ON THE POSTMODERNITY OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract: The exposition tries to capture the nature of the relationship between the sphere of reality and the sphere of discourse engaged in a dynamics of construction where Reality becomes Logos and Logos becomes Reality. What gives relevance to this relationship is the isomorphism that does not leave room for any dominant position: discourse does not wear out reality and reality does not wear out discourse, but there is a certain amount of indeterminateness and incompleteness on one side, as on the other. The two spheres build up a dynamic universe, where they play a sublime game of seduction and rejection, a game through which experience needs to be articulated and intention needs to find its object.

Keywords: philosophical discourse, knowledge, reality, significance, concept

The space of discursivity is heteroclite and subject to metamorphoses through which diverse correspondences between the axis of being (the *on*) and the one of the existing (*gegonos*) are being tried.

The issue of philosophy as type of discourse is putting to rest the millennial principle – be it implicit or explicit – of philosophy being the *0 zone* of knowledge or the pure and secret reasoning, that is only clinging to a material support solely for reasons connected to the necessity or appropriateness of conveying ideas. This perspective can easily be declined through various methods specific to the assumed theoretical conceptions. However, according to A. Codoban, "in the contemporary occurrence of philosophy as discourse, that is appearing along with the new theme of language, communication and signification, there is also something more to appear. Discourse is now the philosophical figure mirrored in its own thematization. And the current in-depth study of philosophy's image as discourse is its in-depth study as significant practice"[1]. From the point of view of signification, this issue receives a precise profile, since the decision referring to the assumed discursive form is not extrinsic to the conceptual substance that is to be expressed; the philosophical ecriture, as Rorty and Derrida have put it, is not the mere representation of a pure thought that exists within and for itself, but rather contributes to the production of the semantic universe through which the philosophical speculation is clarified and unfolded. Therefore, the semiotic perspective directed towards the philosophical discourse cannot be an external inquiry; it has to be a discursive investigation that is embarking on a quest for a "thought *of* the text" and not a "thought *from* the text".

Philosophical discursivity as a method and form of knowledge develops an effort that is both in essence as well as in practice gnosiological. In this sense, it applies an instantaneous act of revealing the strata of thought, of multiplicity and diversity of phenomena, of the myriad of methodological perspectives and points of view, with the help of concepts putting together a structure out of which ideas are self-propelling on a sequential

[1] Aurel Codoban, *Filosofia ca gen literar [Philosophy as a Literary Genre]*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1992, p.85.

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trajectory finally leading to what Greeks have enclosed in the term *epokhé*, meaning middle dialog, where claimed ideas converge and collapse in a seeming or undoubted contradiction. Conscience, as an ontological element, and reason as a gnosiological element interact with reality, developing, expanding, incorporating and devouring their object of study inside a continuous circle between the observed and the observant. Under the action of appropriation of the otherness, of taming the rough fact and of limiting the entropy, reality seems to adapt, adjust and "respond" to the conscience and essence of the *episteme* – in the sense given by M. Foucault.[2] Thus, reality seems to withdraw, leaving space to the philosophical discourse. The philosophical discourse renders what is beyond the borders of verbal representation but, symmetrically, suggests and entails the idea that reality itself can be part of a vaster and more comprising linguistic universe. Therefore, the trajectory of significance works in both directions alternatively, being able to merge sign and significance, to split them or to implode totally and irremediably.

Ever since Kant, philosophy - that is no more defined through its subject, but through modality, therefore, as *method* – is a discourse that speaks both about the essence of things and about the meaning of instances of discourse it relates to. This becomes possible only through a "third party"[3], that is neither essence, nor pure significance, but a singular unit of these two. If the history of philosophy begins with identifying the concept with Eternity – according to the parmenidian thesis, as Kojève[4] believes, it ends along with Hegel's thesis by which the concept is identified with Time – only it is not an indefinite cosmic time, or the cyclic time of life, but with Time as History – a time inscribed inside the human being, a time that cannot be conceived outside this status. The history of philosophy thus appears as a progressive reduction of the Concept's transcendence. This reduction shakes the interior balance of the concept – that is equally sense and essence, determining at the level of philosophical discourse the primordiality of sense and the secondarity of essence. Therefore, the concept becomes the historical process of transformation of the objects' universe into the universe of discourse. „Becoming aware of itself (by discourse) , philosophy must eventually state that the Concept is nothing else but Time, and Time is nothing else but Concept. Philosophy cannot dismantle the truth of this double identification without disassembling itself as Discursive Truth."[5]

With Kojève, the philosophical discourse is unfolded in a structural triplicity: as phenomenological discourse – describing the world as perceived duration, as ontological discourse – that accounts for the objective reality of phenomena, and as energological discourse – that indicates what the objective reality should be, so that the object of discourse can at the same time *be* what we say and *appear* as we say it is.

