CHAPTER FIVE

PAUL RICOEUR: FIGURES AND PHENOMENA

I

This chapter aims at examining how Paul Ricoeur in his *The Rule of Metaphor* (2003) explicates the tendency of human language to create and order new worlds through varied implications of the word. In a way, the chapter seeks to examine how Ricoeur focuses on the metaphor as the point of emergence of meaning.

The phenomenon of 'polysemy'—that is of multiple meaning is a fundamental feature of all language, not just literary language. Hence when we use words in communication, we are already interpreting the world, not 'literally', as if possessed by a single transparent meaning, but 'figuratively', in terms of allegory, symbol, metaphor, myth and analogy.

As our study in the previous chapters indicates, we belong to a language that has been conventionally shaped and formed by others. This language can be recovered for reflection only through a long process of decipherment. This process of decipherment involves not only the description of meaning as it 'appears.' In a sense, we are obliged to interpret it also as it 'conceals' itself. Because, meaning, far from being transparent to itself, is a complex process which conceals at the same time as it reveals. To put it in another way, consciousness, individual or social, is a relation of concealing and revealing which calls for a specific interpretation.

Meaning involves in almost all cases someone saying something to someone about something. This requires paying attention to particular contexts and presuppositions of each speaker and each reader/listener. Such concentration on contexts is invariably mediated by various social institutions, groups, nations and cultural traditions. In such a case, a conflict of interpretations is inevitable.

Ricoeur's work possesses an acute and immediate relevance throughout the human sciences: concerning their epistemological value, on the problem of the subject, in the philosophy of language and in all spheres of interpretation theory. He is a genuinely interdisciplinary thinker, with distinguished contributions in a host of different areas—in addition to those listed above, hermeneutics, historiography, literary criticism, phenomenology, political theory, semiotics, structuralism, theology. However, he is still little known in comparison to the other stalwarts like Barthes, Derrida and Foucault. In Britain, for example, Eagleton's *Literary Theory* (1983) makes no direct reference to his

work: *Freud and Philosophy* is listed, in the notes amongst "other works in the tradition of hermeneutical phenomenology" (220), cited in the bibliography under psychoanalysis. In the US, however, where Ricoeur worked as a part-time professor at Chicago since 1973, his reputation as a theologian has been wide since the early 1960s and has been rapidly spreading in literary thought since then. One indication of this can be seen in his omission from Frank Lentricchia's influential survey *After the New Criticism* (1980); and his inclusion five years later, in Hazard Adams' *Philosophy and the Literary Symbolic* (1985). But attention may be drawn in this regard to Don Ihde's *Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, published as early as 1971. It remains a good critical account of the philosophical background to Ricoeur's hermeneutics, finding a 'latent hermeneutics' in Ricoeur's work, prior to *Symbolism of Evil*.

Considering the major thrust of this chapter in the language-imagination dichotomy, *Paul Ricoeur* (1990) by S.H. Clark would be one of the initial works on Ricoeur's study of phenomenology and hermeneutics. Keeping Ricoeur's writings as theologian, educationist, and social commentator as almost untouched, Clark's work focuses on such "major Derridean themes as the status of the trace, the alienation of the text, the centering of structure and the latent power of the concealed metaphor" (12). Commenting on the significance of the title of the original French version of *The Rule of Metaphor,* (*La metaphore vive*), Clark says that the word 'Vive' "catches the plasmic sense of language underlying Ricoeur's arguments: something in language allows, perhaps compels the disclosure of new meaning" (121).

The 1990s saw a wide range of publications on different philosophical and religious aspects of Ricoeur's work by writers like Jeanne Evans (1995), Lewis Edwin Hahn (1995), Richard Kearney (1996) and Charles E. Regan (1996). From the point of view of the objectives of this dissertation, mention must be made of the David Wood edited work titled *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation* (1991). As the title implies, the essays in this work concentrate on Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* and associated texts. It includes works by such leading Ricoeur commentators as Richard Kearney, Jonathan Ree and Don Ihde, along with two essays by Ricoeur and a discussion with him.

In the present century, there have been quite a few remarkable contributions made by some of the prominent Ricoeur scholars. *On Ricoeur* (2002) by Mark Muldoon attempts at surveying Ricoeur's philosophical works, to the exclusion of innumerable other

writings that deal with theological and political issues. As Muldoon remarks in the Preface to the book: "Ricoeur is specifically interested in revealing how the interplay of the productive imagination and language facilitates the creation of meaning by way of metaphor and language facilitates the creation of meaning by way of metaphor and narrative."

Karl Simms' in *Paul Ricoeur* (2003) attempts an exploration of Ricoeur's prominent ideas as concepts of good and evil, psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, metaphor, narrative, ethics, politics and justice. In another work, titled *Ricoeur and Lacan* (2007), Simms seeks to "mediate between Ricoeur and Lacan" and "to demonstrate the points of contact between Ricoeur and Lacan through argument rather than through mere assertion" (2). Simms suggests that: "Lacan's is the opposite conception of semiotics from Ricoeur's: for him, all of semiotics is poured into the pint pot of linguistics. Thus Lacan reduces, following Jakobson, all rhetorical tropes . . . to the two tropes of metaphor and metonymy" (10). On the other hand, Simms quotes Ricoeur from *Freud and Philosophy* and says that for the former, "the procedures for subjectivity that are manifested in discourse include such distinct entities as synecdoches, euphemisms, allusions, antiphrasis, litotes, etc." (400).

Such an engagement with two prominent thinkers, Derrida and Ricoeur has been taken up in the more recent times by Eftichis Pirovolakis in the work published in 2010, titled *Reading Derrida & Ricoeur: Improbable Encounters between Deconstruction and Hermeneutics*. Pirovolakis juxtaposes and reflects on "texts in which Derrida and Ricoeur address similar issues or scrutinize the work of thinkers such as Edmund Husserl, Sigmund Freud, and Emmanuel Levinas" (5). Pirovolakis, "following Derrida's proposition regarding his "tangential encounter" with Ricoeur, suggests that "the relation between the two thinkers is not exhausted by a reflection on the so-called dialogue between deconstruction and hermeneutics. Although a "dialogue" or a "debate" is absolutely necessary . . . it is at the same time impossible" (163).

Besides, two other important works, *On Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of Minerva* (2004) by Richard Kearney and *Reading Ricoeur* (2008), edited by David Kaplan deserve mention here. Kearney is of the opinion that "Ricoeur is, in more ways than one, the living epitome of the Owl of Minerva—a thinker who has always preferred the long route over the short cut"(9). In this work, Kearney concentrates on some important themes: "the

dialectics between (1) phenomenology and hermeneutics; (2) imagination and language; (3) myth and tradition; (4) ideology and utopia; (5) evil and alterity; (6) narrative and history" (9). On the other hand, in *Reading Ricoeur,* Kaplan has the credit of editing fourteen essays by well-known scholars, who not only explain the central concepts and structures of Ricoeur's philosophy but they also bring him into dialogue with his contemporaries including Sartre, Heidegger, Gadamer, Habermas, Rawls, and Lyotard.

However, it is to be noted that in all the critical works, there is discussion and critiquing of a variety of aspects of Ricoeur's study, ranging from hermeneutics to politics and ethics. Ricoeur's scholars are yet to deliberate on the various aspects of the nature of figurative language as posited by the thinker. There have been commentaries on *The Rule of Metaphor*, but what is urged upon here is a critique of Ricoeur's theory of metaphor, which takes into consideration Ricoeur's engagement with rhetoricians like Aristotle, critics like Richards, philosophers like Heidegger and thinkers like Derrida. Herein lies the justification of this present response to Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor.*

In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur links the productive power of language with that of imagination through the metaphor. For new meanings to come into being, they need to be spoken or uttered in the form of new verbal images. Ricoeur describes the innovative power of metaphorical imagination in terms of the ability to establish similarity in dissimilarity. It follows that metaphorical interpretation is a function of literal meaning. Therefore, a perplexing situation is that when a single metaphorical interpretation might refer to different primary orders of reference, the metaphorical utterance might lead to ambiguity. For instance, the word 'sun' and the phrase 'the largest gaseous mass in the solar system' refer to the same a thing. But the metaphor, "Apollo's flaming chariot" reminds us of the sun and not to the largest gaseous mass in the solar system.

And this brings us to the next question as to the difference between the literal and the metaphorical. Ricoeur talks at length about the distinction between the living and the dead metaphors, by which he draws a distinction between the metaphors in daily use—those that have been in use over a considerable period of time—and the living metaphor, which brings about a fresh link between a word and a thing, that which perhaps has never been thought of before. It is said that the worn-out or dead metaphors become part of polysemy in ordinary language, or language used in everyday conversations.

Accordingly, the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical language needs to be examined.

The above two problems bring to the fore certain questions regarding the nature of metaphor: whether the distinction drawn between metaphor and metonymy by linguists like Roman Jakobson stand valid in the case of the metaphor in Ricoeur. It will be pertinent to examine whether the notion of resemblance, typical of the metaphor has the power to encompass proportion, comparison or simile, the bond of similarity (or sameness), and iconicity without destroying itself. In this context it would be necessary to seek an explanation as to whether metaphor performs any other function apart from being a mere ornament of discourse, as pointed out by philosophers like Fontainer.

