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"Time" has been much less widely studied in psychology and related disciplines than has "space." This book offers theoretical and empirical insights into the study of time-related perception, memory, identity, learning, and reasoning.

With carefully selected chapters by a truly international and interdisciplinary team of authors, this book provides an understanding of time and mind that goes beyond psychophysiology and experimental psychology to encompass wider phenomena, both social and educational. By providing a philosophical basis for understanding how the mind "grasps" the concept of time and the timing of behavior in a cultural context, this unique book should help promote a crossfertilization of research on this important dimension, which is often neglected in cognitive and sociocultural research.
The Temporality of Discourses: A Contribution to the Reshaping of Human Actions

Jean-Paul Bronccart

The propositions laid out in this contribution are in keeping with the general framework of socio-discursive interactionism. Being psychologists, our major sources of reference are the works of Vygotsky (1927-1934), crossed with Piaget (1946), and because of the very principles of socio-discursive interactionism (Bronccart, 1994; 1997), we also think that psychology needs to integrate into its concerns the contributions of certain schools of philosophy, sociology and linguistics, in particular those of Bakhtine (1978; 1994), Habermas (1985), Ricoeur (1984; 1986), Saussure (1916) and Wittgenstein (1974).

For us, the principal focus of human-social sciences is activity, carried out in historically constructed social formations. The very organization of this activity, in its most “practical” forms, is indissolubly linked with the presence of a particular kind of interaction, language, conceived as a process of negotiation and agreement about the contexts in which this activity takes place, and hence, as an instrument for evaluating this activity in the concerted efforts of social sciences, psychology takes action as its specific unit of analysis. Defined first from an external standpoint (which is also a genealogical one), action is a portion of social activity, which is carved out and ascribed to an agent by the play of socio-linguistic evaluations. From a second, internal standpoint, this unit of analysis can be defined as a product of the appropriation and interiorization of these evaluations by the active agent, which leads the agent to becoming a person, who possesses knowledge of the various faces of his or her own responsibility in the unfolding of portions of social activity. The major problem of psychology is therefore the interpretation of action, and from there, of the acting person, with his/her mental and behavioral dimensions. But since action is a product of linguistic evaluations, it can only be interpreted — directly or indirectly — by and in terms of actual linguistic productions, or discourses. This discursive evaluation of action comprises a synchronic aspect (the reciprocal attributions of capacities and responsibilities that come with these behaviors), as well as a historical aspect: from the point of view of the organization of their contents, as well as the semiotic forms making up this organization, discourses evidence the ways in which previous social formations bestowed human activities with meaning, how they interpreted and clarified activities in accordance with the situation, interests and stakes that prevailed. It is in relation to this second aspect that we adhere to the thesis developed by Ricoeur in Time and Narrative (1984; 1986; 1988) and in his later works, according to which discourses are examples of reshaping of human actions, aimed at conferring to them some sort of coherence.

As we know, from his theoretical and ontological assertions (that discourses are meaningful reconfigurations of human activity), Ricoeur derives certain methodological conclusions for the social-human sciences; it is through analyzing discourses, using an empirical hermeneutics, that actions can be interpreted, or to be more precise, that one can analyze the mechanisms by which “events” are transformed into “actions”.

In this general process of reconfiguration, the construction of temporality plays an essential role:

[...] time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full mean-

1 The reader will notice that we borrow from the thesis developed by Habermas in Theorie des kommunikativen Handeins (1985).
2 We take up the technical distinction made in analytic philosophy between “events” occurring in nature and “meaningful action” or “human action” carried out by a human being (cf. Anscombe, 1957).
ing when it becomes a condition of temporal existence (Riceur 1984: 52).

To present his argument, Riceur draws upon Augustin’s gnostic notions of Time, and Heidegger’s Existential-temporal Worry (1962). One of the Augustinian problems can be formulated as follows: “we measure time, but there is no space, and that which has no space we cannot measure”.

