events that happened in a certain state at a certain point in time in which nothing follows logically or through abstraction about its states in relation to other aspects of time? It seems Aristotle and McTaggart agrees that it is the case. “The now which seems to bound the past and the future”, as Aristotle presupposes, “does not always remain one and the same” because “for what is ‘now’ is not a part of time” (Aristotle, 9). This claim implies that the events that once happened had occurred whether in the prior ‘now’ or instant ‘now’ which must always have ceased-to-be. The reason for this implication is that numerous events would happen which will still fall into now, and by virtue of that, there will be ‘numerous nows’ where one ‘now’ will cease to be before another now. The term ‘now’, as described by Aristotle, is a mirage.

There is a point of difference between Aristotle and the presentists, as theorists of time. Presentists argue that necessarily only the present objects and experiences are real, and we as conscious beings recognize this in the special vividness of our present experience. The claim of the presentists seems to differ from the Aristotelian conclusion that “for what is ‘now’ is not a part of time” (Aristotle, 9). The point of departure lay in the confusion created by the presentists that events occur in the present like the state of coma which an agent finds himself and how Aristotle says such event is not a part of time.

It suffices to say that since every event has the characteristic of being both present and very brief (where brief can be a full month or a year), time therefore, is a self-contradictory idea, and thus, as a derivative of this problem, shows that it does not exist. It will mean that each event in time follows logically about its state in other aspect of time and they are stillbirths. But as Aristotle and McTaggart conceive of the nature of time, their accounts cannot be sound, though valid. Soundness, in this case, is not essentially an end-product of logic alone, but takes more from epistemology. On the unreality of time, Aristotle and McTaggart seem to take the normative aspect of metaphysics away from the analysis of time and recognized the descriptive aspect which leads metaphysics to science. It is noteworthy that the metaphysical aspect of time cannot be descriptive but normative. The general questions of the existence of time and the proofs of its aspects are normatively ascertained. This is why Aristotle and McTaggart’s unreality of time cannot be accepted or used as a sound point of reference.

Growing-past theory of time posits that the past and the present are both real. This suggests that the future is not real. It suffices to say that Aristotle, McTaggart, presentists and growing-past theorists would conclude that the future has not come into existence; thus, its reality can be questioned. The future, in this respect, is indeterminable or merely potential. The point of difference between Aristotle and McTaggart, on one hand, and presentists and growing-past theorists, on the other, is that, it is the way events happen in the present that describes how they will be classified or fall into past and that

of the present's present which describes the one happening currently. Hence, there is always a current present which later falls into the past.

There are two problems which Aristotle fails to take care of. One, the idea of a future tense like, the Super Eagles of Nigeria will win the 2022 FIFA World Cup. This illustration might further suggest that the Super Eagles do win at time *t*, where time *t* happens after this utterance. It is noticeable that the future tense 'will win' has been replaced with 'do win' where tense verb makes tense statements true because they will fall into the present when they are to happen. He (Aristotle) fails to take care of this problem. He sees the future as indeterminable. Two, there are no objective ontological differences among present, past, and future because the differences are merely subjective. The nature of this subjectivity is the creation of awareness about a theory of time that is phenomenological. This phenomenological time is the awareness of physical time. Physical time is more basic. It helps us to understand our shared experiences in the world. Aristotle, in a way, fails to accompany his theory of the unreality of time with the authenticity of physical time. What this study intends to assert, using what our shared experiences in the world potentate, is how the failure of Aristotle's unreality of time rejects the reality of physical time. It is in physical time that we understand the distinction between the sleeping state and the state at which we are awake. We understand time to be stopping when we are asleep, while we understand time to have stopped and now being continuous when we are awake. It is the physical time that helps us as human agents to come to this understanding. Our consciousness as human beings is a necessary ingredient for us to imagine or witness other times. This occurs when we experience a difference between our present perceptions and our present memories of past perceptions. It is through these perceptions that we know that the world is changing.

Many discussions on time (Aristotle, McTaggart, and some other proponents of the unreality of time) has caused a lot of damage to the notion of now or present, as if 'present' and stillbirthness or mirage are mutually synonymous. The past or before was once now or present, while the future would become now or present. If the present is a mirage, it would mean that World War II was never a resultant effect of the problems which the First World War could not address, and that it just did not occur in time or was stillbirth. Could we have concluded that the aspects of time (past, present or now, and future) should only be used in logic (or, in abstraction, as a metaphysician like Aristotle would suggest) or in the descriptive aspect of metaphysics which is scientific, while the human state of affairs should be excluded as if events happen in metaphysical and psychological states, and not in the natural, social or physical state of human affairs? Philosophers are known to perform thought experiment and not laboratory experiment, however, it is worthy to note that the aspects of time are not metaphysical or end-products of psychological states but they describe events that once occurred in actual state; that is, these aspects lay in the state of affairs of man and events therein occurred in time as men can testify as witnesses.

