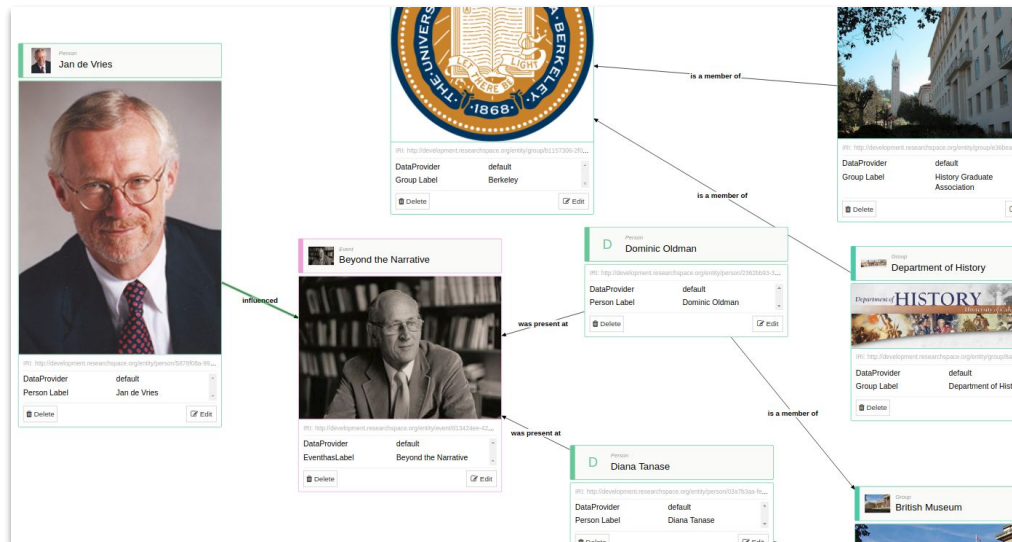


Beyond the Historical Narrative

Faculty of History
Berkeley
4th October 2018

**Dominic Oldman
&
Diana Tanase**



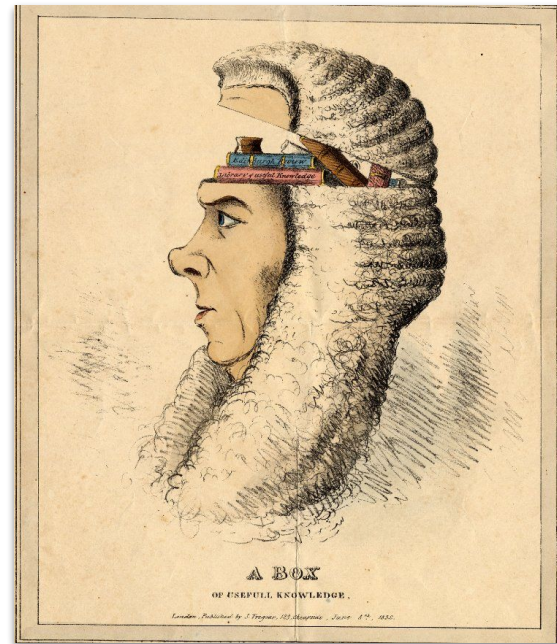
ResearchSpace Project

- Thank you!
- About us
- Andrew W. Mellon Funded
- Open Source but commercially supported
- Ten years - Not technology led
- Possibility of Cloud Service next year
- Demo system available



RS Objectives

- Contextualise to reflect real world complexity.
- Encourage knowledge production through psychological tools
- Improve effectiveness of research through collaboration.
- Support changing knowledge.
- Be accessible to a wide range of people.



