

CHRONOTYPES

*The
Construction
of
Time*



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DAVID E. WELLBERY

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The Constitution of Human Life in Time

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TIME IS CONSTITUTIVE OF human life in society. Of course it is also constitutive of human life in nature: *all* life is in time. But as a dimension of human life time is not only the matrix of growth and decline between birth and death. It is also the condition of human sociality that is achieved again and again in the continuously incarnated contemporaneity of face-to-face interaction. As an essential dimension of individual, interactional, and institutional existence, time confers an elementary historical character upon all human life in society. The emergence and subsequent interpenetration of several dimensions in the experience of time were a necessary condition for both the evolution and the ontogenesis of personal identity as the peculiarly human form of life.¹ As I will try to show, these dimensions are the *non*-identical diachronies of the body, of the ongoing synchronizations of self and other in face-to-face interaction and of "history." Personal identity arises at the intersection of these dimensions in individual consciousness.

"Time" has a peculiar status in sociological theory. In all the sciences theory is the product of (rather peculiar) specialized and systematizing communicative activities. But only the social sciences have a subject matter that is itself constituted in communicative activities: human life in society. In other words, the social sciences are necessarily reflective: second-order (i.e., theoretical) concepts refer to first-order (i.e., ordinary language, common-sense) concepts that guide everyday behavior. Time is therefore evidently an important aspect of the reflexivity of the social sciences.

Sociologists have often complained that their discipline lacks a theoretical focus on time.² It must be admitted that the complaint is not wholly unjustified. It is true that basic efforts to comprehend the social nature of time were not entirely lacking in the sociological tradition. One need only

think of Durkheim and his school and especially of Maurice Halbwachs's essays on collective memory and the social categories of time.³ Equally important in a methodological context, although less known among sociologists, are Georg Simmel's investigations of the problem of historical time.⁴ Sociality and time are the two most important elements in George Herbert Mead's theory of action,⁵ and time is a pervasive concern of Alfred Schutz's protosociology, especially in its account of the constitution of meaning in experience and action, which in this regard is influenced as much by Bergson as by Husserl.⁶ It is also true that interest in the temporal dimension of social processes was a matter of course in interpretive historical sociology, thus in the writings of Max Weber and also in those of Norbert Elias.⁷ Furthermore, investigations of the temporal structures of institutions and organizations have begun to accumulate in recent decades. They are linked to the study of "timetables" and "scheduling" and are paralleled by a growing body of studies on various aspects of "careers" and "trajectories"—occupational, deviant, criminal, medical, marital—as well as of the social contexts of entire life-courses.⁸

However, it is the case that there is no common, clearly articulated perspective on time in sociology or, for that matter, anywhere in the social sciences.⁹ "Time" is everywhere in human life and in the body politic. But the practical problems of the management of time in everyday life do not translate into a general theoretical effort in the social sciences. Time is so pervasive in the everyday life of the social scientist, so omnipresent as a condition of his theoretical and research activities and so basic a dimension of the object of his studies, that it is taken for granted—even as specific temporal aspects of particular institutions and organizations are closely inspected. In view of this, it is not difficult to understand the unease caused by the absence of an adequately elaborated common perspective on time.

Here I shall be concerned with the elementary issues of the relationship between time and sociality. But I shall also try to show the systematic connection between these issues and the specific problems of the temporal structure of organizations and the varieties of the social construction of temporal categories in language, calendars, and so forth.

The Constitution of Human Life in Time

The Body and Inner Time

In everyday life we take it for granted that one experience follows another. We also take it for granted that we can remember past experiences, some accurately, some vaguely. We even believe that we can "share"

our past experiences with other people, recount them to others. We know that under normal circumstances we can do so with a degree of accuracy that suffices for most practical purposes. Correspondingly, we assume as a matter of course that we know what it is all about when others tell us of their experiences—even if we sometimes notice occasional involuntary or deceitful distortions of the past. In the "living" present, the present in which we are immersed with our bodies, we can grasp something that presents itself to us as past, as a recollection, just as well as something that presents itself as an actual ongoing perception or daydream. In fact, in some currently occurring experiences we even anticipate that we shall have occasion to recollect them later on. We note that they are memorable. We often look at an ongoing experience from the currently anticipated future, before that experience recedes into the past.

