

Social Time, Fact or Fiction? Several Considerations on the Topic

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Abstract In 1937 P. A. Sorokin, together with R. K. Merton, published an essay entitled *Social Time: A Methodological and Functional Analysis*, in the *American Journal of Sociology*. They noted that most social scientists share in a silent assumption about the use of the astronomical concept of evenly flowing, quantitative time, and maintained that the astronomical concept of time has a number of shortcomings when applied in the social sphere, so they tried to promote the concept of "social time" as a methodological tool, to lead to a deeper understanding of social periodicity. Since then, the concept of social time has become settled in sociology and social sciences and been the subject of various reflections. This paper examines the problems associated with its use.

Keywords Sociological Theory, Time, Social Time, Qualitative Time, Time Arrow

The concept of social time emerged in 1937 when Pitirim A. Sorokin and Robert K. Merton published in *the American Journal of Sociology* an essay entitled *Social Time: A Methodological and Functional Analysis*. This still represents one of the key works on the subject. The authors observe that most social scientists share in a silent assumption about the use of the astronomical concept of evenly flowing, quantitative time in social research. However, in their view it is only one of many possible concepts, created by philosophy, psychology, economics and other sciences. Sorokin and Merton tried in their joint paper to present social time as a theoretical concept and also a methodological tool, whose use may lead to a deeper understanding of social reality [Sorokin, Merton 1937]. Later Sorokin followed up this effort in the book *Sociocultural Causality, Space, Time*, at which he opposed time "socio-cultural" with time "metaphysical" [Sorokin 1964a (1943)].

1. Inspiration and Influences

P. A. Sorokin saw several reasons to postulate social (or sociocultural) time. He had previously pointed out in his works that there is a difference between space in the geographical sense, and social space. In his work *the System of sociology* he observes that as a geographical map of the country is not the same as a socio-political map, so a natural-geographic space is not the same as a social space [Сорокин 1993 (1920)]. Afterwards in the book *Social mobility* he completed the idea that in the context of the theory of social stratification and mobility, defining social space as a space in which social positions are found, among which are spatial distances [Sorokin 1964 b (1927)]. The movement of an individual, while maintaining the same status, is referred to as horizontal mobility; movement accompanied with a change of status is called vertical mobility.

Another stimulus for Sorokin was the opinions of French sociologist Émile Durkheim. Durkheim speaks of time as a category, and in this respect his opinion develops via a certain philosophical tradition. He was influenced by Aristotle and Kant, by the philosophical concept of categories and ideas about what role they play in our thinking. However Durkheim makes his concept of categories significantly more sociological. He believes that all categories have a social origin for the reason that the contents which these categories express are of a social nature, and there are various aspects of social existence [Durkheim 2002 (1912): 472]. The author thus makes it clear that the basis of the time category is the rhythm of collective life and the basis of the category 'space' is the space occupied by society. This is explained by the fact that the relationships that are expressed by these categories can be realized only within society and through its existence [ibid: 467].

In terms of the theory of knowledge therefore, time is one of the main categories of our thoughts, abstracted from the rhythms of collective life, its collective activities and their repetition [ibid: 18]. From the ontological point of view the basis for the construction of this category (and many other categories as well) is society itself (respectively rhythms that take place within it). The Durkheimian concept was freely followed by Norbert Elias in the book *Über die Zeit* [Elias

1988] at the end of the 1980's. For Elias, as well as for Durkheim, time is a social structure. According to Elias what is interesting above all is that humankind has the tendency to project specifically human - socially constructed - concepts of time onto nonhuman reality, thereby using this, by nature social tool, as a measure and explanatory principle of natural or cosmic events; in so doing imposing on nature and the universe its own concept of time.

Another important inspiration for the development of the concept of social time was the philosophy of Henri Bergson, who in his work *Time and Free Will* [Bergson 1994 (1889)] distinguished between "internal" qualitative time, which is called duration (*la durée*), and "external" quantitative time, which is measurable on the clock. *Durée* indicates emergence; it is not in time, but time forms by the constant influx of the new. Durkheim's pupils Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss were greatly influenced by this philosophy, while there was a substantial shift in the meaning, because in their approach the concept of *durée* does not help in the description of internal time experience, but in the expression of the qualitative nature of the social flow of time. Hubert and Mauss, who dealt with the problem of time in religion and magic [Hubert, Mauss 1929 (1905)], note that this time consists of elements that are not identical. It is discontinuous time, which does not flow evenly, but has "stops" in its flow - the critical data that interrupt its continuity. The individual parts of time are not indifferent to the matters that take place inside; on the other hand there exists the idea of active qualities, whose presence or absence makes given periods similar or different. The rhythm of sacred and secular periods is very different from any purely mathematical division of time.

