Towards an Agonistic Perspectivism: Nietzsche on the production of knowledge

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Abstract: According to agonistic perspectivism, which can be inferred from some of Nietzsche's writings, knowledge is the product of power relations between perspectives. These are specifically agonistic relations, not dialectical ones, insofar as the contradictions remain open, indissoluble, leading to no synthesis. In this sense, rhetoric can be considered an agonistic analysis of argumentative *praxis*, compatible with perspectivism. After addressing these theses, the article concludes that rhetoric is a typical art of the republics, where practice and taste for the plurality of points of view and confrontation of arguments prevail.

Keywords: epistemology; language; republic; rhetoric; truth.

> Where we find two principles that cannot be reconciled with one another, then, each man declares the other a fool and heretic.
> I said I would "fight" the other man – but would not I give him reasons? Certainly; but how far do they go? At the end of reasons comes persuasion. (Think about what happens when missionaries convert natives).
> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §§ 611 and 612.

Introduction

Nietzsche's position in the field of the questions related to the production of knowledge, that is, epistemology, can be roughly designated perspectivism. The following words sum up his main idea: "there are no facts, only interpretations" (Nietzsche, 1980d, 7[60]).[1] It is not an epistemology in the sense of a theory of knowledge foundation or justification. In this regard, Nietzsche notes, in posthumous fragment, that the same text "allows for numerous interpretations: there is no 'correct' interpretation" (idem, 1[120]). In another passage, he explains: "What

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1 This epistemological sentence also has a moral version (Nietzsche, 1980c, § 22).

knowledge can only be? – 'Interpretation', not 'explanation'" (idem, 2[86]). Thus, the perspectivist approach to the epistemological problematic intends very precisely to interpret what happens in the plan of knowledge production, rather than trying to justify it. If knowledge is interpretation, knowledge of knowledge is also interpretation. Epistemology has no privileged status.

Assuming a radical anti-foundationist attitude, perspectivism criticizes the traditional conception of truth, not only by dismissing it as a foundation, but also by eliminating the very instance of foundation. Then, it interprets truth in its relation to power, so that truth and power form the basic categorical pair of what we call an agonistic perspectivist epistemology. Now, agonistic perspectivism is an attempt to interpret the cognitive process through an analysis of language as social praxis. Perspectivism thinks language through a pragmatic reflection, whose specificity lies precisely in the use of a notion of power as analytical operator. It is this relation between perspectivism, agonistics and pragmatics that we explore in what comes next.

1. Perspectivism and Agonistics

We can say that perspectivism is agonistic. It conceives the relations between the perspectives, the interpretations, the points of view, as relations of struggle, relations of power. According to Nietzsche (1980e, 14[186]), there is an intrinsic link between the perspectivism, in the epistemological plan, and an agonistics, in the ontological plan, which the following posthumous fragment clearly emphasizes:

> Perspectivism is only a complex form of specificity. I imagine that every specific body aspires to become totally master of space and to extend its force (its will to power), to repel everything that resists its expansion. But incessantly it clashes with the similar aspirations of other bodies and ends up being arranged ("combined") with those that are sufficiently homogeneous to them: then they conspire together for the conquest of power. And the process continues...

An ontological will to power drives each perspective to expand its force, to become a master, to be taken as true. However, as it pursues its claim of truth, each perspective ends up facing resistance and colliding with other perspectives. There is a clash of perspectives, which is precisely what gives each perspective its definition. The relations between the perspectives are conflictive relations that constitute a correlation of forces, that is, an inter-perspective conflictual space. There is a disagreement, a difference, a basic dissent[2] that defines the inter-perspective rapport.

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2 The dissent between statements, *le différend*, is the basic idea of what Lyotard (1983) himself
   considered as his book of philosophy.

