

## Ricoeur, a disciple of Greimas? A case of paradoxical maieutic

Anne Hénault  
École Normale Supérieure, Paris - France

Date of Submission	Date of Acceptance	Date of Publication
23-05-2020	29-05-2020	30-07-2020

### *Abstract*

In January 1963, Paul Ricoeur praised structuralism in Rome (Ricoeur 1963). In June 1963, during a confrontation with Claude Levi-Strauss that he had organised, on the premises of the journal *Esprit*, the same Paul Ricoeur entered into a violent rejection of that structural philosophy and then kept the same resentment seemingly forever.

At first, his anathema encompassed Greimassian semiotics until 1979 (see the famous Seminars of rue Parmentier on Narrativity and on History). Then, thanks to a period of private encounters and public debates with Greimas (1980–1989), Ricoeur radically changed his opinion about the achievements of Greimas to the point of not allowing him to step aside (outside?) of what would come to be known as standard semiotics in which he recognised an admirable device for explaining and, hence, understanding, more, the symbolic force of narratives.

**Keywords:** structuralism, semiotics, phronésis, narrative, intelligence

## 1 Introduction

A true friendship linked Greimas (1917–1992) and Ricoeur (1913–2005), to which bear witness innumerable references to “my friend Greimas” in Ricoeur’s texts from the late sixties to his *Intellectual Autobiography* in 1994. But a real dissymmetry is however to be noted in their intellectual exchanges:

- Ricoeur read, annotated and commented, very thoroughly in writing, some important texts by Greimas.
- Greimas, on the other hand, does not appear to have read Ricoeur; and apart from the very short article “herméneutique” in the *Dictionnaire I* (Greimas and Courtès 1979), it is well-nigh impossible to find any conceptual interest for Ricoeur’s work in the writing of Greimas, not even a reference to his name.

Three major public debates (1980, 1983, 1989) bear evidence of this dissymmetry: Ricoeur read Greimas and submitted his critiques to him. Greimas limited himself to answering Ricoeur’s philosophical objections, in Greimassian semiotic terms.

Ricoeur’s constant wariness vis-à-vis the advances of semiotic narrative seems therefore to have made him an attentive disciple of Greimas and even an excellent student, increasingly aware of the scientific scope of the methods of modelling meaning that semiotics was bold enough to found, whilst, to the end, Greimas was in the posture of a Master. A pleasing paradox confirms the dissymmetry of these postures as well as the depth of the friendship that brought these great thinkers together: we shall see how, when, during their last great public debate in 1989, Greimas seemed close to giving up this masterly attitude, it was Ricoeur himself who demanded that Greimas pull himself together and keep intact the rigor, the clarity and the magisterial distinction of his abstract procedures.

Why revisit this past today? Even if the cognitive events that will be mentioned already belong to History, insofar as they took place in between 1963 and 1991, they are of a compelling relevancy, to assist in bringing to an end the misinterpretation of semiotics as a structuralism.

The narrative studies of Greimas gave rise in Ricoeur, first to a passionate reprobation (the rue Parmentier seminars, 1976–1979), then, on the contrary, to an increasingly enthusiastic appreciation (1985–1991) and finally a vibrant palinode, an auto-criticism (1991–1993), of the misunderstandings that were

his, in the first period (1976–1979). The corpus of texts in which Ricoeur explicitly comments his reading of Greimas allows us to observe, step by step, how Ricoeur evolved, from his long proclaimed hostility (1967–1980) to a total approbation in 1991–1993.

Paul Ricoeur's evolution did not take the form of the constant progress of an erudite scholar, locked up in the silence of his ivory tower; rather the contrary, this "conversion" of the hermeneutist to semiotics unfolds like *a story full of surges and ups and downs, of sound and fury* of which I will just recall some episodes.

