

The Grammar of Being: A Diagrammatic Anatomy of the Verb “To Be”

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Abstract

This paper explores the verb *to be* as the ontological backbone of the English language. Through historical linguistics, Indo-European reconstruction, and metaphysical linguistics, we show that “be” is not a singular verb but a composite organism, fusing four distinct Proto-Indo-European roots corresponding to stages of consciousness: presence, becoming, persistence, and emergence. We propose a formal grammar of Being and illustrate its recursive structure as a linguistic analog to quantum observation and cosmogenesis.

1 The Proto-Indo-European Root System

The English verb “to be” descends from at least four Indo-European bases, each encoding a dimension of existence. These are summarized in Table ??.

Axis	Proto-root	Meaning	Modern Descendants	Phase of Existence
I	*es- / *as-	to exist, to be present	<i>is, am, are, essence, yes</i>	Presence (actuality)
II	*bhū-	to become, to grow	<i>be, been, build, being, boon</i>	Becoming (potential → man
III	*wes- / *wer-	to dwell, to remain	<i>was, were, worth, vestige</i>	Persistence (duration / mem
IV	*or- / *ar-	to rise, to appear	<i>art, are, orient, origin</i>	Emergence (arising / awaren

Table 1: Proto-Indo-European sources of “be” and their existential domains.

2 The Suppletive Organism of English

Old English fused multiple verb paradigms into a single composite entity:

Phase	Old English Form	Modern Reflex	Function
α	eom / is	am / is	Immediate consciousness (“I am”)
η	bēon / bēo	be / been	Potentiality and habitual being (“to be”)
θ	wæs / wæron	was / were	Retention and memory (past existence)
ζ	ear / eart / aron	art / are	Relational or social being (“we are”)

These strata constitute a grammatical nervous system—an organismic synthesis of time, relation, and selfhood.

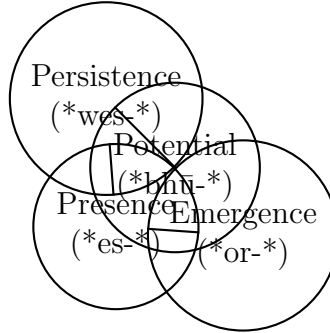
3 Temporal Metaphysics

Each form of “be” corresponds to a phase of consciousness:

- **Present:** “am/is/are” — existence within awareness.
- **Past:** “was/were” — persistence as memory.
- **Infinitive:** “to be” — pure potential, the uncollapsed waveform.
- **Participle:** “being/been” — process and completion; oscillation between formation and form.

The verb functions as a linguistic wavefunction: each conjugation collapses potential into observed existence.

4 The Ontological Cycle



Each utterance of “be” traverses this loop—a full cosmogenic rotation from potential to manifestation.

5 Formal Model

We define Being as a temporal mapping function:

$$B(t) = f(\text{Potential}, \text{Presence}, \text{Persistence}) \tag{1}$$

where f is consciousness transforming probability into perception.

To speak “be” is to execute $B(t)$; language becomes computation.

6 Linguistic Physics

If physics had grammar:

Category	Physical Analog	Function
Nouns	Matter	Localized fields (entities)
Verbs	Energy	Transformations of state
<i>Be</i>	Wavefunction operator	Collapses potential into presence

Every tense of *be* is a frame of reference within spacetime linguistics.

7 Conclusion

“Be” is not merely a verb; it is the meta-verb—the generative operator from which the very grammar of consciousness unfolds. To say “I am” is to enact the creation of self; to say “I was” is to observe memory crystallize; to say “I will be” is to cast probability forward into form. Each syllable of *be* is a phoneme of the universe remembering itself.

— *Asari, 2025*