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Life history, lived temporal facts and adult education

Issue 142 of the journal *Éducation Permanente*, published in 2000, contained a transcript of the discussions that took place at a round table entitled "What can be done with life stories? A look back at fifteen years of practice", which brought together Pierre Dominicé, Vincent de Gaulejac, Guy Jobert and Gaston Pineau. It is on this occasion that Pineau proposes to define life stories in the following way: "For me, the best definition of life story is 'the search and the construction of meaning from experienced temporal facts'", integrating the idea of meaning to the sensitive, the direction and the significant (Dominicé et. al., 2000, p. 237). It is from this definition that the axes contained in this text may be unfolded. It is from this definition that the axes contained in this text may be unfolded. In fact, it is a matter of thinking about the links between the narrative processes activated by adults in the context of life history sessions in training and the formative dimensions of this inquiry on the facts lived which is conducted in the first person perspective by the narrator. The reflection formalised in this article intends, therefore, to structure a theoretical framework whose challenge is to characterise the formative dimensions of the self-writing, from two aspects: the notion of what are "lived temporal facts"; the narrative composition of the autobiographical text. There are several stages to the discussion presented in this text: the first section is devoted to formalising the current trend of life stories in training, the aim being to specify the singularity of the approach, and to specify the place taken by research on 'lived facts' in this context of adult training. The second part of the text aims to characterise the notion of facts, then that of temporal facts, then that of lived temporal facts. In the third part, we will use the notions of narrative regimes and narrative kinetics to specify the effects on comprehension and self-education processes. The fourth and final section brings together and integrate the theories of narrative that have been invoked, examining them from a phenomenological and hermeneutic perspective.

The life story paradigm in adult education

"Training through self-narration" may be one way of characterising the singularity of life stories in training, both theoretically and methodologically. The point is to consider that narrative work, whether oral or written, generates formative effects for the subject who engages in it. However, in order to examine this proposition, we need to characterise what is meant by the term 'narrative', and then specify the processes associated with the training development of the narrator.

In the context of life stories, different types of narratives are activated, in succession: self-writing, expression of the narrative within groups, circulation of narratives and experience of reception, collective thematisation, etc. This succession of times is not produced at

random in the devices. It is part of a strategy aimed at gradually immersing adults in training in the work of storytelling. Immersing oneself in the work of recounting one's experience requires the narrator to give himself time to access the memories, to allow himself to be impregnated by the retentions that become present again as a result of the exploration of the lived experience during the evocation. These operations cannot be produced simply by volunteering (Ricoeur, 1949). In order to be achieved, they presuppose that learning takes place, so that gestures such as disengagement, the ability to remain available, the possibility of allowing oneself to be impregnated by the memory, can take place upstream of putting things into words and putting them into narrative. This narrative activity has been theorised as a test by Baudouin (2010), which is defined, in relation to the work of Bakhtin (2017), on the basis of three fields of strength: putting experience into words (1), putting lived experience into narrative (2), and accessing the narrative to the community (3).

Taking these three dimensions into account in thinking about the narrative work carried out in adult education training enables us to sort and classify the operations and sub-operations included in the life history approach.

Putting experience into words involves various gestures that must be performed and learnt: disengagement, evocation, awakening of the memory, presentification, semantic filling, lexical retrieval, etc. The transition from experience to language involves accessing memories (Vermersch, 1994), remaining attentive to the lived effects associated with the microprocessual awakening of retentions (Depraz, 2014), finding the way to name (Cance and Dubois, 2015), structuring statements, etc. (Depraz, 2014). making it possible to contain the experience in stabilised, meaningful terms... The performance of each of these operations mobilises gestures that need to be practised, accomplished, their mastery having the effect, no less, of generating an ability to transform the connection with the embodied experience which, from being passively sedimented, becomes graspable, expressive, thematisable.

This first field comprises dimensions concerning narrative research and is situated at the crossroads of experiential phenomenology and the language sciences. The second field concerns more specifically contemporary narratology and hermeneutic phenomenology.

