

Discursive Hypostatisations. Philosophic, Scientific, Literary, Artistic and Religious Discursivity

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Abstract: *The realm of discursivity is in truth heteroclitite, submitted to metamorphoses that testify the various correspondences between the axis of being (the on) and that of the existent (gegonos) is testified. Discursivity “pre-sentifies” in a manifested manner a referent that at the same time is not able to determine its existence without associating itself with a situation of knowledge, implicitly with a form of rendering and representation. Being articulated as a conceptual hypostatisation of reason (the philosophic discourse), or a form that creates significance (the artistic discourse), a textual and socio-historical device (the literary discourse), as a closing up of the circle of interpretations (the scientific discourse) or as resignation in silence (the religious discourse), discourse itself emerges as a reflection of conscience about things, that is, it acts, produces, searches for affirmation, thus and ultimately crafting out a possible world.*

Keywords: *discourse, knowledge, representation, object.*

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It seems impossible to dissociate the human being from mental forms and discursive means by which reality is rendered or, more exactly, by which horizons of reality are contrived. By means of discursive coding, reason engages time and space in a play of intelligibility. Fascinated by its own play, reason turns its own movement into a theme of introspective reflection, by which the mechanisms and figures of depth, as well as the adjustment to the situation, confrontation with the thing over which it pertains to become visible. One could rather say that human experience has a latent narrative character and not „a pre-narrative structure that is summoning the story by its beckoning force”. (Tonoiu, 1997: 95). If experience requires discursivity, it means that discursivity is determining experience, that it is silently integrated into it, experience having therefore a discursive character at its inception. What is lived and represented, symbolic and factual, event and structure, object and discourse are not stages or successions, but make an inextricable unit. The referent is being metabolised in discourse. By the fabric of meaning rendering significances, the object is re-localised as experience lived in reality or virtually (Tonoiu, 1997, p. 232), and in the same way the object fills the” void significance”, representing nothing less than an intention to say or to designate, as a” prime act of conscience” (Ricoeur, 2007, p. 14). Therefore, intentionality, in the spirit of a Brentano-Husserlean phenomenology of meaning, as a faculty of conscience by which conscience overpowers itself, becoming a conscience of something, comprises both the act of significance and the one of *presentification*.

The philosophical discourse

The problem of philosophy as a discourse genre place between parentheses the age-old principle of philosophy – whether implicit or explicit – as a zone zero of knowledge or as pristine and mysterious thinking, that is holding on to its material base, only out of considerations linked to the necessity or opportunity of disclosing some ideas. This perspective can easily be rejected through manifold methods specific to the assumed theoretical conceptions. However, as A. Codoban states,” in the contemporary occurrence of philosophy as a discourse, that appears along with the new topic of language, communication and significance, something more appears. Discourse is now a philosophic figure mirrored in its own thematization, and the current deeper study of philosophy’s image as a discourse represents its in-depth studying as a practice of significance.” (Codoban, 1992, p. 85). From a significance point of view of, this issue has a very precise contour, since the decision as to the assumed discursive form is not extrinsic to the

conceptual matter that needs expression; the philosophic *écriture*, so Rorty and Derrida, is not a mere representation of a pure thought that exists in and for itself, but it rather contributes to the birth of the semantic universe, by which the philosophic speculation clears up and unfolds. Thus, the semiotic perspective focused over the philosophic discourse cannot be an external investigation; there has to be a discursive investigation that is taking off in search of a “thought of the text” and not of a “thought from the text”. (Marrone, 1999, p. 3)

