

Student name: Sylwia Lakoma

Student ID number: 2410647

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Lecturer: Donna Williams

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Introduction

In this work, I will present three concepts that are particularly interesting to me and constitute an intriguing point of reference. I believe that philosophy, the soul, and time, although they may seem familiar and obvious, will be critically examined in this essay.

The concepts mentioned above will form the basis for a deeper analysis in which I will examine how their meaning changes depending on context, perception, and individual experience. In this essay, I will also include artists, theorists, and philosophers whose work will provide reliable sources and deepen the analytical perspective as well as the understanding of these concepts and their reception.

1. TIME

Initially, it is important to examine the concept of time, because every action we initiate is subject to it, and the experience of activity reveals constant movement and a lack of permanence.

Time affects all living matter on planet Earth; it is an experience that allows us to distinguish between the past and the future and to anchor ourselves in the present. We can define it as an element of our reality, it is the basis on which all physical phenomena occur and is part of human consciousness (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2024).

Thanks to its presence, we perceive stories in our lives, create memories and build the future. From the perspective of philosophical traditions, it is sometimes referred to as an objective fact and at the same time dependent or independent of man.

Deconstructing the concept of time reveals several new interpretations, depending on perception, experience or culture.

Understood as a linear sequence of events, it appears in Western culture (Fuchs, 2021), supported by the idea of irreversible movement. In contrast, it is also interpreted cyclically, in accordance with nature and its rhythm and repetitiveness. The apparent diversity emphasises the fact that we are not dealing with something universal enough to be interpreted in a definitive way. We are closer to the conclusion that time may be a cultural construct shaped by the environment and its meaning depends on our perspective (Ssorin-Chaikov, 2025).

In the context of my own practice, it's equally intriguing, especially during a project in which I'm simultaneously developing as an astrophotographer.

Time is a record of movement in my shots; a long 30-second exposure can reveal something invisible to the naked eye. These invisible processes make me realize that an image cannot be a single moment but a record of many micro-moments that extend far beyond our perception. During astrophotography, I observe many forms in the sky that are in constant motion, just like us as humanity.

The practice of observation and photography allows me to be more mindful, which significantly influences the outcome of my works and the process of creating them. Henri Bergson, the eminent French philosopher born in 1859, well understood the concept of time and its observation (Lawlor, 2020).

He distinguished between measured time and experienced time, similarly to the 30-second exposure rule in astrophotography, which helped me understand exposure as a process.

One of the most renowned thinkers of his time viewed perception as a process of selection that reduces the richness of an image, meaning that we don't see all of time, only a small fragment of our reality.

Ronald Barthes, a French philosopher and essayist born in 1915, represented a similar approach (Murray, 2019), but from a slightly different perspective.

He viewed photographs as something already past, emphasizing that looking at old photos evokes a bygone time as they are viewed. My practice of night sky photography is quite similar; several seconds pass before light enters the camera lens. However, I don't entirely agree with his approach.

Barthes's thesis of capturing moments through photography, or even freezing them, seems quite inconsistent with my practice, so for me, perspective is the only option.

During this work, I returned to my own photographs taken at the megalithic temples of Malta. Research shows that these structures date back to 2500 to 3600 BC and are among the oldest structures in Europe (Venturino, 2022). In the context of my research, I see a certain connection, as scientists closely examined the openings, believing that these stone irregularities could have been used by ancient civilizations to observe solar cycles.

My own photograph reveals this structure; the small, numerous indentations are interpreted as a possible measurement of time, which is extremely intriguing from the perspective of today's world.

Analysing my own photography, I see systems that, despite the passage of centuries, remain unchanged; we are still trying to find one ultimate truth about the concept of transience and understanding the rhythm of the world.



Figure 1. Malta's megalithic temples, wide view. Photograph by Sylwia Lakoma, December 2025.



Figure 2. Malta's megalithic temples, detail of carved temporal markings. Photograph by Sylwia Lakoma, December 2025.



Figure 3. Malta's megalithic temples, man-made aperture in stone. Photograph by Sylwia Lakoma, December 2025.

2. PHILOSOPHY

There are many difficulties in trying to understand my next word; perhaps it is worth trying to ask oneself what philosophy is. The answer will not be unambiguous, as it is equally difficult to define as art.

Warburton presents it as elusive due to cultural context and social diversity, rightly comparing it to philosophy (Warburton, 2004, p. 149). Many other philosophers suggest that accepting a single final definition is impossible, and that philosophy itself has many similarities to art.

However, it is often described as a discipline concerned with the deep understanding of the world and reality, although it still cannot be ultimately defined, and its nature lies in the continuous and persistent questioning of what we have previously established.

Proceeding to the deconstruction of my second concept, I will present a fragment through which the difference in perception of the same reality will be strongly initiated, and which will emphasise the diversity of human experience:

“Hamlet: Do you see nothing there?”

“Queen: Nothing at all, yet all this I see.” (Danto, 1981)

This fragment allows us to better understand why philosophy cannot be treated as a closed concept. This is because philosophical meaning depends on interpretation rather than fixed definition. Consequently, it becomes clear that there are different experiences of the same reality. Differences may arise from many factors, such as personal experiences, culture, religion, and therefore the attempt to close this field within a single definition is not possible.

This means that the attempt to understand this field requires openness and the rejection of any expectations.

From a theoretical perspective, Andrew Harrison, a British philosopher of aesthetics, emphasised the complexity of the relationship between what we see and how we interpret it. He also highlights the sequence of our response — the initial stage is the visual experience itself, which occurs before we assign meaning to what is seen. In this sense, perception is not something final, but rather the first stage of the viewer’s experience (Harrison, 1997, p. 13).