The above would lead us to the question regarding a distinction, if it exists, between the literal and the metaphorical. If yes, then it needs to be analysed as to whether one could think of a point of convergence between the literal and the metaphorical. Since, the metaphorical utterance is the consequence of imagination, verbal and non-verbal, as pointed out by Ricoeur, it leaves open a question about language as a social investment vis-a-vis language as a mode of individual investment. It would be interesting to explore whether, behind every 'inconceivable' innovative utterance, there was a literal moment.

This brings us to the ultimate question regarding metaphor and reality. If a metaphorical utterance is said to 'redescribe reality', one may assume that reality has already been described in terms of a 'non-metaphorical language.' This brings us to an ambiguous situation about our interpretation of reality itself. This in a way is like begging the question as to whether there is any language that may be termed 'non-metaphorical.

II

In *The Rule of Metaphor,* Ricoeur undertakes a progressive examination of metaphor within three entities: the word, the sentence and discourse. Ricoeur regards metaphor at the level of the word to be the domain of rhetoric. Metaphor at the level of the sentence is the domain of semantics. On the other hand, metaphor at the level of discourse is the domain of hermeneutics. As Ricoeur explains however, the book:

> [D]oes not seek to replace rhetoric with semantics and the latter with hermeneutics, and thus have one refute the other, but rather seeks to justify each approach within the limits of the corresponding discipline and to demonstrate the systematic

continuity of viewpoints by following the progression from word to sentence and from sentence to discourse. (6)

On another occasion Ricoeur says that in the *Rule,* he 'tried to show how language could extend itself to its very limits forever discovering new resonances within itself' (*Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers*, 1984). Describing the innovative power of metaphorical imagination in terms of the ability to establish similarity in dissimilarity, Ricoeur points out that he has now progressed from an analysis of the creative tension between meanings in words (symbols) to that between meanings in sentences (metaphors). Or, to put it in another way, in metaphor the productive unit is no longer the 'word' but the 'sentence'. It is at the level of the sentence that metaphor expresses the power of imagination to create a new semantic unit out of two different ideas.

The initial studies in the *Rule* aim at countering the common view that metaphor is a deviant naming or substitution in naming where one word (the figurative) is substituted for another (the literal) on the basis of a perceived resemblance. The substitution theory is governed by the presumption that a metaphor is nothing more than an ornamental embellishment that can be easily reduced to a more literal form. Ricoeur, on the other hand, goes on to elaborate an "interaction theory" of metaphor that sees a metaphor's creative capacities as the result of a semantic interaction—a tension—between the word and the sentence in which it appears.

The initial gesture towards this is the characterisation of traditional rhetoric as an 'ironic tale of diminishing returns' (9). Aristotle's original categorisation of metaphor 'on the basis of a semantics that takes the word or the name as the basic unit' (3) is seen as dominating its subsequent history in Western thought. This somewhat technical exposition basically centres on the point of 'seeing-as' aspect of metaphor: metaphor allows us to see a familiar thing in a new light. Ricoeur's original contribution in this aspect is:

> [T]o ask whether the secret of metaphor, as displacement of meaning at the level of words, does not rest in the elevation of meaning at the level of *muthos*. And if this proposal is acceptable, then metaphor would not only be a deviation in relation to ordinary usage, but also, by means of this deviation, the privileged instrument in that upward motion of meaning promoted by *mimesis.* (46)

In other words, for Ricoeur, metaphor is important because it is the instrument by which *mimesis* or imitation becomes *muthos* or plot, and therefore not merely imitation of human nature, but an imitation of human action. He poses a reminder here that 'no discourse ever suspends our belonging to the world': 'through *mimesis* metaphor's deviations from normal *lexis* belong to the great enterprise of 'saying what is' (48). Moreover, the 'saying what is' is not just saying how things are in nature, but because of its role in the plot or *muthos*—metaphor allows *mimesis* to 'serve as an *index* for that dimension of reality that does not receive due account in the simple description of that-thing-over –there' (48).

What finally comes to light is that metaphor deviates from the literal sense in order to bring about an extension of meaning. The primary motivation for this deviation is resemblance which justifies the substitution of figurative meaning. Hence, Ricoeur seems to imply that metaphor is essentially translatable: substitution plus restitution leads to no genuine semantic innovation: no new information about reality is conveyed.

The consequences of 'the excessive and damaging emphasis put initially on the word' (49) are examined in a later development of the rhetorical tradition: Pierre Fontainer's *Les figures du discours* (*Figures of Discourse)* (1830). Ricoeur demonstrates the necessary termination of such a methodology to the extent that it focuses on 'deviation' and: 'There is no break between the point of departure, which makes metaphor an accident in naming, and the conclusion, which gives metaphor a simply ornamental function and confines rhetoric as a whole to the art of pleasing' (52) In fact, the metaphor of 'clothing' may be used here to illustrate this. Just as different attires bring in varied changes onto a person, similarly, the metaphor assumes the role of clothes that not only cover the naked expression of thought but also becomes a source of pleasure by adding variety and colour to discourse. Therefore, for instance the oxymoron "*pale* death" does not actually present anything new; it only describes a quality of paleness characterising a dead man. It therefore serves only an accessorial function. Hence, there is an underlying assertion that "metaphor teaches nothing new and serves only to ornament language" (52). Ricoeur refers to Fontainer who suggests that the meaning of the trope rests on the relation between the idea signified by the substituted figurative word, and the idea signified by the absent proper word. He identifies three types of such relations. First relations of 'correlation' constitute metonymy, as in the case with the 'hand' representative of the human-being ('the hand that rocks the cradle'). Second, relations of

connection constitute synecdoche for example, when one says 'mortals' for men. Third, relations by resemblance constitute metaphor as illustrated in the sentence, 'The chairman *ploughed* through the discussion'. Ricoeur notes the perfect symmetry drawn between metonymy and synecdoche: in both cases one idea is designated by the name of another. He is however interested in the fact that metaphor does not belong to this symmetrical pair. For one thing, metaphor can be attached to any kind of word as the example above or the relation drawn between 'love' and the 'rose' indicates, whereas the other tropes can only attach to nouns. Ricoeur sees in Fontainer's theory of metaphor an unwitting shift from the word to the proposition. Even in the metaphorical use of a noun, as described by Fontainer—"To 'make a tiger of an angry man," 'of a great writer a swan'" (65)—there is already something other than merely designating a thing by a new word. Ricoeur asks, "Is it not 'naming' in the sense of characterizing, of qualifying" (65)? It is for this reason that the substitution of resemblance involves an attribution— that metaphor can attach to words other than nouns—as in Fontainer's other examples such as "*consuming* remorse", "courage *craving* for peril and praise", "his *seething* spirit"(65). As Ricoeur points out, "these metaphors do not name, but characterize what has already been named" (66). Moreover, in order to do this, they must not only involve individual words, but the whole sentence which contains them. This is "because they function only within a sentence that relates not just two ideas but also two words, namely one term taken non-metaphorically, which fulfils the function of support, and the other taken metaphorically, which fulfils the function of characterization" (65). Having said this, he suggests that "it is always possible to invoke the ideas behind the words and the things beyond the ideas" (66).

The important point about this is that contrary to Fontainer's own conclusion, Ricoeur notes that metaphor points towards propositions, and is not confined to the level of the individual word. Fontainer seems blinded by the consequences of his own theory, because of which, for instance, he fails to see allegory as an extended metaphor. In fact, once metaphor so to speak is liberated from the word, then all description can be seen as metaphorical: ". . .the functioning of metaphor is to be detected within ordinary usage; . . .metaphor penetrates to the very depths of verbal interaction" (92). In so far as it presents a group of words as setting a thing before us in a certain way—description is not so much "seeing as seeing as". Ricoeur insists that '*to figure is always to see as* but not always *to see* or *make visible* (ibid.70). This in fact, is another way of saying that

figurative language is 'free', in that any idea can be freely presented under the image of another. Any piece of language can be metaphorical of anything.

