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My Experience and Observations in Philosophy as an “Unrelated Person Before”

Abstract

The aim of this study is to share with the readers my impressions which I obtained during the philosophical conference I attended as person who is not interested professionally with philosophy. The writing in which I want to put forth how the philosophical reflection differs from daily thinking, there is also made an inquiry about the origin of language as a means of communication. In this context, there is an attempt to illuminate the relation between language and thinking.

Key Terms

Philosophy, Language, Origin of Language, Communication.

Gözlem ve Edinimler

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı, profesyonel anlamda felsefeyle ilgilenmeyen biri olarak katıldığım felsefe konferanslarından edinmiş olduğum izlenimleri okuyucuyla paylaşmaktır. Felsefi düşünümün gündelik düşünümünden nasıl farklılaştığını ortaya koymak istediğim bu yazıda ayrıca bir iletişim aracı olarak dilin kökenine ilişkin bir inceleme yapılmıştır. Bu bağlamda dil ile düşünme arasındaki ilişki aydınlatılmaya çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar Terimler

Felsefe, Dil, Dilin Kökeni, İletişim.

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Firstly, I want to say a few words on my experience regarding my idea of philosophy. In fact, I only studied philosophy as a compulsory course when I was at high school years ago. Then I was taught "philosophy" by studying and learning the lives of just some leading philosophers like Kant, Hume, Aristotle Plato, Socrates etc... After that, unfortunately, I hadn't taken or couldn't have taken a special interest in philosophy, since many questions in my mind had no definite answers but open to endless discussions. I had a traditional way of thinking within my power of thought, reasoning and concluding with the limited knowledge I had gained anyhow. This went on till the weekly "Philosophy Meetings & Lectures" organised by Prof. Dr. Mr. Çüçen, -the head of our philosophy department, and given by some speakers all carrying careers on philosophy from different universities, including our university, as well. The speakers and their topics were as listed below in weekly order:

1. Ethic & Career Ethics by Prof. Dr. Harun TEPE (Hacettepe University) 4 December 2006.
2. What is science and its historical development by Prof. Dr. Doğan ÖZLEM (Muğla Univ.)
3. What is Philosophy by Prof. Dr. Ahmet İNAM (ODTU).
4. Life-Philosophy by Aristotle by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hatice Nur ERKIZAN (Muğla Univ.)
5. The Thought of Enlightenment by Prof. Dr. A. Kadir ÇÜÇEN (Uludağ Univ.)
6. The Present Concept of Art in our Time by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Işık EREN (Uludağ Univ.)
7. Albert Camus within the Frame of "Existentialism" and Philosophy of Rebellion, by Prof. Dr. Ali Osman GÜNDOĞAN (Muğla Univ.)
8. New Approaches to Science and Breaking Points by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zekiye KUTLUSOY (Uludağ Univ.)

1. In Mr. Tepe's lecture; I learnt much about human rights and some values are not just personal but immensely universal, so they must be dealt with in that way.
2. And in that talk given by Mr. Özlem, -just opposed to those universal approach above, those "universal merits or values" are always relatively variable; thus it can change by the persons, time and conditions.
3. In Mr. İnan's talk on "What is Philosophy?" I noticed that philosophy is not a limitless and vast topic among philosophers but is a subject which every person must apply to it in everyday life, with a Socratic activity.
4. In the fourth talk given by Hatice Nur from Mugla University, I learnt the main points and essentials of Aristotle.

5. In the talk given by Mr. Çüçen from our university, I came to the conclusion that all the possible reasons available should be considered before having or making decisions to gain “enlightenment for the matters still vague”.
6. In the “Present Concept of Art” given by Işık Eren from my faculty; I got the chance of looking at the art not only from the traditional concept leading aesthetics but also the ways that will attract the people (the artists) reflecting their feelings in art, in general. But formerly, I only used to think that art is the reflection and the aim of aesthetic in fine arts, mainly.
7. And in the lecture given by Mr. Gündoğan; it was underlined that philosophy is not so popular in our country as much as it should be, and its reasons.
8. As it is seen in the title “New Approaches to Science and Breaking Points”; I had the chance to see some contemporary approaches to science, in a limited time of talk by Zekiye Kutlusoy.