I observed that we measure past periods of time so that we can say that one period is twice as long as another or equal to it, and likewise of other periods of time when we are capable of measuring and reporting. Therefore, as I was saying, we measure periods of time as they are passing, and if anyone says to me “How do you know?” I reply: I know because we do measure time and cannot measure what has no being; and past and future have none. […] When we speak of lengths of time as single, double, triple, or equal, or any other temporal relation of this kind, we must be speaking of periods of time possessing extension. In what extension then do we measure time as it is passing? Is it in the future of which it comes to pass by? No, for we do not measure what does not yet exist. Is it in the present through which it passes? No, for we cannot measure what has no extension. Is it in the past which it is moving? No, for we cannot measure what now does not exist (St. Augustine, Confessions XI. 27).

An aspect of the Heideggerian Worry can be formulated as follows: the condition of being thrown amongst things tends to render the description of our temporality dependent on the description of the object of our Worry; and this fundamental intra-temporality is irreducible to a linear conception of time.

Riceur then borrows from the theme of mimesis, developed by Aristotle in the Poetics, to assert that plots in narratives have the particular function of creating a coherent temporal structure that is readable and interpretable: not only does the plot organize the events and/or the actions sequentially, it reconstitutes them into a whole, that constitutes the story; hence, the events and/or actions can be situated within this embracing framework, and thereby acquire a meaning that is, at least in part, a product of this discourse temporality:

(...) We may say of the operation of employment both that it reflects the Augustinian paradox of time and that it resolves it, not in a speculative but rather in a poetic mode. It reflects the paradox inasmuch as the act of employment combines in variable proportions two temporal dimensions, one chronological and the other not. (...) Yet poesis does more than reflect the paradox of temporality. By mediating between the two poles of event and story, employment brings to the paradox a solution that is the poetic act itself. This said extracted figure from a succession, reveals itself to the listener or the reader in the story’s capacity to be followed. To follow a story is to move forward in the midst of contingencies and peripeteia under the guidance of an expectation that finds its fulfillment in the “resolution” of the story. This conclusion is not logically implied by some previous premises. It gives the story an “end point” which, in turn, furnishes the point of view from which the story can be perceived as forming a whole. To understand the story is to understand how and why the successive episodes led to this conclusion, which, far from being measurable, must finally be acceptable, as congruent with the episodes brought together by the story (Riceur 1983: 103-104).

Our purpose is to point out some of the more detailed and technical aspects of this reshaping function of the temporality of discourses.

With a non-negligible nuance, however, Riceur, as we have just noted, attributes this reshaping function only to narratives, and even, it seems, only to written narratives. The second restriction is untenable, for historical reasons; the first is debatable, and we shall maintain that in all types of discourses, various degrees and by different methods, temporality constitutes an essential element of the continuum reshaping of human action.

Before illustrating this position by examining some excerpts of discourses, let us provide some clarifications of our references (linguistic, in particular) concerning the status of the temporal units that are found in languages.

In a standard conception, the temporal units (the tense of verbs, in particular) are analyzed in terms of the relations set down between the moment of speech (or the moment of production) and the moment of the events expressed by a verb. On this basis we can identify relations of simultaneity between the two moments (indicated by the PRESENT), of anteriority of the moment of the event with respect to that of production (indicated by PAST tenses), or of posteriority of the event (indicated by FUTURE tenses). This “physical” conception does by no means allow us to account for the actual conditions of usage of the whole range of temporal units, and must therefore be rejected. If it were correct, there would be a relation of simultaneity, for instance, only if the moment of the event coincided exactly with the moment that someone began to speak. Which is exceptional, and everyone knows that most of the time verbs in the PRESENT tense denote events that, from a “physical” point of view, are anterior or posterior to the moment of production.

(1) La semaine prochaine, le journal La Suisse reapparaîtra sous une forme nouvelle.

This example shows that in actual fact any analysis of temporal relations must take into account not just two but three parameters. To the moment of production and the moment of the event, we must add what Reichenbach (1947) calls the “psychological moment of reference.” Let’s look at some examples to introduce this ichthymatic conception.

(2) Demain, Pierre se rend à Lausanne.
(3) Demain, Pierre se rendra à Lausanne.
(4) Aujourd’hui, Marie a rangé sa chambre.
(5) Aujourd’hui, Marie range sa chambre.