Nevertheless, the inter-perspective rapport is not exclusively dissensual. In the quoted passage, Nietzsche makes clear that perspectives seek certain arrangements, combinations, interconnections, so that there are also agreements between perspectives: each perspective, in view of its own interest, associates with other sufficiently homogeneous perspectives, which resemble it as far as they pursue similar objectives of truth. Diverse perspectives form sets, unions, conspiracies, whose unity persists while the common goal has not been reached, while the common enemy still stands. In this sense, the unity of a conspiracy of perspectives is as strong as the enemy they share. Once the obstacle is overcome, when the enemy is finally defeated and the goal is reached, the agonistic dispute is restored within the old union, which dissolves, thus altering the correlation of forces that hitherto prevailed. Then, the process repeats itself. Therefore, agreements, compromises or even consensuses between perspectives are possible, but they have to be merely circumstantial, contingent, conjunctural. Every consensus is preceded by dissent, that is, by the relation of power, the will to power, the *agon*, which defines the inter-perspective space. A universal consensus would be the equivalent of an absolute perspective, an absolute truth, that is, something whose resolute rejection is the starting point of perspectivism.

As relations of power, the relations between the perspectives are agonistic. The notion of *agon* can be read in naturalistic or in historicist terms. In these cases, there is a risk of considering the discourse on physiological or the historical necessities as a kind of ultimate stratum of reality, as truth in itself. Thus, naturalism as well as historicism can lead to the same results as metaphysics. All of them are discourses on the "necessities", that is, all of them support the heavy burden of an ontological compromise with a reality that is essentially and substantially constituted by necessities. Instead of it, it seemed to us that it could be interesting to try to deflate this ontological compromise and that it is possible if we think – and this is thesis we want to advance here – the inter-perspective power relations specifically as discursive relations or language games, which would be, for agonistic perspectivism, also games of power.

At this point, an approach between the thoughts of Nietzsche and Wittgenstein can show great fecundity. Indeed, it is possible to outline a pragmatic reconstruction of perspectivism starting from the parallel between perspectives and language games. We can draw a number of analogies here. First, just as there is no privileged language game playing the role of the essence of language, there is no privileged or essential perspective. Second, as social praxis, the aim of language is the construction of the gregarious space of human interaction, which we can designate as intersubjective or rather inter-perspective. Third, language games are correlates of life forms (*Lebensformen*), as well as perspectives are correlates of certain types (*Typen*) of

existence or vital interests. According to Wittgenstein (1984, § 23): "Here the term 'language game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity or of a form of life". In our view, this is close to what Nietzsche (1980d, 7[60]) says about perspectivism: "It is our needs that interpret the world: our impulses and its pros and cons. Every impulse is a kind of thirst for dominion; each one has its perspective which it would like to impose as a norm on all other impulses". Each language game is part of a form of life, that is, it is an interpretation made according to certain needs, it is a perspective that enables and satisfies certain vital interests. Thus, thinking in terms of perspectives or language games is to establish contexts of local validity and, therefore, to reject the possibility of a non-contextual validity.

On the other hand, perspectives are not exactly identical to language games, for, while Wittgenstein thinks them in a stagnant way, as marked by irreducible incommensurability, Nietzsche understands that perspectives are, in some way, commensurable, since they are always in relations of power, which, indeed, constitute them. Moved by the will to power, each perspective strives to be taken as true, to impose itself as a norm, to become the rule, to establish the regime of truth in its context. To the extent that an agonistic feature characterizes the inter-perspective rapport, Nietzsche points out a solution to the deadlock of incommensurability (Mouffe, 2000). Instead of looking for what is common in all language games and, ultimately, subtracting their radical differences, as long as perspectivism conceives them in dispute, it preserves the differences between language games at the same time that it relates them. Dispute is here the designation for the rapport between heterogeneous perspectives, a kind of assemblage that relate each of its elements in their very heterogeneity, in their difference. In other words, introducing the notion of power as articulation between language games, an agonistic perspectivism is able to overcome their supposed incommensurability.