Moreover, in everyday life there is one kind of experience that has an even more complex temporal structure: an experience that is rehearsed in the ongoing present before it has "really" happened—and then, other things being equal, willed to happen. With Schutz¹⁰ we may call such experiences "actions": sequences of experience that were projected earlier and whose meaning is constituted in (partial) fulfillment or (partial) frustration of the original project. However, actions, although they can be performed by a solitary individual, are intersubjective in origin and will be considered later; we shall first look at experiences with a simpler temporal structure.

Our body roots us in the present by its actual "inner" and "outer" perceptions. But the present in which we live, and of which we are concretely aware, moves on. We say that time "flows." It is to this inexorable flow in which one experience succeeds another that we attach the notion of time in the "natural" attitude of everyday life. Yet, even in a prephilosophical, common-sensical attitude, we also seem to be able to step outside this flow. This is a powerful, operative illusion deserving of closer scrutiny.

In his investigations of inner time, Husserl has shown that the unity of the stream of consciousness over time is constituted in the continuous syntheses of what is given just now with what was given as just now a moment ago and with what is not yet a just now, although about to become now momentarily.¹¹ These fusions of the actual, impressive phase of consciousness with retentions of a previous impressive phase and protentions of a coming impressive phase occur in continuous *automatic* syntheses, not in intentional *acts*. Inner time is the elementary form of passive intentional processes: an irreversible sequence. Every ongoing

experience is located in what William James most appropriately called a "specious present," and it has two temporal horizons: one is a backward horizon behind which everything that is now present is constantly receding. I recognize that which has receded as my past. There is also a forward horizon from which consecutive experiences move forward into the ongoing present. It may or may not be what was anticipated a moment ago in what was the then current impressive phase. But whatever it turns out to be, it also recedes into the past.

This is the *elementary* temporal structure that characterizes all intentional processes of human consciousness. But, although everything else rests on this temporal basis, there are other levels of time in human experience. Husserl pointed out that one normally "lives" in one's intentional activities, that one is occupied with the intentional *objects* of these activities, not with the activities themselves.¹² In order to grasp either these activities or what was presented in them but is no longer presented "in person" in the present experience, it is necessary to turn to them reflectively—and that means, retrospectively. The acts of reflection and the retrospective glances are inevitably embedded in the ongoing present. But the intentional objects, although apprehended in the present impressive phase of inner time, do not present themselves as actual and present. They present themselves as past, and this temporal subscript ("past experience") is an intrinsic part of their meaning.

All experiences are, of course, constituted in time, step by step: polythetically. If I return to them retrospectively, I may follow the path of their original constitution and reconstruct them as they were constructed, once again step by step. I *may* follow this path, but I *need* not do so in all cases. The meaning of many experiences may be grasped in one glance, monothetically. The meaning of *some* experiences is, however, intrinsically polythetic and must therefore be reconstructed polythetically. Musical themes must be replayed, historical events must be narrated, if one wishes to grasp their nature.

Inner time—the point has been forcefully made by Bergson and William James—cannot be adequately segmented into equal units without doing violence to its intrinsic articulation. Inner time is the form of consciousness as continuous experience; it is not a measurable object in space. If inner time has units, they cannot be stretches of the *res extensa*; they must be sequences of the *res cogitans*. It is obvious that the rhythm of these sequences is naturally rooted in the human body with its alternation of wakefulness and sleep. William James spoke persuasively of "flying stretches" and "resting places."¹³ However, although we are automatically

aware of the rhythmic structure of inner time, we do not normally think about it. If we do think about it at all, we cannot help but use the categories of time and space that are socially objectivated in various ways. Such categories are internalized by the members of a society and are thus superimposed more or less "artificially" on the elementary rhythms of inner time. These categories are of course not originally those of inner time itself. They originate in social interaction, and they are determined by the requirements of social organization (communication, work, and political institutions). They are socially preserved in objective (semantic-syntactic) forms, and they are socially transmitted.

