



The History of Discourse as Literary History

On the Historicity and Documentation of a Concept Exemplified by the 'Philosophical Discourse'

Fee-Alexandra Haase

Abstract

The literature, which has formed our concept of discourse, can serve as a literary documentation of the history of discourse. In this article we will discuss the historical documents valuable for the historical development of literature contributing to the history of discourse in Europe from ancient Greek time to postmodernity. Besides the mainstream understanding of discourse in contemporary English any interested person into the subject will soon reach the borders of understanding discourse as a subject, when reaching the historically diverse forms of discourse. Indeed, discourse has its own history and such a history of discourse is a part of this article.

I. Introduction: Research on the History of Discourse

The origin of the word 'discourse' can be traced back to the cultural background of Greek dialectical communication practiced and learned by the public speakers. So the Platonic dialogues of Socrates are the paradigm of dialectical conversation of speakers in academic tradition. The discourse is here introduced as the formal discussion of the entities of the 'universe of discourse' according to logical principles we discuss. Differentiation is here used as a tool to distinguish in the 'universe of discourse' all the entities that contribute to the discussion in a specific function. For example we look for all entities that function as humans among all living objects. We can list here men and women discriminating entities by gender or in discrimination by age child, young adult, adult, and old persons. In other words: The discrimination is the process of a distinguishing listing of all objects that contribute to the discussion of the function. In our case the function would be for example 'description of humans according to their gender' or 'description of humans according to their age'.

'Discourse' in the *Philosophy Dictionary* is defined as "a continuous stretch of language containing more than one sentence: conversations, narratives, arguments, speeches. Discourse analysis is the social and linguistic description of norms governing such productions, and may include (in critical linguistics) focuses upon the social and political determinants of the form discourse takes; for instance, the hidden presuppositions that the persons addressed are of a certain class, race, or gender." (*Philosophy Dictionary*). The philosopher Roland Barthes mentioned the sub-genres 'historical discourse'. Barthes wrote in *The Discourse of History* about the historical discourse: "Historical discourse takes for granted, so to speak, a double operation which is very crafty. At one point (this break-down is of course only metaphorical) the referent is detached from the discourse, becomes external to it, its founding and governing principle: this is the point of the *res gestae*, when the discourse offers itself quite simply as *historia rerum gestarum*. But at a second point, it is the signified itself which forced out and becomes confused with the referent; the referent enters into a direct relation with the signifier, and the discourse, solely charged with expressing the real, believes itself authorized to dispense with the fundamental term in imaginary structures, which is the signified." (Barthes). Barthes wrote in *The Discourse of History* also: "The formal description of sets of words beyond the level of the sentence (what

we call for convenience discourse) is not a modern development: from Gorgias to the nineteenth century, it was the special concern of traditional rhetoric. Recent developments in the science of language have nonetheless endowed it with a new timeliness and new methods of analysis: a linguistic description of discourse can perhaps already be envisaged at this stage; because of its bearings on literary analysis (whose importance in education is well known) it is one of the first assignments for semiology to undertake." (Barthes). Musolff discussed the term and concept 'discourse history' recently in *Cognitive Linguistics in Critical Discourse Analysis*. Musolff wrote that 'Discourse history' can be conceived of as a sub- or sister-discipline of historical linguistics that focuses on socio- and pragmalinguistically motivated changes. (Musolff 2007: 28).

The variations of meanings of the term 'discourse' lead us to the upcoming of a historical perspective of discourse with changing definitions of the term. Another dimension of the discourse in the literary one; discourses have been since antiquity used as literary text type of the prose literature. 'Discourse' in the *Literary Dictionary* is defined as "any extended use of speech or writing; or a formal exposition or dissertation. In linguistics, discourse is the name given to units of language longer than a single sentence; discourse analysis is the study of cohesion and other relationships between sentences in written or spoken discourse. In modern cultural theory, especially in the post-structuralism associated with the French historian Michel Foucault, the term has been used to denote any coherent body of statements that produces a selfconfirming account of reality by defining an object of attention and generating concepts with which to analyze it (e.g. medical discourse, legal discourse, aesthetic discourse). The specific discourse in which a statement is made will govern the kinds of connections that can be made between ideas, and will involve certain assumptions about the kind of person (s) addressed. By extension, as a free-standing noun ('discourse' as such), the term denotes language in actual use within its social and ideological context and in institutionalized representations of the world called discursive practices. In general, the increased use of this term in modern cultural theory arises from dissatisfaction with the rather fixed and abstract term 'language' (see langue); by contrast, 'discourse' better indicates the specific contexts and relationships involved in historically produced uses of language." (*Literary Dictionary*). Musolff in *Is There Such a Thing as Discourse History? The Case of Metaphor* wrote: "'Discourse history' can be conceived of as a sub- or sister-discipline of historical linguistics that focuses on socio- and pragmalinguistically motivated changes." (Musolff).