It is easy to link the notion of game and that of power if we keep in mind that what Nietzsche describes as the will to power is what the ancient Greeks called *agon* (ʼαγών), that is, game in the sense of fight, dispute, combat, competition. We must note that Lyotard does precisely this by formulating the idea of an agonistic pragmatics. Starting from the language games in Wittgenstein's sense, he arrives at a methodological principle for the analysis of linguistic praxis:

> Every utterance should be thought as a "move" in a game. This last observation brings us to the first principle underlying our method as a whole: to speak is to fight, in the sense of playing, and speech acts fall within the domain of a general agonistics. This does not necessarily mean that one plays in order to win. A move can be made for the sheer pleasure of its invention [...]. Great joy is had in the endless invention of turns of phrase, of words and meanings, the process behind the evolution of language on the plan of *parole*. But undoubtedly even this pleasure depends on a feeling of success

won at the expense of an adversary – at least one adversary, and a formidable one (Lyotard, 1979, p. 17).

In these terms, Lyotard finds in Nietzsche the basic insight for the formulation of an agonistics of language. In his turn, Nietzsche approaches the notion of *agon* inspired by an analysis of the discursive-argumentative praxis developed by the ancient Greeks in the time of the invention of democracy. Then, on our own account, we state that we have not to conceive language games as incommensurable, since we may understand them as perspectives, which relate to each other in a conflicting, dissensual, agonistic way. In what follows, we try to demonstrate how this idea can operate as the touchstone of a perspectivist conception of language and, consequently, of knowledge.

Thus, meaning is a creation or a production that does not take place *ex nihilo*, it does not happen out of nowhere, but within the conditions of an *agon* of perspectives. In this sense, at the starting point of perspectivism, there is an agonistics of language. We can find some clues of reconstruction in a footnote of *The Postmodern Condition*. "Agonistics is in the basis of Heraclitus' ontology and the Sophists' dialectics, not to mention the early tragedians. A good part of Aristotle's reflections in the *Topics* and the *Sophistici Elenchi* is devoted to it" (idem, p. 19, n. 35). Lyotard also refers to a text by Nietzsche, *Homer's Contest*, one of his *Prefaces to Unwritten Works*, which uniquely condenses the Nietzschean reflections on the *agon*. Following these guidelines, our approach consists in analyzing the praxis of agonistic language games, the *agon* of words (*parole*), which the ancient Greeks used to call rhetoric.

2. Agonistics and Dialectics

Besides articulating itself as an ontological hypothesis, the notion of *agon* also provides a scheme for the analysis of what goes on at the epistemic plan, that is, at the plan of the production of knowledge. Indeed, the notion of *agon* functions as a perspective that makes it possible to think, in global terms, about the relation between different perspectives. In other words, the notion of *agon* plays the role of conceptual operator in an analysis that has as its starting point, obviously, in a deconstruction of Platonism. In *Homer's Contest*, Nietzsche (1980a) writes:

> in Plato's dialogues, that which has a prominent artistic sense is, most often, the result of a rivalry with the art of the speakers, the Sophists, the playwrights of his time, discovered so that he could finally say: "See, I can also do what my greatest opponents can; yes, I can do it better than them. No Protagoras created myths as beautiful as mine, no playwright, a whole as rich and captivating as the *Symposium*, no speaker composed speeches like the ones I present in the *Gorgias* – and now I reject all this together, and I condemn all imitative art! Only the dispute made me a

poet, a Sophist, a speaker!" What a problem for us when we ask about the relation of contest in the conception of the work of art! –

A critic of democracy, especially of the public disputes around the *doxa*, Plato retires from the *agora*, the natural habitat of the Sophists and the orators, to find, in the dialogue of the soul with itself, the path to *episteme* and to truth, the dialectics. In this sense, Platonic dialectics is a counter-movement in relation to the agonistic spirit present, of course, in sophistry, but also in tragic poetry and in the philosophy of *physis*. Indeed, Platonic dialectics is largely the opposite of agonistics. However, proposing his own philosophy as an overcoming of all agonistics, Plato ends up restoring the very spirit of *agon*. Thus, for Nietzsche (as for Aristophanes[3]), Socrates is not an anti-sophist, but the most skillful of all the Sophists, the only one who is able to overcome them in the terms of their own quarrels. An agonistic rivalry over his intellectual enemies, the Sophists, the poets, and the philosophers of *physis*, is the propeller shaft of Platonic dialectics itself. In these terms, Nietzsche (1980b, §§ 8 e 23) refers to dialectics in two different passages of *Twilight of the Idols*:

> I pointed out how Socrates could be disgusting, the more I have to explain *why* he fascinated me. – One reason is that he discovered a new species of *agon*, of which he was the first master of fencing in the aristocratic circles of Athens. He fascinated by tinkering with the agonal instinct of the Greeks – brought a variant to the struggle between young men and teenagers. Socrates was also a great erotic.

> Philosophy, in the way of Plato, would be defined as an erotic competition, as an improvement and internalization of the old agonal gymnastics and its *presuppositions*… what was generated, finally, by this philosophical eroticism of Plato? A new artistic form of the Hellenic *agon*, the dialectics.

According to Nietzsche, personified in the figure of Socrates, the Platonic dialectics is a new species of *agon*, that surpasses the agonistics of the sophists and, to that extent, feeds on the same agonistic spirit that runs the sophistical contests. Getting out from the *agora*, Plato wanted to place himself *hors-concours*, that is, he wanted to overcome, in advance and by principle, all argumentative dispute. Plato literally wanted to be right. He wanted his perspective to be evaluated not based on the ordinary opinion of the lay majority, but in accordance with a standard based on criteria conceived as valid in itself. Thus, in founding metaphysics, Plato thought he had discovered the path that leads to truth as such, the dialectics, but he had invented no more than philosophical work, a marvelous one, indeed, but still a work. The great creation of Plato, the "poet", was metaphysics. About that, in another important posthumous fragment, Nietzsche (1980d, 6[12]) notes:

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3 From the point of view of Athenian common sense, Aristophanes (2012) describes Socrates as a sophist.

> The inventive force, which has composed categories, works in the service of necessity, of security, of fast understanding based on signs and sounds, of reductionisms: – there are not metaphysical truths in the cases of "substance", "subject", "object", "being", "becoming". – The mighty ones made laws of the name of things: and, among the mighty ones, the great artists of the abstraction elaborated the categories.

For sure, Plato must be conceived as an example of those mighty ones, of those great and powerful artists, and not anyone, but the one upon which the entire Western philosophical tradition is built.

It is as a modality of dialectics, not in the sense of Plato, but as the art of discussion, that agonistics moves from politics to philosophy. Here, Nietzsche's thought is closer from Aristotle than from Plato. Let us remember that, breaking with Platonism, Aristotle (1960) defines dialectics as the argumentation based on generally accepted opinions (*topoi*), not aimed to the necessarily true, but to likelihood or verisimilitude. Thus, for Aristotle, rhetoric is the primordial modality of dialectics, and its species of eminently polemical character, that is, deliberative rhetoric, present in politics, and judicial rhetoric, proper to law, constitute what we can call the agonistic argumentative praxis.

In other words, agonistics is the contentious rhetoric known by the ancient Greek as eristic, term whose root contains the name of Eris, goddess of envy and competition, and its ambiguity. In the *Sophist*, Plato (2015) defines eristic as the combat or the contest, conducted with art, relative to the just itself or to the unjust itself, and to other general questions, in which arguments oppose themselves. Thus, Plato associates sophistry and eristic. On his turn, Aristotle (1955) claims that the eristic arguer is the one who acts with the sole purpose of winning. Finally, retaking Aristotle, in Modernity, Schopenhauer (2017) understands the dialectical eristic as an "intellectual fencing", that is, an art to discuss in order to prevail, and this by licit or illicit means (*per fas et per nefas*).