It is a general trait of all conscious life that in each successive actual phase the immediately preceding phase is automatically retained, just as the next impressive phase is automatically anticipated. Retention, impression, and protention are fused in a flow of ongoing impressive phases, without much intrinsic segmentation of experience. They continue to flow in a characteristic body-bound rhythm. Upon this flow are superimposed both subjectively motivated shifts of attention that may slow it down or speed it up and externally imposed changes in experience. Attentiveness may change when an individual "shifts gears" from mere experience to action, when he proceeds from unimportant to urgent action, and, of course, when he moves (or is moved) from one domain of reality to another (e.g., from waking to dreaming).

The rhythms of inner time are the basis of experience, and all other structures of time in human life are erected upon it. The latter, however, do not *originate* in the (pre-predicative) inner time of a solitary self. They originate in social interaction. Reflective turns to prior experience and projects of future action that normally depend on highly socialized categories are, of course, *located* for each individual in his inner time. Each successive present experience, that ongoing synthesis of impression, retention, and protention, is surrounded by a horizon of definitely past experience, necessarily closed, and of potential future experience, necessarily open-ended but nonetheless anticipated as going to have not only a typical beginning but also a typical end. Each successive experience is thus, in a manner of speaking, the (partial) fulfillment or the (partial or full) disappointment of what was anticipated earlier and—in the case of action—of what was projected earlier.

Social Interaction and Intersubjective Time

The rhythms of inner time are the immediate "link" between body and solitary consciousness. While the individual remains solitary and as

long as he is neither working nor thinking to some purpose, his awareness is regulated by these rhythms. But daily life does not offer much solitude. Periods in which the individual is not attending to practical affairs in some way—working, talking, thinking—are rare. The world of everyday life is a social world of crisscrossing actions. The temporality that characterizes the world of everyday life is therefore not the same as that which characterizes the daydreams of the solitary individual.

The inner time of those who live and act together must be reciprocally adjusted. Such adjustments of course need be neither continuous nor permanent, but they must be undertaken at the very least on all occasions when the individuals engage in social interaction. This evidently covers important stretches of daily life.

The adjustments that are required in the coordination of social interaction are of two kinds. One kind—which we may consider to be elementary—consists in the synchronization of two streams of consciousness. The other—which we may consider to be derivative—results from the superimposition of socially objectivated temporal categories upon concrete social interaction. Empirically the two kinds appear in various combinations.

Synchronization of two streams of consciousness may be said to occur when the body-bound rhythms of two individuals are placed in a “parallel” course so that both are aware of sharing the same experience (e.g., of a bird flying by). The synchronization of two streams of consciousness can only come about when the individuals are situated in bodily presence of one another. (I shall disregard the complexities of partial and quasi-synchronizations achieved by various technological means.) In face-to-face situations the body of one individual is experienced directly by the other, and vice versa. To partners in a face-to-face situation the bodies of fellow human beings are a rich field of expression, expressing an individual’s actual, ongoing consciousness: his momentary perceptions, intentions, fears, wishes, and so forth. And as the other perceives and interprets the first individual’s expression, he experiences his own perceptions and interpretations as simultaneous with the experiences expressed by the first individual. In a face-to-face situation, expression and perception of expression are co-related and reciprocal. The individuals, of course, do not have the same experiences, but they certainly do share experiences.¹⁴

Once synchronization of two streams of consciousness is achieved, actions originating with different individuals can be geared into one another so as to form a unitary course of social interaction. Successful

interpretation of cues is a necessary condition for the accomplishment of social interaction. Under normal circumstances such interpretations are achieved “automatically” as, for example, in reciprocal gazes.¹⁵ That is not to say, however, that even fairly simple coordinations of time above a most elementary level do not represent an early problem of “socialization” and a need to be taught and learned.¹⁶

Synchronization of two streams of consciousness is only required in face-to-face, direct social interaction. Even there the degree of synchronization that must be achieved varies. Building a house together differs in this respect from making love, fencing differs from a liturgical responsory. Different degrees of exactness are required for the timing of different kinds of social interaction. In some kinds of work, as, for example, in ritual sequencing of procedures or intimate bodily interaction, the temporal aspects of experience and action remain in focus; synchronization here may always become problematic. In highly routinized social interaction face-to-face synchronization is still necessary, yet may be achieved in a correspondingly routinized fashion.

