

TIME REWORKED

RICOEUR, PAUL TEMPO E NARRATIVA. MARTINS FONTES:
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More often than not, discussions on journalism revolve around technical issues or practical, straightforward points relevant to its roles, procedures, and technological possibilities. While the value of such discussions is undisputable, discussing the underlying philosophy of journalism by tapping into insights from other areas of study provides an equally important resource in advancing approaches to communications. One remarkable example of such contribution is Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative (Temps et Récit)*, whose translation has recently been re-issued in Brazil. In a time when debates on journalism focus on technologies and formats that stand out for their immediate appeal – and often overshadow more traditional media –, this work is enlightening in that its theoretic rationale and confrontations inspire a fertile study in the philosophy of journalism. Its greatest merit lies in problematising topics which are often considered self-evident and implicit. The questions it raises and the answers it produces go beyond the surface to delve deeper into unsettling and challenging issues, opening new frontiers in areas that are often overlooked.

This book, regarded by Paul Ricoeur as a complementary work to another of his basic books, *A Metáfora Viva (2000)*, is split into three volumes. The first of them, *A Intriga e a Narrativa Histórica*, introduces the work's bold proposal of presenting narrative as the main outlet through which people experience time. Thus, a fertile debate is launched between two key theories to understanding it – Aristotle's and Augustine's. Something that unfolds into further elements that Ricoeur

lists and defines in terms of complex relationships. First, he identifies them with the notion of plot, especially as regards the motifs of literature and historical narrative.

In the second volume, *A configuração do tempo na narrativa de ficção*, Ricoeur draws on *Mrs. Dalloway*, written by Virginia Woolf; *A montanha mágica*, by Thomas Mann; and *Em busca do tempo perdido*, by Marcel Proust, to look into the ways time is conveyed in speech, how it can be transfigured in fiction, and how this affects its setting. In the third volume, *O Tempo Narrado*, the author resumes and builds on Aristotle's and Saint Augustine's notions of time by adding contributions from Kant, Husserl, and Heidegger while challenging some of Hegel's definitions.

Since our limited space here does not allow for an in-depth description of such elaborate conceptualization, what we do seek to emphasize is chiefly the dialogues between "narrated time" and journalism which, in its own peculiar way, shapes time by shrinking it, stretching it, and transforming it into a linear element that makes sense. A rationale that unifies Augustine's notion of distended time – along with the issue of measuring time and even its existence as an entity – and Aristotle's concept of time as a core element in talking about the world and placing the narrative within its frames through mimesis and verisimilitude.

Building on Augustine, Ricoeur looks at the sense of time as past, present, and future as something that transcends a mere mathematical measurement, something that takes the form of a fundamental element to life and reporting on life, both in and out of fiction. Journalism also deals on reported life, and draws one of its most important foundations from time-related features, by reworking it a number of times, turning past into present, bringing future to the current moment, looking back into history in new ways and reworking events, which Ricoeur places within the realms of narrative.

The author also quotes Augustine to point that "we measure time when it is passing; not the future which is not, nor the past which is no longer, nor the present which has no extension, but 'time passing.' It is in this very passing, in the transit, that both the multiplicity of the present and its tearing apart are to be sought." (RICOEUR, 2011, v. 1, p. 32). Thus, he introduces a notion of a threefold present – what was, what is, and what is not yet –, which, within narrative, all turn into present. Something similar occurs in journalism as conventional time is run over by the content of the message and the purpose of the utterance.

All this results in an aporia, with contradictions and paradoxes that Ricoeur looks into in the first volume of *Tempo e Narrativa*, and which

he resolves in the third, after going over dozens of related concepts which all build toward the notion that time is also a construction, anticipation, and realization. It also pervades Aristotle's approach to emplotment, and can further be verified in the discourse of journalism, where the narrated world must be convincing and must result in what Barthes called "the effect of reality". Building on Aristotle, Ricoeur introduces the concept of threefold mimesis, which takes place before, during, and after emplotment.

In a similar process, journalism is expressed – and its discourse operates – through similar paths, not for poetic or aesthetic purposes – although it may indeed explore such possibilities – but to come into life in its informative character. Time, thus, acquires a narrative dimension, which Aristotle, in classical tragedy, and Ricoeur, in twentieth-century novels, both explore in the realms of fiction, but which works in journalism, too, within a similar discursive spirit. This is why *Tempo e Narrativa* has plenty to contribute to communications and communication studies, providing invaluable clues for a comprehensive understanding of how news, narrated fact, relates to time.

Furthermore, the French philosopher draws on further theoretical grounds that deal with the notions of archive, document, trace, which all pertain to such discourses of fact as History, but which can also have links with journalism. This provides a relevant debate, since the measurement of time, which is related to facts, traces, documents, witnesses, lies at the bottom of news communications. Because of this closeness, we can safely point out, based on *Time and Narrative*, that time construction in news discourse involves procedures which, rather than being peaceful, draw on reworked time.

In a time when content is produced in a fast-growing pace – when time is a variable whose measurement unfolds and changes as information is transmitted, especially in digital media, live broadcast, social networks – this reflection proves necessary because it can cast a light upon the paths that are taken to convert the world to something that can be understood in terms of time. As Ricoeur says, "to narrate a story is already to 'reflect upon' the event narrated," (RICOEUR, 2011, v. 2, p. 103). Perhaps journalism should practise it more.

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