In (2) and (3), the event expressed by the verb is posterior to the moment of speech, and the enunciator has adopted a moment of reference (demain: tomorrow) that is also posterior to the moment of speech; thus, he has the choice of “coding” either the relation of inclusion (or simultaneity) of the moment of the event with the moment of reference (use of the PRESENT in (2)), or the relation of posteriority of the moment of the event with respect to the moment of speech [use of the FUTURE in (3)]. In the utterances (4) and (5), the event expressed by the verb precedes the moment of speech, but the moment of reference that has been adopted (aujourd’hui: today) includes both the moment of speech and the moment of the event; again, the enunciator can choose to code the inclusion of the moment of the event within the moment of reference [use of the PRESENT in (4)], or the relation of anteriority of the moment of the event with respect to the moment of speech [use of the PAST in (5)].

This approach makes things clearer, but it concerns only simple phrases, and from their context; moreover, it only accounts for the conditions of usage of a limited number of tenses. To analyse the function of temporality in its natural setting, namely in the context of discourse, we need to elaborate the ichthymatic perspective which we shall do by referring to the model put forward by Co.Vet (1980).

(a) First, let us note that any verbal production by a human agent “takes time”; a couple of seconds, a few minutes, several hours, and sometimes months or years for the production of novels or scientific works. It is thus preferable to speak of the objective duration of the act of production, rather than a “moment of production”.

(b) This production is materialised in the form of a text of a certain genre, that is, a communicative form, constructed historically by social formations, and endowed with a greater or lesser degree of stability (novel, editorial, recipe, sermon, short story, etc.). And a text of a particular genre is itself composed of several types of discourses, interconnected in various ways. For us, the four fundamental types of discourses are interactive discourse, theoretical discourse, interactive narrative, and narrative (Bronsart, 1997).

(c) The types of discourse are linguistic forms (i.e., forms which can be identified

1. (1) Next week, the newspaper La Suisse reappears in a new form.
2. (2) Tomorrow, Pierre is going to Lausanne.
3. (3) Tomorrow, Pierre will go to Lausanne.
4. (4) Today, Mary tidies up her room
5. (5) Today, Mary has tidied up her room

In these examples, “the psychological moment of reference” is made explicit by the nominal or adverbial phrases of time “la semaine prochaine” (next week), “demain” (tomorrow) and “aujourd’hui” (today)
by their linguistic properties) that reflect essentially two decisions taken by the agent who produces the text. On the one hand, the decision to treat the content of the discourse as disjoined from the parameters of the situation of production (as is the case for interactive narrative and narrative), or, on the contrary, to treat the content as joined to this situation (as in interactive discourse and theoretical discourse). On the other hand, there is the decision to involve the parameters of the situation (as in interactive discourse and interactive narrative, which consequently include deictic units) or on the contrary to consider the discourse to be autonomous with respect to these parameters (as in narrative and theoretical discourse, which do not include deictic markers).

(d) The types of discourse reflect, in other words, the construction of specific discursive worlds, which have a status that is radically "other" than that of the objective or empirical world of the production activity. These worlds are governed by a formal entity that we generally qualify as the "enunciator," but that is also called narrator, as in the case of an interactive narrative or narrative, and "exhibitor" in the case of an interactive discourse or theoretical discourse. In this construction of a discursive world, the producing agent (or empirical author), transfers as it were the "declarative responsibility" to the enunciator, who supervises the narrative process [narration as opposed to the narré, in the terms of Genette (1972)] or the exhibitory process.

(e) This narrative or exhibitory process itself also unfolds over a certain period of time, a formal or psychological duration, which we call the temporal reference axis of a type of discourse.

(f) Consequently, with respect to discourses, the three terms of the trichotomous conception then become:

- the duration of the act of production;
- the temporal reference axis of the created discursive world;
- the duration and the other properties of the referent of the verbal lexemes in the discourse.

Let's examine a short segment of narrative, taken from a genre in which it is common, the historical novel.