Proper meaning is lexical, catalogued, emergent meaning because, wholly contextual, the product of "semantic collision" (112) can occur only in the present: "The dictionary contains no metaphors; they exist only in discourse" (112). But the converse must also be recognized. Metaphor, far from being "at once meaning and event" (115) has something of the transitoriness of an ignition, a flaring:

> In the metaphorical statement. . . , the contextual action creates a new meaning, which truly has the status of an event since it exists only in the present context. At the same time, however, it can be reidentified as the same, since its construction can be repeated. In this way, the innovation of an emergent meaning can be taken as a linguistic creation. (115)

Hence, although paraphrase must be 'infinite and incapable of exhausting the innovative meaning', temporality can reduce metaphor to the apparent simplicity of polysemy. It may tell us something new about reality, but this could be seen as the inevitability of its own demise, leading to what Ricoeur calls "a dead metaphor" (115):

> Language really exists only when a speaker takes it in his possession and actualizes it. But at the same time as the event of discourse is fleeting and transitory, it can be identified and reidentified as 'the same'; thus meaning is introduced, in its broadest sense, at the same time as the possibility of identifying a given unit of discourse. There is meaning because there is sameness of meaning. (80)

Nevertheless, a theory of metaphor must consider "discourse and not just the word" (75). There are therefore no metaphorical words, only metaphorical utterances: "To speak by means of metaphor is to say something different 'through' literal meaning . . . the metaphorical meaning is non-lexical: it is a value created by the context" (222). This is what has been the crux in I. A. Richards' *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936): to break with 'the Proper Meaning Superstition' in favour of an "undisguisedly fully contextual theory of meaning" (89). It restores the earlier amplitude that the discipline of rhetoric possessed, embracing "thought as discourse" (88): "With Richards we enter into a semantics of the metaphor that ignores the duality of a theory of signs and a theory of the instance of discourse, and that builds directly on the thesis of the interanimation of words

in the living utterance" (91). In other words, meaning does not belong to individual words, only to the event of discourse at the level of the sentence, which itself is always constituted as a part of a larger context:

> Words have no proper meaning, because no meaning can be said to 'belong' to them ; and they do not possess any meaning in themselves. . . Words have meaning only through the abridgement of the context . . . constancy of meaning is never anything but the constancy of contexts. And this constancy is never a self-evident phenomenon; stability is itself something to be explained. (89)

The polysemic potential of words allows opposing semantic fields to be simultaneously invoked: ". . . nothing prevents a word from signifying more than one thing. Since it refers back to 'contextually missing parts', these parts can belong to opposed contexts" (90). Hence, it would be important to note that Richards' is a 'contextual' theory, as is evident in Ricoeur's reading of Richards. Meaning has to be "guessed" (91): ". . . one must adopt the point of view of the hearer or reader and treat the novelty of an emergent meaning as his work within the very act of hearing or reading" (114). In fact with regard to Richards' terminology of 'tenor' and 'vehicle, Ricoeur is of the opinion that "the advantage of this esoteric terminology is precisely that it combats every illusion to a proper meaning, every return to a non-contextual theory of idea . . ." (93). As regards metaphor, this theory leads Richards directly to the position contrary to that of Aristotle. Richards regards language to be "vitally metaphorical" (92) and not as something that should be regarded as a deviation from such usage: "'Figurative meaning' is . . . not a deviant meaning of words, but . . . meaning of a statement as a whole. . ." (112). It is no longer a case as with Aristotle and Fontainer:

> [M]etaphor holds together within one simple meaning two different missing parts of different contexts of this meaning. Thus, we are not dealing any longer with a simple transfer of words, but with a commerce between thoughts, that is, a transaction between contexts. (92)

Ricoeur however has a problem here: "Would not every pair of thoughts condensed in a single expression constitute a metaphor?" (92). Moreover, Ricoeur notes that Richards consciously avoids any opposition between literal and figurative. In other words, Richards appears to have ignored the dichotomy between the initial context of meaning and the new set of associations brought in to the terminology of the tenor and the vehicle.

A literal meaning can be determined by the absence of division between the two fields: "a word in which tenor and vehicle cannot be distinguished can be taken provisionally to be literal" (94). This is a matter of usage and degree: "One must decide on the basis of the various 'clues' provided by the context, which terms can be taken figuratively and which cannot" (224). There is an implied but at this point unspecified ontological bearing: "the process of interpretation takes place at the level of modes of existing" (96).

On the other hand, Max Black's terminology of focus and frame allows an emphasis on the metaphorical word while retaining a grasp on its necessary context of the sentence, preserving its status as what Ricoeur in *The Conflict of Interpretations* calls, "a trader between . . . the structure and the event" (8) The interaction theory is decisively opposed to any reduction to comparison: metaphor creates similarity rather than appealing to a pre-given order, operates on a semantic level without involving mental imagery, and cannot be translated without loss of its cognitive content. Where Richards relies on either an act of mental juxtaposition or a somewhat indeterminate idea of simultaneity of thought to link tenor and vehicle, Black defines the relation between focus and frame in terms of a reorganisation of associated commonplaces. In his own example, 'man is a wolf', the lupine connotations of fierceness, predatoriness and strength must be brought into relation with a similar range of human qualities—"that is, by virtue of the opinions and preconceptions to which a reader in a linguistic community, by the very fact that he speaks, finds himself committed" (101).

But Ricoeur finds no account being offered as to how metaphor might construct new implications:

> Instead of using a given literal expression, the speaker chooses to replace it with an expression taken in a sense that is different from its proper normal meaning. . . If the metaphor is an expression substituted for an absent, literal expression, then these two expressions are equivalent, and the metaphor can be translated by means of an exhaustive paraphrase. Consequently, the metaphor introduces no new information . . . it is merely an ornament for discourse, giving the hearer the joy of surprise, of disguise, or of imagistic expression. (98-99)

This is primarily because, "to return to a system of associated commonplaces is to address oneself to connotations that are already established. (102). Hence, somewhat reiterating the idea about the 'dead metaphor', Ricoeur's complaint about Black is that:

The author acknowledges that the system of implications does not remain unchanged by the action of the metaphorical utterance. To apply the system is to contribute at the same time to its determination—the wolf appears more human at the same moment that by calling the man a wolf one places the man in a special light. But the creation of meaning, which belongs to what Fontainer called newly invented metaphors is dispersed and attributed to all metaphorical statements. . . The emergence of metaphorical meaning remains just as enigmatic as before. (102).

The denial of genuine 'redescriptive' power results in a reliance on pre-established connotation: "the enigma of novel meaning beyond the bounds of all previously established rules" (104) remains.

The tension theory is further developed in the work of Monroe Beardsley. By disrupting any unitary primary signification, the metaphorical utterance compels recourse to secondary "self-contradictory attribution", (110) a 'twist' that generates a multiplicity of meanings which may be whittled down according to principles of "plenitude" and "congruence" (111). What may appear absurd in purely logical terms "accentuates the inventive and innovative character of the metaphorical statement" (112), as substantiated by Ricoeur:

A significant trait of living language . . . is the power to always push the frontier of non-sense further back. There are probably no words so incompatible that some poet could not build a bridge between them; the power to create new contextual meanings seems to be truly limitless. Attributions that appear to be 'non-sensical' can make sense in some unexpected context. No speaker ever completely exhausts the connotative possibilities of his words. (111)

Such an account, however, leaves the question of where the secondary meanings in metaphorical attribution come from; there is an indication of an unresolved moment of disruption, and in general, there appears to be an inadequate recognition of semantic innovation. Therefore, despite the credit Ricoeur gives to Beardsley for giving "the old opposition between figurative and proper meaning an entirely new foundation" (112), the problem that persists is that "we have not stopped relating the creative process of metaphor to a non-creative aspect of language" (114). In another way, Ricoeur asks, "Is it not really good enough to say that the properties of a word at a given moment in its

history have perhaps not yet all been used, and that there are unrecognized connotations of words (112)?"

  Herein lies the scope to explore the possibilities of a 'collision' between the language as a process of social investment and language as a phenomenon of individual utterance, or if one may put it, individual investiture (one may even call it brilliance or vision): "When a poet writes for the first time that 'virginity is a life of angels, the enamel of the soul', something develops in the language. There accrue to the language various properties of enamel that until then had never been clearly established as recognized connotations of the word" (113). Hence, referring to Beardsley, Ricoeur says that "the metaphor is taken as a *poem in miniature*. The proposed working hypothesis is that if a satisfactory account can be given of what is implied in this kernel of poetic meaning, it must be possible equally to extend the same explication to larger entities, such as the entire poem" (108-9). What remains to be studied is whether something significant happens when the literal 'collides' with the metaphorical. With reference to our study in the previous chapters, it requires to be examined as to whether one could decipher the Saussurean 'bar' between the literal and the metaphorical, or the Derridean 'traces' of the literal in the metaphorical or the juncture when the literal 'slips' underneath the metaphorical, as Lacan would say in terms of the signifier and the signified. Or in Ricoeur's terms, one may ask as to "where it the 'rhetoric degree zero' from which the distance [between the literal and the figurative] be felt, appreciated and even measured" (161)? "It is at once the 'gift of genius' and the skill of the geometer, who sees the point in the 'ratio of proportions'" (231). As of now, it might be safely concluded that:

> [M]etaphorical attribution is essentially the construction of the network of interactions that causes a certain context to be one that is real and unique. Accordingly, metaphor is a semantic event that takes place at the point where several semantic fields intersect. It is because of this construction that all the words, taken together, make sense. Then, and only then, the metaphorical *twist* is at once an event *and a* meaning, an event that means or signifies, an emergent meaning created by language (author's italics). (114)

In other words, the contextual action in a moment is responsible for the meaning of the metaphorical statement at that moment. Since the meaning is valid only in that particular context, the metaphorical utterance enjoys the status of an event. However, since the

construction can be repeated and reindentified, it leads to the creation of an emergent meaning. As a result of this what Derrida calls 'iterability', it might be possible that this contextual meaning might be accepted by the wider linguistic community: after all "'property' belongs to the sphere of things, not words" (114). When for instance, the metaphor is 'Ships ploughed the sea', the listener/reader understands the connotations despite the difference between 'ploughing' and 'sailing' by virtue of the nature of the events at that point of time. Hence, if the event fulfils what Austin would like to name the conditions of 'felicity' it might result in the metaphorical utterance gaining the status of polysemy. Structural semantics approaches the problem of multiple meaning by attempting to match variants of meaning to specific classes of contexts .link? These variants may then be analysed in terms of a fixed nucleus common to all contexts, and contextual variables. By reducing lexemes to a collection of semes, it seeks to account for the possible meanings of any given word as derivatives of these sub-lexical particles, arising out of the interplay of semic nucleus and its varying contexts. Structuralist analysis remains rooted in the same fundamental hypothesis as classical rhetoric: "metaphor is a figure of one word only" (118). It is the issue of polysemy which stimulates an important work from the semiotic tradition: though unable to account for the birth of meaning, it may offer a scientific analysis of its constitution through decomposition into sub-lexical particles: "Polysemy is just an already more ordered and more determinate characteristic of the more general phenomenon of lexical impression" (132). This is a "healthy feature" of language, even conforming to the principle of economy (134):

