

Dialogue between Space and Time
Short, semi-moral work of the 21st century

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Space: Yes, my dear Mr. Time, I go from there to there.

Time: I don't know if you're going to like this Mr. Space, but so do I.

Space: This comes as a surprise, because I go from right to left and left to right, up and down, vertically, horizontally, along a secant and tangent, a straight and curved line, in an infinity of an infinite number of points. So, whether I'm flat or have a three-dimensional shape, there is no question at all about my being infinite.

Time: What! But man can measure you! Come on, anything that can be measured is logically finite.

Space: You're making a big mistake, dear sir. Even if human beings did create measuring units because they had time to lose, you must admit that when they did so they disagreed entirely. In fact, some use a ruler, some their feet, some knots, some perches, there are even those who measure with their eyes and, just think, others use a hand span. These people who measure with their feet, really seem to be thinking with their feet, just like all the others. However, these different approaches show that since no single, sole measurement applies to me, I cannot be classified as finite but as the infinite. You, however, can be lost, since people can lose time reading about our laborious studies and therefore you are finite without a shadow of a doubt. In fact, it is impossible to lose oneself somewhere in the infinite because there is no other space outside of it. I would also like to remind you that somewhere there is

also a room of lost steps and if steps, which are made with our feet, are lost, so are measurements. This shows that I can't be measured.

Time: Your reasoning, my dear Mr. Space, doesn't seem to be getting anywhere. Actually, without having to go back to the beginning of time, after a long but right and proper period of calculating how long it took for a candle to burn out, or how long it took for sand to run through an hourglass, human beings unanimously decided to measure me using a common unit of size that goes from nanoseconds to millennia. However, it's still unclear to me why the second and prime minutes, but not the third, fourth and fifth minutes, are in between.

Therefore, in order to analyze this problem properly, I think it would be better to go back to our origins and ask ourselves if time or space came first, if we came before man or if we are the offspring of man.

Space: You're clutching at straws. Everybody knows, dear sir, that at the beginning there was light which propagated here and there from its point of generation, creating space, that is, myself, through the lines that were projected in all directions.

Time: I'd call this interpretation of yours rather sophisticated. To my knowledge time, that is me, came with light, which would not have appeared if I hadn't already existed, because it is by measuring the time taken by light to travel from its source to the human eye, that you can determine the distance or the space crossed. One can really tell, Mr. Space, that you haven't read *Timaeus* by Plato, which says that I am the moving image of eternity. And, after that, Aristotle, who you probably are not familiar with, and who in his *Physics* defined time as "a number of motion with respect to before and after", that is, with respect to the past and future – passing through the present, which exists only as a moment of transition between the two – which are temporal categories.

Space: Now look, "before" and "after" are the mirror image of the spatial categories "in front of" and "behind", so what are you taking me for? Are you really sure I haven't read *Timaeus*? It seems to me Plato stated that original cosmic space is precisely where primordial matter

and ideal shapes penetrated each other giving rise to the universe. So, everything started with me, including you.

Time: Yes I have, I have read *Timaeus*, but I've also read Aristotle, who asserted that space is identified with place or the adjacent boundary of the containing body. This shows that you are a finite entity.

Space: Did you stop at Aristotle? What about the statements that were later made by the Stoics and Epicureans? Do you know anything about *De Rerum Natura* by Lucretius and where the arrow flung beyond the borders of the universe ended up?

Time: Well if you put it this way, it would be better to move on immediately to modern thought which takes up the atomic theory of space as an infinite vacuum again. This is what you are, my dear Space, nothing but infinite vacuum. You don't exist, do you understand?

Space: How can you assert I don't exist if you are talking to me? And don't come giving me lessons about vacuum. You obviously have a very short memory. Let me remind you that back when Italy had black and white television, man became aware of time gaps and had to fill them with scenes of pasturing sheep, which played a big role in healing many TV viewers from insomnia.

Time: Yet there's no need my telling you that humanity only becomes aware of you in small material things, since you stand out when you are not there. Women, for example, are always complaining that there is never enough space in their handbags and for men the only thing that matters is the distance between the armchair and the remote control. Actually, for the human sub-category of football supporters, you could even say they would like to create an absolute vacuum around them when they are watching their team playing a match.

Space: Listen, couldn't we simply come to an agreement, and acknowledge that I move in straight lines which, like light, converge at the infinite, therefore in a circle that closes and ends, just like you always return to the same position, in a circular movement like the hands of a clock?

Or couldn't we settle this on the basis of a four-dimensional continuous space-time theory – my length, width and height, and your temporal dimension – elaborated by Minkowsky and taken up by that wild-haired Einstein?

Time: How can you settle this? We're not simply talking about double parking! I feel really sorry for you. Even the movie industry hasn't been very kind to you. How distressed we were, in fact, to see *A Space Odyssey*. Can you compare this to all the movement, life and lightness there was in *Adrift in Time* or in *Back to the Future*? And, have you ever asked yourself why I exist in an infinity of proverbs and not you? Let time take care of it; time is money; there's no time like the present; o tempora o mores.

Mind: As Totò would put it, do me a favor, both of you. All of modern-day philosophical thought does justice to your arrogance, considering you an intuition at times and the projection of something at others, and placing you in a relativity that is by no means dignified. Well, if we get to the crux of the matter, you are the mere products of perceptions – take a look at Husserl, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger in this respect – which I generated to give man the illusion of being in a given place at a certain time. These are individual perceptions and are often misleading. You can tell this by the different way a human being feels about you both as he gets older. The kilometer that seemed no longer than a meter at the age of ten becomes a very long distance at ninety, and time never passes for adolescents but, alas, passes ever so quickly for adults.

Time: That may very well be, but they also say about me that “all good things come to him who waits”. Well, have you ever heard people say “all good things come to him who moves”?