We can conclude that agonistics consists of the linguistic-argumentative praxis whose domain the Sophists claimed to be capable of teaching. In short, it is the art of the word, the rhetoric. In this sense, Nietzsche spares no praise for the Sophists, who, unlike Socrates and Plato, were genuinely Greek, for they promoted the agonistic spirit peculiar to the Greece of the Golden Century. Regarding the role played by the Sophists in the ancient context, in a posthumous fragment, Nietzsche (1980e, 14[116]) writes:

> The moment is very remarkable: the sophists strike, with the first *critic of the moral*, the first *vision* of the moral...
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> – they place side by side (local conditioning) most of moral judgments of value
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> – they suggest that all morals can be dialectically justified, – that makes no difference: that is, they are suspicious that every justification of any morality must necessarily be sophistical –

– a sentence which has ever since been demonstrated in style by the classical philosophers, beginning with Plato (until Kant)

– they establish as a first truth that there is no "morality in itself", no "good in itself", that it is a delirium to speak in "truth" in this sector

Where, after all, was the *sense of justice of the intellect* at that time?

the Greek culture of the Sophists had emerged from all Greek instincts: it belongs to the culture of the Pericles' period as necessary as Plato does not belong to it: it has its predecessors in Heraclitus, in Democritus, in the scientific types of ancient philosophy; has, for example, its expression in the high culture of Thucydides

and, finally, she was right: all progress of the gnoseological and moral knowledge has *restored* the Sophists ...

our current way of thinking is, to a large degree, Heraclitian, Democritic and Protagoric... it would suffice to say Protagoric, because Protagoras sewed together the two pieces Heraclitus and Democritus.

The expansion of commercial and cultural exchange and the consequent process of relativization of worldviews based on the myth generate, among the Greeks of the Classical Era, a cosmopolitan atmosphere of pluralism that engendered the philosophy of *physis*, gathered the conditions for the invention of democracy, and led to the rise of sophistry. Thus, for Nietzsche, the contemporary way of thinking is "Protagoric" precisely because we live in a cultural and geopolitical climate quite similar to the Greek "small globalization" of the 6th and 5th centuries BC. Like that of the Greeks, our time has as the dominant tonic the crisis of the foundation, the *Grundlagenkrise* (Lyotard, 1986). In their context, the Sophists realized that one does not argue alone and that, as praxis, argumentation does not lead to the ultimate grounding. Their argumentative praxis highlighted the polemical dimension of language. They have shown that all argumentation takes place in an arena in which diverse perspectives oppose themselves. The Sophists knew that the domain of rhetoric is decisive in the areas of political-deliberative and judicial argumentation. Whether through Protagoras' relativism or Gorgias' nihilism, pragmatically, they abandoned the quest for truth itself, for *episteme*, and proceeded to plead only the verisimilitude, on the formation of a *doxa*, by means of persuasive argumentation. Unlinking language from its apophantic function, the sophists emphasized the power of language to construct truths through the practice of argumentation. Therefore, truth emerges as the result of argumentative dispute, of an *agon* of perspectives, in which the perspective that succeeds in the confrontation with the others perspectives is considered true. Thus, starting from the understanding that rhetoric is an agonistic analysis of argumentative praxis, we can say that it is what is at the basis of perspectivism.

3. Language, Rhetoric, and Truth

Nietzsche's (1967, § 4) lectures on ancient rhetoric, together with *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, contain much of his conception of language. The rediscovery of these writings has even led some commentators (Kremer-Marietti, 1992, p. 9) to talk about a *tournant rhétorique* of Nietzsche's thought. In view of elaborating the notion of an agonistic perspectivism, let us take a closer look at some aspects of these writings.