Philosophical discursivity as an approach and a form of knowledge engages into an endeavour that is gnoseological both in essence and in practice. In this respect it practices an instantaneous revelation of the strata of reason, of the multiplicity and variety of phenomena, of the myriad of methodological vantage points, thus instrumenting, by the intercession of concepts, a structure from which ideas self-propel on a sequential trajectory which is finally leading to what the Greeks have encapsulated inside the term *epokhê*, in the sense of a middle dialogue, where appropriated ideas converge and collapse in an apparent or undoubtful contradiction. Conscience, in its role of ontological element, and reason seen as a gnoseological element are interacting with reality, thus expanding, developing, integrating and ultimately devouring their object of study in a continuous circle between observed and observer. Against attempting to draw alterity close, to tame the rough fact and to limit entropy, reality appears to adjust and “respond” to the conscience and crux of the episteme – in the sense given to this notion by M. Foucault. (Foucault, 1966, p. 13). Reality thus seems to withdraw, making room for the philosophical discourse. This one conveys what is beyond the limits of verbal representation, yet in a symmetric manner suggests and attracts the idea that reality itself can be a part of a much vaster and more comprehensive linguistic universe.

Ever since Kant, philosophy – which is not defined any more by its subject or by modality, therefore as approach, or method – has been a genre of discourse that tackles both the essence of things and what is said about the sense of multiple discourse instances it takes as reference, which becomes only possible by a third party which is neither essence, nor only meaning, but a sole unit of these two.

For Kojève, the philosophical discourse develops as a layout of a concept’s meaning, which represents the constituting element of discursive unfolding. Since the „degree of explanation of a notion’s meaning can grow *ad infinitum*” (Kojève, 1990, p. 45), this unfolding mirrors an „absolute maximum of explanation” or a „philosophical optimum” which is reached by closing the circle, that is by returning to the departure point (to the given

notion), so that the result or conclusion coincides with the origin or the prerequisite. (Kojève, 1990, p. 46). Being constitutive bricks of the philosophical discourse, notions are not granted as fixed departure points, may they be invariable and perfected; they are affirming their own self, are being reactivated or re-dimensioned by the very discursive practice, therefore are not merely elements of static structure, but rather happening events of reason.

If the process leading to the instituting of philosophical enunciation repels any dissociation between operations by which the discourse delineates its content and the operations setting up a framework inherent and structured by discourse, we can regard the philosophical discourse as a constitutive one – under the terms of Maingueneau – „a discourse that establishes without being established by any other instance beyond itself.” (Maingueneau, 1995, p. 14). This endeavour imposes a conceptualization of philosophical discursivity as a discursive institution, which sends to its comprehension as an event of enunciation.

It can be deduced from here that the philosophical enunciation is haunted by an impossibility to isolate it from the historical context and even more so from the philosophical realm – with norms and representations akin to its status. In essence it is about a relation that evolves within problematic areas, with varied and sometimes blurred nuances covering the entire spectrum of attitudes, from acceptance to denial. Paradoxically, both extremes of problematization tend to bend towards zero or non-existent: the extreme point of acceptance can be assessed as an absolute inclusion of the framework, and the extreme of denial as an impossibility to include the framework within the philosophical discourse. Yet, as shown above, discourse in itself is not and cannot be a replica of the framework, nor can it be an absence of it, which bestows on it a paradoxical and even parasite localisation that Maingueneau calls a „*paratopia*”. In other words, the philosophical discourse has an avatar status, its manifestation being a permanent cycle of establishing position and stability, or a permanent negotiation between framework and non-framework.

In his analysis of the discourse, Marc Angenot (Angenot, 1982) formulates two axioms that he considers can be employed to assess the entimematic discourse of knowledge, by which discourse a phenomenon is put in a relation with a conceptual set that integrates it and that composes a structure of surface that can seem incomplete, lacunar, yet that is dominated by a discursive coherence of depth. One first axiom directs to the necessity of a regulating principle - that Angenot calls a „place” (τοποι, Aristotel) – a place of which this putting in relation springs out. In fact, this principle triggers the discourse production, surpassing the discourse’s realm of perti-

nence. The second axiom states the teleological character of the knowledge discourse, that springs out from its unquestionable functionality and its orientation in the direction of a cognitive finality. Such tenets can be applied to any discourse of knowledge which inevitably „integrates places in the discursive construction, closing the entire discursive universe within the discourse itself. Therefore, the discourse of knowledge (in which Angenot comprises the philosophical and the scientific discourse), „unfolds its structures of depth at the surface, distributing itself into a vast tautology to which nothing can be added that is not already contained implicitly.” (Angenot, 1982, p. 32)

