

# **Between Rhetoric and Knowledge:**

## **A Philosophical Account of Metaphor**

### **from Aristotle to Nietzsche**

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Philosophical reflections on metaphor run throughout Western thought, from Aristotle to contemporary debates. Its Aristotelian definition, in fact, draws a picture that subsequent interpretations have taken up and either confirmed or overturned. Often, the lines of continuity have only been presumed, while supposed breaks ended up being more faithful to the original than intended. The aim of this essay is to start from Aristotle's perspective on metaphor to highlight some of the most relevant stages in the history of this concept up to Friedrich Nietzsche: from the transformation of metaphor into a fundamental theme of rhetoric to the recovery of its cognitive function. In this sense, Nietzsche became a crucial turning point for 20th-century “metaphormania”.

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## **A Philosophical Account of Metaphor**

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In its most essential definition – which is paradoxically also the most banal – metaphor can be thought of as speech through images. However one understands metaphORIZATION – whether as a substitution of words, a change at the predicative level, an embellishment, or a form of knowledge – it is clear that producing metaphors involves constructing an (implicit) analogy mediated through a relationship of similarity between elements.

The presence of metaphor in our ways of constructing words, representations, and thoughts can be examined from different perspectives. According to the most common view, the starting point for the philosophy of metaphor was Aristotle – in fact, several fundamental theoretical lines developed from his reflection, weaving through the history of Western culture like a karst stream. This hidden course ran through several centuries, influencing medieval and modern thought, where it produced a radical downplaying of the role and power of metaphor. Finally, on the threshold of the 20th century, history appears to have suddenly changed direction, reinforcing once again the relationship between philosophy and metaphorical language.

The turning point in this sense was the one announced by Friedrich Nietzsche in his essay *On Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral Sense* (1873). His statement on truth was indeed destined to be historic:

What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations that have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, translated, and embellished, and that after long use strike a people as fixed, canonical, and binding: truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions, metaphors that

have become worn-out and deprived of their sensuous force, coins that have lost their imprint and are now no longer seen as coins but as metal<sup>1</sup>.

This was a very influential description, which triggered the metaphorical revival that began in the 1930s and has not yet ended. But the period that lies between Aristotle and Nietzsche is itself intricate and equally interesting. In these pages, I will attempt to reconstruct some of its elements – not with the intention of being exhaustive, which would be impossible in a short space, but with the aim of highlighting some key trends.

### Paul Ricoeur's Two Aristotles

It is indisputable that the first philosophically significant reflection on metaphor can be found in Aristotle's *Poetics*. This work contains what goes by the name of substitution theory: «Metaphor is the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another or else by analogy»<sup>2</sup>. The other important theory of metaphors – the idea that metaphors are abbreviated similes – was also formalized by Aristotle. In the *Rhetoric*, in fact, he explains that similes are a sort of metaphor, because «they always consist of two terms, like the proportional metaphor»<sup>3</sup>.

Matters become more complicated when we come to the post-Aristotelian tradition. On one hand, as the prevailing narrative suggests, the problem of metaphor continued to exist in a subterranean fashion for many centuries: metaphorization became a kind of “spontaneous” device of language in its rhetorical uses, presented exclusively as a linguistic ornament. On the other hand, this karstic trend resulted in a drastic emptying out of Aristotelian theory. Through a restrictive interpretation of Aristotle, in fact, metaphor was reduced to a tool for making speech more beautiful or convincing, stripping it of other potentialities. One such example is the ability to make things known or to

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<sup>1</sup> F. Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral Sense*, in Id., *On Truth and Untruth: Selected Writings*, Harper Perennial, New York 2010, pp. 29-30.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, in *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vol. 23, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA; William Heinemann Ltd. London 1932, 1457b 6-9.

<sup>3</sup> Id., *Rhetoric*, in *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vol. 22, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA; William Heinemann Ltd. London 1926, 1412b 34-1413a 2.

present them in a way that differs from their immediate appearance: an effect of metaphorization that the *Poetics* clarifies when speaking of *eu metapherein*, the disposition to «the right use of metaphor», which is based on having «an eye for resemblances»<sup>4</sup>.

Paul Ricoeur, in the second study of his *The Rule of Metaphor*, addresses this problem at length. His starting point is this: a theory such as Aristotle's, which is philosophically very radical insofar as it concerns genera and species, analogies, relations between things, and the capacity for vision, was quickly turned into something else in its Latin and medieval reception. Although Ricoeur does not use such a drastic expression himself, it can be said that there are two Aristotles: on the one hand, the Aristotle of the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*; on the other, the Aristotle who set the foundation of the rhetorical theories of metaphor as an embellishment, which from Cicero onward clouded the more “cognitive” perspectives on the metaphorical trope.

