

# An Ontology of the Moment



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The Logic, Physics, Mind and Yoga  
of the Relative and Absolute Moment

by WIM VAN DEN DUNGEN

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## Introduction

This e-book is about the moment, the particular instance in time and space when something happens to someone, be it an individual, two human beings or a group. Intimate with time, with 'the now', it is always also correlated to space, energy, information and sentient choice (1). The ontology of the moment tries to explain how this something exists in terms of these five dimensions of the moment.

Conventional thinking (2) consists in passing from concepts to things. This portions concepts, mixes them together and aims at constructing a practical, efficient equivalent of the reality of the object. This approach consists in applying concepts to things and is nothing more than an instrumental, tool-based answer to the question : 'What can the moment do for us ?', or 'How can it be of any use or have practical validity ?'.

Conventional thinking is not interested in the ultimate nature of an object, but merely tries to solve some practical problem. The label eventually put on the object marks the kind of action the object triggers. Usually, such conceptual elaboration comes in couples, representing contraries.

In the case of the moment, concepts like past, present, future (or time), space (or locality), energy, order and freedom (sufficient free sentient choice) pertain.

Conventional apprehension, although necessary to assess objects in terms of their immediate practicality (like reading the hands of a clock), differs from the 'intuitive', 'gnostic', 'direct' entering of the object, knowing it from the inside (3), in a direct, non-conceptual way, prehending how it exists devoid of any conceptual overlay. Thus directly merging with the object at hand, the ultimate nature of the moment is unveiled. In the East, the best conceptual wisdom approximating direct access to the ultimate nature of objects is called '*prajñā*', but the actual, direct living wisdom realizing this ultimate is '*jñāna*', the Western '*gnosis*' (4).

Prehension involves a 'turn of mind', no longer focusing on the object as it appears outside the mind, but prehending the object as it is found when consciously merging with it, and this in a non-conceptual, nondual, paraconsistent way (5). Seized by prehension, thesis and antithesis are cognized to spring from a single reality. In the case of the moment, we prehend past and future as eternally existing in the timeless time of the present. This does not instrumentalize the moment, but reveals how it exists ultimately, absolutely. Conventionally, intimate knowing makes no sense in terms of practicality.

Conventional analysis moves from concepts to reality, whereas synthesis moves from the direct experience of reality to concepts. Analysis never starts with reality. Synthesis never starts with concepts. Analysis operates on the immobile and (in vain) tries to explain what is mobile with what is stationary. Synthesis, always staying with what is concretely experienced in the moment, recognizes its variability. It is no longer a motionless view of the ever-moving reality. So from synthesis one may pass to analysis, but from analysis one can never move to synthesis. Synthesis is largely non-conceptual and so concepts are of little help (6).

The 'change of heart' enabling synthesis is radical. Concepts cannot assist, cause, prepare or trigger a way of knowing devoid of them. We should eliminate the Platonic dogma (7) stating a variation can only be measured on the basis of what is invariable. Concepts are merely residual, artificial products or tools of mind, an attribution of the symbol to every kind of natural, immediate prehension of what is at hand.

### classical metaphysics

Classical metaphysics grasps at existence in a conceptual manner. Instead of using signals or icons, it is all about symbols (8). Even transcendence is, quite in vain –except poetically– symbolized. But concepts merely delimit existence by denoting what things have in common with other things, and not what exclusively belongs to the thing itself. It cannot direct attention to the immediate experience of what exists,

for, in terms of conceptual reason, '*individuum is ineffabile*'. It cannot *enter* the thing, merely circumambulate it. On top of this, in traditions based on Greek concept-realism (9) or essentialism (substantialism), symbols are conceptual representations of what is deemed to be the essential, unchanging, stationary core of what exists. This essence ('*eidos*') is deemed the permanent nucleus ('*substantia*') of the thing represented. It is supposed to exist from its own side, isolated from the apprehending consciousness and so independent. In the West, terministic logic (William of Ockham) ended this quest for the 'universal', the frantic and vain search for the fixed, stable, permanent '*hypokeimenon*' (or underlying substratum) of objects.

