

The Art of Time: An Interview with David Wood

David Wood, John Dalton

Sydney, November 2000

JD: While in Australia, you buried a number of gifts sent to you by people around the world. Objects and accompanying texts would be entombed in a time capsule to be unearthed at a future date. You describe this event as ‘a homage to individual things, a work of friendship, and a gift to the unforeseeable future’. In what sense is it a ‘work’ of friendship for you, and what is the sense of homage to ‘individual things’? The major theme of your work is perhaps a negotiation with the most difficult—and perhaps impossible—thing (or no-thing) there is, namely, time? Perhaps the burial is also a homage to time and time’s passing?

DW: In fact, this all happened yesterday! So it’s now no longer what it was for a long time, a little fantasy, an imaginary event that I hoped would happen. It now *has* happened, although the happening will now continue through the editing of the film, and the various conversations I have with people, not just in formal contexts like this, about what happened, what it meant, and so on. An event like this happens intensely at a particular time: we dug a hole, about five feet deep, and we worked up a sweat.¹ We photographed every object that went in, wrapped it in cellophane, sealed and glued the container and buried it. And then the rain came down. So there was all this local time involved in the actual event. But there are many other ripples spreading out from this splash, ways in which the imagination is provoked and stimulated. And other events will follow in other parts of the world, some modifying and transforming the whole motif of burial.

You asked me in what sense this event was a work of friendship. I did send invitations to participate to a bunch of friends. But what is at stake here is not, as it were, the ‘great friendship’, the one-one friendship, the great love affair, or the relationship to the Other. It connects a multiplicity of friends, some of whom know each other, most of whom

don't. People are being brought together, as they might at a party, who don't necessarily know each other. But this party is a kind of virtual party, because most of them weren't there in person, but rather represented through the objects they decided to send to this event, and which they had partly conceptualized in advance by attaching comments, descriptions, reflections.

I am trying to produce things, to make things happen, to try to invite change. I imagine there might be changes in the relationships between some of these people, who will eventually get back a record of all the objects that were sent, and will in a sense become part of this weird indirect community. If they then are approached about a future event, a new energy may start to happen. Some will decide that they've had enough of this, it doesn't make any sense. And some will think, 'wait, this is intriguing, we want to do more, to be involved'. Perhaps something like a virtual community, at least in a temporary way, is being created.

Something that has always intrigued me about friendship and friendships and the varying degrees of friendship and acquaintanceship is 'losing touch'. You don't see people for a long time, you stop communicating with them—you have no on-going connection. And yet distance is increasingly less significant in principle as an obstacle to a relationship. So the idea of sending objects over thousands and thousands of miles to a distant part of the world, which is what happened in almost every case here, where most of these people have never been, and may never go, in order to continue or even in some cases re-establish or establish a relationship of friendship, is an unexpected way of cutting into this question of the ebb and flow of friendship through contact.

To put another spin on it, think of Nietzsche's discussion (in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*) about the friend being the person who points towards the Overman, who gestures toward this possibility. And that's what we should be to our friends. He doesn't want dependency relations, he wants relations of creative enabling. This event is meant to be like that. It's a gift on my part to my friends, whose contribution is to send me something. But there isn't a closed economy here, it's not really an exchange. Rather things happens as a consequence; it's very open ended. Part of what I am doing here is opening up a space of imagination, one which has no obvious end to it. What fascinated me was that with luck, or by chance, there will for the foreseeable future be this chest buried deep in Australia, that all of these contributors will know is there. Do they still own the objects that they put there? Who knows? All sorts of weird things have happened as a consequence of this act. And there is the other aspect of this, that of friendship and time.

JD: I was thinking of what Blanchot says about the time of friendship: friendship as something that takes a long time, friends mature together...

DW: I don't think that this particular work addresses that sense of the deep long interconnectedness of true friends. It's more generalized, more to do with opening up the whole range of connectedness which people come to have to one another when they

have a common project, even if that project is completely open-ended, indeterminate, and ambiguous, and yet fascinating. And a work of art. It is art at least in this sense. As I see it, art is one of the most powerful engines of resistance to forces of normalization and habituation. Philosophy is another one. But the sheer strangeness of our act of unearthing and the way in which that event and its repercussions will, as it were, keep on rising to the surface (precisely as the object doesn't), is a kind of mark, or an attempt at marking this resistance. Curiously, you could say that *this* burial is a mark of resistance to burial. We might say that the killing off, and burial, of every moment is the norm. What we have done with burial, in a very curious way, is very slowly to mark the burial of the past with something that will not have been buried. Because it will be annotated, carefully documented, and it could indeed have a future, in which those very objects remain intact—much more intact than if they had been allowed to just live and survive in the ordinary way—and may re-emerge.

JD: Like what Derrida calls a 'hauntology'...

DW: We have constructed a haunting regime. This event rather pays homage to the possibilities of re-birth and transformation than that of the connection between death and burial. That works in part by the way in which sacrifice generates significance. We put every one of these things in there, realizing that we would not be seeing these things again. We were giving them up to a future which is not ours. In doing this, these things glistened and gleamed in the very process of being let go. We stuck lots of documentation in there, about the American presidential election, for example, the result of which was not known. Our capsule did not know, as it were, what would subsequently happen. And there is also a ticking clock in there—everything is inert, except the clock, set to the right time, and which will tick for as long as the battery will last, which could be quite a while.

JD: So is there an exhumation date?

DW: It's not going to be exhumed.

JD: So it's just there to be found?

DW: Or not, as the case may be. It's set way back, about fifteen feet up on some sand-dunes, and these sand-dunes are vegetatively stabilized with sea-grass, so it is possible that some Tsunami could come and rip apart this whole landscape. Otherwise, I don't see it coming up. The structure of this burial site is quite complex. There is a deep hole with our 'treasure chest' at the bottom, on top of which there is a huge rock, then there is a 'fake' chest with less interesting things in it, and then there is lots of sand on top of that.

JD: It's almost Pharonic...

DW: Yes, and given the secret knowledge possessed by my collaborators, it was an act of trust to let them live. So there's no exhumation date, quite the opposite.

JD: I didn't know that you would document the objects that would go in there, as if perhaps the collection itself would only be known to you, like a secret.

DW: Actually, copies of this documentation will be sent back to the donors. And they will get—and indeed, I hope that this will be made public—a photograph of the precise site of the open hole, and indeed the closed hole, and a photograph of the entire landscape where that site is *not* marked. So there will be no way of locating this. The most intriguing thing is that from the photograph of the precise burial site, the viewer cannot tell where on the wider landscape (photograph also supplied) it is located. And I hope this will produce a certain creative tension, one which foments both frustration and excitement.