In the temporal coordination of more or less routinized social interaction the required adjustments are usually accomplished with the aid of ready-made categories. In face-to-face situations these categories are of course superimposed upon an elementary synchronization of streams of consciousness. More precisely, they are superimposed on a mediating layer of interactional procedures, such as the taking of turns, that themselves rest upon the synchronized rhythms of inner time. The categories themselves are anonymous and abstract: they structure time in an obligatory fashion for “everybody.” “Ready-made” means that the categories have a degree of social objectivity and that they have been socially transmitted to individuals rather than having been created by them in the process of social interaction. And “structuring time” means that stretches of typical kinds of action and experience are given objective status by being differentiated from (and compared to) one another as well as from events that are independent not only of the rhythms of inner time but also of social interaction, that is to say from external natural events that, of course, are thus endowed with considerable social significance.

It should be noted again that the time that governs daily life is intersubjective: the concretely experienced, “lived” time of direct social interaction. It is not the time of abstract social categories. On the other hand, it is not the time of “pure” intersubjectivity, that is, of original, pre-predicative, precategorical synchronizations of two streams of consciousness. The time of everyday life is *socialized* intersubjective time.

Temporal categories are of course ready-made only from the point of view of any given individual born and socialized into a particular society in a particular epoch. But, evidently, the categories have not made themselves. They were made, and are constantly being remade in the very processes of social interaction whose temporality they help to regulate as soon as they are available. One may take it for granted that synchronization of social interaction could and would come about, no matter how laboriously, even in the interaction of individuals who were *not* socialized into the same world view and thus could not employ the same categories. The "objective" categories of time, on the other hand, cannot be imagined to have come into existence without some prior social interaction. Some synchronization of the inner time of the actors must be presupposed for the accomplishment of any social interaction. The objective categories are *socially* objective: social categories of time thus point back to original intersubjective coordinations of interaction sequences accomplished in precategorical synchronization of two streams of consciousness.

The adjustments of inner time necessary for the successful accomplishment of various kinds of social interaction are typified by the actors on some level of awareness. The typifications are rudimentary cognitive schemes (of the "If . . . then . . ." kind) and therefore necessarily "abstract" to some degree. They are applied to future interactions of the same kind. In the process of application to concrete interaction they reacquire "life." If the typifications turn out to be problematic in some way (e.g., in being "overgeneralized" to the wrong kind of interaction, individual, etc.), they become a topic for reflection and some systematization on the part of the actors. If experts are available in a given social structure, further systematization tends to be turned over to them. The solutions to the problems of temporal coordination are socially objectivated: categories of time and temporal categories of interaction and experience are articulated in words, ordered numerically, represented symbolically, and so forth. They become "abstract": anonymous and independent of the inner time of any living individual.

Once categories of time become objectivated as parts of a social stock of knowledge, they are routinely transmitted to the members of a society. Consequently, social interaction can be coordinated without original acts of synchronization and without original reciprocal typifications of action sequences. Complex social interactions can be organized on the level of institutions with the use of abstract social categories of time in total disregard of the rhythms of inner time that instill life into the synchronizations of two streams of consciousness in direct social interaction.