For Kojève, the philosophical discourse develops as explanation of the sense of a concept that represents the constitutive element of discursive development. Since "the degree

[2] With Foucault, the notion of „episteme*"* or „epistemological points to a „historical a priori" that is the foundation for knowledge and discourse of knowledge, or to the conditions that enable the emergence of some theories and debates, by means of a specific practice of reading. Michel Foucault, **Les Mots et les Choses**, Paris, Gallimard, 1966, p. 13.

[3] B.Hesbois, „Présentation*", in Alexandre Kojève, Le concept, le temps et le discours. Introduction au système du savoir*, Paris, Gallimard, 1990, p.10.

[4] *Ibidem*, p.11

[5] A. Kojève, *op.cit*. p.300.

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of explanation of a sense of a notion can grow ad infinitum[6]", this development represents an: absolute maximum of explanation" or a "philosophical optimum" that is reached through the closure of its circular route, or returning to the starting point (the given notion), so that the result or conclusion coincides with the origin or the prerequisite.[7] As constitutive elements of the philosophical discourse, the concepts are not given as fixed starting points, invariable and perfect; they are reaffirming their self, they are reactivating or re-dimensioning themselves by the very discursive practice, therefore they are not the elements, but events of reasoning. The philosophical discourse is therefore constructivist and establishing[8], and in this quality has two complementary aspects but with differing natures, according to Deleuze and Guattari [9]. One first aspect is the creation of concepts that embody the infinite movement of reasoning, and the second is the drawn plane, the medium or horizon that encompasses this movement. The authors highlight the paradoxical nature of the second aspect, that cannot appear unitary other than through the particular instances generated by the specifics of reasoning's movement. Therefore, „the plan is the object of an infinite specification, which determines it to seem not to be One-and All, other than in each case made particular by the choice of movement."[10]

Starting from the prerequisite that philosophy means enunciation in the name of truth, on condition of admitting this truth solely as a discursive truth, Kojève concludes that the discursive truth philosophy is looking for is no more or less than the act of putting in relation Time and Concept. "Philosophy is nothing else but the progressive introduction of Concept in Time. "[11] Since knowledge as *Logos* (meaning discursive by definition), that establishes or builds a philosophical system is nothing else than a meeting between Concept and Time, and the history of philosophy is the history of progressive penetration of the notion of Time inside the one of Concept, it can be affirmed that "philosophy in its whole is revealed like an introduction of the Concept in Time, introducing Time in the Concept."[12]

If the process by which philosophical enunciation is instituted refuses any dissociation between the operations by which discourse develops its content and the operations by which the frame being presupposed and at the same time structured by the discourse is instituted, we can consider the philosophical discourse as a *constitutive discourse* – in the terms used by Maingueneau – " a discourse that is founding without being founded by any instance other than itself."[13] This enterprise dictates the conceptualization of philosophical discourse as discursive institution, which points to the understanding of philosophical discourse as an event of renunciation. The reflection over the philosophical discourse as a constitutive discourse is necessarily performed on two inseparable dimensions: the dimension of action

[6] A. Kojève, *op.cit*. p.45.
[7] *Ibidem*, p.46.
[8] Etienne Souriau in his research *L'instauration philosophique*, Paris, Alcan, 1939, highlights the fact that all human actions, without any discrimination, create a *just situation of instauration; thus,* Souriau is trying to rehabilitate reason as an instrument of ontic knowledge, performing a problematic transition from gnosiology to ontology.
[9] Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Ce este filosofia? [What is the philosophy]*, Târgovişte Ed. Pandora, 1999, p 36.
[10] *Ibidem*, p.40.
[11] A. Kojève, *op.cit*. p.61.
[12] *Ibidem*, p.80.
[13] D. Maingueneau, *L'énonciation philosophique comme institution discursive, Langages, vol. 29 № 119, Paris, Larousse, 1995* p.14.

