White Mythology: *

Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy

Jacques Derrida

Note from the translator: "Here is a parody of the translator," writes M. Derrida. It is a truism that translation is impossible, or at least a treachery. Indeed, it is the piety of the translator to say so. In this case, however, the dilemma is more acute. It is not merely that M. Derrida's style is peculiarly elaborate and difficult—it is that his topic (if we allow the distinction) itself raises difficulties of which translation provides an evident example. The question of metaphor, as M. Derrida shows, is at the heart of those very general questions concerning the relations of language, thought, and reality. Now the supposed task of the translator is to discern the thought of a text in one language (and the reality which it claims to put before us), and to express *the same thought* in another language. The deeply problematic nature of these notions is a chief concern of the present article. It is therefore with more than the usual insistence that I enter here the translator's conventional warning and apology.

In particular, the reader should take note of the following points: 1. Intelligible English renderings have generally been preferred to direct transfers into English of M. Derrida's suggestive exploitation of nuances of French vocabulary. This results inevitably in some loss of the force of the original. Here are some examples:

—The heading of the introductory part of the article (here translated "On the Obverse") is "Exergue," a word which in English as in French has a technical numismatic meaning (the part of the coin where the date, the engraver's initials and so forth are inscribed), but in French also has an idiomatic use, as in the phrase "mettre en exergue"—"to display, bring to the fore." The effectiveness of the term for M. Derrida's purposes in the introductory section cannot be captured in English.

—Among other examples of metonymy, M. Derrida gives the example of the French word *robe* used of the judiciary. This, and one or two similar examples, have simply been omitted.

—The terms *propre* and *propriété*, a frequent and central topic of discussion, are problematic. The English word *proper* is importantly less versatile than *propre*: *proper name* is normal English for *nom propre*, but *une qualité propre* would more naturally be *a distinctive quality*, and *un sens propre* would only with some strain be a proper rather than a

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literal sense. Strain has been preferred in this case, so that the strategic role of "the proper" in the argument may remain manifest.

—Similar considerations apply to the terms *figure*, *valeur*, *problématique*: again, literal translations are often preferred, in spite of some strain.

2. Quotations and references are given according to English originals or English translations where conveniently available, though some modifications to these translations have been made in view of M. Derrida's use of the texts in question. For instance, the expression "white mythology" itself frightened Anatole France's English translator into a periphrasis.

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I. On the Obverse

PHILOSOPHY . . . and from philosophy, rhetoric. From a book—roughly and more or less a book—to create a flower, and to create it here, to bring it forth, to mount it, rather—to let it mount and find its dawning (and it turns aside as though of itself, revoluted, some grave flower). Following the reckoning of a lapidary, we learn to cultivate patience. . . .

Metaphor *in* the text of philosophy. We might be confident of understanding every word of this phrase; we might hasten to make out a figure (or to write it in) in the volume capable of philosophy; we might set ourselves to deal with a specific question: is there metaphor in the text of philosophy? in what form? to what extent? is it necessary or incidental? and so on. Our confidence is quickly lost: metaphor seems to bring into play the use of philosophical language in its entirety, nothing less than the use of what is called ordinary language in philosophical discourse, that is to say, of ordinary language *as* philosophical language.

In short, a book is called for—on philosophy, on philosophical usage, or good philosophical usage. The interest lies in what this undertaking promises, rather than in what it yields, and we shall therefore content ourselves with a chapter. Moreover, to "usage" we may append the subtitle "wear and tear," and it is with this that we shall concern ourselves. And first of all we shall direct interest upon a certain wear and tear of metaphorical force in philosophical intercourse. It will become clear that this wear is not a supervenient factor modifying a kind of trope-energy which would otherwise remain intact; on the contrary, it constitutes the very history and structure of philosophical metaphor.

But how can we make it discernible, except by metaphor? This is

where the notion of wear and tear comes in. We can have no access to the wear and tear of a linguistic phenomenon without giving it some kind of figurative representation. What could be the wear and tear *properly so-called* of a word, a statement, a meaning, a text?

We shall be bold and look to Anatole France: in *The Garden of Epicurus* we shall unearth an example (but no more than an example in which a common type may be discerned) of this metaphor of the wear and tear of metaphor—of deterioration in this figure. Let it be noted that in the "obverse" of the present chapter, Anatole France's metaphor—the philosophical wear and tear of this figure—happens also to describe the active erosion of the obverse of a coin.

Almost at the end of *The Garden of Epicurus*,[1] there is a short dialogue between Aristos and Polyphilos on "the language of metaphysics." The interlocutors are concerned precisely with that sensible figure which is sheltered, and worn out to the point of seeming to pass unnoticed, in every metaphysical concept. Abstract notions always conceal a sensible figure. It seems that the history of metaphysical language is commingled with the erasing of what is effective in it, and the wearing out of its effigy. We may detect here the double bearing of the French word *usure* (though Anatole France does not actually use this word), of which we may offer the following accounts, although they remain inseparable: first, obviously, the word means that "wear" of which we have been speaking—erasure by rubbing, or exhaustion, or crumbling; but secondly, it has also the sense of "usury"—the additional product of a certain capital, the process of exchange which, far from losing the stake, would make that original wealth bear fruit, would increase the return from it in the form of income, of higher interest, of a kind of linguistic surplus value.

POLYPHILOS: It was just a reverie. I was thinking how the Metaphysicians, when they make a language for themselves, are like [and here we have an image, a comparison, a figure to signify the figurative] knife-grinders, who instead of knives and scissors, should put medals and coins to the grindstone to efface the exergue, the value and the head. When they have worked away till nothing is visible in their crown-pieces, neither King Edward, the Emperor William, nor the Republic, they say: "These pieces have nothing either English, German or French about them; we have freed them from all limits of time and space; they are not worth five shillings any more; they are of an inestimable value, and their ex-

1 Anatole France, *The Garden of Epicurus*, tr. A. Allinson, *The Works of Anatole France*, ed. F. Chapman and J. L. May (London and New York, 1908), III, 205ff. The same work includes a sort of meditation on the figures of the alphabet, the original forms of certain of its letters ("How I discoursed one night with an apparition on the first origins of the alphabet").

change value is extended indefinitely." They are right in speaking thus. By this needy knife-grinder's activity words are changed from a physical to a metaphorical acceptation. It is obvious that they lose in the process; what they gain by it is not so immediately apparent.

It is not our task here to capitalize on this reverie, but to discern through its implicit logic a drawing of the outlines of our problem, of the theoretical and historical conditions under which it emerges. At least, we discern two limits: first, Polyphilos, it seems, wants to preserve the capital intact, or rather, to preserve the natural wealth which precedes the accumulation of capital, the original virtue of the sensible image which is deflowered and spoilt by the history of the concept. In this way he presupposes—and it is a classical motif, a commonplace of the eighteenth century—that at its origins language could have been purely sensory, and that the *etymon* of a primitive meaning, though hidden, can always be determined. Secondly, this etymologism interprets degradation as the passage from the physical to the metaphysical. Thus Polyphilos is making use of a distinction which is entirely philosophical, and which itself has its history and its metaphorical history, in order to pass judgment on what, as he alleges, the philosopher unknowingly does with metaphor.

This is confirmed by what follows: what is now in question is precisely the possibility of restoring or reconstituting, beneath the metaphor which at once conceals and is concealed, what was "originally represented" on the coin that is worn and effaced, polished by the circulation of the philosophical concept. "Ef-*face*-ment" should always be spoken of as the effacement of an original figure, were it not that such effacement itself effaces itself.

> All these words, whether defaced by usage, or polished smooth, or even coined expressly in view of constructing some intellectual concept, yet allow us to frame some idea to ourselves of what they originally represented. So chemists have reagents whereby they can make the effaced writing of a papyrus or a parchment visible again. It is by these means palimpsests are deciphered.
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> If an analogous process were applied to the writings of the metaphysicians, if the primitive and concrete meaning that lurks invisible yet present under the abstract and new interpretation were brought to light, we should come upon some very curious and perhaps instructive ideas.

The primitive meaning, the original figure, always sensible and material ("The vocabulary of mankind was framed from sensuous images, and this sensuousness is to be found . . . even in the technical terms concocted by metaphysicians . . . fatal materialism inherent in the vocubulary"), is not exactly a metaphor. It is a kind of transparent

figure, equivalent to a proper meaning. It becomes metaphor when put in circulation in philosophical discourse. At that point, the first meaning and the first displacement are simultaneously forgotten. The metaphor is no longer noticed, and it is taken for the proper meaning. This is a two-fold effacement. On this view, philosophy would be a self-eliminating process of generating metaphor. It would be of the nature of philosophy that philosophical culture be a rude obliteration.

This is a rule of economy: to reduce the work of abrasion, metaphysicians would by preference choose the most worn of words: "they go out of their way to choose for polishing such words as come to them a bit obliterated already. In this way, they save themselves a good half of the labor. Sometimes they are luckier still, and put their hands on words which, by long and universal use, have lost from time immemorial all trace whatever of an effigy." Conversely, we are unwitting metaphysicians in proportion to the wear and tear of our words. Without making a theme or a problem of it, Polyphilos cannot avoid proceeding to the logical conclusion—the case of *absolute* wear. But what is this? And does not the metaphysician systematically prefer such loss—which is to say such unlimited surplus value—in choosing, for example, concepts which are negative in form, *ab-solute*, *in-finite*, *in-tangible*, *not-being*? "In three pages of Hegel, taken at random, in his *Phenomenology* [a book very little referred to, it seems, in French universities in 1900], out of six and twenty words, the subjects of important sentences, I found nineteen negative terms as against seven affirmatives. . . . These *abs* and *ins* and *nons* are more effective than any grindstone in planing down. At a stroke they make the most rugged words smooth and characterless. Sometimes, it is true, they merely twist them round for you and turn them upside down." This is whimsical: but we may detect beyond it an outstanding question: what is the relation between the self-eliminating generation of metaphor and concepts of negative form? Such concepts cancel definiteness and determinacy, and it is their function to break the link with the sense of a particular being, that is, with the totality of what is. In this way, their obvious metaphorical quality is put in abeyance. (We shall define this problem of negativity more clearly below by drawing attention to the alliance between the Hegelian "sublation"—the *Aufhebung*, itself too a unity of gain and loss, and the philosophical concept of metaphor.)

Such is the general practice, so far as I have observed, of the metaphysicians—more correctly, the *Metataphysicians*; for it is another remarkable fact to add to the rest that your science itself has a negative name, one taken from the order in which the treatises of Aristotle were

arranged, and that strictly speaking, you give yourselves the title: Those who come after the *Physicians*. I understand of course that you regard these, the physical books, as piled atop of each other, so that to come after is really to take place above. All the same, you admit this much, that you are outside of natural phenomena.

Although metaphysical metaphor has turned every meaning upside down, although it has also effaced piles of physical treatises, one ought always to be able to reconstitute the original inscription and restore the palimpsest. Polyphilos indulges in this game. From a work which "reviews all systems one by one from the old Eleatics down to the latest Eclectics, and . . . ends up with M. Lachelier," he abstracts an extremely abstract and speculative sentence: "*The spirit possesses God in proportion as it participates in the absolute.*" Then he undertakes an etymological or philological investigation aimed at bringing to life all the sleeping figures. To do this, he concerns himself not with "how much truth the sentence contained," but solely with "the verbal form." He first makes it clear that the words "God," "soul," "absolute," and so forth are *symbols* and not *signs*. The force of this distinction is that what is symbolized retains a bond of natural affinity with the symbol, and thus warrants etymological reconstitution (in this way, arbitrariness, as Nietzsche also suggests, would only be a degree of wear and tear of the symbolic). Polyphilos then gives us the results of his chemical operation:

Wherefore I was on the right road when I investigated the meanings inherent in the words *spirit, God, absolute,* which are symbols and not signs.

"The spirit possesses God in proportion as it participates in the absolute."

What is this if not a collection of little symbols, much worn and defaced, I admit, symbols which have lost their original brilliance, and picturesqueness, but which still, by the nature of things, remain symbols? The image is reduced to the schema, but the schema is still the image. And I have been able, without sacrificing fidelity, to substitute one for the other. In this way I have arrived at the following:

"*The breath is seated on the shining one in the bushel of the part it takes in what is altogether loosed* (or *subtle*)," whence we easily get as a next step: "*He whose breath is a sign of life, man, that is, will find a place* (no doubt after the breath has been exhaled) *in the divine fire, source and home of life, and this place will be meted out to him according to the virtue that has been given him* (by the demons, I imagine) *of sending abroad this warm breath, this little invisible soul, across the free expanse* (the blue of the sky, most likely)."

And now observe, the phrase has acquired quite the ring of some frag-

ment of a Vedic hymn, and smacks of ancient Oriental mythology. I cannot answer for having restored this primitive myth in full accordance with the strict laws governing language. But no matter for that. Enough if we are seen to have found symbols and a myth in a sentence that was essentially symbolic and mythical, inasmuch as it was metaphysical.

I think I have at last made you realize one thing, Aristos, that any expression of an abstract idea can only be an analogy. By an odd fate, the very metaphysicians who think to escape the world of appearances are constrained to live perpetually in allegory. A sorry lot of poets, they dim the colors of the ancient fables, and are themselves but gatherers of fables. The produce white mythology.

A catchphrase—brief, condensed, economical, almost dumb—is deployed in a speech consisting of interminable explanations. It stands out like a schoolmaster. It produces the laughable effect always given by the wordy and arm-waving translation of an oriental ideogram. Here is a parody of the translator, a metaphysical naivety of the wretched peripatetic who does not recognize his own figure, and does not know where it has led him.

What is metaphysics? A white mythology which assembles and reflects Western culture: the white man takes his own mythology (that is, Indo-European mythology), his *logos*—that is, the *mythos* of his idiom, for the universal form of that which it is still his inescapable desire to call Reason. It's not so easy to get away with this. Aristos, the defender of metaphysics (a misprint woud have given us *Artiste* in place of *Ariste* in the title), finishes by *leaving*, determined not to carry on the dialogue with one who will not play the game: "I leave unconvinced. If only you had reasoned by the rules, I could have rebutted your arguments quite easily."

What is white mythology? It is metaphysics which has effaced in itself that fabulous scene which brought it into being, and which yet remains, active and stirring, inscribed in white ink, an invisible drawing covered over in the palimpsest.

It is not only because it is striking—because, by striking the intellect as much as the imagination, it creates a theatrical delineation of our problem—that this dissymetric dialogue—this false dialogue—deserves a place like the head on the obverse of a coin: there are other reasons. To give them schematically:

1. It seems that the view of Polyphilos is not isolated. It remains to interpret the configurations to which it belongs in their historical and theoretical distribution, their boundaries, their internal divisions, and their shifts of phase. This is a task in which we should be guided by asking about the nature of rhetoric, and in which we should have to

give as much attention to the texts of Renan[2] and Nietzsche[3] (both of whom have recalled, as philologists, what they considered to be the metaphorical origin of concepts, and notably of that concept which seems to be the support of proper meanings, of the property of being proper, namely, *being*), as to those of Freud,[4] Bergson,[5] and Lenin,[6] who were conscious of metaphorical activity in theoretical or philosophical discourse, and proposed or carried out a multiplication of conflicting metaphors in order to neutralize or control their effect. The rise of historical linguistics in the nineteenth century is by itself quite inadequate to explain this interest in the metaphorical sedimentation of concepts. And it goes without saying that this configuration of themes does not have a linear boundary, chronologically or historically. That is shown by the names we have just linked together, and moreover the cleavages to be defined or maintained are accentuated within segments of discourse carrying a single signature. The elaboration of these points should follow or go hand in hand with an attempt for each writer to ascertain anew the unity of his *corpus*.

2. If we read in a concept the hidden history of a metaphor, we are giving a privileged position to *diachrony* at the expense of system, and

2 Ernest Renan, "De l'origine du langage" (1848), Ch. v, *Oeuvres complètes*, VIII.

3 See, for example, *Philosophy During the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, § 11 (*Complete Works of Nietzsche*, ed. D. Levy, tr. M. A. Mügge [London and Edinburgh, 1911], II, 128-29).

4 See, for example, the texts of Breuer and Freud in *Studies on Hysteria*, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. J. Strachey (New York, 1949), II, 227-28, 288-90; or again *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, *ibid.*, VIII, 210-11; "The Question of Lay Analysis," *ibid.*, XX, 187-88. From another point of view, it is natural to refer for the role of rhetorical schemes in psychoanalytic discourse to Jacques Lacan (*Écrits* [Paris: Seuil, 1966]; see the "Indexe raisonné des concepts majeurs" by J. A. Miller), to Emile Benveniste, *Remarques sur la fonction du langage dans la decouverte freudienne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), and to Roman Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbance," Part II of R. O. Jakobson and M. Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1956).

5 See, for example, the "Introduction à la métaphysique," *La Pensée et le Mouvant*, VI.

6 In the *Notebooks* on Hegel's dialectic, Lenin generally defined the relation between Marx and Hegel as one of "overturning" (turning upside down), but equally as one of "decapitation" (the Hegelian system less everything which governs it: the absolute, the Idea, God, etc.), or again of the development of a "seed," and even of the "peeling away" of the husk to arrive at the kernel, etc.

For the question of metaphor in the reading of Marx, and in general in a Marxist problematic, see especially Louis Althusser (*For Marx*, tr. B. Brewster, [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969], Part III, "Contradiction and Overdetermination," pp. 89-90, 114-15, 120-21; and L. Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, tr. B. Brewster [London, 1970], pp. 24, 121n., 187ff.) and Jean-Joseph Goux, "Numismatiques" I, II, *Tel Quel*, 35-36 (1968-69).

we are putting our money on that *symbolist* conception of language which we have touched on: the link between signifier and signified had to be and to remain, though buried, one of natural necessity, of analogical participation, and of resemblance. Metaphor has always been defined as the trope of resemblance; not simply between signifier and signified, but between what are already two signs, the one designating the other. This is its most general feature, and the one which justified us in including under this name all the figures called *symbolical* or *analogical* which are evoked by Polyphilos (figure, myth, fable, allegory). In this critique of philosophical language, to concern oneself with metaphor—a particular figure—is therefore to presuppose a symbolist position. It is above all to concern oneself with the nonsyntactic, nonsystematic pole, with semantic "depth," with the magnetizing effect of similarity rather than with positional combination, call it "metonymous," in the sense defined by Jakobson, who rightly underlines[7] the affinity between symbolism (not only as a linguistic notion, but also, we should claim, as a literary school), Romanticism (*with* a more historical—that is, historicist—orientation, and more directed towards interpretation), and the prevalence of metaphor. It goes without saying that the question of metaphor, in the form in which we are once more posing it here, far from belonging to this problematic, and sharing its assumptions, should on the contrary mark their limits. Nevertheless, the task is, not to consolidate the position which Polyphilos is aiming at by setting up a symmetrical position at the other, systematic pole, but rather to dismantle the metaphysical and rhetorical structures which are at work in his position, not in order to reject or discard them, but to reconstitute them in another way, and above all in order to begin to identify the historical terrain—the problematic—in which it has been possible to inquire systematically of philosophy the metaphorical credentials of its concepts.

3. It was also necessary to subject this notion of *wear and tear* to scrutiny, for it seems to be systematically connected with the metaphorical perspective. It is to be found wherever the theme of metaphor has a special place. It is, moreover, a metaphor which carries a presupposition of continuity: according to it, the history of a metaphor would not proceed like a journey, with breaks, reinstatements in a heterogeneous system, mutation, unmotivated detours, but like a progressive erosion, a regular semantic loss, an uninterrupted draining of the primitive meaning. It would be a case of empirical abstraction not stepping outside its native soil. Not that the authors we have referred

7 "Two Aspects," pp. 77-78.

to have attended exclusively to this idea, but they have come back to it every time they have let the metaphorical point of view predominate. This feature, the notion of wear and tear, belongs without doubt not to a narrow historical and theoretical configuration, but more certainly to the notion of metaphor itself, and to the long metaphysical sequence which it determines, or which is determined by it. It is with that sequence that we shall concern ourselves here initially.

4. It is remarkable how insistently the metaphorical process is designated by the paradigm of coinage, of metal—gold and silver. Now before metaphor—a phenomenon of language—could be metaphorically designated by an economic phenomenon, it was necessary that interchange between these two "regions" should be orchestrated by a more general analogy. Analogy within language is represented by an analogy between language and something other than it. But that which seems here to "represent," a figure, is also that which opens the larger vista of discourse on figure, and is no longer able to be restricted to a regional or determinate science, linguistics, or philology.