(6) Le 20 novembre, Charles Quint fit (iso) défile sa formidable armée sous les remparts de la ville d'où les assiégés purent (iso) l'admirer non sans inquiétude. L'artillerie commença (iso) à démolir les parties les plus vétustes des murailles. [...] Derrière les vieux remparts, Guise avait fait (rétro) élever de nouvelles fortifications en gabions de terre d'où ses troupes purent (iso) naitre les assaillants. [...] L'artillerie impériale s'énerva (iso) en vain contre ces fortifications toujours relevées. Charles Quint fit (iso) creuser des sapes sous les remparts et sous la ville. Ces tunnels bours de mines allaient tout faire sauter (pro).

(J. Ormeux, Catherine de Médicis)

First we notice that in this segment none of the temporal units (verb tense, adverb, prepositional group) seem to indicate a relation to the duration of the act of production. As a matter of fact, the relation to the duration of production has been laid down once and for all when the discursive world was created, in this particular case when the narrative world was created. According to the principles of this type of world, as we have just pointed out, the contents evoked by the text are taken to be disjoined from the situation of production, and in particular from its temporal parameters. More specifically, this disjunction is one of "neutrality" or "indifference". A narrative segment of this kind generally begins with a date (in 1660), that is, by an explicit indication of the origin (Fayol, 1985), which is simply the origin of the temporal reference axis along which the narrative is going to unfold. This origin is absolute, in the sense that it can be identified independently of the act of production, which has thus no relevance here. Also, this origin can be relayed by statements such as "the 20th of November," "the next day," "three days later," which are like the scansion markers of the narrative process itself.

Whenever the duration of the act of production is not pertinent, the value of each of the temporal units of the segment has to be analysed as arising from the connections that are established between the verbalised event and the reference axis, or, to use a Cullilian term, from the act of locating (repérage) the event with respect to the axis. This is therefore a function that is internal to the discursive world. But the temporal organisation of narratives, and other types of discourses, is extremely complicated, and to pursue our analysis, we need to distinguish a primary temporality, a secondary temporality, as well as contrast mechanisms, involving contrasts that are global or local.

Primary temporality concerns the modes in which the various verbalised events are linked to the reference axis, or the modes of location of the events with respect to this axis. Such internal location can take three distinct forms.

The narrator can present the verbalised events as following one another in the verbal sequence according to a relation that remains "parallel" to the ongoing narrative process, that is, parallel to the temporal reference axis; in this case we speak of direct locating or isochronic locating (iso). But the verbalised events can also be presented as following each other in the verbal sequence according to a time frame that is shifted with respect to the temporal reference axis; they can be taken to be anterior to the current phase of the narrative process, in which case we speak of retroactive locating (retro); they can also be considered to be posterior to the current phase of narrative process, in which case we speak of proactive locating (pro). In narratives in French, as our example shows, isochronic locating is indicated by the use of the PS6 (simple past) or the IMP (past continuous); retroactive locating is indicated by the use of PANT (past perfect) or PQP (plusque-parfait); proactive locating is indicated by the use of the IMP ("going to" + IMP) or CONDS (present conditional).

We talk of secondary (or relative) temporality when a first verbalised event is related to a second one which is, in turn, located with respect to

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4 Obviously, deictic markers (I, we, for example) can appear in segments of narratives or theoretical discourses, but the function of these units is merely internal; they never refer directly to the empirical author of the text.

5 In other narrative segments, in particular those belonging to the genre tale, the origin would be of the type "once upon a time" or "one day".

6 PS for passé simple; IMP for imperfect, PANT for passé antérieur, PQP for plus-que-parfait; IMP for imperfect périphrasique (il allait régner/be he was going to reign); CONDS for conditionnel présent.
the reference axis. Secondary temporality is characterised by a mechanism of syntactic embedding, generally associated with an opposition of tenses. When the purpose is to express the relative anteriority of one verbalised event with respect to another, the first event (the earlier one) is presented in a subordinate clause, using compound tenses (i.e., verbs with auxiliaries), while the second event is coded within the main clause by the corresponding simple tenses. The examples of relative simultaneity and posteriority can be analysed along the same lines:

(7) Quand il eut grimpé pendant un kilomètre environ, Fred fit une pause.

(Manceron, Paupières petites crottes) 7

(8) Après avoir essayé différents solvants dans un coin du panneau, Julia prépara un mélange d’acétone (...) et commença (...)