For philosophy, the acme of value is essentially discursive, having as a result the development of discourse into a knowledge system. A philosophical system's dogmatism is nothing else but the transformation of prerequisites into discursive evidence, or concepts. By definition, philosophy is a search after discursive wisdom, lacking a degree zero (a sum of originary meanings rendering reality in a manner as little as possible altered by the meddling of rhetoric) to which it relates, another one outside the one it itself proposes and promotes. In the situation of philosophical discourse, this special relation between degree zero and deviation does not admit intercessors. The philosophical discourse is to itself its own degree zero – that is the meaning and significance of concepts begin with it, or in other words, with the definitions of basic concepts of the theme, that the philosophical discourse is putting in circulation.

By the manifestation of autonomy to the object, the philosophical discourse affirms its uniqueness to the detriment of unequivocalness, defying any interpretive limit. The act of receiving thus becomes the equivalent of a creator act of new meanings and significances, and its oneness makes the very motif of interpretation.

The scientific discourse

The scientific discourse evolves around an object built artificially (conventionally) as a representation of reality, operating a reduction of the latter to one or more dimensions ready for analysis, allowing the development of a formal demonstration on grounds of rational, precise and unequivocal criteria representing its brands. The scientific discursive intervention follows the closing of the circle of understanding and interpretation and therefore of problematisation, looking for a correspondence between mean-

ing and significance¹, even if by its nature, the scientific cognitive attempt is argumentative, therefore oriented towards significance. „Significance or meaning implies the emergence of a possibility of description, of examination and discussion, being called to give its locutor an anonymous and impersonal position” which also „corresponds to one new problem, to the logic of a new situation.” (Stengers, 2001, p. 49) The object and the knowing subject submit themselves to a division and are separated as two totally distinct forms of existence. The subject is “free” and „purified of opinion.” „He knows he only has to deal with objects, whose form of existence is perfect distinct from his own.” (Stengers, 2001, p. 140). Paradoxically, science becomes relativistic when it finds that the observer cannot keep its distance to the Universe any longer and that this is actually located inside the Universe. Therefore, via the relativistic effort, science is looking for equations with absolute validity, independently from the reference point where the observer is. Popper qualifies this attitude as conventionalist, deemed to transform science from an” image of nature” into a” simple logical construction” or into a” technology of discourse” (Halliday & Martin, 1993, p. 10), which means that it is not the world’s properties that are determining this construction, but on the contrary, the construction determines the properties of an artificial world; a world of concepts implicitly defined by the natural laws chosen by the criterion of their simplicity.

The literary discourse

One other hypostasis of discourse is literature. Being regarded as a discourse and not as a text, literature appears like a process that undermines the spontaneous distinction between text and context, yet which is at the same time placed within an ambiguous situation, gliding between three levels that each claim their supremacy over the others, the stylistic, the structuralist and the pragmatic level. Regarded from a discursive point of view, literature shifts its axis of understanding and explanation from the author (in the romantic tradition) or the text (in a structuralist tradition) towards enunciation, that is, a device at the same time textual and social-historic, where that which can be expressed points to its own conditions of enunciation, understanding by this the association between the author’s status, the manner of positioning within the literary field, the circulation of enunciations, the socio-

¹ Every discourse that highlights a particular distinction between meaning and significance, even if they all have the adequation of the two, or at least their cooperation as a common direction and a warranty of truth.

historical function attached to genres, the relation established in the literary work with the reader, etc. As says Maingueneau, „what is improperly defined as the content of a work is in reality riddled by references to its conditions of enunciation.” (Maingueneau, 1993, p. 23). This theoretical reflection upon the literary discourse must be associated, so R. Robin and M. Angenot, with the „meditations that facilitate the assessment of every text, every discursive system as a social object, without reducing it to a «reflexion», to an «adequate» representation of what it pretends to express.” (Angenot & Robin, 1991, p. 39)