In addition to this there were also influences coming from other sciences. Sorokin together with Merton in their article point out that they took into account other sciences in their theory of the existence of different times. The specific nature of time has been considered in terms of economic development and economic theory (A. Marshall, Böhm-Bawerk) and in psychology (W. James), and there was also the concept of physiological time, which is not uniform and whose essential feature is that in biological individuals it slows down. Alexis Carrel dealt with the problem of physiological time in the 30's [Carrel 1948], following up the discovery of his colleague Pierre Lecomte du Noüy, who during the 1st World War found that young people heal faster than older ones: a 20 cm² wound in a ten year old child will heal in about 20 days, persons aged 20 years in 31 days, a 30-year-old in 41 days, a 40-year-old in 55 days, a 50-year-old in 78 days, and at 60 years in 100 days. On the basis of these findings a curve of biological time was constructed which slows down through aging as physical time accelerates. Sorokin with Merton believed that a variety of times existed – astronomical time, economic time, psychological time, biological time, etc. - it could be expected that there was also a social time that differs from other types of time, and in terms of sociology is the most important time.

Finally, you cannot miss the inspiration of Einstein's theory of relativity which, although not found in Sorokin and Merton, appears in the discussions of other authors, specifically the dilation (stretching, deceleration) of time. In the special theory of relativity dilation is considered as a physical phenomenon that is observable in objects that move at high speed (between two moving observers dilation is mutual, i.e. they each see the other's clock as slower). Within the general theory of relativity dilation is understood as a consequence of the gravitational field, which manifests itself so that the clock located closer to the centre of gravitation is slower than clocks that are distant from the centre of gravitation. In the social sciences we come across the simple argument that if there is be an uneven flow of time in physical phenomena, something similar can be expected in social reality.

2. Qualitative Discontinuous Time

Sorokin and Merton in their essay of 1937 distinguish between social time and astronomical time. Astronomical time is uniform, homogeneous, purely quantitative and continuous. Social time cannot be characterized like that; there are days dedicated to specific functions (such as market days), and days off, time periods with specific qualities due to the activities, meanings and associations attached to them, and critical data that interrupt the continuity of time's passing. Social time is qualitative in nature, it does not flow evenly and it is not freely divisible [Sorokin, Merton 1937: 621-623].

It has already been suggested that this concept bears traces of the influence of Durkheim. Sorokin and Merton argue with the view that considers the division of time as determined by astronomical phenomena. They document the independence of social time from astronomical time, for instance by the fact that the week is not the result of dividing the lunar phases, as in various cultures it used to have a different duration: four, five, six, but also eight and ten; the seven-day week comes from Hebrew tribes [ibid.: 624-625]. According to Sorokin and Merton a constant feature of the majority of weeks is that they are mostly associated with the market. Time units have always been associated with periodically monitored social events, and not by observation of "celestial bodies". An example of this is the discrepancy between the lunar movement and the length of calendar months. Sorokin and Merton refer to Mommsen's statement that the calendar system of the ancient Romans hardly took into account lunar movements. This disregard for lunar movements in the determination of the month remains. Unequal periods of astronomical time are socially balanced. The sameness of months is a matter of convention, not an astronomical one. Social duration is not identical with the astronomical duration.

Time data and measurements are different in different societies as a reflection of the differing social and cultural environment in which they are understood and applied.

Counting time is significantly dependent on the organization and functions of individual societies and groups. Systems of time counting, time data and measurements are numerous and varied. Ways of life, customs, traditions, economic and cultural activities, technology, knowledge and religion determine which phenomena represent the beginning and end of a season, month or other time unit. In traditional societies, we meet with expressions referring to time derived from daily activities, such as in Madagascar the "cooking of rice", meaning about half an hour and the "frying of locusts" expressing a moment.

