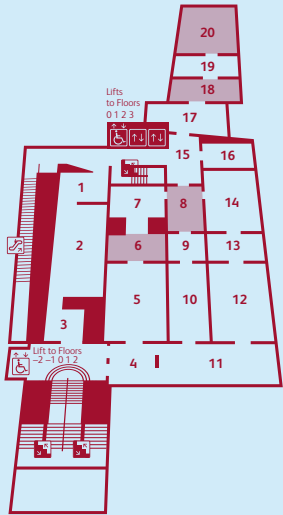


**LATE
SHIFT
TOUR**

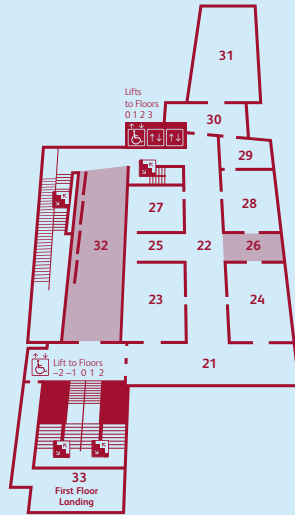
**PICTURING
PHILOSOPHERS**

BY NIGEL WARBURTON

2nd Floor



1st Floor



LATE SHIFT TOUR

Philosophers

Thomas Hobbes – Room 6

John Locke – Room 8

Thomas Paine – Room 18

Edmund Burke – Room 20

John Stuart Mill – Room 26

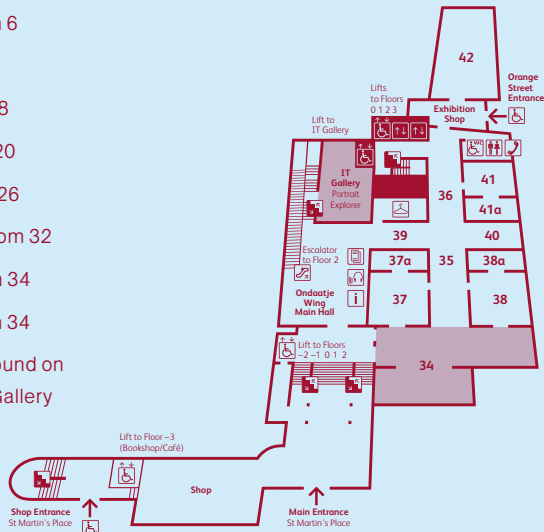
Dame Iris Murdoch – Room 32

Bertrand Russell – Room 34

Jean-Paul Sartre – Room 34

All images can also be found on the Portrait Explorer, IT Gallery

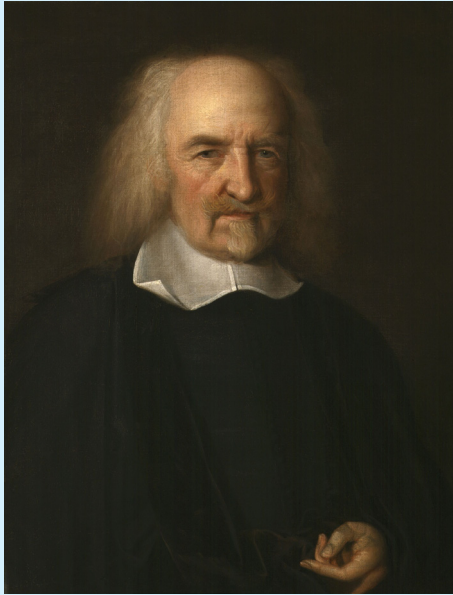
Ground Floor



Late Shift Tour offers an alternative way of exploring the National Portrait Gallery by presenting personal responses and perspectives on the Collection. This Late Shift Tour by philosopher Nigel Warburton focuses on philosophers in the Collection, exploring their philosophic ideas and raising the questions they considered.

Philosophy is the practice of thinking critically about some of the deepest questions we can ask ourselves, questions about the nature of reality and about how we should live. We are very fortunate in having the ideas of many past brilliant thinkers to draw upon and to stimulate us. But in the end we all have to reach our own conclusions. In that sense, anyone who thinks about these questions is a philosopher.

WHAT WOULD LIFE BE LIKE IF SOCIETY BROKE DOWN?



