

FROM CHRONOLOGY AND HISTORICAL TIME TO 'ONTOCHRONY' AND 'LOGICAL TIME': A NOTE ON THE REGISTERS AND LEXICOGRAPHY OF TEMPORALITY

Studies of time in ancient philosophy and in late antiquity are manifold, and from early on in the twentieth century psychoanalytic studies of time have also appeared. One such study worthy of note is that by Marie Bonaparte (1940) 'Time and the Unconscious' (*International Journal of Psychoanalysis* XXI: 427-68). Here she records that 'in a conversation which I had with him [Freud] after he had read this paper, Freud confirmed that his views were potentially in agreement with those of Kant. The sense we have of the passing of time, he observed, originates in our inner perception of the passing of our own life... [Freud] later said that the unconscious also changes in time, though very slowly. Timelessness really means that the unconscious fails to perceive time, that it receives absolutely no impression of it whatsoever'. More recently in 1983 Peter Hartocollis, who was well versed in the philosophical background, published a short study which was based on his reading of Bergson and Heidegger's conceptions of time (*Time and Timelessness*. New York: International Universities Press)¹.

It is well known that Lacan's use of the expression 'logical time' (*le temps logique*²) does not refer to a linear chronology nor merely to the subjective experience of time. The expression may have originated with Victor Goldschmidt³ who

¹ Hartocollis, P. (1983). *Time and Timelessness*. New York: International Universities Press.

² Cf. Lacan, J. Le temps logique et l'assertion d'une certitude anticipée *Cahiers d'art* 1945-1946: 32-48, re-published in the *Écrits* 197-214 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966). Despite the title, this text hardly deals with logical time in any recognisable sense, if at all. Roudinesco has suggested the paper was conceived as a response to a play by Sartre about freedom rather than time. Nevertheless, given that the text is concerned with the solution of a sophism and that the expression 'logical time' is found throughout the seminars, the subject of logical time can justifiably be held to be one which was of enduring interest for Lacan.

³ Given that this was the view of Pierre Hadot, Pierre Vidal-Naquet and Jacqueline de Romilly it seems at least reasonable to infer that Goldschmidt was Lacan's source, although his study of logical time only appeared in print in 1953, seven years after Lacan had first used the expression *temps logique*. Unless, that is,

distinguished it from historical time and argued that in antiquity historians, particularly Thucydides, were not so much concerned with attaching the events they described to fixed historical points of reference as giving structure to the narrative. For Herodotus time flows in reverse when after a son has been mentioned, the story of the father is told. Logical time understood in this sense functions to hold the account together with the use of imprecise adverbs such as ‘afterwards’, ‘next’ and ‘straightaway’. The word *logique* first appeared in French in the thirteenth century as a translation of the Latin *ars logica* which was in turn a translation of the Greek *logikē technē*⁴. It referred to the branch of philosophy that treats of different forms of thinking and particularly of the distinction between true from false reasoning. Hadot has shown that as with ethics and physics, logic did not correspond to a purely intellectual activity or to the acquisition of abstract knowledge but was a spiritual exercise (*askēsis*) aimed at a conversion of the individual and his elevation onto a higher ontological level⁵. That is to say, spiritual exercises are not

they shared a common source. Cf. Goldschmidt, V. (1953). Temps historique et temps logique dans l'interprétation des systèmes philosophiques *Proceedings of the XIth International Congress of Philosophy – Bruxelles 20-26 August 1953* Volume 12 (History of Philosophy, Methodology – Antiquity and Middle Ages): 7-13 Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company/Louvain: Éditions E. Nauwelaerts; Hadot, P. (1979). Les divisions des parties de la philosophie dans l'Antiquité *Museum Helveticum* 36 (4): 213 n 83; and Vidal-Naquet, P. (1960). Temps des dieux et temps des hommes. Essai sur quelques aspects de l'expérience temporelle chez les Grecs *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 157 (1): 69. Vidal-Naquet knew Lacan's daughter, and after Lacan's death, he was sent the proofs of S7. He sent back eight pages of corrections to J.-A. Miller as not a single Greek term was right and none of Lacan's mistakes had been spotted by the editors. On this bizarre incident see Roudinesco, E. (1997). *Jacques Lacan* 423-4 (trans.) B. Bray. New York: Columbia University Press; also Bouillaguet, A. (1987). Remarques sur l'usage du grec prêté à Jacques Lacan par les éditeurs de son VIIe séminaire: L'éthique de la psychanalyse *Psychiatries* 79: 59-60.