> [W]hat allows change of meaning is the nature of the lexical system, namely the 'vague' character of meaning, the indeterminacy of semantic boundaries, and, above all, the cumulative character proper to the meaning of words . . . this cumulative character of the word opens language to innovation. (135-36)

Metaphor therefore possesses a dual status: as part of the code (as the accepted deviation of polyemy) and of the message (as innovation of the level of discourse). A Saussurean linguistics seems obliged to have recourse to a psychological element to account for change in meaning. Ricoeur refers to the chapter 'Mechanism of Language' in Saussure's *Course* "for this marriage between associationist psychology and structural linguistics" (137). This has the advantage in the sense that "a bridge is constructed between the individual activity of speech and the social character of language" (137), an

operative principle within the otherwise static taxonomy is introduced and a common foundation for metaphor and metonymy is provided for in the concept of associations. But the consequences for its account of metaphor are by according to Ricoeur to be "ruinous": it is placed in a "false symmetry between metaphor and metonymy" (154), and deprived of its properly predicative status: the figure remains within the "restricted rhetoric inspired by associationism" (154).

Recent developments in linguistics represent "a revolution within the revolution, which confers a sort of crystalline purity on the postulates of Saussurism" (158). The relation of the signifier and signified becomes wholly detached from consciousness, decomposed down to the level of the seme. This does not result in an alternative theory, however, merely "an even tighter pact between metaphor and the word" (159). The "new rhetoric at first glance is nothing but a repetition of classical rhetoric" (159), in its characterisation of metaphor: the opposition of the proper to the figurative, as in the instance where the poet calls age "a withered stalk"; the motivation of semantic lacunae ,where for example the 'elements' of a comb are like teeth and so 'the teeth of a comb', in the absence of a semantic equivalent for the same), ; the borrowing of an alien term, as in the case of the poet likening nature to a temple; the postulate of deviation, in the instance of time likened to a beggar by Shakespeare; the axiom of substitution, usually through resemblance as in the sentence 'her cheeks are roses'; the possibility of restitutive substitution and exhaustive paraphrase – the use of words like 'sunshine' and 'clouds' to express different human emotions; the absence of new information as with idiomatic expressions as 'to set the ball rolling'; and an ultimately decorative function where, Achilles being said to be a lion, in which case, the metaphor only talks about the bravery of Achilles in another manner.

Ricoeur sees the achievement of this tradition as lying in "a highly clarifying explanation resulting from the integration of the trope into a general theory of deviations" (160), but if deviations, then one needs to know, deviations from what? This is because, language, wholly devoid of rhetoric, "cannot be found" (162). Ricoeur suggests three different possibilities "of resolving the paradox of the undiscoverable degree zero" (164). The first is to take as the standard of measurement "a virtual language" (162), defined as equivalent to the intention of the speaker: "The deviation is between what the poet thought and what he wrote, between meaning and letter" (163). However, this reduces metaphor to a mere translation of a non-verbal act of

consciousness. A second option is to assume "a relative degree zero, i.e. that stratum of language usages that would be the least marked from the rhetorical point of view and thus the least figurative" (164). In another sense, this refers to the use of language in scientific discourse. Though this option breaks with the problematic of intention and appeals to an actual semantic form, it does not address the issue of the internal tension of the statement. A third direction, "to give an account of rhetoric's degree zero is to take it as a metalinguistic construction—neither virtual . . . nor actual . . . but constructed" (166):

> Just as decomposition into smaller units reveals components on the side of the signifier, the distinctive traits, that have no explicit and independent existence in language, so too, the decomposition of the signified reveals entities, the semes, that do not belong to the level where discourse manifests itself. (166)

This appears to be a purely methodological construct of the linguist that completely ignores the plane of manifestation— the lexical or the semic level. All the three cases therefore are fraught with paradoxes: "Rhetoric battles valiantly with this metaphoricity of metaphor, which leads it to remarkable discoveries about the actual status of the literal in discourse and thus about 'literature' as such" (168). Ricoeur offers a critique on the very condition of metaphoricity, of its function to 'redescribe reality'. He talks about an extremely realistic condition language is no more considered as a medium to refer/reflect reality—it is no more a reflection of being, but it is 'being' itself. In other words, this is a reference to that point of convergence between the signifier and the signified when the word no longer carries the weight of the thing, but becomes the thing itself, such that the point of signification is at "degree zero." It is fairly obvious that Ricoeur borrows this term of "degree zero" from Roland Barthes, who explains the term in his *Elements of Semiology*:

> The concept of the zero degree. . . lends itself to a great many applications: in semantics, in which *zero signs* are known ('a "zero sign" is spoken of in cases where the absence of any explicit signifier functions by itself as a signifier') . . .in rhetoric, where carried on to the connotative plane, the absence of rhetorical signifiers constitutes in its turn a stylistic signifier. (77-8)

In fact, Ricoeur's suggestion about a virtual language seems to be an echo of Barthes' concept of "neutral writing" in relation to the idea of "writing at the zero degree"

discussed in the work *Writing Degree Zero* (1967). With reference to an "attempt towards disengaging literary language", Barthes mentions in his work, the necessity "to create a colourless writing", "a neutral term or zero writing" (76). According to Barthes,

> writing at the zero degree . . .takes its place in the midst of all . . . ejaculations and judgements, without becoming involved in any of them; it consists precisely in their absence.. . This transparent form of speech. . .achieves a style of absence which is almost an ideal absence of style; writing is then reduced to a sort of negative mood in which the social or mythical characters of a language are abolished in favour of a neutral and inert state of form. . . (77)

Barthes however is quite pessimistic about the existence of such a neutral language, because, in such a case, one has to assume a purely idealistic situation:

> If writing is really neutral, and if language . . . reaches the state of a pure equation, which is no more tangible than an algebra when it confronts the innermost part of man, then Literature is vanquished, the problematic of mankind is uncovered and presented without elaboration, the writer becomes irretrievably honest. (78)

Ricoeur echoes this idea by Barthes when he says that "neutral language does not exist" (162), because Barthes asserts the fact in *Writing Degree Zero* that "nothing is more fickle than colourless writing", because in such a case, "the writer . . . becomes a slavish imitator of his original creation, society demotes his writing to a mere manner, and returns him a prisoner to his own formal myths" (78). This in fact is to say in other words what Ricoeur notes Fontainer as having pointed out: "To talk about ideas and about words is to talk twice about ideas: once about 'ideas in themselves,' and the second time about ideas as 'represented by words' (F: 41) and also as Ricoeur says in line with Fontainer, "metaphor is a figure and the word *figure* is metaphorical" (60), similar problems arise with the movement implied in the metaphor. In fact, Ricoeur later concedes, there is "no principle for delimiting metaphor, no definition in which the defining does not contain the defined; metaphoricity is absolutely uncontrollable" (339). This seems to be an echo of an idea stated in the initial pages: "it is impossible to talk about metaphor non-metaphorically. . .the definition of metaphor returns on itself" (18-19). Moreover the "space of discourse" may be equated with a theory of denotation: "What is untranslatable in it is its power to evoke an affective tone, a literary dignity" (172).

Ricoeur's response is to posit a double movement of a deviation from an impossible literal interpretation of a given sentence, followed by a movement of restructuring:

> [M]etaphor is not deviation itself, but the reduction of deviation. . . Metaphor is the process through which the speaker reduces deviation by changing the meaning of one of the words. . . . the change of meaning is the answer of discourse to the threat of destruction represented by semantic impertinence. (179)

Structural linguistics may offer "a semiotic equivalent of the semantic process" (184), in its description in terms of substitution of lexemes. However, it lacks the adequate vocabulary to address the issue of "new pertinence" on the syntagmatic plane: "metaphor is a semantic innovation that belongs at once to the predicative order (new pertinence) and the lexical order (paradigmatic deviation)" (184).

Ricoeur now takes up the problem of the creation of a new semantic pertinence by concentrating on the notion of resemblance. Nothing may seem more obvious than that a metaphor involves comparison, presenting something in terms of something else on the grounds of its common features: "metaphor is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality" (5). In classical rhetoric, metaphor is treated as being a little more than an abridged simile, the initial motivation being resemblance, which serves as a link within substitution and a restitution of proper meaning: "To speak by means of metaphor is to say something different 'through' literal meaning . . the metaphorical meaning is non-lexical" (222). These postulates are taken up by structural linguistics, whose theory of 'binarism' reduces the entire domain of tropology to metonymy and metaphor, contiguity and resemblance.

