

The Art of Time Project's

Recommended Reading List

Welcome to the exciting exploration into the phenomena of time! Below is my personal recommendation of books, novels and short stories which I believe will help and inspire you on your journey to understanding the puzzles and paradoxes of time.

Rather than a simple list of titles and authors, I have personally written a brief summary of each book, explaining some of the content, why I have recommended it, and any benefits or drawbacks. Each book recommendation will also include an estimate of the level of knowledge required, either introductory, intermediate, or advanced. This is based on my own judgement, but please do feel free to feedback if you believe it needs adjusting. Finally, I have included details on where you can find these books, both new and used, and a rough price guide for each. I always recommend checking your local library too.

The list is divided into several sections. Section one covers the philosophy of time, particularly metaphysics. This has been my specialism throughout my academic studies. If you have been to one of my Making Time workshops you will recognise some of the topics, (if you haven't, check out the events page on the website!).

Section two is dedicated to books about time in art. I have written this list from the perspective of a philosopher interested in art, rather than as artist. The Art of Time Project aims to look at the subject of time from an interdisciplinary perspective, and I have tried to reflect this in the list.

Section three is given over to the subject of time in fiction. This section could be long enough to form its own book, so I have not included every novel which deals with topic of time, or time travel. Instead, I have focused on books which I personally have found thought provoking, and which I feel might be overlooked. I believe this selection provides rich provocation for thinking about time in interesting and creative ways and might inspire you to creations of your own.

If there are any books you would like to recommend, please message me via the contact page on the website and I will make every effort to read it. If you have any questions about any of the books listed here, please feel free to contact me.

Enjoy your reading!

Kerry Langsdale

Section One: The Metaphysics of Time

A Brief History of the Philosophy of Time

By Adrian Bardon

Difficulty level: Introductory

Summary

Bardon's '*A Brief History of the Philosophy of Time*' is a good introductory level book. It assumes no prior knowledge of the philosophy of time, starting from the basic question of how we even begin asking what time is. Bardon covers a variety of key questions about time, and different ways we have tried to answer them. This book ranges from early philosophy 2500 years ago with Zeno's paradoxes of motion, to 20th century physics with Einstein's special theory of relativity.

This book is an excellent place to start if you want a summary of the philosophy of time and how the discussions have developed. It is a good jumping off point if you would like to explore the subject in a little more detail.

Availability: New copies can be found in most bookstores, used copies are often available from websites such as ebay for approx. £20 - £24. Audiobooks and digital copies are also available.

Travels in Four Dimensions: The Enigmas of Space and Time

by Robin Le Poidevin

Difficulty level: Introductory/Intermediate. I would recommend this after coming to a Making Time workshop with me, or after having a 1:1 on the philosophy of time.

Summary

This book was my first introduction to the philosophy of time as a student of philosophy, and the chapter on whether or not time passes (chapter 8) in my copy is barely hanging in there! That being said, I wouldn't personally recommend this book as a *first* introduction to the philosophy of time. It is intended as an introductory book and is thorough in the topics it covers. However, it can be a little intense as a starting point and covers both philosophy and physics. The line between these two disciplines is not always particularly clear, so it is worth bearing this in mind while reading.

If you have already had a basic introduction to the philosophy of time, though, *'Travels in Four Dimensions'* is wonderful at encouraging its reader to think in a little more depth about different aspects of time. As it is aimed at students, there are questions at the end of each chapter aimed to challenge you to think a little further, for instance, "What is the smallest period of time possible?", or "If space does have a boundary, what would it feel like if you tried to pass through it?"

Availability: Used copies are often available from websites such as ebay for approx. £4 – 7. New copies can be found in most bookstores for approx. £28.

An Introduction to the Philosophy of Time

by Sam Baron & Kristie Miller

Difficulty level: Intermediate - This is a great book for anyone who has some experience in philosophy or physics, or anyone who has already read some introductory level books. However, if you have never come across any of these concepts before, or have no experience in philosophy at all, then you might find it a little more challenging.

Summary

Despite my suggestion that this book is more aimed at students of philosophy or physics than for the novice, this is still an excellent book for exploring this field. If you already have a little background knowledge, or you have read the recommended books above and want a little more depth, you can't go wrong with Baron & Miller.

This book is a comprehensive guide to the main questions and theories within the philosophy of time. It covers a variety of topics, including theories of static and dynamic time, as well as time in physics, phenomenology, and time travel. As this is aimed at students, at the end of each chapter it includes exercises to ensure understanding, glossaries of terms, and recommendations for further reading. If you want to embark on a thorough exploration into the philosophy of time then this book is an excellent road map.

Availability: Used copies are often available from approx. £10. New copies can be found in most bookstores for £18.

Section Two: Art and Art Theory on Time

Documents of Contemporary Art: Time

Edited by Amelia Groom

Difficulty level: Easy – Intermediate. This book is a collection of excerpts from different authors, so the difficulty varies. On the whole, I found it to be accessible for the novice, though there is plenty here for the more experienced practitioner.