We shall see that there is no contradiction between the wrath Ricoeur reserves for structuralism and his slow conversion to the spirit of social sciences as embodied by A. J. Greimas. To do so, we will start by briefly recalling the chronology of the Greimas/Ricoeur relations, before dwelling on the precise critical point that led to some regrettable misunderstandings within the intellectual community.

## 2 Ricoeur/Greimas, chronology of an intellectual relationship

### 2.1 1963 Ricoeur's relationship to structuralism before meeting Greimas

Let us first recall the "primitive scene" at *Esprit*, which started Ricoeur's long war against structuralism (Ricoeur 1963).

In January 1963, during the international Congress on *Hermeneutics and tradition* in Rome, Ricoeur delivered and published his article "Structuralism and Hermeneutics" under the title "Symbolics and temporality", proving then to be already well acquainted with the core of structuralist theses and not far removed from adhering to this new school of knowledge: the text, joyful with cognitive expectations, was republished, under its new title, in *Esprit*, November 1963, 596–627, after having been submitted to Lévi-Strauss for the debate of June 1963 for which Ricoeur and the members of the philosophical group of *Esprit* had invited Lévi-Strauss to a discussion on his most recent 1962 book, *La pensée sauvage*. The group had just spent a whole year of attentive readings, debates and critiques for the preparation of this summit meeting.

Let us dwell for an instant on the atmosphere of the June 1963 session, in the run-down premises of *Esprit*, rue Jacob in Paris. The transcription of the Lévi- Strauss/Ricoeur debate, published, apparently *verbatim*, in *Esprit* 322, November 1963, allows one to perceive how this session dedicated to *La pensée sauvage* (which, like all books by Lévi-Strauss, at the time, met with enormous success in the media) was not long in veering into a sort of slanging match between Claude Lévi-Strauss and Paul Ricoeur (backed up by 9 remarkable assessors fully armed, from head to toe, after the year of debate and reciprocal explanations they had devoted to *La pensée sauvage* in these same premises).

As he was constantly to do later on, in his encounters with other well-known scholars including Greimas, Ricoeur had strategically steered his written mani- festo and his oral intervention towards the idea that a Yalta type division should be made between the field allotted to structuralism and the field of hermeneutical interpretations. Nonetheless the whole would finally be required to be included under the banner of the reflexive philosophy that Hermeneutics constituted for him.

Lévi-Strauss disdainfully thrust aside (p. 634) “this sort of deal that is offered to me of a field where structural analysis would reign alone, in exchange for another where its powers would be limited”. He exposed the subjectivism of Hermeneutics (p. 637), refused to “link the notion of discourse and the notion of person”, and admitted to be seeking as an object of study “a discourse for which there is no personal issuer, a discourse that one gathers up like a little known tongue whose grammar one endeavours to establish” (p. 640).

In stark contrast to the joyful and inviting enunciation of his “*Structuralisme et Herméneutique*”, the last words uttered by Ricoeur resound like a kind of imprecation:

I rather thought that this Philosophy [a sort of materialism L-S has just admitted] would enter the field of your work, where I perceive an extreme form of modern agnosticism; for you, there is no “message”: not in the sense of cybernetics, but in the kerygmatic sense; you are in despair of meaning (...). You save the meaning, but it is the meaning of non-sense, the admirable syntactic accommodation of a discourse that does not say anything. I see you in this conjunction of agnosticism and of a hyper-intelligence of syntaxes. You are both fascinating and disquieting.

This violent disagreement about focalisation upon a grammar of meaning not immediately linked to personal subjects and attributed first to the social subject, added to Lévi-Strauss's public refusal of any form of cooperation with Ricoeur, left a permanent and definitive resentment in Ricoeur's future formulations regarding all that resembled research on immanent structures. This resentment appeared first as an open conflict all through the years 1966–1967, then, as dis-trust, coupled with permanent contempt for any assertions by Lévi-Strauss all through the three volumes *Time and Narrative* (Ricoeur 1984, 1985, 1988), and right up to *La Mémoire, l'Histoire, l'oubli*, published in 2000 (Ricoeur 2003), where Michel de Certeau, another anthropologist with a structuralist background, is rehabilitated by Ricoeur but Lévi-Strauss certainly is not.