II. Early Beginnings of Discourse in Greek and Roman Literature

The Discourse in Antiquity

The dialogues ascribed to Plato use the inquiry technique, which opens the discourse and allows answering the asked person a question with 'yes' or 'no'. Such a logically structured discourse with questions and options to answer is of course highly artificial. On the contrary, a dialogue in everyday real world conditions is not structured to discuss an abstract topic by means of reason. Actually, we must say that a discourse in the real world is not pre-structured and the interest of a speaker is not to fulfill the guidelines of a discourse, but to converse to get information or communicate information. Plato lets Theaet in the *Sophist* in a discourse with the stranger say: "Theaet. Quite true. Str. A succession of nouns only is not a sentence any more than of verbs without nouns. Theaet. I do not understand you. Str. I see that when you gave your assent you had something else in your mind. But what I intended to say was, that

a mere succession of nouns or of verbs is not discourse. Theaet. What do you mean? Str. I mean that words like "walks," "runs," "sleeps," or any other words which denote action, however many of them you string together, do not make discourse. Theaet. How can they?" (Plato 2009: 36). Theaet in the *Sophist* says: "Theaet. True. Str. And, observe that we were only just in time in making a resistance to such separatists, and compelling them to admit that one thing mingles with another. Theaet. Why so? Str. Why, that we might be able to assert discourse to be a kind of being; for if we could not, the worst of all consequences would follow; we should have no philosophy. Moreover, the necessity for determining the nature of discourse presses upon us at this moment; if utterly deprived of it, we could no more hold discourse; and deprived of it we should be if we admitted that there was no admixture of natures at all". (Plato 2009: 34). In the dialogue *Sophist* Theaet also converses with the stranger: "Theaet. True. Str. Most ridiculous of all will the men themselves be who want to carry out the argument and yet forbid us to call anything, because participating in some affection from another, by the name of that other. Theaet. Why so? Str. Why, because they are compelled to use the words "to be," "apart," "from others. "in itself," and ten thousand more, which they cannot give up, but must make the connecting links of discourse;" (Plato 2009: 45). Plato in *Gorgias* lets Socrates say: "And at the very outset, Gorgias, it was said that rhetoric treated of discourse, not (like arithmetic) about odd and even, but about just and unjust? Was not this said?" (Plato. *Gorgias*). Gorgias and Socrates converse regarding discourse topics:

Socrates: Of discourse concerning diseases?

Gorgias: Just so.

Socrates: And does not gymnastic also treat of discourse concerning the good or evil condition of the body?

Gorgias: Very true.

Socrates: And the same, Gorgias, is true of the other arts:--all of them treat of discourse concerning the subjects with which they severally have to do.

Gorgias: Clearly.

Socrates: Then why, if you call rhetoric the art which treats of discourse, and all the other arts treat of discourse, do you not call them arts of rhetoric?

Gorgias: Because, Socrates, the knowledge of the other arts has only to do.

(Plato. *Gorgias*)

Seneca rhetor in his *Controversiae* (1, 3, 6) uses the expression *discursus*: "Ab Tarpeio ad Vestam, cuius vittam carnifex rupit; a templo ad saxum, a saxo ad templum: hac pudicae sacerdotis inter supplicia et vota discursus est." (Seneca the Rhetor). Seneca rhetor in his *Controversiae* (2, 3, 66, 7) also uses the expression discourse in all arts (in omnes artes discursus). (Seneca the Rhetor). The philosopher Seneca wrote in *De Otio* (6, 5, 7): "Sed idem nihilo minus non segnem egere vitam: invenerunt, quemadmodum plus quies ipsorum hominibus prodesset quam aliorum discursus et sudor." (Seneca the Philosopher). Also the philosopher Seneca in his *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium* (epist. 36, 11) wrote using discourse as a movement of stars: "Stellarum iste discursus quicquid praeteriit repetit: pars caeli levatur assidue, pars mergitur." (Seneca the Philosopher). Seneca wrote in *Ad Serenum De Otio* (VI. 5.): "Ad summam, quaero an ex praeceptis suis uixerint Cleanthes et Chrysippus et Zenon. <Non> dubie respondebis sic illos uixisse quemadmodum dixerant esse uiuendum: atqui nemo illorum rem publicam administravit. 'Non fuit' inquis 'illis aut ea fortuna aut ea dignitas quae admitti ad publicarum rerum tractationem solet.' Sed idem nihilominus non segnem egere uitam: inuenerunt quemadmodum plus quies ipsorum hominibus prodesset quam aliorum discursus et sudor. Ergo nihilominus hi multum egisse uisi sunt, quamuis nihil publice agerent." (Seneca the Philosopher). Quintilian in the 5th