(Pérez-Reverte, Le tableau du maître flamand)

In order to introduce the contrast function, let us first point out that the PS and MP in narratives express the same temporal value of isochronic locating, that, in a similar fashion, the PANT and POP express the same temporal value of retroactive locating, and that the IMP and CONDS of narratives express the same value of progression, i.e., the choice of one or the other of the two forms in these pairs that introduces this additional value referred to as contrast.

The global contrast function is of isotopic nature; it consists in marking a distinction between two series of verbal forms: one series is set in the foreground and another (or others) in the background. Certain authors (Hopper, 1982; Labov, 1972) suggest making a distinction between narrative phrases and non-narrative phrases; the former being sequenced in an order that faithfully reproduces the chronology of the related events, whereas the latter are not subject to any such temporal constraints. This interpretation is generally associated with a distinction relative to the human importance of the events that are being related. According to Wallace (1982), for instance, the most significant events and the principal characters are presented in the foreground, whereas the background is kept for events of lesser importance, digressions, and minor characters. Although this approach is very widespread, it should be rejected, since it rests upon the assumption that the story (décrite) is objective, as well as on the assumption of strict parallelism between the chronology of the story and that of the narrative process. As we have noted, any discourse is sustained by the creation of a discursive world, and in the case of narrative, this world can even be completely fictitious. In other words, the related story is never objective, and we are thus left without any criteria whatsoever for determining an a priori hierarchy of the relative importance of the events that are presented in the story. In fact, all empirical analyses of narratives show that events which are apparently decisive for the progression of the story can be rejected to the background, whereas events of apparently secondary importance are projected to the foreground. These considerations make it clear that the function of global contrast does not consist in opposing sets of verbalised events according to their intrinsic importance with respect to the progression of the story; this function is always the result of a decision, taken by the narrator, to highlight certain elements of the story to the detriment of others.

In narratives in French, the foreground is indicated by the PS and the PANT, and the background by the IMP and the POP. These four tenses convey, in addition, the primary temporal values discussed earlier.

The global contrast function can operate in interaction with narrative schemas (Adam, 1992; Fayol, 1985) that appear in certain narratives, and which generally comprise five main phases called initial situation, complication, action, resolution and final situation. In principle, the initial and final phases include mainly the background events, whereas the action and resolution phases include mainly the foreground events (the complication phase is often characterised by the presentation of an opposition between these two types of events). Hence, the initial and final phases are saturated with verbs in the IMP/POP, whereas the action and resolution phases are saturated with verbs expressing dynamic events, conjugated in the PS/PANT.

(9) A la gare de St. Pancrace, John Armitage, chauffeur de taxi, se morfon-

dait. Il lui incombait de rester là en stationnement (...) Une sueur froide lui coulait le long de la colonne vertébrale (...) Sept heures sonnaient, arrachant John à son cafarde (...)

(Aexrayon, On se reverra petite)

But the global contrast function can also be set up independently of any narrative schema, in which case the background events and foreground events are then distributed preferentially in the main clauses and the subordinate clauses respectively:

(10) Elle répondit à son geste par un éclat de rire qui n’aurait pas manché. Elle posa les deux paniers qui avaient laissé des traces de boue.

(Manceron, Paupières petites crottes)

In this second case, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between global contrast and local contrast. Local contrast, which can operate independently of any isotopic series, consists in creating a specific opposition between two verbalised events. These opposing events appear in clauses that are generally articulated with each other by a mechanism of syntactic embedding, whereby one event is presented as being the local context that constitutes the ground against which another event—the figure—is thrown into relief.

(11) Il conduisait donc, attentif à la circulation, lorsqu’il éclata dans son dos un bruit sourd... (Aexrayon, On se reverra petite)

As we can see, the “ground” event is indicated by the IMP (or its compound form, the POP) while the event set “in relief” (or the “figure” event) is indicated by the PS (or its compound form, the PANT).

Of course, this is not an exhaustive analysis of the temporal organisation of narratives.