A Box of Useful Knowledge [Caricature of Brougham] 1832

Networks of Facts or Knowledge

The dissatisfaction with, and disruption of, facts

Facts are simple and facts are straight

Facts are lazy and facts are late

Facts all come with points of view

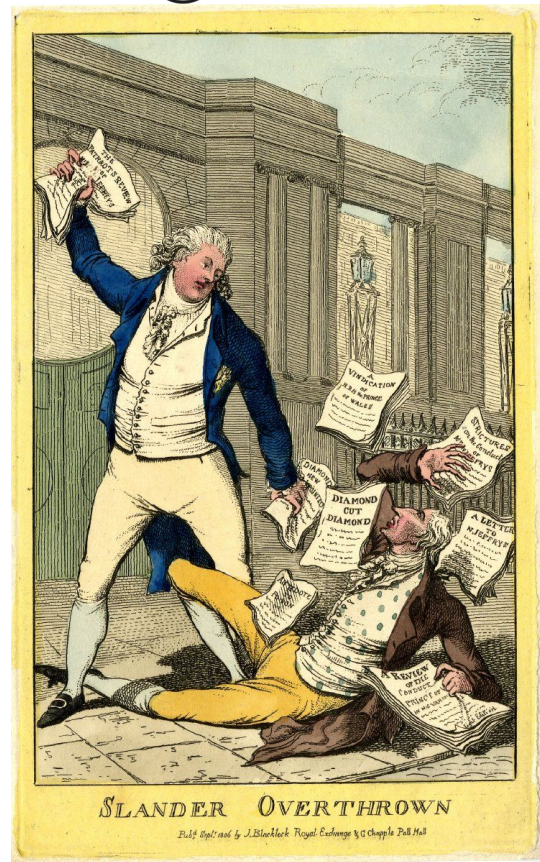
Facts don't do what I want them to

Facts just twist the truth around

Facts are living turned inside out

Facts are getting the best of them

Facts are nothing on the face of things



Print by Charles Williams - 1809



Victorian Parlour Game

Animal, Vegetable and
Mineral

Background

The issue with narrative

*"Those abandoning narrative will have to do more than meet those abandoning structure at mid-field. The way forward is **not primarily a question of compromise and reconciliation**. Rather, the task before both historians and social scientists is to **reformulate their understandings of both structures and events**. Structure, in the sense of society as a reified totality, needs to give way to an understanding of the **multiplicity of structures in all their intersections and interactions**."*

de Vries, Jan. 2017. "Changing the Narrative: The New History That Was and Is to Come" *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 48;3: 313 - 334



Jan de Vries

Why History?

Rule #1: Always Historicize

i.e., *everything* is a product of history,
and history is not *fate*

American Historical Association

- History helps us understand people and **societies**
- History helps us understand **change** and how the society we live in came to be
- The importance of history in our own lives
- History contributes to moral understanding
- History provides identity
- Studying history is essential for good citizenship.
- History Is useful in the world of work.

- Politicians will continue to rewrite history for their personal benefit
- Essential for critical citizenship and informed democracy
- History should be part of ongoing social and economic policy.

From a Curatorial Perspective

We have a number of spaces for contemporary art. The thing that I think is missing, and this might be a funny thing for a contemporary curator to say, is that I think we have a shallow understanding of history, and I always worry that there is always a tendency to concentrate on the contemporary, abandoning the historical. If you don't look to the past then your contemporary work will look vapid.

Juliana Engberg



Confusing times...

Vote to leave EU would 'condemn Britain to irrelevance', say historians

Letter signed by more than 300 prominent historians says voters can 'stiffen cohesion of our continent in a dangerous world'



▲ From left: Sir Ian Kershaw, Juliet Gardiner and Niall Ferguson were three of the letter's signatories. Photograph: Murdo Macleod for the Guardian

More than 300 prominent historians, including Simon Schama and Niall Ferguson, are warning voters that if they choose to leave the European Union on 23 June they will condemn Britain to irrelevance.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/25/vote-to-leave-eu-will-condemn-britain-to-irrelevance-say-historians>

Rival historians trade blows over Brexit

David Cameron is not the only one invoking the past to decide Britain's future. There are two sides to every history

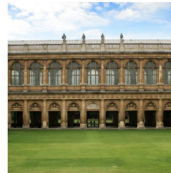


© James Ferguson

<https://www.ft.com/content/86c8faa8-1696-11e6-9d98-00386a18e39d>

**HISTORIANS FOR
BRITAIN
EUROPE**

As historians of Britain and of Europe, we believe that Britain has had in the past, and will have in the future, an irreplaceable role to play. We face a choice: to cast ourselves adrift, condemning ourselves to irrelevance and Europe to division and weakness; or to reaffirm our role and stiffen the cohesion of our continent in a dangerous world.