JD: Your work is often marked by an uneasy relationship with Derrida, which you pose under the title and the problem of 'following Derrida'. This title asks, 'what is it to follow Derrida, how far can we follow Derrida', and also states, perhaps, that we *do* follow Derrida, have little choice in the matter, for just as Heidegger defines the horizon of a philosophy for Derrida's generation, Derrida does so for us. What is your rapport to Derrida's work today? It is also to ask more generally, do you see an irreducible tension in taking up a space in the wake of another's thinking, a tension that is perhaps there for all of us?

DW: I first met Derrida in Oxford in 1968, where I heard him lecture. This was before I had read anything of his, in fact, pretty much before he had made a name for himself, before he was 'Derrida'. He had written three essays, and right at the end of 1967, three books. I fell for him straight away...

JD: Love?

DW: I don't know if it was love—it was certainly a strong case of transference! He embodied a lot of what I aspired to be and was looking for in a philosopher and an intellectual, and he had an incredible philosophical creativity. I admired his generous and transformative relation to the tradition. He had read everyone, he talked about everyone, and he cared about what they were saying, and his way of responding to the tradition seemed strikingly original. I have been interested for some long time now in how we 'follow' other philosophers, in how we read them. I'm particularly interested in those who thematize that very question of reading: not just for the aporetic aroma of their thought, but because the most interesting minds are those who think about

what it is that they are doing in relation to their predecessors. I tried to articulate this particularly in relation to Derrida, and to Heidegger. The book that I'm working on now, *Thinking After Heidegger*,² precisely deals with this question, how we deal with the legacy of Heidegger's thinking. There I stand shoulder to shoulder with Derrida, looking at Heidegger, thinking 'how the hell are we going to respond to him'. I see us still working in Heidegger's wake, without yet being able to stand in Derrida's wake. Now the 'after', in the sense of 'after Heidegger', has a sort of art-historical use, as in 'after Picasso', meaning 'in the style of', but it's also 'after' as in 'running after'. So I'm already as it were playing with the temporal, and the sense of after, making it a thicker concept—thinking after is like running after or 'chasing after'. It's also thinking in the wake of... or in the light of...

In the case of both Heidegger and Derrida, what is so fascinating, and fascinating in a reflective way, is trying to figure out the level at which you respond to someone, because of the puzzle of the level at which we are supposed to take the advice that Nietzsche gives—he doesn't want any followers, followers he says are 'zeros', 'naughts', 'nothings'. If you say, 'Yes, Nietzsche is right, we don't want to be following Nietzsche', we are not obeying him in not being a follower? So how are we to respond? I have followed and admired Derrida's readings of Heidegger, not because there is some strong consistent case that Derrida is making, but because Heidegger constantly returns, *keeps fighting back*. Within the galloping *Gesamtausgabe*, new books keep appearing that Derrida hadn't originally read, but Derrida keeps realizing that while he has been constructing a Heidegger which he can to some extent oppose, Heidegger has already constructed the space within which Derrida is opposing him. But it takes time for Derrida to figure that out. The dialogue between Derrida and Heidegger is a riveting record of what it is to think with and against another philosopher. Thinking after Derrida is in some sense thinking after Derrida's dialogue with Heidegger. That has really had an influence on me.

What is my relation to Derrida's work today? I first met Derrida when I was a young graduate student, and when he was just starting. I've been reading Derrida (while he's been writing) for the last thirty-three years. So it's not as if there is this *corpus* that I just look at. I've been watching the twists and turns. What I initially tried to do was to help out (put right) colleagues and friends (and enemies) who thought that Derrida was a charlatan, someone growing horns out of the top of his head. Most of those were people who had little time for Continental philosophy in the first place. Some of them were serious phenomenologists who thought that Derrida was destroying that tradition, the very tradition that we were supposed to share. I had been trained as an undergraduate quite as much in the analytic tradition as the continental one, and I felt the obligation to try to show, especially to friends, that Derrida was thinking in ways that one could not fail to respond to. In other words, I wanted to put them in the position of *having* to recognize that Derrida was saying something compelling that demanded a response. So that was how I saw my job... to do that, to start with. And I think I was quite successful. The weird thing about that is to make somebody intelligible runs the risk of reducing

this person to what others already understand, and so there is another game, another issue, which is actually weaning people off their intellectual comfort blankets. I don't know if I've been as successful at doing that, but other people have been very effective, including Derrida himself (obviously), at getting people to let go of an economy of thought for which philosophy would be a non-productive repetition. I think the key to Derrida is a 'productive' or at least aleatory repetition.

JD: An economy of invention...

DW: Invention, where production doesn't mean production to some interminable end, but precisely a constant opening up, not just of possibilities in and for the future, but possibilities that were already there, that we didn't see, that we didn't look at, that we glossed over. That, I think, is what Derrida still does for us today. Curiously, I think it's tied with Derrida being seemingly longwinded, even boring, in his public presentations, in that he will spend three hours, working laboriously, on topics where you think you got the point quite early on. But actually, the sheer labour of working these things over, and showing that this approach of undoing our obvious ways into a topic really does pay off, or really does create problems that we hadn't noticed. Weaving simple oppositions back into a complex textuality that belies any reductive grasp of this relationship is a really compelling practice. The most powerful tendencies we all face—philosophers, theorists, artists, and humans of all sort—are the tendencies toward death *in* life, toward repetition, habituation, loss of the capacity to create and invent and see new things, and I think it's a particularly interesting thing to recognize, having read Heidegger on technology, and recognizing that much of the repetition we are faced with, and are, and are becoming, is tied up with the role of repetition in commodity production. Look around this room! When I first came into this apartment I was struck how almost everything—in fact, everything—I could see had been made in a factory, and was an example of something that could be bought somewhere else. It's extraordinary. I thought to myself—'I'm not like that', 'I'm an original', or 'I'm a human'. But actually, in darker moments, we wonder whether we aren't much too close to the sofa, the table, the television. This is one of the historical pressures that we face. It's not just to say no to the technological reconstruction of the real. We can't say 'no'—if we say 'no', we miss it, we misunderstand it, we don't relate to it, we don't engage with it in its own terms. The question is how you engage that reproductive mode of being in a way that acknowledges it without just repeating it. And in that sense Derrida is much more helpful than Heidegger.

JD: Yet repetition remains such a divided concept. Because as you say, it's habituation, a kind of death, nothing happens. But it's also that thing that allows you to fashion an identity: it's there in the idea of 'becoming who you are'.

