On Dufrenne's Philosophical Language Viewpoint

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Abstract. Dufrenne’s language viewpoint is a response to the 20th century linguistic turn. He advocates the study of language from the perspective of ontology, no longer regards language as the object and tool, but emphasizes the equality between man and the world. Language is the foundation of man and the world, and the world speaks to us. Dufrenne’s linguistic view is still concerned with the relationship between man and the world, and run through beyond subject-object duality of thinking.

Introduction

As a master of phenomenology aesthetics, Dufrenne's international reputation is mainly from his contribution in the field of aesthetics. Therefore, both at home and abroad, the researchers put the focus of the study on his aesthetic theory. In fact, Dufrenne's language view is also an important part of his entire theoretical system. Dufrenne's concern about language issues continues to be embodied in the book "Language and Philosophy", the collection “Aesthetics and Philosophy” (three volumes) and monograph "The Poetics". Dufrenne's linguistic view was born in the tide of linguistic turn in the 20th century, not only closely related with structuralism, semiotics, but also, Dufrenne's attention to language is also in line with the phenomenology predecessors. This article focuses on Dufrenne's philosophical view of language.

Dufrenne's philosophical thinking of language is a response to the 20th century linguistic turn. Language has been a philosophical topic ever since the Cratylus of Plato. At the end of nineteenth century and in the beginning of twentieth century, the deep development of logic and linguistics has laid a direct theoretical foundation for the emergence of linguistic philosophy. Dufrenne thinks that all philosophical reflection of language tends in two main directions: toward an ontology of language and toward a phenomenology of speech. The former conception stresses the powers of language: it is through language that being discloses itself, that meaning emerges, such as Heidegger, Schelling and Hegel. Dufrenne chose the latter road. He thinks that: “The phenomenology of speech will lead us back into the domain of a metaphysics of language. Besides, I think that phenomenology can perfectly well be made to accord with ontology, provided that ontology renounces any claims to inspiration from dogmatic theology and that it can be interpreted simply as a philosophy of nature.”[1] He believes that this road can lead us to reascend to the very sources of language itself, ultimately tracing speech back to poetry.

Criticism of Saussure and Structuralism Linguistics

Dufrenne first looked at the linguistic research in the field of linguistics. Although he admitted that Saussure had a groundbreaking meaning for the basic rules of modern linguistics, he was more interested in pointing out the lack of Saussure's linguistics. Saussure distinguished language from speech, and subordinated speech to language, so, a given language is a positive object, it relatively stable and independent of particular circumstances, which I can find in dictionary and grammars. But in Dufrenne's view, language as an object, we are not concerned about its content and meaning, but its material basis. We are no longer concerned about its unique and pronunciation, or its grammatical order, but only to seek their commonalities. Moreover, the language as an object is to treat it as a system, that is, its elements are governed by the rules constitute a whole. Thus,
Dufrenne further questioned the rules of the system and the elements of the system: “Not only are the rules arbitrary, taken just in themselves; but their totality is neither consistent, nor complete, nor saturates.”[1] That is, for linguistics, the rule system does not exist.

In Dufrenner's view, the concept of "structure" is also vague. On the one hand, the concept of structure has biological connotation. On the other hand, the concept of structure can have mathematical connotation. "Structure" thus involves two models that are not isomorphic. More important, structure is conceived as a closed system, therefore, structuralism is always an attempt to discover "scientific" and "objective" humanities facts. Dufrenne's criticism reveals an important feature of Saussure's linguistics: ignoring the vivid speech activity and toward the constant language rules and structure behind words.

There is no doubt that the expansion of Saussure's linguistics is based on the application of some abstract structure and pattern, which, despite the expansion of linguistics everywhere, has often been criticized by people. Dufrenne pointed out: “Structural analysis is here in danger of succumbing to the temptation of ontologizing the purely formal. And then the theory is caught in its own trap...But one must take care not to project the formal structures onto reality, nor to forget the specificity and the diversity of the material structures...But as soon as one defines this as an unconscious logos that brings into being a specific, logical form of the culture as a whole, is not one thereby simply creating an object that is no more than the projection of the anthropologist’s own logical operations? It is then that one pretends to discover in the object what in fact one has only put there oneself.”[1]

This is no doubt that structuralism in accordance with their own logic in advance to set the desired conclusion. Derrida's criticism is similar to that of Dufrenne, he said: “The structure first refers to an organic or man-made project, an assembly; an inherent unity of construction, a project governed by the principle of unity, and a visible building built at a particular place.”[2] This shows that structuralism attempts to achieve the objective, scientific results are actually the result of careful budget.

