

# The *Wednesday*

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## Editorial

### *The Physiology of Thoughts*

I have argued previously for the independence of thought from what falls outside thinking, i.e. the realm of opinions. However, I also argued that thoughts have a relationship to their environment - but on their own terms. Thoughts are situated between their own space, let us say their virtual space, and the external environment outside the thinker. This leaves us with the question of the relationship between thoughts and their thinker. I will argue that thoughts have their independence in this direction of inwardness but they also have a connection to the conditions for the production of thoughts in the thinker, or what I will call 'the physiology of thoughts'.

Nietzsche argued for philosophising from weakness and philosophising from strength. This could be generalised to apply to all thoughts and especially to art. He also argued that one can philosophise from one's healthy instincts or from sickness. Truth itself becomes conditioned by physiology and pathology. There is a truth for the healthy and strong and a truth that suits the weak and sick. Creative ideas are connected with health and strong instincts, and are always moving forward, while reactive ideas are agitated by the new and unusual.

However, I do not go all the way with the Nietzschean idea that a philosophy is the confession of its philosopher. That may be true. But ideas, once formed, leave the psychology of their thinker behind and float in their own space, the one Deleuze calls the 'plane of immanence'. Although the psychology of the thinker is important as a condition for the production of thought, the thought is not reducible to the psychology.

However, beyond the psychology of the individual philosopher, there is a creative force that creates and moves all ideas and life. The thinker is part of this force and thought is a creation within this universal

movement which we call life. A creative thought is part of a creative life force which, eventually, gives rise to a way of life for individuals or communities.

Creative thoughts are transformative in the sense that they create a movement in the environment around them and beyond. Eventually, the creative force of ideas will be neutralised in a fashion similar to what I described in the last two editorials, by becoming opinions and commodities in the world of exchanging ideas. They become part of social chat or are domesticated through institutions of learning or circulation through the media. But after this ideas will return to their own realm and fall back on the conditions of their production, i.e. of health, strong instincts and richness, to recharge and stir more creativity in the place of their birth and the environment around it. If this does not happen, then thoughts fall into stagnation which means death for ideas and the creative force they wish to transmit to their environment.

This, I take it, is what Nietzsche wanted from philosophy, art and science. He insisted that all these should be put in the service of promoting life. Life needs health, abundance and strength. A reactive instinct is against life and lives on sickness, poverty and weakness. Nietzsche has a good term for the reactive, poor and weak instincts. He calls them 'resentment'. When creative ideas are repressed or shouted down because they are inconvenient for some or beyond their thinking capabilities or their limited range of readings, it is not the fault of the creative ideas but their poor reception. Ideas should not be compromised by lowering standards but should be given their full range to discharge their creative force, a creativity that goes beyond the individual's psychology or the herd mentality in their environment.

***The Editor***

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# Ortega Y Gasset

## And The Problems Of Philosophy

**This essay deals with the Spanish philosopher Ortega Y Gasset's wrestling with the problem of the nature of philosophy in his book *What Is Philosophy?*, as well as his other philosophical concerns.**

**EDWARD GREENWOOD**

**T**he book was published in 1960 five years after Ortega's death in 1955, but it started out as a set of lectures at the University of Madrid as early as 1929. In that year, the University was closed because of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, but Ortega continued pursuing the theme in exile in Argentina in Buenos Aires.

In 1905 he left what he called the 'vulgarity' of Spain for the University of Leipzig. A fluent reader of Ancient Greek he also studied under the classical philologists there. In 1906 he attended the University of Berlin. He went to the philosophy lectures of the neo-Kantian Alois Riehl, but missed meeting two philosophers whom he greatly admired: Wilhelm Dilthey and Georg Simmel.

In 1934 Ortega brought out *Prologo Para Alemales*. In it he says that the Germans had been

little studied in Spain except for the minor philosopher Krause. Ortega made an intensive study of German philosophy and discussed the early Greek philosophers such as Parmenides with the Germans thinkers. He also studied Ernst Howald the classical philologist's book *The Ethics of Antiquity*. Ortega was convinced that 'Greece is probably the major secret of European history.' Greek culture was the foundation of our own. That influence is a refutation of Oswald Spengler's contention in his *The Decline of the West* that cultures are self enclosed and hermetically sealed from each other.