DW: Absolutely, and it's in the necessity of this investment in identity that there lies

the source of our seduction in which those concerns take over. In fact, It's important that you put it the way you did—we are not talking about something which is in-itself negative. What we're talking about is something that *becomes* negative and destructive when it takes on a hegemonic power. And this is true of *most* of the things that concern us—when they take over that they become destructive dimensions and powers. The question is, can thinking, can philosophizing, or inventing fashion for itself a way of proceeding, an economy of negotiation with these forces that both gives them their due and holds in abeyance their tendency to totalization. That's where it's really at philosophically. That's why I think there are real limits to Heidegger's position. In the end he doesn't want to negotiate, he wants to set up camp somewhere else. He wants there to be quite a distinct 'mode' of activity, whether we call it 'thinking' or 'waiting', or 'arriving at new gods'. And in the end that risks a separation which ends up being incredibly vulnerable to the very things it's trying to defend itself against or oppose.

JD: In your reading of Derrida, you raise the issue how we may identify 'quasi-transcendental' or 'infra-structural' traits (*différance*, for example). But this is certainly already an issue for Derrida, as not only an examination of the possibility of certain conditions and structures, but how and why they take place, how they unfold, how and why we cannot do without them. It also seeks to avoid repeating certain of the historical forms that have not pursued the questions far enough, or have at some point evaded something crucial. It opens up to a more general question—that where language is a system of differences, how do we, from what we call the 'trace', think the place of meaning and sense, identify and order experience, think our decisions and responsibilities, texts, and language?

DW: There are two sorts of shapes of thought in your question. One is, if you like, the question of how we individuals, or 'subjects', or singular beings, are placed in or confined to a place in a world of history which we so easily describe in terms that don't involve individuals—like a sea of traces, a network of differences. There's the problem of the insertion of something singular in this network. And there's the question of how we connect the language of the trace, with that of meaning and identity. This word 'trace' appears in a number of thinkers before we get to Derrida—in Freud, in Hegel, in Tran Duc Thao for example.

JD: And Levinas, and Heidegger, the *Züsaage*.

DW: The point of finding this word in other thinkers is in a sense is to show that a certain kind of relation, or a certain kind of grasp, of origin, of connectedness, is already available, is already present in the history of thought. What the whole idea of the trace is trying to do—and this is the reason that Derrida brings it into his thinking—is to replace, displace, subvert, the practice of tracing to an origin, to a grounding, to a

connectedness that would give to an origin the right, the legitimacy, to confer meaning and sense onto that which is derived from it. Thinking about the trace radically defers that process, which changes the nature of thought itself, changes the economy of explanation, discussion, interpretation, and so on. In terms of your question—how do we, from what we call the trace think the place of meaning and sense, think our decisions and responsibilities—what all this adds up to is, first, that we recognize, that this ‘we’, this each of us ‘I’, marks the complex way in which we are involved in different kinds of overlapping communities. There are different ways in which we are both I and We. This is tied with our limited but expandable capacity to think our ourselves as the product of certain kinds of historical forces and contingencies and situations and so on. One of the values of education in general and philosophy in particular is actually coming to grasp how it is that we have come to be the kinds of beings as we are. And here, frankly, Derrida needs Foucault at his arm, with a bag of genealogical advice. I don’t see the thought of the trace and genealogical thinking to be that far apart.

Of course for Foucault there can be quite dramatic transformations in history, new structures, new ways of organizing language, but these are not the products of necessity, they are the products of forces converging at a particular time to produce a certain configuration. We can come to see how that happened. But we don’t find a necessary origin, we find *constellations* of forces. And I think that’s consistent with what Derrida is saying about the trace. What it does is to open up our thinking about ourselves and our sense of what the possibilities are for intervention, for resistance, for creativity, for production, for transformation, for intervention in the world. It gives us a certain capacity to mobilize our self-understanding, our relationships to the world, our sense of our own limits and possibilities. In a sense it sacrifices, I would say, the idea of there being a right answer to all this for the much more interesting thought that while there aren’t right answers to ‘what are my responsibilities’, that there are some pretty hopeless kinds of responses to that question. The thought of the trace, in terms of ethics and responsibility, is a kind of *dramatic* opening up of our capacity to think both our relation to that which has formed us, and also our capacity to imagine how we might transform what come after us. And it is important to recognise the limits of power. We are not demi-gods with powers that we can just turn on—rather we recognize just how far the very idea of action or transformation is tied up with limits, with relating to conditions that may not yet appear, and with opening up possibilities for which the conditions may never appear or may *not yet* have arisen.

JD: The trace is, if we can say ‘is’, a place of the ‘already’: but at the same time, any action, such as ‘writing’, produces the trace. We talk of ‘instituting’ the trace.

DW: Well, that’s quite right, but don’t we need to say something more? This is perhaps where references to decisions and responsibilities in the immediate sense become important. We want to ask about different kinds of trace. If everything we do is

productive of a trace, what about the difference between active and reactive responses to a situation? They both produce traces. But something which is active produces a different, oblique response. Valuations are made about the kind of trace that's being produced, and whether, for example, the traces that we produce are themselves productive, or whether they kill off possibilities. It's as if the language of the trace inherits transcendental discourse, and it inherits it as a way of preventing it from happening, it's a kind of negative transcendental discourse. But we need another response which talks about the kinds of logics of tracing and productivity that we are taking part in.

JD: Before asking in regard to the philosophical questions of time that your work centres upon, perhaps I may ask what it is about the question and problem of time that you find most compelling. What is at issue, personally, for you, in thinking and writing about time? And was the question of time your inspiration to pursue philosophy?

DW: Well, obviously this is a really central question, the central issue. What I have concluded is vital, is the productive tension between time as event and time as some sort of structural constitution. So time as event of opening and intensity on the one hand, and time as structurally constituted on the other. But perhaps this is a broad brush conclusion, rather than what you are already asking for, which is 'where did all this come from?—what's the grit in the Oyster?' The curious thing is that in trying to answer that question, I can't just draw on my memory of first stirrings, I have to try to work out an answer, because I honestly didn't *begin* even knowing what the problem was. I have to remember or imagine remembering what comes first, what drives, what experiences and so on. If something in me has allowed me to remember this and that—there may be a bunch of other stuff I'm not allowed to remember. Here are some suggestions for 'formative experience': and I put it like this because I really do think that we formed not just by choices but by things that happen to us. As a child I was really deeply moved by... every summer—so there is a rhythm to this to—being confronted by the pulsing rhythm of waves breaking on the beach. I spent hours and hours, days and days, year after year, walking on the beach, standing on the rocks, watching the waves break. So this to me is a primitive experience of the rhythm of the cosmos. I think even then I had the thought that in this rhythm the cosmos was saying that that pulsing, the rhythm, the breathing, that you are, that is your life, is not so radically different 'out there'. There is a kind of mirroring between forces of life and those of nature in general.