Ricoeur formulates these hypotheses based on the synthesis of rhetorical theories of metaphor proposed by Pierre Fontanier in *Les figures du discours* (Figures of Speech)<sup>5</sup>. Ricoeur's analysis focuses particularly on the definition of the metaphorical trope as an expression of thought in which words are applied to different ideas than those we would consider usual. Fontanier's model is based on the subordination of all ideas to «ideas of objects», especially those to which names are applied<sup>6</sup>. This way, insofar as it involves words and ideas, metaphor also falls under the privilege of naming, which becomes the fulcrum around which the entire phenomenon of the trope revolves. The aim of *The Rule of Metaphor*, however, is not to directly contest Fontanier's scheme but rather to precisely define Aristotle's role within this complex tradition, of which *Les figures du discours* seems to mark the most advanced point. In other words, Ricoeur is interested in measuring the extent to which the theory of metaphor institutionalized in the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* can really be seen as its anticipation.

Here the discussion becomes complex, and the text's reception has not always fully grasped the subtle distinctions that *The Rule of Metaphor* suggests. Let us try to look into them more closely. If the decline of rhetoric is undoubtedly due – even in Ricoeur's eyes

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<sup>4</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, cit., 1459a 7.

<sup>5</sup> P. Fontanier, *Les figures du discours* (1821-1830), Flammarion, Paris 1968.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, Routledge, London 1978, p. 49.

– to the «initial error» that consists of «the tyranny of the word in the theory of meaning»<sup>7</sup>, this outcome appears to him more as a radical simplification of Aristotelian premises than as their faithful reworking. Jeanne Evans highlights this well when she explains that Ricoeur undertakes a genuine “recovery” of Aristotle's position: a return to Aristotle that somewhat resembles Heidegger's theoretical revival of pre-Socratic philosophy before the birth of Greek metaphysics<sup>8</sup>. This comparison is clearly quite challenging, particularly due to the implications of Heidegger's reading of early Greek philosophy. However, beyond this, Evans' intention can be traced essentially to a hermeneutic principle: to demonstrate how Ricoeur's interpretation of Aristotle rediscovers the basis of a more dynamic definition of metaphor, as it was prior to its reduction to a linguistic ornament by neo-classical rhetoric<sup>9</sup>.

Evans' hypothesis is realistic and offers a more nuanced understanding of the issue. In essence, *The Rule of Metaphor* posits that it is feasible to articulate, beneath the primary argument of the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, a sort of «latent theory of metaphor at the level of discourse» that overturns «the explicit theory of metaphor at the level of noun»<sup>10</sup>. This interpretation aims to undermine the central assumption of Aristotle's rhetorical reception, particularly the well-known definition from the *Poetics* whereby «Metaphor is the application of a strange term»<sup>11</sup>.

Ricoeur's interpretation, while addressing several aspects, mainly delves into two key elements: the *categorical* dimension involved in the act of metaphorizing, and the notion that this act is somehow linked to *movement*. Let us begin with the latter. As is well-known, Aristotle's definition in the *Poetics* also says that *metapherein* is the use of a term «transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another or else by analogy»<sup>12</sup>. This expansive use of the term “metaphor” hinges precisely on its ability for transposition: movement, in essence, is the fundamental characteristic of the “metaphorical genus”, enabling it to encompass linguistic phenomena that differ greatly, well beyond the analogical transposition which today we call metaphor. For Ricoeur, this leads to a crucial implication that tradition has

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<sup>7</sup> Ivi, p. 47.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. J. Evans, *Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of the Imagination*, Peter Lang, New York 1995, p. 100.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, cit., p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, cit., 1457b 6-9.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

often overlooked: as a form of movement, the Aristotelian metaphor primarily serves as a disruptive element within a framework of pre-established relations – it disturbs existing *logical* connections. The significant consequence here is that, when viewed in these terms, there's no metaphor that merely intervenes at the level of nouns alone; rather, it affects the discourse as a whole. «To affect just one word», writes Ricoeur, «the metaphor has to disturb a whole network by means of an aberrant attribution»<sup>13</sup>.