According to Sorokin and Merton social time represents the change or movement of social phenomenon in relation to other phenomena taken as reference points. It is a procedure that is known from our daily lives, when we use such expressions as "shortly after the war," "we will meet after the show," "when XY became president." Similarly, we give names durations of time - "per semester", "in one working day", "during Easter" without making reference to astronomical phenomena [Ibid.: 618-619]. Time is thus not continuous. Its periods have specific qualities thanks to the meanings and associations of the particular activities performed in them. Periods of social time which lack any significant social activity go by without a trace. Where there is not enough social relevance, we find hiatus.

The discontinuity of social time is based on so-called critical data. These may include various favourable and unfavourable days, as they are known by all sorts of religious systems, and alongside this, *The pars pro toto* principle (Nilsson) [ibid.: 624], an example of which is the word 'day', which originally meant sunshine in contrast to night, and only later was applied to all twenty-four hours, so meaning a day and night together. The concept of day was related to the whole, because the night is a time when nothing is happening.

The social function of the counting and marking of time is the necessary coordination of social activities. Local time systems are many and various, depending on the nature of the individual groups or communities. With the development of interaction among groups, and especially then in the context of urbanization and social differentiation, such time systems become inadequate and their local specifics lapse and are overcome. Synchronization and coordination require a well-known and valid reference phenomenon, which due to expansion of interaction becomes increasingly abstract, i.e. it is separated from actual social events. This is why astronomical phenomena are reflected in conventionalised time continua. As a substitute for multidimensional social time there is a time '*Esperanto*' - one-dimensional astronomical time [ibid.: 628].

Even though one-dimensional astronomical time - as a social invention - had replaced the multidimensional social time, in order to facilitate and enrich research in the area of social dynamics Sorokin and Merton had to re-establish social time, at least as an auxiliary concept which could contribute to the better understanding of social periodicity. Studies based on the adoption of astronomical criteria can

fail precisely because social phenomena contain "symbolic" rather than "empirical" uniformity and unevenness, so that where we find a lack of periodicity in terms of astronomical time, there can be a periodicity with parameters in social time [ibid.].

In 1943 P. A. Sorokin followed up these ideas in the book *Sociocultural Causality, Space, Time*. In it he opposes "socio-cultural" time to "metaphysical" time, which corresponds with classical mechanics arising from Newton. This modification of perspective on a given problem was influenced by the turn of Sorokin's interest to cultural systems, but probably also to a certain extent by the critical response of ethnologist George Devereux [1938] to Merton and Sorokin's previous essay. Devereux criticized both authors, among other things, for not confronting social time with astronomical, or physical time, but with metaphysical time. Physical (as well as social) time is operational because it is associated with certain events, while metaphysical time in its strict version is independent of any incidents.

In his work from 1943 Sorokin criticises the adoption of scientific methods in sociology and on the insufficiency of mathematical time for the description of the socio-cultural phenomena. The nature of this view can be expressed as follows: if society itself does not work with a completely quantitative system of time, even related social phenomena cannot be adequately scientifically grasped if we use exclusively the quantitative time concept.

Socio-cultural time, which Sorokin postulates, is distinguished by the following features:

- Duration, synchronization, sequencing and changing the socio-cultural phenomena record and measures by reference to other socio-cultural phenomena (e.g. "... it happened when XY entered the President's Office"); ie not by the reference to numerical data.
- It does not flow evenly; it can run fast or slow, there may be breaks and jumps in it.
- It has moments that are rich in events, and others empty; time without social content gives the impression it has stopped.
- It is not infinitely divisible (*the house can be rented for a year or a month, hardly for an hour or shorter period of time*).
- It is "entirely" qualitative; it is always time filled with some specific content, rather than the passage of abstract time intervals.
- It is not an empty flow, but effective; it is significant, creative, modifying and transforming power ("*time is money*").
- It is internally structured by social events and processes [Sorokin 1946b: 171-172].

The basic socio-cultural functions of time, according to Sorokin are the following: 1. mutual synchronization, coordination and timing of successions (sequential timing) of socio-cultural phenomena, 2. the organization of the time system for the implementation of socio-cultural continuity and for orientation in an endless flow of time, 3. reflection of

the pulsing of socio-cultural systems and also simultaneously facilitation of this pulsation or the rhythms necessary for the life and functioning of the socio-cultural systems [ibid 172].