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, this division of the linguistic function was taken up and developed by Roman Jakobson in his essay on the "Two Types of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances". Using Saussure's distinction as a point of departure, Jakobson distinguishes between two "modes of arrangement" at work in every speech-act: (i) combination or contexture, Saussure's syntagms; and (ii) selection or substitution, involving the equivalence or similarity of linguistic elements. Based on his investigation of different disturbances displayed in aphasia, Jakobson tries to show how disorders involving the linguistic function can be grouped along two axes: either as the inability to recognize similarity or equivalence and consequently the inability to select or substitute; or disturbances involving relations of contiguity limiting

one's ability to combine and contextualize. In the realm of literature, Jakobson interprets Romantic and Symbolist poetry in terms of a predominance of the metaphoric function, based on similarity or equivalence, while explaining literary Realism as the use of metonymy that is of contiguity and contexture. The expression "I drink a cup" is by that standard metonymic and we perceive the correct meaning independently of the inexact nature of the signifiers used. It is clear that one is not drinking the cup but its contents. On the other hand, Ricoeur includes the following in the "concept of metaphorical process": definition (the opening of a cave being called the 'mouth) , naming (to make a tiger of a man), synonymy (as in 'peak' instead of 'summit), circumlocution (to say "the roses in these cheeks have paled" is to concentrate only on one aspect of the rose and to negate its freshness) and paraphrase (the 'holy one' to mean God).

Jakobson's elaboration of the Saussurean theory provides Lacan with a decisive precedent in relating linguistic operations to Freud's descriptions of unconscious mechanisms in the *Interpretation of Dreams* (1990). As elaborated in the essay, the 'Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud', Lacan compares the Freudian processes of condensation and displacement to the linguistic entities of metaphor and metonymy respectively. These two linguistic phenomena are deemed responsible for the autonomy of the signifier, or the supremacy of the signifier over the signified in language. In other words, metaphor and metonymy in linguistics and condensation and displacement in psychoanalysis account for the alienation of a thought or a signifier by the simple fact that it must be mediated through language. Lacan however does not apply the Jakobsonian terms in *toto*, rather as he applies them, he bring about a new twist in them. By redefining them as a movement of signifiers, the contextuality of metonymy and the similarity of signified become a function of differential opposition and cease to depend upon the signified.

In the 'Instance of the Letter', Lacan defines metonymy as "the properly signifying function", which supplements its traditional definition as a relation of "word to word." Metaphor, on the other hand has been defined "as the implantation in the signifying chain, of another signifier." Lacan adopts Jakobson's notion of substitution here, but with an essential difference: insofar as the substitution takes place between signifiers, it cannot be based upon a semantic or substantial equivalence or similarity as Jakobson often presumes. Rather, Lacan suggests that the metaphor "breaks out between two signifiers, one of which has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain, the occult

signifier remaining present through its (metonymic) connection with the rest of the chain" (*Ecrits* 507). A clearly defined relationship of presence and absence of the signifier is thus described here: the replaced, absent signifier is driven under the bar between the signifier and the signified, as it were, into the realm of the signified. Lacan says, therefore, that the "metaphor occurs at the precise point where sense takes place in non-sense" (508).

Therefore, it is evident that Jakobson can offer a precedent but in no way, a model for the Lacanian approach to language. The Lacanian approach is based upon the primacy of the signifier, while Jakobson introduces his discussion of metaphor and metonymy y distinguishing between the general meaning of a sign, governed by the function of substitution, and its "contextual meaning" based on combination. This distinction, however presupposes that a general meaning can be generated independently of the context, and that it is only the latter which is differentially constituted through the differential relations of signifiers. In other words, the Jakobsonian distinction between metaphor and metonymy subordinates the notion of linguistic difference to a logic of binary opposition based upon priority of identity over difference.

Ricoeur suggests this limitation in Jakobson's theory by saying that, "The strength of the bipolar scheme lies in its extreme generality and its extreme simplicity" which enables metaphor to be "generalized beyond the sphere of the word and even beyond tropology" (210). The concepts of metaphor and metonymy are no longer restricted to tropology but are applicable throughout the domains of semantics and semiology. But Ricoeur feels that "a heavy price must be paid" (210) for this, and that is, the field of tropology, in all its diversity, is reduced to just two tropes. The failure to acknowledge a separate level of semantics means that basic distinctions "are obliterated in vague resemblances and equivocations affecting the concept of combination as much as that of selection" (211). For example, Ricoeur mentions Freud: if, for Freud, displacement and condensation are two distinct features of the dream-work, the effect of Jakobson's subsuming synecdoche under metonymy is to conflate. In other words, condensation is confused (synecdoche) with displacement (metonymy). Moreover, Ricoeur complains that the idea is "too wide . . . linking . . . metaphorical procedure and metalinguistic operations" (211) and too narrow in the sense that Jakobson leaves out "the predicative character of metaphor" (212). But Ricoeur's most serious charge is that:

> [T]he fundamental problem of the difference between newly invented metaphor and the metaphor in common use vanishes with the omission of the predicative character of metaphor, to the same extent that the degrees of freedom in combination affect the syntagmatic and not the paradigmatic side of language. (212)

Metaphor collapses back into a form of substitution, though this ought to apply more convincingly to metonymy as a movement from name to name. Metaphor, in bringing two ideas together, has obvious affinities with the axis of combination. Jakobson's schema is incapable of distinguishing new metaphor from polysemy, the freedom of innovation from merely compensating for a semantic deficiency. This difference appears to be the most significant point on which Ricoeur wants to insist in *The Rule of Metaphor*, remembering that the French title of the work is *La Metaphore vive* , 'Metaphor Lives' or 'Living Metaphor'. It is the newly invented metaphor, which provides the interpreter of the metaphor with a new insight into the world, and which, thus, elevates discourse to a new level of phenomenological truth. Failure to distinguish between the living and the dead metaphor thus threatens that moment of freedom Ricoeur discerns in the phenomenological reduction.

Thus in Ricoeur's critique of Jakobson lies an inexorable logic: failure to appreciate the predicative ability goes hand in hand with the inability to distinguish the 'living' from the 'dead' metaphor, series both being consequences of the denial of the trait of intentionality in the metaphor, implying a subsequent denial of human freedom. To go back to the previous examples cited, what may be regarded to be 'dead' in a way, may be said to be that the metaphor is no longer treated as a 'metaphor' in the sense that due to long usage, it fails to excite the receiver's imagination. Hence, the link between cheeks and the rose, sunshine and clouds to human emotion, the reference to the 'hand' rocking the cradle or the ball being set to roll or the teeth of the comb have been in use since so long that they have almost entered the domain of idioms, if not polysemy in this case. Ricoeur is of the opinion that since Jakobson fails to consider metaphor to be anything beyond the domain of substitution: "the essence of metaphor is 'to present an idea under the sign of another idea that is better known'", Ricoeur quotes Jakobson. As a result, the nature of the predicative character of the metaphor is totally ignored. This is closely connected to Ricoeur's complaint about Jakobson's failure to grasp the idea of absolute freedom entailed with intentionality in the use of language in discourse. Hence with reference to our previous examples, Jakobson's theory would fail to appreciate the

'newness' brought about by linking age to a 'withered stalk', time to a 'beggar', or nature to 'a temple'. Since the newly invented metaphor is an attribution of discourse, it is not possible for any theory which obliterates the distinction between sign and discourse to be totally blind to it. So long as Jakobson's schema of combination is accepted as taking place in the code, while selection operates between entities associated in the code:

> In order that selection itself be free, it must result from an original combination created by the context and therefore distinct from performed combinations within the code. In other words, it is in the region of unusual syntagmatic liaisons, of new and purely contextual combinations, that the secret of metaphor is to be sought. (213)

The question of resemblance is better posed in terms of the "associated image" rather than "semic abstraction" (217). Ricoeur feels it necessary to preserve a "*non-verbal* kernel of imagination, that is imagery understood in the quasi-visual, quasi-tactile, quasi-olfactory sense" (235), that will provide a necessary element of disruption in "obliterating the logical and established frontiers of language" (233). The account of imagination is disconcertingly devoid of positive content: a moment of grasping together, a change of distance in the logical space, which may be equated with an act of predication. For instance, Ricoeur is of the opinion that "resemblance is the logical category corresponding to the predicative operation in which 'approximation' (bringing close) meets the resistance of 'being distant" (232). Therefore, borrowing Ricoeur's example, "when Hopkins says 'Oh! The mind has mountains', the reader knows that, literally, the mind does not have mountains; the literal *is not* accompanies the metaphorical *is*" (252). In this way, the "metaphor reveals the logical structure of 'the similar' because, in the metaphorical statement, 'the similar' is perceived *despite* difference, *in spite of* contradiction" (232).