### process metaphysics

Process metaphysics (10) indeed takes becoming serious. It embraces the perpetual transformation of all things. In a radical nominalist stance, it rejects substantialism. All what exists, exists as a process. No substance can be found. So although process thinking still accepts the power of the concept in order to posit abstract objects, it never walks the '*via antiqua*', paving a way from the accidental to the essential. No '*eidetic reduction*' (Husserl) is at hand. It still subsumes individual things and happenings, but never without taking their *continuous becoming* seriously. This means process-concepts are fluid, allowing for intellectual auscultation. They never arrest the flow of variation, never replace it by a mere generalization. Moreover, besides conceptual apprehension, process thinking also accepts non-conceptual prehension, the mind '*entering*' its object and knowing it in an altogether extraordinary way, unveiling its ultimate nature and continuous dynamical interdependence with all other objects.

Immanent metaphysics (11) stays within the bounds of conceptual reason. It accepts the limitations of fluid, nominalist categories to partly catch the ongoing flux. It does so for practical reasons. Concepts are tools. As they are never substantialized, these tools are contextual and depend on the problem they solve. One realizes concepts are merely practical waymarks on the road. They do not allow us to

absolutely comprehend objects 'from within'. Conceptual knowledge is relative, fallible and conventional. This perspectivistic mindset cannot move further. It is doomed to remain mechanistic, pragmatic, conventional, generalizing and therefore stripping objects from their specifics, subsuming it as part of a general category, rule or principle. Humble, it has to accept the boundaries of these, for all generalizations depend on a specific, historical and so relative, subjective (first person) and/or intersubjective perspective (second and third person).

Such an immanent inquiry in terms of the process of the moment, investigates its spatiotemporal, material, information and sentient characteristics, calling for the conventions of logic, physics as well as the science of mind.

Transcendent metaphysics ([12](#)), no longer conceptual, *immerses itself* in the current of direct awareness. It realizes rest is not anterior to movement, but the other way around. Embracing impermanence, change and perpetual becoming, it understands immobility, permanence and fixation to be the extreme (abstract, not concrete) limit of the slowing down of process. This limit is never reached in Nature, but only in conceptual thought (and in an extreme ignorant and afflictive way in substance obsessed thinking). This enables process mind to prehend the novelty of each fresh moment. Non-conceptual cognition enters its object, and so no longer merely moves around it. Prehension implies an *intellectual sympathy* placing oneself *within* the object in order to coincide with its unique, concrete, direct and inexpressible existence '*hic et nunc*'. This is like seizing the object 'in its moment', without any conceptual expression or symbolic representation.

Such transcendent metaphysics dispenses with concepts and their symbolic representation. This is no longer an intellectual analysis from without, but a prehension from within. In terms of the moment, this transcendent prehension of what is at hand unfolds the timeless features of events. When such prehension is well expressed in words, *sublime poetry* is at hand, but never science. Therefore, synthesis cannot argue, but merely ostentatiously point at *what is at hand in the very*



*moment of existence*. Like a finger pointing to the Moon, it is not the Moon itself. Argumentation only serves practical matters ; it never leads to a direct insight into the ultimate nature of its objects. It assists to take sides and on the basis of this solve some practical issue or pressing problem. To stay in the moment, concepts are inadequate tools. When a concept is thought, the present moment is out and only past (retention) and future (protention) remain.

In (immanent) process ontology, the actual occasion is the ontological principal, the fundamental building-block of all things. In abstract terms, this is a singular, momentary instance featuring infinitesimal process as a differential extension. This process happens in the moment at hand, and so the ontological principal and the ontology of the instance are closely related. Because of the work of conceptualization, the relative moment is not the absolute moment, contracting the whole universe to a single point of life here and now. While such an absolute moment is ineffable, it is nevertheless a direct experience of a mind aware of what is ultimately the case. This is a mind no longer bent on taking sides and solving problems, but able to enter its object on the basis of a radical 'turn of mind'. The relative moment, with its differential and integral extension, is conceptual (rational), whereas the absolute moment is non-conceptual (intuitive).

apprehending the relative moment

The relative moment can be investigated from the vantage point of an indirect, external apprehension by way of concepts, including objective time, space, matter, information and sentience. This differs from the direct, internal perspective on the absolute moment as given by prehension. The former calls for logic, physics, cybernetics and psychology (being the sciences elaborating matter, information and consciousness), whereas the latter involves the direct experience of the moment and is mystical (gnostic).