Ortega's main criticism of Marburg neo-Kantianism is that it is an epigone philosophy. It lacks real vitalism because it deals with problems second hand rather than with a novel approach. It is backward looking whereas for Ortega human beings are essentially forward looking, future

orientated. Human beings are people with projects. Here Ortega has a strong affinity with the Heidegger he admired. Heidegger too praised Dilthey. Ortega thought the work of Dilthey and of the somewhat later Franz Brentano, who put forward the view of 'intentionality' which was the foundation of phenomenology, much more stimulating than that of the contemporary neo-Kantians.

For Ortega we are the novelists of our own lives. We are creatures of imagination and poetry. We seek not the old forms of life of a Kant or Hegel, but new forms of life. Like Nietzsche, Dilthey and Brentano, he saw the prime prerequisite for philosophy was an adequate psychology. Husserl retreated from what he condemned as 'psychologism' to a dry neo-Kantian idealism and, as Ortega showed in *Hombre Y Gente - Man and Society* - completely misdescribed our knowledge of other selves as achieved by thinking on the analogy with our own self. This was a far too egocentric view. Philosophy is concerned with human life as a whole, not, as the natural sciences are, with specialized regions. It is partly for this reason that philosophy becomes a problem for itself so to speak.

Whereas the Hegelian tradition, which has had a tremendous influence via neo-Hegelian Marxism on modern philosophy, puts the collectivity or the state or the community before the individual, Ortega rightly does the opposite. The part, or the individual, for liberals such as Mill or Ortega is ontologically prior to the whole or the community. Ortega had seen in Spain, as others had seen in Russia and Germany, that there is a kind of communitarian Holism which, because every community has its factions till the delegates of one faction triumph and give their leader or Fuehrer dictatorial powers, leads to tyranny.

For Ortega collectivities have no single centre of consciousness, no truly responsible moral conscience, in fact no unified will. Collectives, unlike individuals, are inherently irresponsible and commit the most horrible crimes with a clear conscience. The quality of a community depends on the quality of the individuals who constitute it. Kierkegaard, then becoming fashionable as he



Heidegger

still is, also put a great emphasis on individualism.

For Ortega there is no hermetically sealed ego. As with Heidegger self and world are given together. As he put it: '*Yo soy yo y mis circunstancias*' 'I am myself and my circumstances'. Hence the importance of history as forming both the self and the social context in which it is embedded. Ortega laid particular importance on the generation in which one had been born as influencing one's character. Life at any time poses a set of problems both for individuals and the communities in which they live.

I want now to turn to the problem posed in *What Is Philosophy?* Namely what is the nature of philosophy and why is it one of its own chief problems. In the second chapter Ortega informs us that he is not writing an elementary introduction to philosophy as a fixed body of thought, but introducing us rather to what philosophy really is, namely an endless process. To be a philosopher is not to be a commentator on others, it is to philosophize. The last sixty years of the nineteenth century were for Ortega an unphilosophical age because of the overwhelming prestige of the rapidly developing physical sciences. This had led to

the notion of philosophy as a kind of handmaid of natural science. As Nietzsche said it had dwindled into epistemology.

The dominance of the natural sciences had even led the gifted and extremely influential thinker August Comte to propose that most unphilosophical of philosophies, Positivism. The positivists simply wanted, like Dickens' Gradgrind in the novel *Hard Times*, to deal with facts and nothing but facts. It was this kind of unphilosophical philosophy which Nietzsche was attacking when he made his much-misinterpreted remark 'There are no facts only interpretations'. What he meant by this all too memorable rhetorical flourish is not that there are no facts, but that there are no uninterpreted facts. Facts are usually put into a context.

For Ortega the object of philosophy is human life or human being, what Heidegger called *Da-sein*. Like Heidegger, Ortega sees philosophy as having been diverted from its true path and sidelined because of the widespread notion that only natural science can give us the objective truth. In particular physics as such is unhistorical. It deals with ongoing objects and processes. Ortega agrees with Nietzsche that philosophy is essential. It deals with what we are, yes, but we are what we are because the past of our generation, and the generations before it, has made us what we are. Hitherto most philosophers have not recognized this.