Ricoeur's hypothesis is firmly bolstered – definitively, in his view – by a second structural insight. Moving from the *Poetics* to the *Rhetoric*, the issue is situated within a context where a parallel is drawn between metaphor and simile: Aristotle explains that similes, too, are a type of metaphor because «they always consist of two terms, like the proportional metaphor»<sup>14</sup>. Simplifying the main argument of *The Rule of Metaphor*, one can say that Ricoeur finds this parallelism crucial for a compelling reason. Simile is *fundamentally* a discursive phenomenon; mere substitution at the level of naming does not apply to it. Despite Aristotle's explicit subordination of simile to metaphor, it serves as a clear exemplification of how metaphorization ultimately impacts the discursive level. «The explicit subordination of simile to metaphor», Ricoeur summarizes, «is possible only because the metaphor presents the polarity of the terms compared in an abridged form», setting in motion a comprehensive categorical transformation rather than a simple exchange of terms<sup>15</sup>.

Alongside this hypothesis, Ricoeur formulates two others that can be considered corollaries of the previous one. Indeed, their significance should not be underestimated, as the entire structure of *The Rule of Metaphor* – and importantly, the points that concern us here – are based on them. These contentions revolve around the production of meaning linked to *metapherein*. In essence, how does the disruption of the pre-established order extend beyond the bewildering effect produced on the listener when confronted with an unexpected organization of speech? Ricoeur's answer revolves around the idea that, as articulated in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, metaphor has the capacity to enhance understanding<sup>16</sup>. Firstly, Ricoeur argues that the dismantling of categorical classifications through metaphorical transposition is mirrored by the construction of a new logical classification.

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<sup>13</sup> P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, cit., p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, cit., 1412b 34-1413a 2.

<sup>15</sup> P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, cit., pp. 25-26.

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, cit., III, 10, 1410b 13.

In this sense, metaphorical subversion can be seen as «the complement of a logic of discovery»<sup>17</sup>, namely the other side of the establishment of a new categorical order. Secondly, it can be inferred that metaphORIZATION presides not only over a changing order but also over a new order established for the first time. Metaphor thus operates not just by introducing fragments into an existing system but also by constructing an entirely new one.

In the words of what Ricoeur terms the *extreme hypothesis* of *The Rule of Metaphor*, it is at least conceivable that «the ‘metaphoric’ that transgresses the categorial order also begets it»<sup>18</sup>. As Evans puts it, this hypothesis is the crucial step by which Ricoeur elevates his theory of metaphor from a secondary issue to a fundamental reflection on knowledge.<sup>19</sup>

## The Rediscovery of Metaphor

The dual nature of Aristotelian metaphor was so apparent, even before Ricoeur, that it served as a starting point for many discussions during the 20th-century resurgence of the concept. Indeed, it became a sort of commonplace which contemporary philosophies of metaphor want to move beyond. This trend is evident in influential authors such as Ivor A. Richards<sup>20</sup>, Max Black<sup>21</sup>, and the seminal work *Metaphors We Live By* by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), which followed shortly after Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor*<sup>22</sup>. This trajectory continues to evolve today, facilitated by fruitful intersections with other disciplines. Neuro-linguistic investigations and reflections on the political role of language imagery are just two examples of distant yet equally impactful fields that contribute to this ongoing discourse<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, cit., p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> *Ivi*, p. 24.

<sup>19</sup> J. Evans, *Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of the Imagination*, cit., p. 102. I have discussed Ricoeur's reading of Aristotle in my book *Filosofia della metafora*, Guerini, Milan 2016, chap. 3.

<sup>20</sup> I.A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1936.

<sup>21</sup> M. Black, *Metaphor*, in "Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society", LV, 1954-55, pp. 273-294.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. also Lakoff and Johnson's *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*, Basic Books, New York 1999.

<sup>23</sup> This is the periodization proposed by B. Nerlich and D.D. Clarke, see in particular: *Mind, Meaning and Metaphor: The Philosophy and Psychology of Metaphor in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Germany*, in "History of the Human Sciences", XIV/2, 2001, p. 40.

However one looks at it, the 20th-century rediscovery of metaphor is fundamentally set against the post-Aristotelian tradition. This opposition manifests in various ways: sometimes by going back to Aristotle and freeing his ideas from subsequent interpretations, other times by challenging Aristotle himself and his dual models, and occasionally by pursuing entirely different and independent lines of reasoning. Yet, the situation is more nuanced than it may appear. To grasp the true significance of the 20th-century shift, it's crucial to recognize that the post-Aristotelian tradition is not as uniform as commonly portrayed. While it's undeniable that Aristotle's treatment of metaphor met a dual fate – it was celebrated by some and criticized by others – there have been theories predating the 20th-century revival that diverged from reducing metaphor to a linguistic or rhetorical device. Though they may not constitute a complete “alternative history” of metaphor in the post-Aristotelian discourse, their presence offers insights into the roots of the contemporary metaphorical resurgence.

