

TIME AND TIMING

three late essays

Collingwood, Jung, and the Timing of History

**Ageing, and our responsibility for Time,
or, What are you Doing Dying, Dad?**

Making it More Personal

DAVID HOLT

Introduction

These three essays all date from my seventy sixth year. Their common theme is that it helps if we think of time as a verb, rather than as a noun.

The first, "Collingwood, Jung, and the Timing of History", was read to the R G Collingwood Society Conference in Oxford, on July 6, 2001.

The second, "Ageing and Our Responsibility for Time, or, What are you doing Dying, Dad?", was written for the Bulletin of the Oxford Psychotherapy Society. I was asked to write this in May of 2001, before I knew that I was suffering from cancer. The Society was planning an issue of the Bulletin to include a number of articles on Ageing, mine was to be one of them. My diagnosis came through shortly before I had finished writing of the paper.

The third, "Making it More Personal", was written as a letter to my son in law, following a talk we had after he read the OPS article. I found myself challenged, not for the first time, to try and make it clearer what I was going on about.

COLLINGWOOD, JUNG, AND THE TIMING OF HISTORY

Introduction

I want to bring some more general questions of timing to bear on Collingwood's philosophy of history. In particular I want to consider his idea of history as re-enactment, and the conclusion to which I am leading up is that it may help to think of time as a verb rather than as a noun.

I hope Collingwood scholars may find what I have to say relevant to the kind of problems William Dray addresses in chapters 4 and 5 of his *History as Re-enactment: R G Collingwood's Idea of History*, in which he asks how the re-enactment of thought relates to feeling, to the social, to the physical.

My paper is in three parts. First, autobiographical. Second, about timing, rather than what goes on in time. Third, an example of re-enactment from my own work.

And I would like to present it in gratitude to two great historians, Richard Southern and Christopher Hill.

1. Autobiographical

Autumn, 1938. I am twelve years old, a boarder at the Dragon School here in Oxford. We have just come out from assembly, where the Headmaster has told us what a good thing Chamberlain's Munich agreement is. I say to another boy: "But I had a letter from my father this morning saying it is a disaster".

Four years later, at my public school. In a lesson on civics, we are being taught about circumstantial evidence. The master gets four or five of us up in front of the class to act some scene of our own devising. The rest of us have to write down what we see. Our accounts are then compared with the actors' version of what they had just done. They do not agree.

Four years on again, after the war. I am reading Modern History at Oxford. My tutor, Dick Southern, puts me on to Collingwood's *Autobiography*. I am fascinated, and go on to read others of his books. The *Essay on Metaphysics* has a decisive influence on my future, in that

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it gets me to choose to read St Augustine as my 'special subject', to be studied from original sources. Reading the Confessions (I think in Latin, though I find that hard to believe now) I feel I must find out what modern psychology has to say about this sort of thing. At Blackwells I pick off the psychology shelves Jung's *Psychology and Religion* (the Terry Lectures he gave at Yale in 1937). Three months later, on a different trajectory, tripped by an unhappy love affair, I begin a Jungian analysis.

Collingwood and Jung. How has Jung affected my reading of Collingwood? I have to be selective. So two points only.

The last paragraph of *The Idea of Nature* has remained a defining moment in my life. For me it has an almost liturgical resonance.

"I conclude that natural science as a form of thought exists and always has existed in a context of history, and depends on historical thought for its existence. From this I venture to infer that no one can understand natural science unless he understands history: and that no one can answer the question what nature is unless he knows what history is. This is a question which Alexander and Whitehead have not asked. And that is why I answer the question, 'Where do we go from here?' by saying, 'We go from the idea of nature to the idea of history'".

What Jung has done for me is to locate that 'turn' from the idea of nature to the idea of history in my autobiography. He did so by focussing my attention on the difference between inheritance and experience. He made that difference an autobiographical responsibility. There's what I'm born with, what comes together with my conception. And there's what happens after. What am I to make of the mix?