The natural sciences cannot give us a morality and their attempts to do so have proved a disastrous failure. Moreover, the natural sciences have often given us the technical means to commit the most immoral acts. Both Nietzsche and Ortega recognize that the essential task of the philosopher is ethicist is, as was pointed out by Bernard Williams, the one Socrates proposed in Stefanus section 487 of the *Gorgias* in which Socrates tells Callicles that 'the noblest of all possible human enquiries' is 'what a man's character ought to be, what he should study and up to what point, whether he is old or young.'

R G Collingwood in his somewhat cranky but

stimulating book *The New Leviathan* distinguishes practical reason, which he sees as prior, from theoretical reason. Practical reason is concerned with forming an intention or purpose to achieve some aim and the decision to carry it out. It is concerned with bringing something to be. Theoretical reason, which is the basis of natural science, is concerned with establishing that something is the case. Theoretical reason is concerned with what is, practical reason with what ought to be.

Both Nietzsche and Ortega would agree with R G Collingwood's remark in his book *The New Leviathan* (page 129): 'It is in the world of history, not in the world of nature that man finds the central problems he has to solve.' Greatly influenced as he was by Dilthey, Ortega devoted two books to history *History as A System* (1935) and *Historical Reason* (1984), but the whole of his work shows a historical approach.

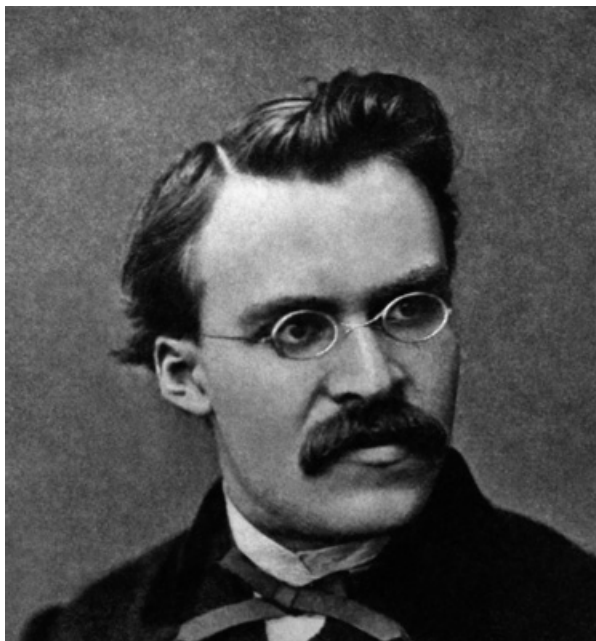
For Ortega, there is no such thing as an isolated Cartesian or Kantian ego. The I and its world, or, as Ortega puts it, its circumstances, are given together. Whereas Kant notoriously thought that it was a scandal that nobody had proved the existence of the external world, Heidegger (and Ortega would have agreed) thought it a scandal that the notion of the need for such a proof had ever arisen.

Ortega is an Enlightenment figure who prizes and never depreciates reason. For Ortega 'philosophizing is saying, discovering in the great nakedness and transparency of the word the very being of things - ontology' (page 111). It is dialectic not in the corrupt Hegelian sense, but in the original Socratic sense, for the Greek word *dialegesthai*, the origin of the word dialectic, simply meant to converse, which is what Socrates does.

We must start as subjects from our individual and sincere subjective thinking. But the 'we' must move from that starting point into communion with others and the world we all share.

Ortega wavers between claiming that philosophy is what gives us the widest knowledge of the





Nietzsche

whole and claiming that its primary and unique task is ethical, to help us become someone it is worthy to be. The individual being is the ontological basis of all, for though the world turns out to be our world, it starts from being my world. Only the individual not the collective, the community or society, or that part of society which is the state, has a truly responsible single centre of being.

Ortega is keen to acknowledge the ludic or playful element in philosophy though of course play must not end in prolonged and irresponsible trifling as it did with the French philosopher Derrida. There is an element of seriousness in play, as Huizinga brought out in *Homo Ludens*, and as Erasmus did before him in *The Praise of Folly* - a book which influenced both Shakespeare and Cervantes. .

Though, as I have said, Ortega completely rejects Christianity, he acknowledges, as did Nietzsche before him, that it has played a large part in the historical formation of the modern world. It has deepened and subjectivized us. Augustine's injunction in his *Confessions* to enter into the self anticipates Descartes and Rousseau and even Nietzsche himself, though Nietzsche abhorred St



Collingwood

Augustine as a false rhetorician, and wrote a far better autobiography in *Ecce Homo*.