It is obvious, nonetheless, that the temporality of *daily* life arises in the coordination of intersubjective sequences of interaction, and that this coordination rests upon the synchronization of the inner times of two or more individuals in bodily presence of one another. It is also obvious that some kinds of interaction continue to require elementary synchronizations of inner time and some elementary reciprocal attentiveness of the actors even if social categories of time are routinely superimposed on them. In immediate face-to-face social interactions the social categories of time provide external temporal settings. But interaction still requires constant "tuning-in." The temporality of daily life, as effectively as it may be structured by abstract, socially objectivated categories, is the intersubjective temporality of immediate social interaction and rests on the synchronization of the rhythms of inner time among men and women.

Time and the Social Stock of Knowledge

Inner time thus has its "location" in the body of the individual human organism, intersubjective time has its location in direct, face-to-face social interaction. The social categories of time, on the other hand, have no comparably concrete location; they are not embodied. Nonetheless they can be said to be located in the social stock of knowledge of a given society at a given time.

A social stock of knowledge has a virtual existence in the minds of the members of a society who share that stock. But the social stock of knowledge does not merely have such virtual existence. It exists also in continuous or recurrent actualizations: in the experiences and actions for which the elements of knowledge are relevant.

A special and most important instance of actualization of the elements of knowledge (in the present case: the social categories of time) is to be found in the social transmission of such elements in practical exemplification and instruction. In addition to such primary—verbal, gestural, mimetic, and so forth—actualizations of elements of the social stock of knowledge in initial transmission and subsequent everyday use, a secondary objectivation may be found in some societies in the form of notations, scripts, and instruments. The obvious examples of such objectivations in the case of the social categories of time are of course calendars and clocks.¹⁷ Yet not only the primary actualizations of the social categories of time are acts of consciousness or include acts of consciousness; the secondary actualizations, too, are embedded in acts of consciousness. The use of calendars and clocks presupposes the elements of knowledge that they embody.

The sequencing of the daily routines of social interaction requires categories that are explicitly temporal (such as calendars) or define beginnings and ends in indirectly temporal ways. The categories mediate between the small-scale interactional temporal structures that, at least in principle, could be negotiated intersubjectively (although they are normally not so negotiated in fact), and large-scale institutional structures of time that are socially objectivated on a high level of anonymity and whose jurisdiction may transcend the life span of an individual. The social categories of time serve to stabilize the recognition of typical beginnings, durations, and ends of typical experiences and interactions. They are historically variable, although, presumably, limits are set to the range of variation by the elementary structure of human consciousness on the one hand and the basic requirements of social organization on the other.

In comparison with the body-bound rhythms of inner time the socially objectivated temporal categories seem abstract and remote from experience. Nonetheless, they are concretely interwoven in the ordinary business of everyday life. The time of daily life is socialized by categories derived from the social stock of knowledge, yet it retains a concrete basis in experience, a basis that consists of ongoing intersubjective synchronizations and the systoles and diastoles of inner time. Furthermore, the dividing line between the genuinely abstract categories measuring duration independently of interaction ("clock time") and the far more concrete categories that shape the flow of social interaction by defining openings, closures, interlockings, and overlaps is not sharply drawn in preliterate societies. In such societies socially objectivated categories of time are therefore very visibly involved in the "lived" time of daily life. Temporal categories are also embedded in the myths and symbols that in such societies link the routines of ordinary experience with extraordinary realities and their "times."

Abstract categories of time became fully divorced from immediate experience and gained the status of quasi-ideal systems only in a few complex literate societies. Along with spatial categories they were first systematized in the early civilizations by experts of various kinds and found an institutional location as special knowledge. But although the "theories" of time and space thus developed no longer belonged to knowledge that was generally distributed in society, the *practical* use of the measures of time (and space) of calendars, clocks, watches (and yardsticks, blueprints, maps) required little or no specialization. It became part of daily routine. Thus even highly abstract categories of time—wherever they had developed—penetrated the interactional structure of daily life.

In these societies abstract temporal categories serve to regulate not only large-scale and anonymous organizations but also many temporal aspects of immediate social interaction. They do so just as effectively as temporal categories "closer" to intersubjective experience regulate interaction in face-to-face communities. The development of abstract categories of time stood in systematic relation to the requirements of the large-scale political organization of action, especially of work, and war in early civilizations.

