The Cognitive Dimension of Narrative Discourse

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I. Introduction

1. Enunciation vs. Utterance [énonciation vs. énoncé]

Since Ferdinand de Saussure, European linguistics has tried to break its bonds with philosophy and the presuppositions of philosophy, so as to warrant its own autonomy and status as a scientific discipline. For this reason, it eliminated the concept of “thought,” too closely bound to the problem of mental activity and to the problem of ontological subject; it replaced the concept of “thought” by that of meaning [signification], better adapted for the analysis of this social phenomenon, language.

As is known, meaning—defined as the form resulting from the union of a signifier [signifiant] and a signified [signifié]—may be grasped and studied at two different moments [instances]: either (a) at the time of the language act, for which we shall use the term enunciation, when semiosis takes place; or (b) after this operation: the result of semiosis will then correspond to the actualized utterance, or statement [énoncé]. This distinction is comparable to a relation used in philosophy: the difference between “thinking thought” [pensée pensante] and “thought thought” [pensée pensé] is, in fact, parallel to the opposition (and complementarity) that we posit here between enunciation and utterance.

Inasmuch as one defines any “act” in general (and, here, a language act) as a “making to be” [un “faire être”] (a linguistic utterance in the present context), one can easily see that preliminary recognition of an opposition between doing and being (understood not in its ontological sense, but according to its semiotic acceptation), an opposition which derives from the duality of enunciation vs. utterance. When the linguistic act (or doing) is made explicit as such—in the form of a simulacrum (as we shall see)—we are dealing with a subjective type of discourse (e.g., autobiography). Inversely, if enunciation markers (such as “I,” “perhaps,” “it seems to me that,” etc.) seem to disappear in favor of utterances of states of being (corresponding to the mere ascertainment of the existence of things and their mutual relationships), then one will recognize a class of objective discourses (e.g., scientific discourse). Of course, at the level of concrete manifestation—for example, in a given text—any author remains free to play on one and/or the other of these two poles, since types or models—of an abstract nature—are never actualized perfectly...
as such. One can therefore conceive of two axes of research, different and complementary: a linguistics of enunciation and a linguistics of utterances.

2. The Utterance [l'énoncé]

An utterance, resulting from the language act and understood as "that which is uttered," may have the dimensions of one sentence or of an entire discourse. That is why, as an object of study, it will lead either to a sentence linguistics (such as is widely developed today throughout the world) or to a discourse linguistics (which, following the lead of sentence linguistics, must integrate the enunciative component: cf. "pragmatics" as defined by certain American logicians) whose need is making itself known in more and more fields. This article deals with discourse linguistics. Since we shall not attempt here to go into detail about the presuppositions and main formulations of this new approach (still being developed), let it suffice to say that, in our opinion, discourses—just as sentences—bear regularities or recurrences: at a subsurface level, discourses possess organization principles that make discourse what it is, although these principles are not always perceptible to the naked eye. Thus, generally speaking, we recognize that literary discourse—whether a poem, a short story, a novel, etc.—is organized by underlying narrative structures, among other things:¹ thus the term narrative discourse, applied to a class of discourse (without considering the question, still under study, of whether all discourses possess a narrative organization).

In addition to the narrative arrangement (the "grammatical" or "logical" form) of narratives that we have just mentioned, discourse linguistics also aims at the organization of the semantic component, which corresponds to the semantic investment (or charge) of the syntactic (formal) structure and is distributed—especially in the area of literature (written or oral) or historiography—as figures (as opposed to conceptual categories, used more frequently in other types of discourse—see below, sec. II.4—somewhat like the distinction between figurative and abstract painting). Here, we are dealing with stable units of content that refer to a formulation of the world and/or of experience (according to common sense, and not according to a scientific nomenclature such as botanical categories). These stable units are defined by their permanent kernel, and their virtualities are actualized differently according to context.² Figurative narrative discourse is what constitutes, essentially, the framework of our analysis.