The problem of personal identity where we will need to ascertain that a five year old girl in a picture and the eighty year old queen are quite the same poses a great deal of problem for the above claim. This would also give the claim that men can testify as witnesses to events of the past a serious problem. However, there is a requirement that we should answer why there is a difference in time and why the past, 'now' and future fades away so softly. But there tends the need to ask, how should time be analyzed?

Time, as this study prefers to conclude entails both the acceptance of its negative and positive significance to human affairs. Philosophers (whether metaphysicians,

epistemologists, ethicists, mathematicians, logicians, and so forth) should not forget that whatever they theorize should be useful for man. So, is it sufficient, therefore, to conclude that time is unreal because Aristotle and McTaggart have said so? The error of making a conclusive authority in Aristotle and McTaggart is committed when such conclusion is followed. But in following Newton's order, time is a real entity with its own manner of existence. The reality of time is necessitated by denying that its unreality is not identical with the way human beings places events on the calendar so that they can be categorized as ones that happened before, the ones to occur in the present and the ones placed in the future (Callender, 2010: 60). It cannot be sufficiently asserted that the whole (of time) does entail the aspects of time. The unreality of time is a forfeiture of the fact that an event A (e.g., a FIFA World cup slated for June -July of every four years) is in the present in as much as it has been planned. Entailment, here, has to do with putting an unrelated obligation on human beings to think that past, present and future has no basis in the scheme of things or are contradictory. Similarly, when events happen, it does not follow that they should be situated in their proper context of past, the ones in the present and the ones slated for the future.

Can the Aristotelian claim that time is unreal go hand-in-hand with the law of contraposition? It may not be so. Let us examine the law of contraposition so as to use it to deny Aristotle and McTaggart's view that time is unreal. Law of contraposition asserts that a conditional statement is logically equivalent to its contra-positive. It is represented in the following; "if P, then Q", this is also equivalent to the statement "if not P, then not Q".

Let us review McTaggart's thesis (time is unreal) using the law of contraposition. Law of contraposition will help us to re-ascertain the reality of time. McTaggart's thesis is that time is a self-contradictory idea, thus, it is unreal. If we use the law of contraposition, it will be that, "if time is a self-contradictory idea, then it is unreal". It is also equivalent to the view that "if time is not a self-contradictory idea, then it is not unreal". This implies by saying that "if P, then Q" which the law of contraposition reviews by saying "if not P, then not Q".

The implication of using the law of contraposition on both Aristotle and McTaggart is to show that the law makes the unreality of time to be found wanting or problematic. Similarly, if we use the law of contraposition on Aristotelian argument or thesis for the unreality of time, it will give us the same end result as we have in McTaggart's case. Thus, with the aid of the law of contraposition, we cannot ascertain the unreality of time.

Peter Inwagen's thesis that "for every instant of time, there is a proposition that expresses the state of the world at that instant" will help us in reaching a considerable conclusion in this study. It presupposes that there were events in the past like the Amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914, World War I, World War II, South Africa 2010 FIFA world cup, Brazil 2014 FIFA world cup, and so forth, in which the conditions of how they happened and how they were resolved still tells on the human co-existence or harmonious living presently. How does it suffice, therefore, to say that the past excludes the facts of today in the case of the instances mentioned? Or, does it suffice to say the foundation of United States' independence of 1776 excludes the facts of what the American government faces today? Upon what conclusive basis did Aristotle and McTaggart premised the unreality of time if the unreality of time is reduced to absurdity by the law of contraposition? A convincing argument would be required by Aristotle and McTaggart to be able to show that time is essentially unreal. I do not seem convinced that

because none of the parts of time, and its whole is non-existing, thus, time is unreal. I admire the view that time, in the Aristotelian sense, is an abstraction. But in an attempt to argue for the unreality of time, Aristotle substituted or equated the word 'now' for or with stillbirth. The stillbirth 'now' is different from the 'now' that is slow to wither away in time. The way 'present' or 'now' actualizes itself shows that it cannot become stillbirth. Some events or objects last longer in the 'present' or 'now' than what Aristotle refer to as stillbirth - present. 'Now' or 'present' persist longer in some situations. This persistence could not allow us to place stillbirthness, mirage, or unreality side by side with the word present or 'now'.