As historians of Britain and of Europe, we believe that a British withdrawal from the European Union would irretrievably damage Britain's position in the world and undermine for decades to come the stability and coherence of what would once again be a divided Europe.

For centuries, Britain has played a central part in shaping Europe's political and economic evolution, whether through the rich patterns of cross-Channel trade and cultural exchange, through participation in Europe's wars, or in diplomatic efforts to secure peace. In 1945 Britain was the only European country able to bring to much of Europe the values of democracy and the rule of law that war and dictatorship had torn up. This legacy of liberation still underpins our standing in Europe and the world.

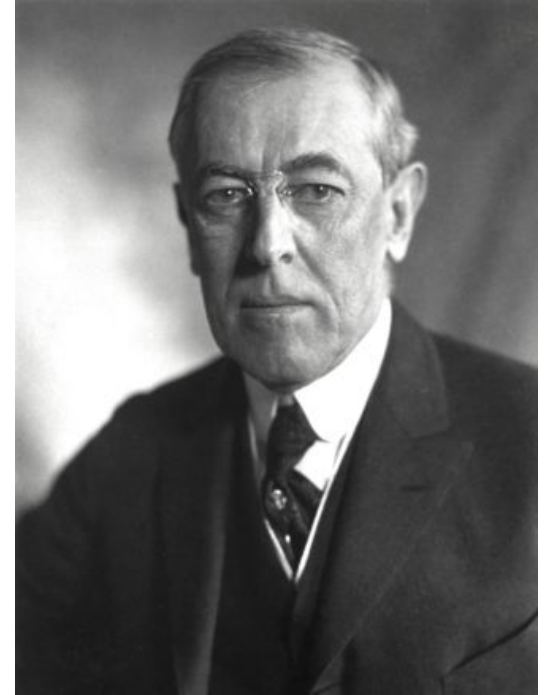
Europe today – including Britain – faces more and greater challenges than at any time since 1945. They include climate change, a Russia falling back into the muscular mindset of nineteenth-century nationalism, the crisis in the Middle East and its repercussions in our own societies, and the need to regulate banks to prevent a repetition of 2008. None of these challenges originated in Europe; none can be solved by pursuing narrow national interests. On the contrary: to meet them, Europeans need to pool their collective resources, and that includes a British commitment to sustain the ideal of a free Europe that was fought for across the past century. There exists a structure for European states to co-operate: it is called the European Union. It is still a relatively young and imperfect structure, subject to the competing and often conflicting interests of its member states. But it is the only structure we have.

Professor Andrew Knapp
University of Reading
Professor Richard Overy
University of Exeter
Professor Beatrice Heuser
University of Glasgow
Professor Alison Adams
University of Glasgow
Dr. Karen Adler
University of Nottingham
Professor Sally Alexander
Edinburgh University of Law
Professor Stephen Alford
University of Leeds
Dr. Tom Allason
Cardiff University
Dr. Peter Anderson
University of Leeds
Professor David Andress
University of Portsmouth
Professor Matthias Rössler

Professional History

Problems of Integration?

“We have seen the dawn and the early morning hours of a new age in the writing of history, and the morning is now broadening about us into day. When the day is full we shall see that minute research and broad synthesis are not hostile but friendly methods, cooperating toward a common end which neither can reach alone. No piece of history is true when set apart to itself, divorced and isolated. It is part of an intricately various whole, and must needs be put in its place in the netted scheme of events to receive its true color and estimation; and yet it must be itself individually studied and contrived if the whole is not to be weakened by its imperfection. Whole and part are of one warp and woof.”