3. The Enunciation

As for enunciation, it can be considered an instance where transformation takes place, transformation that goes from the (available) system, of a paradigmatic type (e.g., on the phonological level, all the phonemes of a natural language), to an utterance or to a syntactically actualized discourse. Here we shall distinguish between two forms of enunciation:
(a) True enunciation [énonciation proprement dite], as an act, is necessarily required by the actualized utterance, and therefore logically precedes it. Evidently, the subject of this enunciation is not—in our semiotic perspective—the biographical or psychological subject (who is interesting for the history or sociology of literature) referred to as “author.” From our point of view, the subject is but a virtual focal point (a space ab quo), or, more precisely, a logical subject whose enunciative act may be semiotically constructed from his present in the utterance, with the help of a corresponding logicosemantic simulacrum, totally independent of historical or biographical contingencies, springing from other disciplines. True enunciation, then, appears as a set of formal procedures that generate and organize discourse. As we shall show in the following pages, the exposure of these mechanisms does not imply a recourse to an external designatum (such as the “characteristic moments” of an author’s life, his relationship to society, etc.). Rather, it is totally dependent on the text itself, which may retain traces of the external referent.

(b) Uttered enunciation [énonciation énoncée] is, on the other hand, manifestly present in the discourse. Let us take, for example, the first sentence of A la recherche du temps perdu in which the autobiographical “I,” as a linguistic sign, seems to be superimposed over the “I” of the true enunciation: this shifter, according to Roman Jakobson, “designates the emitter (and ‘you,’ the receiver) of the message to which it belongs”; Proust’s “I” is an integral part of the text and, at the same time, it is supposed to refer to the producer of the discourse. Thus, the uttered enunciation can be located by specific linguistic marks (analyzed by Benveniste, among others)—such as spatial deictics (near, far, here, etc.) and temporal deictics (now, tomorrow, etc.), verbal forms, certain adverbs or evaluative qualifiers, etc.—as well as by the very organization of the discourse at the level of the form of content (such is the case with actorial shifting: the same “news item,” a holdup, for example, can be told from the point of view of the thief or of the victim).

Whether we are dealing with the classical nineteenth-century novel (Flaubert, Zola, Maupassant) that unfolds an “objective” discourse, or with an autobiography (e.g., Sartre’s Les Mots) that develops a “subjective” discourse, we still have a true enunciation, actualized by the enunciator (= subject of the enunciation). This language act, as such, cannot be verbalized: an author’s statement, “I was born in Paris; I . . .,” implies, hovering over this utterance, an “I am saying that” which is a linguistic doing (or act), always prior, which will never belong to the actualized utterance. As for the uttered enunciation, which passes as a simulacrum of a true enunciation, even if it cannot really be reduced to true enunciation, it does seem to characterize autobiography more than the novel. However, as we shall note later on, the novel’s “objectivity,” for example, which appears to be the contrary of the “subjective” character of autobiography, is only a pseudo-objectivation: the uttered enunci-
ation is at play just as much in both cases, although in a more or less disguised way.

In the framework of this article—where we consider “thought” from a cognitive point of view (in the sense by which one can say, “He is thinking about what he is doing”)—we do not at all intend to analyze the enunciative component exhaustively. In fact, we shall retain only one very limited aspect: enunciation as an arrangement of knowledge, that is, the production of knowledge, the mechanisms of its transmission and of its reception.

II. The Insertion of Knowledge into Narrative Utterance

1. The Evental Dimension vs. the Cognitive Dimension

From our perspective (that of narrative discourse), we consider the utterance as an evental representation, as a string of recounted events, bearing meaning. If the narrative is thus laden with meaning, it is because narrated events are not distributed haphazardly: they are, indeed, bound together, making up series and concatenations of finalized narrative programs, revealing a direction or an intentionality (recognizable as such beforehand and/or afterwards). What establishes them as meaningful programs is apparently the activity of the subject of the enunciation, which—both in fictitious narratives and in the field of historiography, for example—consists in selecting events and linking them together to form a coherent narrative. That is why, at least for the time being, we shall not speak of a semiotics of actions but only of a narrative semiotics, the only goal of which is the analysis of the descriptions of actions and of their concatenations, descriptions which are at the same time the place where events are organized into meaning.

Let us consider, for example, a person digging a hole in the ground or a man tying his tie in the morning. In both cases, the described gestural and somatic activity has meaning; it constitutes a sort of complete, finalized program (the goal of which is the actualization of the hole or the knot of the tie), which can be broken down into concatenated constituent programs (taking the spade, lifting it into the air, striking the earth with it, etc.). Until now the problem of knowledge (or of “thought”) has not been raised: we have a (first) autonomous level of meaning, which we shall call horizontal meaning.