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through which the discourse builds its own emergence from the inter-discursive field and the dimension of the process by which the elements of discourse are brought together, forming a textual entirety, fit for a discursive coherence and cohesion. But the philosophical discourse can not be understood as a content allowing the more or less derailed expression of ideologies and mentalities. Since we cannot dissociate the universe of "silent" things and actions from the universe of their representations, we can state that philosophy itself is an activity of generating its own presence in the world and not merely a mediator between a fact and its representation. "Through discourse philosophy is managing its presence in the world, its institution, the conditions of enunciation of the philosophical text being indefectibly entwined inside its meaning"[14]

It can be inferred from here that the philosophical sentence builds up under the sign of impossibility of isolation from the historical frame and even less from the philosophical field – with all the norms and representations associated with its status. In essence it is about a reference performed on the scale of problematic issues, with various and often confusing nuances covering the whole spectrum, from acceptance to questioning. Paradoxically, both extremes of problematization tend towards zero or towards non-problematization: the extreme of acceptance can be judged as absolute inclusion of the frame into the philosophical discourse. But, as shown above, discourse itself is not and can neither be a copy (a double) of the frame, nor its absence, which confers it a paradoxical and even parasitical location that Maingueneau calls *"paratopia"*. In other words, the philosophical discourse has the status of an avatar, its manifestation being a permanent route of positioning and stabilization,[15] a permanent negotiation between frame and non-frame.

In the analysis of the discourse, Marc Angenot[16] enunciates two axioms he considers applicable to the entimematic[17] discourse of knowledge, through which a phenomenon is put in relation, with a conceptual complex that integrates it, and that makes up a surface which can appear as incomplete, with missing spaces, but which is submitting to a discursive coherence of profundity. One first axiom points to the necessity of an adjusting principle – that Angenot calls "place"(*topoï*, in Aristotle) – out of which this putting in relation necessarily derives. In fact, this adjusting principle determines the discursive production, yet surpassing the field of discourse pertinence. The second axiom affirms the teleological character of the discourse of knowledge, which derives from its undisputable functionality and from its orientation towards a cognitive finality. These axioms can be applied to each discourse of knowledge that necessarily "integrates the places in its discursive construction, enclosing the whole discursive universe inside the very discourse". Therefore, the discourse of knowledge (inside which Angenot integrates the philosophical and the scientific discourse) "develops on the surface its profound structures, spreading out in a vast tautology to which nothing can be added any more that may not be already implicitly contained."[18]

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[14] Ibidem, p.16.
[15] If *stabilization* can be recognized and admitted as an impulse and tendency of that which is created, the *stability* can only be valued within the space of ideal.
[16] Marc Angenot, *La parole pamphlétaire. Contribution à la typologie des discours modernes*, Paris, Payot, 1982.
[17] Angenot metaphorically defines the entimema as „a link in a chain of thought whose positioning is neither aleatory, nor reversible, but determined by a general strategy of a cognitive nature." *Ibidem*, p.31.
[18] *Ibidem*, p.32.

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For philosophy, the supreme value is essentially discursive, and has as a result the development of discourse in a system of knowledge. The dogmatism of a philosophical system is nothing else than the transformation of the first principles into discursive evidence, that is concepts. By definition, philosophy is a quest for discursive wisdom that does not have a *zero degree* (a sum of origin meanings that render reality in a way the least perverted by the interference of rhetorics) it relates to, a different one besides the one it proposes and promotes itself. In the case of philosophic discourse, this special relation between the zero degree and error admits no intermediaries. The philosophic discourse is its own zero degree – that is, the sense and significance of concepts start with it, or better said, with the definitions of the theme's basic concepts that the philosophical discourse sets in circulation. In other words, philosophy exists as philosophy, through the language, thus it exists as philosophical discourse, as a *re-statement* of facts to the use of conscience and reason. Still open in a disquieting way remains the problem of pasting together and inflation of the philosophical language, as highlighted by Hottois, who places philosophy (especially the contemporary one) under the sign of a "profound metamorphosis that is leading it towards the universal hermeneutics – towards poetry, literature, écriture or textualism, which determines philosophy to declare that "the symbolic answer remains the only possible and legitimate answer from a human point of view."[19]

By manifestation of the autonomy towards an object, the philosophic discourse affirms its uniqueness to the detriment of univocalness, defying any limit of interpretation. The act of reception becomes the equivalent of an act that is creating new senses and significances, and its uniqueness constitutes the very rationale of interpretation.

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[19] Gilbert Hottois, Maurice Weyembergh, *Richard Rorty ambiguïtés et limites du postmodernisme,* Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1994, p. 174.

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