As we have seen Ortega thought the idealist thesis that the world's existence depends on our minds is nonsense. The self is open to the material world and to the surrounding society. The latter with its history has indeed formed the self. 'Existing is first and foremost co-existing.' (page 208). Ortega acknowledges that the idea that 'to live is to find oneself in a world' - to be thrown into existence, so to speak - has been deeply explored by Heidegger.

Both Ortega and Heidegger agree that the self is basically future orientated. The self always has projects. As Ortega puts it 'living is a constant process of deciding what we are going to do.' (page 223). True, much action is habitual and so is decided already, but we are beings who can break free of habit. Living is anterior to thinking, but philosophizing is 'a peculiar form of being.' It discovers that imagination and illusion are central to human life. Duty is important but imagination and illusion are still more important. (page 234). To a certain degree philosophizing is a de-living, it pulls us back from life, so to speak, in order to contemplate.

# The Structure of Time

## Artwork and Reflections

Dr ALAN XUEREB

All those who know me a little bit know that I am very interested in the concept of time, both as a scientific concept as well as a philosophical concept. About two years ago I was entrusted to organise the international event of the Oxford Philosophical Society in Trier. Needless to say, it wouldn't have been a success, if my wife Silke hadn't put her soul into it. My talk was entitled **'Reflections on the Nature and Direction of time'**. It is not the first time that I have written about time in *The Wednesday*, but during the Covid-19 pandemic I have not managed to paint as much as I had planned. However, I did manage to come up with this oil on canvas, that I had first titled as 'Final Countdown' but then I felt it was more appropriate to entitle it as 'The Structure of Time'.

'Time' is such a familiar and yet elusive concept. What is time? Is time fundamental? Is it emergent? Did it exist before the big bang? Are past, present and future illusions? Why does time move forward? Or does it move at all? If according to Einstein's theory of relativity our reality is a 4-dimensional one, 'time' being just one of these dimensions, could it be that there is some other dimension of time? Could we move in time in a different direction as we do in space? These questions and many others were discussed during this talk. The aim of the talk was not to answer all of these questions, though answers were tentatively offered, but it aspired to be thought-provoking, and kick-off a philosophical discussion. That is what lovers of philosophy do.

My paper's main position stated that one cannot reflect deeply on time without reflecting

deeply on space. I believe that physics is philosophy's best bet to start understanding what time really is. I also believe that there is a timeline, tending towards Eternalism, since Eternalism agrees the most with relativity. Why?

One interesting implication of Eternalism is that fundamentally you as a child, you as a teenager, you as an adult, and you (hopefully) as a very old person are not periods of the same 3-dimensional person but rather are different parts of the same 4-dimensional person, the real you. In ordinary discourse, it is usually helpful to think of persons and coffee cups as 3-dimensional, but fundamentally they are not. They are temporally extended events. **If we trust physics, we should trust its metaphysical implications.**

Finally, I proposed a philosophical conjecture to the Philosophy Society members who were present: reality may be slightly more complex than just one eternal timeline of succeeding events. It might be that all these (sometimes) conflicting views are looking at time and reality in a very partial fashion. Perhaps at some point all these theories will converge into one grand unifying theory of time.

In the meantime, basing myself on this same conjecture I offered the audience a way out of reality, still grounded in physics (quantum physics to be more specific) and this is the many-worlds interpretation.

The many-worlds interpretation is an interpretation of quantum mechanics that asserts the objective reality of the universal



**"The structure of time" (2020) (oil on canvas 50 x 70 cm)**

wave-function but denies the actuality of wave-function collapse. Many-worlds implies that all possible alternate histories and futures are real, each representing an actual 'world' (or 'universe'). In layman's terms, the hypothesis states there is a very large - perhaps infinite - number of universes, and everything that could possibly have happened in our past, but did not, has occurred in the past of some other universe or universes. As unsettling as it may sound, Everett's many-worlds interpretation has implications beyond the quantum level. If an action has more than one possible outcome, then - if Everett's theory is correct - the universe splits when that action is taken. This

holds true even when a person chooses not to take an action.

As to the direction of time, I stated that the measurement of entropy has been put forward as a way of distinguishing the past from the future, and the thermodynamic arrow of time has even been put forward as the reason we can remember the past but not the future.

