

ON DISCOURSE AND THE CLASSICAL RHETORICAL CANON: A HISTORY OF THE ISSUE

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Abstract

Philosophical analysis of the problem of discourse means a step away from traditional academic philosophy in the direction of what is sometimes contemptuously called "postmodernism". Indeed, this concept is distinguished by a high degree of uncertainty and debatability; its theoretical status is not clear - perhaps it is just a sign of belonging to the "philosophical pop"? Its disciplinary affiliation also remains in question - does it belong to linguistics, political science, sociology, and epistemology? Without a doubt, we can only state the following. The discourse boom is the result of a number of intellectual and social factors: modern communication technologies and the power of the media, active interdisciplinary diffusion, a linguistic turn in philosophy, and the introduction of the term "communication" into philosophical use. There are many "theories" and "definitions" of discourse. The most general, mild and generally accepted of them identifies discourse with argumentative communication. Its insufficiency, as well as the desire to understand what the development and use of this term and concept gives to the theory of knowledge, is the starting point of our consideration.

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Introduction

The term "discourse" (discursus (lat.), discourse (eng.), discours (fr.), discorso (ital.)) comes from the Latin "discurrere" - "discussion", "negotiations", even "quarrel". For the first time as a term in this sense, it began to be used in the Renaissance. To this, however, other shades of meaning were added: "to talk about social things in the way that corresponds to their nature".

In the Renaissance, when the concept of "discourse" began to be introduced into circulation in Italian as "discorso", it still had a negative meaning and meant: "to conduct a monologue that is not very intelligible and long, leading away from the question", "to speak a lot and say nothing at the same time" (J. Savonarola). The revival, however, introduced a change in the canons of rhetoric. Discourse became the goal of a well-constructed speech, in a way "that leads from inventio through dispositio and elocutio to memoria and pronunciatio", in the words of P. Ricoeur. It is a method which, by means of a perfect mode of expression, articulates the faculties of the mind and extracts the hidden truths from the essence of the subject.

Philosophy, rhetoric and theology of the Renaissance contributed a lot to the development of the concept of “discourse”. Thanks to this, at the beginning of the New Age, discourse began to be associated with the discussion of scientific problems in the essayist style typical of that era, using the national (rather than Latin) language - to take at least well-known examples from Machiavelli to Rousseau. This change in the style of reasoning went in parallel with the collapse of the medieval picture of the world and the rigid disciplinary structure of medieval scholarship, with the rejection of anonymity and the acquisition of the significance of the individual authorship of the text. The experimental thinking of the scientist required a different style (later fixed in the form of “experimental essays” by R. Boyle), informal, corresponding to a search, not set by postulates, research orientation.

At the same time, a certain dogmatization of the discourse itself took place, leading to a different understanding of it. In this context, the historical mission of discourse was to create a “functional equivalent of divine revelation”. “Discursive” began to be called such a systematic, methodical and especially conceptual thinking, which sequentially, in parts, represents a certain whole and thereby makes it knowable (R. Descartes). It was intended to compensate for the lack of epistemological ability of a person to come to the necessary knowledge through direct contemplation. Due to the linear sequence of such reasoning, discourse as a monologically constructed speech, as writing, as a systematic treatise, was further opposed to oral conversation, dialogue. The monologue contained the speaker's constant acts of self-reference, which unfolded her own internal dynamics. (Note in parenthesis that the idea of such a discourse encountered strong resistance from the more uninhibited Renaissance humanist tradition, which saw in this understanding of discourse a return to an outdated, dogmatic style of reasoning).

In the 18th century, discourse and treatise coexist with each other, and sometimes natural sciences are discussed discursively and essayistically, while humanitarian problems are systematically interpreted.

In the 19th century, literature almost completely survives from the form of presentation of the exact sciences. Even their empirical component no longer allows for freedom of presentation and must obey formal logical criteria. The discourse migrates to the realm of the aesthetic, to the realist and naturalistic French novel, and prepares a stylistic base for the emerging humanities.

