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Concept Theory and Conceit Theory

Ontology and Logology Between Conceptuality and Non- Conceptuality in Knowledge Organization

Abstract:

Knowledge Organization (KO) has a historically established construction based on a concept theory according to the Aristotelian model. It is from the *Organon* that the primary theoretical basis of documentary-language thinking is established. One can identify the construction of conceptual thinking in classical approaches such as Ranganathan's classification theory. More directly, Dahlberg's theory of concept proves the demarcating point of view of the Aristotelian foundation in KO. However, even in such approaches as Ranganathan's, one can also identify another theoretical tradition in classification theory concerned with constructing a non- conceptual approach. It is from Emanuele Tesauro that we can conceive a non-conceptual theory, establishing a given conceit theory. This research aims to point out the dichotomies and correlations between a concept theory and a non-conceptual one in KO. The research method is theoretical, structured from the perspective of a historical epistemology with a pragmatic background. At first, the historical-theoretical place of concept theory in the KO is determined. Later, the foundation of a non-conceptual theory (or conceit theory) is identified. Furthermore, the relationship between theories in historical and contemporary development in the classification theory is discussed. From the Aristotelian categories, one can understand a method for the relationship between signifier, meaning, and referent, and establish the associations of meaning between terms. The non-conceptuality theory can be historically identified in Emanuele Tesauro. From his *Categorico Index*, published in the *Cannocchiale aristotelico*, the condition of concept (and no-concept) is the apex of a variety of chain of rhetorical being, and it points to the creation and progressive unfolding of language figures (conceit elements). According to the French philosopher, Barbara Cassin, the theory of non-conceptuality lays the foundation or logology perspective for a semiotic-semiological-pragmatic focus and encounters the later Wittgenstein, Michel Foucault, and symbolic and poststructuralist approaches. Coincidentally, sources such as Bernd Frohmann, Søren Brier, and Hope Olson will devote themselves to the study of these philosophers to re-discuss the KO. The results lead us to the discussion of different ontological distinctions of language in the tradition of research in KO, as well as the possibilities of critical-social construction of a non-conceptual perspective. The conclusions point to the common origin of the Aristotelian nature of conceptual thinking and non-conceptual thinking.

1.0 Introduction

Knowledge Organization (KO) has a historically established construction based on a concept theory according to the Aristotelian model (Aristotle 2010). It is from the *Organon* that the primary theoretical basis of documentary-language thinking is established - as well as from reasoning about the role of language in knowledge, already present in Plato's *Cratylus* (Plato 1963). One can identify the construction of the conceptual thinking in classical approaches such as Ranganathan's classification theory (Saldanha 2014), despite the possibility of pragmatic openness launched by the Indian mathematician.

More directly, Dahlberg's theory of concept establishes the demarcating point of view of the Aristotelian foundation in KO (Dahlberg 1993; 2006). However, even in such approaches as Ranganathan's (Ranganathan 1967), one can also identify another theoretical tradition in classification theory concerned with constructing a non- conceptual approach. It is from Emanuele Tesauro that we can conceive a non- conceptual theory, establishing a given conceit theory.

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According to the review by Hjørland (2008), the theoretical path investigated here may point to the distinction in KO between a positivist tradition, focused on hierarchies already pre-existing in nature, and a pragmatic one towards the social construction of local needs and interests. We will try to demonstrate how the second approach has been gaining since the 17th century, the opening to pragmatic-critical thinking in KO.

This research aims to point out the dichotomies and correlations between a concept theory and a non-conceptual theory in KO. The research method is theoretical, structured from the perspective of a historical epistemology with a pragmatic background. The research is structured in order to configure the role of the philosophy of language in the construction of meta-informational practices - as observed by Blair (1992). The final focus of the reflection seeks to demonstrate how, since Emanuele Tesauro's proposals, we can anticipate the opening to semiotic, symbolic, and critical approaches to KO.

The research represents a development of Brazilian studies in historical epistemology in KO. Specifically, it is the result of a set of investigations that have been carried out based on the work and thought of Emanuele Tesauro. The present study is, in this way, the result of other research already published, namely, Saldanha, Almeida, and Silva (2020), Saldanha et al. (2018), Saldanha and Souza (2017), Saldanha (2017a; 2017b).

2.0 The discursive path: between ontology and logology

From the Aristotelian categories, one can understand a method for the relationship between signifier, meaning, and referent, and establish the relationships of meaning between terms. In KO, the non-conceptuality theory can be historically identified in Emanuele Tesauro. From his *Categorico Index*, published in the *Cannocchiale aristotelico*, the condition of concept (and no-concept) is the apex of a kind of chain of rhetorical being, and it points to the creation and progressive unfolding of language figures (conceit elements).