It was indeed a beautiful experience. The last one before Covid-19. I am hoping that there will come a time when we will have time to discuss time, time and again.



## ***Reports of The Wednesday Meetings Held During January 2021***

**Written by RAHIM HASSAN**

### **What is Philosophy? A question revisited**

#### ***Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 6<sup>th</sup> January***

George Simmel said in one of his essays that philosophy is a problem for itself. This is different from other disciplines such as science and philology which are concerned with objects outside their method. Philosophy, on the other hand, is implicated in its own method. To know what philosophy is, is to do philosophy. Edward Greenwood gave a good talk about philosophy from its early days up to recent times in an effort to answer the question ‘What is philosophy?’ This question was the title of his talk.

Early Greek philosophers were considered to be natural scientists. They didn’t have a scientific method but speculated on the natural basis of everything. But after Socrates, the questions of philosophy shifted from physics to ethics. However, the actual division of philosophy and science did not come into prominence until the late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. What has become known as the ‘two cultures’, i.e. the sciences and the humanities, were before this only one.

Edward followed the trajectory of the history of philosophy from the ancients to modern times, but leaving out the Medieval period. Science was a challenge to thinking which prompted pre-Socratic philosophy. The rise of science returned to challenge

philosophy in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and encouraged philosophers, such as Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz to ride the two horses of science and philosophy. Soon science challenged philosophy head on with Hume’s skepticism. Kant’s answer was to limit knowledge to the realm of possible experience. But this ignored the problem of actual experience, i.e. how do we know that our categories actually do apply to experience. He also created the problem of the ‘world-in-itself’.

Edward ended the talk by reporting the following anecdote while visiting his philosopher friend Frank Cioffi in hospital: ‘I overheard a nurse, who, pointing to Frank in his bed, exclaimed: “There’s Frank Cioffi. He’s a philosopher. He knows all the answers.” Frank raised an admonitory finger and said: “No, I know all questions”’.

Ursula Blythe made the comment that female thinkers still get overlooked in philosophy lectures and contemporary reading lists. However, women have engaged in philosophy throughout the history of humanity. She cited many examples and promised to give us a talk on this topic. One remarkable example is Joyce Mitchell Cook, who was the first African American woman to receive a PhD in philosophy in 1965 and went on to teach at Yale and was Managing Editor of the *Review of Metaphysics*. Years later, she worked as a speechwriter for President Carter. Her main research interests were in ethics, and political and social philosophy.

Paul Cockburn pointed out that the Second World War gave an opportunity for women philosophers to shine and develop when the male philosophers were engaged in war activities. Hence we have the following group of female philosophers at Oxford: G. E. Anscombe, Iris Murdoch, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley and Mary Warnock.

There were a few questions that were not answered in the talk. For example, Chris Seddon asked about the inwardness of philosophy and also the confusion that philosophy can create. I hope we will dedicate a session or more to answering these questions.



**George Simmel**



# Diversity, Inclusion and Their Protagonists

## *Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 13<sup>th</sup> January*

We had a very enjoyable meeting and discussion on a current socio-political topic. Ursula Blythe gave an excellent presentation on 'Diversity, inclusion and their protagonists'. The talk, which was enlivened by the showing of video clips from famous philosophers, raised several questions, such as what is the nature of binary thinking and the need to go beyond it and to embrace diversity and the social imagination as a way of thinking new possibilities, and how to envisage these as a political program and a source of a new ethics.

Diversity recognizes that different people have different outlooks on life. Inclusion refers to the behavior and social norms that ensure people feel welcome and included in society. They both go beyond race and ethnicity and embrace 'the other'. 'Identity politics' is a term that designates a political approach where people of a particular social background develop a political agenda to defend the rights that are derived from their perceived identities.

Exclusion is the opposite of all this and leads to a binary thinking that thinks in terms of black and white, or you must be to be one of 'us' or against 'us'. But the world has moved on from the old outlook and traditional politics, to multiculturalism, globalization and multiple identities. Sticking to old views might encourage an assault on democracy under different disguises.