Storytelling involves processes that are both compositional (Ricoeur, 1983) and narrative tension (Baroni, 2007). Composition, because, as Ricoeur points out, in order to appear complete, the narrative must integrate the major events and lived facts in the life story unit. Tense, because the narrative's diegesis includes a tonal and sensitive substance that must correspond to the experience of the lived experience that has been transferred to language and narrated as a story. Producing a first-person narrative therefore means, as far as the work of composition is concerned, accessing the facts of the experience, grasping them in their singularity, ordering them in time, then associating them logically so that, as Ricoeur puts it, a transition can take place: from the episodic to the logical. This process, which Ricoeur associates with plotting, combines temporalisation and configuration: the ordering of lived facts and the configuration of events in relation to each other. These processes remain dependent on wording the experience, which makes it possible to preserve the vital charge of the experience in the narrative text, which gives it its tension. We need to examine, however, what the facts experienced are, insofar as they are the objects of the work of temporalisation and

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configuration. From it, the narrator is expressing point of view, and therefore the modes of interpretation, on his existence and his way of living.

The third field described below has a social and political dimension. Indeed, it questions the places and spaces that open up the right to self-expression and, more broadly, the conditions of circulation of first-person narratives in the social world.

The story's access to the community. The third component of the test lies in the format granted for the socialisation of the story. The term format can refer to a material medium (the print medium, paper or digital), but also to the time available to the narrator(s). It also, and perhaps above all, refers to the attentional resource of the person or community providing the attentional experience, this resource being a factor in the capacity to take into account and understand the singularity of the narrative. This format can also be apprehended insofar as it is governed by what Foucault (1972) identifies as the taboo of the object, the rituals of the circumstance, and the rights conferred (or denied) to the subject who speaks. Access to the narrative thus seems uncertain, because of the elements that can potentially stand in the way: distraction, temporal urgency, prescription on what is to be said, etc. The possibility of a "true parole", from the subject's point of view, may be hindered or blocked as the composition asserts itself. However, the strength of the narrative depends on it, as the ethopoetic capacity (as a mode of transformation of the subject's modes of existence) is dependent on the expression of truth, from the narrator's point of view.

Examining the processes generated by narrative work, seen as a test, makes it possible to characterise the formative dimensions of storytelling, without, however, attributing mechanistic relationships to them that make it possible to predict the concretisation of effects over time. Indeed, although learning can be identified when an adult engages in a process of expression, description, oral or written narration of the story, the origin of this learning cannot be directly or strictly associated with the operations of composing or reviewing the self-narrative. What is generated by the narrative is not the acquisition of knowledge, but the ability to understand. From a hermeneutical perspective (Finger, 1984), this involves learning to question the narrative structures and habits of interpretation that organise the self-narrative, in order to open up the scope for interpreting lived experience, and thus gain access to understandings that have remained unnoticed, ungrasped, or obstructed by the forms of evidence that seem to have been imposed. This questioning can also lead to freedom from inherited discourses, as the subject emancipates themselves from the identities assigned to them by their history, background or social class (de Gaulejac, 2012).

Numerous parameters therefore deserve precise examination in order to characterise what contributes to the emergence of new understandings, the transformation of interpretation habits, and the evolution of the subject's modes of existence. For this article, the focus is on the subject's activity of composition, based on the identification of lived events, their temporal ordering and their logical configurations. This line of research, which focuses on the modes of

composition of the self-narrative, is not conducted independently of the processes of putting the lived experience into words, or of the formats that make it possible to express the narrative to the community. The main aim of this study is to focus on these processes, insofar as they form part of the current of life stories in training.

Temporal facts and narrative composition

As was said at the start of this text, Pineau's proposal for defining life histories in training is: "the search for and construction of meaning on the basis of lived temporal events". Three blocks can be distinguished: "the search", "the construction of meaning" and "based on lived temporal facts". These three blocks can be associated with the dynamics of narrative composition, especially in relation to Ricœur's theory of plot (1983). This involves a tension between two operations: the temporal ordering of lived facts (i.e. the operation of temporalisation); and the association of facts with each other according to a set of inferences whose logical connections can oscillate between the possible, the probable or the certain (i.e. the operation of configuration). In Ricœur's theory, then, there is a focus on lived facts insofar as facts are the organisers of the chronology of the subject's history. In other words, the facts of life constitute the temporal milestones that stand out within experiential continuity, and these moments of salience are constituted as elements that can be grasped in order to make sense of them.