For their part, during the same period (the biographers of Ricoeur, Olivier Abel 2004 and François Dosse 1997, insist on this fact) the schools of Althusser and of Lacan, in the name of a scientificity that they purport to embody, passed off Ricoeur's Hermeneutic as spiritualist ideas definitely out of date. The result was a temporary disrepute that, at the top of the structuralist wave, deeply touched Ricoeur.

## 2.2 1963–1980: Fulminations against structuralism

The intellectual climate (dominated by the series of “Maîtres à penser” such as Lacan, Foucault, Althusser, not forgetting Lévi Strauss, or Barthes, Greimas and Dumézil, all very pugnacious, who were then reigning) had brought upon Paris this paradoxical “structuralist” fashion, totally unclear about what is to be understood by the term “structure”.

As a consequence of this climate, Paul Ricoeur withdrew from Paris and waged a bitter contest against what he has qualified himself as the dangerous philosophical and moral nature of structuralism, embodied in his eyes by Lévi- Strauss and his followers:

He teaches for three years at Louvain, in this temple of Phenomenology that houses Husserl's Archives. And especially in the United States where he seizes the opportunity to offer philosophical answers to the dead ends characteristic of the structuralist paradigm that still dominates France's intellectual landscape (Dosse 1997, Abel 2004).

The nascent semiotics of Greimas (1966, *Sémantique structurale*) was immediately caught up in Ricoeur's condemnations, but to a lesser degree: as soon as *Sémantique structurale* was published, Ricoeur criticised the structural aspects but took pleasure in dabbling with the concept of isotopy whose simplicity allows resolution of so many ambiguities. However, the positions he took up, afterwards at his seminars, rue Parmentier on narrativity and later on history (1976–1979), were a direct and ferocious invitation to rise up against Greimas and his Semiotics.

### 2.3 1980–1989: Direct public exchanges Ricoeur/ Greimas

But, in 1980, a direct public encounter was organized by some protestant intellectuals, amongst whom Marie-Louise Fabre and Françoise Bastide, Paul Ricoeur delved into a chapter of *Du sens* (1970) "Elements of a narrative grammar" (pp. 157–183) which he commented on in the document bearing the title *Herméneutique et sémiotique*, written to introduce this debate on "the abstraction of the text practiced by you, semioticians" (op.cit. p.VIII). This first public debate between Greimas and Ricoeur is a real confrontation. Each one claims to draw the other onto his own terrain and to ensnare him with his net of concepts: "I am engulfing you", one often hears repeated on each side. Then, as a result, still in 1980, Ricoeur sends to the semioticians his famous "La grammaire narrative de Greimas" (Ricoeur 1980b), a heavy, detailed analytical and critical study of the elementary structures of meaning as elaborated in *Du sens*. Even though the hermeneutist shows himself to be quite taken up by the clarity and operativity of certain semiotic concepts, he remains cautious and does not then imagine introducing these concepts into his own intellectual apparatus and even less so in his hermeneutical practice.

The same text, greatly abridged and entirely recomposed reappears under the title "Greimas's narrative Semiotics" in *Time and Narrative II* (1985). This version is followed by an extremely laudatory reading of *Maupassant, La sémiotique du texte* (Greimas 1976). According to Ricoeur, from *Structural Semantics* to this *Maupassant*, Greimas's narrative venture is led by the ambition to build a strictly achronic model. *Du Sens* and *Maupassant* have strongly radicalised this logical "parti pris". "The stroke of genius, one may well say, is to have sought this already articulated character in a logical structure as simple as possible, that is to say "the elementary



structure of meaning” (Ricoeur 1980b: 77). And Ricoeur comes to this conclusion: nowhere does Greimas come closer to turning linguistics into an algebra of language.