declamation writes (declamatio 5, 11, 95,10) “Quid vero, si in educationem, in discursus, in pretia vacuatus sum?” (Quintilian). Quintilian in his *Institutio Oratoria* (1, 12, 10) writes: “videlicet ut corpora infantium nec casus, quo in terram totiens deferuntur, tam graviter adfligit nec illa per manus et genua reptatio nec post breve tempus continui lusus et totius diei discursus, quia pondus illis abest nec se ipsi gravant: sic animi quoque, credo, quia minore conatu moventur nec suo nisu studiis insistunt, sed formandos se tantummodo praestant, non similiter fatigantur.” (Quintilian). Cicero takes Aristotele as the authority for genres in *De Inventione* (I, 7): „Aristoteles autem, qui huic arti plurima adiumenta atque ornamenta subministravit, tribus in generibus rerum versari rhetoris officium putavit, demonstrativo, deliberativo, iudiciali.” (Cicero). The term 'genre' can be traced back to the Latin term *genus*. The term genre is used in literature studies and rhetoric. The discourse can be considered a literary genre of writings of philosophy and rhetoric. Often philosophers wrote in the genre discourse a reasoning written literary form. The genres of discourse were developed and practiced by rhetoricians and philosophers in ancient Greece.

Discourse as Genre and Type: Paradigmatic Discourse Types of the New Time

Guillelmus de Ockham wrote in his *Summa Logicae* (1, 8, 123): “Et si dicatur quod per istam viam possem impedire quemcumque syllogismum, dicendo in aliquo terminorum aliquod tale aequivalenter includi, dicendum quod ad sciendum an aliquis discursus valeat, oportet praesupponere significata vocabulorum, et secundum hoc iudicandum est de discursu an sit bonus vel non.” (Ockham). Godefroy established in the *Dictionnaire de l'Ancienne Langue Française et de Tous Ses Dialectes du IXe au XVe Siècle* the following definitions:

DISCOURS, s.m.

cours, course:

Le semblable encore advient par son entree et discours (du soleil) au signe du Taureau. (Descr. du Nil, ap. Leon, Descr. de l'Afr., p. 294, éd. 1556.)

DISCOURS, s.m. [Compl.]

action de parler; propos, conseil:

Par discours fantasques. (EST. PASQ., Lett., V, f° 133 v°, éd. 1586.)

Si ceux dont tu parles eussent esté de bon discours, ils eussent tout autrement donné de moy a entendre qu'ils n'ont fait. (EST. PASQ., l'Alexandre.)

(Godefroy)

In the early 15th century Nicolaus Cusanus used the term *discursus* in his writing: “Logica igitur atque omnis philosophica inquisitio nondum ad visionem venit. Hinc, uti venaticus canis utitur in vestigiis per sensibile experimentum discursu sibi indito, ut demum ea via ad quaesitum attingat: sic quodlibet animal suo modo – et sapientissimus Philo eapropter omnibus animalibus dixit rationem inesse, uti beatissimus recitat Hieronymus in De illustribus viris –, sic homo logica. Nam, ut ait Algazel, “logica nobis naturaliter indita est; nam est vis rationis”. Rationabilia vero animalia ratiocinantur. Ratiocinatio quaerit et discurrit. Discursus est necessario terminatus inter terminos a quo et ad quem, et illa adversa sibi dicimus contradictoria. Unde rationi discurrenti termini oppositi et disiuncti sunt. Quare in regione rationis extrema sunt disiuncta, ut in ratione circuli, quae est, quod lineae a centro ad

circumferentiam sint aequales, centrum non potest coincidere cum circumferentia." (Nicolaus Cusanus), In 1516 Niccolo Machiavelli wrote the *Discourses Upon The First Ten Books of Titus Livy* dedicated to Zanobi Buondelmonti and to Cosimo Machiavelli. Milton used the term 'discourse' for speech in *Paradise Lost* (Book 9):