In traditional societies, according to Sorokin, time is "social" in its nature; but what is the case in modern societies? Did mathematical time push out socio-cultural time? Does our socio-cultural time now match with math? Sorokin observes that in historical development time increasingly uses references to the movements of celestial bodies, then to the rotation of the Earth. In parallel, the measurement of time becomes less qualitative and more quantitative. It is a trend to the "quantitization" and "mathematization" of time. However, to deduce that in modern societies there is no difference between socio-cultural and mathematical time, and that there is only one all-purpose mathematical time would, according to Sorokin, be premature for several reasons: 1. the mentioned trend has not been completely accomplished, 2. socio-cultural time still exists next to mathematical time and is as lively as ever, 3. mathematical time itself is the result of the diversity of socio-cultural time and broken down by combination with socio-cultural circumstances expanding the network of interacting societies [ibid.: 187].

3. Confusing Number of Social Times

Another shift in the understanding of social time is presented by Georges Gurvitch in *La multiplicité des temps sociaux* [Gurvitch 1964 (1963)]. The background for Gurvitch's theories was largely the traditions of French thought which, however, at the same time he attempted to supercede. In the ideas of Durkheim and his followers the unitary concept of social time dominated, corresponding to the time of society as a whole, which Durkheim called "total time". The first to point out the diversity and heterogeneity of social times was M. Halbwachs [2009 (1950)], nevertheless even he still assumed their unification on the basis of "total time". Only Gurvitch definitively destroys this idea of a single social time.

The name of his work, *La multiplicité des temps sociaux*, suggests that he talks about the pluralism or multiplicity of social times. Gurvitch was an individual who, like Parsons or Sorokin, struggled to build up a large theoretical system. Social reality in his concept is distinguished by the multidimensionality and structure associated with the resolution of a number of 'deep' levels, and by instability and volatility. He distinguishes 10 such levels, from the morphological surface to collective mentalities, hence the designation of this sociology as "deep", Gurvitch's multiple theory is grounded in the fact that social life in its various forms flows in extremely different and frequently diverging times, which often compete with each other and are in conflict. Real existence in this case is granted only to individual specific times of individual specific duration, not to time in the monistic sense. Every society, social class,

individual group, micro social phenomenon and also every deep level of social reality, and any social activity (mythical, religious, magical, economic, technical, legal, political, cognitive, moral or educational) has a tendency to act at the time of its own [Gurvitch 1963: 1974].

In his sociological theory, Gurvitch's concept of social time falls into a confusing welter of social times, which in summary is typologically broken down into several general types. On the basis of criteria such as duration, method of pulsation and rhythmicity of movement, the author distinguished eight types of social time: 1.time of long duration and slow decline, 2.misleading (deceptive) time, 3.irregular (erratic) time, 4.cyclical time, 5.retardant time, 6.alternating time, 7.time overtaking itself, 8.explosive time. In his attempt to make a typology of social time Gurvitch shifted research in this area towards the individual partial components of social reality. However, it ought to be borne in mind that his attempt was questioned and criticized as speculative.

- *Time of long duration and slow decline* is characterized by a relatively distant but dominating past reflected in the present and future. It is "the most continual" social time. It becomes particularly evident at ecological, morphological and demographic levels respectively. At this time family relationship groups, local, primarily agricultural, groupings, farmers as social class, and patriarchal society, are moving as a type of global society.
- *Misleading (deceptive) time* gives rise to the appearance of long duration and slow movement; however, this conceals the potential for sudden and unexpected crises. It is paradoxical, surprising time, whose slow movement may be unexpectedly disturbed by a "flurry of discontinuity" in the form of a sharp crisis or explosion It is a social time of major cities, passive communities, and public policy, reflected in such types of global societies as may be considered charismatic theocracies, like ancient Egypt, China, or India.
- *Erratic time* is a time of irregular cycles and irregular rhythm, characterized by uncertainty and randomness. The present predominates over the past and future and has difficulty blending with them. This time expresses itself on the micro-social level in terms of roles and positions, as in global societies found in a phase of transition.
- *In cyclical time* the past, present and future project into each other; emphasis on continuous cyclic course weakens the randomness. This time prevails in mystical and ecstatic groups, churches, sects, and also in types of archaic societies, where mythology plays an important role, with religion and magic.
- *Retardant time* is characterized by delays, found in groups lagging behind, like nobility, closed groups, exclusive corporate groupings and privileged professions. In global society terms it is feudal society.