Hence, the conflicting possibilities within the term metaphor may be assessed on the axis of presence and absence. Metaphor encompasses such disparate phenomena as the arbitrary evocation of things absent but existent elsewhere; the controlled projection of an image that replaces an absent thing, as the following comment by Ricoeur demonstrates:

> When for example, Shakespeare likens time to a beggar, he is faithful to the profoundly human reality of time. Therefore we must reserve the possibility that

metaphor is not limited to suspending natural reality, but that in opening meaning up on the imaginative side it also opens it towards a dimension of reality that does not coincide with what ordinary language envisages under the name of natural reality. (249)

Therefore, "'Seeing X *as* Y' encompasses 'X *is not* Y'; seeing time *as a* beggar is, precisely to know also that time is not a beggar. The borders of meaning are transgressed. . ." (253). At this point the concept of 'iconic function' is somewhat problematically introduced: "imagination must cease being seen as a function of the image, in the quasi-sensorial sense of the word; it consists rather in 'seeing as'". This 'seeing-as' refers to "a power that is an aspect of the properly semantic operation consisting in seeing the similar in the dissimilar" (4). The basic trope of metaphor—displacement, the sudden proximity of things previously set apart is now considered eligible for legitimate description in terms of a metaphor of visibility. Earlier Ricoeur refers to "modern authors who say that to make a metaphor are to see two things in one" (26). He later on harps on this idea: "Nothing is displayed in sensible images, therefore; everything, whether associations in the writer's mind or in that of the reader takes place within language" (223). That is to say, "Metaphorical meaning . . . is not the enigma itself, the semantic clash, pure and simple, but the solution of the enigma, the inauguration of the new semantic pertinence" (254). The importance of resemblance here lies in the "tension between identity and difference in the predicative operation set in motion by semantic innovation" (4). In fact, the tension is a serious one, because "metaphor presents itself as a strategy of discourse that, while preserving and developing the creative power of language, preserves and develops the *heuristic* power wielded by fiction" (5). Herein lies the significance behind exploring the connection "in all discourse between sense, which is its internal organisation, and reference, which is its power to refer to a reality outside of language" (5).

Hence, what initially appears to be a contextual definition of truth according to use and situation acquires the 'postulate' of a world beyond language: "In *Speech Acts,* John Searle postulates . . . the thesis that something must be in order that something may be identified" (258). This finally leads Ricoeur to comment that:

Just as the metaphorical statement captures its sense as metaphorical midst the ruins of a literal sense, it also achieves its reference upon the ruins of what might be called

(in symmetrical fashion) its literal reference. If it is true that literal sense and metaphorical sense are articulated within an interpretation, so too it is within an interpretation that a second-level reference, which is properly the metaphorical reference, is set free by means of suspension of the first-level reference. (261)

Ricoeur uses two terms to indicate the movement: "centrifugal or 'outward' movement takes us outside discourse, from words towards things. Centripetal or 'internal' movement of words presses towards the broader verbal configurations that constitute the literary work in its totality" (266). Hence, the metaphoric process involves the linking of the word to the context of the whole sentence in which it is located but also in the context of the discourse in which the sentence is located. The metaphor is in fact "born out of the dismantling of semantic networks caused by the shock of contradiction" (235). Ricoeur refers to Nelson Goodman who, using a "metaphor of metaphor" defines metaphor as the 'reassignment of labels', that fashions in figure from 'an affair between a predicate with a past and an object that yields while protesting": "To yield while protesting is, in metaphorical form, our paradox. The protest is what remains from the former marriage, the literal assignation, destroyed by contradiction; the yielding is what finally happens thanks to the new rapprochement" (231). Therefore, "the meaning of a metaphorical statement rises up from the blockage of any literal interpretation of the statement. In a literal interpretation, the meaning abolishes itself. Next, because of this self-destruction of meaning, the primary reference founders" (271).

 In this context, it would be relevant to go back to Ricoeur's formulations of the distinction between verbal and non-verbal imagination: "The question then is whether the iconic moment of metaphor stands outside every semantic approach. . .Would not imagination have something to do with the conflict between identity and difference?" (235). Borrowing Kant's terminology, Ricoeur identifies verbal imagination as being productive and the non-verbal imagination as reproductive. He goes on to argue that the metaphoric function of imagination involves a verbal aspect to the extent that it involves "the grasping of identity within differences", establishing "the relatedness of terms far apart" in such a way that they confront each other rather than "melt together"(236). This schematism of metaphor "turns imagination into the place where the figurative meaning emerges in the interplay of identity and difference" (236). However, one cannot afford to ignore the "pictorial capacity of language," contained in the "seeing an aspect" (251): "'Seeing-as' is an experience and an act at one and the same time. On the one hand, the

mass of images is beyond all voluntary control; the image arises, occurs, and there is no rule to be learned for 'having images'" (252). Moreover, because of the priority of "'seeing-as' over the resemblance relationship", the 'seeing-as' "can succeed or fail" (253):

> Thus 'seeing-as' quite precisely plays the role of the schema that unites the *empty* concept and the *blind* impression; thanks to its character as half thought and half experience , it joins the light of sense with the fullness of image. In this way, the non-verbal and the verbal are firmly united at the core of the image-ing function of language" (253).

For instance, when a man is likened to a tiger or a wolf, the words actually bring in the image of the ferocity of the tiger. Therefore language creates a non-verbal image of a human quality describes it in verbal and animalistic terms. In this way the 'emptiness' of the concept of the human trait, (in the sense that its linguistic equivalent is missing) of ferocity is actually linked to one's impression of the tiger which the reader/listener has yet been blind to. Once homogeneity is discovered, the distance between the terms, 'tiger/wolf' and 'man' is shortened and this brings in 'fullness' or sense to the yet 'non-sensical' relation of between and tiger or wolf.

Here, one might be tempted to conclude along with Ricoeur that

> [T]he fittingness, the appropriateness of certain verbal and non-verbal predicates, indicate that language not only has organized reality in a different way, but also made manifest a way of being of things, which is brought to language. . . It would seem that the enigma of metaphorical discourse is that it 'invents' in both senses of the word: what it creates, it discovers; and what it finds, it invents (282-83)

But the question is whether "there is an experience of reality in which invention and discovery cease being opposed and where creation and revelation coincide" (291). According to Ricoeur, "reality brought to language unites manifestation and creation" (283). Ricoeur mentions elsewhere that "instead of being a medium or route crossed on the way to reality, language itself becomes 'stuff' like the sculptor's marble" (247). On the other hand, "metaphor is not limited to suspending natural reality, but . . . in opening meaning up on the imaginative side it also opens it towards a dimension of reality that does not coincide with what ordinary language envisages under the name of natural

reality" (249), because, "nothing is obtained from the world except imagery unchained by meaning" (249). Hence, it is ultimately imagery that characterizes the 'real' experience, thereby rendering it the status of a "quasi-experience or virtual experience" (249). On the other hand, Ricoeur also opines that:

> Concepts in scientific language as well as in ordinary language can never actually be derived . . . from images, because the discontinuity of the levels of discourse is founded, at least virtually, by the very structure of the conceptual space in which meanings are inscribed when they draw away from the metaphorical process . (355)

This brings us to a crucial paradox: "The notion of virtual experience indirectly brings back 'relatedness' to reality, which paradoxically offsets the difference and the distance from reality that characterize the verbal icon" (249). This in a way implies that as we seek the meaning of 'reality' we actually land on a tension between the literal and the metaphorical, because, "if all language, all symbolism consists in 'remaking reality', there is no place in language where this work is more plainly and fully demonstrated. It is when symbolism breaks through its acquired limits and conquers new territory that we understand the breadth of its ordinary scope" (280). Therefore, "The difference between literal and metaphorical can introduce dissymmetry in any way at all into compatible combinations. Are a person and a picture alike in being sad? Yet one is sad literally, the other metaphorically, according to the established usage of our language" (279). The compatibility amid the combinations is determined by social usage and convention. Hence, the colour grey in a picture is associated with sadness and gloom, though colours and human moods are in no way in symmetry with each other. Moreover, we tend to call the painting a sad one when only sentient beings may be either sad or gay. Thus the literal falsity becomes responsible for a metaphorical truth. Therefore,

> [T]he application of a predicate is metaphorical only if it conflicts with an application governed by present practice. Ancient history and repressed memory can break through to the surface. Still, an expatriate according to the present laws remains an alien even when back in his homeland. A theory of application comes to life in the present. (279)

Moreover,

> [T]he distinction between literal and metaphorical exists only through the conflict of interpretations. One interpretation employs only values that are already lexicalized and so succumbs to semantic pertinence; the other, insinuating a new semantic pertinence requires a twist in the word that displaces its own meaning. (343)

From this, what can be discerned is that "philosophical language appears to contradict the semanticist's judgement" (344), if the language of philosophy is taken to be literal language, as meaning the "current" or the "usual" language, or the language in "use in discourse" (343). In Ricoeur's words, "Philosophical discourse sets itself up as the vigilant watchman overseeing the ordered extensions of meaning; against this background, the unfettered extensions of meaning in poetic discourse spring free" (308). The point to be taken note of however is that one needs to be cautious of the metaphor used in philosophy:

> We must draw a line between the relatively banal case of an 'extended' use of words of ordinary language in response to a deficiency of naming and the case. . .where philosophical discourse deliberately has recourse to living metaphor in order to draw out new meanings from some semantic impertinence. . .(344)

In fact, borrowing from Nietzsche, Ricoeur feels that "a 'genealogical' manner of questioning philosophers has emerged":

> An entirely different sort of implication between philosophy and metaphor comes to light which links them at the level of their hidden presuppositions. . . it is not only the order of terms that is inverted, philosophy preceding metaphor; but the mode of implication, is itself reversed, the 'un-thought' of philosophy anticipating the 'unsaid' of metaphor. (331)

The paradoxical status of the above lines is important. There is a refusal to allow 'unthematised' presuppositions, which seems highly idealistic, yet there is a looking forward to a trap onto language itself. There is also a reference to Heidegger's maxim that "the metaphorical exists only in the within the metaphysical": "This saying suggests that the trans-gression of meta-phor and that of meta-physics are but one and the same transfer. . . meta-phorical means transfer from to the proper sense to the figurative sense. . ." (331). This leads Ricoeur to conclude that "whether we speak of the metaphorical

character of metaphysics or of the metaphysical character of metaphor, what must be grasped is the single movement that carries words and things beyond, *meta*" (341). In another way, "wherever metaphor fades, there the metaphysical concept concept rises up" (338). Hence, Ricoeur quotes Derrida here from '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" (Derrida, 11; Riicoeur338). He brings in the concept of dead metaphors in the quote from Nietzsche: "truths are allusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions; worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses, coins which have their obverse effaced and now are no longer of account as coins but merely as metal" (338).