It is a question that makes timing a defining concern, in body as well as mind, in mind as well as body. For instance, and this is my second point, in the theatre of my dreams. There is much in Jung's teaching that I have come to doubt. But his insistence that dreams are theatrical in structure and energy and intention has grown ever more persuasive. And what I have learned from them is how much theatre has to teach us about the timing of everyday: timing that is synchronic as well as diachronic, so that endings underwrite what goes before, grounding futurity in closure, making the present opportune. As I hope to show in my example.

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But there have been other influences beside Jung. To start with, of course, Augustine. And then I select another three: the work of Kenneth Burke, well known in the US but perhaps not so well known here, with his five terms Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, Purpose, work which allowed me to place my interest in the dramatic structuring of dreams in a much wider context; Hans Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, which brings Collingwood's logic of question and answer into touch with Heidegger's meditation on time; and the thought of Paul Ricoeur, his work on Freud, on Narrative, and on the Conflict of Interpretations.

And to complete this autobiographical note I must mention my special interest in the workings of the brain. In 1958 my first wife suffered a massive stroke, which got me reading extensively about the brain as it was then understood. Just how influential this has been on my thinking I've only realised in the last five years, since a minor stroke of my own introduced me to the kind of brain research now going on. Compared with forty years ago it is a different science. In preparing this paper I am aware of drawing again and again on what this changing science is teaching us.

So where does all that leave my interest in the timing of history?

2. Timing, rather than what goes on in time

Events. With that 1942 civics lesson in mind, think of the part we play in events. That's where history, and our interest in history, begin.

An event is a happening, what P G Wodehouse liked to call a 'concatenation of circumstance'. It also involves some kind of action or doing. It is happening and act, in one.

Events are timely. They take time, and the time an event takes is set, set by other events. Events time each other, and in doing so hang together. That hanging together has consistency. We call it story.

Events also take place. They come together to set a scene. In setting a scene they make a picture. We call it theatre.

That's how the eventfulness of everyday is constituted: being subjected to happening, initiating action, taking time and being timed, taking place and setting scene, making a picture.

But for there to be history there has to be something more. I call it responsibility, spelt with an a in the middle.

In my work I play on the words responsible and responsibility so as to allow for the impingement of both past and future on the present, on the Now - which is, when all is said and done, all the time we ever have. We are responsible in the sense of being in debt to the past. And we are responsible towards the future, in the sense of being able to act now in creating the future. I use the spelling 'responsability' to keep those two different directions in play across each other: responsibility as a past debt to be carried, responsibility as future opportunity, an ability to be exercised as well as an obligation to be met.

History is eventfulness discovering itself as responsibility. I think of it as having three moments, a triangle with a spiral of hesitation. First, a questioning: what is going on? Then, an answering: ah, I see, so that's it. But then there is another questioning, a kind of second order questioning, a sense that in order to have arrived at the answer, to have moved from the "what's going on?" to the "ah, I see" I must have done something. So there's this new level of questioning: "so what have I done?", which feeds back into the original "what is going on?".

Eventfulness discovering itself as responsibility. How do I relate that to Collingwood's history as re-enactment?

Through the come and go of time, and through witness.

The anthropologist Edmund Leach reminds us of societies in which the come and go of time is not experienced as in the same direction, or as round and round the same wheel, but as "something discontinuous, a repetition of repeated reversal, a sequence of oscillations between night and day, winter and summer, drought and flood, age and youth, life and death".

The come and go of time as repetition of repeated reversal. Psychoanalysis recognises that "repetition of repeated reversal" as a familiar matter of life and death. It locates it in our experience of how death and sexuality are timed. As it has been expressed recently, by the psychoanalyst Adam Phillips in his book *Darwin's Worms*, "our death is inevitable, but our conception is not".

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There is a hiatus, a hesitation, in that "but" which catches me. It catches me on the turn, as it were, between the come and go of time, making it a personal responsibility. I think it was probably one reason why Collingwood's turn from the idea of nature to the idea of history caught my attention in the way it did, aged 21, ex serviceman, virgin.