In dealing with the relationship between rhetoric and language in the *Lecture Notes on Rhetoric*, Nietzsche opposes the distinction between a rhetorical language – the discourse that uses as devices of persuasion – and a non-rhetorical language – the allegedly neutral discourse that would describe the real as such. We can find this distinction, for example, in Aristotle, for whom, the non-rhetorical discourse, so-called "natural", aims the truth, what is necessarily true, while the rhetorical discourse turns to the verisimilitude, to what is just possibly true. In these terms, the West tradition of thought conceived a non-rhetorical "naturalness" of language as opposed to an artificially rhetorical language. Nietzsche (1967, § 3) rejects this distinction, formulating the basic thesis of his approach, according to which "language itself is the result of purely rhetorical arts". The rhetorical use of language would not be a consequence of the development nor a deviation of language, first and in itself, non-rhetorical. On the contrary, rhetoric lies in the very genesis of language.

Nietzsche defines rhetoric as a force to make be taken for true, in each thing, what is effective. As such, rhetoric is the "essence of language" (idem, ibidem). This means that language is not essentially the description of the objective world, nor its most adequate representation. Language is not an *episteme*. Rather, it is a question of taking for true, by the means of language, a *doxa*, an opinion, an apprehension of the world, which is always a perspective. Nietzsche (idem, ibidem) writes: "It is not the things that penetrate the consciousness, but the way we relate to them, the *pithanon*. The full essence of things is never apprehended". The essence of things is permanently out of reach because our way of relating to them, that is, the empirical experience, apprehends nothing through and through, but only one of various aspects of each thing. Before we exhaust the experience, we take this particular aspect for the essence of the thing. As soon as a subject articulate it linguistically, she transmits her perspective apprehension of the thing to another subject, trying to take it for true, trying to win the other's adhesion. In other words, it is in rhetorical terms that we raise our pretensions of truth. In short, Nietzsche (idem, ibidem) affirms that "language is rhetorical because it only wants to convey a *doxa*, not an episteme". We can say that language is not about discovering the truth of the things, but about

taking for true, something that is not nor can true. In effect, this notion of "taking for true" (*für-wahr-halten*) is decisive for Nietzsche's entire thought. In a posthumous fragment, written much later than the *Lecture Notes on Rhetoric*, he remarks:

> The most original acts of thought, affirming and denying, taking it for true (*für-wahr-halten*) and taking it for not true, insofar as it presupposes not only a custom, but a right to take for true or to take for not true – are already dominated by a belief that there is for us knowledge, that judgment can actually reach the truth (Nietzsche, 1980d, 9[97]).

Here we have a critique of the theory of truth as correspondence, which we can formulated in the following terms. According to this theory, true are the statements that correspond to facts, false are the ones that does not correspond. Nevertheless, there are cases in which we cannot establish a relationship of correspondence between words and things. There are also cases where correspondence relationships, long taken for granted, were later dismissed. Finally, there are cases in which a discourse, that presupposes a relationship of contestable or contested correspondence, is still taken for true. This is precisely what Nietzsche calls *für-wahr-halten*. It is what is considered truth, although nobody knows if it is or not. The fundamental example for this is the concept of "God". We can say that, even though God has never existed, even if this has been universally proved, yet the concept of "God", the statements and discourses that employ it, will have produced effects of truth or will have been taken for true (*für-wahr-gehalt*). Furthermore, it is perfectly possible that these taken for true discourses continue to produce effects that can be termed effects of truth, even after been proved false. They are not true, but they produce effects as if they were.

Let us remark that this does not concern the truth-value, in the sense of logic, of these statements. Indeed, they produce effects of truth, so to speak, outside the realm of logic or according to a logic that they try to establish themselves and they produce these effects regardless of whether they are true or false. Indeed, the effects that indeterminate or indeterminable statements produce are not simply effects of truth, but also effects of power. Hence, Nietzsche says that the will of truth is the will to power. The idea is that none wants the truth for the truth. For example, in general, one does not want to have the truth about God simply to have this truth. What is wanted is to exercise the power conferred upon who holds the truth about God. Even the atheists can exercise this power over the truth about God.