*Hee, after EVE seduc't, unminded slunk
Into the Wood fast by, and changing shape
To observe the sequel, saw his guileful act
By EVE, though all unweeting, seconded
Upon her Husband, saw thir shame that sought
Vain covertures; but when he saw descend
The Son of God to judge them, terrifi'd
Hee fled, not hoping to escape, but shun
The present, fearing guiltie what his wrath
Might suddenly inflict; that past, return'd
By Night, and listning where the hapless Paire
Sate in thir sad discourse, and various plaint,
Thence gatherd his own doom, which understood
Not instant, but of future time. With joy
And tidings fraught, to Hell he now return'd,
And at the brink of CHAOS, neer the foot
Of this new wondrous Pontifice, unhop't
Met who to meet him came, his Ofspring dear.
Great joy was at thir meeting, and at sight
Of that stupendious Bridge his joy encreas'd.
Long hee admiring stood, till Sin, his faire
Inchanting Daughter, thus the silence broke.*
(Milton)

Hobbes in *Of Man, Being the First Part of Leviathan* wrote: "Of all 'discourse', governed by desire of knowledge there is at last an "end", either by attaining or by giving over. And in the chain of discourse, wheresoever it be interrupted, there is an end for that time. If the discourse be merely mental, it consisteth of thoughts that the thing will be, and will not be; or that it has been, and has not been, alternately. So that wheresoever you break off the chain of a man's discourse, you leave him a presumption of "it will be," or "it will not be," or "it has been," or "has not been."" (Hobbes 2009: 22). Hobbes also wrote: "For a dog by custom will understand the call or the rating of his master; and so will many other beasts. That understanding which is peculiar to man is the understanding not only his will but his conceptions and thoughts, by the sequel and contexture of the names of things into affirmations, negations, and other forms of speech; and of this kind of understanding I shall speak hereafter." (Hobbes 2009: 6). Hobbes mentioned that "in any discourse whatsoever, if the defect of discretion be apparent, how extravagant soever the fancy be, the whole discourse will be taken for a sign of want of wit; and so will it never when the discretion is manifest, though the fancy be never so ordinary. The secret thoughts of a man run over all things, holy, profane, clean, obscene, grave, and light, without shame or blame; which verbal discourse cannot do farther than the judgment shall approve of the time, place, and persons. An anatomist or a physician may speak or write his judgment of unclean things, because it is not to please but profit;" (Hobbes 2009: 24).

Discourse types already existed in the early New Time in Latin writings in Europe. For example the work *Discursus Politicus de Societatis Civilis Primis Elementis* by Johannes Gotthard von Böckel (1677) is an example of the political discourse (*discursus politicus*) in the 17th century. The book *Discursus Astronomicus Novissimus* was published in Palermo by Petrus Cortesius in 1642. Samuel Andreae

wrote a *Discursus Metaphysicus de Praemotione Divina*. Dominicus Arumaeus wrote a *Discursus Academici de Iure Publico*. Ansaldi's *Discursus Legales de Commercio et Mercatura* was published in 1698.

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|------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| <i>Discursus Politicus</i> | Political Discourse | Deliberation |
| <i>Discursus Academicus</i> | Academical Discourse | Education |
| <i>Discursus Panegyricus</i> | Panegyric Discourse | Entertainment |
| <i>Discursus Iudicialis</i> | Legal Discourse | Law |

Discourse Typology of Modern Time

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Genus Demonstrativum</i> | Demonstrative Genre |
| <i>Genus Deliberativum</i> | Deliberative Genre |
| <i>Genus Iudicialis</i> | Legal Genre |

Genus Typology According to Aristotle and Cicero

Cicero takes Aristoteles as the authority for genres in *De Inventione* (I, 7): „Aristoteles autem, qui huic arti plurima adiumenta atque ornamenta subministravit, tribus in generibus rerum versari rhetoris officium putavit, demonstrativo, deliberativo, iudiciali.“(Cicero). The term 'genre' can be traced back to the Latin term *genus*. The term genre is used in literature studies and rhetoric. The discourse can be considered a literary genre of writings of philosophy and rhetoric. Often philosophers wrote in the genre discourse a reasoning written literary form. The genres of discourse were developed and practiced by rhetoricians and philosophers in ancient Greece.