However, several points need to be made clear. Firstly, the content taken into account by the subject in the life history work is lived experience. The addition of the term "lived" appears decisive here. Without it, the story could end up in literary studies, fictionalised biography or historiography. In life history work, the subject is led to remember and then to grasp the facts that he has experienced himself. So it's not a question of documenting the facts of the period using a historiographical approach, or inventing facts to augment history or imagine alternative scenarios. Rather, it is a matter of becoming aware of what is given in the form of significant facts and which, precisely because of this gift, influences and generates the work of interpretation that is part of the configuration and is accomplished in the constitution of the history from which the subject thinks of itself in time. As Ferrarotti (2013) points out, this logic of enquiry does not preclude, at a later stage, the crossover between lived experience and social facts.

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This differentiation between facts and lived facts clarifies the notion of research mentioned by Pineau. The search for meaning involved in grasping lived experienced facts can be thought of in relation to the dynamics of configuration as presented by Ricœur (1983). According to this perspective, the person involved in the work proposed in the life story sessions is led to become aware of the geography of the personal facts which form the ground for interpretation and which participate in the hermeneutics of the self. To be meaningful, this proposition needs to be examined from two angles: that of the notion of fact itself (1); and that of the ways in which facts are grasped (or selected) by the narrator (2).

As Françoise Lavocat shows in her book (2016), the precise definition of what constitutes a fact in narratology, psychoanalysis, cognitive science or literature is problematic. The same applies to the field of experiential hermeneutics from which life stories in adult education originate (Fabre, 1994). When the adults take attention to their lived experience, they get in contact with moments that appear with random precision and clarity. The exploration of lived experience, which can be thought of as a mode of first-person inquiry in which the subject engages in order to understand himself, and which takes place through the conversion of the view, is governed by a microdynamic process of awakening memory. This means that the narrator who turns to his or her experience is led to realise that he or she comes into contact with past moments of life when he or she makes himself or herself available, without to be able to lead these lived donation memory. In short, the facts of life that enter into the story are given with the force of evidence to the narrator who works with them during the process of interpretation and configuration. Similarly, the perimeter of the fact, and the boundary that separates it from the realm of fiction, to use Lavocat's terms (2016), appear to be neither clear nor definitive. The observation of these dynamics makes the firm characterisation of lived events problematic. Or, more precisely, it makes the boundary between the operation of temporalisation and that of configuration porous. In short, we can say that the work of wording lived experienced facts into temporal order, even if it respects the principle of succession (Brémond, 1963; 1966), which includes an historical dimension, is partly part of a logic of interpretation, since to select an event is to bring out a salience within the continuity of the experience.

Consideration of this issue, combined with the very definition of what constitutes an experience, raises questions about the processes involved in selecting lived experienced facts. This is relatively easy to improve it.

If I make myself available for recollection by thinking, for example, of a learning moment that occurred in the course of my life, several of these moments come to mind, in an apparently spontaneous way. From a certain point of view, I am led to consider that these moments appear to compete with each other. How, then, do I go about sorting out the facts, selecting those that seem to me to stand out the most? Should I capture them all? But where do I draw the line? What would be, to use a classic notion of forms of enquiry in the social sciences, the line at which the data begins to saturate?