This theoretical radicality gives Paul Ricoeur a dazzling, true revelation and an intense intellectual pleasure, the more so that, according to him, Greimas has managed in the same movement to reintegrate into his modelisation some elements essential in the eyes of Ricoeur such as

- adjunction of temporalizing structures such as inchoativity/terminativity, durativity /punctuality, iterativity, and tensivity, in practice introduced at the discursive level.
- indexations of moral values invested in the narration thanks to the semiotic square, etc.

According to Ricoeur, all these adjuncts “loosen the logical model of semiotic narratology without bursting it apart.”

This extremely synthetic and scrupulous presentation, worked out from a drastic recomposition/reconfiguration of the texts provided to the semioticians during 1980, tends to discover through this evolution of the theory many concessions to the fundamental preoccupations of Hermeneutics. This acknowledgment brings about a change of affective tonality just as categorical. The plodding dysphoria of *Grammaire* (1980) becomes the vibrant euphoria of *Time and Narrative II* (1985).

Finally, the period 1980–1989 sees Ricoeur increasingly taken over and convinced by the rationality of semiotic research. Some indisputable proofs of this fact are provided by his texts of 1989–1991.

## 2.4 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1989: The last public debate

On 23 May 1989, A. J. Greimas and Paul Ricoeur agreed to take part in a dialogue (in the programme I direct at the Collège International de Philosophie – cf. Henault 1994) on the manner in which semiotics of the passions could rationally connect up with the semiotics of action, elaborated so far. This debate attracted a very broad audience. Once again, Ricoeur placed his interlocution with semiotics under the banner of the hermeneutic category /explain/vs/understand. Having recalled the various texts he had devoted to presenting semiotics, always in a critical though increasingly positively critical

mode, Ricoeur concluded the first part of this debate (Ricoeur 1990: 201) with the words: “It is therefore this acknowledgement that I offer you”. This expression takes on an extremely strong meaning and can be made clear in the light of Ricoeur’s last writings, among which is *Parcours de la reconnaissance*, published in 2004.

As usual Greimas answers, exclusively on his own ground, mentioning “the interrelationship of the semiotic group, its convivial research and, lastly the “problem of meaning”; then, finally, a most modest evocation of his life that nonetheless provides a personal, private, intimate and very warm touch to this debate. Greimas had never given way to such outpourings in public encounters. That day, he abandoned his usual very specialised and abstract language, for an extremely simple and emotional language, which led him to give an image of proximity and effectiveness to his vision of passionate processes. What was experienced during this last encounter?

For Greimas, the bliss of making himself understood exactly on the level he wished, with neither haste nor pressure, in a friendly atmosphere, stripped of the common solemnity of ordinary scientific confrontations. Ricoeur (1990: 200) had first expressed an unreserved admiration:

I attach great importance to the Maupassant; for me, it is a major book; one can affirm that the text is respected to the degree that there is not a word, not a scansion that are not justified – and here I say that, thanks to the explanation, I discover something I would not have understood in a simple, ordinary, reading, especially the famous catch of fish offered by the dead, or rather that the non-dead offers to his enemy. Is that not a miraculous draught of fish? Thus there is a sort of mythisation that one can only bring out with the semiotic square of veridiction – it is as if we have a kind of productivity here of the explanation that makes me say that I understand better having explained more.

But, after the response of Greimas, Ricoeur plies Greimas with questions on the subject of *Sémiotique des passions*. Far from appearing reticent or still opposed to the achronic and logical epistemology of semiotics, as had been so often the case in the past, Ricoeur’s querying is in exact agreement with Greimassian epistemology under its most logical, articulate and distinctive aspect. Ricoeur calls on Greimas to tell him how he will maintain the dazzling simplicity, coherence and rationality of his theory while venturing on the unstable and labile territories of the sensitive. Then, displeased with the weak answers he gets from Greimas, not demonstrative or systematic enough to his



taste, he does not hesitate to take him to task: Ricoeur thus orders Greimas to be more Greimassian.

