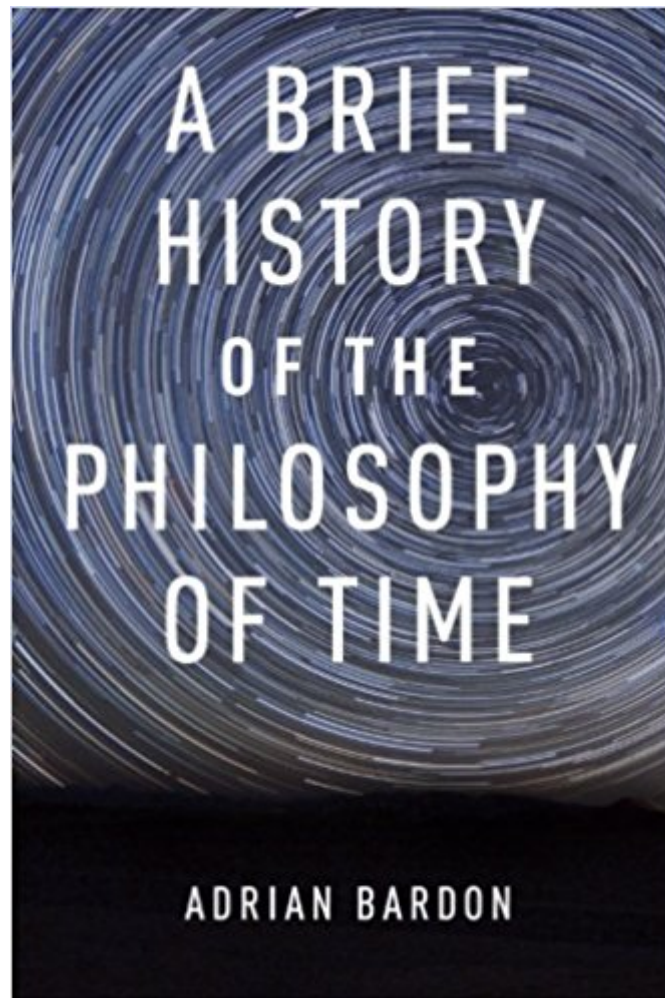


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# A Brief History Of The Philosophy Of Time



## Synopsis

Adrian Bardon's *A Brief History of the Philosophy of Time* is a short introduction to the history, philosophy, and science of the study of time—from the pre-Socratic philosophers through Einstein and beyond. *A Brief History of the Philosophy of Time* covers subjects such as time and change, the experience of time, physical and metaphysical approaches to the nature of time, the direction of time, time travel, time and freedom of the will, and scientific and philosophical approaches to eternity and the beginning of time. Bardon employs helpful illustrations and keeps technical language to a minimum in bringing the resources of over 2500 years of philosophy and science to bear on some of humanity's most fundamental and enduring questions.

## Book Information

Paperback: 200 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (July 1, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0199301085

ISBN-13: 978-0199301089

Product Dimensions: 8.1 x 0.7 x 5.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.7 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 10 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #256,605 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #61 in [Books > Science & Math > Experiments, Instruments & Measurement > Time](#) #120 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Philosophy > Metaphysics](#) #405 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Metaphysics](#)

## Customer Reviews

Bardon's *A Brief History of the Philosophy of Time* provides an engaging, clear, and succinct introduction to the philosophy of time. It is ideal as an introduction to the topic for undergraduates or, used in conjunction with sources it cites, in a more advanced class for postgraduates... Bardon consistently presents conceptually difficult ideas within philosophy and physics in a way that is accessible to undergraduate students. A particularly nice feature of Bardon's text is its integration of history with contemporary debates... I highly recommend this book as a text to introduce students to the central issues in the philosophy of time." --*The Philosophical Quarterly* "Adrian Bardon manages to cover a truly impressive array of issues in the philosophy of time ranging from an overview of some of the historical precursors of current ideas to a discussion of the most recent developments

in the area. EL. Bardon does an excellent job of making the issues thoroughly accessible whilst at the same time not shying away from the interesting and more difficult questions. Because he manages to walk this tightrope so well, the book would make an excellent resource for undergraduates, but would be equally at home in the bag of a graduate student." -- Kristie Miller, Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews

"The book is a real winner. It's accessible, lively and packed with good philosophy. More than that, despite being introductory, it really is on the cutting edge of philosophy of time." -- Craig Callender, University of California, San Diego, and editor of the Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Time and author of *Introducing Time*

"Bardon has written a superb little book on the philosophy of time. Though this book is, as its title states, a brief history, it is packed with marvelously lucid explanations of the central problems and issues relevant to the subject, including philosophy, physics, and phenomenology. Highly recommended." - L.B. McHenry, California State University - Northridge, CHOICE

"Adrian Bardon's *A Brief History of the Philosophy of Time* provides a quick and clear introduction to the philosophy of time, along with accessible outlines of relevant topics from general philosophy, the philosophy of physics, and the philosophy of mind, each chapter preceded by a well-designed summary...the comprehensiveness, clarity, and agility of this book are remarkable. Adrian Bardon, who specializes on the philosophy of space and time, has produced a valuable resource for students of time and science teachers." -- Science and Education

"...the comprehensiveness, clarity, and agility of this book are remarkable. Adrian Bardon, who specializes on the philosophy of space and time, has produced a valuable resource for students of time and science teachers." -- Science and Education

Adrian Bardon is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Wake Forest University, where he teaches courses on the philosophy of space and time and the history of philosophy. He is the author of numerous scholarly articles on time and the history of philosophy; he is also the editor of *The Future of the Philosophy of Time* (2012) and co-editor of *A Companion to the Philosophy of Time* (2013).