When I was about ten we moved to the States for a year and I saw for the first time the American south-west, the deserts and the rocks. I was told that 'that rock is three hundred million years old': I came face-to-face with geological time, and I saw the Grand Canyon—where you can actually see the effects of millions of years in front of you in an unthinkable space: and *it took my breath away*, in a way that I've never forgotten. Quite how I work that through I don't really know. I suppose it's always given me the sense that when we talk about time we're not just talking about subjective time,

the time of internal time-consciousness—however hard it is to think this— and however we think that geological time wouldn't mean anything unless there were humans here to make sense of it, *nonetheless*, there are humans here not just making sense of it, but being bowled over by it: not just 'making sense', but being *moved* by it.

Also... at the age of sixteen, I *knew* that I was going to die. And I said goodbye... I slipped down a glacier in Austria, and fell over the precipice at the bottom. I said goodbye, and I said thank-you. And the whole of my life went through my mind, just as they say it happens, *exactly* that way. Without any fear at all I knew I was finished. In a weird way, ever since then I have felt that this is like a second life... something of a gift.

The other thing that affected me was moving from England to the States and Canada, as a child, and developing a sense of the connectedness between the intensities of time and place, and the experience of loss and distance. I kept leaving places that I was attached to, and in leaving them I became more attached, even in their absence. The process of moving through completely different cultures generated a connection between time and loss and the production and the intensification of meaning. But a lot of what I'm talking about must be fairly common. I'm not saying this is what made this remarkable person, I'm saying that is what *this* kid went through. But if it's actually not that different from other people, it leaves open the question of why I became a philosopher ...

What got me into philosophy was, I suspect, this cultural displacement, and being absolutely *astonished* by the fact that in one state, one country, certain things should be unquestionably the right thing to do, the necessary thing to do, and in another country, another culture, you find that people don't think that. For a ten-year-old, that's absolutely shocking, it really caught my attention. I'm still affected by that, by the power of sheer cultural, historical contingency.

The other thing to be said here, is that I got into philosophy by chance. I'd always had a passion for reading and discussing philosophy, but in my last year as a graduate student at Oxford I was making plans to rent an old railway station and become a sculptor, when some of my friends said to me 'Have you thought of applying for a teaching job in philosophy?' There were three jobs in my field that year. I got three interviews, I didn't get the first, or the second, but I got the third. If not, I don't know if I would have been a philosopher. So chance played its part... and friendship... it's only these friends who said *you really be should applying...* that got me into this thing.

So was it the question of time?—*no*, it wasn't the question of time. Although we need to ask whether there is a question of time, or perhaps rather a bunch of questions that could be said to have time at their core, like questions about memory, identity and loss, and the uncertainty of the future. If in those early days I didn't think about time, I did think about all of those other things.

JD: Levinas is all but absent from *The Deconstruction of Time*, yet his thinking of time as diachrony, where my sense of time and subjectivity flows from a ‘time that is not my own’, seems precisely the direction in which that work gestures toward, and beyond, the general direction for which thinking time has taken. Certainly for Derrida, the promise, justice, decision, responsibility, and so forth, think, if not a diachrony, then the differential movement of time, and its relation to repetition (which, for Derrida, marks precisely the trace of the other) and spacing. How would you assess Levinas’ thinking of time, and what Derrida opens around it on justice and the messianic?

DW: Levinas is absent from this book largely because in 1986 I don’t think that I understood Levinas enough. Both then and now I found the atmosphere of his thought to be cloying, stifling. In the most general terms, I don’t accept the idea of infinite obligation, whether it’s in Levinas or in Derrida. And I’d even be tempted to think of it as a kind of misunderstanding. I think our obligations are *unlimited*, but not ‘infinite’. The difference between the two is really important. Indeed, I think there is a strange kind of hubris in thinking that I’m absolutely responsible for the other. Sartre once talked about Man wanting to be God. This strikes me as a weird God-like position—to believe that the other has no obligation to me, but that I have an *infinite* obligation to him. And along with this—something that really matters to me—I find that Levinas’ readings of other philosophers, especially Hegel and Heidegger, to really dramatically belie the generosity that we owe the other. In other words, if you’re going to be a Levinasian, you *couldn’t possibly* read Heidegger in the way Levinas reads Heidegger. This is really important when it comes to assessing the place of the ethical. I have a lot of sympathy with Heidegger’s claim that we don’t need to, and indeed, shouldn’t, make a radical separation between ontology and ethics. And you can find the same refusal of that separation, in Deleuze, in Nancy, and in Merleau-Ponty. Everything hangs on that separation. I think it’s a mistake.

The *Deconstruction of Time* was also written before much of Derrida’s work on the gift and hospitality, and the problems of the messianic, which are very influenced by both Levinas and by Blanchot, and I try to deal with this schematically in the new preface to the *Deconstruction of Time*. I do, however, applaud the unearthing of these thick, fleshy ways of problematizing time, issues such as the gift, chance, the promise, memory, haunting, commemoration. These are really important. And I’m intrigued by the way these issues shade off into issues that are only marginally temporal, or rather, are not temporal in at least one of the strong senses that really matters to me. Rather they turn into questions about possibility, questions about openness, rather than questions about time. What I mean by that is that if you take this tension between time as event and time as structurally constitutive, what we end up with, say in thinking about the messianic, is a movement toward what we call a *time and justice* event, time not even as an event but as *eventuation*, as the impossible/possibility of a transformation that we can’t even imagine. I see that as going to the outer edge of what we know about time, to the point at which we get quite lost.

Temperamentally—and this sounds like confession—I am less drawn to formally aporetic moments and more interested in what I would call complex and surprising structures of time. I wrote a paper which probably shows this best, comparing Italo Calvino, in particular the weird narrative structures in *On a Winter's Night a Traveller*, with the work of Escher, with the impossible spirals and discontinuous-continuities that you find in his painting. In both Escher and Calvino what you have is not a certain kind of possibility of openness which sets itself against representation. What you have is a really complex interplay between representation and this openness and eventuation. I find that more fruitful. This may be unfair, but sometimes I get a sense that Derrida too often arrives at the same end-game, at the same aporetic moment. I don't think that that moment is the last moment—it's *not meant to be* the last moment—but those aporias are always inscribed in everyday structures. Now of course, having said that, I'm replicating in these kinds of responses to Derrida the same kind of misunderstanding that Derrida engaged in when reading Heidegger. So what I'm really doing is working out *my* version of Derrida's own position, I suspect, using my previous understanding of Derrida as the stalking-horse. I think I'm more driven to exploring and describing these structures with the sense of the impossibility of disentangling oneself from representation. Whereas Derrida at times seems to leave his reader suspended in an aporetic moment.