Woodrow Wilson

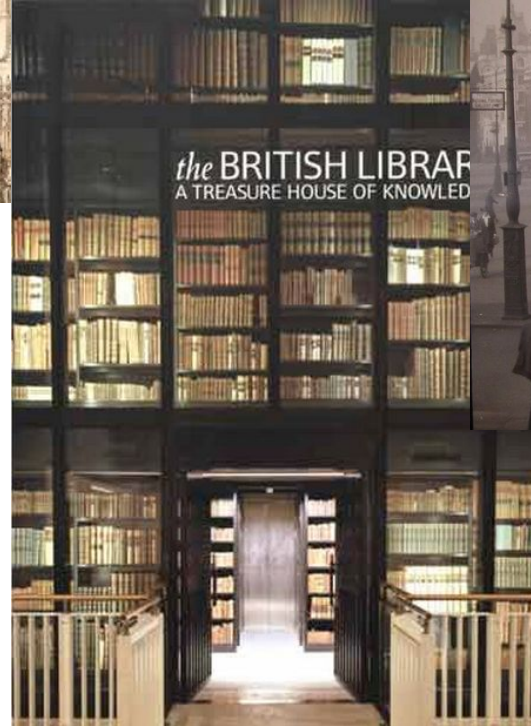
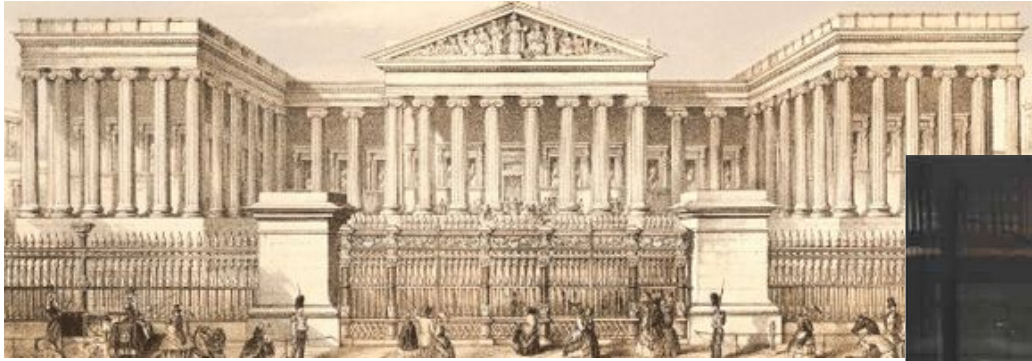
On social scientists

“verbal juggling and esoteric language” - Lawrence Stone

...I suspect that Trevor-Roper and I disagree about labels rather than facts - Eric Hobsbawm

...that materialism and idealism, reason and emotion, interests and morals, are constantly confused, first one and then the other rising to the surface. There is no final solution to this problem, and every historian must work according to his private judgement. - Lawrence Stone

Specialisation & Fragmentation



Cultural Heritage Integration

- Each Institution has its own language and vocabulary.
- It's own perspective, based on its history, type and selection of objects, location, disciplines.
- They have different world views and approach the material world differently.



Methods (and politics)

Concerns of Stone (scientism)

The Vulgar Marxists - deterministic

The Cliometricians - artificial and unintelligible

The French Annales - ignored cultural change

*Quantitative methodology has proved a fairly weak reed which can only answer a limited set of problems. Forced into a choice between a priori statistical models of human behaviour, **and** understanding based on observation, experience, judgement **and** intuition, some of the "**new historians**" are now tending to drift back towards the latter mode of interpreting the past.*



Question: How do you write History?

- **Descriptive Narrative** - The framework revolves around a description of people and linear events which focus on the particular and the specific
- **Analytical Narrative** - the framework revolves around a collective and statistical analysis?
- **Thick Descriptions** - All relevant context - a bit of everything
- **Pregnant Principle** - A descriptive narrative but which has an underlying theme and argument.
- None of the above.
- Equally all of the above.

