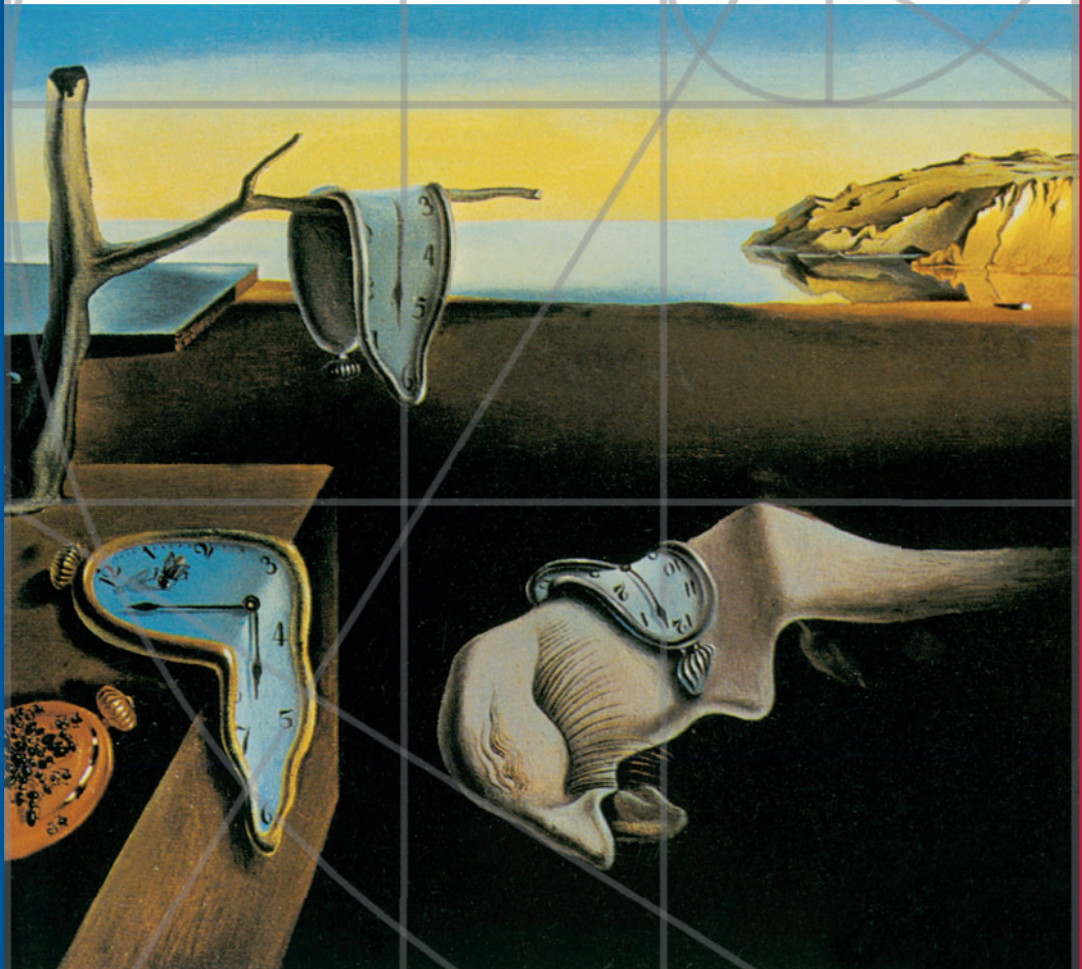



Analogy

**Imagination**

Metaphor



**Dali/Magritte**



*“Out of your vulnerabilities,  
will come your strengths”*

**Sigmund Freud**

Surrealism (symbolism)

Surrealism (symbolism)