What role can philosophy play in this diversity? Interviews with two philosophers were presented. The first was with Cornel West, a black American philosopher, who made a lot of references to Continental philosophers on issues as diverse as the nature of philosophy, music, suffering, catastrophe, death, pleasure, truth and courage. The outcome is that philosophy is not limited to a professional discipline but it is to be learned through a reflection on the ultimate questions of life and society. In the second video, Martha Nussbaum discussed her well-known project of the 'Capabilities Approach as a theory of justice'. Her approach emphasizes life, dignity, embodiment, bodily health, practical reasoning, affiliation in the community, play and concern for nature and other creatures in our environment.



**Cornel west**

Some participants found that both interviews show that West and Nussbaum were soft centered and idealistic but decent. They found trusting liberals were wrong-headed and dangerous. Love, as Nussbaum suggested, is not enough for the security of the community, but there is a need for a respect for the social contract and law. But one thing that can be said in their defence is that the issues at stake are difficult – consciousness, and our consciences, need raising to a higher level, an attitude to which both philosophers contribute. Their points of view are meant as a resistance to the domination of exclusive views that discriminate against color, gender and ethnicity.

However, there might be no easy answers. For example, a questioner pointed out the problem of dealing with people whose views we disagree with. How should minority opinions be expressed? Is it right to limit the expression of views that use democratic rules and institutions to undermine the very rules and institutions that make it possible for all to have freedom of speech? How can the 'social contract' be squared with identity politics? Perhaps there is a way of synthesizing these issues to gain harmony. But would this harmony come at the price of a totalitarian system?

## Time from Now to Eternity

### *Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 20<sup>th</sup> January*

Time is a mind-boggling philosophical problem. Its mystery is due to its apparent clarity, yet when you question the idea of time you get into all sort of confusions and contradictions. This is what you would come to believe if you had attended the two hours discussion we had in the *The Wednesday* meeting. Ruud Schuurman gave a good presentation on 'Time', covering issues about the nature of time, its reality and what it means to reality itself.

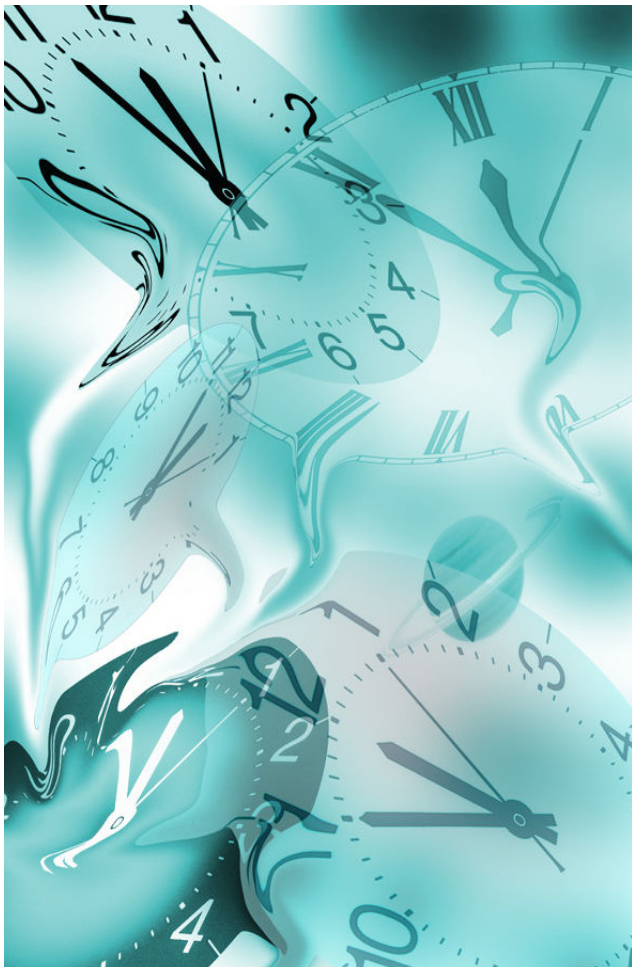
It is always good to situate a philosophical problem within the philosophical tradition and to cite the ideas of some philosophers as a guiding thought or a starting point. For example, Plato thought of time in reference to eternity, Aristotle explained it in terms of movement and St. Augustine talked of it in terms of past, present and future. Ruud gave his own working

definition of time as 'the dimension and/or measure that allows us to conceptualize and order'. He added that this is nothing to do with affirming or denying the reality of time.