We might also examine the intersections that exist between the contrast functions and the spatio-temporal markers (markers of degree of accomplishment and markers of types of events). Looking only at the types of events for instance, although it is the narrator who, in final analysis, chooses to relegate one series of events to the background, or to present one event as the ground for another, it is a fact that the background and ground events are most often of the type state, activity or accomplishment, and that events in the foreground or ones set in relief are usually of the type achievement (to use the typology inspired by Vendler, 1967). In other words, the narrator’s decision is not completely independent of the intrinsic properties of the events in the story. Thus, given that the background or ground events are indicated by the IMP and POP, and that foreground or relief events are indicated by the PS and PANT, it follows that events of state and duration are regularly associated with the IMP or POP, and that dynamic and resultant events are regularly associated with the PS and the PANT.

We might also mention mechanisms that are more of a “literary” nature, such as the one adopted by Simonen, for example, which consists in introducing a systematic retroactive shift between the narrative process and the unfolding of the narrated events—giving the impression that the narrated events are retrieved from the narrator’s “memory”—and, in using isochronic locating only occasionally to produce an effect of accentuation or acceleration. Decisions of this type involve very complex narrative strategies, which we cannot go into here.

(12) Lognon, lui, ne perdait pas un poil de son sérieux; c’est en vain que, pendant deux bonnes heures, La Souris avait essayé de le dérider. (...Le fait est que Lognon était presque dessus; (...) il avait passé la nuit au poste de l’Opéra. Dès le matin, il avait suivi ... (Simonen, Monstreur La souris)

The analysis we have just proposed for narrative applies almost in full to interactive narratives.

(13) C’est vers 19 heures que l’absence de Simon a été remarquée (iso). Simon avait quitté (retro) les environs de la cabane et s’était perdu (retro) dans la forêt. Malgré les recherches immédiatement engagées, hier matin, Simon n’était toujours pas retrouvé (iso). Quelque cent trente personnes ont repris (iso) les recherches. Puis, vers 9 heures, un hélicoptère de la Rega a été mobilisé (iso). Finalement, Simon allait être retrouvé (pro) et saut vers 10 heures, à un kilomètre de la cabane.

(La Suisse)
In segments like this one, we find the same functions of primary and secondary temporality, as well as global and local contrast. The main difference is that in interactive narratives, the origin of the temporal reference axis entails a measurable relationship to the act of production: we have an origin that is neither absolute nor irrelevant, as in narrative, but deictic (“last week,” “yesterday,” “two days ago,” etc.). In French, this difference in the status of the temporal reference axis is indicated by the use of the PC and PSC, which take on respectively the functions of the PS and PANT in narratives.

The same type of analysis can be applied to theoretical discourses. What is particular in this case is that the temporal reference axis of the discourse world is unlimited, bounded, or without an origin. By its very status, theoretical discourse offers elements of content (notions, concepts, theories, etc.) that are presented by the narrator “as if” they were eternally valid, and independent of any particular time frame. Thus, the main tense of theoretical discourse is the PREP, which suggest a neutral, or neutralized location (neut).

However, in this type of discourse, the tenses of the verbs can also code the relationship between the unfolding of the expository process itself and the unfolding of the events that are presented; and we thus obtain the three forms of locating in primary temporality that we discussed earlier. In French, isochronic locating is indicated by the use of the PRE, retroactive locating by the use of the PC or the IMP, and proactive locating by the FUTS or CONDS. To these simple forms we can add the five corresponding composed forms (respectively PC, PSC, PQR, FUTA and CONDC), which confer an aspect of completion to the primary temporality or a value of secondary temporality:

(14) Tout développement géographique ou collectif aboutit (neut) à la construction de phylums relativement stables [...]. Ces phylums stables sont alors décrits (neut) en termes de régnes, embranchemens [...]. Aux époques où l'idée d'évolution était inconnue (retro) [...], cette notion réaliste [...], suffit et permet de construire des unités temporelles les plus souvent employées (pro ou au chapitre 4...).

(J. Pingat, Biologie et connaissance)

In this type of discourse, produced in French, the contrast function is not indicated by oppositions between tenses, as is in interactive discourse or narrative; it seems to be expressed instead by processes of syntactic embedding.