The non-conceptuality theory has been synthesized directly from Hans Blumenberg's theory, Barbara Cassin's philosophy, and the rhetorical approach of the Belgian collective "Groupe μ " (1970). Openness to non-conceptuality, from the empirical point of view, represents the recognition of plural horizons of meaning. Therefore, the theoretical and applied approaches that address, for example, discursive issues of gender, race, and social classes, such as those made possible by the researches of Hope Olson (2003) and Antonio García Gutiérrez (2011). On the one hand, the issues of feminism in the context of knowledge representations, on the other, the need for a tropological theory of classification, demonstrate the already advanced application of discursive theories in KO.

For Blumenberg (2017), it is necessary to consider that concepts are not only based on objects, but they also constitute objects. Concept, therefore, can be defined as a rule of representing representations - therefore, a representation of a representation. The hypothesis of the existence of the concept presupposes, therefore, the urgency of non-conceptuality. This means that we are not in a logical-essential terrain of the object as we are talking of representations of representations.

The concept theory leads us to a rigorous semantics capable of establishing an ontology that sustains being precisely by being itself, a classical conception that finds in Heidegger its simulacrum in language and the so-called first Wittgenstein (1979). The

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theory of non-conceptuality lays the foundation – or logology perspective, according to the French philosopher Barbara Cassin (2005) - for a semiotic-semiological-pragmatic focus (as the research by Friedman and Thellefsen (2010)) and finds the later Wittgenstein (1979), Michel Foucault (1971; 2002), and symbolic and poststructuralist approaches, including revisions in Information Science, as the work of Day (2005).

According to Cassin (2005), ontology operates in the realm of being, the discourse that manifests and affirms being. At the ontological level, the discourse imposes itself and imposes what can be said. Logology acts in the discourse that makes being, that is, being is an effect of saying. In the logological dimension, discourse produces what is said. The ontological movement depends, therefore, on the concept as a way of sustaining its imposition.

Fundamental to the establishment of metaphysics in Western culture, a concept theory will also be central to the late foundation of KO. This theory supports, by the principle of identity, the logical possibility of subjects and machines to sustain formal relations of meaning. However, they are not configured as valid from a socio-cultural point of view, due to the dynamics of representations. These dynamics are precisely the place where metaphor lives: in a non-conceptual world. In other words, we are here in the political world. This is the central point of social life observed by Cassin (2005) from the linguistic-rhetorical construction of the real since Ancient Greece: before logic, existence is logological, the existence in the city, in the gregarious world of the subjects, happens through the intensive use of non-logical language. This is the opening for political thinking about language. Its repercussion in KO is direct; it represents criticism of pure logic in classification practices.

In Information Science and KO, we can also find these tendencies as the focus of pragmatic theory and critical theory for informational practices in the late 20th century. One of the central syntheses of these approaches is in the discussion about the hermeneutic-rhetorical paradigm of the informational field observed by Rafael Capurro (1992). Equally, Bernd Frohmann (1990), Søren Brier (1996), and Hope Olson (1999; 2003), for example, devote themselves to the study of these philosophers to re-discuss the KO. The results lead us to the discussion of different ontological distinctions of language in the tradition of research in KO, as well as the possibilities of critical-social construction of a non-conceptual perspective, from a pragmatic-critical approach.

3.0 “The courage of metaphor:” challenges for KO from Emanuele Tesauro

If rhetoric was relatively critical during the Middle Age, we could see it became a trending topic during the Renaissance and, after the Council of Trento, it certainly acquired a special place in western culture.

One of the main interests in studying the work of Tesauro concerns the possible uses of metaphors. Umberto Eco, who widely wrote on metaphors, rooted his reflections in the Aristotelian conception of metaphor as “instrument of knowledge, clearness, and enigma” (Eco 1984, 164), stating that its function is to show, teach to see and recognize similarity among things, “the subtle web of proportion between the cultural unity” (Eco 1984, 164).

As we will see, Tesauro's work is an encyclopedic model in which we can recognize the core of Aristotelian rhetoric, establishing the metaphor model as a way of discovering inedited relations between knowledge data.

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Aristoteles considers metaphors, mainly when they are subtle e not evident, as learning figures: “the obvious metaphor, the one that does not shock at all, is rejected. When metaphor shows us things opposite to what we used to believe, it becomes clear that we learned, and it looks like our mind is telling us: ‘it was like this, and I was wrong’” (Eco 1984, 164).