⁴ While *logikē* is most often translated as ‘rational’, Long considers its sense rather broader and often renders it ‘expressible’ or ‘expressed’. Cf. Kneale W. and M. (1962). *The Development of Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Long, A.A. (1971). *Problems in Stoicism*. London and Atlantic Highlands: The Athlone Press; and Mates, B. (1954). *Stoic Logic*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

⁵ From the Stoics through to Augustine we can see some development in the way the three parts of philosophy - physics, ethics, and logic - are treated. For example, we find Epictetus distinguishing three fields of *askēsis* - desires, tendencies, and thoughts, corresponding to the three parts of philosophy. According to Clement of Alexandria physics has as its object God as *ousia*, while ethics has as its object God as goodness, and logic God as intellect (*Strom* 4, 25, 162, 5). According to Augustine, while the object of physics is God as the cause of being, and of logic, God as the norm of thought, and ethics, God as a rule of life (*De civ. Dei* 8, 4; *Epist* 118, 3, 20). The change in the order which Augustine introduces corresponds to the order of the Divine Persons in Trinity: the Father as the principle of being; the Son, intelligence; and the Holy Spirit, love (*De civ. Dei* 11, 25). The systematic unity of the parts of philosophy is here reflected in the reciprocal interiority of the Divine Persons. Cf. Hadot (1979), Les division...212 and n. 78-80 op.cit.; and Dom O. Du

concerned with ethics alone but involve the whole of philosophy⁶. Logic as a spiritual exercise leads the disciple to analyse continually his representations so that no unreasonable judgment remains in his chain of thoughts (*logismoi*). Hence the Stoic adage ‘only the Sage is the true logician’ (*monos ho sophos dialektikos*). From this perspective the three parts of philosophy, particularly as they are found in Stoicism, are no more than three aspects of a fundamental spiritual attitude which is vigilance or attentiveness (*prosochē*). Within these three aspects of philosophy an important place was given to describing the structure of our thinking about the world, and it would be misleading not to call this metaphysics. Long considers the point needs stressing because it is rarely appreciated in accounts of Stoic logic⁷. Here it is clear that there is a simultaneity, in the present moment, of the three philosophical activities⁸. Hadot argues that at the same time that the pedagogical dimension in ancient philosophy imposed a temporal order - a succession of moments, an intellectual and spiritual progression. This had two aspects, the ‘logical time’ of the discourse itself and the ‘psychological time’ required in the disciple’s formation (*paideia*). The latter refers to the time it takes for the disciple to mature as he assimilates new ideas. Logical time, on the other hand, corresponds to the exigencies of the discourse itself in which a temporal succession of ideas are presented with one argument preceding another.

Historical time signifies the way the past that lives on in the present of each of us always belongs to a context that is wider than the individual subject. Anchored in cultural events, personal memories are signified - translated, that is - into a variety of signs⁹ that disclose a structural connectedness with other people (*Mitsein*). Calendars, which go back at least to the Sumerian

Roy, (1966). *L'intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon saint Augustin. Genèse de sa théologie trinitaire jusqu'en 391*. Collection des Études augustiniennes. Série Antiquité. Paris: Brepols.

⁶ Goldschmidt, V. (1953). *Le système stoïcien et l'idée de temps*. Paris: Vrin. Although published the same year as his paper on logical time, surprisingly, while referring to a number of registers of temporality including ‘infinite time’, ‘finite time’, ‘physical time’, ‘cosmic time’, ‘human time’, ‘living time’, ‘passionate time’, ‘illusory time’, ‘qualitative time’, he does not use the expression logical time.

⁷ Long, A.A. (1971). *Problems in Stoicism* 75. London and Atlantic Highlands NJ: The Athlone Press.

⁸ Cf. Hadot, P. (1978). Une clé des *pensées* de Marc-Aurèle: les trois *topoi* philosophiques selon Épictète *Les études philosophiques* 1: 65-83.

⁹ Krzysztow Pomian (1984) distinguishes four such registers – chronometry, chronology, chronography and chronosophy. Cf. *L'ordre du temps*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard.

empire and are based on lunar or solar revolutions or a combination of the two, underline this social aspect of time and indeed their political function¹⁰. These identified points of time as well as durations of time, giving details of recurring days, weeks, months and years, liturgical feast days and holidays for specific communities¹¹. Calendars also reveal our connection to nature. This reflects the fact that in the daily life of the peasant time (*tempus*) is, first of all, a question of meteorology and of the effect of the changing cycle of the seasons on the crops¹². Although the Greeks had considerable knowledge of astronomy and were aware of the Egyptian solar calendar, their calendars were lunar and flexible, differing from city to city. Homer says little about any form of calendar but overall the Homeric year is seasonal and agricultural. Hesiod, in contrast, gives a better idea of how the Greeks reckoned time through stellar observations, especially for agricultural purposes. Complex versions of cyclical time or recurrence are found in the Presocratic, Buddhist and Hindu doctrines of reincarnation and it seems likely that a belief in reincarnation in terms of *psuchē* (*metempsychosis*) was already held by Pythagoras¹³. We find this made explicit in the doctrine of a cycle of incarnations in the *Purifications* of Empedocles which are almost certainly a version of Pythagorean teaching.