Figure 4. Drawing Carlos Acosta, exhibition view, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery. Photograph by Sylwia Lakoma, October 2024.

In the context of my own practice, this idea is reflected in a photograph I took at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery during Curtis Holder's exhibition *Drawing Carlos Acosta*, which presents a portrait of a ballet dancer (Curtis Holder, 2024). In the photograph, the exhibition space and the artist's works are visible; however, the central element of the composition becomes a man standing and closely observing the main artwork. His presence in the frame is incidental.

The man observes the work with focus and contemplation, creating a particular relationship between the viewer and the artist, even though the exhibition itself might initially be considered the primary subject. In this image, meaning does not arise solely from the artefact itself, but from the way it interacts with the viewer, which adds an additional interpretative dimension to the image.

From my perspective, and within my own photographic practice, I recognise the importance of capturing this process between the artwork and the viewer. In this sense, I align with Harrison's view, acknowledging a significant distinction between seeing and interpretation.

In this context, I understand philosophy not as a concept that can be definitively defined, but as a complex process of perception, continuous questioning, and individual interpretation.

3. SOUL

In relation to the concepts I have previously explored, the term soul appears almost impossible to define in a singular and definitive way. It is significantly more difficult to understand and to situate within any structures of reality. Nevertheless, even the earliest thinkers attempted to engage with this concept.

Within philosophical discourse, Plato argued that the soul consists of three essential elements, each corresponding to a different aspect of human life. According to him, desire, reason, and the emotional-volitional element form a strong, interrelated structure (Plato, Republic, 434a–435a).

Deconstructing this understanding of the soul, the first element to consider is the sphere of desire, which reveals the soul's connection to what is changeable and tied to the body. This suggests that the soul cannot be understood as entirely detached from physical experience. The second aspect is reason, which introduces an analytical and contemplative dimension, showing that the soul is not only something that is felt, but also something shaped through thought.

The final element is the emotional and impulsive sphere, which highlights the dynamic and often unpredictable nature of human action.

Consequently, the soul cannot be understood as a unified concept, but rather as a complex and shifting structure. This perspective not only challenges the possibility of defining it precisely but also emphasises its strong dependence on context and individual experience.

This classical understanding of the soul is undergoing a contemporary perceptual shift. It is no longer viewed solely as something connected to the physical body, but rather as something that may extend beyond physical presence.

Such an approach highlights how fluid and changeable the understanding of the self has become. It is no longer perceived as fixed or closed, but rather as a form of existence that may continue beyond the body.

In this context, attention is drawn to the traces we leave behind both in digital spaces and in the memories of others, through conversations, relationships, and shared experiences.

As a result, a relationship emerges between what is internal and how we are perceived by others (Stokes, 2021, p. 32).



Figure 5. Cirio, P. (2021) *Iris*, archival inkjet prints on plexiglass. (Accessed: 27 April 2026)

In my work and practice as an emerging graphic designer, it is essential for me to create in a way that allows the viewer not only to see a project but also to feel it emotionally. Similar to *Odyssey 19.43*, where the soul is presented as a movement shaped by one's way of seeing and choosing, perception for me becomes a process that forms an individual's inner experience. This idea resonates strongly with my own approach, because in digital creation I am primarily interested in the emotions a project evokes and the state in which it leaves the viewer. For this reason, I believe that every form of art is more than an aesthetic image; it possesses its own "soul" a space of interpretation that opens itself to the audience. In this context, Paolo Cirio's exhibition *Iris* offers a relevant example. The Italian artist presented it as part of the Monitor Control installation in Modena in 2021 (Cirio, 2021). Cirio uses photographs of irises as biometric data, revealing how contemporary technologies strip the eye of its original philosophical and semiotic significance.

This contrast between the eye as a symbol of the soul and the eye as a dataset generates a strong reaction. In my interpretation, Cirio's work intentionally flattens the emotional depth of this symbol, reducing it to a technical function. For me, however, this is only one possible perspective. When placed alongside the ancient understanding of the eye as a sign of spirituality and the inner movement of the soul, Cirio's approach appears limiting and incomplete. It demonstrates how technology can deprive an image of its soul and its original meaning.

SYNTHESIS.

After discussing three key concepts, it became apparent that although the topics were seemingly unrelated, they are in fact coherent and share a common interpretative axis. In this combined analysis, it is noticeable that all the concepts relate to the way in which people interpret and experience reality. Time, which appears to be a cultural construct, is in fact a physical process that highlights the changing nature of our reality. Philosophy, on the other hand, helps us understand how we selectively and individually experience our surroundings.

In the case of the concept of the soul, it becomes clear that our emotions, combined with reason and identity, contribute to an internal experience of ourselves as individuals. However, when considered together, these concepts lead to certain interpretations that are primarily based on human perception, interpretation, and emotional, individual reception.

In my own practice, it is similar these three concepts do not function separately; rather, they overlap and, as a result, gain greater strength in the creative process. This synthesis, within the context of my artistic practice, shows how these concepts

can be used to express ideas through visual form and give them a specific narrative.

It demonstrates that this is relevant to all forms of artistic practice.

This opens many new possibilities for further research and shows that human creativity is a process in which our emotions, thoughts, time, and personal experiences are involved.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

How significant is perception and emotional sensitivity in influencing artistic creativity and its reception?

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Figures.

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