

Abstract

The topic of this dissertation is thinking in relation to inference, or reasoning, and to language. The main theoretical starting point is the inferentialism of Robert Brandom, and the main goal is, against the background of the inferentialist theory, understood here primarily as a model of linguistic practices, to explain thinking, understood primarily as an activity or process. Inference is thus the topic both in the sense of the activity of reasoning and in the sense of inferentialist interpretation of linguistic meaning and practices. The connection between thinking and language is understood here to be essential from the beginning, which is evident already in the plan to examine thinking within the framework of a theory of linguistic practices. The goal is thus to explicate the outlined connections.

Inferentialism can be understood firstly as a kind of theory of meaning that starts from inference and not, like many other theories, from representation. Thus, according to inferentialism, representation is not something that can be used to explain meaning, but rather something that itself needs a non-trivial explanation. Another essential feature of Brandom's inferentialism is the priority of propositions over singular expressions, since propositions are the smallest units using which something can be asserted, i.e., for which one can be responsible (therefore we talk about normative inferentialism), and which have a direct inferential role, i.e., they are in inferential relationships with other propositions, or assertions. The focus of this dissertation on thinking as a process is in relation to Brandom's theory manifested by putting more emphasis on its pragmatic than on its semantic aspect. The further development of Brandom's philosophy, which can be shortly characterized as a transition from the inferentialist to the historical model of rationality, will turn out to be significant for the explored topic as well.

Thinking in connection with inference is also examined in this dissertation in the context of Peirce's theory of abduction. In the abstract, this approach seems to represent the understanding of inference as inferential processes and inferentialism to represent the understanding of inference as inferential relations. However, it turns out that both are essentially connected. It also turns out that both inferential processes and inferential relations, and Brandom's inferentialism and abduction are connected by the essential role of expression, or, making something explicit. This Brandom's concept is also ultimately crucial for the conception of thinking developed in the dissertation.

Keywords

Thinking, reasoning, inferentialism, Robert Brandom, making explicit, abduction, rational reconstruction