JD: One could also point out that for Heidegger, ecstatic time is a diachrony—*Dasein's* 'time' is an issue for itself, its death and future are outstanding possibilities. Yet Heidegger's thinking of the being or the meaning of time, or time as the horizon of being, remains for us to think. The project announced in *Being and Time* was not completed. Do you see a current possibility with a still Heideggerian approach to time? Do you see a future for Heideggerian temporality, at least one without the political overtones of historical destiny, the hero, and where, as you say, 'authenticity has been dropped'? But I wonder if this is possible, given that the thinking of time is generated by the ontic/ontological difference. This distinction derives its intelligibility, its *ethos* and its significance for the early Heidegger from the place of *Dasein* as 'temporal transcendence', where everything directs itself to the 'self-importance' of *Dasein* as that 'being that has its being as a question', and so is *committed* to some kind of historical/existential 'self-assertion'.

DW: The paper I gave in the Keynote Address³ is one obvious answer to your question. It's a nice example of what you're talking about, which is the interplay between the ecstatic and the diachronic. It certainly is a way of giving Heidegger's account of temporality a future. I don't think it's the *only* way or the *best* way. As Heidegger wrote at the end of *Being and Time*, we have to find our way (and as he annotated his own copy of the book, '*not the only way*'). I am drawing a connection between on the one hand our capacity to ask and to be asked by the question of being, as *adults*, and our being creatures that are the product of an incomplete development, or a whole series of

ways of relating to the world, of economies of being. The path of our relationship with the past is dimly lit. My relation to an infant who is crawling around, an infant ‘without speech’, requires a number of translations to get to. In order to relate to that being, you have to become a being that lives its body in a certain way: you have to translate yourself into another mode of being to relate to this child. My insight, if it is an insight, is to suggest that the kinds of experiences of *angst*, the various kinds of dramatic negativity that Heidegger draws upon to show that we have some access to the question of being, not just theoretical access, but an access of passion or affect, are tied up with experiences of transition from one mode of being human to another, which we are, which we have been through, and which we also repress. Now there are pop psychological versions of this—that someone is ‘not in touch with his child’, his childhood. Some people would say you have to be really careful not to mix up psychology with ontology, and I think that that’s absolutely true—but I think there is quite as great a danger in throwing the baby out with the bathwater, so to speak, in actually letting all the material go just because you’re rightly worried about the methodological problems of introducing it. It is because of the importance of this general position that I was talking about human development in very general terms. I don’t want to say let’s go with Lacan, Piaget, of Klein. That’s not my point. My point is that if it’s true that human beings are essentially the products of development, and if the stages through which they develop are never quite completed, and if they never actually completely let go of them, and if we have partial access to those stages, then the affective way that we relate to our past is not just going to be out of curiosity: sometimes it will be delight in regression, sometimes its going to be deep anxiety and fear. And if that’s true it is another way of saying that we are not substances, not little rocks of identity, but *multiple* beings, as if we are inhabited or haunted. If I say that I am inhabited by my childhood, ontologically, that means that part of what makes up the patterns of my response to the world, or one of the ones that I revert to from time to time, or one of the ones that I find it very hard to get away from, is that of a child, or a young child, or infant.

Now, is this plausible? I think it’s not *implausible*, indeed I suspect it’s true. What I’m arguing is that all this psychological material is to be understood ontologically, not just empirically. And I make a very general claim about this—that the empirical and the ontological are the same stuff. It’s not as if two sorts of things are happening. When people talk about Heidegger having moved away from an analysis of *Dasein*, about wanting to think being without reference to beings, and so on, there are two ways you can understand this. You can say that the whole path Heidegger took in trying to introduce the question of being through an analysis of *Dasein* is some kind of mistake. Or you can say, it wasn’t a mistake at all, it’s rather strategically a way of preventing psychological, or anthropological, or humanistic readings from returning. And that Heidegger eventually thought, at the end of the day, that he just couldn’t win. I think this is a mistake. We can keep these reductive readings at bay by talking about economies of being. We can delineate the shapes, the limits, the parameters, and the dimensions of different ways of relating to the world. And isn’t that humans *have* them, it’s rather

that humans are the products of *having been* able to negotiate those different kinds of relations to the world. So I accept the primacy of the ontological, but I think all the psychological material is grist to that interpretation. I resist the idea that Heidegger really discounts or wants to drop the analysis of *Dasein*. *Dasein* is already an ontological characteristic, an ontologically defined being. It's just that Heidegger, I think, gave up the fight.

JD: It's also a question of how we understand development, that is, how "development" is meaningful for us. I am wondering if in this there is a step back from *Being to Time* to the slightly earlier thinking, such as the 'hermeneutics of facticity'. Would you say that there is something 'authentic' about having an 'awareness' or a grasp of the developmental process?

DW: That's an important question: there's a sort of involution or a reflexive moment here, because one of the conclusions that one might come to is that there *really* is something called development, and there really is something like progress. And that something like the awareness of the developmental nature of human beings is one of the more recent stages of that very development. In fact I think something like this is true. I think that's more generally true, that Heidegger is in effect saying that as soon as we start pursuing the thought that *Dasein's* temporality is not just a fact about it, but is a truth the interpretation of which, coupled with the incorporation of those interpretations into one's way of thinking, one's life, *is* transformative. Is it not another step in this moral development, or authenticity development or ontological development, or whatever you want to call it, to recognize that the whole idea of teleological development *is itself* in need of being overcome. You can find exactly that kind of move in Heidegger, in the late Heidegger—'we need to cease all overcoming'—as if the very model of overcoming was something we need to cease, to overcome. The implication here is that it's something we need to stop doing, and then we'll be in a *better* position.