But to get that hiatus, that hesitation, into ACT there has to be witness.

I have said that history is eventfulness discovering itself as responsibility. Witness is how that discovery is incorporated.

I think it was Gadamer who showed me how witness calls up responsibility. He did so by connecting event with experience in his analysis of the German word *Erlebnis*. An *Erlebnis* is something we have 'of' the world, an experience. It is also a happening 'in' the world, a Wodehousian concatenation of circumstance, an event. Experience is as it were the subjective side of *Erlebnis*, event the objective.

Witness is what brings the two together. Witness conjugates experience and event. It does so by making the subjective objective. Which can feel reputable, scientific. But witness also involves making the objective subjective, and that can feel very dodgy. So cross examination is called for, and we have a more public version of the three moments I spoke of earlier, crossing I with We, You with They. "What's going on?" "I can tell you what's going on." "Oh no, you can't. You're getting it all wrong." "What are we doing, arguing like this?", which turns into "Why are they arguing like that?" That civics lesson in 1942. The conflict of interpretations.

The come and go of time. The incorporation of witness. Eventfulness recognising itself as responsibility. Timing rather than what goes on in time. Let's move to an example.

3. An example

The example I bring emphasises body as the vehicle of thought. It combines theatre with a history book. I am bringing it as I said in the hope that you may find it relevant to the question which William Dray addresses in his book: how does re-enactment of thought relate to feeling, to the social, to the physical?

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For about fifteen years, from the late 70's to 1991, we had a series of weekends under the general title "Jung and Hermeneutics", in which we acted, without speaking, fairy stories, myths, Biblical stories, and plays by Shakespeare and Ibsen. In them we developed a shared interest in theatre as a way of cross fertilisation between psychoanalytic, behavioural, and what we called ontological, approaches to human affairs. We described what we did as enactment. In 1985 we enacted Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. The paper which I read the day after our performance was titled "Listening for the Beat of History in the Rhythms of Everyday".

To tell you about that weekend I have to start by saying something about acting without words.

Acting without words gets us into the difference between demonstration and description. It's not so much that action speaks louder than words. It speaks otherwise. Theorists of the theatre talk about it as deixis, or ostension. Demonstration is effective in ways that description is not. It is the force, the urgency, the immediacy, of demonstration that comes home to us when we act without words, and however clever we are with words, it eludes description.

But we go on trying. And I started us off with this book.

The book was (show) *The Tremulous Private Body: essays on subjection* by Francis Barker. I was trying to imagine what being in the body was like when Shakespeare's text and his company of actors first came together. Barker's book starts with a page out of the diary of Samuel Pepys. He then looks at the "glorious cruelties of the Jacobean theatre", leading to some pages on Hamlet. Then he turns to the question of censorship, as studied in Milton's *Areopagitica*. Then, the emergence of something like our modern sense of 'I' in the philosophy of Descartes. Then, from literature to painting, eleven pages are given to analysis of Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaas Tulp*. Returning to literature, Andrew Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress*. And he ends by weaving together his various threads into what he calls the outline of a historical fable, a fable of transition: the transition from a world and culture centred on "the word made flesh", to a new world and a new culture in which "the flesh is made word".

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In my talk I used this book, in particular the sections on Pepys, Marvell and Rembrandt, to help get us talking about our enactment of *Measure for Measure*. I've had it printed out, and there are copies here. Just one example for now. Barker is writing about Marvell's poem.

The internal *milieu* of the poem is eventually one of 'rough strife', which, if it is a sexual metaphor is also in the historical context a political one. As the poem tends towards the future it reaches after objectives which will have to be wrested from life and from time, from history itself. This is, as Christopher Hill argued some time ago, an anti-epicurean ethic, and one which could well be described as militant and 'puritan', in its combativeness and commitment to labour, if not actually in its emphasis on urgent sex.