The inscription on a coin is most often the point of crossover, the scene of interchange between linguistics and economics. The two kinds of signifier serve for each other in the problematic of fetishism, as much in Nietzsche as in Marx.[8] And the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* organizes systematically the motifs clustered around the French word *usure* (see above)—of "coinage speaking different languages," of the relation between "differences in name" and "differences in shape," of the conversion of coinage into "gold *sans phrase*," and reciprocally of the idealization of gold which "becomes a symbol of itself and . . . cannot serve as a symbol of itself" ("nothing can be its own symbol," etc.[9]). The reference here seems to be economic

8 See, for example, *Capital*, Part I, Ch. i, §4: "[The] Fetish character [of commodity production] is comparatively easy to be seen through. . . . Whence arose the illusions of the monetary system? To it gold and silver, when serving as money, did not represent a social relation between producers, but were natural objects with strange properties. . . . Could commodities themselves speak, they would say: . . . Now listen how these commodities speak through the mouth of the economist. . . ."

9 *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, tr. N. F. Stone (Chicago, 1904), Book I, Ch. ii, §2c, pp. 139, 145. Here we simply recall these texts. To analyze them from the point of view which concerns us here (the critique of etymologism, questions on the history and import of the notion of what is "proper"—*idion, proprium, eigen*), it would be necessary to keep firmly in mind this fact in particular, that Marx's critique of etymologism was not, like that of others (Plato, Leibniz, Rousseau, etc.), simply that it was an unscientific deviation or abuse, an exercise in bad etymology. His critique took what is *proper* as an example. We cannot quote here the whole critique of Destutt de Tracy who plays on the words *property* and *proper*, as did "Stirner" with

and the metaphor linguistic. No doubt it is not without significance that Nietzsche, at least in appearance (in his case too), reverses the current of the analogy; but this should not lead us to overlook the common possibility of exchange and of terms: "What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymics, anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which became poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage, seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they *are* illusions; worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses [*die abgenutzt und sinnlich kraftlos geworden sind*], coins which have their obverse [*Bild*] *effaced* and now are no longer of account as coins but merely as metal."[10]

Mein and *Meinung* (mine, my opinion; Hegel did this too), *Eigentum* and *Eigenheit* (property and individuality). We shall simply quote a passage concerned with the reduction of the science of economics to the play of language, and of the stratified specificity of concepts to the imaginary unity of an *etymon*: "Above 'Stirner' refuted the communist abolition of private property by first transferring private property into 'having' and then declaring the verb 'to have' an indispensable word, an eternal truth, because even in communist society it could happen that Stirner will 'have' a stomach-ache. In exactly the same way he here bases the impossibility of abolishing private property by transferring it into the concept of property ownership, by exploiting the etymological connection between the words *Eigentum* ["property"] and *eigen* ["proper," "own"], and declaring the word *eigen* an eternal truth because a stomach-ache will be *eigen* to him. All this theoretical nonsense, which seeks refuge in bad etymology, would be impossible if the actual private property which the communists want to abolish had not been transformed into the abstract notion of 'property.' This transformation, on the one hand, saves one the trouble of having to say anything, or even merely to know anything about actual private property and, on the other hand, makes it easy to discover a contradiction in communism, since *after* the abolition of (*actual*) property it is, of course, easy to discover still all sorts of things which can be included in the term 'property.' " (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, ed. C. J. Arthur, [Moscow: Progressive Publications, 1964/London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1965], Part II, "The Language of Property," p. 247.) This critique, which opens or leaves open the questions of the "reality" of being proper and of the "abstraction" or concept (not the general reality) of being proper, is continued further on with some remarkable examples: "For example, *propriété*—property [*Eigentum*] and feature [*Eigenschaft*]; property—possession [*Eigentum*] and peculiarity [*Eigentümlichkeit*]; '*eigen*' [one's own]—in the commercial and in the individual sense; *valeur*, value, Wert ["Worth," "Value"]; commerce, *Verkehr* ["intercourse," "traffic," "commerce," "communication"]; *échange*, *exchange*, *Austausch* ["exchange"], etc., all of which are used both for commercial relations and for features and mutual relations of individuals as such. In the other modern languages this is equally the case. If Saint Max seriously applies himself to exploit this ambiguity, he may easily succeed in making a brilliant series of new economic discoveries, without knowing anything about political economy; for, indeed, his new economic facts, which we shall take note of later, lie wholly within this sphere of synonymy" (*ibid.*, p. 249).

10 Nietzsche, *Works*, "On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense" (1873), II, 180. This motif of the effacement, of the fading of the image, can also be found in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud, *Complete Psychological Works*,

If we accept this Saussurean distinction, we shall therefore say that the question of metaphor belongs here to a theory of *value*, and not merely to a theory of *meaning*. It is just when he justifies this distinction that Saussure lays down the necessity that the synchronic and diachronic axes should intersect in all the sciences of vaue, but only there. He then develops the analogy between economics and linguistics:

. . . that duality [between synchrony and diachrony] is already forcing itself upon the economic sciences. Here, in contrast to the other sciences, political economy and economic history constitute two clearly separated disciplines within a single science. . . . Proceeding as they have, economists are—without being aware of it—obeying an inner necessity. A similar necessity obliges us to divide linguistics into two parts, each with its own principle. Here as in political economy we are confronted with the notion of *value*; both sciences are concerned with *a system for equating things of different orders*—labour and wages in one, and a signified and a signifier in the other.[11]

To define the notion of value, even before it is made specific as economic or linguistic value, Saussure describes the general features which will guarantee a metaphorical or analogical transition, by similarity or proportionality, from one order to the other. Now once again, analogy producing metaphor is constitutive of each of these orders as much as of their relation.

Once more, the demonstration of this point is paid for in coin:

. . . we must clear up the issue [of the relation between value and signification] or risk reducing language to a simple naming process. . . . To resolve this issue, let us observe from the outset that even outside language all values are apparently governed by the same paradoxical principle. They are always composed:

(1) of a *dissimilar* thing that can be *exchanged* for the thing of which the value is to be determined; and

(2) of *similar* things that can be *compared* with the thing of which the value is to be determined.

Both factors are necessary for the existence of a value. To determine what a five-franc piece is worth one must therefore know: (1) that it can be exchanged for a fixed quantity of a different thing, e.g., bread; and (2) that it can be compared with a similar value of the same system, e.g., a one-franc piece, or with coins of another system (a dollar, etc.).

IV, 43), but no more in Freud than in Nietzsche does it provide a univocal or unilateral determination of the theory of metaphor. For this we need to put ourselves in a more general framework of debate.

11 Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. C. Bally and A. Sechehaye, tr. W. Baskin [1959], Part I, Ch. iii, § 1, p. 79.

In the same way [our italics] a word can be exchanged for something dissimilar, an idea; besides, it can be compared with something of the same nature, another word. Its value is therefore not fixed so long as one simply states that it can be "exchanged" for a given concept, i.e., that it has this or that signification: one must also compare it with similar values, with other words that stand in opposition to it. Its content is really fixed only by the concurrence of everything that exists outside it. Being part of a system, it is endowed not only with a signification but also and especially with a value, and this is something quite different.[12]

We have long known that value, gold, the eye, the sun and so on, belong to the development of the same trope. Their interchange is dominant in the field of rhetoric *and* of philosophy. Saussure's remark to this effect in the same passage can therefore be considered in the light of Polyphilos' renderings quoted above (the "seated breath," the "divine fire, source and home of life," etc.). It reminds us that an object which is the most natural, the most universal, the most real, the most clear, a referent which is apparently the most external, the sun—that this object, as soon as it plays a role in the process of axiological and semantic exchange (and it *always* does), does not completely escape the general law of metaphorical value: "The value of just any term is accordingly determined by its environment; it is impossible to fix even the value of the signifier 'sun' without considering its surroundings: in some languages it is not possible to say 'sit in the *sun*.' "[13]

In this same constellation, but in its inalienable place, we should reread once more[14] the whole text of Mallarmé on linguistics, aesthetics, and political economy, his whole deployment of the sign *or* ["gold"], which has the calculated textual effect of thwarting all the contrasts between proper and figurative meaning, metaphor and metonymy, form and content, syntax and semantics, classical speech and classical writing, the more and the less. Especially we should look to that page which disseminates its title *OR* in the course of "phantasmagoric sunsets."

II. More and No More Metaphor

The obverse of the coin is effaced. How are we to decipher a figure, and metaphor in particular, in the text of philosophy? This question

12 *Ibid.*, Part II, Ch. iv, §2, pp. 114-15.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

14 I have given an outline of this reading in "La Double Séance" II, *Tel Quel*, 42. [See Stéphane Mallarmé, *Variations sur un sujet*, "Grands faits divers: Or"—Tr.]

has never been dealt with in a systematic treatise, a fact which no doubt is not without significance. Instead of venturing here on prolegomena to some future metaphorics, let us rather attempt to recognize the *conditions which make it in principle impossible* to carry out such a project. In its barest and most abstract form the problem would be the following: that metaphor remains in all its essential features a classical element of philosophy, a metaphysical concept. It is therefore involved in the field which it would be the purpose of a general "metaphorology" to subsume. It is the product of a network of elements of philosophy which themselves correspond to tropes and figures and are coeval with them or systematically bound to them. This stratum of "founding" tropes, this layer of "first" elements of philosophy (let us suppose that scare-quotes are a sufficient precaution here) cannot be subsumed. It will not allow itself to be subsumed by itself, by what it has itself produced, grown on its soil, or supported on its foundations. It is therefore self-eliminating every time one of its products (here the concept of metaphor) vainly attempts to include under its sway the whole of the field to which that product belongs. If we wanted to conceive and classify all the metaphorical possibilities of philosophy, there would always be at least one metaphor which would be excluded and remain outside the system: that one, at least, which was needed to construct the concept of metaphor, or, to cut the argument short, the metaphor of metaphor. This extra metaphor, remaining outside the field which it enables us to circumscribe, also extracts or abstracts this field for itself, and therefore removes itself from that field as one metaphor the less. Because of what we might for convenience call metaphorical supplementation (the extra metaphor being at the same time a metaphor the less), no classification or account of philosophical metaphor can ever prosper. The supplement is always unfolding, but it can never attain the status of a complement. The field is never saturated.

To prove the point, let us see what such a survey (at once historical and systematic) of philosophical metaphors would be like. First, it would be ordered in terms of a rigorous concept of metaphor. By this, metaphor would be carefully distinguished from all the forms of expression with which it is too often confused, within a general study of tropes. Let us grant for the sake of argument that such a definition has been established. It would then be necessary to recognize the importation into what is called philosophical discourse of metaphors having another origin, or rather of meanings which become metaphorical on being taken out of their proper home. This would lead to classifying metaphors by their source: we should have metaphors that were biological, organic, mechanical, technical, economic, his-

torical, mathematical (geometrical, topological, arithmetical: always supposing that mathematical metaphor, properly so-called, could exist, a question which we shall leave on one side for the present). This classification, which assumes a place of origin and a process of migration, is currently adopted by the few who have made a study of the "metaphorics" of a philosopher or of a particular work.

If we classify metaphors according to the region from which they originate, we shall inevitably be led (as indeed those who have taken this path have been led) to draw a distinction among the forms of discourse which "lend" (which are origins) as opposed to those which borrow, between two main kinds: those which seem intrinsically to have the character of origins[15] and those whose object is no longer original, or natural, or primitive. The former give us physical, animal, and biological metaphors, while the latter produce metaphors which are technical, artificial, economic, cultural, social, and so forth. This secondary distinction (between *physis* and *teknè* or *physis* and *nomos*) comes into play everywhere. Sometimes the guiding idea is not stated. Sometimes we find a claim to break with tradition. But the result is the same. These taxonomic principles do not spring from a particular problem of method. They are governed by the concept and the system of metaphor (for instance, given a metaphor, we may adduce its place of origin, its *etymon*, its proper meaning, and the rest of it), and so long as this concept is not brought out into the open, methodological reform must remain aimless. For instance, in his *Les Métaphores de Platon* (Rennes, 1945), Pierre Louis declares that he will not follow the model of classification by "genealogy" or migration. He will therefore prefer the internal organizing principle of metaphors, he tells us, to the external criterion of place of origin. In that case, we shall have to be guided by the author's intentions, by what he has in mind, by what is meant by the play of figures of speech. This is apparently all the more sound a proposal since we are concerned here with philosophical discourse, or a treatise as such: what matters in such a case, as everyone knows, is the content, the meaning, the truth aimed at, and so forth. Of course, to take account of the import and inner articulation of Plato's thought is an incontestable requirement for anyone who attempts to reconstruct the system of Plato's metaphors. But we soon realize that the inner articulation is not that of the metaphors them-

15 The metaphor which in the first place is simply *encountered* in nature needs only to be plucked like a flower. In a flower we always have youth, something very close to nature and to the morning of life. The rhetoric of flowers, in Plato, for example, always has this force. See Plato, *Symposium* 183e, 196a-b, 203e, 210c; *Republic* 475a, 601b; *Politicus* 273d, 310d, etc.

selves but that of the "philosophical" ideas, metaphor playing the role of pure pedagogical adornment, whatever the author may say. As for the strictly philosophical configuration of Plato's thought, it is nothing but an anachronistic projection. Let us first consider Louis's methodological pronouncement:

> The traditional method in this kind of study is to group images according to the source from which the author borrows them. This method may be appropriate, if needs be, in the case of a poet whose images are mere ornaments whose beauty bespeaks an unusual richness of imagination. In such a case, we attend little to the deeper sense of the metaphor or of the simile, but are concerned above all with its original impact. Now the images of Plato are not of interest merely for their qualities of brilliance. Whoever makes a study of them is soon aware that they are not mere ornaments: it is their nature always to express ideas better than could be achieved by extended explanations. (pp. 13-14)

These views are at once paradoxical and traditional. It is rare to consider poetic metaphor as an extrinsic ornament, above all in contrasting it with philosophical metaphor. It is rare to conclude that for this reason it deserves to be studied for itself, and that it has an identity of its own only in proportion as it is external to what is meant. On the other hand, there is no more classical theory of metaphor than treating it as an "economical" way of avoiding "extended explanations": [16] and, in the first place, of avoiding simile. Louis, however,

16 On this view, metaphor and the other figures of speech, especially simile, would be homogeneous: they would differ only in their degree of development. And metaphor, being the briefest form of figurative language, would also be the most general, and would save the others. This "economizing" view of metaphor may be traced back to Aristotle: "The simile [or image *eikôn*] too is a metaphor; the difference is but small. When the poet says of Achilles 'he sprang at them like a lion,' this is a simile [*eikôn*]; when he says 'the lion sprang on them,' this is a metaphor" (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, III. 4, 1406b20-22). The same theme reappears in Cicero (*De Oratore*, III. 38.156-39.157; *Orator*, XXVII, 92-94), in Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria*, VIII. 6, §4), in Condillac (*De l'Art d'écrire*, II. 4), in Hegel: "We may place the image midway between the metaphor and the simile [*Gleichnis*]. It has, in fact, so close an affinity with the metaphor that we may regard it as a metaphor fully amplified [*ausführlich*], an aspect which at the same time marks its very close resemblance to a simile [*Vergleichung*]" (*The Philosophy of Fine Art*, tr. F. P. B. Osmaston, [London: Bell, 1920], "The Image," II, 144). The theme still survives (J. Vendryes, "The Metaphor Is an Abridged Comparison," *Language: A Linguistic Introduction to History*, tr. P. Radin [London and New York, 1925], p. 178). What seems to deserve further attention here is not so much the considerations of economy in themselves as the mechanical character of the explanations to which they give rise (abbreviation, a quantitative measure of saving, abridgement of time and space, etc.). On the other hand, the principle of economy is discerned as operating between one figure of speech which is actually constituted, and another which is at least

had claimed to reject this tradition: "If we need a criterion to distinguish metaphor from simile, I should say rather that simile always takes the form of an easily detachable outwork, while metaphor is always absolutely indispensable to the meaning of the expression" (p. 4).[17] Thus on this view the economizing procedure of abbreviation would be applied not to another figure of speech but directly to the expression of the "idea" or meaning, and the metaphor would be intrinsically and essentially linked to that idea or meaning. In that way it would cease to be an ornament, or at least a "superfluous ornament" (the work carries a maxim of Fénelon to this effect as an epigraph: "Every ornament which is nothing but an ornament is superfluous"). There is nothing superfluous in that previous ornament which is metaphor; it brings no additional burden to the necessary blooming of the idea, the natural deployment of the meaning. But from all this it follows inexorably that metaphor will be more "superfluous" than ever. It will be identical with its prop, with the governance of the idea signified. It will be indistinguishable, or will be distinguished only at once to fall unwanted and withered. Metaphors, then, outside thought, as a product of the "imagination" have it as

. . . their nature always to express ideas better than could be achieved by extended explanations. Consequently, it seemed to me of interest to in-

implicitly so, and it is not discerned in the actual production of the figure. The economy of that production could not be mechanical and external in this way. We may say that the extra ornament is never useless, or that what is useless may always serve a purpose. Here we have neither time nor space to comment on that passage of André Breton's *Vases Communicants* ([Paris: Cahiers Libres, 1932], pp. 46-47) in which, with due attention to the rhetorical analogues of "condensation" and "displacement," and to their economy, he offers an analysis of an adornment: "Without doubt, I have a 'complex' about neck-ties. I detest this incomprehensible masculine adornment. From time to time, I reproach myself for conforming to so paltry a custom as that of tying each morning before the mirror (I try to explain to the psychoanalysts) this bit of cloth which is supposed to elevate the already idiotic expression of a jacket with it lapels by the addition of a very careful bit of nothing at all. It is, quite simply, disconcerting. And another point: I am aware—and cannot hide it from myself—that just as slot-machines (those cousins of the dynamometer on which Jarry's Supermale successfully performs—'Come, Madam!') are symbols of woman sexually (the disappearance of coins in the slot) and metonymously (the part for the whole), so too neck-ties, even if it were only according to Freud, represent the penis, "not only because [they] are long dependent objects and peculiar to men, but also because they can be chosen according to taste, a liberty which in the case of the object symbolized, is forbidden by nature.'" (Cf. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, Complete Psychological Works*, V, 356. For Breton's discussion of the "work of condensation" and of "that law of *extreme abridgement* which has impressed upon modern poetry one of its most remarkable characteristics," see also *Vases Communicants*, p. 58.)

17 Louis is here drawing on W. B. Stanford, *Greek Metaphor* (Oxford, 1936), and H. Konrad, *Étude sur la métaphore* (Paris, 1939).

vestigate what these ideas were. And this is what has led me to prefer to traditional classifications another method which has already been used by F. Dornseiff, in his study of the style of Pindar (*Pindars Stil* [Berlin, 1921]). This method, which consists in grouping metaphors according to the ideas which they express, has the great advantage of enabling one to grasp the writer's way of thought, instead of being concerned only with his imagination. It also enables us when we state precisely the meaning of each image to discern in certain dialogues a dominant metaphor "threaded" by the author from one end to the other of the work. Finally, it has the merit of bringing out any evolution in the use of metaphors, by displaying any new images which may occur in the expression of the same idea. In a word, it serves not only to classify but also to achieve a better understanding of the role and force of images. (p. 14)

Thus, to avoid treating metaphor as an imaginative or rhetorical ornament, and to come back to the inner articulation of philosophical discourse, we are to reduce figures of speech to being methods of "expressing" an idea. At its best, this procedure could have led to a study of immanent structures. It might have been a transfer to rhetoric (if indeed this is possible, even in principle) of the method of Martial Guéroult, or, more precisely, of the program of V. Goldschmidt in his book on paradigm and Plato's dialectic.[18] (Louis quotes Plato's definition of the paradigm in the *Politicus*, 278c, and ventures the following exclamation: "If we simply replace *paradeigma* by *metaphora* we have a Platonic definition of metaphor!" [p. 5].) But as things are, the only justification for Louis's method is a whole implicit philosophy whose credentials are never examined. He gives metaphor the role of *expressing an idea*, of bringing out or representing the content of a thought which would naturally be called an "idea," as though every one of these words or concepts did not have a whole history of its own (and one with which Plato himself was familiar), and as though that history did not itself carry some imprint of a whole system of metaphor, or, more generally, of tropes. At any rate, in this initial classification, an alleged respect for Platonic articulations yields the following headings: two main parts called *Enquiry* and *Doctrine*, and nine chapters called *Intellectual Activity* (*Reflection* and *Creation*); *Dialectic*; *Discourse*; *Man*; *The Soul*; *Theory of Knowledge*; *Ethics*; *Social Life*; *God and the Universe*; which are just so many anachronistic categories—an orchestrated violence done under pretext of faithfulness to the thought of one who taught respect for the articulations of the living organism, and hence for those of discourse too. The fact

18 *Paradigme dans la dialectique platonicienne* (Paris: PUF, 1947). See esp. in Ch. iii, "Paradigme et métaphore," pp. 104-10.

that these distinctions would not have any meaning completely outside Platonism does not justify their being turned back and applied directly to Plato's system. Finally, they have not saved the author from adding in an appendix a list of metaphors arranged according to the distinction which was pointed out above (*physis/aomos*; *physis/teknè*). The headings are as follows: *List of metaphors and similes classified according to the source from which Plato draws them: I. Nature; II. Man; III. Society; IV. Reminiscences of myth, history and literature.*

If we followed this example, we should find our criteria for the classification of philosophical metaphors in a secondary and derivative form of philosophical discourse. This would perhaps be legitimate if we had an identifiable author of a system using these figures of speech in a calculated and conscious way, or again if the task were to describe a form of philosophical rhetoric put at the orders of an autonomous theory, constituted before and outside the language in which it finds expression, and maneuvering its tropes like instruments. This, no doubt, is a philosophical ideal, indeed, a Platonic one, generated by Plato's ordering and distinguishing between philosophy or dialectic on the one hand, and rhetoric or sophistry on the other. Directly or indirectly, it is this distinction and this hierarchy which is under question here.