The reason that I'm going through all this is that it's very tempting for us philosophers to identify and find real problems with the idea of progress, as if the whole idea of progress, of development, was just a throwback to something we can disdainfully set aside. But if you really think that through it *cannot* be true. I'll give you one example and one general reason. Let's take the general reason first. The general reason is that every time that we critique the idea of progress or development, we actually propose a principle, which we're being asked to accept, which is a genuine advance on what we previously understood about the role of development. So it's a kind of contradiction to claim that we can drop the idea of development. Rather we are being told something very sophisticated, that we are expected to agree with and believe, and which is largely true. We are not being asked to drop the idea of development *tout court*. We are being asked to drop a silly version of it.

If you want an example to show why we are absolutely committed, and must be committed to some such notion, it would be this: a young child, a bit like a lizard, operates with yes/no, with inside/outside, friend/enemy, and these binary oppositions organize its relation to the world. If it wants something and can't get it, it screams. Adults are sometimes like that, but *there really is a difference* between that mode of relationship and one where boundaries and borders and differences are subtly negotiated. And that difference is vital to everything we care about. It's precisely that difference that dissolves in war and violence, and in those situations and relations where we despair of our fellow human beings. So take just this example—the difference between a being whose relation to the outside is organized in terms of these powerful binary oppositions *without mediation*, on the one hand, and those that use language, who use reasoning, discussion and all kinds of affective development. That change is surely an advance. You could say that it's even more important to realize that those binary oppositions don't disappear, they still operate (to the extent that we are still concerned with survival, even when we are smart, and intellectuals, we still want to survive until tomorrow, we still protect ourselves against invasion, against incursion, and so on). What that shows is that often when we talk about getting rid of something, we're talking about getting rid of its hegemony, overcoming its domination. That's meant to be just the most simple example of how ineradicably something like progressive development is built into our thinking. Philosophical inquiry, even philosophy inquiry that questions the idea of development, is committed to something like the idea of progress. At the very least, it's a question to pose to those who want to say that these kinds of values no longer operate. When we talk about the death of the subject, or the death of the author, or the death of history, we are talking about coming to realize the hopelessness of our traditional models of these things. When we talk about the death of the subject, well, a certain model of the subject has been deconstructed, reconstituted, reformulated, and critiqued ever since Kant. Perhaps before. You can show that these notions have not just been held onto as vulgar concepts, they have been continuously questioned and transformed.

JD: Indeed, we can suggest that in the very thinking of the subject there is already something deconstructive. The subject is articulated alongside and in regard to freedom, liberty, the question of rights, and so on.

DW: Yes, there is something like the disaggregation of the question, as if it's being dispersed... a bit like what we were saying about time. When we talk about the question of time, I think that much of what happens in both Derrida and in Heidegger is the recognition that time is neither a thing, nor properly speaking a concept either. It's rather a dimension in which concepts operate, more of an arena... not just a formal notion, it does gather together these other 'temporal concepts'. It's like the hub around which these spokes and these ribbons are revolving, but it doesn't have any substantiality other than occupying that role, connecting these other notions.

JD: Your reading of Nietzsche takes its departure from Derrida's judgement that 'perhaps time is a metaphysical concept', and that there is no, or cannot be, a 'post-metaphysical concept or thinking of time'. Yet as you say, Nietzsche's eternal return is not articulated as a 'concept'. Perhaps, to be more radical, it is not articulated as a thinking of time in the first place—as you put it, "it surely does *not* actually capture the general structure of time." I would see it more as a call for some kind of transformation of the self, rather than expressing a meaningful view of time. As a thinking of self and its relation to history, memory, and will, it calls for the adoption of a standpoint that entails a different relation to chance, to finitude, to creativity, to one's place in the world. Yet something deeply unsatisfying haunts the apparent desire "to turn time's 'it was' into a thus I willed it," the desire "to want nothing to be different." There is, likewise, something strange about the place of the 'eternal', as well as the 'redemptive' that Nietzsche gestures toward: and it seems that readings of Nietzsche too easily commit themselves to finding a properly 'radical' and 'anti-metaphysical' Nietzsche. The project of making time one's own would amount to a hyperbolic Prometheanism of the ecstatic or the 'intense'. Perhaps we can say that the time of and for the eternal recurrence, the risk of being 'crushed' by a thought, the appeal to 'living dangerously', has in fact passed?

DW: Quite right... certainly the organizing question in *The Deconstruction of Time* was Derrida's claim that there could be no alternative non-metaphysical conception of time, that time is somehow *essentially* tied up with metaphysics. The question then in respect of Nietzsche's thought, for example, was whether it did not offer the resources for a non-metaphysical concept of time. I think you're right that we can't treat the doctrine of the eternal return as just another concept of time. As I see it, it is fundamentally what we could call an excessive antidote to the ultimate enemy, and the ultimate enemy here, I think, is *ressentiment*. It's as if Nietzsche is saying that *ressentiment* is so sneakily pervasive, so difficult to get rid of, and so fundamental, that only something absolutely dramatic, absolutely over the top, is going to combat it. I think that's what the eternal return is about. That's why you get these extraordinary formulations that you need to be able to will everything that has happened, to affirm that you willed it thus. Well, of course that seems outrageous. But of course it's outrageous only if you focus one by one on individual things that you cannot imagine that you would have ever willed, and forget what the *real stake* is here. The stake is the elimination of *ressentiment*, which I think for Nietzsche is utterly destructive of our whole being. We come to devalue the world itself, we come to imagine time through the spirit of revenge, we fall back behind our possibilities, permanently. As I say, I think it's an excessive antidote to an ultimate enemy, and that's why it has this extraordinary, strictly incredible—aspect to it. If you hold that view, if you take the question seriously, then the question becomes 'how could we have a less hysterical response to *ressentiment*...'

JD: A weaker version of it would be to find one's personal implication in the events that happen. In that sense, you can never overcome *ressentiment*, but perhaps you

can have a liberated rapport to it.