Metaphor is capable of “putting in front of the eyes” an unexpected relation between things, it “imposes a reorganization of our knowledge and opinions” (Eco 2007, 70), becoming a “productive tool of new ontologies” (Eco 2007, 67), capable of leaving “a trace in our encyclopedia” (Eco 2007, 72)

Eco states that during the Middle Age, an idea of metaphor developed in which its sense shifted away from the Aristotelian definition, acquiring a purely ornamental function, with very little knowledge. (Eco 2007).

According to Blumenberg (2017), in his theory of non-conceptuality, metaphor is initially a disturbance of connections, a fracture in the homogeneity that allows mechanical reading. In this way, metaphor is historically understood as a semantic anomaly. This historical reason places the priority of the concept over the metaphor, as being the first “correct,” and the second a displacement of meaning. However, it is precisely in the analysis of the most straightforward and most complex concepts, like the cosmos, that metaphor is revealed as, precisely, essential for knowledge (before and after the concept).

Cassin (2005) demonstrates that, through the reinterpretation of Aristotle's Poetics, that metaphor has already produced a “better teaching” than logic, since they produce a picture of reality. Metaphors put before the eyes things they mean in action.

Eco compares Middle Age and Renaissance proposals on the use of metaphors to the theory developed in the 17th century by Emanuele Tesauro, observing that during the Middle Age, the Aristotelian theory was not much prized. Simultaneously, Tesauro's *Il Canocchiale Aristotelico* (1654) represents its prime reach (Eco 2007, 123-124).

Tesauro seems to be Aristotle's heir, mainly when it comes to the knowledge function of metaphor. All the possible metaphorical combinations that Tesauro suggests and lists along with his quite broad “categorical index,” considered by Eco as a “model of an unlimited semiosis,” or encyclopedic web of interpreters, allow discovering “a warehouse of unedited metaphors” (Eco 1984, 170).

Eco's starting point is the Aristotelian classification of different kinds of metaphors to develop his analysis of production and interpretation. The first two, from gender to species and from species to gender, can be classified as synecdoche, while the third one, from species to species, should be thus considered a metaphor (Eco 1984, 150-154).

The first two kinds of metaphor may be satisfactory when described through the dictionary model, which is hierarchic, designed as a tree, where we can find the neo-platonic heritage descending from the so-called “Porphyrian tree.” It manages metaphors in the kind of relation from gender to species and vice-versa, which means synecdoche through the formula *pars pro toto* or *totum pro parte* (Eco 1990, 146-147).

In order to describe the third and the fourth kind, that is metaphor *stricto sensu*, we need to resort the non-hierarchical model of an encyclopedia, a web or rhizomatic structure in which to insert the practices of interpretation and of knowledge of the so-called “unlimited semiosis,” where metaphor has the function of an interpreter. Inside the sophisticated space of an encyclopedia, metaphor is a constitutive part of a web of

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interpreters: “of a reticulate of properties in which parts are the interpreters of others” (Eco 1984, 177), properties furthermore sensitive to circumstances, historical contexts and knowledge of the world, fact that turn it “interesting.”

The substantial opposition between the two models of dictionary and encyclopedia is based on their properties, being analytics in the first model and synthetic in the second one. As Eco states (1980, 206), the properties of dictionaries are “artifices of a metalinguistic economy that allows avoiding a long list of encyclopedic properties.”

The content of the system designed in Tesauro's *Cannocchiale* is organized encyclopedically, revealing that the metaphoric shifts are guaranteed by the language's very structure rather than by ontological relations.

Tesauro studies the refinement in single words and short texts as well as in visual and plastic manifestations: for him, mastering metaphors is not casual but requires practice. Step one of the path leading to master the craft and use of metaphors consists of reading catalogs and all varieties of collection of texts and emblems., in order to learn

how to combine them.

Step two is drafting a categorical index (both on cards and tables). This index has the

task of modeling a universe “semantically organized” (Eco 1980, 214). Branches, collecting everything that the ten Aristotelian categories can include, are established, and things can be found just sliding through the index.

Tesauro follows his time trend, testifying the encyclopedist's effort to flee from a dry classification based on synecdoche (from gender to specie and vice-versa). He proposes a partial accumulation (partial, because at least it is ordered by the ten Aristotelian categories of Substance plus the nine accidents) that allows the *inventio*, in its meaning of discovering, of unexpected relations between the “objects” of knowledge.

According to Proctor (1973), Tesauro conceives a figurative approach or a structure that addresses the relationship between sense, emotion, and intelligence. His experiments seek not only to isolate and relate terms to identify their sign and symbolic effects. The theoretical Tesaurian activity also allows, in its combinatorial technique, to identify other meanings based on the relationship between ideas.

