

U3A Philosophy. Time, Space, Matter. Review of meeting 6 Oct 2023

The following issues were raised, especially concerning time.

A) General

- i) The definition of 'time' (cf Augustine's quote)
- ii) What evidence is there that time exists?
- iii) Are time and space absolute i.e. do they exist independently of the events and objects that populate them (Newton) or are they merely the relationships and order between those events and those objects (Leibniz)?
- iv) What is the relationship between time as we experience it - with present, past and future - and time independent of us, where there is order between points in time - before, simultaneous, after - but no privileged 'present' moment?
- v) Similarly with space, as we experience it - here, there, yonder - and the independent space of Cartesian co-ordinates.
- vi) Are time and space ultimately subjective - a priori forms of all our experience (Kant) - or do they exist in themselves, objectively and independent of us?
- vii) Is time linear? Is there a beginning and end of time? Does space have limits? What would be beyond those limits?
- viii) What is the metaphysics of time? Is only the present real? Or the past and the present? Or are all times real, in a block universe of time? (cf McTaggart). Is time dynamic or static?
- ix) Why is the future different from the past?
- x) What relation is there between our view of time and free will, fatalism, morality and God?
- xi) Is time travel possible?

B) The science of time

xii) What does physics make of the notions of simultaneity and the present?

xiii) How do gravity and acceleration affect time?

xiv) Can we sensibly talk of space and time separately?

xv) What accounts for the 'arrow of time'? What role do the second law of thermodynamics and entropy play here?

xvi) What is the relationship between the Scientific Image and the Manifest Image of time (Sellars)?

C) The experience of time

xvii) Does time pass?

xviii) How do we experience time?

xix) What part does time play in our experience e.g. memory, anticipation, the 'specious present' (James)?

xx) What part does time play in our conception of ourselves (e.g. Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty)?