

Abstract

Robert Brandom's normative inferentialism promises a theory of meaning that avoids the pitfalls of the now-dominant representationalist approach to meaning (viz. dogmatism) while steering clear of relativism of conceptual norms embraced by his pragmatist predecessors. In this thesis, I criticize Brandom's approach and offer an alternative. In particular, I argue that Brandom's attempt at securing the objectivity of conceptual norms as a way out of the dilemma between dogmatism and relativism fails (Chapter 1). Then, I generalize the insights of the debate on the principle of harmony within logical inferentialism (Chapter 2) to natural language, relying on insights from the dialogical tradition (Chapter 3). Finally, I offer a Kantian account of how we might ground semantic normativity—and in particular, the principle of harmony—on discursive agency (Chapter 4). The upshot is that normativity of conceptual norms has its source not in objective, mind-independent reality but in our nature as discursive agents.

Résumé

L'inférentialisme normatif de Robert Brandom promet une théorie de la signification qui évite les pièges de l'approche représentative de la signification, aujourd'hui dominante (à savoir le dogmatisme), tout en évitant le relativisme des normes conceptuelles adopté par ses prédécesseurs pragmatistes. Dans cette thèse, je critique l'approche de Brandom et propose une alternative. En particulier, je soutiens que la tentative de Brandom de garantir l'objectivité des normes conceptuelles pour sortir du dilemme entre dogmatisme et relativisme échoue (chapitre 1). Ensuite, je généralise les idées du débat sur le principe d'harmonie au sein de l'inférentialisme logique (chapitre 2) au langage naturel, en m'appuyant sur les idées de la tradition dialogique (chapitre 3). Enfin, je propose un compte rendu kantien de la manière dont nous pourrions fonder la normativité sémantique - et en particulier le principe d'harmonie - sur l'agence discursive (chapitre 4). La normativité des normes conceptuelles trouve sa source non pas dans une réalité objective et indépendante de l'esprit, mais dans notre nature d'agents discursifs.

Resumo

O inferencialismo normativo de Robert Brandom promete uma teoria do significado que evita as armadilhas da abordagem representacionista do significado, atualmente dominante (nomeadamente, o dogmatismo), ao mesmo tempo que evita o relativismo das normas conceptuais adotado pelos seus antecessores pragmatistas. Nesta tese, critico a abordagem de Brandom e proponho uma alternativa. Em particular, defendo que a tentativa de Brandom de garantir a objetividade das normas conceptuais como forma de sair do dilema entre dogmatismo e relativismo falha (Capítulo 1). Depois, generalizo as ideias do debate sobre o princípio da harmonia no âmbito do inferencialismo lógico (Capítulo 2) à linguagem natural, apoiando-me nas ideias da tradição dialógica (Capítulo 3). Por fim, apresento uma descrição kantiana do modo como podemos fundamentar a normatividade semântica - e, em particular, o princípio da harmonia - na agência discursiva (Capítulo 4). O resultado é que a normatividade das normas conceptuais tem a sua fonte não na realidade objetiva e independente da mente, mas na nossa natureza de agentes discursivos.

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