III. European Reception of the Concept 'Discourse' and the Literature on Discourse in the 15th to 19th Century

Discourse in Europe in the 17th Century

Thomas Hobbes introduced the expression 'mental discourse'. Hobbes wrote in *Leviathan* (chapter III) *Of the Consequence or Train of Imaginations*: "By consequence, or train of thoughts, I understand that succession of one thought to another which is called, to distinguish it from discourse in words, mental discourse. When a man thinketh on anything whatsoever, his next thought after is not altogether so casual as it seems to be. Not every thought to every thought succeeds indifferently. But as we have no imagination, whereof we have not formerly had sense, in whole or in parts; so we have no transition from one imagination to another, whereof we never had the like before in our senses. The reason whereof is this. All fancies are motions within us, relics of those made in the sense; and those motions that immediately succeeded one another in the sense continue also together after sense: in so much as the former coming again to take place and be predominant, the latter followeth, by coherence of the matter moved, in such manner as water upon a plain table is drawn which way any one part of it is guided by the finger. But because in sense, to one and the same thing perceived, sometimes one thing, sometimes another, succeedeth, it comes to pass in time that in the imagining of anything, there is no certainty what we shall imagine next; only this is certain, it shall be something that succeeded the same before, at one time or another." (Hobbes). Hobbes wrote in *Leviathan* (1651) on 'mentall discourse':

This Trayne of Thoughts, or Mentall Discourse, is of two sorts. The first is Unguided, without Designe, and inconstant; Wherein there is no Passionate Thought, to govern and direct those that follow, to it self, as the end and scope

of some desire, or other passion: In which case the thoughts are said to wander, and seem impertinent one to another, as in a Dream. Such are Commonly the thoughts of men, that are not onely without company, but also without care of any thing; though even then their Thoughts are as busie as at other times, but without harmony; as the sound which a Lute out of tune would yeeld to any man; or in tune, to one that could not play. And yet in this wild ranging of the mind, a man may oft-times perceive the way of it, and the dependance of one thought upon another. For in a Discourse of our present civill warre, what could seem more impertinent, than to ask (as one did) what was the value of a Roman Penny? Yet the Cohærence to me was manifest enough. For the Thought of the warre, introduced the Thought of the delivering up the King to his Enemies; The Thought of that, brought in the Thought of the delivering up of Christ; and that again the Thought of the 30 pence, which was the price of that treason: and thence easily followed that malicious question; and all this in a moment of time; for Thought is quick. (Hobbes)

Authors of the Age of Reasoning in Europe

Hume wrote in *Of the Standart of Taste*: “As this variety of taste is obvious to the most careless inquirer; so will it be found, on examination, to be still greater in reality than in appearance. The sentiments of men often differ with regard to beauty and deformity of all kinds, even while their general discourse is the same. There are certain terms in every language, which import blame, and others praise; and all men, who use the same tongue, must agree in their application of them.” (Hume). Locke wrote in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*: “For where the principles of reason have not evidenced a proposition to be certainly true or false, there clear revelation, as another principle of truth and ground of assent, may determine; and so it may be matter of faith, and be also above reason. Because reason, in that particular matter, being able to reach no higher than probability, faith gave the determination where reason came short; and revelation discovered on which side the truth lay. In matters where reason can afford certain knowledge, that is to be hearkened to.” (Locke 2009: 528). Locke wrote in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*: “This I hope to make plain in the sequel of this Discourse. I allow therefore, a necessity that men should come to the use of reason before they get the knowledge of those general truths; but deny that men's coming to the use of reason is the time of their discovery.” (Locke 2009: 24). Locke also noticed in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*: “Whether syllogism is the great instrument of reason: first cause to doubt this. There is one thing more which I shall desire to be considered concerning reason; and that is, whether syllogism, as is generally thought, be the proper instrument of it, and the use fullest way of exercising this faculty. The causes I have to doubt are these:- First, Because syllogism serves our reason but in one only of the forementioned parts of it; and that is, to show the connexion of the proofs in any one instance, and no more; but in this it is of no great use, since the mind can perceive such connexion, where it really is, as easily, nay, perhaps better, without it. Men can reason well who cannot make a syllogism.” (Locke 2009: 508).