Biography and Historical Time

In addition to the categories that structure the temporal dimensions of social interaction and the increasingly more abstract measurements of time in complex organizations, social stocks of knowledge contain another important set of temporal categories, categories by which an individual course of life is fitted, from birth to death, into a time that transcends it.

It is not surprising that categories in this set (one might call them biographical schemes) bear a closer resemblance to the diachronic interactional categories that differentiate aims and projects, define beginnings and ends, and coordinate interlocking phases of action than to the synchronic categories that measure duration (and provide a spatialized taxonomy for it). Both interactional categories and biographical schemes serve to order sequences of action in time. But there is a substantial difference in the temporal span on which the ordering occurs. Interactional categories integrate sequences of action within the individually recurrent and short stretches of daily life; biographical schemes integrate sequences of (temporally already preordered) action within an overarching, individually *nonrecurrent* "long" sequence, the entire course of an individual's life.

There is another, subtler difference. Interactional time categories are, in a sense, diachronic—but their function is, first and foremost, to *synchronize* interaction. The sequential ordering is primarily intersubjective and *social*, although this also involves an ordering of individual routines in daily life. Biographical schemes, on the other hand, are diachronic in the full sense of the word, and their basic function is to integrate short-term into long-term temporal sequences—and the long-term sequences are *individual* rather than social. They are socially constructed as all other elements of a social stock of knowledge—but they are tailored to fit an individual's lifetime rather than institutional times.

Biographical schemes endow the meaning of short-term action with long-term significance. One might say that this is a matter of "reverse telescoping": what looms large when seen with the naked eye recedes into

the background if one looks at it through the wrong end of the binoculars. The meaning of daily routines does not disappear in such telescoping but is set in relation to the vaster background of an entire lifetime. This, however, is not the only function of biographical schemes. In view of the intersubjectively gained knowledge of the finitude of human life, they also endow some actions and experiences with special significance and make them stand out sharply from daily routines. One might describe the procedure involved here as proper "telescoping." Something that perhaps would not appear to be of special importance by itself is brought forward by the magnifying lens of the telescope. The lens is ground and polished by a hard diamond: human, intersubjectively gained knowledge of the finitude of human existence.

Biographical schemes cannot—entirely—avoid the problem of death. They attempt to "solve" it by linking individual existence to something that transcends it. From the point of view of the individual, time that transcends the human lifetime may be said to be "historical." There is no denying that simple as well as complex theories about his location in "historical" time profoundly influence an individual's conduct of life. I shall return to this point again. Historical time in the sense proposed here is as universal in human societies as interactional time and inner time.

Biographical schemes thus perform two kinds of closely related functions. They "convert" short-term into long-term relevance and vice versa. The meaning of a large variety of ordinary, everyday actions and experiences is subordinated to biographical significance, and biographical significance is infused into certain kinds of actions and experiences directly. Both procedures, hierarchization and dramatization, fuse short- and long-term sequences of action into meaningful components of an entire course of life. They do so by locating an individual course of life in relation to something that transcends the individual's lifetime. That "something" may be primarily the time of a transcendent social entity: family, kin, or a larger social whole such as nation, class, and the like. It may be transcendent nature or it may be an *individual* transcendent "timeless" time: eternal life.

Biographical schemes link large stretches of a typical individual's life and even his entire life to transcendent, historical times. As elements of a social stock of knowledge transmitted in socialization, biographical schemes trace individual paths through the social and historical world. They consist of formulaic versions of obligatory or possible lives or parts of life, with some instruction as to how the parts are to be put together in order to form whole lives. It may be said of interactional categories that

they already tend to combine so as to produce formula-like wholes with normative, explanatory, and legitimating connotations. Evidently, this is so in increased measure in the case of biographical schemes. Biographical schemes are explanatory, legitimating, and normative "models."