The difficulties which we have just indicated become worse when we turn to "archaic" tropes which have given to "founding" concepts (*theoria*, *eidos*, *logos*, etc.) the character of a "natural" language. Even the signs (words or concepts) which make up this proposition, starting with *trope* and *arché*, have their metaphorical charge. Concept is a metaphor, foundation is a metaphor, theory is a metaphor; and there is no meta-metaphor for them. Let us not dwell on the optical metaphor which opens up under the sun every theoretical point of view. The "fundamental" answers to the desire for firm and final ground, for building land, the ground as a support for an artificial structure. The force of this metaphor has its own history, and one of which Heidegger has suggested an interpretation.[19] Finally the con-

19 When Kant expounded his theory of hypotyposis, he had recourse to the example of *ground*. A hypotyposis *may be schematic* (the direct presentation of an intuition to a concept of the understanding) or *symbolic* (the indirect presentation of an intuition to a purely rational concept). "Hitherto this function has been but little analysed, worthy as it is of a deeper study. Still this is not the place to dwell upon it. In language we have many such indirect presentations [*Darstellungen*] modelled upon an analogy enabling the expression in question to contain, not the proper [*eigentliche*] scheme for the concept, but merely a symbol for reflection. Thus the words *ground* (support, basis), to *depend* (to be held up from above), to *flow* from (instead to follow), *substance* (as Locke puts it: the support of accidents), and numberless others, are not schematic,

cept of concept cannot fail to retain, though indeed it would not be reducible to, the pattern of that gesture of power, the taking-now, the grasping and taking hold of the thing as an object. This is both in Romance and Germanic languages. Hegel observed this, and in passing he defined our problem, or rather set the terms of the problem by giving a reply to it which cannot be distinguished from advocacy of the Hegelian speculative and dialectical logic:

The metaphor is mainly used in the expressions of speech, which we may usefully consider in this relation under the following aspects.

(αα) In the first place every language includes within its own compass a host of metaphors. They arise from the fact that a word, which in the first instance merely designates something entirely sensuous (*nur etwas ganz sinnliches bedeutet*), is carried over (*übertragen wird*) into a spiritual sphere (*auf Geistiges*). "*Fassen*," "*begreifen*," [("to grasp," "to comprehend")] and generally a number of words connected with the processes of thought, have in regard to their original meaning (*eigentliche Bedeutung*) a content that is wholly sensuous, which is consequently abandoned and exchanged for the meaning applicable to mind; the first meaning is sensuous (*der erste Sinn ist Sinnlich*), the second spiritual.

(ββ) By degrees, however, the metaphorical aspect disappears in the general use (*im Gebrauche*) of such a word, which as the current coin of language (*durch die Gewohnheit*) is converted from an expression which is not strictly accurate (*uneigentliche*) to one that is so (*eigentliche Ausdruck*), the effect of this process being that image and import, owing to the habitual frequency with which the latter is only conceived in the former, cease to differ from one another, and the image merely immediately presents the abstract significance itself instead of a concrete mode of vision.

When we take, for example, the word "*begreifen*" ("to grasp") in the sense applicable to mental life it entirely escapes us that there is any sensuous relation (*das sinnlichen Anfassen*) implied between the hand and external objects. In living language this distinction between genuine metaphor (*wirklicher Metaphern*) and words which already through usage (*durch die Abnutzung*) have fallen to the level of a mere means of expression (*eigentliche Ausdrücken*) is readily established; the reverse is the case with dead languages, for the reason that here mere etymology is unable finally to bring our minds to a decision, inasmuch and in so far as the question does not depend on the original source of that word, and

but rather symbolic hypotyposes, and express concepts without employing a direct intuition for the purpose, but only drawing upon an analogy with one, i.e. transferring the reflection [*mit . . . der Ubertragung der Reflexion*] upon an object of intuition to quite a new concept, and one with which perhaps no intuition could ever directly correspond" (Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, tr. J. C. Meredith [Oxford, 1952], Pt. I, § 59, p. 223).

its general development in speech, but first and foremost on the fact whether a word which has all the appearance of being used in a picturesque and metaphorical sense had or had not already lost by habitual usage under a meaning applying exclusively to spirit, and in the speech when alive, its first sensuous significance, and been *absorbed* (*aufgehoben hatte*) in that higher sense.[20]

In speaking of usage (*Abnutzung*), a notion whose implications we have already noted in our discussion of the French word *usure*, Hegel is appealing to a distinction between metaphors in action and metaphors that have been effaced. This is a virtually constant feature of discussions of philosophical metaphor: according to it, there are inert metaphors which are deemed to be without interest because the author *was not aware* of them, and the metaphorical effect is limited to the field of awareness. To this distinction between metaphors in action and metaphors that have been effaced corresponds the traditional contrast between living and dead metaphors.[21] Above all, the movement of metaphorization (the origin and then the effacing of the metaphor, the passing from a proper sensible meaning to a proper spiritual meaning through a figurative detour) is nothing but a movement of idealization. And it is covered by the master category of dialectical idealism, namely *sublation* (*Aufhebung*), that is, that memory which produces signs and interiorizes them (*Erinnerung*) by raising up, suppressing and conserving sensible exteriority. This schema brings an opposition into play, and one to be considered and resolved—the opposition between nature and spirit, nature and history, or nature and freedom, an opposition genealogically linked to that between *physis* and its opposites, and at the same time to that between the sensible and the spiritual, the sensible and the intelligible, the sensible and sense itself (*sinnlich/Sinn*). Nowhere is this system more explicit than in Hegel. Now what this system describes is the possibility of metaphysics, and the concept of metaphor so defined belongs to him.[22]

20 *The Philosophy of Fine Arts*, II, 139-40 (our italics). For analogous considerations on the figurative force of grasping, see P. Valéry, in his "Discours aux Chirurgiens" in *Variété* V.

21 This is central to the study of T. Spoerri, "La Puissance métaphorique de Descartes," *Husserl* (3e colloque philosophique de Royaumont, 1957), (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1959). See also C. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *La Nouvelle Rhétorique: traité de l'argumentation* (Paris: PUF, 1958).

22 This explains Heidegger's distrust of the concept of metaphor. In *Der Satz vom Grund* he insists above all on the opposition between the sensible and nonsensible, a feature of metaphor which, though important, is not the only, nor the first, nor the most decisive. "But here the following remark will suffice: since our understanding and our seeing are never simple reception by the senses, it is also inappropriate to claim that the interpretation of thought as grasped by hearing (*als Er-hören*) and looking (*Er-blicken*) represents only a metaphor

Let us grant for the sake of argument that these oppositions can be accepted, and entrusted with the project of a general "metaphorics" of philosophy. In classifying metaphors of origin (natural metaphors), we should soon need to have recourse to the mythology of the four elements. This time, it would be a matter, not of a kind of psychoanalysis of the material imagination concerned with a fairly indeterminate corpus, but of a rhetorical analysis of the text of philosophy, always supposing that we have some criteria to identify it as such. It would be impossible then to avoid superimposing on this last classification by source a general grille, no longer determined on the basis of elementary areas of the phenomena (of the appearances) but by zones of receptiveness, regions of sensibility. Apart from the text of mathematics of which it is difficult to see how it could furnish metaphors in the strict sense (being attached to no fixed ontic region, and having no sensible or empirical content), all regional forms of discourse, in so far as they are not purely formal, provide metaphorical content of the sensible kind for philosophical discourse. We might therefore be tempted to analyze such content according to the classical concepts of the senses. So it is that we speak happily of visual, auditory, and tactile metaphors (and here are the elements of the problematic of knowledge) and even, more rarely (which is not without significance), of olfactory,[23] or gustatory metaphors.

But we should find, corresponding to this empirical aesthetics of sensible contents, a corresponding transcendental and formal aesthetics of metaphors which would be the condition of possibility for the empirical aesthetics. We should be led back by it to the a priori forms of space and time. Indeed, do we not speak readily of temporalizing metaphors, those which bring in our hearing, not only on the model of music, from Plato to Husserl, but to appeal to listening, to understanding, and so forth? Nietzsche stretches the limits of the meta-

(*Übertragung*), a transposition into the non-sensible of the supposedly sensible. The notion of transposition and of metaphor (*Metapher*) rests on the distinction, not to say the separation, between the sensible and the non-sensible, the physical and the non-physical, is a basic feature of what is called 'metaphysics,' and confers on Western thought its essential characteristics. Once the distinction between the sensible and the non-sensible is recognized to be inadequate, metaphysics loses its authoritative role as a mode of thought. Once this limitation of metaphysics has been seen, the determining conception (*massgebende Vorstellung*) 'metaphor' collapses of itself. It has a decisive effect in particular on the way in which we represent the being of language. This is why metaphor is often used as an auxiliary device in the interpretation of poetic works, or, more generally, of works of art. The metaphorical exists only within the boundaries of metaphysics."

23 "It seemed appropriate to begin with the sense of smell, since of all senses it seems to contribute least to the knowledge acquired by the human mind" (Condillac, *Traité des sensations*, Introduction).

phorical to such a point that he attributes a metaphorical power to every use of sound in speaking: for does this not involve the transfer into the time of speaking of something that has a different nature in itself?[24] Conversely, is it not often claimed that every metaphorical statement spatializes from the moment that it calls on imagination, sight, or touch? Bergson is far from being alone in his distrust of spatial metaphors.

How can we make this last step back? How can we appeal to this last opposition of space and time without going to the heart of that traditional philosophical problem (and it is in connection with this transcendental aesthetics and with the forms of pure a priori sensibility that the problem of mathematical metaphors would have one of *its* loci)? How could we know what is meant by the temporalizing or spatializing of a sense or meaning, an ideal object, an intelligible tenor, without elucidating the meaning of "space" and "time"? But how can this be done without knowing already what a logos is, what a meaning-to-say which of itself spatio-temporalizes whatever it expresses? what logos is as metaphor?

The contrast between sense (a signified which is atemporal or non-spatial insofar as it is a sense, a content) and its metaphorical signifier (a contrast already at work within the element of sense to which metaphor completely belongs)[25] is sedimented (another metaphor) by the whole history of philosophy. And this is so without taking into account the fact that this divergence between sense (signified) and the senses (sensible signifier) is declared through the same root (*sensus*, *Sinn*). One might, like Hegel, admire the generosity of this stock and interpret

24 Strangely enough, this comes down to treating every signifier as a metaphor for the signified, while the classical concept of metaphor denotes only the substitution of one signified for another so that the one becomes the signifier of the other. Is not Nietzsche's procedure here precisely to extend to every element of discourse, under the name *metaphor*, what classical rhetoric no less strangely considered a quite specific figure of speech, *metonymy of the sign?* According to Du Marsais, this consists in taking "the sign for the thing signified." It is the last of a list of five kinds of metonymy drawn up by Du Marsais, and Fontanier devotes less than a page to it. This can be explained by the fact that the sign taken up is in this case part of the thing signified, and not the very stuff of figures of speech. Examples of it are in the first place cases of *symbolic* and non-*arbitrary* signs (the *sceptre* for the king's majesty, his *hat* for the cardinal's office, the *sword* for the soldier, "*spear* to signify a man, and *distaff* a woman: *a fief falling from spear to distaff* is a fief which passes from the male to the female line," César Chesnau Du Marsais, *Traité des tropes*, Ch. ii, 2).

25 This complex structure carries with it a number of confusions. Some of them can be avoided by the distinction proposed by I. A. Richards between the metaphorical vehicle and metaphorical tenor. A meaning (produced by the "co-presence of the vehicle and tenor") is "to be clearly distinguished from the tenor" (*The Philosophy of Rhetoric* [1956; rpt. Oxford, 1965], p. 100).

its hidden sublation speculatively and dialectically; but before using a dialectical concept of metaphor, it is necessary to investigate the double twist which opened up metaphor and dialectic by allowing the term *sense* to be applied to that which should be foreign to the senses.

The general taxonomy of metaphors—of what are called philosophical metaphors in particular—thus presupposes a solution to important problems, and first of all to problems which actually generate the whole of philosophy and its history. Any "metaphorology" would therefore be derivative with regard to the discourse over which it would claim ascendancy, whether guided by that of which the philosopher in question was explicitly aware, or by the systematic and objective structure of his text, whether it reconstitutes a meaning or deciphers a symptom, whether or not it articulates an idiomatic metaphorics (peculiar to a philosopher, a system, or a particular corpus) on the basis of a more general, more compelling and more durable metaphorics. The concept of metaphor, together with all the predicates which allow us to determine its sense and its reference, is itself an element of philosophy.

This has a two-fold and contradictory consequence. On the one hand, it is impossible to get a grip on philosophical metaphor as such *from the outside*, since one is using a concept of metaphor which remains a product of philosophy. Only philosophy itself would seem to have any authority over its metaphorical productions. But on the other hand, and for the same reason, philosophy deprives itself of what it gives. Since its instruments belong to its field of study, it is powerless to exercise control over its general tropology and metaphorics. Indeed, they can only be perceived around a blind spot or a deaf point. The concept of metaphor would describe this outline but it is not even sure that in so doing it is circumscribing an organizing center; and this strict law holds for any element of philosophy. And that for two reasons which reinforce each other: (1) The philosopher will only discover what he has put in or, at least, what as a philosopher he thinks he has put in. (2) The setting up of the fundamental oppositions of "metaphorology" (*physis/teknè, physis/nomos*, sensible/intelligible, space/time, signifier/signified, etc.) took place through the history of a metaphorical language, or rather through movements of tropes which, for all that they can no longer be called by the philosophical name of metaphor, do not however constitute, and for the same reason, a "proper" language. Account has to be given of the effects of that which is proper and that which is not by going beyond that difference itself. By definition, there is therefore no properly philosophical category to qualify a certain number of tropes which have conditioned the structuring of those philosophical oppositions which are called "funda-

mental," "structuring," "originating": being just so many "metaphors" which would be the basis of such a "tropology," the terms "twist" or "trope" or "metaphor" are themselves governed by this rule. We could only allow ourselves to ignore this *sleep* of philosophy by supposing that the meaning aimed at through these figures is an essence rigorously independent of that which carries it over, which is already a philosophical thesis, one might even say the sole thesis of philosophy, the thesis which constitutes the concept of metaphor, the opposition *between* what is proper and what is not, between essence and accident, between intuition and discourse, between thought and language, between the intelligible and the sensible, and so forth.

Such would be the stake. Now this reservoir of prephilosophical tropes, supposing that we could attain it (touch it, see it, understand it?), cannot have the archaeological simplicity of a proper origin, the virginity of a story of beginnings. And we know already that it could not belong either to a *rhetoric* of philosophy or to a *meta-philosophy* analogous to what Bachelard, considering the psychoanalysis of the material imagination, called a meta-poetics. This we know already from the law of supplementation (between the concept and its field), considered in its completely unbreakable necessity. But provisionally let us treat this law as a hypothesis. By trying to verify it through "examples," we might perhaps be able both to *fill* the concept of metaphor, to follow a whole tradition of metaphor as much philosophical as rhetorical, and to recognize both what governs its transformations and at the same time the limits of its flexibility.

III. Ellipsis/Eclipse of the Sun: The Riddle, the Incomprehensible, the Ungraspable

> He may do [the deed of horror], but in ignorance of his relationship, and discover that afterwards, as does Oedipus in Sophocles. Here the deed is outside the play. (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1453b29-32)
>
> There should be nothing improbable among the actual incidents. If it be unavoidable, however, it should be outside the tragedy, like the improbability in the Oedipus of Sophocles. (*Ibid.*, 1454b6-8)
>
> A likely impossibility is always preferable to an unconvincing possibility. The story (*logous*) should never be made up of improbable incidents; there should be nothing of the sort in it. If, however,

> such incidents are unavoidable, they should be outside the piece like the hero's ignorance in *Oedipus* of the circumstances of Laius' death. . . . (*Ibid.*, 1460a26-30) [26]

Our hypothesis then is that neither a *rhetoric* of philosophy nor a *metaphilosophy* are to the point. Why should we not start with rhetoric as such?

In every rhetorical definition of metaphor is implied not just a philosophical position, but a conceptual network within which philosophy as such is constituted. Each thread of the net in addition forms a turn of speech (we might say a metaphor, but that the notion is too derivative in this case). Thus the definiens presupposes the definiendum.

It goes without saying that it will not do here to suppose some homogeneous continuum (tradition constantly referred back to itself, whether the tradition of metaphysics or that of rhetoric). However, we must pay attention to the more lasting constraints of this kind (which have had their effect through the systematic links of a very long chain); we must take the trouble to delimit their general functioning and the limits of their effects: otherwise, we should risk mistaking the most derivative effects for the original characteristics of a historical substructure, of a hastily identified configuration, an imaginary or marginal mutation. We should be prey to a precipitate and impressionistic empiricism, concentrating on alleged differences which would in fact be mainly linear and chronological breaks. So should we step from discovery to discovery, each step marking a break! For instance, we should be likely to delineate the true face of "eighteenth-century" rhetoric by a collection of traits (such as the privileged position of the noun), passed down, though not in direct line and with all kinds of diversions and irregular transformations, from Aristotle or the Middle Ages. Here we are led back to the program, not yet spelled out at all, of a new marking of the limits of each corpus, and a new problematic of signatures.

There is a code, a program, a rhetoric if you will, in any discourse about metaphor: *in the first place*, by custom, Aristotle's definition is to be recalled, that at least of the *Poetics*. We shall not fail to follow this example. Of course, Aristotle invented neither the word *metaphor*, nor the concept of metaphor. However, he seems to have put forward the first systematic placing of it, a placing at any rate which survived as the first, and had the most profound historical consequences. We

26 The translations here and in what follows are from I. Bywater, *Aristotle and the Art of Poetry* (1909), rpt. in *The Works of Aristotle*, XI, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford, 1924).

cannot dispense with a study of the ground on which the construction of the Aristotelian definition was possible. But that study would lose all relevance unless preceding or guided by a systematic and internal reconstitution of the text to be reinscribed. Although this is a partial and preliminary task, it is not limited to a commentary on a textual surface. Nothing is transparent here. We already have to do with an active interpretation putting into play a whole system of rules and expectations. "Metaphor (*metaphora*) consists in giving (*epiphora*) the thing a name (*onomatos*) that belongs to something else. the transference being either from genus to species (*apo tov genous epi eidos*), or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy" (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1457b6-9).

This definition, without doubt the most explicit and precise, and in any case the most general,[27] may be analyzed from two points of view. It is a philosophical thesis on metaphor. It is also a piece of philosophical discourse the whole surface of which is worked by metaphor.

The philosophical thesis belongs to a system of interpretation in which *metaphora*, *mimesis*, *logos*, *physis*, *phonè*, *semainein*, and *onoma* are linked. To display the nature of these connections, we must consider the *position* of the discussions on metaphor, both in the *Poetics* and in Book III of the *Rhetoric*.[28] This position is significant in itself.