¹⁰ As Rüpke points out the power to determine dates such as the start of a month or days when judicial or business activity prohibited was a means of exerting control over commerce and law, as well as religious rituals. For example, in 8 BC the adaptation of a local lunar calendar to the Julian calendar was a demonstration of loyalty to Augustus who had published calendars widely as propaganda for his own reign. Cf. Rüpke, J. (2011). *The Roman Calendar from Numa to Constantine: Time, History, and the Fasti* (trans. D. M. B. Richardson). Chichester/Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

¹¹ The Babylonian calendar which was widely used in Mesopotamia from about 1100 BC was lunar but reconciled with the solar year by the intercalation of a thirteenth month every two or three years. In 500 BC only the Egyptian calendar was the only solar calendar in the Near East non-lunar and schematic but by 300 AD almost all calendars in the region were fixed and derived from the Egyptian calendar. The Zoroastrian calendar which dates from the fifth century BC was probably based on the Egyptian calendar. It was a three hundred and sixty five day solar calendar with twelve months, beginning at the vernal equinox. The Jewish three hundred and sixty four day calendar is known from the Old Testament and from Qumran. Stern's view is that it derives from the Egyptian calendar. Cf. Stern, S. (2012). *Calendars in Antiquity: Empires, States, and Societies* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹² The first meaning of the Latin *tempestus* is opportune and was used to translate the Greek *kairos*. Later, with Ennius, *tempestatas* comes to refer to the state of the atmosphere and hence to bad weather or tempest.

¹³ Xen. fr 7; Diog. VIII.36 in Diels vol. 1: 47; Herdot. II. 123 in Diels vol 1: 22. Herodotus thought the idea originated in Egypt but this is not attested in any Egyptian documents. Cf. Diels, H. (1906). *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. Two vols. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.

Antiphon, in the late fifth century BC, had said that time was not a substance but a human concept¹⁴. As Heidegger put it, time produces itself ‘only insofar as man is...because time fashions itself into a time only as a human, historical being-there’¹⁵. It is the lives of men, that is to say, that constitutes time. Discussing the title of SZ, Heidegger said that one could speak of an ‘ontochrony’ where ‘χρόνος stands in the place of λόγος’, although he added that the two terms were not to be thought interchangeable. Parmenides had already asserted that time is not extraneous to Being because Being is complete (*oulon*)¹⁶. Later, Plotinus described *aiōn* as Being’s mode of existence. The distinction between *chronos* and *aiōn*, an opposition made explicit in Aristotle, does not correspond to any of the distinctions with which we are familiar. Rather, it signifies different registers of temporality. It is *aiōn*, for Homer, that disappears with the soul at the moment of death (*psuchē te kai aiōn*)¹⁷. In this sense *aiōn* refers to the *chronos* of the life of each individual¹⁸. The substitution which Heidegger makes of *logos* (word) for *on* (being) for should not go unnoticed. If *chronos* can be said to stand for *logos*, ontochrony might be said to rest on Heidegger’s definition of *logos* as *Ansprechen* (speaking to), *das Sprechen* (speech), and as ‘letting something be seen’ (*schlichtes Sehenlassen*), a ‘gathering of things into presence’. In fact, Heidegger translates the verb *legein* (to speak) as ‘the Laying that gathers’ (*lesende Lege*). Heidegger sees the forgotten, concealed truth of being disclosed in the work of speaking through things (*die Arbeit des Durchsprechens der Sachen*) as the work of the word in poetry or thought, or the work of the stone in sculpture. Bringing together the radically divergent treatments of time found in Parmenides and Heraclitus, ‘ontochrony’ stands for this disclosure, culminating in the notion of the authentic present or ‘instant’ (*to exaiphnēs*). This links it to *kairos* (the exact moment), a notion which takes on a special significance in the New

¹⁴ Coxon, A.H. (1986). *The Fragments of Parmenides. A critical text with introduction, translation, the ancient testimonia and a commentary* 210-11. Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum.

¹⁵ Heidegger, M. (1953). *An Introduction to Metaphysics* 84 (trans.) R. Manheim. New Haven: Yale University Press.

¹⁶ In fr. 8: 36-8. See Coxon 210 op. cit.

¹⁷ Iliad 16. 453.