Suppose now that another actor enters the picture and that he watches the first person digging a hole or the man tying his tie. By watching, he acquires a piece of knowledge that he can put into words (and, in turn, pass on to someone else): “X is digging a hole,” “Y is tying his tie.” He thus obtains a transitive type of knowledge, which can be opposed to reflexive knowledge (cf. below, sec. III.1, n. 7) semiotically defining “consciousness” (example: the man digging the hole thinks about the fact that he is digging a hole). Going one step further, we might propose—for the needs of our analysis—the concept of metaknowledge (= knowl-
edge about knowledge). *Metaknowledge*, in turn, is capable, syntactically speaking, of being transitive or reflexive, depending on whether one is confronted with knowledge about others' knowledge or knowledge about one's own knowledge. In any case, the acquired knowledge may be likened—from the point of view of narrative grammar—to an object that the subject possesses: there we recognize a relation describing a state, which thus places knowledge at the level of being.

However, the actor who watches the other dig a hole may begin to wonder why he is digging it, what he wants to do with it, etc. He then exercises a cognitive activity which thereby transfers knowledge from the order of being to the order of doing. From this moment on, a new narrative dimension develops, that of knowledge about events. The introduction into the narrative of the cognitive dimension, operated by the enunciator, brings about the appearance of vertical meaning, hierarchically superior to horizontal meaning (produced by the events and their sequence) on which it is grounded.

2. The Distribution of Knowledge

The introduction and recognition of knowledge in the utterance are accomplished by the actants of communication (*enunciator/enunciatee or emitter/receiver*), even if they are very often mediated by the actants of narration. It can thus be conceived that each subject of doing, inserted in a given narrative, carries out a particular cognitive narrative program through which—the enunciator willing—he is endowed with (or deprived of) a peculiar knowledge from which the enunciatee (reader, listener) can profit (or of which he can be deprived as well). Inversely, the cognitive subject may be different from the subject of the evental transformations (or the subject of doing) and of his narrative program, having simply the task of filtering knowledge about events for the benefit of the enunciatee (e.g., in a chronicle).

In this perspective, the knowledge of the enunciator, or emitter (= subject of the enunciation), will be called total with respect to the partial knowledge of the subjects within the narrative, with possible play according to the distance created between enunciation and utterance. We have noted above that this latter opposition would generate two classes of discourse, one of a subjective type, the other of an objective nature. At the level of knowledge, this dichotomy is found between the statements, "I know that . . ." and "it is true that . . .," in which knowledge is delegated (or displaced from the individual instance, "I," to that of the social group or the impersonal) in the form of an objectivated projection. From this point of view, narrative discourse is characterized at least by this pseudo-objectivation that attempts to erase the traces of the enunciator's knowledge to the advantage of the actants of the narration.

At the other end of the axis of communication, the enunciatee, or receiver (= reader, listener), receives knowledge either from the enunciator (directly or by the intervention of this actor, the informer: cf. below,
sec. III.3), or simply from one or another of the subjects within the narrative. One may go as far as to say that he can remain ignorant of the true knowledge (see below, sec. II.5) until the end of the narrative (e.g., detective novels). It is here that the problem of what is often called "perspective" or "point of view" comes in (and which corresponds to the generally fragmentary establishment of the subjects of knowledge).

The distribution of knowledge will prove to be even more complex when the enunciator and/or the enunciatee are inserted (or delegated) in the uttered narrative: we can then speak of narrator and of narratee. Thus, A la recherche du temps perdu introduces a narrator, the "I," who, although he is supposed to represent the enunciator, cannot be superimposed over him, since he is an actant who acts within the discourse, but does not produce it. In the same way, classical tragedy, through the use of dialogue, calls upon a narratee whose point of view does not necessarily coincide with that of the enunciatee, whence an interplay of possible perspectives. However, as long as these different roles appear clearly divided among the different actants, the analysis is relatively easy. Sometimes, however, especially in certain modern literary works, the analysis becomes much more difficult, and one begins to wonder who is really speaking. In this case, the complexity is often bound to phenomena of syncretism: for example, when the function of narrator or narratee and the roles of doing subject and of knowing subject are simultaneously taken over by the same actor.