27 This generality gives rise to problems which, as we know, have in a way recently been reactivated. We shall come back to them at the end. At all events, Aristotle was the first to consider metaphor as the general form of all figures of speech, whether by *including* them (as in the case of transfers by metonymy or synecdoche), or by being an *economical* form of them (abridged simile), or by have one of them as its own *best form*, as in the case of analogy or "proportional metaphor" (*Rhetoric*, 1411a ff.). No doubt this generality is in proportion to the degree to which metaphor remains unspecified. Aristotle was already being accused or excused at an early date. André Dacier wrote (in his *Introduction à la Poétique d'Aristote*, 1733): "Some ancient authors condemned Aristotle for including under the term metaphor these first two cases, which are properly speaking only synecdoches; but Aristotle spoke in general, and he wrote at a time when refinements about figures of speech did not exist, either in distinguishing them, or in giving each of them a name which would have more clearly explained its nature. Cicero gives a sufficient justification of Aristotle when he writes in the *De Oratore: Itaque genus hoc Graeci appellant allegoricum, nomine recte, genere melius ille (Aristoteles) qui ista omnia translationes vocat.*" And Hugh Blair wrote (in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, Lecture XV, "Metaphor"): "Aristotle, in his Poetics, uses Metaphor in this extended sense, for any figurative meaning imposed upon a word; as a whole put for the part, or a part for the whole; a species for the genus, or a genus for the species. But it would be unjust to tax this most acute writer with any inaccuracy on this account; the minute subdivisions, and various names of Tropes, being unknown in his days, and the invention of later rhetoricians."

28 On the relations between the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* on this point, and especially with respect to the notions of *metaphora* and *Eikôn*, see Marsh H.

In both works, it is included as part of a theory of *lexis*. "The Plot and Characters having been discussed, it remains to consider the Diction and Thought (*peri lexeôs kai dianoias*)" (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1456a33-34: there is an analogous move at the beginning of Book III of the *Rhetoric*). Although the word has just been used, "thought" (the word is *dianoia*) covers the area of what is allotted to language or to be thought in language, a cause, effect or content of language, but not the linguistic act itself (enunciation, diction, elocution, *lexis*). The subject matter of rhetoric is thought, so determined, at least in the first two books devoted to it. "As for thought, it must have its place in treatises devoted to rhetoric."[29] The difference between *dianoia* and *lexis* is connected with the fact that the former is not manifested by itself. Now this manifestation, the act of speech, constitutes the essence and the very process of tragedy. If there were no difference between *dianoia* and *lexis* there would be no room for tragedy: "what, indeed, would be the function (*ergon*) of the speaker, if his thought was manifested of itself and not expressed by his words?"[30] The difference is not restricted to the possibility that a character may think one thing and say another. He exists and acts in the tragedy only on condition that he speak.

Now discourse on metaphor belongs to a treatise *peri lexeôs*. *Lexis* exists, and metaphor within it, to the extent that thought is not manifested of itself, to the extent that the sense of what is said or thought is not a phenomenon in itself. *Dianoia* as such has not yet any relation to metaphor. Metaphor exists only to the extent that someone is supposed to be manifesting by an utterance such-and-such a thought which remains in itself unobvious, hidden, or latent. Thought happens upon metaphor, or metaphor is the lot of thought at the moment at which a sense attempts to emerge of itself to say itself, to express itself, to bring itself into the light of language. However—and this is our problem—the theory of metaphor remains a theory of *sense* and supposes a certain originating naturalness in this figure. How is this possible?

McCall, *Ancient Rhetorical Theories of Simile and Comparison* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969): "Neither work can be proved to precede the other—almost certainly both were revised and supplemented from time to time. The odd absence of *eikôn* from the *Poetics* must be left unresolved." This is not a total absence (see at least 1048b10 and b15).

29 Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1456a34-35. [The Budé translation is incorrect here, but I have retained it because of the requirements of M. Derrida's text. Bywater (*Works of Aristotle*) translates more accurately: "As for the Thought, we may assume what is said of it in our Art of Rhetoric." Tr.]

30 *Ibid.*, 1456b7-8. [Aristotle's text here is corrupt, and the version quoted by M. Derrida, including the word *dianoia*, is highly conjectural. Tr.]

Aristotle has just put *dianoia* on one side, and relegated it to rhetoric. He next defines the components of *lexis*. Among them is the noun. It is under this heading that he deals with metaphor (*epiphora onomatos*). "*Onoma*, indeed, has two meanings in this context. Sometimes it is opposed to the verb (*réma*) which implies an idea of time. Sometimes it covers the field of verbs, since metaphor, the displacing of nouns, is in play also, in the examples of the *Poetics*, in the case of verbs. This confusion is possible in proportion to the deep identity of noun and verb: they have it in common to be intelligible by themselves, to carry an immediate reference to an object or rather to a unity of sense. They constitute the order of *phonè semantikè*, from which, as we shall see, articles, conjunctions, prepositions, and in general all the elements of language which according to Aristotle have no sense by themselves, are excluded—in other words, he excludes that which does not of itself designate anything. The adjective can admit substantivization and nominalization. It is to this extent that it can belong to the *semantic* order. It seems therefore that the field of the *onoma*—and consequently that of metaphor, as the transfer of a noun—is less that of the noun in the strict sense (a sense which it acquired very late in the development of rhetoric) than that of the *nominalizable*. Every word which resists nominalization would remain foreign to metaphor. Now we can only nominalize what claims—or what would from that moment claim—a complete and independent signification, what is intelligible by itself, independently of any syntactic relation. To take up a traditional contrast still operative in Husserl, metaphor would be a transfer of categorematic words, and not of syncategorematic words *as such*. This *as such* must be emphasized, since syncategorematic words too can also permit operations of nominalization.[31]

31 Leibniz gives a remarkable example of this operation of *extension* and *extraction*. It is a case of disengaging the hidden concept and noun, the substantive idea disguised in every syntactical sign of a relation. In this way a particle is transformed into a complete meaning. Once more, this occurs in a philosophical dialogue, and the subject dealt with is not very far from that of *The Garden of Epicurus*: "THEOPHILUS: I do not see why we could not say that there are *privative* ideas, as there are negative truths, for the act of denial is positive. . . . PHILALETHES: Without disputing about this point, it will be more useful to approach a little nearer the origins of all our notions and knowledge, to observe how the words employed to form actions and notions wholly removed from the senses, derive their *origin* from sensible ideas, whence they are *transferred* to significations more abstruse. . . . Whence we may conjecture what kind of notions they had who spoke these first languages and how nature will suggest unexpectedly to men the origin and the principle of all their knowledge by the terms themselves. THEOPHILUS: . . . The fact is not always recognized because most frequently the true etymologies are lost. . . . It will, however, be

Du Marsais had attempted to follow Aristotle very literally by defining metaphor as "a figure by which the proper significance of a noun is transferred." That he replaced *noun* by *word* from one edition to the next, that his first move was criticized by Laharpe and by Fontanier, that the latter systematically enlarged the scope of metaphor to include all words, none of this seems to be a serious interruption, at least on this point, to the Aristotelian tradition. In fact, on the one hand, only tropes "of a single word" are "properly so-called," according to Fontanier. On the other hand, and in consequence—after declaring that all kinds of words can give rise to metaphors, Fontanier is obliged to exclude from the enumeration which follows syncategorematic words, what are called incomplete meanings, and the dowelpins of discourse:

On tropes of resemblance, that is, metaphors:

Tropes of resemblance consist in *presenting an idea under the sign of another more striking or more well-known idea, which, moreover, has no other link with the first than that of certain conformity or analogy.* Generically, these tropes can be reduced to one—*metaphor*, a very well-known word, perhaps better known than the thing itself, which, as Laharpe observes, has lost all its scholastic weight. Ordinarilly, *metaphor* is not distinguished into species, such as *Metonymy* and *Synecdoche*; but we should not for all that suppose that it has only one form, only one aspect, or that it is the same in all cases. On the contrary, it is very varied, and no doubt more comprehensive than *Metonymy* and *Synecdoche*, since it comprises not only the noun but also the adjective, the participle, the verb, and every kind of word. Thus all sorts of words can in fact be used or are

well to consider *this analogy of sensible and non-sensible things* which has served as the basis of *tropes*: a matter that you will understand the better by considering a very extended example such as is furnished by the use of *prepositions*, like *to*, *with*, *from*, *before*, *in*, *without*, *by*, *for*, *upon*, *towards*, which are all derived from place, from distance, and from motion, and afterwards transferred to every sort of change, order, sequence, difference, agreement. *To* signifies approach, as in the expression: I go *to* Rome. But as in order to attract anything we bring it near that to which we wish to unite it, we say that one thing is attached *to* another. And further, as there is, so to speak, an immaterial attachment. . . ." The proof is taken up again for each preposition, and is concluded as follows: "and as these analogies are extremely variable and do not depend on any determinate notions, it thence comes that languages vary much in the use of these *particles* and *cases* which the prepositions govern, or rather in which they are found as things understood and virtually included" (*New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. III, "Words," Ch. i, §§4-5, tr. A. G. Langley [London and New York, 1896], pp. 289-91). Du Marsais wrote: "Each language has specific metaphors peculiar to it . . ." (*Traité des tropes*, Ch. i, 10). And Fontanier will write: "Certain figures of speech can vary from one language to another: indeed, some do not even occur in all languages" (*Préface au Traité général des figures du discours autres que les tropes*, p. 275). Condillac, in whom Fontanier found as much "force" as in Du Marsais (*ibid*, p. 276), also thought that "the same figures of speech are not admissible in all languages" (*De L'Art d'écrire*, II, 6).

used *metaphorically*, if not as *figures*, at least as examples of *catachresis*. The sorts able to be used *metaphorically* as *figures* are the noun, the adjective, the participle, the verb, and perhaps also the adverb, though rather rarely.[32]

Now on the one hand, everything excluded from this list of words is in the category of catachresis (abuse of metaphor), "false figures" which "include in their scope cases as extreme as that of interjection" ("Indeed, there are very few words of any kind which are not subject to this influence" [p. 215]. This problem will arise again below.) True metaphor therefore is confined to the limits of the Aristotelian *onoma*. On the other hand, this seems to be confirmed by the whole system of distinctions proposed by Fontanier in his general definition of words. Among the words corresponding to "ideas of an object"—which naturally admit of nominalization—are included *nouns*, all words "used substantivally" (*the beautiful*, *the true*, *the just*; *the behind*; *the why*, *the how*; *the inside*, *the outside*; *the but*'s, *the if*'s[33]) and active or passive participles. The first corresponds to *substantive* ideas of an object, the second to *concrete* ideas of an object. Among the words corresponding to "ideas of relation" are included the verb ("But by *verb* here, I understand the only verb properly so-called, the verb *to be*, called an *abstract verb* or a *substantive verb*; and not the verbs which are improperly so-called, *concrete* verbs formed by the combination of the verb *to be* with a participle: *I love*, *I read*, *I come* standing for *I am loving*, *I am reading*, *I am coming*."), the preposition, the adverb, and the conjunction. The dissymetry of these contrasts seems very

32 *Les Figures du discours* (Paris: Flammarion), p. 99. Resemblance and analogy—these are the distinctive springs of metaphor from Aristotle to Fontanier. Du Marsis too, in defining metaphor, spoke of a "comparison which is in the mind." It remains that Aristotle made of metaphor a rather extended category, as we have seen, comprising every other figure of speech including metonymy; that Fontanier restricts the field of metaphor (and therefore of analogy or resemblance) to contrast it with metonymy; that Du Marsais had at first, by etymology, loosened the limits of metonymy: "The word *metonymy* means a transfer or change of name, one name for another. In this sense, this figure includes all other Tropes; for, in all Tropes, a word, not taken in its proper sense, awakes an idea which could be expressed by another word. We shall note later what properly distinguishes metonymy from the other Tropes. The great writers restrict metonymy to the following uses . . ." (*Traité des tropes*, Ch. xi, 11). Condillac (whose philosophy more than any other, or at least like any other, could be considered as a treatise on analogy) puts forward an opposite but symmetrical proposition: "What we have said about simile must apply to metaphor. I shall simply draw it to your attention that if we follow etymology all tropes are metaphors: for metaphor properly means a word transferred from one meaning to another" (*De L'Art d'écrire*, II, xi).

33 [This list is abbreviated, since the original includes nominalizations which occur in French but not in English (such as *le manger*). Tr.]

prominent: We have ideas of an object as superior to ideas of relations ("delicate ideas which we did not wish to separate from their signs, lest they should escape us"), and correlatively the superiority of the substantive. And this superiority does not appear only in the case of the verb *to be*. Of all kinds of words, those which are subject to variation ("in their forms and inflections") are governed by the substantive idea ("But it is easy to see that they are governed by the substantive idea in the expression of which they all participate more or less directly. . . ."). The other kinds (preposition, conjunction, adverb, interjection) "do not vary at all because they are not directly connected to the substantive idea, and indeed are completely separate and independent of it; at bottom they seem scarcely to have any other basis than a mental viewpoint, to be anything other in the mind than ways of seeing" (p. 46).

Everything in the theory of metaphor which is arranged according to this system of distinctions, or at least according to the principle of this system, seems to belong to the great unmoving chain of Aristotelian ontology, with his theory of the analogy of being, his logic, his epistemology, and more precisely with the basic organization of his poetics and his rhetoric. Indeed, let us take the Aristotelian definition of the noun, that is of the chief element of metaphor. The noun is the primary semantic unit. It is the smallest significant element. It is a composite *phonè semantikè* whose elements are themselves without significance (*asemos*). The noun shares this feature with the verb, from which it is distinguished only by its atemporality.

Before coming to the noun, Aristotle had enumerated all the elements of *lexis* made up of sound without signification (*phonè asemos*). The letter, for instance, the *stoikheion*, the ultimate element, is part of *lexis*, but has no meaning in itself. The letter here is not the written form, but the phonetic element, the vocal atom (*phonè adiaireton*). Its insignificance is not indeterminate. The letter is not just any vocal noise without sense. It is a sound produced which, though it has no sense, must nevertheless be able to enter "*naturally*" into the formation or composition of a *phonè semantikè* (*ex es pephukè sunthetè guinesthai phonè*), to open the possibility of a noun or verb, to contribute to *saying what is*. Here is the difference between man and the animals: both, according to Aristotle, can emit indivisible sounds, but only man can make a letter from them: "The Letter is an indivisible sound of a particular kind, one that may become a factor in an intelligible sound. Indivisible sounds are uttered by the brutes also, but no one of these is a Letter in our sense of the term" (*Poetics*, 1456b22-25). Aristotle does not analyze this difference—he reads it retrospectively

according to his teleology. No internal feature distinguishes the atom of animal sound from the letter. It is only when we start from significant phonetic composition, from sense and reference, that we should therefore distinguish the human voice from the animal cry. Sense and reference, that is to say, signify something (*Rhetoric*, III. 10, 1410b11), an independent self-identical being envisaged as such. It is at this point that the theory of the noun as it is implied by the concept of metaphor is articulated on an ontology. Apart from the classical and dogmatically asserted dividing line between the animal without *logos*, and man as *zôon logon ekon*, what emerges here is a certain systematic inseparability of the nature of metaphor from the metaphysical chain which holds together the natures of discourse, utterance, noun, significance, sense, imitative representation, resemblance; or, to lessen what is added or lost in these translations, the natures of *logos*, *phonè semantikè*, *semainein*, *onoma*, *mimesis*, *homoiosis*. The definition of metaphor has its place in the *Poetics*, a work which starts off as a study of *mimesis*. Now *mimesis* does not occur without *theoretical* awareness of resemblance or likeness, that is, of what will always be taken to be the condition of metaphor. *Homoiosis* not only constitutes truth (*aletheia*)—a notion which governs the whole series, but without it the production of metaphors is impossible: "To produce a good metaphor is to see a likeness" (*Poetics*, 1459a7-8). What makes metaphor possible (what makes good and true metaphor possible) is what makes truth possible. Inevitably, animals, denied *logos*, *phonè semantikè*, *stoikheion*, and so on, are also incapable of *mimesis*. For *mimesis* so defined belongs to *logos* and is not a matter of aping and mimicking, of animal gesture; it is connected with the possibility of meaning and truth in discourse. At the beginning of the *Poetics*, *mimesis* it taken to be in some way a possibility inherent in *physis*. *Physis* is revealed through *mimesis*, or in poetry, which is a form of *mimesis*. What makes this possible is a far-from-obvious structure in which the redoubling or folding effect of *mimesis* is not something brought from outside. Rather, it belongs to *physis* or we might equally say that *physis* includes its own exteriorization and its *double*. In this sense, then, *mimesis* is a "natural" movement. But Aristotle reduces and confines this naturalness to human speech, though in fact this gesture constitutive of metaphysics and of humanity is a teleological determination rather than a reduction: naturalness in general is said, collected, known, manifested and "mimed" par excellence and in truth in human nature. *Mimesis* is the property of man. Only man properly speaking imitates. He alone takes pleasure in imitating, learns to imitate, and learns by imitation. The power of truth, as an unveiling of nature

(*physis*) by *mimesis*, is a congenital property of man as a physical being. Here is the natural origin of poetry and of metaphor: "It is clear that the general origin of poetry was due to two causes, each of them part of human nature (*physikai*). Imitation is natural (*symphyton*: innate, congenital) to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature in the world and learns at first by imitation. And it is also natural for all to delight in works of imitation" (Aristotle, *Poetics,* 1448b4-9).

These two sources of poetry confirm our point: *logos*, *mimesis*, and *aletheia* become here one and the same possibility. And *logos* is at home only in the *phonè*. It is better there than elsewhere. And always we are confronted with teleological determination: just as nature is destined to be best mimed in human nature, and just as man, more than any other animal, is apt in imitation (*mimetikôtaton*), in the same way the voice is the organ most apt in imitation. Book III of the *Rhetoric* uses the same word to designate this vocation of the voice: ". . . words represent things, and . . . the human voice . . . of all organs can best represent other things" (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, III. 1, 1404a21-22).

Thus metaphor, an effect of *mimesis* and *homoiosis*, and a manifestation of analogy, will be a means of knowledge: a subordinate, but for all that a certain means of knowledge. We may say of it what is said of poetry: it is more philosophical and more serious than history (*Poetics*, 1451b5-6), since it not only tells something particular, but expresses what is general, probable, and necessary.[34] However, it is not as serious as philosophy itself, and will, it seems, keep this intermediate status throughout the history of philosophy. We might better say ancillary status: for metaphor, properly controlled, is in the service of truth, but the master cannot be content with it, and must prefer that form of discourse which shows truth in its fullness. For instance, Aristotle takes Plato to task for being content with "poetic metaphors" and holds that his language is empty when he says of the Forms that they are paradigms in which other things participate (*Metaphysics*, A 9, 991a20; M 5; 1079b25).

For the same reason, pleasure, the second "cause" of *mimesis* and metaphor, is a pleasure in knowledge, in learning by resemblance, in recognizing the same. The philosopher will be *more* able to do this

34 "Metaphors must be drawn, as has been said already, from things that are related to the original thing, and yet not obviously so related—just as in philosophy also an acute mind will perceive resemblances even in things far apart" (*Rhetoric*, III. 11, 1412a9-12).

than anyone else. He is a man par excellence: "The explanation is to be found in a further fact: to be learning something is the greatest of pleasures, not only to the philosopher, but to the rest of mankind, however small their capacity for it—the reason of the delight in seeing the picture (*eikonas*) is that one is at the same time learning, and deducing what is represented" (*Poetics*, 1448b12-17). The point is made in more detail in Book III of the *Rhetoric*, between stalk and flower: "We all naturally (*physei*) find it agreeable to get hold of new ideas easily: words signify something, and therefore those words are the most agreeable which bring us knowledge of something new. . . . From metaphor . . . we can best get hold of something fresh. When the poet calls old age a 'withered stalk' he conveys a new idea, a new fact, to us by means of the general notion of 'lost bloom' which is common to both things. The similes (*eikones*) of the poets do the same. . . . The simile, as has been said before, is a metaphor, differing from it only in having a prefixed word, and just because it is longer it is less attractive. Besides, it does not say outright that 'this' *is* 'that' . . ." (*Rhetoric*, III. 10, 1410b10-19). Thus metaphor puts before our eyes with vivacity what simile reconstructs indirectly and more cumbersomely. Good metaphor, for Aristotle, has the virtues of putting something before our eyes, making a picture, having a lively effect; and these virtues are regularly associated with the notion of *energeia*, which has a decisive role in his metaphysics, indeed, in metaphysics in general. "We have still to explain what we mean by 'making a picture,' and what must be done to effect this. I say that an expression puts something before our eyes when it represents things as in a state of activity (*energounta semainei*). Thus to say that a good man is 'four-square' is certainly a metaphor; both the good man and the square are perfect; but the metaphor does not suggest activity (*ou semainei energian*). On the other hand, in the expression 'with his vigour in full bloom' there is a notion of activity" (*Rhetoric*, III. 11, 1411b22-29). Generally this activation or actualization of metaphor consists in animating the inanimate, transferring it into the "psychic" order of things (*ibid.*, 1412a2). (The opposition between the animate and the inanimate also governs the whole of Fontanier's classification of metaphors.)