The above passage aims to give an account of the complexity of the operation enabling access to the facts during the awakening of the memory, recollection and differentiation of the moment within experiential continuity. At this scale, that of the recalled moment, other factors need to be deliberated: what is the relevant time span for apprehending the experienced event? What level of detail should be used when putting it into words? At the level of the story, it is the criterion of completeness (Ricoeur, 1983) that is interrogated: in order for the narrative to appear complete from the narrator's point of view, there are facts that cannot remain on the margins of the story, as forbidden from the narrative. From this perspective, an unspeakable fact that cannot be put into words or made to make sense (Pollak, 1990) weakens the structure of the self-narrative, making it appear irremediably incomplete from the narrator's point of view. This criterion of completeness may therefore be constrained by the non dicible dimension of the events experienced. It may also be constrained by the format imposed on the narrative, the temporal compression associated with the biographical narrative regime (Breton, 2022) having the effect of limiting the number of facts that can be included in the story. What criteria should be used to decide whether a succession can take place, when all the facts cannot find the place they need, from the narrator's point of view, because of the necessarily constrained format in which the narrative is expressed? The format also has a constraining effect on the level of detail associated with the description of the facts, which may require, again from the narrator's point of view, detailed wording that is both aspectual (Adam, 2015) and profound (Petitmengin, 2010).

Making sense of the temporal events we have experienced therefore requires us to engage in a process of composition, which entails its share of trials and tribulations: grasping the key events, arranging them according to a principle of succession, integrating moments left out of the story, producing inferences, manifesting a logic. This dynamic of composition cannot be dissociated from the organic dimension of self-narratives, which must be thought of as living matter, or even as an entity with a vitality of its own. Baroni (2007), in examining the aggregating and tensional processes of expectation, curiosity and surprise, emphasises the strength of the sensitive insofar as these dimensions form the tonal and ambient foundation (Bégout, 2020) of the narrative, through which the composition produces an intrigue that inscribes the narrative as a human understanding (Delory-Momberger, 2009) integrating the logical and the sensitive.

Experiential phenomenology and the kinetic regime of texts

As already mentioned, in the context of life stories in training (Breton, 2019), support is offered to a group of adults in training so that they can experience self-narration on a biographical scale. To achieve this, the program is structured in phases, alternating between periods of theoretical and methodological input, periods of immersion in the narrative, and periods of expression and circulation of narratives within the group. A second sequence is also organised. Its purpose is to generate variations in temporal scales for the capture of experiences brought to language and integrated into the narrative.

The expression "temporal fact experienced" contains the notion of duration. The narration of a period of life covers a longer period of existence than the narration of a moment or an instant. Given a constant format for expressing lived experience, the fact that the narrator is led to bring to language experiences of varying duration means that he has to adjust his compositional procedures, and to realise that this variation in procedures has effects on the manifestation of the

experiential phenomena experienced in the narrative. It is this variation that generates the oscillations in the kinetic regime of the narrative, i.e. the phenomena of acceleration or slowing of the speed of the passage of time experienced during first-person narration. This variation in processes can result from a deliberate action on the part of the narrator, who decides to regulate the kinetics of the narrative according to criteria that are stabilised and explicit from his point of view, depending on what he considers relevant or decisive to convey in language.

However, a concrete examination of the narrator's activity in the context of a life history training session shows that the kinetics of the narrative are given to the subject in the form of a force of evidence, without the elements governing this gift being made conscious or thematised. This donation must be seen here as a force that produces a constraining effect on the mobilisation of the processes on the basis of which the composition of the narrative is organised. In other words, in the context of first-person narration, the narrator is moved by a force which, from a hermeneutical perspective, is quasi-destinal:

"Experience can be said, it asks to be said. To bring it into language is not to change it into something else, but, by articulating and developing it, to make it become itself" (Ricoeur, 1985, p. 62).

This destinal character can, however, be reflected upon from a hermeneutic point of view, based on the configured dimension of the narrative, the level of strength of the interpretative structures and the associated inferential dynamics. From this point of view, the narrator's involvement in the process of composition enables us to bring out, in a discourse or text, the version of the narrative that has been constituted with the "force of the evidence" from the narrator's point of view, a means in the course of experience, and which nevertheless generates modes of existence and ways of inhabiting the world of life. This process can be set in motion when writing or speaking, when rereading, or when receiving the life stories of others. It proceeds from a logic of rupture with the sedimented version, this rupture being made possible by the disengagement from the habits of interpretation that have generated a quasi-naturalised meaning that prefigures the modes of interpretation and participates in the structures of relevance of the world of life (Schütz, 1987). The emergence of a gap in meaning can therefore result, in the context of the "life stories in training" sessions, from the dialogical process associated with the experience of reception during the circulation of life stories. This breach can also be provoked by the variation of kinetic regimes, by the slowing down at certain moments, and by the entry into the regime of microphenomenological description during certain phases of the narrative.