In my talk on "Listening for the Beat of History in the Rhythms of Everyday" it was that tending towards the future, reaching after objectives to be wrested from life and from time, from history itself, which I tried to evoke. It's what the brain does as anticipation tries itself out. It's what our dreams do as they ground futurity in closure, making the present opportune.

But however interesting my talk, what made the weekend *work* was our enactment. And there it's the timing that catches us, and makes us return the year after to repeat the experience. Because in rehearsal there is never enough time. While in performance there is always all the time you need.

At the time, it seems so self evident. You just get on with it. But in thinking about it afterwards, it's that difference between rehearsal and performance to which I return again and again.

Think of the difference between rehearsal and performance. You don't have to go on stage to act, though that can help. Just think of the way the events of everyday are timed, of how anticipation and "ah, so that's it" depend on each other. When does rehearsal end and performance begin?

And then think of how history relies on our interest in history, so that it just has to go on being re-researched, re-written, re-marketed, as if performance is calling for rehearsal. Why can't we let history alone? Perhaps it's because of the timing, rather than what goes on in time.

Conclusion

I think Collingwood's philosophy of history as re-enactment presupposes that time is given into our keeping. This is the thought which I am offering to the world of Collingwood studies.

William Dray writes in his book that Collingwood's account of history as re-enactment "has often been held not to apply to unreflective human activities, to highly irrational actions, or to what people feel by contrast with what they do - He has also been accused, because of the way he emphasises the historian's concern with past 'thought', of ignoring the considerable role played by physical conditions in history, and of remaining strangely silent about how large-scale social processes are to be understood. The latter, say many of his critics, is scarcely surprising, since his theory, which was originally devised as an account of the way we are to understand individual actions, cannot be expected to have anything to say about these quite different and more important problems".

That is not my experience of Collingwood. He put me onto my responsibility for timing. Jung, and of course Augustine, and others, extended that sense of responsibility into the body, my personal body, and what the anthropologists have taught me to think of as the social body. And to sum up my argument in the one sentence I gave you when I began, it's the body which finds it helpful to think of time as a verb rather than a noun.

Timing, not time. That's what enactment is about. When we think of time as a verb rather than a noun, it is as if all those other verbs we use in speaking about time - to find, to take, to spend, to save, to waste, to make, to allow, to keep, to spare - turn into questions. They question how the gift of time and our responsibility for keeping time belong together. That questioning is interested in acts rather than facts, demonstration rather than description. It calls for the incorporation of witness, making us responsible now for the come and go of events. Finality and originality reciprocate, so that endings and beginnings speak of each other. And now that sentence about death and conception ends on a rising, questioning, inflexion: "our death is inevitable, but our conception is not.....?", turning us from the idea of nature to the idea of history.

References:

Copies of the lecture "Listening for the Beat of History in the Rhythms of Everyday", printed together with two other supporting papers, under the general title "Re-enacting Jacobean Bodies", are available from the author, at 35 Blenheim Drive, Oxford, OX2 8DJ

AGEING AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR TIME or, WHAT ARE YOU DOING DYING, DAD?

I

Ageing would be more lively if society would recognise its responsibility for time. A lot more sharing could go on between the old and the young if only we'd all wake up to the fact that time is given into our keeping.

I've been lecturing and writing about time for thirty years. After my stroke in 1995, aged 69, my first teaching engagement was three months later at the St Albans Counselling Service, when I took as my title "Getting our Timing Right". In that talk I developed three themes: time as conflictual, time as provisional, time as disappointing.

In our everyday experience of being in time there is

(a) time as given (natural): a stream, flow, medium, into which we are thrown, by which we are carried along.

(b) time as doing (historical): we speak of making, taking, saving, spending, wasting, losing, finding, keeping time.

Being in time involves us in both. What does it feel like?

