

Truthfulness from a transcendental-pragmatic point of view

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Abstract

Discourse ethics of Apelian provenance provides *ultimate justified* (K.-O. Apel) norms. Against their binding power however, following can apparently be criticised:

1. *Ultimate justified norms* appear to be true only for those who already feel bound by *discourse*.
2. Theoretical *ultimate justification* of *discourse norms* cannot demonstrate where motivation for the individual should derive from in order to abide by these norms.
3. Furthermore, it cannot be demonstrated how a person should know how to fulfil these norms, especially when, as Apel himself admits, contextual conditions for reciprocal observance of norms is not given and hence unilateral abidance is not reasonable.

Invalidation of all three points is indeed already inherent in the concept of *ultimate justification*. However, I argue that through introduction of a *transcendental-pragmatic* redetermination of *truthfulness*, these points of criticism can be refuted yet even more decidedly.

The foundation of my thesis states that *truthfulness* of a speaker is not a *validity claim* through which a speaker imposes a claim expressing its subjective sensations as effectively experienced – as assumed by Habermas and Apel – but rather that *truthfulness* is the *presupposition* with which the speaker fulfils the norms of *argumentative discourse* (K.-O. Apel) and *consensually oriented speech* (J.Habermas).

More precisely, my thesis claims that the salient characteristic of this *presupposition* of *truthfulness* lies in a twofold, hitherto unnoticed, peculiarity:

Firstly, *truthfulness* is the sole *presupposition* which the *competent speaker*, at any time and with certainty, can *catch up* with.

And secondly, this possible *infallibility* of the speaker in his *truthfulness* is at the same time a *necessity*. Since *truthfulness* is the *presupposition* with which the speaker raises *validity claims* in regards *catching up* on all *counterfactual*, *ideal* but *non-circumventable presuppositions* of *argumentative discourse* and *consensually oriented speech acts* and acts.

One could say that *catch up* with *truthfulness* is the practical equivalent of theoretical knowledge to the effect that discourse is *non-circumventable* for the *rational speaker* and hence *presuppositional norms* of *discourse* are *non-circumventable*.

Thus, it can be said that each rational competent speaker in its *truthfulness* has inasmuch *always already* acknowledged the *self-catching-up* of reflective *ultimate justification*.

Conversely, what is *self-caught-up* through reflective knowledge of *ultimate justification* is nothing but *truthfulness* of one's own speech.

Thus, with afore introduced concept of *truthfulness* with which a speaker in all certainty at any time can *catch up*, one can now object against above outlined points of criticism:

1. It enables to reinforce that norms of discourse do not require explicit decision by discourse itself, but is true for any *rational* and *competent speaker* who *means* anything *truthful*.
2. Motivation to *catch up* with these norms is already built into the linguistically constituted “conscience” of any *rational competent speaker*.
3. Since norms of *argumentative, consensually oriented speech are caught up in truthfulness* of speech, the *competent speaker* knows how to *catch up* with these norms.