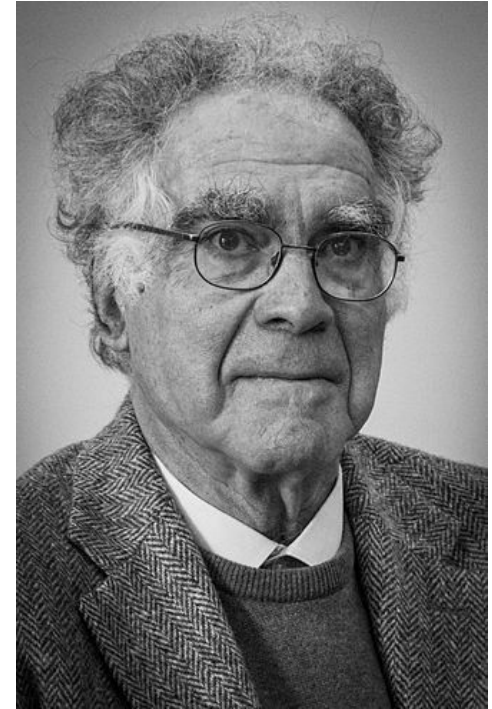


A Web of History - Dealing with Data

An Analytical approach

- Intensive study of something leads to a better generalisation.
- It's not the cult of the fragment.
- Leads to further questions and provisional generalisations
- A way of dealing with the mass of data

I take culture to be those webs and the analysis of it to be ... not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.



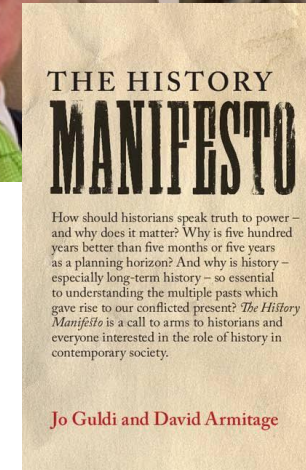
Back to the longue duree

David Armitage & Jo Guldi

Through Big Data and digitisation?

