

The Theory of the Problématique Language, Communication and Argumentation

Mohamed El Mouden El Mouden*

University of Seville, Spain

Abstract: This paper aims to expose the elements of Michel Meyer's theory of problematologie, and through it, to highlight the critical theoretical framework of a theory of argumentation. This theory is committed to consolidating the turn towards the rational legitimization of natural logic as a logic of values in the face of the domination of formal logic, and towards the rational legitimization of rhetoric as a rational process.

Keywords: Argumentation, communication, natural logic, problematologie, rationality, rhetoric.

1. Introduction

The philosophical reflection of the Belgian thinker Michel MEYER (Brussels, 1950) has led to the elaboration of a philosophical theory that has taken on the task of thinking about the reality of philosophy and reason in modernity and has considered in his works, as in other philosophical and logical conclusions, that this reason is currently undergoing a crisis. It is a theory that guides his theoretical plans developed in his reflections on reason, discourse or rhetoric. This philosophical theory is called the theory of "questionnement" based on a critical framework called by himself "de la problematologie".

This theory finds its foundations in a concept that reverses the essence of philosophy and its functions, because thought for him is nothing else but the posing of a question/question, therefore we will find that all of MEYER's reflections, which cover different areas of knowledge: science, language, literature and ethics, are reflections governed by the principles of the theory of questioning.

In this context, we are interested in delimiting the theoretical concept within the framework of which argumentation is determined for MEYER within the theory of questioning. For this purpose, we must follow in the footsteps of his reflections on discourse and language. MEYER's efforts constitute aspects of a philosophical theory of argumentation which reserves for itself a major space in areas of modern logical and linguistic thought which are involved in argumentation and rhetoric and which were developed mainly by the Belgian Logic theorist Chaim Perelman (Perelman and Tayetca: 1958) and the French linguists Ducrot and Anscombe. (J. C. Anscombe and O. Ducrot, 1983).

2. Discourse and Language in the Light of the Theory of Questioning

Michel Meyer outlines in his article on the "foundations of argumentation" the turn his thinking on this issue will take with his proposal, which is a turn that aims to go beyond the definition that sees argumentation as a technique for convincing, and in this way prepares the ground for the direction his vision will take. As he puts it:

"For the most part previous theories of argumentation limited the definition of argumentation to the techniques of convincing, but forgot and left aside the question without which there will be neither conversation nor distance." (Meyer. M. 1993: 126).

But what does the question or the problem mean for Meyer? Is it an interrogative sentence or something else? How is the question understood according to this author?

Actually, the question or the interrogative sentence are not identified with each other for Michel MEYER, as he himself declares, since the question is equivalent to the problem in the first place, indeed, it is identified with it and linked to the appeal to make the decision, i.e. to think. And consequently, the use of the question is nothing but a thought on the problem that provokes the conversation and by this part, i.e. by its problematic nature, the discourse becomes the origin of the dialogue, since we converse only when there is a problem, or what is the same, a question that requires an answer, because the discourse always consists in raising a question, inviting it, inspiring it or pointing it out, and the receiver reacts to it in a double way, since when confronted with the answer he must necessarily ask a question (Meyer, M. 1994:15). The answer poses a question for him, because, although he is implicitly and totally attached to it, this cannot happen only because he is answering a question that he is asking himself at the same moment or that he was interested in before. To consider discourse as raising a question means that the question raises a debate that necessarily engenders an argument (Ibid. 17).

For Meyer, language appears as an element with different dimensions: argumentative, dialectical, semantic, and hermeneutic dimensions. Each of these dimensions requires another: how can one convince without making oneself understood, and how can this be achieved without there being another with whom to communicate and who presents at the same time his acceptance or rejection? (Myer. M .1993)

*Corresponding author: mohamedelmouden@gmail.com

Language becomes the light of questioning theory, a tool to draw attention to an issue on which there may be no consensus. And while language has been a tool that conveys different positions in different communicative contexts, it has become on the basis of this a manifestation of that problematic difference that is expressed to the other in language use and conversation, which is considered another problematic differentiation besides, and the "I" also becomes an "other" that is formed within thought, integrated into it and formulated in the mind of the interlocutor. Questioning as an incitement to question and answer is linked to language in its communicative context, and this linkage is based on a belief that recourse to language belongs to the general framework of human action, as people act according to the problems they face and which they will inexorably encounter by virtue of existing. With this character, the use of language means solving problems and on this basis, MEYER justifies a general philosophical law which contains the following: "The main unity of language is the duality question/question and the use of language is always identified according to this duality" (Ibid: 23).

3. Argumentation in the Light of the Theory of Questioning

A. MEYER's

The definition of argumentation hardly abandons the general sense of argumentation that it had in most previous theories of argumentation as an effort to convince and, consequently, any discourse that aims to convince the person it is addressed to is an argumentative discourse, just as argumentation exists only when there is a space for disagreement. This is precisely the point that MEYER invests in order to support the theory of questioning and to make it effective in his theoretical efforts on argumentation. Meyer, like Chaïm Perelman, has resorted to establishing an opposition between argumentation and formal reasoning, but starting precisely from the principle of *problématologie* which represents the fundamental duality of natural language, since argumentation for him is identified as non-formal reasoning whose results are not evident as opposed to formal reasoning conditioned by the necessary relation between premises and results (Meyer, M. 1986). These two determinations are interrelated, since reasoning conditioned by the absolute necessity of mathematics is not required and, consequently, there will be room for a possible mismatch. The comparison between formal reasoning and argumentation is in fact based on the fact that formal languages should not leave any possibility for contradictory propositions in the system, since there are no alternatives, i.e. there is no possible questioning that goes beyond the answers presented by the formal system. The mathematical proof pretends to convince that it offers the answer to the question raised and, in fact, if we pose the question, we cannot but accept this answer and from there comes adhesion and agreement (Ibid.56).