In his work “A Theory of the Conceit,” Proctor (1973) demonstrates that conceit represents a particular image of comparison, which produces different figures of speech, including metaphor. These figures are used in the singularities of objects, in their complexity and tension between objects. In Proctor's (1973) point of view, Tesauro solves historical questions of the idea of figurative language studies.

Aware of the difference between science and rhetoric, the seventeenth century, the use of metaphor as a way to discover pre-existing relationships. The methodological path of the Tesauro takes us, thus, deepening Aristotelian thought, to apprehend the object and its representation by imagination. The “imagination,” we can understand, in contemporary terms, as the socio-cultural imaginary that composes the meanings of objects and their relationships in the real.

Emanuele Tesauro (1654) visits the same Aristotle we knew from the logical tradition in KO in the 20th century – centrally, *Organon*, *Rhetoric*, and *Poetics* (Aristotle 1966; 1991; 2010). The difference lies in his understanding of the complexity of the Aristotelian work concerning language. It is about verifying the relations between logic and rhetoric and intensively exploring its developments. Specifically, through the metaphorical path, in the context of rhetoric, Tesauro allows us to discuss the question

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of bringing the social and cultural world. The result is the repositioning of political issues at the center of reflections and practices on the organization of language and knowledge.

This movement establishes a path at the end of the twentieth century for critical theory in KO - even without talking directly with the Tesauro vanguard. We can find this critical theory, for example, in Olson (1999; 2003), in Brier (1996) and García Gutierrez (2011). It is important to note that part of the critical solutions pointed out by these authors are already in Emanuele Tesauro, from rhetoric - It is about the possibility of perceiving a classical non-hierarchical structure, the Porphyrian structure; as well as perceiving the plurality of meanings in the socio-cultural world. In other words, as described by Capurro (1992), "The rhetorical distinctions do not intend to separate informative (and deliberative) speech from the other forms of speech nor to isolate all of them from ethics and politics."

This is the direction towards plurality via a theory of the conceit. In non-conceptuality theory, Blumenberg (2017) indicates that poverty of our relationship with reality (amid the richness of our relationship with possibility) is not only of the order of knowledge but also of language. The universe of action (that is, the universe of pragmata) opens us up to the possibilities for transforming the social world.

The lesson of Tesauro, therefore, represents, in our analysis, what Blumenberg (2017) will call "the courage of metaphor." This courage reveals to us the dilemmas of the economic effect of the concept (including its need, our conceptual urgency). However, the same metaphorical courage reveals to us that beyond poverty (our semantic limits) and the need for economy of meaning for communication there is our freedom

Metaphor, the object of exploration of the theoretical Tesauro's thought, therefore represents a challenge for KO. The practices of knowledge representation gain here the horizon to face the socio-cultural dilemmas impregnated with alleged neutrality.

Between ontology and logology, Emanuele Tesauro opens, with his theoretical and applied reflections (the conceit theory), the path to the second direction in KO. As seen, logology - a term consecrated by Bárbara Cassin (2005) - operates in the territory of the discourse. This territory is marked by an understanding of the social production of knowledge and its representations. In KO, logology can be expressed by the significant influence of a pragmatic theory, already detected by Hjørland (2008). Foucaultian and Wittgensteinian contributions are registered here. The political condition of language seems to us most fundamental in the theoretical-applied window opened by Tesauro. The study of metaphor brings us to the reflection on the effects of saying, on the risks of the word, on the need to critically understand the practices of representing knowledge as a form of oppression, but also of autonomy. Therefore, the logological path in KO is an itinerary towards the socio-cultural dilemmas of a general theory of classification.

4.0 Conclusions: KO as politics

The metaphorical path of knowledge operates in the potential and pragmatic plurality of the senses – logological mode, according to Cassin (2005). The concept is achieved in the search for an abstract and watertight singularity of meaning – ontological mode. In this way, the conclusions point to the common origin of the Aristotelian nature of conceptual thinking and non-conceptual thinking. Besides, the conclusions aim to recognize each approach's uniqueness for solving the current semantic problems of

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information systems, as well as for historical gaps in theoretical understanding, especially non-conceptual studies.

Tesauro (1654) has made possible, since the 17th century, a logological form of thought for the organization of language through the foundations of logic and rhetoric. From the plan applied to the political plan in KO, the logological (or discursive) perspective marks a turning point in thinking in classification. In other words, metaphor extinguishes precisely the separation between the concept and the policy, nullifies the possibility of neutrality discourse in informational practices.

We have here the locus for the deepening in KO of theoretical and methodological foundations for a semiotic theory as seen in Brier (1996), a critical theory, as developed in García Gutiérrez (2011) and a symbolic theory - for example, from Todorov's reflections, as seen in Saldanha (2017b).

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