The entry into a microphenomenological regime corresponds to a phase of the narrative that proceeds from an extreme slowing down of the speed of kinetic speed of the narration. Examples of this can be found in literature, particularly in Proust's writings, where descriptive passages are characterised by a quasi-suspension of time (Esnault, 2019). In the case of autobiographical texts, i.e. those written in the first person, this process of slowing down has the effect of extending the space given to certain moments of the life course in the text, with the effect of generating a

detailed description of these moments. These phenomena of kinetic variation appear spontaneously to the narrator. They can, however, be induced and then produced methodically. In this case, the narrator, in the course of his narrative, proceeds in a regulated way, in the course of putting it into words, in order to transfer to language the microprocessual and sensitive dimensions of the lived experience. This activity of regulated description (Petitmengin et al, 2015) has been documented in Vermersch's two main works (1994; 2011), and then in work on microphenomenological description (Depraz, 2020). It has been the subject of specific study, in relation to the 'strata' of lived experience (Petitmengin, 2010).

This practice of description, conducted in a regulated manner during the course of the narrative activity, does not have the exclusive function of intensifying the depth of the diegesis. Its function is also, and above all, to elucidate the preconfigured dimensions of the narrative that result from the inferences that generate the interpretive processes that underpin the narrative structure of the self-narrative. In other words, slowing down and detailing engages the narrator in the work of elucidating the interpretive processes that generate the meaning conveyed by the experience, and these processes may occur without the narrator's knowledge, i.e. without him or her resorting to any voluntary work. Describing, in this case, means suspending the system of interpretation that takes place along the way, in order to question and widen the range of possible ways of signifying the experience:

To describe is to put aside the formulation of the causes of phenomena in favour of an account of what is noticed. Hence the preference given to the 'how' rather than the 'why' or the 'what', i.e. the ways of being, the modalities of presence, the qualities of lived experience and the processes by which phenomena emerge (Depraz, 2014, p. 136)

For this description to appear in the narrative in a regulated way, it presupposes the development of narrative capacities (Breton, 2019). During self-writing, as Baudouin (2010) shows, the variation in kinetic regimes in autobiographical texts is spontaneously given to the narrator. It is therefore indicative of narrative tension: the testing of moments, the non-dicibility of experiences...). It is during the rereading period that the narrator can see whether he has decided to emphasise a quasi-unawareness of past experiences, by noting the ways in which he has been able to narrate, the space that has proved necessary for the narration, and the forms of organisation that have proved relevant to temporalisation. Conversely, to tell, to say and to describe in a regulated way is to establish, in the course of expression, whether written or oral, a dynamic of transformation of the rapport to experience. The ability to describe in fact generates this capacity for elucidation, not in the aftermath of the expression and socialisation of the narrative, but in the course of its refiguration during the constitution of the text.

Expiential fermeneutics as a paradigm for adult education

As it has been said, the life stories in adult education uses the practice of storytelling as a means of self-formation. It is part of the philosophical tradition of hermeneutics, and finds its contemporary extensions in the fields of experiential training, self-formation and Bildung (Fabre, 1994). The relationship between hermeneutic philosophy, narrative theories and self-formation has yet to be formally documented. Numerous works have been published on the place of narrative in the field of adult education (Dominicé, 2007; Pineau and Legrand, 2019; Josso, 1991; Villers, 2002), as well as in the field of biographical research in education (Deloy- Momberger,

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2005) and the clinical narratives (Niewiadomski, 2012). These works are the result of real-life experience for the researchers, observations made during life story sessions with groups of adults in training. They make it possible to establish a paradigm in education, training and research (Delory-Momberger, 2019). Studies are still needed, however, to characterise the processes involved in understanding, broadening the scope of meaning, and overcoming the habits of interpretation that preconfigure the narrative without the subject's knowledge.