Analysis of the temporal organisation of interactive discourses, be they dialogues or monologues, is much more complex, particularly because these types of discourses can comprise several temporal reference axes.

The producing agent can set up a first sort of reference axis, one that is disjoined from the act of production; this disjunction is generally made explicit by adverbs or clauses of time (“yesterday,” “tomorrow,” “this morning,” “on the 10th of January,” etc.). Axes of this sort are usually limited or bounded; they can follow each other throughout the discourse and therefore have only local validity. Once such a disjoined axis is created, the producing agent can choose to indicate his relation to the moment of the event. And this relation always seems to be one of inclusion, in which case we speak of location of inclusion (“Demain, Pierre se rend à Lausanne” “Tomorrow, Peter goes to Lausanne”). As the examples (3) and (5) have shown, in this same case the producing agent can also choose not to relate the moment of the event to the disjoined reference axis, indicating instead the relation that exists between the moment of the event and the duration of the act of production (“Demain, Pierre se rendra à Lausanne” “Tomorrow Peter will go to Lausanne”). Of course, this possibility becomes a necessity if a disjoined reference axis has not been specified.

This second type of relation is by no means a mechanical nature, as the trichotomic theory would have it. It is not the physical “moment” of production with which the event is linked, but the psychological duration built around (or “on the basis” of) the act of production; this duration can be more or less long, and can also change constantly. This is thus also a temporal reference axis, but one that takes another form, being adjoined to (or dependent on) the duration of production. This type of axis can be limited or bounded, in which case we have a relation of anteriority, if the moment of production is considered to be situated before the “left boundary” of the axis; a relation of posteriority if this moment is considered to be situated after the “right boundary”; and a relation of simultaneity if it is considered to be included within the boundaries. This type of axis can equally well be unlimited or bounded, in which case the moment of any kind of event necessarily entails a relation of inclusion with the axis; we then have a neutral relation, similar to that found in theoretical discourse.

In interactive discourses in French, neutral relation, relation of simultaneity and relation of
inclusion are all indicated by the same tense of the verb (PRE). But in spite of this morphological identity, each form takes on a different value, which is determined precisely by the underlying form of location; grammarians sometimes call these values the generic present in the first case, the present of simultaneity in the second case, and the psychological present in the third. The latter expression indicates that the choice of linking the moment of the event to an embracing, disjoined axis is intended to arouse in the receiver a paradoxical feeling of proximity to the event, in spite of the fact that it precedes or follows the act of production. Locations of anteriority are indicated either by the PC or the IMP, and locations of posteriority by the FUTS or by the FUTP (aller + infinitive).

These general laws of temporal location in interactive discourse obviously need to be completed with considerations concerning aspects and secondary temporality.

Let us now compare the temporal organisation of these four types of discourse. In the three types of discourses that are of an exclusively monologic nature (narrative, interactive narrative and theoretical discourse), the relation between the objective duration of the act of production and the temporal reference axis of the discursive world is fixed once and for all, as we have seen. Hence, verbal forms express only internal temporal values.

- **Primary temporality** has to do mainly with the relation of the unfolding of the discursive process chosen by the enunciator (narrative versus expository process) to the unfolding of the verbalised event; there can be parallelism between the two time references (isochrony), a relation of forward displacement (proactive) or backward displacement (retroactive).

- **Global contrast** reflects the hierarchy the enunciator introduces between series of isotopic events (foreground and different levels of background, sometimes interlocked).

- **Secondary temporality and local contrast** are relative mechanisms: in the first case, the event is situated from a temporal point of view with respect to another event for which primary temporality has been determined; in the second case, an event is located from the point of view with respect to another event that has also been subject to primary temporal location.

In accordance with Ricoeur’s thesis, these four functions contribute to the clarification of the verbalised actions, states or events. More precisely, it is the process of text production itself (the narrative or expository process) which is the real creator of concordance and homogeneity.

- On the one hand, the producer establishes, for the sake of the recipient, the hierarchical levels of sets of verbalised events. This contrast function is not unrelated to the internal or asp ectual characteristics of events, but in the final analysis, it is always the enunciator who chooses whether or not he takes into account the properties attributed to the events in the world.