From the preceding observations about a few possible relations (ample examples of which can easily be found in the field of literature), we shall particularly keep in mind that the fundamental axis of discourse is the one that goes from the enunciator to the enunciatee (\(=\) the two actants of the communication process): the knowledge-object passes from one to the other, either directly and wholly, or through the mediation of actants present within the discourse (which can yield progressive acquisition, bit by bit, of knowledge by the enunciatee). Whatever form the distribution of knowledge may take, we do not forget that the goal of any discourse is to make something known \(\textit{un faire savoir}\), a communication, and as such, it is an exploitation of ruses, a cognitive game, the analysis of which must render the rules explicit.

3. The Fiduciary Contract

Let us consider an elementary narrative and figurative sequence: for having vanquished the dragon, the hero marries the king's most beautiful daughter. Inasmuch as it is a slice of narrative discourse—borrowed from a folktale\(^3\)—this sequence is made up, by definition, of a regulated concatenation of events; as discourse, it is narration, relation,\(\textit{communication of knowledge}\) (about events and the order of events) addressed to the enunciatee (a knowing subject who receives and interprets the message).

From a narrative point of view, the structure of this sequence is organized according to the principle of \(\textit{exchange}\) (give and take) that is
easy to formulate according to the syntax of narrative grammar. Here, the principle of exchange is a narrative pivot point, dividing the narrative into two parts and permitting the passage from one state to another. It is the transformation without which there is no narrative.

As for knowledge about the events, it can be said that this knowledge adheres, in a certain way, to the events themselves and to the characters in action: both are what they appear to be, what the enunciator says about them; it is an unambiguous discourse. We are dealing here with a narrative without surprises, in which relationships between the actants of the narration are regulated by what we shall call a fiduciary contract, an act of trust, where no double-dealing can enter. In the example we gave, the exchange is characterized by “truth” (intrinsic to narrative: see below, sec. II.5), posited as such and of a common, tacit, and implicit accord, between the hero and the king, and shared by the tale teller and the audience. There is no distance between the events and knowledge about the events: such is simple narrative.

4. Knowledge as a Narrative Pivot

As long as the superimposition of both planes is complete and as long as it is perceived only as pure transparency, we remain in the sphere of simple narrative. However, the producer of the narrative, as we have indicated above (sec. II.2), can distribute the knowledge differently by attributing it (partially or totally) to certain characters and by depriving others of it. In this case, a gap or disjunction is produced between the acting subject (the subject of doing) and the knowing subject (the cognitive subject), a gap the sudden destruction of which can constitute an event of a different order, a cognitive event with repercussions and peripeteias, capable of generating a new string of events.

Take the well-known story of Oedipus. The first part of his life is spent in ignorance [le non-savoir], the second part in knowledge (about himself and about his previous acts: a reflexive knowledge or “consciousness”; cf. above, sec. II.1, and below, sec. III.1, n. 7). The passage from one part to the other corresponds to a transformation on the level of knowledge (of the subject about himself), which puts the narrative off balance and triggers a new narrative sequence. Whereas in the case of simple narrative, illustrated above by the example of the hero’s getting married thanks to his victory over the dragon, exchange constitutes the narrative pivot, in complex narrative (such as would therefore integrate the exchange structure into its first part) knowledge is what serves as a second pivot (hierarchically superior to the first: cf. below, sec. III.1.).

Thus, the distribution of knowledge in the utterance—actualized by the subject of the enunciation—must be considered in this case as a new organizing principle of narration.

5. The Cognitive Positions

We thus meet again with Aristotle’s famous “recognition,” the informative utterance that introduces a transformation of nonknowledge.
into knowledge (e.g., Oedipus realizing that he has killed his father and married his mother). However, looking a little closer, it can be seen that what we have just rapidly designated as "ignorance," or nonknowledge, is not really an ignorance of events or things, but a certain knowledge that is not "right," a type of knowledge that would consist, for example, in considering as existent those things which only appear (such as a mirage), and vice versa. The narrative pivot, of a cognitive order and called "recognition," is not the passage from ignorance to knowledge, but the passage from a certain knowledge (erroneous) to another knowledge (true). Take, for example, the well-known theme—developed, among others, by Albert Camus in his play Le malentendu—of the "murdered son": a man comes to an inn to spend the night without saying who he really is; during the night his hosts kill him for his money; afterwards, they realize that the visitor was their own son, who had left them long ago. From the point of view of the parents, the man they take in appears to be a stranger, whereas, in reality, he is their own child.