It hardly needs to be stressed that both the "contents" of the biographical schemes and the communicative forms into which their "contents" are poured—most notably the oral and literary, everyday and religious and poetic genres—vary from society to society and from epoch to epoch. The range of variation is wide. Biographical significance inhabits such diverse notions as honor, dignity, sanctity, fairness, success, and self-fulfillment, and links them to essentially temporal categories such as natural, social, and individual seasons, feasts and liturgical cycles, and superordinated categories such as Fate, Providence, Salvation, Chaos, Cosmic Order, and Nothingness. Biographical schemes may be elaborated in independent genres such as legends, *vitae sanctorum*, etiological myths, confessions, diaries, and autobiographies, or worked into catechetical and other pedagogical subgenres (e.g., sermons and schoolbooks).

Ordinarily the word "biography" refers to a fully developed, historically and socially restricted literary genre in which the course of an individual life is narrated, written down, and published in some form. For my part, I am using the term in an extended sense to refer to any socially objectivated oral or literary scheme or model for the course of an individual's life. I think such schemes necessarily contain a narrative core, that is, a sequential arrangement of events and actions, and formulaic condensations, that is, typical ordinary and reverse telescoping.¹⁸ How such models become elements of the social stock of knowledge, how and to whom they are diffused, and in what kinds of communicative processes, whether they form independent genres or are fused into essentially nonbiographic genres, whether they enter socialization in pedagogical blocks or obtain a certain autonomy, all these are matters that vary from society to society and from epoch to epoch.¹⁹

Biographical schemes form the basis for individual projects of life, for the planning, evaluation, and interpretation of daily routines as well as of dramatic decisions and critical thresholds; they provide a scaffolding for partial and full reconstructions of a life's course for legitimacy, instructive, or other purposes. The categories and interpretive schemes by which human beings order their course of life prospectively and retrospectively—and in terms of which they reconstruct, narrate, and legitimate their lives to others and to themselves—are evidently not categories of inner time. They are categories that are somewhat removed even from the

structures of intersubjective, at least partly negotiable interactional time. In innumerable anonymizing and idealizing communicative acts they have attained the status of cultural objectivity and tend toward systematization.

Nonetheless, the temporality of daily life and the temporality of an individual course of life embedded in historical time are linked in various ways. In reflection and retrospection, in planning and projecting, in reconstructing and legitimating, biographical schemes are superimposed on the routines of daily life. The polythetically constituted sequence of many a day's experiences and actions can be thus retrospectively summed up in narrative formulae (of high evaluative content) in a manner that comes close to a monothetic grasp of them. On the other hand, both projects for the distant future and interpretations of one's past are necessarily inserted into the small-scale temporal articulations of daily life. Biographic schemes are particularly important as constituents of the *conscious* and explicit dimensions of personal identity. Its categories claim a high degree of objectivity—"this is the way it is"—and they retain a subjective reference point: they objectivate what to the individual is *his*, his unique sequence of experiences and actions, sedimented in *his*, his unique memory. In addition to those elements of an individual life that are predetermined by a social structure and those that are simply contingent, there are those that are the result of his own actions—and *those* are guided by biographical schemes that were internalized by him.

Historicity, Historical Consciousness, and a Modern Fissure of Time?

"Historicity" is a universal characteristic of human life in society. When individual courses of life become "biographies," when they gain contours by being situated in the transcendent time of institutions, by being inserted into ancestral lines and oriented with respect to (dynastic) successions in the body politic, individual actions no longer automatically serve to maintain or change a given social order. They *may* maintain it—as they may transform or even destroy it. Concrete situations are no longer determinants of human action (as they, in combination with genetic programs derived from a biogram of the species, tend to be in other species). The meaning of individual action is not encompassed by an individual's life span.

This much can be said about the anthropology of time without becoming enmeshed in the Heideggerian net of an (*Eigentlichkeits-*) ontology of being-toward-death. But even if historicity is a universal trait

of human life in society, what about historical consciousness (which, perhaps, is more closely connected to an awareness of mortality)?