Time as given, and time as doing, are conflictual. To con-flict, to strike together. Sometimes they fit, sometimes they don't. Sometimes what we do catches the tide, sometimes it doesn't, and we miss the tide. There are accidents that seem to be meant, and there are accidents that make nonsense of meaning.

How do we get in on the rhythm, the beat, of that con-flict?

We need a "So be it" that's both passive, accepting, and also active, assertive. That "so be it" has to be said, and it has to be done. It has to be incorporated in the way we behave. That is the only way to get in time.

It is here that the provisional comes in. The provisional makes room for acceptance and assertion. To get in time, which means to be timed, our "so be it" has to allow for both. Think of the phrase "for the time being". What does it carry for you? What does it do to you?

We have to allow for "the time being". We have to be able to wait, to rest, to get ready. Only so do we have time to act.

We can think of it it another way, starting from how our bodies operate *on* time and *with* time as well as *in* time.

J.T.Fraser, founder of the International Society for the Study of Time, in his 1990 book *Of Time, Passion, and Knowledge*, identifies five levels or modes of temporality.

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(1) an electromagnetic substratum, (2) a level at which parts are countable but not orderable, (3) a "dawn" when before and after are allowed for but not future, past, and present. (4) a biological, when living organisms introduce a present as anchor, and (5) the mental, associated with unresolvable conflicts made possible by the sheer complexity of the human brain.

Our bodies are implicated in them all.

Which means that they aren't only subject to time. They constitute their own time out of different times. They are constantly engaged in making time habitable. And they feel accordingly. They pick up gentle vibrations, seismic tremors, contrapuntal urgencies. They feel called on for some response, because that is how they are made. They are made able to operate on time, and with time, and in time.

But though called on for some response there is no guarantee that we can get the different times to synchronise. Dis-appointment is built into time keeping. We have to allow for that dis-appointment. And not only allow in some passive sense. We have to take it on board, make it our responsibility, include it in what we *do*, in what we expect of others.

Allowing for dis-appointment. Here's a dream I had aged 68, to illustrate what that can feel like.

I have made a simultaneous appointment for the dentist, and for some kind of psychotherapy/shiatzu/acupuncture.

I have known about it for a long time, and it has been no problem. But now the time has come to keep the double appointment. How can I? I can't. I can't be in two places at once.

Terrible, exhausting, pain/anxiety of getting - to which? Like all the journeying, travel dreams.

I do get to the dentist, 25 minutes late (out of 30 minute 'slot'). He/she says I'd better come in and he/she'll see what he/she can do.

Later sequence, trying to sew up skin round someone's groin, penis, a bit like doing up nappies, but it involves threading string through holes in the flesh.

The someone lies still and patient.

In dream, it is said that this is the explanation of why I 'split'. Because I don't distinguish between the two kinds of appointment. Splitting caused by failure to appreciate the difference between them.

II

What has all this to do with ageing, and with the "lot more sharing that could go on between the old and the young if we'd all wake up to the fact that time is given into our keeping"?

As with so much else, death is a defining moment. Is death something that happens (natural) or is it something we do (historical)? I believe it's something we do, but I feel the society I'm a member of on the whole prefers to think of it as something that happens. Ageing for me seems to be organising itself round the attempt, the need, the expectation, the hope, for more dialogue about the timing of death. Is it a doing or a happening?

It may be a more conflictual question than I yet realise.

A book to which I have found myself returning again and again over the last five years is Maurice Bloch's *Prey into Hunter: the politics of religious experience* (Cambridge, 1992). It's about how bloody time keeping can be. It has caught and held my attention because it reminds me of work some of us did twenty years ago on the Jacob and Esau cycle, and the story it tells of food supply, family, religion, tribal warfare. It's a book that leaves me wondering, not for the first time, how much more there is to the Bible than I ever hear about in church.