Dufrenne also criticized very seriously the neglect of semantics in the field of linguistics. He pointed out that, under the influence of Saussure, structural linguistics from the outset ignored the actual use of language from the beginning. Semantics is generally neglected by the structure linguists, because structuralism deals with signs rather than meanings. The meaning is reduced merely to the distinct apprehension of sounds, as if the only problem were to transmit or register a message properly without having to interpret it or decode it. But in fact, language has outstanding diversity. “This diversity affects not only the languages, but also the cultures, that is to say the whole system of institutions that are tied to the language-religion, science, technology, ideology, and even family relationships and social stratification.”[1]

The connection between language and social system totals occupies an important position in the study of anthropology, but there is no necessary causal relationship between the two, and Dufrenne focuses on the Structural Anthropology of Levi-Strauss. He thinks that the path created by Levi-Strauss is praiseworthy in any way, but this approach must have its own limitations. For example, when using linguistic knowledge to accurately analyze the language, culture must be subordinate to the only observation skills, especially when considering its totality. Thus, the conclusion of structural anthropology can only be part of the expression of the overall culture, which loses some of the better meaning.

**Regard the Language from the Perspective of Ontology**

In contrast to Saussure's linguistic and the structuralism views, Dufrenne emphasizes the importance of meaning to language. Saussure criticizes the theory of word as the center, and advocates the theory of meaning as a whole. And Dufrenne argues that the theory of word center does not conflict with the integrity of meaning, and even the meaning of integrity as the premise of the word center theory: “Can people draw meaning from nothing? Cannot. To give meaning to the word, alone to depend on the sentence is not enough (Myth for the mythical elements, melody for the notes, the film for a group of lenses, painting for color, are also not enough). If the sentence must be meaningful, the word must first make sense.”[3] Because the language makes people and
the world, people and others to achieve communication, and signification brings into play the relation of man and the world. Words are not only with the entire language system, but also with the things it points to is an alliance relationship.

Dufrenne regards language as a knot in the relationship between man and the world. Compared with language, he is concerned about the living speech phenomenon. He said “Our preceding reflections have invited us to turn our attention toward the ownership that language has of meaning and toward the usage that man makes of language—that is to say, toward man as speaking and toward language itself as speaking.”[1] Then why should we pay attention to "the language of speaking”? Dufrenne explained this: “Experience is our first relation with the world, as this is lived in perception and named in speech. For speech is this original tie with the world, the world is contemporary with perception and inseparable from it. The first consciousness that bears the logical consciousness is already a speaking consciousness. This is why the logical language is rooted in the natural language, just as formal thought is in intuition. Phenomenology, considered as transcendental logic, invites us, then, to return from the language that is spoken to the language that speaks, the language that is speaking because man speaks, but veritable alliance has been sealed, even from birth, between man and the world.”[1] This shows that Dufrenne is concerned with the living words being used in real life, rather than being abstracted as rules, the language of the system. “Contemporary French philosophers love language problems, apparently not as British and America analytic philosophy calm and objective interpretation of the logic of the language, but consider completely the language as part of our living existence”, [4] Dufrenne is also the case, his research ideas and the idea of the French philosophers are consistent.

On the basic relationship between language and the world, Dufrenne does not recognize that the world has become the object of language, he stressed that the world speaking, which is the most fundamental. “To speak is primarily to let the world speak for itself, as if it were speaking for itself through the poets.”[1] what the world speaks are through the "preimage" to start. “One sees here that the language by which the world announces itself is already present, contemporary with feeling. Feeling expresses itself in words at the same time that crystallizes itself in images. I have said preimages, because these coarse images of a world do not yet limn distinct and identifiable objects.”[1] “On this level of what we have called preimages, the human being feels rather than sees. But there already is, and there always is, an intention in feeling: feeling is not irremediably alienated in its own subjectivity. What the human being feels is that which touches him, that which speaks to him.”[1] The preimage reveals the original connection between man and the world, and this connection proves that the relationship between man and the world at the root is not antagonistic.

Unlike the traditional view of language as a tool, Dufrenne thinks that language and speaker are one, and the two are inseparable. In the book "language and philosophy", he said again and again: “I was lost in the world, and in speaking, lo, I become what I am. My speech commits me. I am what I say, and every genuine word is a word of honor. Likewise, my speech reveals me to myself, just as it does to others: In communicating, I thereby become myself a communicable being.”[1] “In effect, when I speak, I am my speaking: I become one with my words. Certainly, as we have already said, to speak puts me at a certain distance from that of which I speak. But between my consciousness and my speech there is no distance at all: I am in union with the language I use.”[1] Language cannot be proved in the same way as any kind of tool, language is the intermediary between man and the world, through language, people and others, themselves and the world to communicate, but people do not exist through language, people and his language is a whole. Heidegger believes that people say is meaningless, it obscures the language say, and in contrast, Dufrenne is fully affirmed the people say.
Conclusion

To sum up, Dufrenne's attention to language is consistent with the tradition of ontological phenomenology. His language view, advocated from the ontological point of view of the language, no longer set people as the subject, no longer stressed that people (subject) through language (tools) to conquer and dominate the world (object), but stressed that people are equal with the world, language is the foundation of man and the world, the world says to us. Thus, in the language issue, Dufrenne continued beyond the two opposite ways of thinking he established in "The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience", and generally served to his exploration on the relationship between man and the world for a long time. At this point, it shows the profound influence of Heidegger's view on language. And Dufrenne’s criticism of structuralism and other schools, the root cause is that Dufrenne's aesthetic way of thinking and Saussure's linguistic way of thinking is opposed to each other.

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