Pinpointing the exact chronology of these (sporadic) alternatives is challenging. Many scholarly readings attribute the emergence of a more philosophically robust conception of metaphor to English empiricism and its emphasis on scientific language. While this view is understandable, it is also paradoxical because empiricism, particularly on the epistemological front, is traditionally seen as the heir to philosophical skepticism toward non-literal language – a skepticism that goes hand in hand with reducing metaphor to a mere rhetorical embellishment. As summarized by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, the prevailing stance among English empiricists is that «Words are viewed as having “proper senses” in terms of which truths can be expressed. To use words metaphorically is to use them in an improper sense, to stir the imagination and thereby the emotions and thus to lead us away from the truth and toward illusion»<sup>24</sup>. This characterization of empiricism aligns partially with rationalism's perspective on metaphor, as noted by Johnson: «In the post-medieval development of empiricist and rationalist systems, it is mistrust, rather than appreciation, that dominates philosophical accounts of metaphor. During the rise of empiricist epistemologies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, metaphors suffered one beating after another at the hands of “scientific-minded” philosophers»<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> G. Lakoff, M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, The University of Chicago Press, London 2003, p. 191.

<sup>25</sup> M. Johnson, *Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition*, in Id. (ed. by), *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1981, p. 11.



Upon closer inspection, once again the landscape is more multifaceted than what may appear at first. Radical critiques of metaphorical language coexist with highly articulated conceptions of metaphor that extend beyond equating metaphor with emotion and illusion. Consequently, some interpreters attribute to key authors of English empiricism a sort of dual strategy toward figurative language. On one hand, there is an undeniable rejection of rhetoric, as expressed by John Locke in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), where he states that rhetorical applications only serve «to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment», and are therefore «perfect cheats»<sup>26</sup>. On the other hand, this criticism does not reject metaphor *per se*, but rather its abuses. In specific domains marked by probability rather than truth, forms of analogical language are perfectly legitimate. Locke himself acknowledges that metaphors can often lead to the discovery of truths and are sometimes the only aid at our disposal. The abuses denounced by the empiricists are rather associated with alchemical and esoteric theories of the 17th century. Reinterpreted through an empiricist lens, these models employ metaphors in a way perceived as irrational. This implies, as exemplified in Robert Boyle's *The Sceptical Chymist* (1661), that there exists a reasonable use of figures of speech, which remains largely to be defined but is nevertheless far from being deceptive and inherently mistaken.

In the ambivalent scenario characterizing the position of the English empiricists, at least one thing is certain: even if one admits that their theories of knowledge (and language) are not reduced to a negative evaluation of metaphorical devices, it remains true that the function of metaphor is limited to an auxiliary and not equal – let alone foundational – role with respect to the rational activities of the subject. Something very different emerges instead in Giambattista Vico, who must be granted a prominent place in the modern history of metaphor.

The space that Vico dedicates to metaphorical discourse is central to his reflection on language and, more generally, to his philosophical project. This is highlighted by Hans Blumenberg, who, in his *Paradigms for a Metaphorology* (1960), explicitly aligns his work with Vico. For Blumenberg, the genetic heritage of modern philosophy includes, on the one hand, Descartes' *Discourse on Method* (1637) with its appeal for clarity and distinction – the reference to the perfection of a totally transparent language «designed to

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<sup>26</sup> J. Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1894, vol 2, p. 146.

capture the presence and precision of the matter at hand in well-defined concepts»<sup>27</sup>. On the other hand, however, within this same genetic line, one can also trace an opposite tendency to the «Cartesian teleology of logicization»<sup>28</sup>: this is the place of Vico and his poetic logic, for which poetry and tropes are the *natural and original modes* that «the first poetic nations» relied on to explain reality<sup>29</sup>.