In the 20th century, numerous theories of discourse arose, which mainly belong to two directions. Firstly, this is the German school, which, relying on Kant and the Anglo-American theories of language acts, formulated the ethical principles of discourse within the framework of the theory of communicative action. Secondly, we are talking about the French school of discourse analysis, which combines the criticism of rationality by Nietzsche and Heidegger with postmodernist understood neostructuralism and identifies discourse with the phenomenon of power. Finally, the concept of discourse penetrates into psychology, ethnography, sociology and other social and humanitarian sciences, as well as into theology, in fact, claiming the status of an interdisciplinary methodological program. In general, according to V.V. Maroshi, two tendencies are obvious that can come together and diverge: to call any speech (communicative) practice “discourse”, including here non-verbal units (gesture, facial expressions, body movement, etc.) and to limit the scope of discourse to “discursive” (logical-formalized, conceptual, terminological, etc.).

Discussion

Discourse is not a purely epistemological concept. On the contrary, its characteristic feature is a significant political, social and moral burden. From here grows what is called “discourse-ethics” by J. Habermas. Habermas proceeds from the well-known complexities of substantiating morality, which are already fixed in the principle of Hume's guillotine. D. Hume, appealing to the fact that statements about facts cannot reliably confirm general value statements, demanded that the latter be discarded. Habermas seeks to refute this skeptical position, according to which morality cannot be justified, and certainly cannot be rationally justified, since reason belongs only to the sphere of expediency (end - means). He

proceeds from the fact that the scope of moral justification is limited by the meaning of obligation inherent in the norm. Referring to P. Strawson, Habermas shows that moral problems are actualized exactly when, as a result of unsatisfied normative expectations, a painful emotional reaction arises that does not fit into an objective view of things. The realm of the moral, therefore, is not the product of a logical definition or dispassionate evaluation. On the contrary, it defines itself through involvement. Moral reflection cannot be separated from the participant's active position, and justification needs a "performative (participatory, activity) attitude." Scientific justification, aimed at explaining the facts, differs from the ethical "justification of an act." Feelings play the same role in ethical justification as empirical facts in scientific. The ethical legitimacy of norms requires a discursively formed recognition of all participants in the situation - says the formal principle of discourse ethics. It is based on the belief that there are "universals of language use" that already contain the Universalist moral principle, but that this premise is taken for granted. In this case, it is not possible to build a "formal justification of morality", because the last premise is of a substantive nature.

In fact, the discourse-ethics of J. Habermas and O. Apel sets the task of indirectly evaluating the normative correctness of actions and practical judgments on the basis of the meanings that are presupposed by discourse. Instead of using for evaluation some abstract principles, values or norms that themselves require substantiation, but which, in fact, cannot be finally substantiated, the relation of understanding is chosen as a metanorm. If it is established in the course of communication, then this serves as the only and inevitable guarantee of a "moral" attitude towards each other, humanism. Moreover, it is not moral in the sense that obliges an individual to act this way and not otherwise, based on external coercion. The moral relation emerges here as an epiphenomenon of the internal dynamics of discourse, certain discursive procedures that require the participants to make increasingly convincing arguments. This problem becomes especially acute in the context of discussing global problems, in particular the consequences of scientific and technological progress.

Thus, O. Apel formulates the widely discussed "expert's dilemma", which calls into question the possibility of a reasonable social decision. The fact is that democratic decision-making requires discussion and comparison of different points of view, the involvement of many experts. But science is called upon to seek the truth, and if scientists do not agree with each other, then they do not possess the truth and their opinion cannot be decisive. The democratic solution thus contrasts with scientific truth: either truth or democracy.

It seems to me that this sounds convincing only in general terms in the context of the natural sciences. With regard to social and humanitarian knowledge and the solution of urgent social problems, this "dilemma" turns out to be quite naive. Apel believes that differences between experts are born mainly in applied fields due to social pressure on science, when scientists have to take a certain socio-political position. However, each mature person differs precisely in the fact that she already has such a position and she defends it. Next, imagine that several experts from the same field of science are invited. The question arises: where are the limits of their necessary and sufficient number?