## 2.5 1990–1991: The tribute to Jeanne Delhomme

That said, the comment that is most absolutely free from any restriction devoted by Ricoeur to Greimas, the real certificate of rationality awarded to semiotics by Ricoeur is to be found in a somewhat confidential document: “*Contingence et rationalité*”, an article in the volume of tributes to Jeanne Delhomme in which Paul Ricoeur affirms unreservedly the rationality reached by the semiotic work lead by Greimas:

Narratology is a relatively recent science (...) applied to the deep structures of narration, that is to say the codes that preside over the transformations from an initial state of things to a terminal state of things, which is finally the matter of all narrations. My thesis here is twofold: on the one hand I hold the narrative enterprise for perfectly legitimate, especially in the structural versions of Greimas and his school of thought today in France; on the other hand I hold that that enterprise (and those that are related) can ultimately only be justified as a simulation of a prior narrative intelligence. Thus narratological rationality is one of a second degree discourse, of a metalanguage grafted onto the understanding that, as children, we had of what stood as a story (Ricoeur 1991: 179).

This short auto-summary of the relationship of Ricoeur to narrative semiotics praises as the emergence of a new rationality, totally unknown till then, the semi-otic meta-language; that day, Ricoeur was addressing the hyper-rational corporation of the most representative philosophers of the French school of philosophy and in memory of an admirable philosopher, who was also an actor of his own *bildungsroman*, Jeanne Delhomme, his contemporary, recently departed when he wrote this text in her honour, for the volume *d’Hommage élaboré par*, her disciples and by the Société de Philosophie de Paris. Delhomme was a friend from his youth; he met her at Gabriel Marcel’s Friday gatherings (les Vendredis) during the first years of his own academic training (1934–1935). This fact added to the solemnity of this publication; the depth and the value of a personal appraisal, at an age when one jests no more with one’s own truth and when one commits oneself before what may be already perceived as one’s own irreversible eternity.

## 2.6 1993–1995 : Ricoeur's recantations and palinodes

On the one hand, one finds in these pages of *Réflexion faite* (1995), in extremely courteous terms, a meticulous distinction between structuralism as an ideology or philosophy and structural analysis as a well delimited technique “legitimate and fruitful adapted, each time, to a well bounded field of experience”; this distinction was becoming established and discussed during the 1963 happening and Greimas himself had always been in full agreement with it. This distinction reappears in this self-portrait of 1995, to the benefit of Greimas.

One sees that the misinterpretation of Greimas vanished for Ricoeur as soon as he accepted that, even in the domain of significations, one had to distinguish work on general laws and structures (which is characteristic of/characterises any science) from structuralism which was a trendy word, forged essentially by the media, in order to designate a series of very important researchers, belonging to different domains of Human Sciences during the 1960s. In any case, most of these researchers did not accept for themselves this designation and they never constituted a group of thought recognisable as such. On the other hand, in “taking up” this self-portrait at the time for appraisals, Ricoeur re-qualified his 1967–1979 anti-structuralist anathemas and described as follows, his own evolution:

I strove to eliminate from my own conception of the thinking, acting and feeling subject, all that might make it impossible to incorporate into the reflexive operation a phase of structural analysis. There was nothing circumstantial in this auto-criticism: already, in my essays on Husserl following the translation of *Ideen I* – essays gathered together later on under the title “À l'école de la Phénoménologie” (1986), I distanced myself from an immediate consciousness of oneself, transparent to oneself, direct and argued in favour of a detour through signs and works deployed in the world of culture (Ricoeur 1994b: 19).