Thomas Hobbes
by John Michael Wright
circa 1669 – 1670
Room 6

Our existence outside society in a state of nature would be 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutal and short.' There would be a war of all against all. Even the weak could destroy the strong by stealth. No one could be trusted. It would be rational to take pre-emptive action against potential enemies. The only way out of this living hell would be to submit to a powerful authority, to make a social contract and appoint a strong sovereign power able to impose the rule of law.

WHAT IS PERSONAL IDENTITY AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?



John Locke
by Michael Dahl
circa 1696
Room 8

Am I the same person I was ten years ago? I'm the same biological organism because my body has physical continuity with its earlier versions. But although I'm the same body in that sense, I might not be the same person I was. Being a person is about continuity of consciousness, memory, and moral responsibility. If a cobbler and a prince were to exchange memories, we should hold the one with the prince's memories responsible for any crime the prince had committed. That's what God would do.

WHICH IS BETTER, A MONARCHY OR A REPUBLIC?



Thomas Paine
by Laurent Dabos
circa 1791
Room 18

We are born equal and have equal natural rights. Hereditary monarchies are inefficient, absurd and unjust. Ruling a country requires abilities that aren't guaranteed by bloodline. Such monarchies are only sustained by the ignorance and irrationality of the people. Government by election and representation in a well-organised republic, on the other hand, is a rational form of political organisation that exploits nature, reason and experience. Representative democratic government produces the best laws; monarchy is expensive and useless.

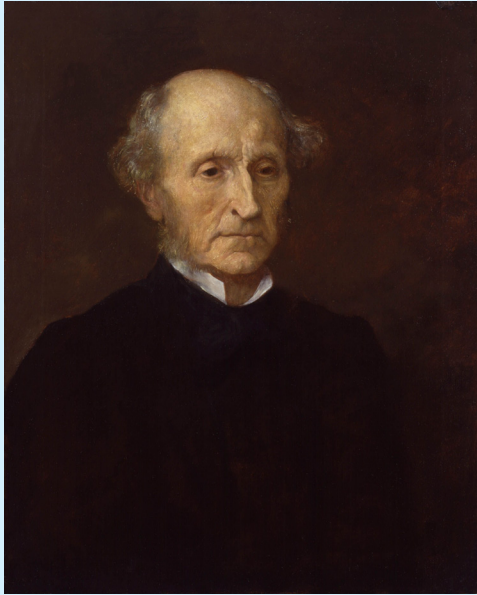
CAN WE TAKE DELIGHT IN SOMETHING THAT TERRIFIES US?



Edmund Burke
studio of Sir Joshua Reynolds
oil on canvas, (1767-1769)
Room 20

Beauty produces pleasure. But some situations and views that have the potential to terrify and are even dangerous, such as a thunderstorm at night, a raging river, or a vast craggy cliff face, affect us in a different way. They produce a special visceral response that is not pure pleasure, but rather includes an element of fear. These are sublime. Beautiful objects tend to be small, delicate, and smooth; sublime ones, are large, awe-inspiring, and threatening. They have such a profound effect on us because our bodies are finely-tuned in response to possible pain.

WHAT LIMITS SHOULD WE SET ON FREE SPEECH?



John Stuart Mill
replica by George Frederic Watts
oil on canvas, 1873
Room 26

Through the collision of truth with error we learn and develop. Unchallenged beliefs remain dead dogma. We go to sleep intellectually when there is no enemy in the field. Those who dissent and disagree with us, even if we find what they say offensive, do us a service. They force us to clarify, and even refine, what we believe; they give us the energy to act on our beliefs. Free speech that isn't a direct incitement to violence should be tolerated and protected.

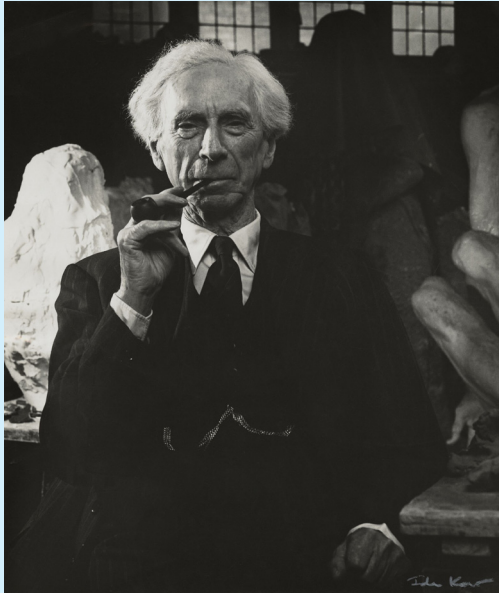
DOES ART DISTORT TRUTH?



