

**Aristotle and the Philosophy of Time**  
**PHL 415.101**  
**W, 6-9 pm**  
**990 W. Fullerton, 2402**

**Sean D. Kirkland**  
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**Office Hours: Th 3-5, & by appt.**  
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### **Topic**

We will begin the quarter with a session discussing very briefly some major moments in the philosophy of time in the Western tradition, primarily in an effort to indicate what a radically different approach to this question we find in Aristotle. That is, the history of Western philosophy has approached time *either as objective or as subjective, either* (ala Descartes or Newton) as a vessel (like space) in which external objects are situated and real events occur *or* (ala Kant or Husserl) as a structure that consciousness imposes on the content of experience. However, a discussion of Aristotle's philosophical method, *dialektikē*, will indicate that his thinking does not unfold in terms of the subject-object relation, but is rather a thinking of phenomenal being. Given this, we will spend the next two sessions looking at some other proto-phenomenological approaches to time, in order to prepare ourselves (through similarities and dissimilarities) for Aristotle's own thinking of time.

We will then proceed to employ a quite unorthodox heuristic device to lay bare Aristotle's unfamiliar conception of time, one according to which temporal beings are fundamentally tragic (in a very specific Aristotelian sense). Rather than beginning from Aristotle's metaphysics and working our way up through the physics and then tracing the implications of the physics for ethics, politics, and poetics, we will begin from the fundamentally tragic experience of time Aristotle sets out in the *Poetics*. We will then see how this illuminates the temporality of ethical and political life and, ultimately, how all natural beings (i.e. all beings in time) are fundamentally tragic for Aristotle. One virtue of this unorthodox approach is that it reveals something extremely compelling, and otherwise quite hidden, about Aristotle's thinking of time. Another virtue is that it amounts to addressing Aristotle as the aporetic or problem-based (rather than systematizing) thinker that he is.

### **Required Reading:**

Aristotle, *Poetics*, tr. J. Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2006)  
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. J. Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2006)  
Aristotle, *Physics: A Guided Study*, tr. J. Sachs (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995)  
Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, tr. F.L. Pogson (London: Dover, 1913/2001)  
(selection) Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*, tr. J. Churchill (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1964)

### **Schedule** (subject to change)

9.11 : Introduction

9.18 : Bergson pp. 1-140

10.23 : Aristotle, *Physics* I-II

9.25 : Bergson pp. 141-240  
Husserl pp. 109-123

10.30 : Aristotle, *Physics* II-III

10.2 : Aristotle, *Poetics*

11.6 : Aristotle, *Physics* III

10.9 : Aristotle, *Ethics* I-V

11.13 : Aristotle, *Physics* IV

10.16 : Aristotle, *Ethics* VI-X

### **Grade**

Class Presentation	20%
Paper (12 pages)	60% <b>(DUE Friday 12.2, No Late Submissions)</b>
Attendance and Participation	20% = 100%

If any student has any condition that might interfere with his or her timely completion of the assignments, please let me know and I will be happy to make arrangements.