Thus there is a bonus of pleasure which compensates for the economic development of the hidden syllogism of metaphor, the theoretical perception of resemblance. But this operation involves energy only on the supposition that the resemblance is not an identity. *Mimesis* brings pleasure only if it allows us to see in action what is nevertheless not given in action itself, but only in its very similar double, its *mimeme*.

Let us leave open the question of this energy-carrying absence, this mysterious break, that is, this gap which creates stories and scenes.[35]

The semantic system (the order of *phonè semantikè* with all its related concepts) is not separated from what is other than it by a simple continuous line. We are not dealing here with a simple frontier between the human and the animal. There is another division which crosses the whole of "human" language. For human language is not uniformly human in all its parts to the same degree. It is still the criterion of the noun which is decisive: its literal elements—vocal sounds without

35 The pleasure here is that of a syllogism—to be completed. Rhetoric must take account of this. "Since learning and wondering are pleasant, it follows that such things as acts of imitation must be pleasant—for instance, painting, sculpture, poetry—and every, product of skilful imitation; this latter, even if the object imitated is not itself pleasant; for it is not the object itself which here gives delight; the spectator draws inferences: "that is a so-and-so," and thus learns something fresh. Dramatic turns of fortune and hairbreadth escapes from perils are pleasant. . . . Everything like and akin to oneself is pleasant. . . . And because we are all fond of ourselves, it follows that what is our own is pleasant to all of us, as for instance our own deeds and words. That is why we are usually fond of our flatterers, and honour; also of our children, for our children are our own work. It is also pleasant to complete what is defective, for the whole thing thereupon becomes our own work. . . . Similarly, since amusement and every kind of relaxation and laughter too belong to the class of pleasant things, it follows that ludicrous things are pleasant, whether men, words or deeds. We have discussed the ludicrous separately in the treatise on the *Art of Poetry*" (*Rhetoric*, I. 11, 1371b4-1372a1).

In the elliptical syllogistic of *mimesis*, the pleasure of knowing is always compounded with the decisive absence of its object. Indeed it originates in that compounding. The *mimeme* is neither the thing itself nor something completely different. Nothing will interrupt the operation of this law which produces pleasure according to the economy of identity and difference, not even (indeed, above all not) the unbearable horror, ugliness or obscenity of the thing imitated, provided that it remains out of view and out of reach—off-stage. One should go through the series of examples besetting this classic *topos* from Aristotle to Lessing. As always, when mimetic ellipse is in question, Oedipus, the serpent, and the parricide are never far off. ". . . Though the objects themselves may be painful to see, we delight to view the most realistic representations of them in art, the forms for example of the lowest animals and of dead bodies . . . the reason of the delight in seeing the picture is that one is at the same time learning and deducing what is represented, for instance, that this figure is such and such a person . . ." (*Poetics*, 1448b10-17).

> "There's not a monster bred beneath the sky,
> But, well-disposed by art, may please the eye;
> A curious workman, by his skill divine
> From an ill object makes a good design.
> Thus to delight us, Tragedy, in tears
> For Oedipus, provokes our hopes and fears;
> For parricide Orestes asks relief,
> And to increase our pleasure, causes grief."

(tr. Sir William Soames from Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, *Art Poétique*, Chant III, ll. 1-8, rpt., *The Art of Poetry: The Poetical Treatises of Horace, Vida, and Boileau*, ed. A. S. Cook [New York, 1926], p. 185)

meaning—include more than letters alone. The syllable too belongs to *lexis*, but of course has no sense in itself. Above all there are whole "words" which, though they have an indispensable role in the organization of discourse, remain nonetheless quite devoid of sense, in the eyes of Aristotle. Conjunction (*sundesmos*[36]) is a *phonè asemos*. The same goes for the article, and in general for every joint (*arthron*), everything which operates *between* significant members, between nouns, substantives, or verbs (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1456b38-1457a10). A joint has no sense because it does not refer to an independent unit, a substance or a being, by means of a categorematic unit. It is for this reason that it is excluded from the field of metaphor as an onomastic field. From this point on, the anagrammatic, using parts of nouns, nouns cut into pieces, is outside the field of metaphor in general, as too is the syntactic play of "joints."

Since this whole semantic theory, this theory of lexis and of the noun, is implied by it, it is natural that the definition of metaphor should follow the exposition of the theory. Such is the order of the *Poetics*. That this definition comes in immediately after the definitions of *phonè semantikè* and *phonè asemos*, marks not only a necessity but also a difficulty. Metaphor is more than an illustration of the general possibilities so described. It carries the risk that it may interrupt the semantic plenum to which it should belong. Since it marks the movement or the detour in which sense may seem to launch out by itself, unloosed from the very object to which it nevertheless is pointed, from the truth which brings it into harmony with its referent, metaphor may set off an errant semantics. The sense of a noun, instead of designating the thing which the noun should normally designate, goes elsewhere. If I say that the evening is the old age of the day, or that old age is the evening of life, "evening," though it has the same sense, no longer designates the same things. Signification, by its capacity for metaphorical displacement, will be in what we might think of as a state of readiness, lying between the non-sense which precedes language (for it has sense) and the truth of that language which tells it how it is. But it is not a guaranteed truth. There can be bad metaphors. Are they metaphors at all? This question can only be dealt with in terms of a theory of value supported by a theory of truth; and that theory of value belongs within rhetoric, which cannot be neutral.

In non-sense, language is not yet born. In truth, language should be in a state of plenitude, fulfillment, and actualization to the point of self-effacement, there being no possible play before the thing (the

36 The *Rhetoric* deals also with the proper use of conjunction (III, Ch. v) and the effects of asyndeton, the suppression of a conjunction (Ch. xii).

thought) which is there properly made manifest. Even *lexis*, it might be held, exists only at the stage of proceedings at which sense has appeared but truth may still be missed, when the object is not yet made manifest in action. Metaphor is the moment of possible sense as a possibility of non-truth. It is the moment of detour in which truth can still be lost. It surely belongs to *mimesis* that redoubling in *physis*, that point at which nature, veiled by her own act, has not yet recovered her proper nakedness, the very act of her proper self.

If metaphor, which is *mimesis* trying its chance, *mimesis* at risk, may always fail to attain truth, this is because it has to reckon with a definite absence. Aristotle, after his general definition, distinguishes four kinds of metaphor. The apparently disjointed examples may perhaps belong to a kind of organic recitative.

1. Transfer from genus to species (*genos* → *eidos*): "Here stands my ship" (*Odyssey*, I. 185. xxiv. 308). Instead of the more general word *stand*, the proper expression would have been "lie at anchor," a species of standing. (Note the traditional recourse to the boat, its movement, its oars and its sails, to represent figuratively the figure of metaphor—itself a means of "carrying over.")

2. Transfer from species to genus: "Truly a myriad of fine deeds has Ulysses wrought" (*Iliad*, II. 272). The myriad is a species of numerosity in general.

3. Transfer from species to species: "drawing off life with his brazen [sword]," and "cutting [water from the springs] with [a cup of] durable bronze."[37] "Drawing off" and "cutting from" are two species of the general operation which consists in "taking away" (*aphelein*).

4. Analogy: this consists, where we have two pairs of terms, in putting the fourth in place of the second, and the second in place of the fourth. The cup is to Dionysus what the shield is to Ares. "The shield of Dionysus," and "the cup of Ares" are metaphors by analogy. In the case of the two pairs old age and life, evening and day, we have, for example in Empedocles, "the evening of life." (Cf. also *Rhetoric*, III. iv, 1406b26ff.)

Analogy is metaphor par excellence. Aristotle emphasizes it a good

37 [The fact that Aristotle is here quoting from lines of poetry otherwise unknown to us, apart from a passing reference to the second quotation (the work of Empedocles) by Theon of Smyrna, though his audience no doubt knew the lines well, and the fact that the text transmitted to us is moreover corrupt, has given rise to considerable scholarly controversy (see for example the commentaries on the *Poetics* of Gudeman and Rostagni). The interpretation involved in the translation given here is similar to that of the Budé translation used by M. Derrida. I have rendered the examples so as to be as conformable as possible to the intentions both of Aristotle and of M. Derrida. Tr.]

deal in the *Rhetoric*. "Liveliness is got by using metaphor by analogy and by being graphic" (*Rhetoric*, III. 11, 1411b21). "Of the four kinds of metaphor, the most taking is the metaphor by analogy (*kat'analogian*). Thus Pericles, for instance, said that the vanishing from their country of the young men who had fallen in the war was "as if the spring were taken out of the year." Leptines, speaking of the Lacedamonians, said that he would not have the Athenians let Greece 'lose one of her two eyes . . .' " etc. (*Rhetoric*, III. 10, 1411a1). This privileged position of analogy means that it is Aristotle's general theory of the analogy of being which articulates his theory of metaphor.

In all these examples, where it is so often a matter of taking away, cutting off, or curtailing (life, the eye, and so on), and not only in the fourth kind, all the terms are nevertheless actually or implicitly present. It is always possible to bring out four members in their pairs, a kind of family whose relations are clear and whose names are known. The hidden term is not nameless; it does not have to be invented: the exchange of terms involved in the analogy has nothing hermetic or elliptical about it. It is almost a simile, or a double simile. Now there are cases, Aristotle remarks, where one of the terms is missing. In that case it has to be invented. More surprisingly, the impression made is stronger, and sometimes also has greater truth or poetry: here is an open hand, a fertile land, an inspired command. The point is illustrated by Aristotle with an example; and the example is the most illustrious, that which illustrates before all else, the most natural lustre that may be. It is in connection with its life-giving power that the question of the missing name comes to be put, so that one of the terms in the square of analogy has to be supplied.

(In Plato's *Republic* (Books VI-VII), before and after the Line, which expounds an ontology by analogies of proportion, there appears the sun. Only to disappear. The sun is there, but as the invisible source of light, in a kind of insistent eclipse. It is more than essential: it produces essence, being and appearing: the essence of that which is. One may not look upon it, on pain of blindness and death. Beyond that which is, it portends the Good, of which the sensible sun is the offspring: source of life and visibility, seed and light.)

Here is the treatment of the Sun in the *Poetics* (1457b25-30): "It may be that some of the terms thus related have no special name of their own, but for all that they will be metaphorically described in just the same way. Thus to cast forth seed corn is called 'sowing'; but to cast forth its flame, as said of the sun, has no special name." How can we rectify this lack of a name? "This nameless act (B), however, stands in just the same relation to its object, sunlight (A), as sowing

(D) to the seed-corn (C). Hence the expression in the poet "sowing a god-created flame" (D + A)."

But where have we ever *seen* that there is the same relation between the sun and its rays as between sowing and the seed? If this analogy compels acceptance, and it does, it is because it is acceptable in language because of a chain that is long and not very visible, and whose first link is extremely difficult—and not only for Aristotle—to display. Rather than a metaphor, do we not find here a "riddle," a secret fecitative made up of several metaphors, a powerful asyndeton or unmasked conjunction, the essential character of which is "to describe a fact in an impossible combination of words" (*Poetics*, 1458a26-27)?

If every metaphor is a simile, or an elliptical analogy, we should now be dealing with a metaphor par excellence, a metaphorical redoubling, the ellipse of an ellipse. But the missing term calls forth a word which is the proper name of something. The existing terms (sun, rays, sowing, grain) are not in themselves tropes, according to Aristotle. Metaphor here consists in a substitution of proper names having a fixed sense and reference, especially in the case of the sun. This referent is the origin, the unique, the irreplaceable (so at least do we represent it to ourselves). There is only one sun in this system. The proper name is in this case the first mover of metaphor, itself non-metaphorical, the father of all figures of speech. Everything turns on it, everything turns to it.

And yet in one aside, in a parenthesis no sooner opened than closed, Aristotle notes in passing the case of a *lexis* which would be metaphorical throughout. At least, there is no proper name in it in any explicit way. After the solar sowing, we have the "wineless cup": "There is also another form of qualified metaphor. Having given the thing the alien name, one may by a negative addition deny of it one of the attributes naturally associated with its new name. An instance of this would be to call the shield not 'the cup *of Ares*' as in the former case, but 'the *wineless* cup.' "

But this procedure, though Aristotle makes no mention of the fact, can be repeated and elaborated without limit. There being no longer any properly named reference in such a metaphor, the figure of speech sets out on a voyage into a long and hidden sentence, a secret recitative, with no assurance that we shall be led back to the proper name. The metaphorization of metaphor, its bottomless overdeterminability, seems to be written into the structure of metaphor, though as its negative side. As soon as we admit that in an analogical relation all the terms are already individually set in a metaphorical relation, the whole begins to function, no longer as a sun but as a star, the pinpoint source of

truth, of what is proper, remaining invisible, or swathed in night. At all events, in Aristotle's text, it refers us back to the problems of the proper name, or of the analogy of *being*.[38]

If the sun can "sow," it is because its name is written into a system of relations which constitute it. Its name is no longer the proper name of a unique thing on which the metaphor would supervene; that name has already begun to speak of the multiple and divided origin of all sowing, of the eye, of invisibility, of death, of the father, of the "proper name," and so on. If Aristotle does not pursue this consequence, it is no doubt because it conflicts with the philosophical force of *aletheia*, with the proper appearance of the property of what is, with the whole system of concepts which gives metaphor its place as a philosophical notion, giving it force by giving it limits. Indeed, by stopping its movement: just as we repress by crossing out, or as we control the infinitely fluctuating movement of a vessel to be able to drop anchor where we wish. The whole theory of names which governs the theory of metaphor, the whole Aristotelian doctrine of simple names (*Poetics*, 1457a1off.) is constructed to guarantee the havens of truth and of that which is proper.

Like *mimesis*, metaphor *comes back* to *physis*, to its truth and its presence. Nature always finds in it its own analogy, its own resemblance to itself, and finds increase there only of itself. In metaphor, nature makes gift of herself. This is why, from another point of view, metaphorical ability is a natural talent. In this sense everyone has it (*Rhetoric*, III. 2).[39] But, according to a pattern which we have frequently encountered, nature gives (herself) more to some than to others. More to men than to beasts, more to philosophers than to other men. Since the invention of metaphors is an innate, a natural, a congenital gift, it will also be a mark of genius. The notion of nature makes this contradiction acceptable. In nature, everyone has his nature. Some have more than others—more brilliance, more generosity, more seed. If "the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor," some have the gift of metaphor, know better than others how to perceive

38 We cannot enter into this matter here. See, in particular, P. Aubenque, *Le Problème de l'être chez Aristote* (Paris: PUF, 1962-66), and J. Vuillemin, *De la Logique à la théologie* (Paris: Flammarion, 1967).

39 "Boileau and Dumarsais have said on the subject of Tropes—and it has been taken up many times—that more are created in one day in the marketplace than are in the whole of the Aeneid, or than are used at the *Académie française* in several consecutive sessions. . . . Now is this not an obvious proof that Tropes form an essential part of the spoken language; that like spoken language they have been given us by nature to serve for the expression of our thoughts and feelings; and that consequently they have the same origin as that language, and as language in general?" (Fontainer, *Les figures*, p. 157).

resemblances and uncover the truth of nature. A capacity not within our grasp. "It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others and it is also a sign of genius" (*Poetics*, 1459a5-7; see also *Rhetoric*, III. 2). Either you know how, or you do not: either you can, or you cannot. The ungraspable, what cannot be taken, certainly, is the genius for perceiving a hidden resemblance, but also, and consequently, for being able to substitute one term for another. The genius for *mimesis* can therefore give rise to a language, to a code of controlled substitutions, to the talent and the techniques of rhetoric, to the imitation of genius, to the mastery of the ungraspable. Can I be assured henceforth that the one thing that cannot be taken from me is the ability to replace? For example, to replace what has been taken from me by something else? In what conditions do we always have another trick up our sleeve? Another seed? And would the sun always be able to sow? and *physis* to be sown?

IV. The Flowers of Rhetoric: The Heliotrope

> One day all that will be of just as much value, and no more, as the amount of belief existing today in the masculinity or femininity of the sun (Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day*, § 3, *Works*, vol. IX, tr. J. M. Kennedy, p. 12.)
>
> The alternative "either-or" cannot be expressed in dreams in any way whatever. . . . They show a particular preference for combining contraries into a unity or for representing them as one and the same thing. . . . The same blossoming branch (cf. "des Mädchen's Blüten" ["the maiden's blossoms"] in Goethe's poem "Der Müllerin Verrat") represented both sexual innocence and its contrary. . . . One and only one of these logical relations is very highly favoured by the mechanism of dream formation; namely, the relation of similarity (*Ahnlichkeit*), consonance (*Ubereinstimmung*) or approximation (*Berührung*)—the relation of "just as" (*Gleichwie*). This relation, unlike any other, is capable of being represented in dreams in a variety of ways. (*Note*: Cf. Aristotle's remark on the qualifications of a dream interpreter quoted above on p. 97, n. 2). (Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *Complete Psychological Works*, IV, Ch. vi C, pp. 316-20)

> Aristotle remarked in this connection that the best interpreter of dreams was the man who could best grasp similarities. . . . (*Ibid.*, Ch. ii, p. 97, n. 2)
>
> At this point, too, the words "*expensive flowers, one has to pay for them*" must have had what was no doubt literally a financial meaning.—Thus the flower symbolism in this dream included virginal femininity (*jungfräulichweiblicher*), masculinity and an allusion to defloration by violence. . . . [She] laid all the more emphasis on the previousness of the "*centre*"—on another occasion she used the words, "*a centre-piece of flowers*"—that is to say, on her virginity. . . . Later on the dreamer produced an addendum (*Nachtrag*) to the dream: . . . ". . . there is a gap, a little space in the flowers. . . ." (*Ibid.*, V, p. 376)

Our present position, then, is that metaphor is what is proper to man. And more properly to each individual man, according to the *dominance* of nature's gift in him. But what of this dominance? And what is the meaning here of "what is proper to man," in connection with such a capacity?

We have already noted the need for a historical and systematic investigation of the notion of—"property," of "what it proper." It is an immense task presupposing a whole worked-out strategy of deconstruction, and a whole system of reading. It is to be foreseen that such a task, however distant, would have to deal in one way or another with that in Aristotle's text which is translated as "proper": which is to say, with at least three senses.

The Aristotelian problem of metaphor does not go back to a very simple and clear (that is, central) distinction between what will be called the proper sense and the figurative sense. Nothing prevents a metaphorical *lexis* from being proper—that is, appropriate (*prepon*), suitable, decent, proportionate, becoming, properly related to subject and situation, to things as they are.[40] It is true that this way of being proper is rather external to the form of discourse, whether metaphorical or not. But this is not so for the meanings *kurion* and *idion*, both commonly translated by the same word *proper*.[41] Though the

40 See, for example, *Rhetoric*, III. 7. On the translation of *prepon*, see *Les Topiques d'Aristote*, ed. J. Brunschwig (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1966), I, iv, 122, 6, n. 3.

41 [What is said here is true of the French word, *propre*, but only questionably true of the English *proper*, or of translations into English of the relevant Aristotelian terms. See the note at the head of the article. Tr.]

difference between *kurion* and *idion* is never explicitly dealt with, it seems that the first notion, which is more frequent in the *Poetics* than in the *Rhetoric*, designates the property of a name used in its dominant, its chief or capital sense. We must not forget that this sense of sovereignty is also the guiding sense of *kurion*. By extension, the *kurion* is interpreted as a primitive (as opposed to derived) sense, and sometimes is equivalent to the current, literal, or familiar sense (*to de kurion kai to oikeion* [*Rhetoric*, III. 2, 1404b6]): "By the ordinary word (*kurion*) I mean that in general use in a country" (*Poetics*, 1457b3-4). It is then distinguished from the unusual word (*glotta*), which is rare but idiomatic, on the one hand, and from metaphor on the other. As for *idion*, which is much rarer in this context, it seems to have some part of both of these other meanings. More precisely, in the *Rhetoric* (III. 5, 1407a31) to go back to *proper* names is to avoid periphrasis (*tois idois onomasi legein, kai mè tois periekousin*), which is a desirable thing to do. The mutual contamination of these three meanings seems to have taken place already in Cicero's notion of *verba propria* as opposed to *verba translata* (*De Oratore*, 2.4).