Therefore, Ricoeur likens metaphysics more to a "plant in a herbarium" than to an "allegorizing interpretation of metaphors already given in language" (336). Here he pays generous tribute to "the tight fabric of Derrida's demonstration' that enters domain of metaphor not by way of its birth", but "by way of its death". This is with reference to the "non-stated in metaphor" which is the "used, worn-out metaphor"; "metaphoricity functions here" "behind our backs" (336):

> The concept of wearing away [*usure*] . . . carries its own sort of metaphoricity with it, which is not surprising in a conception that aims precisely at demonstrating the limitless metaphoricity of metaphor. In its overdetermination the concept carries first the geological metaphor of sedimentation, of erosion, of wearing away by friction. To this is added the numismatic metaphor of wearing down the features of a medal or a coin. This metaphor in turn, evokes the tie perceived by de Saussure among others, between linguistic value and monetary value: a comparison that invites the suspiscion that the using up or wearing away [*usure*] of things used and worn is also usury of usurers. At the same time, the instructive parallelism between linguistic value and economic value can be pushed to the point where the *proper* sense and *property* are suddenly revealed as next of kin within the same semantic network. Following this association further, one may suspect that metaphor is a sort of 'linguistic surplus value' functioning unknown to speakers, in the manner in which in the economic field the product of human labour is made at once unrecognizable and transcendent in economic surplus value and the fetishism of merchandise. (336-37)

However, Derrida's emphasis precludes the influx of new meaning, which might in fact serve as a justification of his procedure: "The creation of new meanings, in connection with the advent of a new manner of questioning, places language in a state of semantic deficiency; lexicalized metaphor must intervene to compensate for this lack" (344). Derrida's account of the dead or the worn-out metaphor, according to Ricoeur, "is more seductive than earth-shaking" (344), in the sense that the attempted exposure of the collusion between metaphor and metaphysics represents "only one episode in a much vaster strategy of deconstruction" (339). Far from representing a vast untapped reservoir of meaning, it propounds that "dead metaphors are no longer metaphors, but instead are associated with literal meaning, extending its polysemy" (342).

Hence, the implication of this "worn-out" metaphor is that a discourse on metaphor is itself infected by the universal 'metaphoricity' of the philosophical discourse, which brings us to the ultimate paradox:

> [T]here is no discourse on metaphor that is not stated within a metaphorically engendered conceptual network. . . Metaphor is metaphorically stated. . . The theory of metaphor returns in a circular manner to a metaphor of theory, which determines the truth of being in terms of presence. . . Were one successfully to establish order and figures, still one metaphor would at least escape: the metaphor of metaphor, the 'extra metaphor' (339).

From Ricoeur's point of view, no philosophical discourse would be possible, not even a discourse of deconstruction, if we ceased to assume what Derrida holds to be "the sole thesis of philosophy", namely "that the meaning aimed at through these figures is an essence rigorously independent of that which carries it over" (346). This is possible because, "The reanimation of a dead metaphor . . . amounts to a new production of metaphor and therefore, of metaphorical meaning" (344) and hence, "The analysis of dead metaphor is thus seen to refer back to an initial foundation which is living metaphor" (345). Ricoeur cites an example here, of the metaphor of 'home':

> [T]he metaphor of the home is really '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 . . . the reappropriation, the second coming, the self-presence of the idea in its light (341-42).

This is because "speculative thought employs the metaphorical resources of language in order to create meaning and answers thus to the call of the 'thing' to be said with a semantic innovation" (367). Moreover:

> The appearance of new natural and cultural objects in the field of naming, the deposit of beliefs in key words, the reinforcement or lifting of cultural taboos; political and cultural domination by a linguistic group, by a social class, or by a cultural milieu— all these influences leave language . . . to the mercy of social forces whose effectiveness underlines the non-systematic character of the system. (148)

Besides, "The metaphorical field in its entirety is open to all the figures that play on the relation between the similar and the dissimilar in any region of the unthinkable whatsoever". (348). It is basically the knowledge of the use of words in sentences and that of sentences in contexts that determines the mastery of meaning, which "stands as mediator between words and things", "through which words relate to things" (144). Hence, knowledge about meaning in a way guarantees the association of meaning to referents, or in other words, makes one aware of the power of signifying, which is known to be the "intersection of two movements: "One movement aims at determining more rigorously the conceptual traits of reality, while the other aims at making the referents appear (that is, the entities to which the appropriate predicative terms apply", thereby resulting in a signifying power that is "an unending exercise, a 'continuing Odyssey' (352). But the "dynamism of meaning" affects the "signifying power" in another important way:

> The semantic dynamism, proper to ordinary language, gives a 'historicity' to the power of signifying. New possibilities of signifying are opened up, supported by meanings that have already been established. This 'historicity' is carried by the attempt at expression made by a speaker, who, wanting to formulate a new experience in words, seeks something capable of carrying his intention in the network of meanings he finds already established. Thanks to the very instability of meaning, a semantic aim can find the path of its utterance. (352)

Herein may be found and echo of the speech-act theory of Austin and Searle. For instance, according to Austin, for a felicitous speech act, "There must exist an accepted conventional procedure, having a conventional effect" (1962; p.14) as also of Saussure. For Ricoeur brings up a similar idea with reference to Saussure:

M[etaphor . . . having ceased to be an innovation . . . enters into standard usage and then becomes a cliché; the circle is then completed between language and speech. The circle can be described in the following manner. Initial polysemy equals 'language', the living metaphor equals 'speech', metaphor in common use represents the return of speech towards language, and a subsequent polysemy equals 'language'. This circle is a perfect illustration of the untenability of the Saussurean dichotomy. (142)

This makes possible the notion of the "living metaphor" which "vivifies a constituted language" and "introduces the spark of imagination into a 'thinking more' at the conceptual level" (358). Thereby, the idea of 'historicity' to the power of signifying brings in the concept of "sedimentation" into Derrida's 'worn-out' metaphor. In a way, the idea of signification as a "continuing exercise, an unending Odyssey" also seems to be a reiteration of the Derridean phenomenon of "iterability", as also the presence of "traces" of the living in the worn-out metaphor. Therefore:

On the one hand, as regards sense, the metaphorical utterance reproduces the form of a movement in a portion of the trajectory of meaning that goes beyond the familiar referential field where the meaning is already constituted. On the other hand, it brings an unknown referential field towards language, and within the ambit of this field the semantic aim functions and unfolds. (354).

However one important point is to be borne in mind here:

[L]anguage becomes aware of itself in the self-articulation of the being which it is about. Far from locking language up inside itself, this reflective consciousness is the very consciousness of its openness. . . When I speak, I know that something is brought to language. This knowledge is no longer intra-linguistic but extra-linguistic; it moves from being to being-said, at the very time that language itself moves from sense to reference. Kant wrote: "'Something must be' for something to appear". We are saying: "Something must be for something to be said" (360)

At this point, it may be noted that Lacan has an interesting comment where he addresses the means by which the subject confronts the 'suspicion' of which Ricoeur speaks, a suspiscion concerning the centrality of the ego to the Being: "It is nonetheless true that the philosophical cogito is at the centre of the mirage that renders modern man so sure of

being himself in his uncertainties about himself . . . if in the name of 'war is war' and 'a penny's a penny', I resolve to be what I am, how can I escape here from the obvious fact that I am in this very act?" (*Ecrits* 430). Ricoeur appeals to Aristotle's concept of the polysemy of being and more specifically, to the distinction between "being as potentiality and being as actuality" (363). This seeing "things as actions" (364) could be taken to be a dominant preoccupation of Ricoeur's later work: "Signifying things in act would be seeing things as not prevented from becoming, seeing them as blossoming forth" (364). This, to some extent seems to bridge the gap between the 'real' and the 'imaginary'. Here it is important to mention that "Signifying is always something other than representing" (356). Therefore:

> It is then the task of speculative discourse to seek after the place where appearance signifies 'generating what grows'. As this sense is no longer to be sought in the region of objects, that occupied by physical bodies and living organisms, it indeed seems to be at the level of appearance. . . In relation to this open and unlimited acceptation, signifying actions, signifying artifice, and signifying movement are already determinations, that is to say, limitations and restrictions that miss something of what is indicated in the expression 'signifying the blossoming of appearing'. If there is a point in our experience where living expression states living existence, it is where our movement up the entropic slope of language encounters the movement by which we come back this side of the distinctions between actuality, action, production, motion. (365)

Hence the ultimate referent of the metaphorical utterance is the power of transformation to which it testifies. This power of redescription demands that the distinction between disourse directed outwards (to facts, things) and that directed inwards (to moods, emotions) must be abandoned:

> Poetic discourse brings to language a pre-objective world in which we find ourselves already rooted, but in which we also project our innermost possibilities. We must thus dismantle the reign of objects in order to let be, and to allow to be uttered, our primordial belonging to a world which we inhabit, that is to say, which at once precedes us and receives the imprint of our works. In short we must restore to the fine word *invent* its twofold sense of discovery and creation. (362)

In conclusion it may be said that a detour of semantics reveals a "tension" in the metaphorical truth in three different levels: "tension between subject and predicate, between literal interpretation and metaphorical interpretation, between identity and difference. . . They come to completion finally in the paradox of the copula, where being-as signifies being and not being" (371). Arriving at a metaphorical truth is therefore not a question of judgement on the reader/hearer's part. Rather arriving at a metaphorical truth is a question of the reader/hearer suspending, or bracketing off, their judgement regarding the literal truth of the proposition.