Summary

The Documents of Contemporary Art series is truly wonderful, at least, the ones I have read. This edition, *'Time'*, follows the same layout as the others; it is a series of short essays, excerpts from books and lectures, all relating to time or temporality. Each essay is just a few pages long, and the collection includes contributions from artists, philosophers and various other authors.

Differing from the previous section of recommended reads, this book contains less in the way of metaphysics, and instead casts a wide net. It pulls in themes of temporal experience, synchronicity, repetition, history, horology and much more. If you are looking at exploring time and temporarily creatively, or from a wide variety of different perspectives, I highly recommend this book.

Availability: This is available new from most bookstores for £17 - £19. It is not always easy to find used copies, but as always I would recommend checking your local library.

Time

By Andy Goldsworthy

Difficulty level: Easy

Summary

Seminal British sculptor, Andy Goldsworthy, explores the flow of time, change through time, and entropy. He creates works which are frequently temporary, or transitory in nature. Often these works vary in their longevity, some (such as those at Yorkshire Sculpture Park YSP, *'Hanging Trees'*, for instance) are considered 'permanent', whereas others, such as *'Maple Leaves'* are very fleeting. Even Goldsworthy's apparently permanent works, though, display or highlight change, the works at YSP marking out space for nature to take over.

This book displays Goldsworthy's stunning work over its many full photograph pages, including reflections on making the pieces by the artist himself. Large sections of his international work are accompanied by diaries, revealing more of Goldsworthy's practical process.

Goldsworthy's work makes me want to go out into the middle of nowhere and make land art for days at a time. I hope this book inspires you too.

Availability: You can buy this book new for £28 paperback/£35 hardback. You can also find used copies online for £10 - 12.

Note: For those who prefer to learn in other ways, there is also a documentary on Goldsworthy, which you will be able to find shortly in my Recommended Watching List.

Out of Now

By Tehching Hsieh and Adrian Heathfield.

Difficulty level: Easy

Summary

This list would hardly be complete without Taiwanese performance artist Tehching Hsieh. Hsieh explores temporality and duration in his work, which is seen clearly, and famously, in his *One Year Performances*.

Most of '*Out Of Now*' features stunning photographs of Hsieh's work, which are wonderfully inspiring. Heathfield's written component contextualises Hsieh's work in its philosophical and artistic roots. He considers the likes of Bergson, Derrida, and Merleau-Ponty, as well as Ono, and Abramović. This book also treats us to an interview, or 'exchange' between Hsieh and Heathfield, mostly this looks at Hsieh's personal background, and life as an artist. He also speaks about the difference he perceives between 'lived time' and 'art time' which is fascinating.

Availability: Bookstores will sell this new for about £36, and used copies typically sell for £22 - £26.

Section Three: Time in Fiction

The Merchant and The Alchemist's Gate

by Ted Chiang

Difficulty level: Easy. At just 26 pages, this is a short work of fantasy. The story is simple, though when considered, contains much food for thought.

Summary

Our narrator, Fuwaad, recounts the tales of Bashaarat, an alchemist who built a remarkable gate: the Gate of Years. Enter the gate one way, and you will be transported twenty years into the past, enter the other way, and you will emerge twenty years in the future. Bashaarat tells Fuwaad three different tales of people who have used the gate, with varying results and lessons learned. Finally, Fuwaad recounts his own use of the gate, and the lessons he learned from it. I wonder what lessons you might learn from it...

This story also gives us a wonderful opportunity to compare our own intuitions about time to those within the tale. How does this compare with your view of time?

Availability: Can be found in Ted Chiang's collection of short stories, *Exhalation*. Available new for approx. £10, or used copies can also be found online for approx. £7 – 9.

The Book of Sand

by Jorge Luis Borges

Difficulty level: Easy. This is a very brief (8 page) story. Another that is simple to read, yet which can summon complex and intricate ideas in its reader.

Summary

This is a simple tale about a man who impulsively trades for a sacred book with a door-to-door bible seller. This diabolic book is very unusual. It contains an infinite number of non-consecutive pages. This intrigues and captivates our narrator, almost to the point of madness. He finally realises he must be rid of it. But how? If he burns an infinite book, will the fire be likewise infinite? He eventually settles on hiding it in the most logical place for a book. I wonder if it's still there?

The reasons for my recommending this story might not be obvious on first reading. However, like when I first read it, this story may take root in your mind and lead to endless

exploration. Just like our narrator, you may become obsessed with trying to figure out the infinite nature of the book of sand, so named because, like sand, the book has neither beginning nor end. It encourages us to consider the nature of infinity, and how this relates to time. Borges writes, "if time is infinite, we are at any point in time". Is this true? Does time have a beginning or an end? Is the line really made of an infinite number of points? Is time simply an infinite number of moments?

This short story has inspired artists to create theatre, dance, film and music. I wonder what it might inspire you to create...

Availability: The short story can be found in 'The Garden of Forking Paths', by Jorge Luis Borges. This can be purchased for £2 as part of Penguin's Modern collection, available at most bookstores.