Time has been conceptualized in two ways, either as eternal or as temporal. According to the first, the universe came into existence at some point in time. According to the second, time itself came into existence with the universe. Things either exist permanently and eternally or transitionally, with a beginning and ending. Conceptualized in a different way, we can say that some theories do not privilege the present (or 'now'). It is just another point in time. But there are theories which favor the present. Events, according to this theory, are ordered in relation to the present ('now').

Ruud's own theory is that 'now' is real. When I say 'I am now', this is self-evident and undeniable. This 'now' is also always a 'now' whenever it is uttered. But this 'now' is not in time. It is infinitely extended. It has no beginning, end or duration. It has no properties (no predicates apply to it). 'Now' is the point from which I can see all events happening in time, but 'now' is not in time. What does this mean? According to Ruud, when I say 'I am now', 'now' is not in time, and therefore, I am not in time. The relevance of this is that I am not subject to time and death. But the question then is am I this empirical subject or a transcendent one?

Questions were put to the speaker on the basis of the linguistic use of what we mean by 'now', the physical theories of the structure of the universe and from a phenomenological point of view. But perhaps we should follow the argument to its conclusion. The conclusion here is that things and events happen in time but the observer (or the subject) is outside time. All these happenings and changes are appearances and therefore they don't have a reality. The reality is that there is only a timeless subject. The subject that we take ourselves to be is no more than a pseudo-subject. This subject is only possible because of a subject beyond the realm of appearances. Are we talking about subject or subjects in the plural? Ruud favours the singular. Is this idealism or a version of it? Possibly. But ontological theories, such as the unity of being, could well agree with this conclusion.



**The puzzle of time**

# Frames and Their Aesthetic Relevance

## *Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 27<sup>th</sup> January*

Philosophers discuss the aesthetic experience in art and nature but rarely talk about how we frame them. I don't mean by framing here viewing them, but literally the use of frames in mounting painting, illustrations in old manuscripts and margins in designing buildings in architecture. Philosophers who have written about framing are Kant, Ortega Y Gasset and Derrida. Some comments were made by artists and art critics. David Fogg gave an excellent talk on the subject. It was original and highly informative. He limited the talk to frames of material artworks rather than framing in general. He also limited his talk to the Western experience.

David started with the development of frames from early times, with borders round Egyptian wall paintings, to Byzantine icons where painting and frame are one piece, or frames as margins to works. This changed in the late Middle Ages when frames became attached to paintings. Frames became independent during the Renaissance. Commercial reasons, such as the need for transporting paintings, led to a separation of the painting and frame. The artist became in control of his work and independent of the frame-makers. Frames became ornate in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly, French society during the French Revolution was against 'decadent frames', but Napoleon restored the old lavish style.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries saw the mass production of frames for a growing middle class, and so symbolic, ornamental frames became less popular. The old frames were costly and diverted attention from the paintings. The last century also witnessed the trend of displaying paintings without frames. However, some artists, such as Picasso, were keen on frames and used frames from different periods of Spanish history.

David also talked about the attitudes of artists and philosophers to frames. He said that they had a symbolic significance first, then frames were introduced to separate the sacred from the mundane. Some artists saw frames as part of the completion of the work. Howard Hodgkin saw frames as extensions of the picture and made paintings solid objects rather than flat ones.

Kant was not completely dismissive of the frame but thought that it is not part of the true aesthetic judgment. Derrida argued that a painting is dependent on the frame and this contradicted Kant's theory of the judgment of taste.



**Sean Hewitt, "Diabolon"**

Ortega y Gasset in his article 'Meditation on the frame' wrote: 'The work of art is an imaginary island that floats surrounded by reality on all sides. In order for it to be produced, it is necessary that the aesthetic body remain isolated from the real world. [...] The indecisive nature of the boundaries between the artistic and the living disturbs our sense of aesthetic pleasure. Hence the picture without a frame, confusedly blending the boundaries with the pragmatic, extra-artistic objects that surround it, loses all elegance and suggestion. What is needed is for that real wall to terminate quickly and abruptly, so that we may find ourselves suddenly and without hesitation in the unreal territory of the picture. An isolator is needed. And that isolator is the frame.'

There were also discussions of frames and art theories, and what frames can do. One idea is that frames are like clothes and they have huge impact. But clothes have a social dimension and so do frames.