Bloch is an anthropologist. *Prey into Hunter* runs to 105 pages, and is in seven chapters: Introduction, Initiation, Sacrifice, Cosmogony and the State, Marriage, Millenarianism, Myth. Bloch's central argument derives from a question. How do human beings, who are transient, who don't last, who are born to die, participate in institutions which do last, which do not die? In other words, how do we keep time? How do we synchronise biological experience, organised round birth, death and reproduction, with historical experience of being members of institutions which endure, like families and societies?

His answer, derived from the study of various contemporary tribal peoples, the Abraham-Isaac story, Iphigenia, Buddhist and Shinto funeral rites, and early Christian experience as reflected in Paul's discussion of circumcision, is based on the idea of 'rebounding violence'. Rebounding violence is our response to a contradiction, the contradiction between a world of process, a world of biological transformation, and a world beyond process, a world which defies transience, a world which lasts. "The construction of the ritual drama of rebounding violence is an attempt to avoid the force of this contradiction (p.19)".

The force of that contradiction. Death as happening, death as doing. The con-flict between time as given and time as doing. Apart from certain religious congregations, we don't want to engage with it. We don't even want to think about it.

I believe that what is at stake between the dying and the rest of us is something to do with the force of that contradiction. But I also believe that we are far more familiar with that contradiction than we realise, if only we will listen to our private, intimate, intuitions about time.

John Berger put it well some fifteen years ago in writing about his Channel 4 television programmes *About Time*.

It wasn't that we thought we knew what ought to be said. We have all discovered the trap which St Augustine described so succinctly: "What then is time? If no one asks me, I know; but if I wish to explain it to he who asks, I know not".

No, it wasn't that we knew what ought to be said. It was simply that, through our different experiences and lives, we had come to the conclusion that the notions about time, which are embodied in formal education, the current assumptions of news bulletins, political promises and moral sermons, are patently inadequate. What we wanted to do was to clear a space that could be given over to other, more intimate, less rhetorical and more far seeing intuitions and questions which cluster, for the most part unacknowledged, around everyone's experience of time, and then to let these intuitions talk with science and history.

So what is it that's lying around unsaid between the old and the young?

There's something very surprising and very demanding about time. Between the old and the young we have an opportunity to acknowledge both the surprise and the demand, to get inside them, to make something of them. Read Martin Amis's book *Experience* about his father Kingsley and all that went on in that family over the years.

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We oldies ask ourselves, with varying inflection, curiosity, intensity, what it's all been about. Has it perhaps been about something else, something we've never cottoned on to? We are learning to engage ever more urgently with the provisional. Dis-appointment reveals itself as a key to time keeping.

But what happens all too often is that far seeing intuitions, for the most part unacknowledged, surface and then are lost. We need the questions that go with them. And for that we need to be talking across the generations.

For instance, here are some questions I'd like to be talking about with younger generations.

1. Why aren't Sundays special any more? What happened? What was it that changed?
2. Our natural resources need time to renew themselves. How does that affect what we do with our own time?
3. Do we care how the time of the physicists and the time of the evolutionists compare? Is it any business of ours if they don't synchronise? If it is, how do we rethink the timing of our world?

Time as given into our keeping. Old age could have a lot to say to science and history if the young were minded to ask us: "what are you *doing* dying?" - knowing, as they surely do, that that "you" is really a "we". Death as doing can wake us up to the fact that *we* (that familiar yet suspect mixing of I with the plural Other) is responsible for time.

Let me conclude with two examples from our recent corporate experience in our Society.

Claire Tanner's talk in November 1998 on *Cognitive Analytic Therapy* got us thinking a lot about timing. In her Bulletin report on the evening, Eva Smith described our "rapt attention" as a letter of Reformulation was read out. We were hearing about work that takes our responsibility for time seriously, and proves its effectiveness in doing so.

A few months later, in April 1999, Gertrud Mander talked to us on *Echoes of War: Thoughts on Transgenerational Transmission*. Her talk coincided with the start of the war in Kosovo. In the discussion afterwards I for one felt strangled. I think we were confronted with the force of a contradiction which we could make nothing of.