For the layman it is explained very well -- hence I was able to understand the concepts and ideas explored in the book. And not only did I think about the concepts but I have thought about them differently than I expected.

As the title suggests, this is a brief review of the various understandings of time. I would have enjoyed a greater investigation of the psychology of time, but this book has given me a great frame of reference for further exploration of the subject.

Excellent book. It covers a brief history of how time has been viewed historically, offers interesting insight and questions for your consideration. An easy read and very educational.

This is an amazing book. Very clear and with the perfect amount of science blended in.

Good exercise for the mind.

Received in excellent condition. It reads well and its title is well suited! And...I'm only half way through. Great things sure to come. An important adjunct to works such as Brian Green's "The Fabric Of The Cosmos" and "From Eternity To Here" by Sean Carroll.

Excellent summary and presentation.

In this slim book Adrian Bardon discusses one of the largest, possibly \*the\* largest metaphysical issue: time. Surprisingly enough, his conclusions do not suggest that the riddle of time is unsolvable. On the contrary, the intricate questions presented in the Introduction - "What is the nature of our experience of time? What gives time its direction? Is travel in time possible? Is the future unwritten, and do our choices matter? Did time begin, and, if so, how?" (p. 2) - get directly addressed and rather unambiguously answered in the subsequent chapters. If you wish to believe that the "flow" of time constitutes a conceptual enigma that is impossible to penetrate with our feeble human minds, "A Brief History of the Philosophy of Time" will disappoint you. The title is somewhat misleading. Bardon does not limit himself to the philosophical method as it is traditionally understood. His approach is eclectic and energetic: The author combines metaphysical reasoning with results from physics and cognitive science. That applaudable strategy allows the author to cover a lot of ground in only 180 pages. A more suitable title would be thus "A Brief History of the Concept of Time" ("A Brief History of Time" is already taken). Bardon's story starts in the usual place: in Ancient Greece, with the Eleatic paradoxes of motion and change, and Aristotle's answers to Parmenides and Zeno. Augustine is mentioned in the passing, and then we jump straight to the modern period with Locke's and Kant's epistemological proposals concerning the origin of our temporal concepts. We reach the twentieth century already in the third chapter. The rest of the book is dedicated to Einstein's theories of relativity, McTaggart's notorious arguments against the reality of the time flow, the arrows of time, the possibility of time travel, the question whether free will and a fixed future are compatible, and the

possible beginning (and end) of the Universe. There is no doubt that Bardon has picked up many exciting bits. However, it is hard to believe that medieval philosophy has nothing interesting to tell us about the nature of time, especially given the theological predilections of the Scholastics. The continental strand of philosophy is also entirely absent. I miss in particular Henri Bergson whose views on duration I remember to be very inspiring (and very complex). I do not blame Bardon for having his way of presenting the subject, but I do not appreciate when an author makes huge omissions without informing his reader explicitly about them. A couple of paragraphs in the Introduction and some footnote references would do; otherwise some readers may be led to think that Bardon's book includes all significant contributions to the debate on the nature of time. It certainly does not. "A Brief History of the Philosophy of Time" is mainly a story about two mutually incompatible views of time: the dynamic one that conforms to our intuitions according to which time flows and the present moment travels from the past towards the future, and the static one that conceives time as the fourth dimension of the spatiotemporal "block" of reality. The book gives us a good understanding of the latter, but we also ascertain that a coherent explication is a very tricky task, since one has to interpret the flow of time as an illusion \*without\* using the question-begging temporal concepts. So, when we read sentences like this one - "The absence of any absolute now is perfectly consistent with my having beliefs, at any moment, as to what is 'currently' happening, and as to what lies in the past or future" (p. 108) - we grasp, of course, Bardon's point, but we also see that he does not manage to fully control the semantic subtleties. Because what do "moment", "past" and "future" mean within the static view? Maybe the time-as-an-extra-spatial-dimension metaphor should be employed more vividly and more shrewdly. Bardon's sympathizes with the static view, and presents many good arguments for it. He is, however, uncharitable in his assessment because he does not tell us about competing arguments corroborating the dynamical view. Also, the author never seriously disputes the static hypothesis. He mentions several apparently powerful counter-arguments - the phenomenon of change (p. 98-99), our ordinary understanding of causation (p. 99), scientific explanation (p. 100) and time-travel asymmetry (p. 136) - but he dismisses them quickly, usually as psychological biases. Although Bardon tries to construe "temporal passage as adaptive psychological projection", I did not gather how his theory is different from Kant's idealism. Ironically enough, the author manages to present Kant's views on time more lucidly than his own. Finally, there is the matter of style. Some sections are excellently written. I enjoyed in particular Bardon's exposition of Kantian epistemology in Chapter 2. The difference between (metaphysical) fatalism and (causal) determinism is carefully expounded in Chapter 6. However, in many places Bardon gets slightly verbose: He explains something, and then he explains it again using another

words, but too often these additional paragraphs do not really increase our understanding. So, yes, this short book could be even shorter. Besides, many sentences are awkward and cluttered with genitives: "Metaphysical fatalism's embrace of the principle of bivalence derives from the static theory's metaphysical position on the status of events in time" (p. 142). Bardon's approach to the subject is an exemplary synthesis of popular metaphysics and popular science. That approach alone easily trumps drawbacks of the book, but hardly removes them. If you have enough time to read only one \*short\* book on (the philosophy of) time, Bardon's work is probably the best choice. But if you simply wish to read a \*single\* book on the subject, I believe there are better alternatives. (An extended version of this review \*in Norwegian\* has been published here: [http://www.salongen.no/-/bulletin/show/817379\\_populaermetafysisk-om-tid](http://www.salongen.no/-/bulletin/show/817379_populaermetafysisk-om-tid) )

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