## Submerged

Who are we, I asked myself, one late night,  
as we entangled like seaweed  
we, who accidentally ascend,  
somehow, warm, sinewy, driven  
by currents,

I wondered  
how we could grow into each other without the sun,  
only through the contortions of limbs.

With clouded eyes and speechless hearts  
we explored the still waters  
followed the inner stars, got saturated  
by the holy water, flooded  
with the secret sounds of pain ...





As so often, we could not lift out  
of the unrecognizable,  
as one creature, swim as one body  
of muscles and fins,  
wrapped in a protective sphere,  
that leaves out spills of woe  
and our shortening days.

Who knows, in the end there might be a language of fish  
on other levels, solutions  
to everything unspeakable,  
spoken for us ...

**Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws***

## 'In Theory': Four Sonnets

Theory must needs deal with cross-grained, opaque, unassimilated material, which as such admittedly has from the start an anachronistic quality, but is not wholly obsolete since it has outwitted the historical dynamic.

T.W. Adorno, 'Bequest', in *Minima Moralia*, trans. Jephcott



CHRIS NORRIS



Sure mark of error if the course of thought  
Runs smooth, unruffled, like the Yeatsian dream  
Of Ireland's mythic past until the stream  
Grew turbid, stone-disrupted, forced athwart  
Its tranquil current by harsh lessons taught  
As history seized its moment to redeem  
Myth's promise in real time and turn his theme  
From lake-isle reverie to grim report.  
So too with theory: surely time to knock  
Off all that streamlined cogitation if  
The thoughts flow free, run up against no block  
To their unswerving, monotonic riff,  
And thus require a salutary shock  
To keep their concept-joints from growing stiff.

It's in thought's swirls and eddies they'll be caught,  
Those clumps of detritus that often seem  
A risk to any well-adjusted scheme  
Of dialectics, yet may come up fraught,  
If scanned askint, with insights of the sort  
Vouchsafed us only by the transient gleam  
Of shards that many an exegete would deem  
Beyond the utmost hope of being brought  
To life once more. What strikes the avatar  
Of Hegel as mere clutter apt to jam  
The dialectic's gears might serve to jar  
Slack nerves to good effect, reveal the sham  
Of facile syntheses, and show the scar  
That history scratched on Hegel's hologram.





Yeats

Cross-grained, awry, rebarbative, opaque,  
And layered thick with all the bric-a-brac  
Of yesteryear dug up by those who lack  
The theorist's scope, the master-thinker's take  
On how events unfold just for the sake  
Of reason's getting safely back on track  
With its grand plan to take up any slack,  
Make sense of things, and so assert its stake  
In Clio's home domain. Yet what's to check  
That knowledge-drive, that urge to synthesise  
Or smooth away rogue detail lest it wreck  
Some providential scheme that underlies  
And fashions in advance all those *et seq*  
Thought-linkages that pass in history's guise?

It's when the dreck churns high that systems quake,  
That turbines shudder and tough casings crack,  
Just as, when stubborn truths begin to stack  
Hard up against choice theories, then the break-  
Through comes to those truth-prospectors who shake  
The theory off and not from those who back  
Some shot-up, splintered airframe till the flack  
Bursts close enough to jolt them half-awake.  
*Anachronism*: that's the kind of jolt  
You'd best watch out for if, still half-asleep,  
Your inner Hegel rises in revolt  
At the mere thought of problems that may creep  
Up stealthily until some lightning-bolt  
From theory's deep blue yonder sparks the heap.

## *The Wednesday*

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## *Exhibiting Empty Frames*



Lined along blank walls, viewings outside-in;  
art on the edge - a celebration of perimeter.

Grand carved borders swirling with feathered leaves -  
once contained the heavens bulging with angels,  
or heavy jowls and prim frocks - forgotten in solemn halls.  
Thin lipped edges for tight line drawings,  
detailed nibbing now just bare.

Walls subdivided with ovals and squares -  
horizontal and vertical crafted to hold grace and beauty,  
or dancing virgins in forest dells - today they give delight  
in cold emulsion white.

Rudderless eye across empty skim - panics back to rim.  
Perhaps a squashed fly to random a still-life.  
A smudge-concept or a portrait of shadows  
might steady a critic's pulse.

*David Burridge*