In the *Lecture Notes on Rhetoric*, Nietzsche deconstructs the essentialist conception of language, dissolving the opposition between literal and figurative language, that is, between denotation and connotation. He says: "all words are in themselves and from the beginning, as to their meaning, tropes" (Nietzsche, 1967, § 3). If all language is rhetorical, then every use of it is figured; our terms

and propositions always function as figures of speech, such as tropes (synecdoches, metaphors, metonymies etc.), that is, as improper designations. In other words, strictly speaking, it is not possible to distinguish between proper and improper designations, since the meaning is always tropic or rhetorical. This implies a rupture with the essentialist semantics, which intends to solve the problem of the relation between signs and objects in terms of correspondence. Apparently, Nietzsche moves towards a rhetorical conception of semantics, for which the meaning would not be describing, but to taking for true. In this sense, language is always connotative and the very idea of denotation stems from renitent incomprehension, not about the logic structure of language, but about its rhetorical character. This is why, based on Nietzsche, we could talk about a rhetorical therapy of language (Danto, 1980, p. 83). Nevertheless, Nietzsche's movement is more radical, since it forces the abandonment of all semantics in the name of a pragmatic rhetoric. From this point of view, the problem of meaning has to be put in terms of a specific kind use, which we can define as a rhetorical use, since it aims convincing, that is, the adherence of the interlocutor to the claim of truth linguistically articulated.

Of course, this Nietzsche's *tour de force* toward a kind of pragmatic rhetorical analysis of language constitutes a conceptually consistent rupture with the traditional essentialist project of discovering truths and foundations in general. Thus, to say that language is rhetorical is not tantamount to revealing the essence of language. It is not a matter of affirming that "the essence of language is without essence", leading the rhetorical reflection on language to implode in self-refutation. Indeed, as rhetoric, language only intends verisimilitude, and not essences or the truth itself. Evaluated on its own criteria, the claim of truth of a rhetorical analysis of language is no more than a claim to verisimilitude. Therefore, it is plausible to say that language is rhetorical. However, we must understand it from an interpretative, experimental point of view, that is, on the horizon of a perspectivism.

Following these terms, Nietzsche defends a relativized pretension of truth, that is, a pretension of verisimilitude, both in the practical use of language and in its analytic-reflexive use. With this, the distinction between first and second-order discourses fall apart. Rhetoric-pragmatic analysis is not nor intends to be a meta-language. Moreover, there is no need to exclude terms like "essential", "fundamental", "true", "really" etc., from everyday linguistic praxis nor from the analytic approaches. There is no need for therapeutic correction of language. We only should understand that, since they are purely performative, these terms play a rhetorical function, which is their role in the process of convincing. We can simply deflate predicates such as "is the essence", "is the foundation", "is true", "is fact" etc. The point is that we should not interpret these predicates in a descriptive sense, but regarding the performative function of rhetorical emphasis that they exert in the

discourse of a subject, which aims adhesion, which tries to make a certain statement be taken for true. In other words, none comes to believe that something is true simply by hearing that "it's true". However, this predicate fulfills the rhetorical function of reinforcing what we want to be taken for true, it is an artifice with which we establish a position. Therefore, in no way, it is useless. In short, we can say that, for Nietzsche, the predicate "is true" exerts a performative function that is rhetorical, since it emphasizes what the subject claims, rhetorically reinforcing it and, thus, fulfilling an important role in the process of winning adhesion.

Language is rhetorical because its use aims, above all, convincing. Hence, the definition according to which, language is the force to make be taken for true, in each case, what is effective. Therefore, assuming that there is a tangled web of power relations at the basis of every claim to truth, Nietzsche develops a pragmatic rhetorical analysis of language. By the way, in this sense, we can understand the definition of truth that he formulates in *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*:

> What then is the truth? A mobile battalion of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in sum, an amount of human relations, which have been emphasized, transposed, adorned, poetically and rhetorically, and which, after long use, appear, to a people, solid, canonical and obligatory: truths are illusions, of which we forgot what they are, metaphors that have become worn out and without significant force, coins that have lost their figure and now come into consideration as metal, no longer as coins (Nietzsche, 1980f, § 1).