The data and the techniques are not available

Back to Problems of quality data and transparency

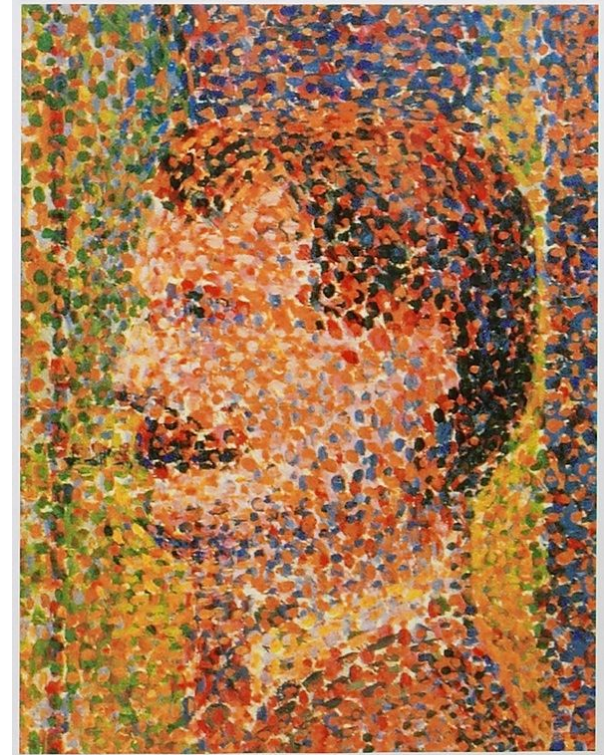


Poor Practice and Theory



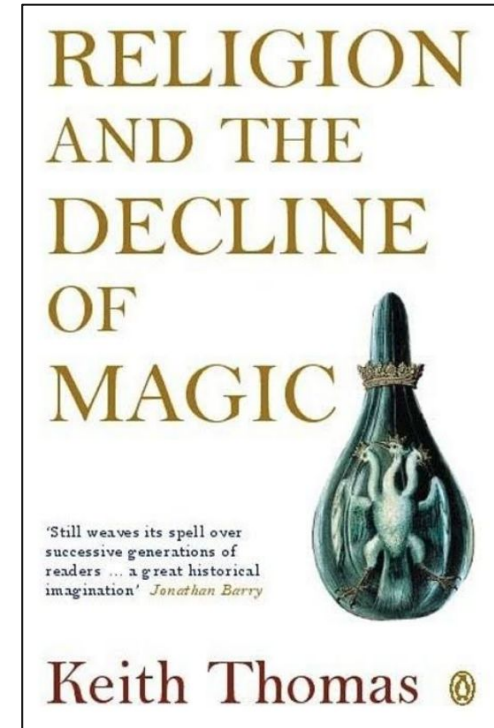
The Paradox for Stone

- Total history only seems possible if one takes a microcosm and applies it upwards (see Ginzburg and Wilson)
- But in reality our academic and institutional structures don't support a total history of a society, ...*and settles for the story of a single cell* - Lawrence Stone



A Case Study - Keith Thomas

“It never helps historians to say too much about their working methods. For just as the conjuror’s magic disappears if the audience knows how the trick is done, so the credibility of scholars can be sharply diminished if readers learn everything about how exactly their books came to be written.”



Summary of messages

1. Complexity and accessibility
2. Friction between agency and structure
3. Transparency of both data and narrative.
4. Collaboration under a common framework.
5. The integration of different methods of histories.
6. Language and terms of reference.
7. How do we deal with data?

Interdisciplinary Knowledge for Writing History

Core Competencies for History

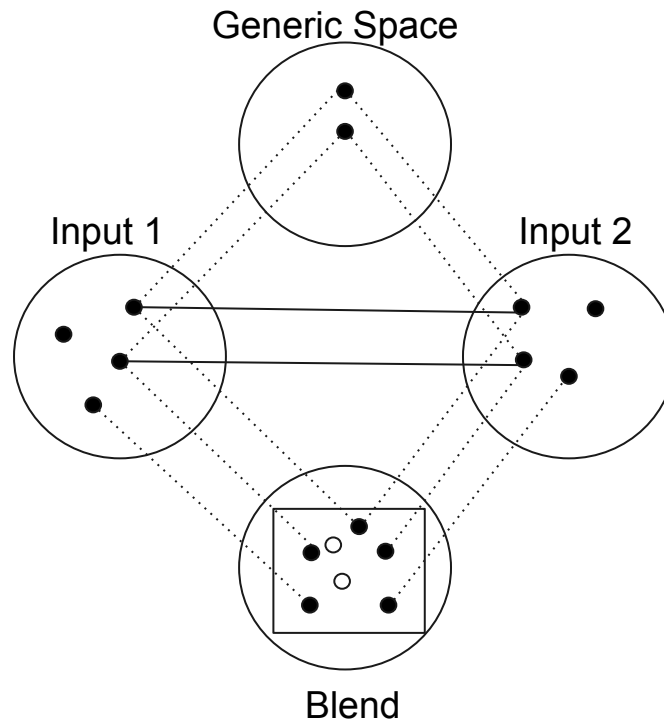
American History Association History Tuning Project: 2013 History Discipline Core

1. Engage in historical inquiry, research, and analysis. →
2. Practice historical empathy. →
3. Understand the complex nature of the historical record. →
4. Generate significant, open-ended questions about the past and devise research strategies to answer them. →
5. Craft historical narrative and argument. →
6. Practice historical thinking as central to engaged citizenship. →

American History Association History Tuning Project: 2016 History Discipline Core

1. Build historical knowledge.
2. Develop historical methods.
3. Recognize the provisional nature of knowledge, the disciplinary preference for complexity, and the comfort with ambiguity that history requires.
4. Apply the range of skills it takes to decode the historical record because of its incomplete, complex, and contradictory nature.
5. Create historical arguments and narratives.
6. Use historical perspective as central to active citizenship.