However, this whole "metaphorology" seems to be sustained by the notion of the *idion*, though it does not occupy the forefront. We know that in the *Topics*, for instance, it is at the center of a theory of the "proper," of essence and accident. Now if metaphor (or *mimesis* in general) aims at the expression of knowledge, it cannot be treated without relating it to a form of knowledge linked to *definition*: to what the thing of which one is speaking properly, essentially or accidentally *is*. Indeed, one can speak properly or otherwise of what is not proper to a thing, of an accident of it, for example. These two meanings of what is proper and what is not proper do not have the same bearing in this case. Nevertheless, since the ideal of all language, and of metaphor in particular, is to allow the thing itself to be known, a turn of speech or of thought will be better the closer it brings us to its essential or proper truth. The "space" of language, the field in which it may diverge, is precisely opened up by the differences between the essence, the "proper," and the accident. Here, then, are three very preliminary reference points.

1. A name is a proper name when it has only one sense. Or rather, it is only in this case that it is properly a name. To be univocal is the essence, or rather the *telos*, of language. This Aristotelian ideal has never been rejected by any philosophy as such. It is philosophy. Aristotle recognizes that a word may have several senses. This is a fact. But this fact has no right in language except to the extent that the plurality of meaning is finite, that the different meanings are limited

in number, and above all sufficiently *distinct*, each one remaining single and identifiable. Language is what it is—language is language, only to the extent that it can control and analyze plurality of meaning. And without remainder. A spread which cannot be controlled is not even a plurality of meaning: it belongs outside language.

And it makes no difference even if one were to say a word has several meanings, if only they are limited in number; for to each formula there might be assigned a different word. For instance, we might say that "man" has not one meaning but several, one of which would be defined as "two-footed animal," while there might be also several other formulae if only they were limited in number; for a peculiar name might be assigned to each of the formulae [what Ross translated by "peculiar name" is precisely the "proper" name, *idion onoma*; and "formula" is *logos*]. If, however, they were not limited but one were to say that the word has an *infinite* number of meanings, obviously reasoning [discourse, definition, *logos*] would be impossible; for not to have one meaning is to have no meaning, and if words have no meaning, reasoning with other people, and indeed with oneself, has been annihilated; for it is impossible to think anything if we do not think one thing; but if this *is* possible, one name might be assigned to *this* thing. Let it be assumed then, as was said at the beginning, that the name has a meaning, and has one meaning. (*Metaphysics*, 4, 1006a34-b13, *Works*, VIII) [42]

Every case in which a plurality of meanings is irreducible, in which there is not even a promise of unity of sense, is a case in which we are beyond language. And consequently beyond humanity. It is proper to man, no doubt, to be able to create metaphors, but that in order to express something, some one thing. In this sense, the philosopher, who always has just one thing to say, of all men is indeed a man. He who does not subject the equivocal to this law is already something less than a man: a sophist, who in the end says nothing that can be brought down to a sense.[43] At the limit of this "not-meaning-anything," a

42 See also *Topics*, I. 18. Du Marsais wrote: "In any piece of reasoning any word must be taken in the same sense throughout, otherwise the reasoning will not be valid." And Fontanier: "In the beginning, every word must have meant only one thing" (Quoted by T. Todorov, *Littérature et signification* [Paris: Larousse, 1967], pp. 109-10).

43 The poet takes his position between the two. He is the man of metaphor. While the philosopher is concerned only with the truth of what is meant—his concerns indeed take him beyond signs and names; and while the sophist manipulates empty signs and derives his effects from the contingency of signifiers (hence his taste for the equivocal, and in the first place for homonymy, the misleading identity of different signifiers)—the poet on the other hand makes play of the multiplicity of things signified in order to come back again to an identity of meaning: "Homonyms are chiefly useful to enable the sophist to mislead his

creature is barely animal. It would rather be a plant, a rose tree without thought: "We can however demonstrate negatively the impossibility of the same thing being and not being, if our opponent will only say something; and if he says nothing, it is absurd to attempt to reason with one who will not reason about anything, in so far as he refuses to reason. For such a man, as such, is seen already to be no better than a mere plant" (*Metaphysics*, 1006a12-15). And this metaphorical plant (*phytos*) no longer even belongs entirely to *physis*, in that it is actually presented by *mimesis*, *logos*, and the voice of man.

2. Though the two are inseparable, we should not confuse what is proper with essence. The gap here is no doubt what allows the play of metaphor. Metaphor is able to display properties, to relate to each other properties which have been abstracted from the essence of different things, to make them known on the basis of their resemblance, without ever directly, fully, or properly stating the essence, without itself making visible the truth of the thing itself.

Meanings transferred concern the properties attributed to a thing, not the thing itself, as subject or substance. In this respect metaphor remains mediate and abstract. To make it possible to replace one property by another, without bringing the thing itself into the play of substitutions, it is necessary that these properties should belong to the same essence of the same thing, or have been abstracted from different essences. The necessary condition of these abstractions and exchanges is that the essence of a concrete subject should admit several properties, and then that between the essence of a thing and what is proper to a thing (which is inseparable from the essence) there should be a specific possibility of inversion, so that quasi-synonymous elements would be exchanged for each other. This is the operation which Aristotle calls *antikategoreisthai*: the predicate which states the essence of a thing and the predicate which attributes to it something which is proper to it may be exchanged without the statement becoming false: "A property is something which does not show the essence of a thing, but belongs to it alone, and is predicated convertibly of it."[44]

hearers. Synonyms are useful to the poet, by which I mean words whose ordinary meaning (*kuria*) is the same, e.g., *pareuesthai* (*advancing*) and *badizein* (*proceeding*); these two are ordinary words and have the same meaning" (*Rhetoric*, III. 2, 1404b37-1405a1).

44 Aristotle, *Topics*, I. 5, 102a18-19, tr. E. S. Forster, Loeb Classical Library. Brunschwig (*Les topiques*) has a note important for our purposes: "The word *antikategoreisthai*, contrary to the traditional interpretation (but in conformity with its etymology), does not designate the legitimacy of *inversion of subject and predicate*, but that of *reciprocal substitution between two predicates* applied to one and the same concrete subject (denoted by the words *tou pragmatos*). In

We have been led to claim, for instance, that metaphor, the metaphorical ability, is something proper to man. Take a concrete subject, Socrates, whose essence is to be human; something that is proper—some property will be expressed each time we say "If Socrates is a man, he possesses *logos*," and conversely "If Socrates has *logos*, he is a man"; or "If Socrates is capable of *mimesis* he is a man" and vice versa, or "If Socrates can create metaphors, he is a man" and vice versa, and so forth. The first example of the operation of *antikategoreisthai* given in the *Topics* is that of grammar: grammar, the ability to learn to read and write, is proper to man. This property belongs to the chain of other properties of man (*logos, phonè semantikè, mimesis, metaphora*, etc.). "For example, it is a property of man to be capable of learning grammar; for if a certain being is a man, he is capable of learning grammar, and if he is capable of learning grammar, he is a man."[45]

3. What is it that is proper to the sun? The question is put in the *Topics*, as an example. Is this by chance? Indeed, was it without significance already in the *Poetics*? We have been constantly drawn, without willing it, by the movement which turns the sun into metaphor; or attracted by that which turns philosophical metaphor towards the sun. Is not this flower of rhetoric (like) a sunflower—that is, though it is not an exact synonym, analogous to the heliotrope?

No doubt, it will in the first place emerge from the Aristotelian example that heliotropic metaphors can be bad metaphors. Indeed, it is difficult to know what is proper to the sun, properly so-called: to the *sensible* sun. Consequently any metaphor implying the sun (as tenor or vehicle) fails to bring clear and certain knowledge: "Every object of sensation, when it passes outside the range of sensation, becomes obscure; for it is not clear whether it still exists, because it is comprehended only by sensation. This will be true of such attributes as do not necessarily and always attend upon the subject. For example, he who has stated that it is a property of the sun to be 'the brightest star that moves above the earth' has employed in the property something of a kind which is comprehensible only by sensation, namely 'moving above the earth'; and so the property of the sun would not have been correctly assigned, for it will not be manifest, when the sun

other words, we may say that a predicate P is proper to a subject S, not when one has '*S is P and P is S*,' but rather when one has '*For every concrete subject X, if X is S, X is P, and if X is P, X is S*.'" See also the remainder of this note. Cf. also on the different kinds of "property" (the proper in itself—"For example, the property of man as a mortal living creature receptive of knowledge," or relative, permanent or temporary properties), *Topics*, V. 1, 128b34ff.

45 *Topics*, I. 5, 102a20-22. Cf. also Brunschwig's note.

sets, whether it is still moving above the earth, because sensation then fails us."[46]

This seems to bring two consequences. They may seem contradictory, but the opposition between them in a way constructs the philosophical concept of metaphor, divides it according to a law of ambiguity which is constantly being confirmed.

First consequence: Heliotropic metaphors are always imperfect metaphors. They give us too little knowledge because one of the terms directly or indirectly implied in the substitution (the sensible sun) cannot be properly known. This is no different from saying that the sensible sun is always im-properly known and therefore im-properly named. In general, that which is sensible does not limit our knowledge of it for reasons intrinsic to the *way in which it is present*; but primarily because the *aistheton* may always *fail* to be present, may be hidden or absent. It is not available on command, and we cannot control its presence. Now the sun, from this point of view, is a sensible object par excellence. It is the paradigm of what is sensible *and* of what is metaphorical: it regularly turns (itself) and hides (itself). The trope of metaphor always implies a sensible kernel, or rather something which, like what is sensible, may always fail to be present actually and in person. And the sun, in this respect, is above all the sensible signifier of what is sensible, the sensible model of the sensible (the Form, paradigm, or parable of the sensible). For these reasons, the orbit of the sun is the trajectory of metaphor. Indeed, of bad metaphor which gives only improper knowledge. But since the best metaphor is never absolutely good, since otherwise it would not be a metaphor, does not bad metaphor always provide the best example? Metaphor therefore means heliotrope, both movement turned to the sun, and the turning movement of the sun.

But let us not be too hasty in making metaphor a form of truth. Are we sure that we know what the heliotrope is?

The sun does not merely provide an example, however remarkable, of that which is sensible insofar as it can always disappear, be hidden from sight, be absent. The very opposition between appearing and disappearing, the whole vocabulary of *phainesthai*, of *aletheia*, and so forth, of day and night, visible and invisible, present and absent, all this is possible only under the sun. And the sun, so far as it gives

46 *Topics*, V. 3, 131b22-31. Cf. also G. Verbeke, "La Notion de propriété dans les Topiques," *Aristotle on Dialectic: The Topics*, ed. G. E. L. Owen (Oxford, 1968). The author here analyzes in particular the reasons for which "the 'proper' cannot be such that its belonging to a subject could be known solely by sensation" (p. 273).

form to the metaphorical space of philosophy, represents what is natural in philosophical language. It is that which in any philosophical language is allowed to be retained by natural language. In the metaphysical alternative which contrasts formal or artificial and natural language, "natural" would always be bound to lead us back to *physis* as a solar system, or, more precisely, to a certain account of the relation between earth and sun in the system of perception.

Second consequence: But now we have performed a volte-face. Earlier we were saying that the sun was that unique, irreplaceable, and natural object of reference around which everything must turn, and towards which everything must turn. But now we find ourselves obliged to reverse this judgment, by following the same direction of argument: to say that the sun properly so-called, the sensible sun, not only produces bad metaphors and therefore bad knowledge, but is itself only metaphorical. Since, as Aristotle tells us, we can no longer be sure of its sensible characteristics as properties, the sun is never properly present in discourse. With every metaphor, there is no doubt somewhere a sun; but each time that there is the sun, metaphor has begun. If the sun is already and always metaphorical, it is not completely natural. It is already and always a lustre: one might call it an *artificial* construction if this could have any meaning in the absence of nature. For if the sun is not entirely natural, what can remain in nature that is natural? This object which is the most natural in nature has in itself the capacity to go out of itself; it joins with artificial light, it suffers eclipse and ellipse, has always itself been other: the father, seed, fire, the eye, the egg, and so on, all of them so many further things, providing the measure of good and bad, or clear and obscure metaphor; and then, at the limit, of what is better or worse than metaphor:

> One commonplace regarding obscurity is that you should see whether what is stated is equivocal with something else. . . . Another commonplace is to see whether he has spoken metaphorically, as, for example, if he has described knowledge as "unshakeable" or the earth as a "nurse" or temperance as a "harmony"; for metaphorical expressions are always obscure: a metaphor in the description of metaphor. Also, it is possible to quibble against one who has spoken metaphorically, representing him as having used the word in its proper sense; for then the definition given will not fit, as in the case of "temperance," for "harmony" is always used of sounds. . . . Further, you must see if he uses terms of which the use is not well-established, as Plato calls the eye "brow-shaded" . . . for unusual words are always obscure. Words are sometimes used neither equivocally, nor metaphorically, nor in their proper sense; for example, the law is said to be the "measure" or "image" of things naturally just.

Such phrases are worse than metaphors; for a metaphor in a way adds to our knowledge of what is indicated on account of the similarity, for those who use metaphors always do so on account of some similarity. But the kind of phrase of which we are speaking does not add to our knowledge; for no similarity exists in virtue of which the law is a "measure" or an "image," nor is the law usually described by these words in their proper sense. So, if anyone says that the law is a "measure" or an "image" in the proper sense of these words, he is lying; for an image is something whose coming into being is due to imitation, and this does not apply to the law. If, however, he is not using the word in its proper sense, obviously he has spoken obscurely, and with worse effect than any kind of metaphorical language. Further, you must see whether the definition of the contrary fails to be clear from the description given; for correctly assigned definitions also indicate their contraries. Or, again, you must see whether, when it is stated by itself, it fails to show clearly what it is that it defines, just as in the words of the early painters, unless they were inscribed, it was impossible to recognize what each figure represented. (*Topics*, VI. 2, 139b19-140a23; cf. also IV. 3, 123a33ff.)

The appeal to criteria of clarity and obscurity would be enough to establish the point made above: that this whole philosophical delimitation of metaphor is already constructed and worked upon by "metaphors." How could a piece of knowledge or a language be clear or obscure *properly speaking*? Now all the concepts which have played a part in the definition of metaphor always have an origin and a force which are themselves "metaphorical," to use on this occasion a word which can no longer strictly be applicable in designating tropes which are as much defining as defined.[47] If we were to take each term of the definition suggested in the *Poetics*, we should detect in it the mark of a figure of speech (*metaphora* and *epiphora* also designate transfer in space; *eidos* is also a visible figure, an outline and a form—the space of an aspect or a species; *genos* is also a line of consanguinity, the stock of a birth, an origin, a family, and so on). One sees everything that these tropes maintain and sediment in the tangle of their roots. But our task is not to trace back the function of a concept along a line to the etymology of the word. Indeed it was to avoid this etymologism that we concerned ourselves with the inner, systematic, and synchronic articulation of Aristotelian concepts. Nonetheless, none of these has

47 The general case of this circularity is recognized and illustrated in the *Topics* as follows: "Another way is when the term which is being defined is used in the definition itself. This passes unobserved when the actual name of the object which is being defined is not employed, for example, if one has defined the sun as 'a star appearing by day'; for in introducing the day, one introduces the sun" (VI. 4, 142a34-b2).

a conventional and arbitrary "x" as a name, so that the historical or genealogical (not to say etymological) link which ties the concept signified to its signifier (to language) is not a contingent link which can be set aside.

This implication of what is to be defined within the definition, this abyss of metaphor will always be in a process of self-stratification, simultaneously consolidating itself and hollowing itself out: an (artificial) light and a (displaced) dwelling-place of classical rhetoric.

Du Marsais illustrates his definition of metaphor as follows:

> When we speak of *the light of the mind*, the word *light* is to be taken metaphorically; for just as light in the proper sense enables us to see corporeal objects, so does the faculty of knowledge and perception enlighten the mind, and put it in a position to make sound judgements. Metaphor is therefore a species of Trope; the word used metaphorically is used in some sense other than its proper sense: "it dwells in a borrowed home," so to say; something which is common and essential to all Tropes (Ch. ii, 10).

These two examples—of light and of the house—have different functions. Du Marsais thinks himself able to offer the first metaphor as one example among others, one metaphor among others. But we now have some reason to believe that it is indispensable to the general system in which the notion of metaphor is set. The other figure—of the borrowed home—is not given by Du Marsais as one metaphor among others; it is there to signify metaphor itself; it is a metaphor for metaphor: expropriation, being-away-from-home, but still in a home, away from home but in someone's home, a place of self-recovery, self-recognition, self-mustering, self-resemblance: it is outside itself—it is itself. This is philosophical metaphor as a detour in (or in view of) the reappropriation, the second coming, the self-presence of the idea in its light. A metaphorical journey from the Platonic *eidos* to the Hegelian Idea.

The use of a metaphor to convey the "idea" of metaphor—this is what prohibits definition, but yet metaphorically assigns a stopping place, a limit, and fixed point: the metaphor-home. Du Marsais found it natural to give these two examples, whether or not fortuitously. But for all that, any metaphor may always be read at once as a particular figure and as a paradigm of the very process of metaphorization: *idealization* and *appropriation*. Everything in talk about metaphor which comes through the sign *eidos*, with the whole system attached to this word, is articulated on the analogy between *our* looking and sensible looking, between the intelligible and the visible sun. The

truth of the being that is present is fixed by passing through a detour of tropes in this system. The presence of *ousia* as *eidos* (being set before the metaphorical eye) or as *upokeimenon* (being that underlies visible phenomena or accidents) faces the theoretic organ, which, as Hegel's *Philosophy of Fine Art* reminds us, has the power not to consume what it perceives, and to let be the object of desire. Philosophy, as a theory of metaphor, will first have been a metaphor of theory. This conversion has not excluded, but rather allowed and given rise to the transformation of a thing's being present into its being present to itself, into the state of subjectivity being close or proper to itself. As we were saying above, what should be followed is the wandering and returning story of the "proper" meaning.

"Idealizing" metaphor, which is constitutive of any element of philosophy in general, opens up Fontanier's *Les Figures du discours*, at once providing him with the most general feature of his theoretical landscape. In fact, the whole treatise sinks into the gap between signifier and signified, sense and the sensible, thought and language, and above all between *idea* and word. Now Fontanier recalls, as though it were a minor matter, the etymology and the buried origin of the word *idea* at the very beginning of his book where he puts forward his major distinction between words and ideas:

> Thought is made up of ideas, and the expression of thought in speech is made up of words. Let us therefore consider first what ideas are in themselves: we shall then turn to what words are relative to ideas, or, if this way of putting it be preferred, what ideas are in so far as they are represented by words. A—IDEAS. The word *Idea* (from the Greek *eido*, to see) has the same meaning as *image*, but relative to objects seen by the mind; and relative to the mind which sees, the same meaning as *sight* or *perception*. But the objects seen by our mind are either physical and material objects which affect our senses, or metaphysical and purely intellectual objects quite beyond our senses.

After this, Fontanier classifies all ideas as physical or metaphysical (and moral), simple or complex, and so on. Thus there are whole strata of metaphors and philosophical interpretations supporting the notion of that which is supposed to precede language or words, what is supposed to be anterior, exterior, and superior to them, as is sense to expression, what is represented to the representation, *dianoia* to *lexis*. One might put it by saying that a metaphorical *lexis* has been interpolated in the definition of *dianoia*. It has provided the *idea*.

In drawing attention here to the history of the signifier *idea*, we do not mean to give etymology an importance which it has already

been denied. We recognize the specific function of a term within its own system, but we must not suppose the signifier to be perfectly conventional. No doubt, Hegel's Idea is not Plato's; no doubt the effects of the system in which these notions exist are irreducible, and must be understood accordingly. But the word *Idea* is not an arbitrary "x", and it has a traditional burden which continues Plato's system into Hegel's, and must also be investigated as such, through a stratified reading: neither pure etymology or origin, nor homogeneous continuum, nor the absolute synchronism or simple interiority of a system to itself. This means that we must simultaneously criticize the model of a transcendental history of philosophy, and that of systematic structures that are perfectly closed in their technical and synchronic arrangement, recognized hitherto only in bodies of work identified according to the "proper name" of a signature.