The artistic discourse

The artistic discourse is generally grounded on meaning, being from this point of view similar to the constructive philosophic discourse for which the issue of foundation is unessential. One important aspect that separates the philosophic from the artistic discourse, bringing it closer to science is, as C. Sălăvăstru states, is „the substitubility of expressions inside discourse”. (Sălăvăstru, 2001, p. 59). If the scientific discourse is immune to changes of meaning – and in the case of philosophical discourse, there is not much wriggle space for meaning – for the artistic discourse, form is creator of meaning, and this is the only way to bestow value upon the endeavour of searching for the right expression to use in clothing a piece of thought or a slice of reality.

What is yet specific to any of the three avatars of discourse, at the same time representing their finality, is the ideal of order; if it may not be a type of order adequate to the presupposition of universal order, at least an order understood as a crystallization of knowledge, as bringing reality closer to one’s proximity and as familiarisation with it through language. In other terms, „knowledge and language (...) take mastery of the world with authority (...); the name stands above the thing, of what is, and the meaning of the name «catches» the essence of the thing, of each existant.” (Iliescu, 1989, p. 129)

The religious discourse

A special position that places us in a paradox is occupied by what we call religious discourse, generally understood as a discourse about transcendence or theological discourse. Transcendence is by definition the ineffable that lies beyond all that is enunciable and therefore, according to A. Kojève (Kojève, 1990, p. 220), „any theology is inherently contradictory” although it searches to „conceal” this state by assuming a “skeptical” position by which

to demonstrate the degree of contradiction from any discursive form. The assumption of such a position means abandonment of a discursive Truth and resignation in „silence”.

The connection of religious discourse with the referent takes place under the auspices of dialectics, as an „event and a meaning” (Thomasset, 1996, p. 311), or as an embedding of the event into meaning. In other words, the religious discourse does not point to a universal or particular religious practice, but reveals in a metaphorical form “a way of being in the world that has to do with the fundamental relation between human and the Divinity.” While citing the Biblical hermeneutics as an example, Ricœur goes on to say that this one „does not depend on a previous anthropological scheme, but maintains a dialectic relation with the philosophical hermeneutics that appears as *appel-réponse* and allows it to engage into dialogue with other perspectives on the world.” (Thomasset, 1996, p. 308). In short, the religious conception cannot be separated by a hermeneutical construction which takes it both towards a cognitivist and a discursive model, yet in the sense in which the religious discourse is the expression of human experiences at the limit and not a *prima* manifestation, previous to experience - a “grammar of faith” according to Lindbeck. (Lindbeck, 1984)

Conclusions

The universe of discourse appears as a dynamic universe, strung by the incessant interplay of attraction and rejection, by which experience must be articulated and intentionality is searching for its object. The angles from which the various types of discourse are projecting their light on reality represent the same number of ways in which it can be crafted out and the same number of possible forms of existence. In this view, the state of incompleteness of authenticity, legitimacy and up-to-date-ness of any form of discourse (philosophic, scientific, religious or artistic) must be reaffirmed, since each one bestows on the others the necessary conditions of existence. But beyond the dialogue between discourse types, one must highlight the intrinsically dialogic character of discourse in itself. The very manner in which the discourse conceives its object (without taking here in discussion the objectual character of discourse and of thinking) presupposes an acute interaction with the realm of other types of discourse. „The so-called direct, object-oriented discourse does not meet the resistance of a thing that in itself is still pristine and pre-Adamic. It meets instead a thing already talked, symbolised and signified in one way or another, therefore a talking thing, which symbolizes and signifies on its own.” (Tonoiu, 1997, p. 194). It is essential that

through discourse, reality become the main player in a dialectic adventure of knowledge, „open for experience and capable of integrating its own experience.” (Tonoiu, 1997, p. 415)

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