DW: That's a very nice formulation because what I call an hysterical reaction, if you take that formulation seriously, is reactive, which is exactly not what Nietzsche wanted. This would be very weird—to actually treat this affirmation precisely in its hyperbolic dimension precisely as a reaction, rather than as an active force. Of course this is a persistent concern—that something which such dramatic force, when directed against something, will end up falling prey to it precisely because there is no negotiation, you haven't established a negotiating relationship. And so you do not have available all those possibilities of laying off risk, of working through ways of avoiding these kind of rebound effects. I think this is what is happening when Derrida, especially with the word *différance*, is perusing the possibility of all kinds of intensity and concentration, in both action and response, in actions, but just as much in our responses to things. This might be said to disperse the effect of the eternal return into a philosophy of intensity which is not just physical intensity, not just a philosophy of passion, but also a philosophy of response. Even Derrida's discussion of going through the undecidable is an intensification of the moment. The intensification comes through the recognition that in an action that is entirely driven by an algorithm, by a rule or a set of rules, a situation is not being responded to as fully as it could be, and is being reduced to being a reflection of a concept. So here, intensification would take the form of going through the undecidable, trying, as it were, to step back from the conceptualization of this issue, to think it through in relation to other rules and other principles, or the limits of those rules and those principles, or the singularity of the situation, and so on. So more broadly, I see the inheritance of Nietzsche's position to be that of taking the eternal return not literally, but as a strategy of promoting various kinds of intensity. In Levinasian form it would take the form of responsibility, ratcheting up the stakes, so that we are killing a Nicaraguan when we drink a cup a coffee. In fact, although hyperbolic formulations can spur the proper recognition of our responsibility this one may be dangerously misleading. Levinas supposes that my drinking coffee is at the price or cost of another life or livelihood, but things are lot more complicated than that, and it's that complexity which is important. It really makes a difference whether you buy coffee from plantations where the workers and being paid properly or not being paid properly. Levinas makes no such distinction, and yet politically it's really important that there are cooperatives set up precisely to pay people properly. Those differences make all the difference.

JD: One of the features of the philosophy of time is that time has been thought alongside ethics, and from the beginning. The Anaximander fragment talks of time and justice. From Plato to Aristotle, from Augustine to Kant, Hegel certainly, and then, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Levinas, all think time according to some expression of an ethos and a Good, to some conception of a responsibility, a good-life, a conversion, an overcoming, an authenticity, and around the figures of the 'already', the 'to-come', the messianic, the immemorial, and indeed, *contretemps*. What you would make of this

profoundly historical connection of time to ethics?

DW: Although we can, as you say (and Heidegger does), go back to Anaximander, to the relationship of time and justice, as I see it, this grasp of the connection between time and ethics has taken a long time to become clear. It's not as if it's something that we knew two thousand years ago but we forgot, it really is something that's become clear. As I see, it, the central questions of this relation between time and ethics, the reason that those two are so intimately connected, have to do with first of all death, the fact of mortality—not just 'my death', as Heidegger thinks, but the death of others, and which generalizes not just a death but to vulnerability and the fragility of the human condition. Here, time gets commuted into questions about mortality, which then immediately have ethical implications. The second dimension I would add is that of chance or contingency, of 'my' very birth, very existence, at a particular time. And again, these things don't generate ethical principles, but they set the scene for what Heidegger calls *ethos*, dwelling. Thirdly, separate from mortality, the question of finitude, of human limits. The fact we have to choose under conditions of relative ignorance, that we constantly make mistakes, that we often can't undo the things that we've done. Finitude is intimately bound up with time, and again it's another plank in a fuller account of dwelling, of *ethos*.

JD: And it's that we have such a short space of time that concentrates significance for us...

DW: Exactly...

JD: Our decisions become vital, more important...

DW: I think that that's more tied up with mortality—let's say brief mortality. The thing about finitude is this: supposing we had a thousand years each, the fact is that each 'now' decision would still go this way or that way, there would still be things that we've not said, and even then there would be things that could never be corrected. In other words, finitude is tied up with limitation and contingent circumstances that would even be true of an immortal being. Quantity of time is not the issue. It has to do rather with the *irreversibility* of time, the sense of the limitedness of things, the fact that we are ignorant, that we don't bring all our powers to an interview. The inevitability of the *pensée d'escalier*, when I think 'Oh, I should have said...' This condition infects human existence, even if we were immortal. I think the last real, powerful dimension in linking time and ethics is what I'd call this constant movement toward degeneration, toward blind repetition, in other words, I see a principle of gravity. Blind repetition—habit, habituation, the transformation of an event into an institution—this is the gravitational pull of everyday life, that we die bit by bit before we die, and it's precisely philosophy as a *contretemps*, as acting against time in that sense, that contributes to the cutting against the grain, opening up, reopening up, preventing this blind repetition, or if not

preventing it, at least moderating it. This is why I compare philosophy to art, to other works of imagination. Philosophy can break open the historically specific grounding constitutions that we find ourselves in. These are four ways of thinking about the connection of time and ethics.

JD: One could say that certain attempts to rethink time in fact close off a vital re-reading of the 'vulgar' concept of time. There is an impatience or aversion to the vulgar concept (and one wonders about the word vulgar here, as if something abject is at issue) marked by a need to give time another origin—in consciousness, in the subject, in being, in language, discourse, etc, in everything else but time's passing. If the problem of the vulgar concept is one of seriality, of the now as present, the past as a past-present, and the future as a future-present, perhaps this is more a problem of the metaphysical thinking of presence. There is no thinking of time without passage and duration—what is questioned is sense and direction, linearity, that time is unitary, intentionally directed to a future now, that it consists of a potentially infinite series of now-points. Yet one can argue that the vulgar or ordinary concept of time is already differential, and that any rethinking of time, of time as experienced and lived, or ontological, as precisely, more markedly differential, remains in debt to the vulgar concept. Not only in that a new conception of time is thoroughly dependent upon the vulgar concept in order to stake out its own sense, but that, to refer to Augustine's perplexity (though he eventually psychologizes time, as a way to overcome his *angustia*), the vulgar concept is already thoroughly aporetic—there is nothing simple or ordinary about it. One could begin to open this precisely in regard to the repetition of the 'now'—is repetition a going back or a coming forward? A gathering that opens? What direction does it have, if any? And the *iterability* of the now would precisely trace a diachrony, a trace of the other. What is more impossible than the 'now'? It is as if thought continually objects to the refusal of time to fulfil the meaning of the words 'past', 'present', 'future'. We may attempt to think the origin of the vulgar concept in number, in counting, but it remains the most difficult and strangest sense of time to think: a now that never is, a past already gone, a future not yet,—and further, the gesture toward an infinite series only seems to make the matter more difficult (after all, how do we actually think an 'infinite' in the first place?). Perhaps the vulgar concept is quite happy to unfold as something more or less *unthinkable*, and perhaps its very difficulty, or indeed, *impossibility*, is what allows us to distance ourselves from it, to put it into the too-hard basket, but as commonplace duration. Something about the ordinary concept of time remains irreducible and uncircumventable. Perhaps there is something about the sheer passing of time that generates a kind of horror (and Blanchot intimates something like this in *Le Pas Au-Delà*, as does Bataille in *The Practice of Joy Before Death*, and Levinas around the *il y a*)? Perhaps it would be necessary, then, to start not with the by now traditional philosophical prejudice against the so-called vulgar concept, but with a reawakening of Augustine's anguish over how to name and trace time?