MAKING IT MORE PERSONAL

January 24, 2002

After we talked recently, I felt I wanted to have another go at getting you to see some sense in what I am going on about in that Ageing and Dying piece of mine, for the OPS Bulletin. So here is an attempt to present it as it were autobiographically.

But first, the key thought. Time is given into our keeping.

It is given, it's just there, for us to live in. But it is also in some way our responsibility. It is up to us to keep time. How the givenness and the keeping go together is the question I'm trying to talk about. I think of it as a huge, slippery, insistent, question, occasionally enlightening, occasionally heartbreaking. And I think we, both as individuals and as society, are failing to give that question the attention it deserves.

To get inside the question, I find it helps to think about timing as well as time. Time as a verb as well as a noun. But timing is not something which time does. So which comes first, as it were: the verb or the noun?

Now, autobiographical: how the question has got at me during my life. And remember, I'm trying to raise a question, not to come up with an answer.

1. For many years, up to I suppose about the age of twelve, I heard and read the Biblical story of creation, Genesis, and the Darwinian story, evolution, side by side, without much sense of contradiction. Then I began to realise that both couldn't be true. Some sense of "us" having a BIG problem with time took hold of me, as it were. And it has not let go.

2. Then there was "telling the time". This involved reading a clock, how the numbers, Roman numbers, were arranged in a circle, and how two hands, a big hand and a small hand, went round, number by number. The big hand went faster, and told the minutes. The small hand went slower, and told the hours. So minutes were sort of faster, hours slower.

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3. Later on this got mixed up with "maths".

I think it was my teacher my last year at Dragons, a man called E Allan Price. I still have a small book of his he gave me on leaving, July 1939, with the inscription: "David Holt - there's rosemary....", which suggests some sort of feeling between us. Maths opened up that early experience of reading a clock into work between arithmetic and geometry, how counting and measuring go together. It was the beginning of an interest in what the physicists have to say about time and space. Although I cannot understand them, I know that what they are going on about matters to me personally.

4. Then, after the war, reading History at Oxford, I was influenced by the philosopher R G Collingwood, just at that time of life when the mind is as it were "setting".

Collingwood taught me to think about time from the point of view of the historian, and to contrast that with the assumptions about time made in the natural sciences. The emphasis was very much on timing, on time as verb.

Looking back now, I wonder if the effect of Collingwood's work on me had something to do with it coming just then, immediately after the war had ended. My teens were timed when people weren't at all sure what kind of future there was going to be. We were being taught to kill and to expect to be killed. Day by day, week by week, there was expectancy of some kind of catastrophe. And then it was over, and things were going to go on more or less as before.

So perhaps wondering about the make up of history came easily to a 21 year old in 1947.

5. Then, St Augustine and psychoanalysis, together.

Augustine was my "special subject", to be studied from original sources. It was my introduction to Biblical theological thinking, and argument, passionate and at times murderous argument, about time. But it came together with the intensely autobiographical Confessions, pulsing with timing as what matters, as what makes time interesting.

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So that when I got into psychoanalysis a few months later I was as it were primed to think about time and timing.

Just two points about psychoanalysis and the timing of life.

First, sexuality and death: how are they related? As one psychoanalyst has written recently: "Our death is inevitable, but our conception is not".

Think about that. How does that "but" affect us between the givenness of time and the responsibility to keep time?

It places my, our, question, slippery, insistent, occasionally enlightening, occasionally heartbreaking, in the pulsing centre of family life.

Second, working with dreams gets us asking, again and again, what is inherited, what is learned? What is just given, and what is in some way or another my doing?

6. Anthropology. Reading about other societies and how they time themselves brings home again and again how "time" is dependent on "timing".

7. Theatre has been a major influence on my understanding of time. Somewhere I have an essay in which I describe the five kinds of time involved in theatre. There is performance time, how long the performance lasts. There is plot time, the order in which events are presented on the stage. There is chronological time, the order in which the events actually take place. There is historical time, the time of the world outside the theatre. And, perhaps most important of all for my argument here, the dramatic present, the *now* which carries the action being presented.