In his obituary for Greimas, he is even more explicit and less cautious:

The 1963–67 conflict revolved, then, around the question of the subject, ill treated, (or so one thought), by those named, in a global and encompassing sense, “structuralism”, under the banner of whom polemics placed confusedly Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Barthes, Foucault and finally Greimas. The subject supposedly saved by Phenomenology and Gadamerian hermeneutics to which I was perceived to be attached, every structuralist was, by definition, enemy of the subject. It is this

conflict, in the end rather sterile, that I attempted, if not to arbitrate, at least to move, temporarily placing in brackets the question of the subject, the principle topic of the dispute. I then questioned, with the help of the Greimas of Structural Semantics (1966), the epistemological presupposition on which was generally fixed the advocacy in favour of the subject, i.e. the opposition going back to Dilthey between understand (Verstehen) and explain (Erklären). The opposition could only stand if to explain was considered a prerogative of the sciences of nature, and to understand, a prerogative of sciences of the mind. Linguistics, since Saussure, Hjelmslev, Jakobson, etc. had ruined Dilthey's dichotomy by introducing explanation to the core of the sphere of language, however in a form no longer causal or genetic, but structural. It is at the very heart of the famous sciences of the mind that to explain and to understand should be innovatively brought together. That is how I found in Greimas less and less an adversary and more and more an ally (Ricoeur 1993: 48).

### 3 Misunderstandings in contemporary narrative studies

#### 3.1 Phronesis vs théorétique

This is how Paul Ricoeur contrived little by little to escape from the intellectual dilemma into which, in his youth, the obliged opposition imposed by hermeneutics between the arid demand *to explain* of the sciences of nature and the generous encouragement *to understand* of the sciences of the mind had locked him. The 1991 text that we have mentioned regarding Jeanne Delhomme luminously demonstrates the manner in which Ricoeur came to consider the opposition 'phronetic intelligence versus theoretical intelligence' as a radical posing, hierarchically superior to explaining and understanding.

The art of storytelling has the virtue of teaching (...) the virtue of revealing one of the universal aspects of the human condition. It *"develops a kind of intelligence that may be called narrative intelligence and which is much closer to practical wisdom or moral judgement than science or more generally the theoretical use of reason"* (...) It is thanks to the familiarity that we have contracted with the modes of setting intrigue received from our culture that we learn to link these virtues or better still the excellences to good fortune or misfortune. *These "lessons" of poetry (understood as the art of story telling) constitute the universals mentioned by Aristoteles: but they are universals a degree below those of logic and theoretical thinking.* We must nonetheless speak of intelligence, but in the sense however that Aristoteles gave to Phronesis (translated by

the Latins as *prudentia*). In this sense, I shall talk about phronetic intelligence, as opposed to theoretical intelligence” (Ricoeur 1991: 178, my italics).

We see how, in order to comment on the art of storytelling, Ricoeur renews with the aesthetic considerations, the *aesthesis*, a major pole of the philosophic research of his friend Mikel Dufrenne. For him, ethics uses this esthesia provided by the pleasures and seductions of storytelling in order to teach the indispensable art of *bien vivre*. However, if *Phronesis* is the domain he assigns to narrative poetics, Ricoeur does not for one instant lose sight of what he categorically opposes to this practical intelligence that is to say the *theoretical intelligence* that narrative semi-otics had started to apply not only to storytelling but more widely to the entire field of living expression.

Linguistic semiotics (Hjelmslev, Greimas and so many other members of the European School of semiotics) had started responding to the scientific challenge of Saussure through a rationally structured method. By contrast, hermeneutic reason, embodied by Ricoeur until 1980, first set the task of reclaiming the “life experiencing” (“le vécu”) that it considered structuralism had fatally evacuated. But, at the same time, Ricoeur saw himself as increasingly dependent on the scientific meta-language of semiotics to better “explain” in order to better “under-stand”.