Descartes was the first philosopher who discussed the relation between discourse and reason. Descartes wrote in his *Discourse On the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason, and Seeking Truth in the Sciences* about reason as criterion for truth: “For, in fine, whether awake or asleep, we ought never to allow ourselves to be persuaded of the truth of anything unless on the evidence of our reason. And it must be noted that I say of our reason, and not of our imagination or of our senses: thus, for example, although we very clearly see the sun, we ought not therefore to determine

that it is only of the size which our sense of sight presents; and we may very distinctly imagine the head of a lion joined to the body of a goat, without being therefore shut up to the conclusion that a chimaera exists; for it is not a dictate of reason that what we thus see or imagine is in reality existent;" (Descartes 2009: 23). Descartes also wrote: "As to the opinions which are truly and wholly mine, I offer no apology for them as new, -persuaded as I am that if their reasons be well considered they will be found to be so simple and so conformed, to common sense as to appear less extraordinary and less paradoxical than any others which can be held on the same subjects; nor do I even boast of being the earliest discoverer of any of them, but only of having adopted them, neither because they had nor because they had not been held by others, but solely because reason has convinced me of their truth." (Descartes 2009: 43).

Discourse in the 19th Century in Europe: Rhetoric as Discourse

1884 Theodore W. Hunt, a professor of rhetoric and English language in the College of New Jersey, in *The Principles of Written Discourse* noticed that "the birthplace of this science was Sicily. It arose in the fifth century b. c, occasioned, partly, by the disputative character of the Sicilians, and also by those peculiar political events which called that tendency into exercise. After the overthrow of the Sicilian tyranny, those who had suffered in person and property sought redress. Those who assumed their cases soon became the leading disputants and discoursers of the time. We are speaking of the study in its scientific aspect. As such, it was founded by Korax of Syracuse. His *Techne* was the first treatise on the subject theoretical in its character. He gives in it a system of rules for forensic speaking, calling special attention to two things — the arrangement of the different parts of a discourse and the method of arguing from general probabilities. Tisias and others followed him as teachers and authors and the way was fully opened for the systematic study of the art." (Hunt). Hunt in *The Principles of Written Discourse* wrote: "The fact of its decline is a matter of history. It began at an early date (300 B.C. — 150 B.C.) and was rapid in its progress. The tendency among the existing and the later schools to further the declension was strong and aggressive. The language used by Socrates in the *Gorgias* of Plato indicates the extremity which this destructive criticism had reached, even at that date. It is true that this deteriorating process has been, at times, arrested both by distinctive schools or epochs and by separate individuals. This was true of Cicero and of those general influences which have been at work since the revival of learning in Europe. Still, the declension went on. Since those primitive days, the science has never occupied that high position which it then did, nor has it even approximated to it. We seek the causes of this. They are manifold and satisfactory." (Hunt). In the 19th and early 20th century the grounds of modern discourse studies were built using the theory and terminology of rhetoric. Hunt's parts of discourse exemplify the process from rhetoric with the parts of speech beginning, narration, argumentation, and conclusion to parts of discourse. Hunt in *The Principles of Written Discourse* stated about qualities of discourse:

1. Discourse includes both Prose and Poetry.
2. Discourse includes Oratory and Composition. It may be both Oral and "Written.
3. Discourse is both a Science and an Art. It has a body of rational principles in systematic form and these applied to visible production.
4. Discourse is the expression of thought. The excellence of the form will depend on that of the subject-matter. (Hunt)

Hunt in *The Principles of Written Discourse* mentioned the following parts of a discourse:

1. Introduction
2. Proposition
3. (Analysis)
4. Discussion
5. Conclusion (Hunt)

Parts of Discourse According to Hunt

IV The Discourse in Postmodernity

Research

Schrag in *The Self After Postmodernity* wrote: "Without the contextualizing of discourse in the configurations of narrative, discourse stands in danger of being pulverized into abstracted, atomistic, static, elemental units. In such a reduction to elemental units, the figures of discourse are shorn of all intentionality, all vectors of sense, and all illustrations of reference." (Schrag 1997: 20). Phan wrote: "The way of wisdom for most people has often been through stories and reasoning. Mythos, especially in the form of dramatic narratives explaining the origin and operation of the universe and the place of humans within it, is, in the early stages of humanity, a common medium to express the communal fund of wisdom that, together with rituals and ethics, shapes the social reality and is in turn shaped by it. In addition, logos, particularly as practiced in philosophy, not only transmits the perennial truths of the community to successive generations but also inculcates the love of wisdom by which humans can live the good life." (Phan). Thompson wrote in *Ways Out of the Postmodern Discourse* on postcolonial discourse: "Postcolonial discourse is usually classified together with the postmodern, and indeed it probably would not have developed were it not for the 'school of suspicion' out of which postmodernism sprang. The states and empires engaged in colonialism caused much damage to the colonized, especially when, as was the case with Russia, they expanded militarily into areas whose social organization and civilizational advancement were superior to those of the colonizer." (Thompson).