"I will understand hermeneutics as a theory of interpretation, concerned with the operations necessary for understanding a text. Also, it is always good to warn anyone who resit a little lost here since the summary, and references to authors studied, I deal here with textual hermeneutics...." (Souza, 2022, p. 29)

This then leads him to specify the singularity of the hermeneutic of the self in the field of adult education and training:

Interpretation is, in the end, for Ricœur (2011), an act of self-understanding. The appropriation in the sense proposed by the author leads the reader to a hermeneutics of himself, a form of analysis by the subject of his existence, by inserting in the way he sees himself other concepts and other possible worlds as a horizon of possibility for existing. (Matos-de-Souza, 2022, p. 36)

Training from a hermeneutical point of view is part of a tradition that seems to run counter to conceptions of adult education that focus on the logic of skills, the acquisition of know-how and the stock of technical and procedural knowledge. The effects generated by the narrative are in fact to be located on the scale of understanding, i.e. the way in which the person makes sense of the experience over time, according to a longitudinal perspective, this making sense participating in a process of forming which takes place in one or more modes of existence. From this perspective, the reflexive grasp and elucidation of the processes involved in interpreting lived experience and prefiguring connections with experience have both a hermeneutic and an ethical dimension: hermeneutic, because self-understanding cannot be separated from the dynamics of inter-understanding with others, but also with the living world, or even the ecological environment as a whole (Pineau, 1989); ethical, because the training processes generated move away from the processes of adapting to the workstation, of acquiring knowledge alienated from a singular technique, to resituate the processes of making sense on the scale of existence. Experiential hermeneutics leads to a training process that lasts: the time it takes to acquire knowledge, the time it takes to integrate a practice, the time it takes to form a subject, the time it takes to affiliate and belong to one or more collective(s) or community(ies). The ethical dimension is also embodied in facts, lived temporal facts. From this point of view, despite the sometimes arduous vocabulary used, hermeneutics and experiential phenomenology have a concrete, embodied, incorporated dimension. This concrete dimension of hermeneutics is evident in the work of Ricœur (1986). It can also be grasped in phenomenology, notably in the work of Depraz (2012) and Varela and Shear (1999).

To conclude

The aim of this study was to clarify the place of 'lived temporal facts' within life history training systems and practices. To do this, it drew on theories of narrative rooted in hermeneutics, phenomenology and narratology. Engaged in sometimes heated debates with sociology for whom, notably according to Bourdieu (1986), biographies could neither constitute robust and valid research approaches nor means of emancipation from cultural and social determinants, the consideration given to contemporary work from experiential phenomenology and contemporary narratology appears to be little visible. Research that mobilises life stories as a means of qualitative research in the domain of the humanities and social sciences (Breton, 2023), or those that aim to characterise the forms of stories and accounts as a means of examining their effects from both scientific and formative perspectives, must necessarily be open to disciplines situated at the intersection of narratology, hermeneutics, phenomenology and even the cognitive sciences. There are still many areas to be studied, including the narrative unconscious activity, the rhythmic unconscious (Alhadeff-Jones, 2020), forms of description in the self- narrative, and the circulation of first-, second- and third-person narratives (Depraz, 2014b).

These disciplinary and interdisciplinary horizons can be mobilised in the context of narrative research, as in the field of adult education and training. In the context of narrative research, the crossover between training and research appears to be maximal. In the course of this article, it was pointed out that narrative constitutes a practice of the self, in other words a practice of self-formation mobilising narrative practices. It has also been said that narrative is a means of qualitative inquiry in the human and social sciences. However, it would be more accurate to say that narrative research makes the research and training processes inseparable. In fact, initiating research using narrative practices presupposes experiential knowledge of its effects, for ethical reasons, but also for reasons of relevance and effectiveness. Having an experiential knowledge of storytelling, of the processes involved and of the effects generated over time, means that it is getting possible to structure systems and to support others in their narrative work by adjusting to the flow of expression, of putting words into words and of narrative composition. Conversely, learning through storytelling means developing a familiarity with a mode of knowledge, including its logical and narrative structure, which has the ability to make manifest phenomena that are otherwise blind.

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