DW: That is a really interesting line of argument—that the ordinary or vulgar concept of time is already differential, and that any rethinking of time remains in debt to the vulgar concept. I think this is a powerful suggestion. The analogy that I would give is in Deleuze's interest in the paratactical uses of language, in *The Logic of Sense*, for example, where he's interested in the empirical diversity, the ways of using language, not just language in its representational modes, but language in all its playfulness. This is a promising way of trying to rethink time. I don't think it's quite the same as returning to the vulgar concept of time. It's rather a returning to the vulgar grasp of the domain of temporality, which goes back to what we were discussing before—whether time really is a 'concept'. It's not just time as diachrony, either. It's the whole pre-organized, pre-reduced, pre-conceptualized human engagement and involvement—and not just human. You can even expand that into the time of plants, and of creatures, and of gases and of earth-movements. As I see it, the basic idea here would be is that philosophy has declared war on—is the declaration of war on—the differential, on differentiation. This is not because philosophy is an evil thing, it's because philosophy is, as Nietzsche argued in *The Birth of Tragedy*, man's response to the horror of the uncontrolled world. Consider by comparison our current love of wilderness, the desire to preserve wildness, the belief that in wilderness 'lies the preservation of the world'. In the eighteenth century, in pioneer America, wilderness was the most frightening thing you can imagine. It meant menace and death in every direction. Perhaps we romanticize wilderness now because we can actually drive there safely in our 4 x 4s, have the experience, and come back again. It's important to remember that philosophy (just as language, and all of our other human institutions), is in some sense an attempt to deal with and respond to the often frightening diversity of unpredictable stuff out there, which it is easy to forget. So we become, we go multiple. I think it's a lot easier to go multiple when you're sitting in your armchair with your coffee, than if you're trying to keep your body intact, because you've got ants and lice eating you up.

A number of people have drawn analogies between the work of J.L. Austin and Derrida. Austin was famous for wanting to approach the big questions from the side. So instead of talking about freedom, he talked about the kinds of excuses we give when we don't do what we should do, instead of talking about the big thing, freedom. And you can say the same thing about time. If you want to pursue the question of time, *don't talk* about time, because you're just going to repeat the old moves. Talk about delay, talk about not having enough time, talk about deadlines, talk about this sort of stuff. And what you'll find happening is that you'll produce a de-habituation effect, you'll actually get away... I was going to say you'll get away from the stock philosophical concepts: but of course, you won't actually, you'll end up reproducing a lot of them. But you'll have the opportunity to think anew. What you'll be doing is drawing on this massive multiplicity of examples, including literary examples—the whole array of human experience that we have. And the analogy with language is very suggestive. Imagine Joyce's relation to language transferred, as it were, to a thinking about time. Language

ceases to be the bearer of concepts, but has a constantly disruptive, empirical, associative, cultural power. This is another way of thinking the same project, a version of the same project as Derrida's. But I think that it does reconceptualize, or deconceptualize, the way he's doing it. As if we return to empirical diversity with antennae, because if you just grasp the multiple, or all that's there, as it were, under the vulgar experience of time or times, and if you just bring along your old machinery you'll end up producing the old results. What you have to do is to approach it with a kind of alertness and responsiveness to the unexpected. This is a very general response, but I really think we should look more to literature, drama, poetry, painting and of course music as cornucopias of material for complex temporal articulation.

JD: Even though what is called the vulgar concept is inadequate for a thinking of temporalization, historicity, and so forth, what you're talking about would bring in 'little temporalizations', and the effects of that could be unforeseeable, bringing different sense and effects together.

DW: Yes, Lyotard's *petite récit, petite temporalité*. I think that's absolute right. I'm just adding that multiplicity itself is incredibly vulnerable in the way that butterflies are vulnerable to butterfly nets. Multiplicity is just waiting to be joined and glued together again. The question is how do you allow that to be a breaking away principle, to be an innovative and creative principle. For that you probably need to have some principle of resistance to that gathering.

JD: Those sorts of moment can be agonizing, in the sense of Augustine's anguish, which isn't necessarily coming up against something that's impossible to think, but the point where something is beginning to emerge, to take place.

DW: Strangely we begin by thinking these are very special and unusual situations. But then we start realizing that it's far more general than we thought. The idea, for example, that this event that you find yourself involved in might be the beginning of an entire trajectory. That is not as unusual... it's far more frequently possible than one realizes, except that we are repeatedly driven to close things down. If you start to grasp the structure of eventuation, of the productive and opening event, you might start that by thinking of the French Revolution, and discover by going to a party and meeting a new person that the same eventuation structure arises there too, and in fact reappears fractally over and over again. And that's where, as it were, the anxiety arises.

JD: Since Nietzsche, we may say, philosophy has attempted to think subjectivity as a certain kind of event (in Heidegger, *Dasein* is towards its own being, in Derrida, the figure of the *subjectile*, in Levinas, the one-for-the-other, and further, in Nancy's thinking of birth-to-presence and rethinking of being-with, and Deleuze's becomings). Would you agree that the thinking of the subject will require, precisely, thinking and

rethinking time, and in this, the ethical sense that accompanies time, perhaps in regard to where Derrida, for example, argues that ‘what there is to give, uniquely, *would be called time*’ (I choose, here, the last of three senses that he marks)?

DW: It’s true! If the subject is *not* a substance, but is a complex relatedness of opening, generosity, creativity, resistance, challenge, etc, in the face of morality, being a subject is all the work of time. I think the tension between time as event and time as structuration becomes central to what it is to be a subject. In other words, what I’m trying to do there is to say that the error of trying to think the subject as some sort of substance, some sort of fixed and permanent thing, is actually a misunderstanding of one of the poles of a tension, which is something like structuration, or constitution, or narrative production. You can’t do without that. What we call the subject in time or in process, or temporalized, is this lived tension between openness and habituation, or the ongoing structure of meaning and this openness to the event which can undermine and destroy it.

JD: Thank you.

Notes

1. Here I must thank the rest of the team: William McClure, Robyn Ferrell, Fiona Jenkins, and Joanna Hodge.
2. David Wood, *Thinking After Heidegger* (Cambridge: PolityPress/Blackwell, forthcoming 2002).
3. David Wood, “Reading and Writing After Heidegger: Glimpses of Being in Dasein’s Development,” *Contretemps: An Online Journal of Philosophy* <<http://www.usyd.edu.au/contretemps/3April2002/wood.pdf>>.

Copyright©2002 David Wood, *Contretemps*. All rights reserved.