¹⁸ According to Fragment 150 of Damascius, Eudemus - writing in the late fourth century BC - said that the hypostatisation Chronos was derived from the Iranian Zurvan Akarana (unending time).

Testament¹⁹. If an analysis is akin to exegesis of text (Lacan S1: 73) - something woven (*texere*) - it might not be too fanciful to suggest that *kairos* signifies 'a moment of understanding' or the insight that results from the disentanglement of the interwoven past and present and future, the latter - as death - being something already with us in our innermost being.

If we take heed of Heidegger, the inalienable link between being and time (and thus speech) must surely imply that the question of time, as it has been considered in the Western philosophical tradition, resembles a series of paths that lead to an impenetrable thicket. That is to say, the conception of time set out by Plato and Aristotle fails to take account of being. The former's view of time is an analogue of his idea that the sensible, temporal world shares something of an intelligible, timeless world, defined time as an everlasting likeness (*aiōnios eikōn*) of eternity²⁰. While the latter, in a highly obscure and elliptical passage in the *Physics* IV. 10-14 defined time as a kind of number (*arithmos*), something that can be broken down into instants of change and counted, measured and ordered²¹. Like Plato, Augustine derived temporality from a timeless eternity, or more precisely from a multiplicity of eternities. In this he probably relied, however, not on Plato but on Basil's *Adversus Eunomium* I.21 and on Gregory of Nyssa's idea that time consists of three states of mind.²² He distinguished between a fundamental *aeternitas* that refers to the immutable divine essence, from a derived eternity (*aeternitas participata*) that he calls *aevum* (a term based on the Greek *aiōn*), which is unlike created time as it is not susceptible to change (*tempus mutabilis*). Plotinus in his reading of the *Timaeus* had already discussed the distinction between the atemporal and the

¹⁹ In its earliest usage, *kairos* refers to the precise moment in weaving a cloth in which the shuttle could be passed through threads on the loom.

²⁰ Anaximander had contrasted the cosmic operation of time with the eternity of *to apeiron* cf. Coxon op. cit. On the background see Finkelberg, A. (1993). Anaximander's Conception of the "Apeiron" *Phronesis* 38 (3): 229-56. Despite being so obscure as to puzzle Aristotle, who described it variously, the notion seemed to appeal to Freud who referred to it in *Totem and Taboo*. Indeed it may have contributed to his view of the timelessness of the unconscious.

²¹ Coope, U. (2005). *Time for Aristotle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²² Although there is some uncertainty about whether Augustine actually knew this work, it is generally accepted that he was familiar with a Latin version of the *Hexaemeron*. See Callahan, J.F. (1958). Basil of Caesarea a New Source for St. Augustine's Theory of Time *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* Vol. 63: 437-54; and (1960) Gregory of Nyssa and the psychological view of time *Atti del XII Congresso Internazionale di Filosofia* 11: 59-66.

perpetual. Designating the latter *aidiotēs*²³. The atemporal refers to that which is outside time. This idea - eternity (*aeternitas*) in other words – is distinct from continuous, unending time (*perpetuitas*; *sempiternitas*) – and refers, rather, to permanent presence.

The whole notion of a ‘beyond time’ connects the question of time to the mystical or more precisely, to ecstasy with which it is often unwittingly conflated. Heidegger, despite his insistence that the three ecstasies of temporality - the character of having been, letting-oneself-be encountered, and of Being-towards-oneself (SZ 328) - possess a unity, gives priority to the future as anticipation (being-towards-death), which holds them together. Thus he speaks of the present being formed in a folding back of the future into the past. Freud, on the other hand, describes present events in some sense creating the past (*Nachträglichkeit*)²⁴. At the same time both consider that a residue of the past always remains fundamentally inaccessible and irretrievable. Wrapped up in that association is, perhaps, to echo Wittgenstein, the idea that the solution to the riddle of time lies outside time (Wittgenstein Tr. 6.4312).

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²³ Enneads 3.7.3. This distinction between *aiōn* and *aidiotēs* is mirrored in Plotinus’ distinction between *eidōs* (contemplation) and *logos*. While the eternal refers to participation in eternity (*theōmēmos*). Cf. Sleeman, J.H. and Pollet, G. (1980). *Lexicon Plotinianum* c.46-9. Brill: Leiden-Leuven.

²⁴ Freud, S. (1950). *Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse*. Imago Publishing. Cf. Eickhoff, F.-W. (2006). On *Nachträglichkeit*: the modernity of an old concept. *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 87 (6): 1453–69; Faimberg, H. (2007). A plea for a broader concept of *Nachträglichkeit* *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 76 (4): 1221–40; Laplanche, J. (1999). *Time and the Other Essays on Otherness* 238–63. London and New York: Routledge.