Great historians, among them Jacob Burckhardt and Ranke, philosophers such as Jaspers, and even scholars familiar with preliterate cultures, for example, Mircea Eliade, have thought of archaic society as unchanging or, if they were aware of the fact that this is not so, insisted that only explicit and nonmythical knowledge of "origins," of change, and so forth makes for "true" historical consciousness. In fact, the ruling opinion was that historical consciousness is possible only in literate societies.

It is easy to show that this position is untenable and that it can be reduced to the absurd and probably unintended argument that history is an artifact of the historiographers. However, even if historical consciousness of some sort as well as the historicity of human existence can be assumed to be universal, it does not follow that different kinds of historical consciousness could not have developed. Everyone is conscious of the limitations of human experience and of human life and aware of the fact that life and experiences are embedded in something that transcends them in time and space. Furthermore, human beings everywhere acquire knowledge about their own finitude as they observe the mortality of their fellows. Nonetheless, such knowledge does not automatically scale down the potential of expectations to the measure of individual finitude. This is a problem for all societies, to which they have responded in different ways. Socially constructed models of restraint and resignation, as well as of small and great expectations and hopes transferred to other levels of reality, of individual and collective utopias and eschatologies, have dealt more or less successfully with this specifically and intrinsically human "fissure" of time.²⁰

Many different circumstances influence the social determinants of "historical consciousness." The structure of the social stock of knowledge (from simple to complex) and the degree of institutionalization characterizing the social transmission of knowledge (from age-grades to Babylonian scribal schools to modern education systems) constitute one important group of factors. Another consists of the repertoires of "historical" versus purely "fictive" genres of narration, commemoration, and so on that are available in a society, and the degree of differentiation of such genres. No doubt literacy is a particularly significant aspect of the "technology" of preserving and transmitting traditions, and it also changes the character of canonization and censorship, which, understood in a broad sense, determine the selectivity of tradition and thus of historical consciousness in preliterate as well as literate societies.²¹

It hardly needs to be stressed that all these factors and combinations of factors are at least partly determined by the general type of social structure in which they are operative. Hunters and gatherers (for example, the Pygmies of the Ituri forest) have a less clearly articulated sense of tradition than even the acephalous societies segmented along clan principles (as in some African tribes) for which descent and ancestral continuity may play an important role. Historical consciousness is more clearly articulated in societies with a central political institution (e.g., chieftainship). A particularly important, possibly qualitative change of the nature of historical consciousness occurs in the conjoint institutionalization of power and religion, as in the divine kingships of the Ancient Middle East and especially in Pharaonic Egypt.²² A shift of perhaps comparable magnitude occurs with the historicization of the future for which the basis was established in Ancient (especially exilic) Judaism and which characterizes the Christian eschatology and its secularized descendents in the philosophies of the Enlightenment, Hegelianism, and Marxism.²³

But this is a well-known story. I merely wished to reinforce the point that one variant of historical consciousness must not be taken as the only kind there is—nor be made the measure for the others even if their existence is halfheartedly admitted. Furthermore I think that it is precisely the clear understanding of the universal substrate of “historicity” in human action and of “historical consciousness” in the pretheoretical orientation in the world that helps us to discern and to interpret its fascinating variations and articulations.

Fascinating and, on occasion, perhaps fateful. There may be a line in our own tradition that leads from the *ars longa, vita brevis* of the ancients to the resignative sentence in Montaigne's *Essays*, “Le temps me laisse; sans lui rien ne se possède,”²⁴ to the modern invention of “midlife crises.” Hans Blumenberg devoted his latest book to a magisterial study of the continuities and changes in the Western experience of time. His findings cannot be easily summarized; the story is too complicated to allow for formulaic simplifications. However, one may represent his main thesis in the metaphor he himself uses: the gap between the two blades of the temporal scissors is widening—where one blade is the time of individual existence in the world and the other blade is world time.²⁵ It is unlikely that the scissors were ever completely closed. In this world human life is an intersection of diachronies—in fact, the identity of experience and action in these diachronies constitutes personal identity. But Blumenberg makes a very strong case for his thesis that in our present situation the time-scissors have opened wider than ever before or anywhere else.