From the side of prehension, the temporal characteristic of the absolute moment, the absolute now, has no conventional temporal extension or duration ( $t_0 = 0$ ), making it instantaneous. This direct observation happens to a

consciousness without memory. But from the side of apprehension, the moment may, in terms of a '*minimum minimorum*' be conceptually represented as an infinitesimal interval ( $t_1 = t_0 + dt$ ). This differential extension defines time present (the now) as it conventionally exists as an actual occasion. In this way, it exists as a differential 'dot' or 'droplet' (if it were a mere 'point', it would be equal to  $t_0$ ). The temporal characteristic of an event, as a set of such actual occasions, is then a large integrated set of such differential extensions ( $\int t.dt$ ) ; the relative becoming integral.

Thanks to this infinitesimal calculus of differentiations and integrations, we have at least begun touching the continuity and mobility of the moment.

Logically defined in terms of a differential interval of time, functionally this now-dot is the differential limit of the converging before and after in time. Indeed, the actual now always has the functional structure of a differential limit of two converging lines. As thermodynamically, time is experienced –due to gravity– to flow from past to future, the lines of the before and after continuously change and with them the differential limit on which they converge.

In mathematics, a point connects the two halves of a line, but also divides them. As a dividing point, it is the end of one half of the line, and the beginning of the other half of the line. So it is two 'points', although a single dot. What grounds the claim for two different points is the fact the single dot is associated with two different functions. The one is to be the end, and the other the beginning of two different lines. The one point belongs to the one half-line, and the other to the other half-line. Yet, as a connector, it is only one dot. It has only one function, namely to connect the two parts of a line. So, simultaneously, there are two points and a single dot. In abstract terms, it is not always one and the same point, since it is 'this' and 'that' when dividing the line. But in actuality, it is the same dot in every respect.

Given the (conventional) relative now always has (at least) differential extension ( $t_0 + dt$ ), then on one side of the interval (say the left), the dot connects with the past ; on the other

side, it connects with the future. This duality is observed when the Arrow of Time, the flow of change from 'this' to 'that', is singled out. In this sense, the relative now has some existence, and is, as a differential dot, more than merely the converging point of two states : namely past actualities and future actualities.

Conceptually singling out the absolute now as a connector, a single point results, and this stands outside the temporal flow. This absolute now ( $t_0 = 0$ ) is absolutely instantaneous. Unlike the relative now, it has no infinitesimal extension ( $dt$ ), and cannot be apprehended by the conceptual mind (except as a limit-concept), but only seized by the nondual mind. So in conceptual terms, the absolute now merely exists as a limit, but never as an entity. Nevertheless, it is the logical foundation of the relative moment. However, in non-conceptual terms, the absolute now has absolute existence and roots the absolute moment.

Although the moment is intimately related to time, it is also characterized by space (here), energy (matter), internal structure (information) and consciousness (who). This is the case for both the absolute moment and the relative moment.

### prehending the absolute moment

Prehending the absolute moment is being taken from time into eternity. Viewed in a conceptual way, this would mean an ultimate form of stability. But ultimate reality, the way things are in themselves, devoid of conceptual superimposition, is not a permanent, made reality, but a reality *continuously in the making*, a perpetual becoming of changing states. What we prehend is *an incipient change of direction*. Such a direct perception does not place us in the immobile, lying in wait for the movement to pass, but replaces us *in the movement itself*. Then we traverse with it its own change, following its reality in its sinuosity, seizing or adopting the movement of its inward life, its 'form-in-movement' (13).