Blumenberg's scheme is, in turn, a simplification, but it has the merit of shedding light on Vico's position. The concept of metaphor holds a fundamental role in Vico's thought, from his earliest writings to *The New Science*. This in itself is an extremely original aspect in the context of modern philosophy. Metaphor, in fact, could not serve as a component of his philosophical model if Vico had not pursued a path that renounced metaphor as a mere rhetorical device: it is only by this means that metaphorization can become a device of knowledge. This is evident in the core of Vico's model, namely the thesis that «verum et factum convertuntur» (truth and fact are convertible). Here, the key lies in the theory of *ingenium*. Indeed, Vico proposes a definition of *ingenium* that mirrors Aristotle's *eu metapherein*. In *On the Study Methods of Our Time* (1709), Vico writes that *ingenium* is a «specifically philosophic faculty, i.e., [the] capacity to perceive the analogies existing between matters lying far apart and, apparently, most dissimilar. It is this capacity which constitutes the source and principle of all ingenious, acute, and brilliant forms of expression»<sup>30</sup>. *Ingenium*, therefore, encompasses two aspects: one rhetorical-ornamental, and the other *philosophical*, capable of discerning similarities and ultimately producing knowledge.

Here too, as in English empiricism, one can observe an oscillation in Vico's system; however, this oscillation is less incidental and more structural. The correct understanding of the faculty of *ingenium*, in fact, depends on its cognitive, rather than rhetorical, function. Vico's treatment of *ingenium* relates to the distinction between critical-deductive knowledge and analogical-inductive knowledge. Within this binomial, metaphor serves as the hinge of analogical knowledge, allowing *ingenium* to grasp reality by uncovering unexpected relations in it. In *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, for instance, Vico contrasts critical-deductive reasoning, associated with syllogism, with

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<sup>27</sup> H. Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press 2011, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> *Ivi*, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> G. Vico, *The New Science*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press 1948, p. 118.

<sup>30</sup> G. Vico, *On the Study Methods of Our Time*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press 1990, p. 24 (my emphasis).

the inductive method he endorses – *inductio similium*. While syllogism deduces a species from its genus, induction seeks out and compares similar things.

If a syllogism «brings no new element»<sup>31</sup>, induction is creative by nature: it transcends genus boundaries, insofar as by identifying otherwise invisible similarities, it enables predications across different genera and species. In this way, induction creates a new categorical order or innovates an existing one. The induction of the similar is not limited to recognizing, thinking, and categorizing the truth. On the contrary – as per the motto “*verum ipsum factum*” – it produces the truth, or rather makes the truth such. Induction thus becomes the basis of fantastic universals and mythical-poetic thought, which elevates an “individual” to the *representative type of a trait* (e.g., “Hercules” for “strength”), forming the fundamental cog in the mechanism of metaphor.

Giambattista Vico thus occupies a unique and original position in the 18th-century philosophical context, not only for the role he attributes to metaphor as an instrument of knowledge distinct from categorical thinking, but also for the explicit alternative he presents to Cartesian rationalism. Retracing the legacy of his thought is not straightforward. While it is generally true that Romanticism – and even earlier, the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau – opposed a Cartesian definition of rationality, this opposition brought with it a different conception of language, one broader than that of literal speech or the perfect coincidence between language and reality. However, these general elements did not immediately impact the philosophical importance of metaphor. The attention to “irregular” phenomena such as genius and linguistic creativity, which belong to the genetic heritage of Romanticism, was mostly confined to the artistic and poetic spheres. Consequently, poetry and art remained separate from, and even opposed to, philosophical investigation proper.

We have to wait until the last thirty years of the 19th century to witness a real qualitative leap in philosophers' attention to metaphorical language. Thus began a new and fortunate phase for the philosophy of metaphor, in which the link between linguistic cognitive devices and the phenomena of metaphorization was once again clearly identified. The main figure of this new phase is obviously Nietzsche. This is not only evident in his above-mentioned work *Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral Sense*, where he describes truth as a mobile army of metaphors whose origin is forgotten, but also in his

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<sup>31</sup> *Ivi*, p. 32.

overall philosophical approach. Nietzsche's writing, in fact, is characterized by a pervasive use of metaphors to discuss the metaphorical nature of philosophy itself. This “metaphoricality” to the second power is perhaps the most distinctive feature of his radical thought<sup>32</sup>.