Before those very useful lectures effecting all the audience joined of all ranks and class, I was all thinking that “philosophy” is any sort of knowledge comprising some vague matters -we normal people- don’t and can’t understand, and I also believed that philosophy was just an endless argument among them who are struggling for and they are the rare people trying to explain those vague matters to each other far away from my understanding and conceiving limits and border unified in me. In Turkish we have got a famous but also sarcastic saying: “Don’t make philosophy!”

We say it to our opponents we speak to, for the matters or topics we are far away to comprehend, understand and perceive. I remember that I had also said it to many people. But at the end of these lecturers mentioned above, I have learnt that: Formerly I could only reason and conclude as much only as my knowledge and power of thinking within the limit of intelligence, whatever and how much it is. In other words, I was looking into “life and happenings” around me through a single, narrow window that was my “self” window, that was my world! But now, I am looking into events and the behaviours of the “others” through another wide window I had gained and formed by the views, comments and ideas of those lecturers above. They opened a wide window for me to look at the matters in general within the borders of philosophy. I saw and appreciated what I have gained and learnt. So, in this sense I am thankful to all speakers above and especially Mr. Çüçen who organised those serial lectures. Formerly, I was just “thinking” in a way that thinking is in a narrow sense, but now I think twice harmoniously. Firstly it is my way of thinking limited by my traditional knowledge I had accumulated so far, and the second is my “new way of thinking” which opened new horizons to me –by my trying effort to learn – thinking, by the valuable contributions of those valuable speakers above. I am all thankful to them, not only for myself but also in the name of the listeners I had contacted, commented and spoken to, later on.

A Brief Comment On “the Origin of Language” as a means of Communication

We -the humans- are talented creatures to think, to anticipate, to reason, to conclude and to judge; so socially and logically, we must convey and transfer those

what we have in our minds no matter how primitive or sophisticated, to the others we are to contact, since we were and are social mammals living in communities and in societies.

One very important element in the evolution of human "I" has not been considered. The indispensable invention of a distinctly human trait: Language, means of communication. But its level and sophistication is unique, in the animal kingdom. With the help of that tool we were able to examine, share, and pass on knowledge, our feelings, ideas and thoughts under our control. It appears that this dominance was due to the influence of language on the development of the human.

But, how could such a facility as language have come out? Well, it appears unlikely that our non-speaking primitive ancestors could have been totally "without thought". How could language develop at all, if there was no thought to precede? It seems quite likely that our early ancestors going to sleep, with an image of the sunrising or sunsetting in their sense or mind. The words to express this sense of anticipation would have come later of course and it did so.

It may appear difficult to account for the development of concepts and generalizations from this. It also seems impossible to develop such things without a language already being in existence. But general concepts can in fact be contained in gestures, such as pointing, for example. Pointing, might be considered as a general gesture which conveys a concept or not? It appears that thought without language is possible, although I can admit that it would be very simple,- but not a complex thought, by our standards. This went on till we got a self-awareness.

It seems that language must have evolved from simple forms of communication, such as gestures and facial expressions - these being set against a background of mental visualizations derived from a shared context of objective reality and a shared body form (allowing particularly the formation of the same sorts of sounds). After all, to originate language, one would have to be motivated by an awareness of things to be communicated, and would have to have a belief that the communication's content had some chance of being grasped. This appears only to be possible when humans share the human experience or feelings of an objective.

The most intimate (special) form of communication is that which takes place within one's mind, when considering the merits of any action. This is a type of reflective thought we would wish to associate with language, but I can't help myself thinking that we do have some grasp of such thinking (when it is our own), even without language; although it would not be so well clarified in our minds. If our definition of reflective thought is to be strictly associated with more advanced concepts than these, language is necessary and needed here. But I am looking here more to the origins of the language, the way it was brought into existence; and I presume that language probably came about through reflective thought, intimate and internal. Once language was in existence, of course, a refining process would begin, which would feed back into the reflective thought process, clarifying and expanding it into new areas. For this, language appears to be required. Language is the expansion of the consciousness beyond the individual, and this reflects back on the individual, supposing accurate communication and a good and sufficient vocabulary, of course.

Thought in the sense of appreciation the things and perceiving them preceded language. It appears logical, too. So, in order to originate language, one must have a feeling that one wishes to communicate. And this could have only been carried out by language. If not, why did we invent the language?

Indeed, as we can see, the process is not complete, and perhaps never will be. But once the written form of language came into existence, this expansion beyond individual, this awareness of the minds of others, could be better preserved and more widely communicated, to be developed even further, as more minds came up in the field.