Modernity and Postmodernity: Limitations of Discourse

Modern philosophy of language not only established a meta-system of linguistic analysis; also the philosopher Wittgenstein discussed the limits of discourse. Wittgenstein wrote in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (5.6, 5.61):

*Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt.
Die Logik erfüllt die Welt; die Grenzen der Welt sind auch ihre Grenzen. [...]
Was wir nicht denken können, das können wir nicht denken;
wir können also auch nicht sagen, was wir nicht denken können.*

*The Limits of my language mean the Limits of my World.
The Logic fills the world; the Limits of the World are also its Limits. [...]
What we Cannot Think, we Cannot Think;
We also Cannot Say What We Cannot Think.*

(Wittgenstein)

Saussure and Foucault are the dominant figures for discourse studies as an academic field. A recent approach to discourse is Discourse Representation Theory. Geurts and Beaver wrote regarding the 'Discourse Representation Theory' for the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: "In the early 1980s, Discourse Representation Theory (DRT) was introduced by Hans Kamp as a theoretical framework for dealing with issues in the semantics and pragmatics of anaphora and tense (Kamp 1981); a very similar theory was developed independently by Irene Heim (1982)." (Geurts; Beaver). Postmodern thinkers like Barthes and Foucault considered the authority of the author as a doubtful consideration. This is actually a development which corresponds with the assumption of the existence of intertextuality and the reference of texts as a network minimalizing the influence of the authorship. Foucault wrote: "In dealing with the 'author' as a function of discourse, we must consider the characteristics of a discourse that support this use and determine its differences from other discourses." (Foucault 1977: 124). Foucault wrote regarding the function of the author: "The third point concerning this "author-function" is that it is not formed spontaneously through the simple attribution of a discourse to an individual. It results from a complex operation whose purpose is to construct the rational entity we call an author. Undoubtedly, this construction is assigned a "realistic" dimension as we speak of an individual's "profundity" or "creative" power, his intentions or the original inspiration manifested in writing. Nevertheless, these aspect of an individual, which we designate as an author (or which comprise an individual as an author), are projections, in terms always more or less psychological, of our way of handling texts: in the comparisons we make, the traits we extract as pertinent, the continuities we assign, or the exclusions we practice. In addition, all these operations vary according to the period and the form of discourse concerned. A 'philosopher' and a 'poet' are not constructed in the same manner; and the author of an eighteenth-century novel was formed differently from the modern novelist." (Foucault 1977: 127). An example of the reduction of the influence of the author is the replacement of individualized contents by common topics. For example Graesser wrote in *Introduction to the Handbook of Discourse Processes* that the introductory part formally follows a common separating into its parts: "One way to organize an introduction to a handbook is to divide it into the past, the present, and the future. This is precisely the approach we have adopted. We start with a short history that documents how the field of discourse processes emerged. Next we describe the current trends in investigating discourse processes. We end with our forecast of how the field is destined to evolve into the future, or how we hope it will evolve. The purpose of this Introduction is to set the stage for the subsequent chapters rather than to provide a comprehensive overview of the field." (Graesser).

In *The Edinburgh Encyclopedia of Continental Philosophy* is written on discourse that "truth and dialectic Hermeneutics thus assures the understanding of discourses; but understanding the meaning of a discourse tells us nothing of its truth, which is what philosophy seeks above all else. Is understanding a discourse not simply knowing what it says, rather than knowing whether what it says is true? Certainly, hermeneutics pretends to truth, but the 'truth' at which it aims is simply that of meaning, which can only be the first stage of any search for the truth: before knowing if a discourse reveals the truth, one must know what it means and what it 'truly' says. (*The Edinburgh Encyclopedia of Continental Philosophy* 1999: 199). The traditional intellectual field using the discourse is philosophy since ancient Greek time. In this tradition Habermas discussed in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* in the form of lectures the philosophical discourse in Modernity. Gimmler wrote in *The Discourse Ethics of Jürgen Habermas*: "One of the most famous phrases of the discourse ethics of Jürgen Habermas is: in discourse the unforced force of the better argument prevails. Or to put it in the words of hermeneutic philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, who gives this a popular turn: What the Others are saying could be right! As everyone knows, this