By thus taking into account the opposition between being and appearing, one can see that the knowledge of the enunciator, being projected into the discourse, can bring into view different cognitive positions, framing narrative segments that concern either the characters' doing or being:

- true ( = being + appearing)
- false ( = not being + not appearing)
- secret ( = being + not appearing)
- delusion or lie ( = not being + appearing).

With the help of these four categorial terms, it is first of all possible to characterize states of being and to determine thereby the truthfulness of the characters and events which will be true, false, secretive, or delusive.

But the problem is more complex since this formulation bears upon the specific doing, operating on the level of knowledge, which we shall call cognitive doing. Cognitive doing does not create pragmatic events, but "cognitive events" (see below, sec. III.2, p. 8), since it acts on knowledge and arranges knowledge. Given the fact that the transfer of the knowledge-object takes place on the sender/receiver axis (since it is communication, a making-to-know [faire-savoir]), cognitive doing, as we shall demonstrate in more detail below (sec. III.1), will assume two forms: on the
emitter's side a *persuasive doing* takes place, on the receiver's side, an
*interpretative doing*.

In both cases, the four categories brought out above come into play. In
the exercise of persuasive doing, they allow us to define those operations
and procedures that lead to the establishment of true, false, secretive, and
delusive states (e.g., hiding, lying, uncovering the truth, etc.). Cor-
relatively, they also serve in formulating interpretative doing, which, for
the receiver, consists in recognizing the truth, the secret, the falsity, or the
delusion. In the episode of the "murdered son," the persuasive doing of
the hero thus consists in dissimulating his true identity (his being) under
the misleading appearances of a stranger, age having rendered him un-
recognizable to his parents. By coupling being (= his condition as son)
with not appearing (= the absence of marks of filiation present in his
real passport, for example), he establishes a state of *secrecy*. From his
parents' point of view, however, this operation appears to be *delusive*
inasmuch as the man they take in outwardly shows the *appearance* of a
stranger, but not the corresponding being (since he is their son). Their
interpretative doing, deceived with the hero's arrival, will uncover the
truth through recognition (generally accomplished by a third party who
identifies the corpse).

It goes without saying that the four categorial terms identified above
can be defined as such only within discourse: the problem of truth, as
we treat it here, is totally independent of an *external designatum*
[référent]. By that, we mean that from a semiotic point of view the nar-
native establishes its own "intrinsic truth," for example, the one that is
implicitly posited in the case of our simple narrative: the exchange of
victory over the dragon against the daughter given in marriage is char-
acterized by truth. There, we have a sort of *internal designatum*, with
respect to which divergences can be typologized: falsity, secrecy, delusion
(illustrated in sec. III.1). In other words, the *cognitive dimension takes
as its designatum the pragmatic (or evental) dimension of the narrative
discourse.*

III. The Manipulation of Knowledge

1. Persuasive Doing vs. Interpretive Doing

In our example taken from a folktale, if the victory of the hero is
delusive, it is because we may be dealing with an impostor who, thanks
to his proofs of conquest, attempts to pass himself off (not being + ap-
ppearing) as the true victor (while the latter is, correlatively, in a state of
secrecy: being + not appearing). When the victory is thus presented as
delusive, the fiduciary contract between the two subjects (hero/king) is
broken: the *entire game of the deceiver and the deceived* is presented as
spectacle and, at the will of the enunciator, it can be inverted. Such would
be the case if to the true victory there corresponded, in the framework of
the exchange, a falsification at the level of the marriage promised as a reward. Thus, French folktales sometimes make use of a replacement of "the most beautiful daughter" by a "very ugly daughter," disguised under a very beautiful veil, who is given to the hero as he is told to take her without looking at her until the end of the ceremony, on the pretense that she is too shy.

In both cases, the delusive persuasive doing, while changing its place of origin, is addressed to someone: while being registered in the emitter/receiver schema, it calls for a correspondent interpretative doing. Inasmuch as narration plays on the two partners of communication (emitter/receiver) with, alternatively, their persuasive and interpretative doings, the narration establishes the well-known structure of the rogue and dupe (swindler tales) in which the two positions are interchangeable (defining man's fate as the eternally deceived deceiver), and the narrative endless. Everything happens as if each narrative sequence were supported by a cognitive structure that characterizes it, or as if narrative discourse could be decomposed into as many cognitive spaces.