Prehending the absolute moment is intimately related to awareness and timeless time (the 'absolute *samādhi*' of Zen) (14). The latter are found in the '*bardo*' of the moment,

revealing a *heightened possibility* of ultimate insight into the nature of reality. In this precious and profound interval, time is left for the eternity of an eternal present, a perpetuity. This cannot be grasped by concepts, but seized when it is fully realized the past is a recollection *in the present* based on memory (retention), and the future as an expectation *in the present* based on anticipation (protention). Prehending this unique moment is *witnessing from within* both past and future do not exist as such. The former has happened and will not come back. The latter has not yet happened and may never arrive (as projected). Again and again returning to this realization erodes the conceptual framework given by the Arrow of Time and its material (gravity, thermodynamics), informational (linearity, orientation) and sentient features (substantializing conceptuality or a cognition driven by substance-obsession).

Being mindful and present in the moment at hand flows into the prehension of the absolute moment. This absolute here and now is not like knowing *another object* of consciousness. It is consciousness being merely conscious of itself as *an unseen seer* ; deep calmness coupled with sharp insight into impermanence ... This awareness is not a sensate object of consciousness, nor consciousness itself (the subject knowing itself as a mental object), but the direct, immediate and unmediated *entering* of consciousness in its own existence, a penetration revealing to itself its *mere cognizing activity* or clarity. This is not a known, nor a knower, but the *sheer act of knowing*, the naked activity of knowing standing above, behind, underneath and within *every cognitive act* and this *ongoingly*. When such a prehension of the absolute moment is at hand, the linear direction of conventional time vanishes, to be replaced by the continuous symmetry-transformation *characterizing* the absolute moment and its timeless time. When this happens, integral existence is realized, an etiquette of movement ! A continuous change formatted by the laws of harmony.

*Omnia stant harmonia !*  
*motto of G.Ph. Telemann*Notes

1) Sentience or consciousness is not reduced to material

events, but co-relative with matter and information. These three are domains or 'operators' of actual occasions. In each domain, the two other operators are also active, but in a subordinate way.

2) Conventional thought is the nominal discursive activity of the conventional mind. It is intersubjective, historical and constructed. Moreover, its objects are truth-concealers, for they appear not as they truly exist. Conventional objects seem independent, self-powered and possessing their properties inherently, while in an absolute sense all phenomena are dependent, other-powered and process-based.

3) Such knowledge is intuitive, i.e. not formal, critical or creative, but nondual. It does not involve apprehensions, but prehensions or direct observation.

4) Couliano, I.P., *The Tree of Gnosis*, Harper, San Francisco 1990.

Doresse, J., *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics*, Inner Traditions, Rochester 1986.

5) Paraconsistent systems harbor a contradiction, but are able to make efficient use of it or isolate the inconsistency so it does not harm the nominal operations of the system.

6) Bergson, H., *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Hackett, Cambridge, 1999, *Time and Free Will*, Dover, New York, 2001.

7) The Platonic dogma is the notion the world of the senses (or becoming) is of a lesser ontological value than the world of ideas (or being). The former is merely a shadowy reflection ('*methexis*') of the latter.

8) Signs, or glyphs imparting information, are either signals, icons or symbols. Signals is stand-alone information sent from one thing or person to another using a piece of equipment or an organized system. Icons are visual representations of an object, scene or person. Symbols are denotative and/or connotative arbitrary sign (written or printed) with a conventional significance. In the brain, signals are reptilian, icons limbic and symbols neocortical.

9) Concept-realism is the epistemological view stating concepts represent reality-as-it-is. In Western philosophy, concept-realism remained on the foreground until Kant's 'Copernical Revolution', showing concepts organize reality and not *vice versa*.

10) Whitehead, A.N., *Process and Reality*, The Free Press, London 1979.

11) Immanent metaphysics studies the totality of all what exists. It cannot be tested, but only backed by arguments. It does not move outside the boundaries of the world and so does not root its fundamental concepts in a 'transcendent signifier' (Derrida).

12) Transcendent metaphysics studies the infinite in which the totality of all what exists rests. It cannot be tested, nor backed by arguments. It moves outside the boundaries of the world in a non-conceptual, intuitive way. At best its articulations are sublime poetry. To understand mysticism, transcendent metaphysics is necessary. Not philosophy proper, this superstructure may assist in directing the mind to directly observe absolute reality.