This *now* is what gets all the other timings ticking together, as it were. It is a good example of how the givenness of time and the keeping of time somehow depend on each other. I think it is why theatre is so important to us. You go to the theatre often. Is it just to be entertained? I doubt it.

Time and Timing - three late essays

8. Now, I'm dying. How does the time/timing problem get at me now?

What I am trying to say in that OPS Bulletin paper, when I talk about dying as a doing - "What are you doing dying, Dad?" - is that dying is both a dropping, falling, out of time, something that happens in the same way as time just happens to be there (or is it here?), and also proof, perhaps the only really convincing proof, that like it or not it's up to us to keep time.

To get what I'm trying to say it probably helps to think of all the different kinds of dying there are.

There's dying of old age (which until recently in history only a small proportion of us did). There's dying of an illness when you're already getting on, like what I'm doing. Which is different to dying of an illness aged 50, or 40, or 30, or 20, or 10, or 1. And then there are the many kinds of dying as a result of an accident, an accident which can be someone's fault, the fault of the person dying, or the fault of someone else (big difference there), or just bad luck, an Act of God. And then there are the many kinds of dying by killing. Being killed in war when you are yourself set to kill is not the same as being killed by a dangerous driver, a careless surgeon, racist violence, an inspired terrorist, an estranged partner. And then there is suicide. And assisted suicide.

Simplify it by just thinking of war, accident, illness, old age. Dying is of many kinds and each kind is *timed* differently. We should think more about these differences in dying, because they keep reminding us that life depends on timing. Death may be inevitable, but its "how" is not. History is involved as well as nature.

One way to develop that thought is in talking about religious belief in an after life, as we did briefly when I had supper with the family last November.

And so to my final point.

9. We. Us. Our.

"We should think about these differences, because they are showing us how...."

"Time is given into our keeping."

All that I'm trying to say here depends on that We, Us, Our. And remember, it's both slippery and insistent, and can be heartbreaking as well as enlightening.

At Ali and Than's wedding, you said something to me about the way I was taking my sentence of death (something like that). But however I am taking it relies a lot on you, all of you, many different yous. Talk about dying is deeply reassuring - when that talk is a sharing rather than a denial. Because we seem to be sharing a sense of time keeping as our responsibility.

But not only in relation to death. History as compared to nature, family, theatre, all depend on We, Us, Our. To get inside what the question about the givenness and the keeping of time we have to ask ourselves, each one of us, how I relates to We.

There are wes that are like me, friendly wes, wes I am happy to identify with. And there are wes that aren't like me at all, wes that I don't want to have anything to do with. So what happens to our responsibility for timing? Who is going to carry that responsibility if "we" is divided against itself? Just think of the conflict of religions.

Perhaps that is why we don't like to think too much about it. Because we know we're not going to be able to agree. But then something like September 11 happens to remind us that we'd better try.

First system of musical notation. The right hand (treble clef) features a melodic line with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, and F4. The left hand (bass clef) plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present. Fingering numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 are indicated for the right hand.

Second system of musical notation. The right hand continues the melodic line with notes F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, and F3. The left hand continues the eighth-note accompaniment. A dynamic marking of *dimin.* is present. Fingering numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 are indicated.

Third system of musical notation. The right hand features a melodic line with notes F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, and F2. The left hand continues the eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *p cresc.* and *mf*. Fingering numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 are indicated.

Fourth system of musical notation. The right hand features a melodic line with notes F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, and F1. The left hand continues the eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *p*, *cresc.*, *mf*, and *dimin.* Fingering numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 are indicated.

Fifth system of musical notation. The right hand features a melodic line with notes F1, E1, D1, C1, B0, A0, G0, and F0. The left hand continues the eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *poco a poco*, *rallent.*, and *smorz.* Fingering numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 are indicated.