This study has found some other problems with Aristotle's position that time is unreal, which McTaggart reiterates; his (Aristotle's) rejection of time (its unreality) is a variant of absolutism. In its nature, the Aristotelian absolutism represents an absolute denial of the reality of time which he hinged on the 'nows' as distinctively ephemeral. This may be obtainable in the way that Aristotle's work represents a classical example of how a denial ought to be situated within the context of a conceptual framework. Two, Aristotle fails to carefully distinguish between time and "time". Time (without the scare quote) is both a physical state (phenomenological description), while "time" is a four letter word, or a combination of words naming time. Time provides measures for change; this is a public or physical time, while "time" is a description of words combined together; e.g., t + i + m + e = "time".

In his work, *The Metaphysics of Natural Kinds*, Gbenga Fasiku reiterates the view that there is a delivery 'time' which is estimated by using our proprietary method which is based on the buyer's proximity to the item's location (Fasiku, 2010). Fasiku's assertion as further analyzed suggests that it is through our language which is a product of a well-engineered biological instinct that events are shapened with exquisite precision (Fasiku, 2008). Thus, if reality is construed in different ways when we have different languages, and because there is a delivery time to most things that we do as human beings, it is noteworthy that people develop social and moral consciousness which has their basis in time.

It is a possibility that time dissolves because of the past, present ('now') and future, but Aristotle (albeit McTaggart) is interpreting this disintegration of time as something that makes time not to be real. If this is the case, it suggests that Aristotle may have created a wrong notion about what time does not entail. Similarly, he may have committed a hasty generalization -- where the unreality of time is equivalent to the temporality of 'nows'. In conclusion, he could have committed *ignoratio elenchi* (irrelevant conclusion) by asserting that since the 'now' which bounds the past and the future together does not always remain the same, time is unreal.

Finally, there is the need to say that the unreality of time, as this study have attempted, did not start with Aristotle, and may not end with McTaggart. In 5th century BC Greece, Antiphon the Sophist, in a fragment preserved from his chief work *On Truth*, held that: "*Time is not a reality (hypostasis), but a concept (noema) or a measure (metron)*" (Pendrick, 2010; 42). Antiphon created a confusing explication where time is a measure but not a reality. How could it have been so? Antiphon fails to give us the answer. Parmenides went further than Antiphon by maintaining that time, motion and change were illusions, leading to the paradoxes of his follower Zeno (Layton, 1994; 7). Time as an illusion is also a common theme in Buddhist thought (Garfield, 1995; 33). Other philosophers who maintained the unreality of time are Zeno, Plato, Spinoza, Hegel, F.H. Bradley, Godel, and so forth.

## Conclusion

As noted earlier, this study is not bound by any school of thought, be it the Aristotelian absolutism that time is unreal, or McTaggart's avowed rejection of time. The study just admire the law of contraposition and the principle of entailment; so, it is impossible to confine 'time' into either of Aristotle or McTaggart's absolutist discourses, or seek absolute objectivity for time itself. If time is absolutely rejected, as we in Aristotle and McTaggart, then, there might not have been the need to analyse the philosophy of time as the presentists and the growing-past theory of time have suggested, to begin with. The permissibility of retraction in ontological and social discourses of time is greatly significant to philosophy. The failure of Aristotle's attempt and many others like him (e.g., McTaggart) can be traced to the fact that they all 'misdirectedly' attempt to deny the fusion of three different aspects of time (past, 'now' and future) that they are unrelated. While attempting to gain unreality for time, Aristotle tries to confine its representation into a syllogistic argument, and create the view that if time is a mental existence, its ontological status faces enormous challenges. However, a similar mistake is further committed by Aristotle by according superiority to *reductio ad absurdum* and figurative synecdoche whereby denying the thesis that "for every instant of time, there is a proposition that expresses the state of the world at that instant" (Inwagen, 1975; 186). In a nutshell, Aristotle might have succeeded in showing the flaws in admitting that 'time' is not real, but he cannot infer from this view that the ontological status of time and its relevance to social plans of man should be abandoned. The Aristotelian conception of the unreality of time can be said to truly abhor a fundamental error in the face of inconsistency that faces this conception.

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