But, as we were asking above, is it possible still to call these defining tropes metaphors—being tropes anterior to any philosophical rhetoric, and themselves the producers of philosophical elements? This question could guide a whole reading of the analyses given by Fontanier of *catachresis* in the *Supplément à la théorie des tropes.*[48] Let us content ourselves here with a hint. This *Supplément* is first of all concerned with the use of a sign by violence, force, or abuse, with the imposition of a sign on a sense not yet having a proper sign in the language. And so there is no substitution here, no transfer of proper signs, but an irruptive extension of a sign proper to one idea to a sense without a signifier. Here is a "second origin":

However, since our principles concerning *Catachresis* are the foundation for our whole tropological system, it cannot but be close to our heart to shed still greater light upon them, if possible. It is for this reason that we shall add here some new observations to those which are already to be found in such large numbers in the *Commentary.*

Catachresis, in general, consists in this, that a sign already assigned to a first idea should be assigned also to a new idea which has no other sign at all, or no longer has a sign as its proper expression. It includes, therefore, any Trope whose usage is forced or necessary, any Trope which results in a purely *extended* sense; this proper sense of second origin,

48 *Figures du discours,* 3e *partie,* pp. 207f. "In this *Supplément* will be found new and certainly rather enlightening ideas on a major and important point, *extended* meaning or *Catachresis,* the subject of so many objections brought against DuMarsais in the commentary on his treatise. We shall also make clear the differences between tropes and other forms of speech called *figures,* and accordingly the reader will learn better to distinguish these different forms from each other. But above all, the reader will find here something of which there is not the first idea in DuMarsais' treatise or in the commentary, namely, the art of recognizing and appraising tropes, reduced to principles and practice" (p. 211).

an intermediary between the *primitive proper sense* and the *figurative sense*, but one which is by nature closer to the first than to the second, although it may itself have been *figurative* in principle. Now of Tropes which result in a *purely extended* sense, there are three kinds, as in the case of Tropes resulting in a *figurative sense*, and moreover these three kinds are determined by the same relations as in the latter case: *correspondence*, *connection*, or *resemblance* between ideas; and they occur in the same fashion: by *metonymy, synecdoche*, or *metaphor*. (pp. 213-14)[49]

Fontanier thus proposes a theoretical classification of all these irruptive tropes, these "non-true figures" preceded by no code of semantic substitution. But this classification derives its types from the main known forms. So we have here a move in two directions: on the one hand putting catachresis quite apart and giving it an irreducibly original position, and yet on the other bringing it into a common taxonomy and seeing in it a phenomenon of usage (of abuse) rather than of coding. This is natural since the code is forced, but strange since the abuse here is no more a form of usage than the application of a code.

Like Dumarsais, we have admitted *Catachresis* as a Trope. But we have not yet given it its place, nor devoted an article of our *Theory* to it. We have thought it proper to deal more specifically with this Trope, once we are in a position to regard it (not, like Dumarsais, as a species apart, and a species of figure as well as of Trope) as a use, which if not always originally, is at least actually forced, of one or other of the three main species which we have drawn attention to. (p. 213)

49 These definitions are clarified and completed by those of the three kinds of meaning (objective, literal, mental or intellectual) proposed in the first part. The literal seems to correspond satisfactorily to the Aristotelian *kurion*, which may be either proper or a trope, and is sometimes wrongly translated "proper." Here is Fontanier's definition: "A *literal meaning* is in question when words are interpreted to the letter; it is the meaning of words understood according to how they are taken in ordinary usage: it is, consequently, what immediately comes to mind for those who understand the language. The *literal sense* of a single word is either *primitive*, *natural* and *proper*, or derivative, if we must make the point, and *tropological*. This term comes from *Tropes*, which are divided into several genera and species. But *Tropes* occur, either by necessity and by *extension*, to take the place of words missing in the language for certain ideas, or by choice and by *figure*, to present ideas in livelier and more striking images than their proper signs. Hence there are two different kinds of *tropological sense: extended tropological sense*, and *figurative tropological sense*. The first, as can be seen, lies between *primitive sense* and *figurative* sense, and we can scarcely avoid regarding it as a new sort of *proper sense*" (*Les figures*, pp. 57-58). What concerns us here, then, is this production of a proper sense, of a new sort of proper sense, by the violence of a catachresis whose intermediate status tends to escape the dichotomy of primitive and figurative, holding the "middle ground" between them. When the middle ground of a dichotomy is not a mediation, there is a strong likelihood that the dichotomy is irrelevant.

In the supplement, it is the catachresis of metaphor which receives the longest treatment. This is mainly so because here the dams of nominalizability are breached: "There is no end to the examples that might be given here, and it is not only names that could furnish them, but every kind of word that represents an idea. The *figurative metaphor* scarcely reaches the adverb; but the *catachretic metaphor* includes everything in its scope as far as interjection. Indeed, there are few words of any kind that are not subject to it" (p. 215). It is still true that the interpretation of catachretic metaphors from prepositions (*to*, for example) always consists in defining the meaning by the name of a category of predicables (state, place, time, posture, action, manner, cause, direction, etc.; cf. p. 219), and even that of a single nominal meaning—"tendency," "as Condillac admirably demonstrated in his *Grammar*."

As for nouns and verbs, the examples given by Fontanier are in the first place (and in fact exclusively) those of catachretic metaphors with the most substantial philosophical bearing (light, blindness; to have, to be, to do, to take, to comprehend). The living body provides the "vehicle" for all these nominal examples in the order of nature: *light* is the first—and the only—example chosen when we turn to the moral sphere:

> . . . here are some in the moral sphere: *light*, for clarity of mind, for intelligence, or for insight; *blindness*, for disorder, or dimness of reason. The first *light* that we knew was no doubt the light of day, and the word was created for that light. But is not reason like a torch which the Author of nature has set in us to lighten our soul, and is not this torch, to our moral, faithfully what the torch of day is to our physical nature? Hence it was necessary to attribute to it a *light*, and to say *the light of reason* as we say *the light of day*. (p. 216)

And after repeating this analysis on the word *blindness*, Fontanier asks: "And how, without these forced metaphors, these catachreses, could one have traced these ideas back to their origins?" Fontanier seems to think that these "ideas" already existed, that they were already in the mind like a diagram without a word; but one would not have been able to trace them back, track them down, bring them to light without a force of torque acting *against usage*, without the housebreaking of a catachresis. Catachresis does not go outside the language, does not create new signs, does not enrich the code; yet it transforms its functioning: it produces, with the same material, new rules of exchange, new meanings. Philosophical language, a system of catachreses with a capital resource of "forced metaphor" would have just this relation to natural language, if such a thing existed as Fontanier

would have us believe. And when Fontanier posits, but nevertheless presupposes, that the meaning or the idea of catachresis is prior (since it only goes to meet a concept that is already present), he interprets this situation in philosophical terms; it is just so that philosophy has traditionally interpreted its powerful catachresis: a torque turning back to a sense already present, a production (of signs, or rather of meanings), but this as revelation, unveiling, bringing to light, truth. This is why "forced metaphors" can and must be "natural and correct" (p. 216).

V. Metaphysics: The "Sublation" and Elevation of Metaphor

> Yet, though I give considerable weight to the sympathetic use of metaphor (a rhetorical figure which does greater service to human aspirations towards the infinite than is ordinarily imagined by those who are steeped in prejudices or false ideas, which is the same thing), it is none the less true that the ridiculous mouth of these peasants is still big enough to swallow three cachalots. Let us curtail our thoughts, and be serious. Let us be content with three little new-born elephants. (Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, IV)
>
> It is an extraordinary thing, generally speaking, that force of attraction which leads us to search out (in order later to express) the likenesses and differences that lie hid in the natural properties of objects that are quite disparate, and quite unsuited in appearance to take part in this kind of sympathetically curious combination, and, upon my word, graciously confer on the style of a writer who allows himself the indulgence of such personal satisfaction, the impossible and unforgettable appearance of an owl solemn to all eternity. (*Le Chants de Maldoror*, V)

Classical rhetoric, then, is incorporate in that mass within which the text of philosophy is marked off, and can be given no position of control over that mass. It is not so much that metaphor is in the text of philosophy (and the coordinated text of rhetoric)—rather these texts are in metaphor. And metaphor may no longer be given its name by metaphysics, unless by a sort of catachresis which would follow it through the philosophical shadow of metaphor—as "non-true" metaphor.

Might we not dream for all that of some meta-philosophy, of a more general level of discourse which would still be of a philosophical kind, on "primary" metaphors, on those non-true metaphors which open up philosophy? There would be some interest in work under the heading of a meta-metaphorics such as this. It would amount to carrying Bachelard's program of a "meta-poetics" (*Lautréamont*, p. 55) over into philosophy. What would be the limits of such a transposition?

On this point, Bachelard follows tradition: metaphor does not seem to him to be simply, or necessarily, an obstacle to scientific or philosophical knowledge. It can work towards the critical rectification of a concept, or reveal it as a bad metaphor, or finally "illustrate" a new concept. No doubt, in the process of scientific knowledge the "verbal obstacle" often has the form of metaphor ("metaphorical apparatus," "generalized image," deficient metaphorical character of the explanation, etc.).[50] No doubt, the reign of metaphor stretches even beyond the bounds of language, in the narrow sense of verbal "expression": "metaphors seduce our reason."[51] But on the one side, the psychoanalysis of objective knowledge must above all condemn "immediate metaphors." ("The danger of immediate metaphors for the formation of the scientific mind is that they are not always passing images; they provoke an autonomous form of thought; they tend to be fulfilled and worked out in the domain of the image";[52] as we shall see, it is the *system* of metaphor which is the chief interest of Bachelard.) On the other side, non-immediate or constructed metaphor is useful when it is introduced to "illustrate" a piece of knowledge won from bad metaphor. Thus its value is essentially pedagogical: "A psychoanalysis of objective knowledge must therefore attempt to take the colour out of these naive images, if not to efface them. It will

50 G. Bachelard, *La Formation de l'esprit scientifique* (Paris, 1938), pp. 74-75. Cf. also pp. 15, 194, 195.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 78. Bachelard cites Van Swinden: " 'This expression "iron is a sponge of magnetic fluid" is therefore a *metaphor* which diverges from the truth: and yet all explanations are based on this expression used in its *proper sense*. But for myself, I believe it misleading . . . to suppose that reason shows that these expressions are erroneous, and nevertheless to use them in the explanation of Experiments' (1785). Beneath its somewhat confused form, Van Swinden's thought is concise: metaphor cannot be restricted as readily as is supposed simply to the domain of expression. Like it or not, metaphors seduce our reason."

52 *Ibid.*, p. 81. On the other hand, the "discours préliminaire" of the work gives constructed and constructive metaphors an intermediate status, which breaks with sensible immediacy and naive realism. They belong to the realm of *"figured quantity*, half-way between the concrete and the abstract, in an intermediary zone. . . ." "Thus scientific thought is drawn towards 'constructions' that are more metaphorical than real, towards 'configurative spaces' of which sensible space is after all only a poor example" (p. 5).

be time to *illustrate* [Bachelard's italics] schemata when abstraction has passed this point. In short, the first intuition is an obstacle to scientific thought. Only the kind of illustration which works beyond a concept and adds some colour to its main features can help scientific thought."[53] At the end of *La Formation de l'esprit scientifique*, we shall find the most luminous examples illustrating this value of *illustration*: not only those of the circle, the egg, and the oval,[54] but those of the sun and the hearth, the center, the circle, and the ellipse. Here we shall quote only the conclusion:

Even in the simple realm of images, we have often made use of shifts of meaning. Thus the following antithesis was elaborated in our teaching. The ellipse, in Aristotelian science, is a badly constructed circle, a flattened circle: whereas in Newtonian science, the circle is an impoverished ellipse, an ellipse whose foci have collapsed into each other. I would then take the side of the ellipse: the centre of the ellipse is useless because it has its two different foci; in the case of the circle, Kepler's second law (the law of equal areas) is banal; while in the case of the ellipse, it is a discovery. Little by little, I was trying gently to detach the mind from its adherence to privileged images. . . . Also, I have little hesitation in characterizing rigour as a psychoanalysis of intuition, and algebraic thought as a psychoanalysis of geometric thought. Right into the realm of the exact sciences, our imagination is a sublimation. It is useful, but it may mislead us to the extent that we fail to recognize what we are sublimating and how we are sublimating it. It is valid only to the extent that its principle has been psychoanalyzed. Intuition should never be a datum, but always an illustration. (p. 237)

53 *Ibid.*, p. 78. ". . . Modern science uses the analogy of the pump to *illustrate* [Bachelard's italics] certain features of electric generators; but it is done in an attempt to clarify *abstract* ideas. . . . We see here a sharp contrast between two ways of thought: the scientific, in which the hydraulic analogy comes into play *after* the theory, and the prescientific, in which it comes into play *before* the theory" (p. 80).

54 *Ibid.*, pp. 233f. It is certainly opportune at this point to recall that in Bachelard's eyes, the metaphorical obstacle is not merely an epistemological obstacle connected with pressure in the realm of science from nonscientific schemes that derive from common imagination, or from the imaginary in philosophy. It is sometimes a philosophical obstacle, when scientific schemes are wrongly and distortedly imported into a philosophical domain. In this case, one could speak of an "epistemologizing" obstacle. The philosopher may display a sort of naive scientism, transforming scientific discourse into a vast reservoir of metaphors or "models" for the hard-pressed theoretician. "Science is taken by [the philosopher] as a peculiarly rich collection of well-formed and well-connected items of knowledge. In other words, the philosopher looks to science only for *examples*." And those examples "are always alluded to, never developed. Sometimes, scientific examples are even commented on according to principles which are not scientific: they give rise to metaphors, analogies and generalizations." (*La Philosophie du non* [Paris,

This epistemological ambivalence of metaphor which accelerates, slows up, but always *follows* the movement of the concept is perhaps most clearly evident in the life sciences where a constant critique of teleological assertions has to be undertaken. The animist or anthropomorphic analogy (technical, social, or cultural) is *as though* at home here. Where else could one be more tempted to *take the metaphor for the concept*? And what more urgent task for epistemology and the critical history of the sciences could there be than distinguishing between the word, the metaphorical vehicle, the thing, and the concept? Let us take two examples among all those that have been analyzed by G. Canguilhem. The first two concern "the development of the theory of cells" in which "the affective and social values of cooperation and association come into play, directly or remotely."[55]

In the case of the cell, too much credit is generally given to Hooke. Certainly he it was who discovered it, rather by luck and by the play of an amused curiosity in the first revelations of the microscope. Hooke cut a fine section from a piece of cork, and observed its septate structure. He it was also who invented the word, under the sway of an image, assimilating the vegetable object to a honeycomb, which is the work of an animal itself assimilated to that of human beings, for a cell is a little room. But Hooke's discovery did not initiate anything: it was not a starting point. Even the word was lost, and only rediscovered a century later.

This discovery and this invention call for some comment. In the cell we see a biological object which is unquestionably affectively overdetermined to a considerable degree. The psychoanalysis of knowledge is sufficiently successful and well-established as a genre for one to be able to contribute to it, even unsystematically. Anyone who remembers natural history lessons will have in his mind the image of the cellular structure of living beings. The image has an almost canonical steadfastness. A diagram of an epithelium is the image of a honeycomb. Cell is a word which makes us think, not of a monk or prisoner, but of the bee. Haeckel has pointed out that cells of wax filled with honey correspond perfectly to vegetable cells filled with cellular fluid. However, it does not seem to us that the hold on our minds of this notion of the cell is due to that complete correspondence. Perhaps rather, in consciously

1940], p. 3. See also, in this sense, the end of the chapter on "Les diverses Explications métaphysiques d'un concept scientifique," and what Bachelard says about anagogical reverie as mathematicizing, at the point at which mathematics and arithmetic come in in metaphorical position [pp. 38-40].)

55 *La Connaissance de la vie*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Vrin, 1969), p. 49. On the problem of metaphor, cf. also *Études d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences* (Paris: Vrin, 1968), especially the chapters headed "Modèles et analogies dans la découverte en biologie" and "Le Concept et la vie" (particularly pp. 358-60).

borrowing from the bee-hive the term cell to designate the element of living organisms, the human mind has also almost unconsciously borrowed from the same source the notion of cooperative labour such as produces the honeycomb. Just as the alveole is the element of a structure, so, as Maeterlinck put it, bees are individuals completely absorbed in the republic. In fact cell is at the same time an anatomical and a functional notion, the notion of a material element, and that of the labour of an individual which is partial and subordinate. (pp. 48-49)

This animal metaphor of the hive, analyzed here in its determinate effects on the development of a particular theory, appears, as is well known in Nietzsche. But he puts it at a kind of heraldic fess-point, at the center of the escutcheon—to signify the metaphoricality of concepts, a metaphor of metaphor, a metaphor of the production of metaphors itself:

Only out of the persistency of these primal forms the possibility explains itself, how afterwards, out of the metaphors themselves a structure of ideas could again be compiled. For the latter is an imitation of the relations of time, space and number in the realm of metaphors.

As we say, it is *language* which has worked originally at the construction of ideas; in later times it is *science*. Just as the bee works at the same time at the cells and fills them with honey, thus science works irresistibly at that great columbarium of ideas, the cemetery of perceptions, builds ever newer and higher storeys; supports, purifies, renews the old cells, and endeavours above all to fill that gigantic framework and to arrange within it the whole of the empiric world, i.e., the anthropomorphic world. And as the man of action binds his life to reason and its ideas, in order to avoid being swept away and losing himself, so the seeker after truth builds his hut close to the towering edifice of science in order to collaborate with it and to find protection. And he needs protection. For there are awful powers which press continually upon him, and which hold out against the "truth" of science "truths" fashioned in quite another way, bearing devices of the most heterogeneous character.[56]

This move of Nietzsche's (generalizing metaphoricality by putting a determinate metaphor at the fess-point) is only possible by risking a continuity between metaphor and concept, as between man and animal, knowledge and instinct.[57] To avoid ending up with an empiricist

56 "On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense," pp. 187-88.

57 It is to mark this continuity that Nietzsche describes the tissue of metaphor produced by man ("solely in the . . . inviolability of the conceptions of time and space") *as* a spider's web (p. 186). This again is a re-mark: it is a generalization of a particular metaphor whose effects are determinable, for instance in the history of the sciences. G. Canguilhem writes, in connection with Bichat's *Traité*

reduction of knowledge and a fantastic ideology of truth, we should no doubt have to substitute for the classical opposition (maintained or eliminated) between metaphor and concept some other articulation. And this articulation, without bringing in the whole metaphysics of the classical opposition, would also have to give some account of the specific gaps which cannot be ignored in epistemology between what it calls metaphorical and scientific effects. Undoubtedly, the need for this new articulation speaks in the work of Nietzsche. Undoubtedly, also, it would give rise to a displacement and a rewriting of the meaning of science, of knowledge, of truth, which is to say, of some other terms also.

A redistribution of this kind should allow us to define the "figure" which will necessarily continue to leave its "mark" on a "concept" *after* such rectification, after the abandoning of such a model "which perhaps, after all, was no more than a metaphor."[58]

So (and here is our second example) when the biological concept of the *circulation* of the blood was substituted for the technical concept of *irrigation*,[59] the rectification did not eliminate all trace of the figurative. In ceasing to be the irrigation of a garden as in the *Timaeus*[60] or the *De Partibus Animalium*, the "circulation" of the blood does not in the proper sense travel a circular path. From the

des membranes (1800): "This term 'tissue' will rightly give us pause. It comes from the Old French 'tistre,' an archaic form of the verb 'tisser' ["to weave"]. If the term 'cell' seems to us overloaded with implicit meanings of a social and affective order, the term 'tissue' seems to us no less full of extra-theoretical implications. 'Cell' makes us think of the bee and not of man. 'Tissue' makes us think of man and not of the bee. The fabric which we call 'tissue' is human work par excellence" (*La Connaissance de la vie*, pp. 64-65). Cf. also Marx: "We presuppose labour in a form that stamps it as exclusively human. A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realises a purpose of his own that gives the law to his modus operandi, and to which he must subordinate his will" (*Capital*, I, Part III, Ch. vii, §1).

58 "On this point, then, experimental embryology and cytology have rectified the concept of organic structure too closely linked by Cl. Bernard with a social model which perhaps, after all, was no more than a metaphor" ("Le tout et la partie dans la pensée biologique," *Études d'Histoire et de Philosophie des Sciences*, p. 332).

59 Cf. *La Connaissance de la vie*, pp. 22-23.

60 From a purely rhetorical point of view, Condillac is strongly critical of the figures used by Plato ("the greatest philosopher and the greatest orator") to describe the human body of which he makes "an unimaginable monster"; especially when "he says that the blood is *the pasture of the flesh: and*, he goes on, *in order*

moment that only one predicate of the circle is retained (such as the return to the starting point, the closure of the circuit) its meaning is put in the position of a trope, metonymical if not metaphorical.