Dame Iris Murdoch
by Tom Phillips
oil on canvas, 1984-1986
Room 32

Plato famously wanted to banish artists from his ideal republic on the grounds that they only deal in false representations of objects that are themselves at a remove from true reality and have the power to corrupt our morals. According to him, only philosophers can see beyond mere appearances. But Plato failed to understand the unique truth-conveying potential of art. Great art can provide a therapy for the soul and move us towards heightened moral goodness. Through artistry and discernment it reveals the world to us as we have never seen it before.

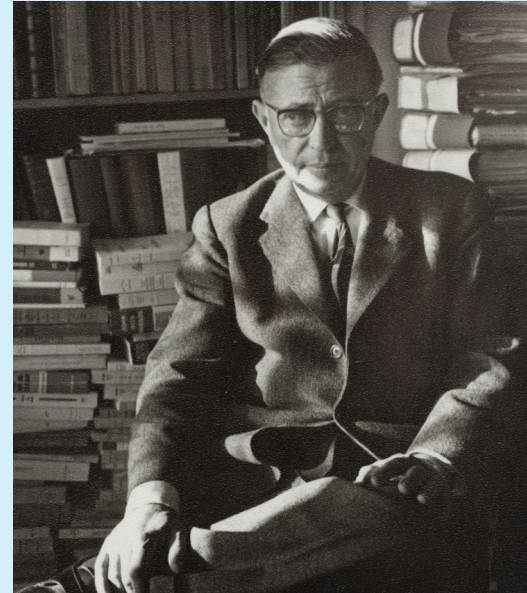
IS THERE A GOD?



Bertrand Arthur William Russell, 3rd Earl Russell
by Ida Kar
vintage bromide print, 1953

None of the traditional arguments for God's existence is convincing. Religion is based primarily on fear of the unknown. In modern times we no longer need to invent allies in the sky. The church has retarded scientific progress. It is time to face reality squarely, recognizing its good and bad features. We must conquer the world with scientific knowledge, kindness and courage. The world can be a better place. The way forward requires a fearless outlook, and a free intelligence.

WHAT IS THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT?



Jean-Paul Sartre
by Ida Kar
vintage bromide print, 1961

We are thrown into a godless world without pre-existing values that we have to accept. Through our choices we define who we are and what matters. We must act as if the whole of humanity is watching us, and are responsible for all our attitudes, even our emotions. To deny this is a flight from freedom, a special kind of self-deception known as 'bad faith'. This is the anguish of life. We are condemned to be free and responsible for ourselves but at the same time for a vision of what humanity should be.

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

HOW SHOULD WE LIVE?

CAN WE TRUST OUR SENSES?

WHAT IS CONSCIOUSNESS?

ARE MORAL DUTIES ABSOLUTE?

IS THERE A GOD?

DO WE HAVE FREE WILL?

WHAT IS ART?

HOW DOES SCIENCE PROGRESS?

DOES THE UNIVERSE HAVE A PURPOSE?

WHAT IS TIME?

HOW DO I KNOW I'M NOT DREAMING?

WHY IS THERE EVIL?

CAN COMPUTERS THINK?

WHAT ARE THE LIMITS OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE?

This Late Shift Tour on philosophers in the National Portrait Gallery Collection was written by Nigel Warburton. Nigel is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the Open University. His books include *Philosophy: The Basics*, *Thinking from A to Z*, *Philosophy: The Classics*, *The Art Question* and *Free Speech: A Very Short Introduction*. His latest book, *A Little History of Philosophy*, will be published this autumn. With philosopher David Edmonds he makes the podcast 'Philosophy Bites', a series of over 150 interviews with contemporary philosophers.

www.nigelwarburton.com

www.twitter.com/philosophybites



National Portrait Gallery

St Martin's Place
London WC2H 0HE

Admission Free

Open 10.00 – 18.00

Late Shift every Thursday and Friday 18.00 – 21.00

www.npg.org.uk/lateshift

Next *Late Shift Extra*:

ReAnimate

Friday 5 August 2011

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