Knowledge & Cognition



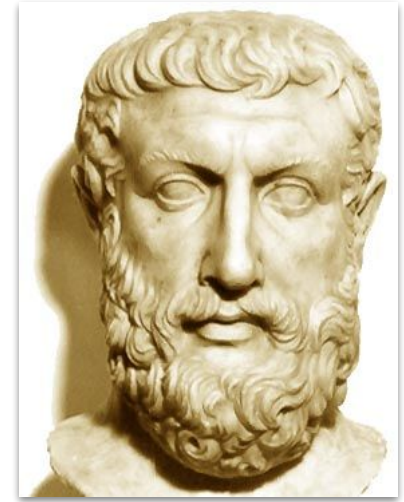
What is an Ontology?

In Philosophy

“The science or study of being; that branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature or essence of being or existence.”

In Computer Science

In computer science and information science, an ontology defines categories, properties, and relations between the concepts, data, and entities that substantiate one, many, or all domains.



Parmenides

What is Production?

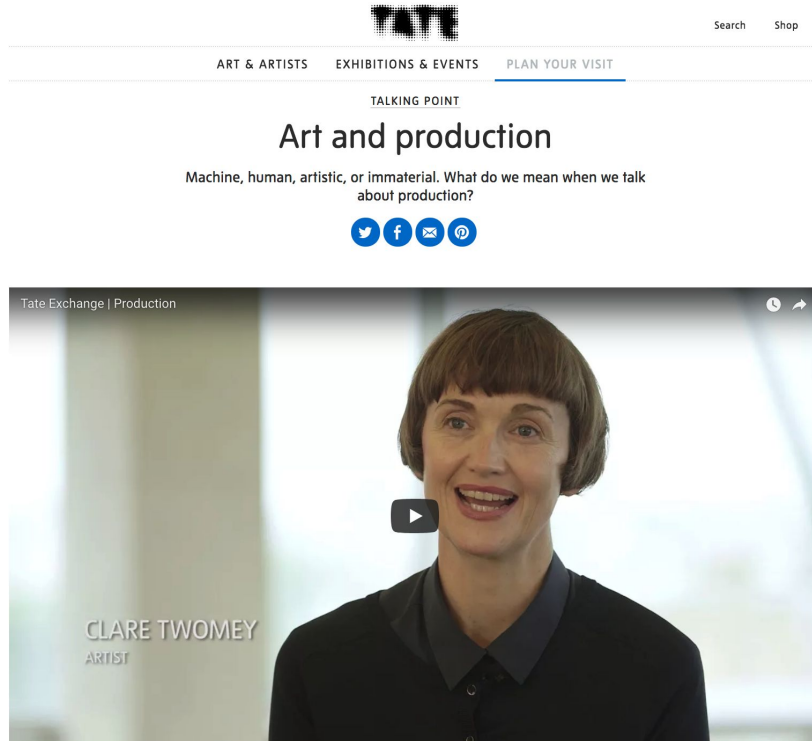
Ontological Definition

This class comprises activities that are designed to, and succeed in, creating one or more new items.

It specializes the notion of modification into production.

The decision as to whether or not an object is regarded as new is context sensitive. Normally, items are considered “new” if there is no obvious overall similarity between them and the consumed items and material used in their production. In other cases, an item is considered “new” because it becomes relevant to documentation by a modification.





WHAT IS 'PRODUCTION' AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

“...is the conscious act to understand the doing, the making of a thing...some production you see, some of it is completely hidden” - Clare Twomey

- Getting something ready for someone.
- Inputs made into outputs.
- Working with others - coming together to create.
- Humans? Machines?
- Understanding what is needed from someone else.
- Learning through making, energy, time, mistakes.
- Talk and debate and thinking through important ideas

Causality, Process & Change



Internal and External Relations

Ollman - The most important question in Philosophy

Broadly philosophies can be divided into two:

1. External Relations -
 - a. Talks about independent entities that are external related.
 - b. Changes can occur between them but it does affect their individual characteristic
 - c. This means that analysts can live with paradox and can select.
2. Internal Relations -
 - a. Takes about processes that are mutually dependent, they are internally related.
 - b. Changes to one affect the nature of the another
 - c. This means that apparent paradox must be resolved. Rather than select, the reason for a contradiction must be investigated and the reason for it understood.

Demonstration