- In *alternating time*, progress and backwardness, past and future, enter into fierce competition, with uncertain outcome. Discontinuity is stronger than continuity. It is a time of models, rules and characters such as the time of early capitalism and the monarchical period of Enlightened Absolutism.
- In *time that overtakes itself* we find such acceleration that the future becomes the present. Such a time brings innovation and decision, collective upheaval and the appearance of masses.
- *Explosive time* means the maximum rate of discontinuity, associated with the vigorous starting of a new future- a time of collective acts of creation and creative community [Gurvitch 1963: 175, Gurvitch 1964: 31-33].

According to Gurvitch, no society, social class or structured group (local, professional, family, etc.) can live without trying to control its social times, but that does not mean that this will be achieved. Each social unit, class, group, micro social element, relationship, activity, etc. has a tendency to move at an inherent time, while society aims to unify this plurality. Efforts to establish their cohesion and coordination lead to the creation of a specific gradation of social times, in which individual social structures vie for domination in a flux of structuring, destructuring and restructuring leading to collisions, and even to "explosions".

4. Weaknesses and Questionable Assumptions (Instead of the Conclusion)

The concept of social time can be found in a variety of specialized texts to the present day, though somewhat infrequently. This is because Sorokin and Merton, despite being referred to in a number of studies dealing with the problem of time in the context of social sciences (for example [Lauer 1981, Sue 1994]), failed to move research to make the significant shift to the concept of social time that both authors advocated, i.e. a theoretical and methodological tool, contributing to a deeper understanding of social reality, especially with regard to its periodicity. There of course exists a large number of studies that examine the concept of time in pre-modern societies and cultures from an anthropological or historical perspective (see [Gell 1992]); these studies, however, usually manage without the concept of social time, working with the category of time "without attribute".

The line of reasoning about social time followed in this article was derived from Durkheim to Sorokin, and on to Gurvitch. For completeness, it should be noted that in the history of sociology we can also find other conceptions of time, which do not use the concept of social time. For example there is the approach of Alfred Schütz [1960]), which is based on Husserl's phenomenology, or the conception of George Herbert Mead [1959, 1967]), which

builds on Whitehead. It should be emphasised that in the mainstream of sociological thought today we do not meet the concept of social time very often, and the authors who deal with this issue simply talk about "time".

Generally we can say that the research in this field focuses mainly on three areas: The first is the question of the formation of human understanding of time (eg. [Elias 1988; Dux 1989]); the second is the functioning of temporal structures at different levels of social systems (eg. [Zerubavel 1981; Rifkin 1987; Young 1988]); the third is the role and place of time in general sociological theory (eg. [Adam 1990; Baert 1992; Nassehi 1993; Abbott 2001]). There are a number of specialized studies that examine the different aspects of the relationship between social processes and time (eg. [Moore 1963; Grossin 1974; Rinderspacher 1985; Nowotny 1989]), but also monographs with wide-ranging topics (eg. [Gell 1992; Adam 1995]). Preeminent among the important theorists dealing with the problem of time in different contexts are Niklas Luhmann [1971, 1976, 1993, 1998] and Anthony Giddens [1981, 1988, 1995, 1998]. However nowhere in the mentioned examples do we encounter the concept of social time as an important heuristic tool.

A certain affinity to the ideas of social time can be found in Giddens, where we encounter the idea that every moment of social reproduction includes three intersecting levels of time: 1. *durée* of day-to-day experience (temporality of immediate experience of everyday life), 2. *Dasein* (temporality of human life and its cycles), 3. *longue durée* of institutions (long duration associated with the development and reproduction of social institutions) [Giddens 1981: 93]. What approaches the concept of social time is the fact that Giddens postulates the existence of reversible time, at the level of *durée* and *longue durée* [Giddens 1988: 89]. Let us add, however, that this idea of reversible time provoked harsh criticism from other theorists. They argue that although events may repeat in seemingly immutable form, in fact they carry in themselves the irreversible direction of time, which is an integral aspect of time – also by the most recurrent phenomena (between this winter and the past one, the payment of last month and this, yesterday and today's lunch – the world has changed, we have grown old and other people or objects are changed). What is repetitive are the events and tasks, but not time; the flow of experience still continues irreversibly in one direction [Adam 1990: 27].