We can say that true is that metaphor that is no longer taken as a mere metaphor, that is, the perspective whose perspectivistic character was, after long use, forgotten or erased, so that it now passes as truth. In other words, true is that metaphor, rhetorically emphasized, which is taken for true and, as such, exerts effects of power. The will of truth is the will to power. A pragmatic rhetorical analysis of language goes along with the perspectivist conception of knowledge elaborated by Nietzsche.

Final Considerations

There is yet another important thesis in the *Lecture Notes on Rhetoric* about the relation between language, truth, and power. According to Nietzsche (1967, § 1), rhetoric is not, strictly speaking, a democratic, but a "republican art: one has to be accustomed to bear the opinions and the most alien points of view and even to feel some pleasure in the contradiction". If rhetoric is a republican art, the obvious question to ask is what characterizes the conception of republic here implied. In Nietzsche's text, this explanation comes just after the enunciation of the thesis. The republic that is presupposed here is a political regime, marked by plurality

and controversy. In a republican environment, political deliberations are based on a plurality of points of view. The regime is republican when and where there is the custom of standing a great diversity of points of view. Therefore, in the sense of Nietzsche, the republic consists of this plurality of perspectives that oppose each other in order to deliberate, that is, to make one of several perspectives be taken for true.

The agonistic disposition of feeling pleasure in the contradiction, that is, the taste for controversy characterizes the republican attitude. However, it is not a matter of taste. For the republic to function as a deliberative system, it is necessary that the various points of view effectively enter into controversy, it is necessary to establish a set of dictions and contradictions, a contradictory of perspectives. The pleasure of the contradiction is a secondary objective that stems from the success that a perspective conquers in the game with the others. We take pleasure in contradicting when we succeed in making our perspective be taken for true, when we convince others, as if by doubling their point of view, converting it to ours. Rhetoric *par excellence*, eloquence is precisely the faculty of making divergent points of view converge. In this respect, Nietzsche (idem, ibidem) alludes a passage from Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*:

> Eloquence, says Schopenhauer, is the ability to share our opinions and our way of thinking about one thing, to communicate our own feelings to others, to bring them into harmony with us. We must arrive at this result, by making penetrate, through words, our ideas in their brains with such a force that their own thoughts stray from its primitive course to follow our own. The masterpiece will be more perfect the more the previous course of their ideas differs from ours.

Eloquence is the art of composing convergences, not consensuses. In the game of perspectives, although convergences are possible, the divergence is first (Rancière, 1996). Every perspective at stake aims for convergence, for it equals success. Every perspective forces the others to converge in the direction in which it points. In other words, all convergence is a correlation of forces and, as such, is circumstantial, precarious, and tense. Agreements are possible, but they are merely phatic. Soon or later, the correlation between the perspectives falls apart and the play of positions and oppositions continues.

To conclude, we can define rhetoric as the theory and the practice of power relations in language. While eristic, rhetoric is present at the genesis of language. In rhetorical games, the *agon* of words develops in a democratic or republican way. The democratic *agon* is a sublimated form of the physical *agon*, that is, of the corporal struggle. In its turn, eristic is the sublimation of the *polemos*. Here we have a refinement of power relations: from the opposition between physical forces (brute force), we pass to the opposition between symbolic forces (discursive

force) and, with this, there is no loss, but gain of power. Rhetoric emerges when the deliberative center of society migrates from the court to the public square, when the *agora* is established (Vernant, 1962). Therefore, we can say that what happens in the *agora* is an *agon* of perspectives. Rhetoric is a plural and controversial political game, a perspectivistic and agonistic game. Thus, on the one hand, Nietzsche's agonistic perspectivism allows thinking that perspectives are not incommensurable. On the other hand, it allows perspectives not to be conceived in a harmonious or consensual sense, but as constituted in and by conflict. It is in these terms that agonistic perspectivism provides a general explanation of what happens on the plan of knowledge production.

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