ideal is very difficult to achieve in scholarly and everyday discussions. But there is a obvious deficit in practical philosophy - namely, its fundamentally "unresolved openness" ('Unabgeschlossenheit') concerning its problems and its various attempts at their solutions. This fundamental, unresolved openness becomes a great virtue in discussions - the virtue of fallibilism." (Gimmler). Cavalier wrote in *Introduction to Habermas' Discourse Ethics*: "Habermas situates the moral point of view within the communication framework of a community of selves. He moves Kant's categorical imperative beyond its 'monological' reflection by demanding that we emphatically take into consideration the viewpoints of all who would be affected by the adoption of a certain moral action or normative claim. In a similar vein, he 'lifts' Rawls' veil of ignorance and demands that we participate in a discourse where all are fully aware of the other's perspectives and interpretations." (Cavalier). Barthes in *Elements of Semiology* defines 'discourse' as extended speech:

"1.1.3. Speech (parole): In contrast to the language, which is both institution and system, speech is essentially an individual act of selection and actualisation; it is made in the first place of the 'combination thanks to which the speaking subject can use the code of the language with a view to expressing his personal thought' (this extended speech could be called discourse), - and secondly by the 'psycho-physical mechanisms which allow him to exteriorise these combinations.' It is certain that phonation, for instance, cannot be confused with the language; neither the institution nor the system are altered if the individual who resorts to them speaks loudly or softly, with slow or rapid delivery, etc. The combinative aspect of speech is of course of capital importance, for it implies that speech is constituted by the recurrence of identical signs: it is because signs are repeated in successive discourses and within one and the same discourse (although they are combined in accordance with the infinite diversity of various people's speech) that each sign becomes an element of the language; and it is because speech is essentially a combinative activity that it corresponds to an individual act and not to a pure creation." (Barthes)

Using references from ancient Greek and Latin studies, in modernity the basic linguistic concepts of discourse studies were established. Various aspects of discourse were discussed in the 20th century.

Research on Discourse in the 21st Century

With the spreading separation of various fields of research studies regarding discourse the ambiguity of the term 'discourse' increased. Freccero wrote in *Popular Culture: An Introduction* regarding discourse: "The term is most commonly associated with the work of Michel Foucault. Most generally, it refers to the way language is organized into ideologically meaningful domains in a given culture. One refers, for example, to specialized fields of knowledge as having their own discourses, as in the discourse of law, medicine, and so forth." (Freccero 69). Besides the academic use of the term 'discourse', it was also used for oral common speech. Studies in spoken non-literal speech became the specifically new area of research on discourse studies. Butler wrote in *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*: "These discourses, as used by lawyers, doctors, and others, do not just implicitly accept some kind of dominating theory to guide them (for example, in the guise of a paradigm as used by those engaged in orthodox science). They involve politically contentious activities, not just because of the certainty with which they describe and define people - who is an 'immigrant', or an 'asylum seeker', or a 'criminal', or 'mad', or a 'terrorist' - but because

such discourses at the same time express the political authority of their users.” (Butler 44). Butler also mentioned in *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*: “The appreciation of ‘aesthetic’ or ‘virtuoso’ qualities is to be thought of as politically regressive, in that it allows us to defend a rather modernist aesthetic pleasure in formal composition, of which Crowther clearly disapproves. Indeed, like many other postmodernists, he attacks artists when they show such modernist qualities, which are not ‘progressive’ by being critical of ‘legitimizing discourses’ including those of modernism. But what then of Crowther’s own ‘legitimizing discourse’ – could the work of Estes be construed as a progressive criticism of that?” (Butler 80). Discourse typology in relation to language typology was also discussed by Longacre (Longacre 457-86). According to Renkema, “the active voice is typical of subjective discourse types.” (Renkema 63). Flunderik wrote: “In *Coming to Terms* (1990), Seymour Chatman initiated an enquiry into the delimitation of the narrative text type as against the text types of argument and description. This revolutionary step was a major landmark for literary scholars.” (Flunderik). Sawyer wrote in *A Summary of Discourse Theory*: “Discourse is not a string of propositions or theme statements. The author of a discourse had a purpose in mind as he wrote and he arranged his material accordingly. Before the nuclear concept of a unit can be determined, the relationships between the concepts, propositions, or paragraphs of the unit must be determined.” (Sawyer).

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