- On the other hand, given that the activity of text production has its own time frame (our reference axis), it is the location of the verbalised events with respect to this time frame of production that gives them their temporal organisation (function of primary temporality). The time frame of the represented worlds is thus a by-product of (or relative to) the time frame of the discursive activity.

It is the activity of elaborating discursive worlds which organises the verbalised events into a hierarchical and temporalised structure, in other words, which creates a concordant structure that can be understood and interpreted by the recipient.

Then what about the temporal organisation of interactive discourses, which are fundamentally dialogic in nature?

First, we stipulate that interactive discourse, as any other type of discourse, is supported by the creation of a discursive world; however, this world is constructed through interaction and is subject to constant, on line re-negotiation. Hence, the enunciator, as a formal entity, is actually manifold, and the temporal unfolding of the text production is in constant movement, or even chaotic. Thus, through alternation, and sometimes through competition, interactive discourse leads to the creation of three sorts of temporal axes:

- an unbounded axis, similar to that found in theoretical discourse;
- a local, bounded axis, made explicit by expressions such as “yesterday,” “last week,” etc.;
- and finally an axis built around the objective duration of production.

It should be noted that the latter axis is the only one that can really be used as a reference for external location of simultaneity, posteriority, and anteriority. Hence, this type of relation is a special case, and a rather rare one, in the temporal organisation of discourses.

Whatever the case may be, the decision to create and use one or other time axis always comes from this formal (enunciating) entity. And it is from the connections to these axes that the verbalised events acquire temporal coherence. But only a potential coherence and intelligibility, as it is obvious to those who try to interpret interactive discourses independently of their context. Although we must therefore grant to Ricoeur that interactive discourses clarify human activities less well than narratives do, it seems to us that one should not confuse the process itself, which does indeed have the aim of clarifying, and the result in the dialogue, which is rarely satisfactory.

To make up for burdening the reader with these technical considerations, we conclude this expose with some “free” suggestions regarding the problem of the genealogy of discourses, and that of the very status of temporality.

Socio-discursive interactionism, to which we rally, contests the notion that the foundations of human rationality (formal logic, in particular the temporal logic of mental operations) are exclusively biological, as Piaget would have it. For us, the works of developmental psychology (including those of Piaget) show that formal logic is a secondary product, which develops late and is always fragile; that it is constructed on the basis of abstraction and decontextualisation of natural logic, which is nothing other than a logic stemming from the appropriation and interiorisation of the properties of natural languages. In this sense, primary logic is a social logic, for it de-
rives from the social constructs that are natural languages.
This primary, natural-social logic is itself the product of the continuous historical process of reconfiguration of human actions in discourses; of the attribution of hierarchical and temporal organisation to these actions.
But what types of discourses contribute most effectively to this clarification of actions. Evidently narratives and interactive narratives come first, then theoretical discourses, and last interactive discourses. According to us, this de facto observation should be confronted with the dominant theses concerning the genealogy of discourses and temporality.
The theses concerning the emergence of language in our species, including those of Engels (1946), and found implicitly in the works of Habermas, all postulate the primacy of interactive discourse: language is first constructed in the form of dialogue, in work/labour situations, as an instrument for defining the contexts of collective activity; monologues appear afterwards, as abstractions of these interactive situations.
Now what if we contest these theses, just to see? Because, for one thing, interactive discourses are so complex in their organisation that it is hard to imagine the sort of processes by which a "logic" could have derived from them. And then, more fundamentally, we can argue that the emergence of a semiotic function necessarily implies establishing a distance with respect to immediate action and its context. It would therefore seem to be at least as reasonable to suppose that language was first constructed in narrative activity that recalls or plans work, rather than during work itself. We might turn around Engels' formula and claim that language is fundamentally a product of leisure and that narrative is consequently the primary form of discourses.
And then "primary" temporality would indeed be as we have qualified it: a product of the establishment of connections between processes and the unfolding of monologic speaking activity. And relations of anteriority, posteriority and simultaneity, which are external in the sense that they involve the situation of the producing agent, would then be secondary constructions.
Genealogically secondary, that is, which does not mean of course that these constructions have not played a decisive role, as we know, in the elaboration of a temporal logic.

References