Are we now to take rectification as the rectification of a metaphor by a concept? Are not all metaphors strictly speaking, concepts, and is there any *sense* in opposing them? Does not rectification in scientific criticism rather move from an inefficient and ill-constructed concept-trope, to one that is operative, and more delicate and powerful in a given field and at a certain point of scientific progress? For all that, the criterion of this progress or change (here we should have to distinguish cases of "cutting off," "recasting," and many other forms) is not defined; but two connected assumptions now seem problematic: (1) that this criterion must necessarily bring into play a rhetorical evaluation ("from metaphor to concept," for example); and (2) that tropes must necessarily belong to the prescientific phase of knowledge.

In other words, there is also a concept of *metaphor*: it has a history too. It gives rise to knowledge. It requires of the epistemologist that he show its construction and rectifications, that he explore the critical rules for passing into or out of the field of metaphor.

We return to our question: is it possible to transfer to the field of philosophy Bachelard's program for a meta-poetics? Bachelard suggests proceeding by *groups* and *diagrams*. Let us first consider these notions. By *groups*:

> When we reflect on the freedom of metaphors and on their limits, we realize that certain poetic images can be projected on to each other surely and precisely, which amounts to saying that in *projective poetry* they are one and the same image. We realized, for instance, in studying the Psychoanalysis of Fire, that all the "images" of inner fire, hidden fire, fire smouldering beneath the cinders, in short, of fire that is unseen and hence demands metaphors, are "images" of life. The projective link is in that case so primitive that we may translate images of life into images of fire and vice versa without difficulty, and sure of being understood by everyone.

The deformation of images, then, must designate metaphorical *groups*, in a strictly mathematical fashion. Once one could specify the various *groups* of metaphors in a particular body of poetry, one would realize that certain metaphors failed because they had been added in defiance

that all the parts of the body might receive this nourishment, they dug a number of canals, as in a garden, so that the streams of the veins, coming from the heart as from their spring, might flow in these narrow conduits of the human body." In contrast, Condillac quotes six lines of Rousseau, on which he comments as follows: "The flowers that proliferate on a stem fed by pure waters are a fine image of what the love of glory produces in a lofty soul" (*De L'Art d'écrire*, Book II, Ch. iv).

of the cohesion of the group. Naturally, a person of poetic sensibility will react directly to these mistaken additions, without needing the pedantic apparatus to which we are referring. But nonetheless a meta-poetics should undertake a classification of metaphors, and sooner or later will be bound to adopt the one essential procedure of classification, the determination of groups.[61]

By *diagrams* next (another mathematical metaphor, or at least, more precisely a geometric metaphor, adorned this time with a flower, to indicate the field of a meta-metaphorics):

If the present work could be retained as a basis for a physics or a chemistry of reverie, as the outline of a method of determining the objective conditions of reverie, it should offer new instruments for an objective literary criticism in the most precise sense of the term. It should demonstrate that metaphors are not simple idealizations which take off like rockets only to display their insignificance on bursting in the sky, but that on the contrary metaphors summon one another and are more coordinated than sensations, so much so that a poetic mind is purely and simply a syntax of metaphors. Each poet should then be represented by a *diagram* which would indicate the meaning and the symmetry of his metaphorical coordinations, exactly as the diagram of a flower fixes the meaning and the symmetries of its floral action. There is no *real flower* that does not have this geometrical pattern. Similarly, there can be no poetic flowering without a certain synthesis of poetic images. One should not, however, see in this thesis a desire to limit poetic liberty, to impose a logic, or a reality (which is the same thing) on the poet's creation. It is

61 *Lautréamont* (Paris, 1956), pp. 54-55. The *projective* model allows us to recognize here not only the syntactic coherence of metaphors, but above all the original and final unity of their theme, the center of their semantic focus. The demonstration of the point, moreover, is rather remarkable: the multiplicity of images (those of fire by which this metaphorology first had vision) refer back to and reflect the same focal image ("one and the same image"): but we are concerned with the hidden fire "that is unseen and hence calls forth metaphors." This "hence" indicates that what is not seen calls for a metaphor. That seems to go without saying. But if we follow through the analogical equivalents here (covered fire = that which is hidden = life), all metaphors are also metaphors of life, of *physis*, the source and metaphor of metaphors. It is a circulation of meanings which does not take us much further, but which returns to this metaphor of the same, the outline of which is now familiar to us. This is why we insisted above on the necessary link between the meanings of life, metaphor, and metaphor of metaphor. "So the mind is free for the *metaphor of metaphor*. It was with this concept that we ended our recent book on the *Psychoanalysis of Fire*. We undertook a long reflection on the work of Lautréamont in view of a *Psychoanalysis of Life*" (p. 155). The rigorous constraints of a program are very evident here. The respect for "poetic sensibility" and its "direct reaction" to inappropriate metaphors forms a long-standing part of this program (from Aristotle to Condillac and Hegel), as elsewhere does the will not to "limit poetic liberty" or "the poet's creation."

objectively, after the event, after the full flowering, that we wish to discover the realism and the inner logic of a poetic work. At times some truly diverse images that one had considered to be quite opposed, incongruous and non-cohesive, will come together and fuse into one charming image. The strangest mosaics of Surrealism will suddenly reveal a continuity of meaning. . . .[62]

It is very necessary to pay attention to *syntax* in this way, to the systematic logic of metaphorical productions, to "metaphors of metaphors" (p. 110). But is this ultimately compatible with the concept of metaphor? Can we do justice to metaphor without calling into question the semantic (that is monsemic) point of view of metaphor? Bachelard himself interprets syntactic coordination as a semantic or thematic bundle. The multiplicity of metaphors is organized in view of "one and the same image" whose refraction is simply a projective system. Unity and continuity of meaning govern the play of syntax. We have tried to show above that this subordination of the syntactical dimension was written into the most invariant features of the concept of metaphor; and we have tried to show elsewhere[63] the essential limits bounding this thematic view.

Such metaphorology, when it moves into the area of philosophy, is destined always to find the same—the same *physis*, the same sense (sense of being as presence or, *what comes to the same*, as presence or absence), the same circle, the same fire of the same light that is manifest or hidden, the same turning of the sun. When we search for metaphor, what could we find *other* than this return of the same? For are we not searching for resemblance? And when we try to determine *the dominant* metaphor of a group which interests us because of its capacity to gather things together, then what else should we expect but the metaphor of domination augmented by that power of dissimulation which allows it to escape domination in its turn, what else but God or the Sun?

If, for example, we tried to ascertain the diagram for the (supposedly) proper metaphorics of Descartes, even if we allow ourselves to suppose what is far from given, that we could rigorously delimit the metaphorical *corpus* belonging to his signature alone, we should have to bring to light, beneath the layer of metaphors which are apparently didactic (those reviewed in the psychological and empirical analysis of Spoerri: the ivy and the tree, the road, the house, the town, the machine, the foundation or chain), another less

62 Gaston Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, tr. A. C. M. Ross (London, 1964), pp. 109-10.

63 "La Double Séance" II.

obvious but equally systematic stratum which would not only be *beneath* the first but also interwoven with it. There we should come upon the wax and the pen, dress and nakedness, the boat, the clock, the seeds and the lodestone, the book, the stick, and so on. To reconstruct the grammar of these metaphors would be to relate its logic to what is taken to be nonmetaphorical writing, in this case to what is called the philosophical system, the meaning of concepts and the order of reasons; but also to relate it to longer sequences, to patterns of permanence and continuity, the "same" metaphor being able to function differently in one place and another. But if we put above all else our respect for the philosophical specificity of this syntax, we thereby also recognize its subordination to sense or meaning, to the truth of the philosophical concept, to what is signified in philosophy. And it is to that main item signified in onto-theology that the tenor of the dominant metaphor will always return: the circle of the heliotrope. Certainly, the metaphors of light and of the circle, so important in Descartes, are not organized as they are in Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, or Husserl. But if we turn to the most critical and most properly Cartesian point of the critical process, to the point of hyperbolic doubt, of the hypothesis of the Evil Genius, to the point at which doubt attacks not only ideas of sensible origin, but "clear and distinct" ideas, and the self-evident truths of mathematics, this point we know very well that what allows the work to start off again and to continue, its last resort, is designated as *lumen naturale*. The natural light, and all the axioms which it enables us to see, are never subjected to the most radical doubt. Indeed, that doubt is practised *in* that light. "For I cannot doubt that which the natural light causes me to believe to be true, as, for example, it has shown me that I am from the fact that I doubt" (*Third Meditation*). Among the axioms which the natural light causes me to believe to be true, there is, on each occasion, and with each step, what allows emergence from doubt, and progress in the order of reasons; in particular, what allows the proof of the existence of a God who is not a deceiver. ("Now it is manifest by the natural light that there must at least be as much reality in the efficient and total cause as in its effect . . . so that the light of nature shows us clearly that the distinction between creation and conservation is solely a distinction of reason. . . . From this it is manifest that He cannot be a deceiver, since the light of nature teaches us that fraud and deception necessarily proceed from some defect," etc.) Prior to any determinate presence or any representative idea, natural light constitutes a kind of ether of thought and of the discourse proper to it. As something natural, it has its source in God, in the God whose existence has been put in

doubt and then demonstrated *thanks to it.* "I have certainly no cause to complain that God has not given me an intelligence which is more powerful, or a natural light which is stronger than that which I have received from Him . . ." (*Fourth Meditation*). Precisely in breaking out of the logical circle which has so much preoccupied him, Descartes inscribes the chain of reasons in the circle of natural light which proceeds from and returns to God.

This metaphorics no doubt has its own specific syntax; but as a metaphorics it belongs to a more general syntax, a more extensive system whose constraints are equally operative in Platonism; and everything becomes clear in this sun, sun of absence and presence, blinding and luminous, dazzling. This is the end of the *Third Meditation*, where the existence of God has just been proved for the first time thanks to the natural light which he himself has bestowed on us, in the pretence of disappearing and allowing us to seek the blinding source of its clarity: "It seems to me right to pause for a while in order to contemplate God Himself, to ponder at leisure His marvellous attributes, to consider, and admire, and adore, the beauty of this light so resplendent, at least as far as the strength of my mind, which is in some measure dazzled by the sight, will allow me to do so."

Of course, the adoration here is that of a philosopher, and since the natural light is natural, Descartes does not take what he says to be like what a theologian would say: for a theologian would be content with metaphor. And metaphor must be left to the theologian: "The author could give a satisfactory explanation, according to his philosophy, of the creation of the world, as described in Genesis. . . . The account of creation there is perhaps metaphorical; it must therefore be left to the theologians. . . . Why is it said, in fact, that darkness preceded light? . . . And as for the fountains of the great deep, there too is a metaphor, but this metaphor escapes us" (*Entretien avec Burman*).

A presence disappearing in its own radiance, a hidden source of light, of truth and of meaning, an obliteration of the face of being—such would be the insistent return of that which subjects metaphysics to metaphor.

To metaphors, we should say: for the word can only be in the plural. If there were only one possible metaphor (a dream at the basis of philosophy), if the play of metaphors could be reduced to a family circle or group of metaphors, that is, to a "central," "fundamental," or "principal" metaphor, there would no longer be any true metaphor: there would only be the guarantee of reading the proper sense in a metaphor that was true. Now it is because the metaphorical

comes into play in the plural that it does not escape syntax; and that it gives rise, in philosophy too, to a *text* which is not exhausted by an account of its sense (a concept signified, or a metaphorical tenor: a *thesis*), nor by the visible or invisible presence of its theme (the meaning and truth of being). But it is because the metaphorical does not reduce syntax, but sets out in syntax its deviations, that it carries itself away, can only be what it is by obliterating itself, endlessly constructs its own destruction.

This self-destruction may always follow two lines, which are almost tangents but yet are different: they repeat each other, copy each other, and diverge from each other according to certain laws. One of these is a line of resistance to the spreading of the metaphorical in a syntax which at some point and above all involves an irreducible loss of sense: this is the metaphysical "sublation" of metaphor into the proper sense of *being*. The generalization of metaphor may denote this Second Coming. In this case, metaphor is included within metaphysics as that which should penetrate to the horizon or to the depths of the proper, and in the end there regain the origin of its truth. The turning of the sun is then seen as a reflecting circle, returning to itself with no loss of sense, no irreversible expenditure. This *returning to itself*—this interiorization—of the sun, has not only left its mark on Platonic, Aristotelian, Cartesian discourse, and so on, not only on the science of logic as a circle of circles, but also and in the same stroke on the man of metaphysics. The sensible sun, which rises in the East, allows itself to be interiorized, in the evening of its journey, in the eye and the heart of Western man. He it is who sums up, assumes, and fulfills the essence of man "illuminated by the true light." [64]

64 "In the geographical survey, the course of the World's History has been marked out in its general features. The *Sun*—the Light—rises in the East. Light is a simply self-involved existence; but though possessing thus in itself universality, it exists at the same time as an individuality in the Sun. Imagination has often pictured to itself the emotions of a blind man suddenly becoming possessed of sight, beholding the bright glimmering of the dawn, the growing light, and the flaming glory of the ascending Sun. The boundless forgetfulness of his individuality in this pure splendour, is his first feeling,—utter astonishment. But when the Sun is risen, this astonishment is diminished; objects around are perceived, and from them the individual proceeds to the contemplation of his own inner being, and thereby the advance is made to the perception of the relation between the two. Then inactive contemplation is quitted for activity; by the close of day man has erected a building constructed from his own inner Sun; and when in the evening he contemplates this, he esteems it more highly than the original external Sun. For now he stands in a *conscious relation* to his Spirit, and therefore a *free* relation. If we hold this image fast in mind, we shall find it symbolizing the course of History, the great Day's work of Spirit.

The History of the World travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of History, Asia the beginning. The History of the World has an East

Philosophical discourse—as such—describes a metaphor which is displaced and reabsorbed between two suns. This *end* of metaphor is not understood as a death or dislocation, but as an interiorizing *anamnesis* (*Erinnerung*), a recollection of meaning, a sublation of living metaphoricality into a living property. The philosopher yearns—and it is a yearning that cannot be repressed—to sum up/sublate/interiorize/dialecticize/command the metaphorical divergence between the origin and itself, which is the difference of the East. In the world of this yearning, metaphor is born in the East, from the moment that the East, beginning to speak, to work, to write, defers its joys, separates itself from itself, and gives a name to absence: let it be that which is. At least, such is the philosophical proposition contained in these statements with their geographical tropes and historical rhetoric.

Since the first motives which led man to speak were passions, his first expressions were tropes. Figurative language was the first to be born, and proper meaning was the last to be discovered. And "the genius of oriental languages" is to be "lively and figurative."[65]

It is not merely the Greek philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, or the great historians and orators, such as Thucydides and Demosthenes, but also the great poets, Homer and Sophocles, who albeit we find examples of the simile (*Gleichnisse*) in all of them, remain on the whole and without exception, content in the use of their direct forms of expression (*eigentlichen Ausdrücken*). Their plastic severity and sterling substance will not permit them such a multifarious product, as is bound up with the use of metaphor, nor will it suffer them, even for the sake of gathering the so-called flowers of expression (*sogenannte Blumen des Ausdrucks aufzulesen*), to waver fitfully in devious ways from their ideal mintage of the completely simple and co-ordinate result as of one metal cast in one mould. The metaphor, in fact, is always an interruption to the logical course of conception (*Vorstellungsganges*). . . . On the other hand it is particularly in the East, and above all the later literature of Mohammedan poetry, which makes use of the indirect or figurative modes of expression, and, indeed, finds them essential. The same thing may be said, if less emphatically, of modern European literature.

Kat' exochen, though the term East in itself is entirely relative, for although the Earth forms a sphere, History performs no circle round it, but has on the contrary a determinate East, viz. Asia. Here rises the outword physical Sun, and in the West it sinks down: here consentaneously rises the Sun of self-consciousness, which diffuses a nobler brilliance. The History of the World is the discipline of the uncontrolled natural will, bringing it into obedience to a Universal principle and conferring subjective freedom" (Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History,* tr. J. Sibree, 1872/1900, Introduction, "Classification of Historic Data," pp. 109-10).

65 Rousseau, *Essai sur l'Origine des langues,* ed. C. Porset, pp. 45, 41; cf. also, for example, Condillac, *Essai sur l'Origine des connaissances humaines,* II, 1, Ch. x, §103, and in particular his *Logique,* Part II, Ch. iv: "The generation of the

Metaphor is therefore classified by philosophy as provisional loss of meaning, a form of economy that does no irreparable damage to what is proper, an inevitable detour, no doubt, but the account is in view, and within the horizon of a circular reappropriation of the proper sense. This is why the philosophical evaluation of metaphor has always been ambiguous: metaphor is menacing and foreign to the eyes of *intuition* (vision or contact), of the *concept* (the grasping or proper presence of what is signified), of *consciousness* (the proximity of presence to itself); but it is an accomplice of that which it threatens, being necessary to the extent to which a de-tour is a return tour guided by the function of resemblance (*mimesis* and *homoiosis*) under the law of sameness. At this point, the contrasts between intuition, concept, and consciousness become irrelevant. They are three meanings belonging to the order of sense and its movement. And so does metaphor.

From this point, the whole teleology of sense, which constructs the philosophical concept of metaphor, directs it to the manifestation of truth as an unveiled presence, to the regaining of language in its fullness without syntax, to a pure calling by name: there would be no syntactic differentiation, or at least no properly *unnamable* articulation which could not be reduced to semantic "sublation" or dialectical interiorization.

The second form of self-destruction of metaphor is deceptively similar to the philosophical form. It follows the first closely, but is there as an additional element of syntactic resistance, arising from everything (for example in modern linguistics) which thwarts the distinction between syntax and semantics, and above all the philosophical hierarchy in which syntax is subordinated to semantics. Self-destruction here still has the form of generalization, but in this case it is not a matter of extending and confirming a philosophical notion, but rather of deploying it in such a way, without limit, that the borders

ideas and faculties of the soul must have been evident in [these first common languages] in which the first meaning of a word was known, and all the other meanings were given by analogy. Names of ideas which escaped the senses were found to be the very names of the sensible ideas from which they came; and instead of seeing them as the proper names of these ideas, men saw them as figurative expressions displaying their origin. So, for instance, one did not wonder whether the word *substance* meant anything other than *that which is beneath*; whether the word *pensée* meant anything other than to weigh (*peser*), balance, compare. In a word, the questions of today's metaphysicians occurred to no-one: language replied in advance to all these questions, and prevented them being put; not yet had bad metaphysics come into existence. Good metaphysics began before language, and to it language owes all its best features. But this metaphysics was at that time less a science than an instinct. It was nature leading men unwitting; metaphysics became a science only when it ceased to be good metaphysics." Cf. also Fontanier, *Les figures*, p. 157.

of what is proper for it are torn from it; consequently the reassuring dichotomy between the metaphorical and the proper is exploded, that dichotomy in which each member of the pair never did more than reflect the other and direct back its radiance.

Metaphor, then, always has its own death within it. And this death, no doubt, is also the death *of* philosophy. But this "of" may be taken in two ways. Sometimes the death of philosophy is the death of a particular philosophical form in which philosophy itself is reflected on and summed up and in which philosophy, reaching its fulfillment, comes face to face with itself. But sometimes the death of philosophy is the death of a philosophy which does not see itself die, and never more finds itself.

This is a homonymy in which Aristotle descried (in that case beneath the traits of the sophist) the very image of that which repeats and threatens philosophy: these two deaths repeat each other and simulate each other in the heliotrope. The heliotrope of Plato or Hegel on the one hand, and that of Nietzsche or Bataille[67] on the other, if we may use metonymous abbreviations at this point. Such a flower always bears within itself its own double, whether it be the seed or the type, the chance of its program or the necessity of its diagram. The heliotrope may always raise itself up. And it may always become a dried flower in a book. There is always, absent from any garden, a dried flower in a book; and because of the repetition in which it is endlessly spoilt, no language can bring within its compass the structure of an anthology. Anthology is powerless before this supplemented code in which the field is crossed, the fences endlessly shifted, the line confused, the circle opened.

Unless an anthology were also a lithography. Indeed, the heliotrope is a stone too: a precious stone, greenish and veined with red, a kind of Eastern jasper.

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Translated by F. C. T. Moore

66 Hegel, *The Philosophy of Fine Art*, II, 143-44.

67 Cf. in particular, apart from the well-known texts of Bataille, some of the *Premiers Écrits* gathered by D. Hollier in the first volume of the *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970): "L'Anus solaire," "Le Langage des fleurs," "La Mutilation sacrificielle et l'oreille coupée de Van Gogh," "Le Bas Matérialisme et la Goose," "Soleil pourri," "Corps célestes," etc.