## Bibliography

### Short Author Bio

[Wim van den Dungen](#) (°1961), born in Antwerp, studied Applied Economy (BA) and Philosophy (MA), majoring in Logic and Epistemology (at Ghent University), focusing on defining the boundaries of the categories 'rationality' & 'irrationality'.

Additionally, he took courses in Sociology of Music, Aesthetics of Music, Middle Egyptian, Middle Dutch, Sanskrit, Depth Psychology and Biofeedback (GSR, AVS and EEG).

In 1982, he began practicing Yoga (*Ananda Marga*, later [Patañjali Yoga](#)).

In 1990, in order to be able to practice philosophy, he co-founded *Taurus Consulting Agency Ltd*, a Belgian company offering consultancy services. For over two decades, mindful of 'free study' (Multatuli), he remained relatively free of instrumental and strategic factors. In this way, a truly independent philosophical activity is possible.

The synergies between Philosophy and Mysticism remain central to his work.

From 1996 onwards, these Philosophical Studies are available at no cost on the internet ([www.sofiatopia.org](http://www.sofiatopia.org)).

Since 2006, Wim is a practicing Buddhist.

By writing *Critique of a Metaphysics of Process* (2012), a long period came to a close, rekindling his love for [musical composition](#).

Core publications covering logic, epistemology and ontology :

- [Rules](#), 1999
- [Criticosynthesis](#), 2008
- [Critique of a Metaphysics of Process](#), 2012
- [The Book of Lemmas](#), 2014.

In 2015, a totally revised Dutch translation of [The Window of the Open Heart](#) was published by BRES/Edicola Publishing as [Het Open Hart](#). The year ends with *An Ontology of the Moment*, the first EPUB.

## Studies in Philosophy

Philosophy, or love of wisdom, is a cognitive answer – extraordinary, multi-dimensional and comprehensive– to this call rooted in our physical, informational and sentient evolution, to know as much as possible, to invent novel order by actively transcending limitations and to open up and unchain our minds, thus producing more complex, refined and subtle states of matter, information and consciousness, thereby aiding creative advance and negentropy.

This answer is engaged, open, personal, dialogal, rational, critical, creative and seeks the unconditional. Philosophy allows recurrent and multiple transferences between, on the one hand, reason and intuition or meta-reason, and, on the other hand, reason and instinct or ante-reason. It is open to the spontaneous, meaningful, wondrous, luminous, ineffable.

My first attempt at writing a text on philosophy was way back in 1981. It had an impressive Dutch title : *Schetsen van een Absurde Wereldbeschouwing*, or *Sketches of an Absurd World View*. It was pessimistic, dark and nihilist.

In 1984, *College Tractaat (College Tractate)* came. Thanks to the daily practice of yoga, the nihilist view was out and the urge to manifest a *philosophical system* poignant. In 1987, *Proto-Tractatus Logico-Comicus* got written. This first English text drew the contours of this system-to-be. It was followed, in 1992, by the *Tractatus Logico Tragi-Comicus*. Besides a considerable reorganization of themes, this basic text invoked decennia of study ahead. Countless corrections would be the outcome.

In all my texts, the principle of the non-reducibility of the cosmic operators matter, information and consciousness pertains.

In 1996, the issue of being read, and therefore interact with a community of relevant sign-interpreters, was solved by the WWW. Indeed, since the 9th of April 1996 onward, my ongoing *Studies in Philosophy* have been freely available on the internet. The [corpus](#) of these texts is growing. At present, the total website consists of c.9300 PDF pages. On average, c.1 GB is transferred daily ([webstatistics](#)).

The [author](#) escapes the dogmas and directives of any organized religion, church, lodge, temple, cult, sect, lineage, spiritual school or sectarian organization, and avoids economical, political and academic pressure ; his aim being *free study*.

For an overview of my [Studies in Philosophy](#), consult the [Synopsis Page](#).