Apart from Nietzsche, a small constellation of authors emerged during this era who, through diverse theoretical paths, elevated the pairing of philosophy and metaphor as a defining element of that period. Two key aspects stand out here: first, the increasing recognition of metaphorization beyond mere rhetoric; and second, the discovery (or rediscovery) of metaphor as a fitting language for describing intersections between the corporeal and, in a broader sense, the “spiritual”<sup>33</sup>. Alfred Biese's position is one of the most explicit on this point. In his work *Die Philosophie des Metaphorischen* (The Philosophy of Metaphor, 1893)<sup>34</sup>, Biese positions himself within a lineage that goes back precisely to Vico. His perspective is marked by three compelling aspects: firstly, the critique regarding the distinction between literal and figurative meanings of words; secondly, the idea that metaphor played a role in the genesis of language, stemming from the diminishing creative and imaginative scope of poetry; and finally, the assertion of metaphor as a form of knowledge, deemed the paramount “schema” for human orientation in the world. Biese's contribution was pivotal in establishing a genuine tradition of metaphor studies. Unlike Nietzsche's more radical stances, Biese's *Philosophie des Metaphorischen* rightfully finds its place in the canon of literary and rhetorical studies. Since the early 20th century, these disciplines, also thanks to Biese, have viewed the function of metaphorization as undoubtedly cognitive rather than merely decorative<sup>35</sup>.

A few decades later, Nietzsche's legacy was taken up by Blumberg in an original way with the publication of *Paradigms for a Metaphorology* in 1960. Blumenberg's work is first and foremost a polemic against philosophy as «strictly “conceptual”» language, in which everything can be «superseded by logic»<sup>36</sup>. Within this perspective, metaphor

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<sup>32</sup> One could cite countless references. Cf. e.g. Giorgio Colli's analysis of metaphor as the interpretive key *par excellence* (G. Colli, *Scritti su Nietzsche*, Adelphi, Milano 1980, pp. 39-49), and of course the monumental *Nietzsche and Metaphor* by Sarah Kofman (S. Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1994). I have discussed these issues, as they appear from Vico to Nietzsche, at greater length in my *Morte e rinascita della metafora*, in “Tropos. Rivista di ermeneutica e critica filosofica”, IX/1, 2016, pp. 131-144.

<sup>33</sup> B. Nerlich, D.D. Clarke, *Mind, Meaning and Metaphor*, cit., p. 40.

<sup>34</sup> A. Biese, *Die Philosophie des Metaphorischen*, Verlag von Leopold Voss, Hamburg und Leipzig 1893.

<sup>35</sup> *Ivi*, p. 50.

<sup>36</sup> H. Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, cit., pp. 1-2.

would be nothing serious, merely a provisional covering destined to decay in the course of history in the face of logical language. The reference to history is important because, along with the notions of paradigm and metaphor, it forms the heart of Blumenberg's argument: metaphorology is, in fact, «an auxiliary discipline to philosophy as it seeks to *understand itself from its history* and to bring that history to living presence», whereas the paradigm is a kind of schema that focuses on the *historical developments of metaphorical language*<sup>37</sup>. Thus, in Blumenberg's perspective, metaphorology allows for the identification of aspects – «new aspects, perhaps» – of the process of self-understanding in philosophy<sup>38</sup>. This, however, can only happen on the condition that we suspend the explanatory model from myth to *logos* that philosophy has always embodied: that is to say, the passage from the pre-rational to reason, considered the birth of philosophical reflection. To embrace that model is to believe that myth is a «“pre-logical” phenomenon assigned to a primitive form of mental “development” that has been superseded and supplanted by more exact forms of understanding»<sup>39</sup>.

Beyond his intentions, Blumenberg echoes the same argument that, just five years earlier, Max Black enunciated in his seminal essay *Metaphor*, which holds significant value in the Anglo-American debate of the second half of the 20th century. With an assertion destined to become almost proverbial, Black recalls and challenges the philosophical prejudice against figures of speech: «To draw attention to a philosopher's metaphors» does not in the least mean to belittle them, as it would be if one were to praise a logician for their calligraphy; on the contrary, one must renounce «the principle that whereof one can speak only metaphorically, thereof one ought not to speak at all»<sup>40</sup>. This perspective aligns with Ricoeur's view on the categorical function of *metapherein* which, as we have seen, culminates in the *extreme hypothesis* that places metaphor at the heart of conceptual thought.

These unexpected connections unsurprisingly set the stage for what Mark Johnson would term the *metaphormania* of the 20th century<sup>41</sup>. For over sixty years, metaphor has served as a philosophical arena where traditions from both sides of the Atlantic intersect. It is precisely this intricate historical backdrop that encourages such encounters. If the

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<sup>37</sup> Ivi, p. 77 (my emphasis).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ivi, p. 78.

<sup>40</sup> M. Black, *Metaphor*, in “Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society”, cit., p. 273.

<sup>41</sup> M. Johnson, *Preface*, in Id. (ed. by), *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, cit., p. IX.

philosophical history of metaphor were linear and confined to a single tradition, contemporary debates would likely have resolved it as a problem long ago.