

Causes and wishes : on the temporal orientation of subjunctive clauses  
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According to a distinction originally due to Stowell (1993) and subsequently exploited by Quer (1998, 2006), “intensional subjunctives” – as opposed to “polarity subjunctives” – are lexically selected by a semantic class of matrix predicates which also impose a particular (non-anterior or futurate) temporal orientation on their argument clauses: directives, causatives and volitionals.

Careful examination of the licit temporal configurations for subjunctive clauses shows, however, that intensional subjunctives do not conform to a homogeneous pattern: in particular, the argument clauses of “volitionals” deviate in manifold ways from the expected temporal orientation and give rise in some cases to interpretive effects that parallel those found with modal verbs, most notably as regards the distinction between epistemic and counterfactual construals. In this presentation, I explore the possibility of accounting for the behaviour of “volitionals” by exploiting their double nature as evaluative propositional attitudes and as dispositions to act (Kenny 1963, Heim 1992, Portner 1997).