We can make the situation a little more complex by supposing, for example, that the king sends a spy to watch over (= an informative doing, see below, sec. III.3) the struggle between hero and dragon. If the impostor forces the true hero to disappear and if he carries off the heads so it will be believed that he succeeded in the task, the spy's role will be decisive. From the king's point of view, it is a question of an interpretative doing which results in the acquisition of a true knowledge (cf. detective novels, which are completely dominated by interpretative doing and the discovery of the truth) which will allow the king to confound the impostor, that is, to reduce or negate the power [pouvoir-faire] that the impostor deceptively demonstrated.

Thus, the acquisition of true knowledge, as a narrative pivot, often provokes a new series of events, capable of unraveling on the cognitive plane, but also on the pragmatic level. In the latter case, we see a type of transformation by which the acquisition of (true) knowledge becomes, on the pragmatic plane, an augmentation of power [pouvoir-faire] (see below, sec. III.2). Correlatively, as our example shows, knowledge about a character implies a lessening of his power.


This last remark leads us to clarify, in a new light, the position of the cognitive dimension in narrative. As is already known, narrative semiotics differentiates in the dimension of events—or, more precisely, in the pragmatic dimension—between two components: performance and competence. We have noted that, from a grammatical point of view, narrative is defined as a succession of states between which at least one transformation is inscribed. From the point of view of the subject who carries out the transformation, it is translatable in terms of performance (equivalent to doing). The concept of performance naturally (and in-
dependently of Chomskyan linguistics) evokes that of competence. Indeed, according to motivation logic (post hoc, ergo propter hoc), the subject must first acquire a certain competence in order to become a performer. Similarly, according to presuppositional logic, the performance, or doing [le faire performateur], of the subject implies a prior competence to act. This is why, in a later development, narrative semiotics was led to interpret competence as a set of modalities of doing. Hence, on the pragmatic level, the introduction (the growing theoretical development from which they benefit today) of at least three fundamental modalities (among other possible ones): those of volition-to-do [vouloir-faire] (tension between virtualization and actualization); cognition-to-do [savoir-faire] (as “memory”—in the meaning of information theory and not of psychology—or paradigmatic recapitulation of past analogous actions: cf. “learning”); and power-to-do [pouvoir-faire] (alluded to above at the end of sec. III.1).

Now, what is thus brought to light by succeeding approaches, on the plane of the pragmatic dimension, can be found again on the cognitive level. Cognitive doing—in its persuasive and interpretive forms—can be likened to a performance and in turn requires a corresponding competence. If the false hero persuades the king that his victory is real, it is not only because he has the desire or volition, but also because he possesses a persuasive power-to-do (made figurative in the heads that he brings back as proof to back up his discourse) and, possibly, with a persuasive cognition-to-do characteristic of this deceptive play (a particular savoir-faire that defines the very role of the impostor). Correspondingly, the interpretative doing will also require the implementation of adapted modalities.

In this way, any performance—pragmatic or cognitive—calls for a corresponding competence. Thus, we can oppose not only pragmatic doing and cognitive doing, as we have done until now, but also pragmatic competence and cognitive competence: we then have an additional criterion, among other possible ones, that permits us to recognize the real autonomy of the cognitive dimension.

3. Forms of the Manipulation of Knowledge

In narrative, knowledge, as a narrative pivot, can be simply informative: someone makes something known, and the course of events changes. There we have an operational (and not real) concept that we posit in order to simplify the analysis: concerned with the simplicity and economy of the analysis (at least for the time being), we suppose that the informative doing is not modalized by the categories of true, false, secretive, or delusive. By once more taking into account the schema of communication and by recalling that it concerns the simple transfer of a knowledge-object, one can immediately foresee that informative doing—opposed to cognitive (persuasive/interpretative) doing that modalizes the transfer of the knowledge-object—can also be expressed in two possible ways. It is either emissive or receptive. The receptive aspect can be considered, in
turn, as *active* or *passive* (e.g., in French, oppositions of the type *écouter* vs. *entendre* [to listen vs. to hear] or *voir* vs. *regarder* [to see vs. to look at]). In our preceding example, the spy sees and/or listens ( = an active receptive doing), then goes to inform the king ( = an emissive doing). It is the same case with Oedipus who learns from the messenger that the man he killed is his father and the woman he married, his mother. Such an *informer*, very frequent in narratives, is an actor who holds the position of simple mediator between the enunciator and the enunciatee: he is simultaneously receiver and emitter of knowledge, like a television relay. His introduction into the narration corresponds approximately to what we suggest calling a *direct manipulation of knowledge* (playing a sort of *deus ex machina* role).