On the other hand, non-formal reasoning presents no guarantee that a given question will not remain open due to the absence of a process offering an absolute and indisputable solution, and hence the possibility of the permanence of an

alternative and the emergence of contradiction. The comparison between demonstration and argumentation is based on the limits of the presence of the problematic dimension (question/answer) in the reasoning system of each (demonstration and argumentation). It seems that the system that tolerates the existence of contradictory propositions and space for differences is the system that is most capable of accepting questioning and problematology.

It follows from all this that argumentation is attached to the theory of questioning while demonstration (formal logic) appears separate from it. In argumentation, arguments represent only opinions on the question, and when the question/question is raised, it means the beginning in the process of argumentation because the question is an anticipation of the debate, which is nothing else than the statement of the opinion and its opposite in an argumentative spirit. Moving from the question to the answer in this debate is in fact nothing more than a deduction that is exercised through the context and the information provided by this context. On the contrary, the receiver represents a questioner who, for his part, passes on to the question raised through the answer, so that the former is deduced through the context.

Any deduction that develops through the context is not only an argumentation that functions as a necessity leading to a conclusion or a position that forces the other to take it on a problem posed in a context that exposes the interlocutors to informative matters necessary to be able to establish the operation of the deduction linked to the question/answer pair.

Michel Meyer has taken the same path with the comparison of argumentation with demonstration taken by Perelman (Amossy, R. 2000), who established the same comparison, although MEYER based himself on another foundation, which is the theory of questioning. And it is the basis on which MEYER constitutes the distinction of his theory which he clarifies in *Questions de rhétorique* by saying: "For the most part, the theories of argumentation of yesteryear limit the definition of argumentation to the technique of convincing but forget or neglect the question without which there will be no conversation and no distance". (Meyer. Op. cit. 1993)

Meyer's theoretical concept of argumentation, which is natural reasoning, is very close to Chaïm Perelman's theory of argumentation, who reconsiders rhetoric. In MEYER's view, rhetoric becomes argumentation when it is transformed into a space of disagreement through distances provoked or formed by the different opinions and beliefs of the interlocutors. And this is the term with which rhetoric takes shape, according to MEYER's concept as rhetoric actually constitutes a space for the meeting of people and languages in the exposure of their differences and their unity as they seek agreement to bring each other closer and find a moment to unify in it. Or, on the contrary, they discover the impossibility of meeting each other and make sure that there is a wall between them.

The discursive relation always and every time devotes a social, psychological and cognitive distance that is plausible and probable, as well as structural in a way that manifests itself through argumentation or seduction and hence Meyer puts forward the following definition:

"Rhetoric is the negotiation over the distance separating subjects, that negotiation which takes place through language no matter whether it is rational or emotional, and the distance in it may be short or long or fixed, as the case may be." (Ibid. 14).

The reduction of rhetoric in negotiation to a distance caused by disagreement between the interlocutors is completely equivalent to the area of the functioning of argumentation and its action, because with distance and disagreement comes negotiation, which is nothing other than the exchange of questions and answers, which are after all arguments, and hence the preferred domain of argumentation is rhetoric, which MEYER defines with a functional and essential definition, that is, considering rhetoric as negotiation over the distance between people, over a question or a problem.

Meyer's theory of argumentation is enriched by theories of argumentation in language as he resorts to reformulating Ducrot's discussion of the "implicit" and the "explicit" within the framework of the theory of questioning. MEYER adopts these two concepts as the main elements in the process of argumentation, so that the existence of argumentation is conditioned by the existence of a relationship between the "explicit" and the "implicit", since the explicit is the external aspect of the question and the implicit is not only a contextual intermediary that allows deduction but is also the argument to which we want to induce the receiver.

4. Conclusion

In general Meyer's argumentation limits its concept through those views linked to the interrogative function of conversation

or speech. And speech is the source to raise the question or to invite the question and on the basis of this, the conversation should take the form of a debate which gives rise to argumentation and from this part (the part of linking speech with the raising of the question) argumentation becomes the foundation of every conversation.

From this part also rhetoric approaches argumentation, if it does not become its preferred area as long as rhetoric, from the theory of questioning, is the negotiation of the distance that separates the subjects.

Meyer's work contributes to the enrichment of cognitive and philosophical efforts to overcome the crisis of formal reason in the domain of values and to overcome the crisis of modernity, the essence of which was based on the power of formal reason.

References

- [1] Amossy, R. (2000). *L'argumentation dans le discours*. Paris: Nathan.
- [2] Meyer, M. (1993). *Questions de rhétorique. Langage, raison et séduction*. Paris: Librairie Générale Française.
- [3] Meyer, M. (1996). "Les fondements de l'argumentation". En Hoogaert, C. (1996).
- [4] *Argumentation et questionnement*. Paris: PUF, 13-36.
- [5] Meyer, M. (2008a). *Principia Rethorica. Une théorie générale de l'argumentation*. Paris: Fayard.
- [6] Meyer, M. (2008b [1986]). *De la problématique: Langage, science et philosophie*. Paris: PUF.
- [7] Meyer, M. (2013). *Principia Rethorica. Una teoría general de la argumentación*. Buenos Aires: Perelman, Ch. and Olbrechts-Tyteca, L. (1989 [1958]). *Tratado de la argumentación. La nueva* PUF.
- [8] Plantin, C. (2005). *L'argumentation. Historia, théories, perspectives*. Paris: PUF.
- [9] *retórica*. Madrid: Gredos.
- [10]
- [11]