From the Museum

**Salvador Dali:  
The Persistence of Memory: 1931;**

Museum of Modern Art, New York

**René Magritte: Lovers: 1928**

Museum of Modern Art, New York

*The Persistence of Memory* is an unforgettable dreamscape composition that plays with the *timelessness of time* and juxtaposes photo-like reality painting with what can only be imagined. Everywhere hardness is juxtaposed with softness and transformation abounds (fading deterioration of each element alone *versus* the enduring celebrity of the melting clocks as an iconic whole). The *sur-reality* of time passed in all its phases is explored within the framed time of a clock face. At the top of the painting is a sun-streak underlined blue sky that could be either the sunset or sunrise of 6 o'clock in three of the four solidified melting watches. Immediately, hope and despair are as one. At 2 o'clock is a rocky Catalanian protrusion (Dali) with a lone smooth pebble isolated in front (Gala, his muse and mistress). At 3 o'clock and extending centrally is a lived-in, well-moustached, long eye-lashed self-portrait, whereas at 7–11 o'clock are several natural and man-made structures with dulling reflective surfaces. The water-cool blue that is bathed in the sunlight (consciousness) contrasts with the earth-warm brown background that is featureless and variably shaded (unconsciousness). The latter surrounds the four pocket watches that form the central motif of this picture and which represent the different phases of time contextualised by Dali-nean imagination. A silver watch moulds itself over the distorted and translucent face-figure with closed eyes signifying the morphing characteristics that time has on memory and that dreams have on time. Another silver watch is draped over a lifeless tree whereas a gold watch softly wraps around a wooden table and a bronze time-piece is closed within its ant-covered casing. Noble time that can be so precisely measured is now the variable time of recent memory, the long-term memory of our best years and the closed-off memories of things forgotten, respectively. All of the sudden time absolute has become time relative, flexible and contextual.

Surrealism initially grew out of several avant-garde artistic roots in Paris at a time of great scientific and social change. The Surrealists believed that the conscious mind repressed the power of the imagination and the unconscious and sought to unlock it using dream imagery, archetypal symbols and hallucinatory states. Soon after the defining publication of the Surrealist Manifesto in 1924, a classically trained Dali fully embraced the Surrealist aesthetic and unleashed his creative genius into its experiment. The Surrealist masterpiece of melting clocks that he produced then produced him and, from there, it was only a small step to Dali the full blown exhibitionist that we all remember. Dali took the Surrealists' wish to present a more profound reality as revealed by the unconscious mind and fused it with his inspirations to *“materialise images of concrete irrationality with the most imperialist fury of precision”*. *The Persistence of Memory* is therefore a *“hand-painted dream photograph”* from which imagination leaps outwards from the memories that we are grounded in, using analogy and metaphor as its wings. Dali is indeed our drug as we go from melting camembert origins through the curved space-time of Einstein's relativity, circle the subconscious time of Freud's dream world, reflect on the psychological time of our moods and the autobiographical time of our history, and then finish with a flourish of sarcastic humour (persistence of memory title for melting time picture).

Whereas Dali's melting clocks is all strangeness cloaked in a classical realism, Magritte's *Lovers* takes the everyday and gives it a strange twist. The use of grey hoods as a barrier to an intimate embrace transforms an act of passion into one of isolation and frustration. Intimacy is now a chimera. Adding future time to the mix, we can never fully unveil the true nature of even our most intimate companions and bourgeois imprisonment often awaits (symbolism of framing cornice above the Lovers' heads). As for Dali, Magritte's creations expose his inner mind in symbolic ways to uncover and analyse deeper anxieties through visual means. Both artists understood that the simplest images can telegraph the deepest truths (*unlocking our mind's darker side to confront that perpetual deluded haze*) but chose very different ways to do this. Dali's complex compositions and classical realism (dream-painting) matched the exuberant Spaniard's approach to life whereas Magritte's flatly painted bizarre pictures (think-painting) matched the paradox that he was: a Belgian, avant-garde surrealist with a limited palette and technical fluency who was very popular. Although Dali and Magritte estranged the objective world and flaunted their persistent disavowal of a specific meaning to their work, their pictures act as both trigger and sustaining image and will therefore forever speak to us of a deeper *“secret desire for a change to the order of things”*...

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