One will also recognize, next to this direct manipulation, a *manipulation by delegation* carried out by cognitive subjects within the discourse. By going from one form of manipulation to the other, the cognitive dimension clearly manifests its autonomy: it then seems separate from the enunciator, and operations on knowledge appear to be the work of discursive subjects. In Maupassant's famous tale "La ficelle," Master Hauchecorne picks up a "string," but noticing that he is being watched, he pretends to look for (and not find) some money. From that moment on, the pragmatic level will disappear in favor of what people think of his act. A cognitive exchange is established between Master Hauchecorne who seeks to persuade public opinion, while the society presents its own contradictory interpretation of the facts. Finally, the hero's death itself will cease to be pragmatic in order to become "symbolic."

Thus, what in the case of informative doing was a pivotal *moment* (the messenger speaking to Oedipus, for example) is developed here, becomes a sequence, a narrative (with its own communication actants). Given the polemical and communicative character of narrative discourses, the introduction of persuasive doing calls for a corresponding interpretative doing. Of course, as it is not unilateral, the movement does not stop there; for interpretative doing can be, in turn, presumed by the subject of the persuasive doing, who will take it into account in order to change or transform his own persuasion procedures, and so forth—a game that goes on infinitely and is established as such only on the cognitive plane, even if its point of departure (such as the act of finding a string) was of a pragmatic nature.

4. A Typology of Cognitive Discourses

Ultimately, the pragmatic dimension of narrative can be only the pretext of cognitive activities, as it is often the case in certain streams of modern literature. The proliferation—on the two axes of *being* and *doing*—of questions such as "What do I know?" "What am I?" "What have I done?" "How successful have I been?" "What can I do then?" etc., is on an equal footing with the atrophy of "what happens," of the pragmatic component. The expansion of the cognitive dimension in narrative discourses then serves as a transition between the *figurative* and the
abstract (between which there is no possibility of continuity). We thus end up with discourses apparently less figurative (or characterized by another type of figurativity) that can be classed globally into three groups:

—interpretative discourse, such as literary criticism, history as an interpretation of series of events, exegesis, art criticism (painting, music, architecture, etc.), and so on;

—persuasive discourse, such as pedagogical, political, advertising, etc.;

—scientific discourse, which overlaps with both persuasive discourse (with the subtle game of demonstration) and interpretative discourse (exploiting previous discourses considered as referential discourses), with true knowledge as its project and goal.

5. Cognitive Competence

We have noted that the autonomy of the cognitive dimension is actualized at least by the establishment of a distance, or gap, between the speech act and the series of “objective” events in the world (recounted events), correlatively with an apparent detachment from the enunciator. The recognition of this pseudo-objectivation permits us perhaps to clarify the hidden mechanism of the manipulation, beginning first with its manifest effects, that is, from the point of view of the enunciatee. For example, there is manipulation—in the psychosociological sense of the term—when the subject of cognitive doing (persuasive/interpretative), normally projected into discourse by (and referring to) the enunciator, becomes implicit for the enunciatee, which gives the impression of a truth that “goes without saying,” of “objectivity,” of something “obvious.” The disappearance of the manipulating subject on the level of discursive performance marks a clever withdrawal into the secret (and still practically unexplored) universe of discursive competence. As an illustration, and only on the level of persuasive cognition-to-do [savoir-faire], let it suffice to think of the “objectivity” of economic discourse that reads the “truth” from figures and statistics. Inversely, discourse in the first-person singular can be as subtle a form of manipulation inasmuch as, explicitly bringing in a psychological element, it attempts to create a false intimacy, foreign to the proposed goal. The allegation, thanks to the simulacrum of the uttered enunciation, of (individual) discursive competence allows one to render implicit (in part) the performance itself (and the objective that it achieves). It is perhaps the same situation with the displacement from “I” to “we,” from the individual to the social group, from the personal to the impersonal “they” [in French: on], as is the case, for example, in scientific discourse. Here, utterances states of being, telling the “truth” about things and their mutual relationships, generally appear detached from the cognitive operations from which they stem, for it is no longer performance or competence that is rendered implicit, but the subject of doing himself (with science then appearing to construct itself, unaided). Those are the many effects, from the enunciatee’s point of view, that are brought to the attention of the researcher and of his analysis.
On the level of the procedures used, that is, from the point of view of the enunciator, we believe that the manipulation of knowledge is carried out in two ways: either (a) the sender [destinateur] manipulates the receiver [hero, destinataire] and makes him a delegated subject (as we showed in sec. III.3); or (b) a subject manipulates the antisubjects. That is what happens, for example, in the Kriegspiel, or “war play” (and which can also be found elsewhere, as in many society games, such as chess), in which strategy makes use of the very reactions of the adversary in order to accomplish one’s own goals.

