

was scolding him, and warning him that it would be a 2,000-year calamity for mankind if he failed to clear up his theory of serialism; his right arm then developed severe neuritis, so that he was unable to work at his drawing board and had no alternative but to finish his last book.

The basic idea of serialism is best expressed in a short book called *Nothing Dies* (1940). Classical science, he points out, has tried to picture the world 'from outside'—as if the scientist were a detached observer, a kind of ghost standing outside the real universe. This, says Dunne, is an impossibility—as Einstein and Heisenberg recognised; the scientist alters the universe in the act of observing it.

Far from being 'outside' the world, says Dunne, 'you' and the universe are opposite ends of a stick. And if you start by examining the other end—the world—and then try working inward, towards 'yourself', you soon realise that your goal is unattainable; you never reach the end of the stick that is 'you', because in some weird way, you keep on regressing.

In order to explain this concept, he uses the image of a man painting a picture. The painter looks at the world in front of him and tries to transfer it on to canvas. Having done that, it strikes him that his picture of the world is incomplete, because he has failed to include himself. So he paints a second picture, this time showing himself painting the first picture. But that is incomplete too. For it now strikes him that in order to paint this second picture, he had to 'get outside' himself, and regard himself as a physical object, a part of the world. This means that another 'him' has somehow risen above the first one, a 'Self No. 2'. So he paints another picture showing Self No. 2 observing Self No. 1 painting the picture. Yet the fact that he can think detachedly about Self No. 2 means surely that once again he has risen above it to become a Self No. 3? And so on, ad infinitum.

We all experience this on a practical level; everyone has experienced this sense of splitting into two, the 'I' to whom something is happening, and another 'I' who looks on coldly from above.

Dunne goes on to suggest that each of these different 'Selves' lives on a different level of time. When we say 'Time flows', it follows that we are measuring it *against* something. And that something must be another kind of time, 'Time No. 2'. And this in turn is measured against Time No. 3 . . . This, Dunne thinks, explains how we can foresee the future in dreams. Self No. 1 exists in 'this world', stuck in

the flow of Time No. 1. But Self No. 2 exists in another kind of time, a more flexible time; he can rise above the time of Self No. 1 and foresee the future. Dunne even gave some practical meaning to the first three Selves. Self No. 1 is the 'me' who looks out through my eyes when I stare blankly out of a window; he is a mere observer, nothing more. Self No. 2 takes over when I sit up and pay attention, selecting what interests me and ignoring other things. This is undoubtedly a higher self than Self No. 1, as I realise if I try to write in a room full of children; it requires tremendous effort to focus on what interests me, and prevent Self No. 1 from taking over again. Then there is Self No. 3, the detached 'I', who seems to be able to look down coldly on the 'observer' and the 'selector'. It is even more difficult to preserve this Olympian attitude for more than a split second at a time.

In his book *Man and Time*, J. B. Priestley summarises Dunne's theory, and tells a story that seems to illustrate the difference between Self No. 1 and Self No. 2. A young mother had a dream that she was on a camping holiday and left her year-old son by the river while she went to get soap; when she returned, he was drowned. She forgot the incident, but some time later, on a camping holiday, suddenly recognised the scene of her dream as she was about to go and get soap. She took the child with her and so—presumably—a tragedy was averted. The mother had dreamed of herself—Self No. 1—in Time No. 1; but by paying attention, taking thought, she had become Self No. 2, and so had risen to Time No. 2, where a degree of free will is possible. But Priestley goes on to reject Dunne's 'infinite series' of 'Selves', arguing that we need only the first three 'I's' to cover most of our everyday experience. Dunne's infinite regress of selves, he argues, is just an abstract hypothesis.

A similar objection can be applied to Dunne's infinite regress of times. To say 'Time flows' is only a manner of speaking. We really mean 'Process happens'. So all this talk about measuring one time against another is also a misunderstanding.

Yet while it is true that Dunne's theory contains many flaws, the basic structure remains sound. The image of the painter painting a picture expresses a truth about consciousness. Man is capable of infinite regress; it is impossible to catch him. If I look at a great portrait by Rembrandt, I may say: 'Ah yes, he has caught the very essence of the sitter.' But I know this is not true. The sitter contains a rich, deep complexity of emotions and impulses that no painter could ever catch.