### 3.2 The last Master

The new *episteme* (Michel Foucault’s vocabulary) alias *epistemia* (Jacques d’Hondt’s vocabulary) that was appearing in the world during the second half of the XX century, through the scientific quality that human sciences were progressively acquiring, was received very differently by the two friends. In Volume III of *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur proclaims that it is necessary to “Renounce Hegel” and welcomes the mutation of the world, the new spirit, the new rationality that was developing. He had sufficient knowledge of the history of the intellectual world to know that this would mean the rising up of totally new schools of thought. He also knew that the burning feeling, then the confused perception, *experienced* rather than felt, of the new horizons of thought, would probably be met by the answers of a Master who, as Hegel said, precisely should come neither too early nor too late.

In the manner of the rustic that he pretended to be, A. J. Greimas advanced alone, and founded in Paris a real School, subject to often violent sarcasms and attacks, like it was the case for Hegel storming Berlin's Humboldt University in 1818. As soon as he was able to return to Paris, *first in writing* in 1956, with his famous article "*Actualité du Saussurisme*" and *then, in person*, back from Turkey, with his seminar on *Structural Semantics* at Institut Henri Poincaré, in 1964 (after his appointment to Poitiers University), Greimas took on, immediately the intellectual stature of a Master. He adopted the appropriate firm tone and started coining and explaining the new concepts implied by Saussureanism, as well as moulding around him appropriate minds capable of prolonging the task upon which he was embarking. He was not the sort of professor who, one day, recited to his students Aristotle's doctrine and, the next day, that of Kant according to the appointed academic curricula. Past a certain age, Greimas only taught Greimas, i.e. very novel concepts as well as very honed, most elaborate, epistemologically: he purported to bestow on them scientific reliability, following a series of dazzling rational experiences that he owed particularly to Saussure, to Gestalt Theory and to the symbolic writings of Reichenbach. At least, those were the masters he wanted to acknowledge, adding, for good measure, Descartes, Nietzsche, Blanche, Bachelard and Raymond Ruyer (cf. Greimas 1966).

By contrast with his friend, Dumezil, who steadfastly refused to be bothered with disciples, A. J. Greimas was obliged, by the radical novelty and by the deep abstraction of the notions he had to develop, to found a school and to really become its Master *infatigable*. It was in tune with the times; we will not mention Foucault, Althusser, Derrida, Deleuze, or Levi-Strauss, whose brilliant schools have, now, more or less been dispersed. But we must mention Ricoeur, himself, who became step by step, an authentic Master too, whose numerous disciples deeply adhered to his feeling for phronesis without necessarily taking into account the prudence of this Master regarding the developments of truly rational knowledge, that he designates either as *science* or as theoretical intelligence.

If these followers, notably amongst the ranks of narrative studies, having superficially read *Time and Narrative*, felt they were authorised to ignore

semiotic reason, Ricoeur himself provided them with a very different example. The Master of *Phronesis*, recognized in Greimas a Master of *Logos*, Master of pure reason and therefore Master to himself, Ricoeur. According to his own rating, both received from his professors and from his own rational experiencing, he publicly acknowledged that there is a semiotic reason exactly as there is a logical or a mathematical reason and that, on the one hand, this *theoretical intelligence* is more universal than *phronesis* and on the other hand, that it is capable of going further than hermeneutical reason, on the path of discovering, explaining and understanding significations.

His boundless respect for the progress of knowledge led Ricoeur to understand deeply A. J. Greimas's achievements. Before Greimas, his Master, younger than himself but deceased much before, Ricoeur consented to throw in the towel, i.e. to change his mind and learn a new way of thinking. Ricoeur's integrity, the way he conquered for himself this new rational domain, acquired, after more than thirty years of a resistance made of questions, doubts and criticisms, should be a lesson for many *néo-narratologists*, (or rather *narratologists* as they are so far of any *logos*) who confine themselves in *phronetic intelligence* and who disrepute drastically the *theoretic intelligence* of narrative semiotics.



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