Thus, we see that it is most likely possible to construct a typology of cognitive subjects (with different doings that characterize them and the corresponding modalities), and eventually, as a future goal, to constitute a semiotics of manipulation different from (but linked to) a semiotics of action.

In the context of our own research (alluded to at the beginning of this article), it would be fitting to render implicit the analytical results of narrative discourses (considered as constituting performance) in order to elaborate correlatively a theory of competence (including a typology, but also all the rules of manipulation and of countermanipulation) of subjects, the cognitive dimension of which would, evidently, be but one of the components. As we have emphasized from the beginning (particularly in the last part of sec. I.3), the manipulation of truth is only one particular element of the enunciative act. In the meantime, we should be able to construct, in the form of simulacra, cognitive models found in competence capable of accounting for strategies of “thought” at work in all discourses.

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(Translated by Michael Rengstorf)

NOTES

1 It must not be forgotten that a poem, for example, is also structured on the phonological and prosodic levels.
2 Let us consider one example: the “ball” (= dance). This figurative unit contains several permanent semes (or minimal units of meaning at a given level). Without attempting to put forth an exhaustive inventory, we can point out—within the framework of our particular cultural universe—that “ball” implies /temporality/ (a ball is a reunion which lasts only a certain length of time), /spatiality/ (a ball is a place), /gestuality/ (dancing takes place), /sociality/ (a ball brings people together), /sexuality/ (a ball calls in man/woman relationships), etc. A given discourse cannot simultaneously exploit all of its components; it retains one or another, leaving the others in a position of virtual use, capable of being actualized later on in the narrative:
   /temporality/: “While his friend was at the ball, he went . . . ”;
   /spatiality/: “Crossing the ballroom, she noticed . . . ”;
   /gestuality/: “Because the ball had tired her, she . . . ”;
   /sociality/: “The ball gave him an opportunity to forget his loneliness.”
3 It is not surprising for us to take our examples from folklore and mythology,
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inasmuch as we are looking for universal and particularly simple narrative forms; in our opinion, it is only by beginning with such apparently elementary material that we can, with any amount of rigor, grapple with an area as complex as that of written literature.


5 From a grammatical point of view, narrative is definable as a (more or less long) series of states between which are inserted transformations, that is, reflexive or transitive operations (cf. sec. III.1, n. 7), insuring the passage from one state to another.

6 In order to prevent any ambiguity in our examples, we should specify that it would be wrong to identify cognitive doing with verbal doing and to put forth a distinction between a dimension of events and a dimension of words: cognitive doing takes place not only verbally, but also through gestures, behavior, disguises (masks), etc. Apparently, the signed, and not its signer, is what counts.

7 As we have noted above, the transfer of the knowledge-object takes place in a transitive or reflexive way, depending on whether or not the two subjects between whom the transfer takes place are distinct actors. In the case of reflexive doing, there is indeed syncretism of the two roles of emitting subject and receiving subject: such is the case of Oedipus who deceives himself. It is to be noted that, unlike written literature, folktales generally exploit only the transitive form.

8 In order to avoid ambiguity, when speaking of a dimension of the narrative, we shall henceforth abandon the qualifier evental [évenemential], of a generic type, for “events” are produced on the pragmatic, as well as the cognitive, plane.

9 Even an informative utterance such as “The earth is round,” which seems to be in a pure state (a sort of “degree zero”), entails at least one affirmation modalization.

10 On the level of manifested discourse, the scientist often disappears and makes way for the object (of his scientific “quest”), promoted to the rank of cognitive doing. Thus, just to give one of innumerable examples, we quote this sentence from Claude Lévi-Strauss: “The organizing principles of mythical matter are in this matter, and they can be revealed only progressively” (Le cru et le cuit).