But in fact, this is a fictional situation. Expertise differs from a scientific conference in that it is already based on a certain political decision, on the basis of which the selection of experts is carried out. Suffice it to recall which economists the Russian reformers invited for consultations and with which of them they found a common language. And this is not so much a political arbitrariness, but a common practice of expertise: a lot of experts discussing a certain problem gather from representatives of different sciences and their opinions may not coincide precisely because there is no single science with a single truth. From the collision of different truths relating to different sciences (as well as to other areas), the prerequisites for making a decision is born.

Research results and discussion

Today, the concept of discourse indexes a twofold shift in the central problem of philosophy - the

problem of justifying knowledge. Discourse is opposed to a treatise, non-specialized everyday opinion - to professional expert judgment, especially when discussing problems of social significance. This concept of discourse corresponds to a new picture of the world, which rejects monotheism and science-centrism. From now on, the task is not limited to putting one of the scientific models of the world in the center; it is important to evaluate them by their mutual advantages and disadvantages. In addition, this comparison is made not only in order to achieve scientific truth, but against the background of the world of everyday life and a relatively simple person with his interests and needs.

The rapid and wide dissemination of the term “discourse” in the humanities has already brought its limits of linguistic certainty, but has not yet given it a philosophical understanding. How can the concept of discourse be narrowed and refined?

First, we need to compare the concept of discourse with similar epistemological concepts. These are the concepts of the creative act and the method of cognition. In both cases, we are talking about the process of knowledge development, in which activity is regulated to a certain extent and, at the same time, is forced to go beyond normative and empirical limits. This process connects the acquired knowledge and cognitive resources, or sources of knowledge. Secondly, of all the socio-political nuances of the meaning of the term “discourse”, it seems to us that only the one that implies a live social act of discussion, or communication, is theoretically significant. It mediates the interaction of individual social subjects and social structures. Thirdly, from the linguistic meanings of this term, it is worth returning to the theory of discourse as a pragmatically oriented text, which goes back to the works of E. Benveniste. He distinguished text as an impersonal-objectivist narration from discourse as living speech, assuming communicative contexts (speaker, listener, intention, place, time of speech). Their difference, according to Benveniste, does not coincide with the difference between written and oral text. This approach seems justified to me. At the same time, in modern linguistic pragmatics, the concept of text includes the concept of discourse as its particular form. I am forced to depart from this tradition: in my understanding, text and discourse are only partially overlapping concepts. I will understand discourse as an unfinished living text, taken at the moment of its direct involvement in the act of communication, in the course of its interaction with the context. The text differs from the discourse, which is already alienated from the author by spatial, temporal and other indexical parameters. To understand the discourse, one can ask the speaker a question, while understanding the text requires “questioning the context”, the contextualization of writing, which is possible only in the process of sociocultural reconstruction. In this sense, there are no oral texts, since access to any text is possible only through its objectified carrier, in the analysis of which the scientific principle of reproducibility can be applied. Oral in the literal sense, connected with the lips, that is, incomplete, alive, can only be discourse (“live broadcast”), even if it is realized not only by audio, but also by visual means, with the help of gestures, signs, elements of written text. And the process of writing itself is a discourse insofar as it is not yet completed and is associated with the author. For example, this is the process of drawing or writing a teacher on a blackboard in front of students watching his activities and ready to ask a question.

Conclusion

The goal of modern discourse analysis in a broad sense is to unravel or at least partially clarify this mystery, that is, to describe the game, clarify its often obscure rules, delineate its boundaries and identify its participants, coaches and referees. The purpose of philosophical reflection on the concept of "discourse" is somewhat different. Philosophy does not create a scientific theory of discourse, but problematizes this very possibility. She starts by distinguishing between discourse and text as dynamic and static elements of language, unfinished and finished speech. The first for its understanding requires a dialogue with another, the second - a dialogue with oneself (self-reflection, interpretation). The very activity of reflection or interpretation can be understood as a discourse about the text, context or meaning. Then the dynamics of discourse will be moving from one level of language to another, from

one type of discourse to another. It turns out to be a migration or exchange of content between syntax, semantics and pragmatics, between text, context and meaning. Discourse is an intermediary link between text and context, which makes it possible to make one text the context of another, to involve the context in the text, to introduce elements of the text into non-linguistic contexts, to give meaning to the text and the surrounding world.

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