The problems associated with the assumption of the existence of social time are several. The first can be inferred from Gurvitch himself. Accepting his opinion, we must conclude that there is no single social time, but innumerable ones, because each social phenomenon exists in its inherent temporality. Gurvitch attempted to develop a typology of these times, but it is highly speculative. The procedure which his typology created is essentially uncontrollable and irreproducible, and it is not too clear how to use such a typology in research. It is therefore probably no coincidence that no one successfully followed up Gurvitch's effort in the context of world sociology

A more serious discussion point is the assumption that social time is qualitative time. The terms "quantitative" and "qualitative" demark the whole discussion so frequently that they darken the essence of things rather than help to clear the air. Key in these considerations are three aspects that often impose haphazardly:

- There is a difference between the rhythm of collective life (temporality of the social system) and the rhythm reported by tools of measurement of time (clock).
- There is a difference between archaic and modern ideas about time and its measurement.
- There comes an identification of time with events (movement), which takes place not only at the level of archaic consciousness, but also at the level of theoretical knowledge.

The fact that the frequency of social events mostly does not coincide with the divisions on the clock face is an indisputable fact that applies not only in traditional but also modern society. However, we still cannot automatically draw the conclusion that the time in which hands move on a clock face is fundamentally different from the time in which people move in society.

The findings of anthropologists and historians suggest that archaic traditional societies have created landmarks for orientation in time before their use in modern society, and that people of different social types have quite different ideas about time than those we have. Thus the person who does not know and does not use clocks, looks differently on time than a person for whom the wristwatch has become essential. What in this case has the qualitative character is not time itself, but only certain human ideas about it, about its determination and measurement.

A person who has no inclination or need to theorize usually has no reason to imagine time as an emptied flow or duration. In his thinking time is usually linked to the phenomena that take place in it. Even though this aspect of human thought is emphasized mainly by researchers who deal with premodern societies, it cannot be said that it is typical only for them. On the contrary, we meet with it in modern society, and not only in unscientific, non-professional thinking. Even some researchers tend to equate time with the movements that takes place in it, and these confused concepts then they call "qualitative time".

A major argument of supporters of the concept of social time is that it does not flow evenly; that it can slow down, speed up or even stop. Such a claim can be difficult to prove. The problem to which we allude here consists, as already mentioned, in the confusion of time and movement. What do not follow evenly are processes that take place in time, i.e. the movement of things and events. The fact that this movement does not flow equally to all may not automatically mean that time also passes unevenly. Recall who it was that in the question of the relationship of time and motion warned

about their mixing. For Aristotle time was "number (*aritmos*) of motion earlier and later" [Aristoteles 1996: 125]. We measure movement by time and conversely movement (e.g. movement of sand in the hourglass) serves to measure time; but it is necessary to distinguish between them, because time is not motion [ibid.: 122].

The concept of social time assumes that time is a human work. Even this is very problematic premise. The products of social life (sometimes intended, sometimes unintended) not only include various time (temporal) structures of social phenomena in terms of time plans, schedules, timetables, but also spontaneous and unplanned cycles or rhythms. Human works are also instruments for measuring time, and people set the units in which time is measured. However, what is definitely not a human creation is time in terms of its objective, inevitable flow in the direction of the time arrow. Let us add that Stephen W. Hawking talks about three arrows, which, however, are all heading in the same direction: a) thermodynamic, in which direction is growing disorder (entropy), b) psychological, whose direction is given by the fact that we remember the past and not the future, c) cosmological, defined by the direction in which the universe expands [Hawking 1991: 141].

By their actions people give visible, indeed often tangible form, to the passing of time, and so some theorists have a tendency to attribute to human conduct the power to create time. What they usually ignore is the fact that such conduct can intervene in the present and future and not the past (which can only be read or interpreted differently). As people produce and reproduce social formations, institutions and social systems by their actions, they construct the individual parts of the social reality of their time (sometimes associated with such terms as "internal" or "own" time); if the individual components of social reality were not so maintained for posterity, they would disappear. However, it cannot be thanks to human conduct that duration unfolds in a certain direction - in the direction of the arrow of time - i.e. from the past through the present to the future (and not the other way around). The existence of this arrow of time is then also what enables us, despite the morass of temporal structures, to think about time in a single (monistic) and realistic approach.

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