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III

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Hence in Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor*, there is a crucial distinction between semiotics and semantics. Ricoeur takes up a sympathetic exposition of the semic analysis undertaken by structural linguistics; a detailed examination of the interaction theory of metaphor developed in philosophical semantics; and most problematically , an extension of this into an ontological tension within the second-order reference of metaphorical language. Ricoeur states his 'double allegiance' to French and English-language philosophy and undertakes a historical survey of disparate theories, a co-ordination of traditions. Metaphor is presented as a unique point of creativity, of innovation of meaning in the utterance of an individual speaker or writer, struggling against the linguistic entropy that produces the polysemy of ordinary language. In fact Ricoeur appreciates the fact that a study of the metaphor is so vast that "a simple interpretation through a game of question and answer is no longer sufficient. Heideggerian deconstruction must take on Nietzschean genealogy, Freudian psychoanalysis, the Marxist critique of ideology, that is, the weapons of the hermeneutics of suspiscion" (337). This hermeneutics of suspicion is actually geared to unmasking and removing the illusions of symbols which not only reveal but also conceal meaning. Ricoeur draws on Marx, Freud and Nietzsche, each of whom, in his own way does something like positing a 'false' consciousness, in place of an immediate, self-transparent consciousness. The hermeneutics of suspicion deciphers the meaning hidden and distorted by literal and apparent meanings. Ricoeur makes a plea for the 'unmasking' of the metaphor: "we must 'expose' metaphor, unmask it. Metaphor has been compared to a filter, a screen, and a lens, in order to say that it places things under a perspective and instructs us to'see as...' Yet it is also a mask that disguises. (298)

That is precisely why Ricoeur urges upon his readers to keep the notion of "split reference" of the metaphorical utterance in mind. All creative language refers to the world in a way that literal and descriptive language does not. It refers to the world "as if" it were actually like that. The reference is 'divided' or 'split' meaning that such an utterance points to some aspect of the world that cannot be described but only suggested at and referred to indirectly. The referent in such creative discourse is discontinuous with that of ordinary language, although it refers to another level that is more fundamental than that attained by descriptive language. Therefore, though all discourse is distanced from the everyday world, by pointing beyond the everyday world by projecting new possibilities, the creative language points back to the everyday world, and presents new ways to see the world. Metaphors, fiction, depictions project an absent world, and therein lies the critical dimension of poetic and fictional discourse. The imaginary, non-congruent character of creative language is therefore its virtue, not its failure. It is precisely because it is unreal that imaginative discourse can present perspectives that do not actually exist but might be preferable alternatives. Fiction can act as a regulative ideal that allows us to step back and reflect on our world in the light of a different world. The unreal acts as a vantage point for criticism of the real. That is why as Ricoeur speaks of "the work of resemblance" or of similarity through the dissimilar, he recalls the formula quoted by Jakobson: " 'Aixo era y no era' (It was and it was not)" (265). The formula that served as an ending to Majorcan tales expresses very effectively the same double move and tension between (a) the ontological vehemence that says that "it was"; and (b) the critical 'distanciation' that says that "it was not", both neutralizing the reality designated by the narrative and thus opening onto the field of the possible.

In the first set of "hermeneutic essays", titled *The Conflict of Interpretations*, Ricoeur deals with the attempt to find the meaning or truth as that which is hidden "behind" the object of interpretation. The meaning or truth of a text in some sense precedes the text, and answers the question that produced it. In the second set of "hermeneutic essays" published under the title *From Text to Action*, Ricoeur claims that to interpret means to imagine a world or worlds possibly unfolded by the text. The imagination "plays" with this world just as a musician performs a score or a preacher interprets a biblical text. For Ricoeur, the text breaks away from its author's intention, its original social and cultural setting, and from its original audience as well. The text is therefore able to "open" up new spaces in front of itself; it creates the possibility of new meanings, opening up new

worlds. The world of literal reference is consequently suspended to the benefit of an opening in the direction of what we call a metaphorical reference. This suspension is what has been named as "*epoche*" (266), which is defined in *From Text to Action* as "the virtual event, the imaginary act that inaugurates the whole game by which we exchange signs for things" (40).

  This act of suspension is typical of living metaphors—what makes a live metaphor is the double movement by which a poetical utterance first of all suspends the ordinary meaning of words, their first order-reference so as to open up a new space of meaning, the second-order reference. Ricoeur's metaphor of the home cited in one of the preceding pages in this chapter carries with it the connotation of displacement of this first order reference. In *Freud and Philosophy* (1970), he speaks of:

> a *decentering* of the home of significations, a *displacement* of the birthplace of meaning. . . The necessity of this dispossession [is] . . . aimed at making me completely homeless, at dispossessing me of that illusory Cogito which at the outset occupies the place of the founding act, *I think, I am* (422-23)

 Therefore, far from being confined to the language of tradition, in the figures of an already set 'prejudgement' and 'precomprehension', the live metaphor tries to shake up and enliven the "sedimentary" layers set down by the history and prehistory of our signs and images. It shakes them and reorients them; it suspends and reorients and thus tries to offer a new world. This implies that the concept of the "worn-out" or "dead" metaphor needs to be re-examined. In fact Ricoeur clarifies his stance towards the end of his book:

> [T]his language ploy involves no mystique of 'primordial meaning'. A buried sense becomes a new meaning in the present instance of discourse. This is all the more true when speculative thought adopts the new meaning in order to blaze a path to the 'thing' itself. The return of ancient metaphors—that of light, the ground, the home, the way, or path—must be regarded in the same manner. Their use in a new context is a form of innovation. . . This is why if no metaphor is privileged, neither is forbidden. (367)

The metaphor indeed has the capacity to suspend all the semantic, descriptive, and explanatory aspects of our knowledge and judgements. In a way, it would not be wrong to say that the *epoche* is practically that point when the reality component of our

interpretation of the world encounters the fantasy component or the component of imagination. In fact, the thinkers discussed in the preceding chapters make a plea for such a point of encounter—be it the Saussurean bar or the Derridean trace or the Lacanian concept of the mirror. Ricoeur's reference to Heidegger bears relevance at this point: "Between these two [thinking and poetry] there exists a secret kinship because in the service of language both intercede on behalf of language and give lavishly of themselves. Between both there is, however, at the same time an abyss for they "dwell on the most widely separated mountains" (370). Hence there is not just an epistemological and a political imagination, but also a linguistic imagination which generates and regenerates meaning through the living power of metaphoricity. It is this linguistic imagination which to a great extent reduces the distinction between the literary and the metaphorical. Human existence is always open to the horizon of imagination, which is always already present, exceeding the limits of finitude. Cultural forms, works of art and religious symbols provide configurations of human existence. On the other hand, on the basis of our 'preconfigurations' and 'prejudgements' about the world around us, we are also capable of creating meanings in order to discover the 'real' and thereby endow existence with significance. But the real or the true is never revealed before us unless mediated through language, because our universe is rooted in language, in metaphors and the most universal and abstract concepts still bear traces of metaphors that helped to produce them. Ricoeur therefore adds that:

> This is true of other metaphors for metaphor evoked so frequently in the present work: screen, filter, lens, super-imposition, overload, stereoscopic vision, tension, interanimation, change of labels, idyll, and bigamy etc. Nothing prevents the fact of language that metaphor constitutes from being itself 'redescribed' with the help of various 'heuristic fictions' produced sometimes by living metaphors, sometimes by worn-out metaphors that have been revived. (347).

The above quote truly substantiates the point that language at all levels is metaphorical. In other words, Ricoeur's explanation of the relationship between the logic of metaphor and the strength of metaphor raises fundamental questions on the metaphoricity of language itself. On the one hand, Ricoeur suggests that the so-called non-sense words are metaphors as yet unused but are clearly in the zone. It would mean that what we call metaphorical would have had its beginnings in a specific utterance that would be called either absurd or poetic within the same linguistic community. The difference, we must

note, is not therefore a matter of logic or traditionally systematised knowledge but of knowledge on the frontier, which gets accepted or becomes visible at moments of extreme distress or dire need. On the other hand, the comfort with which societies or linguistic communities accept some metaphors as logical and some others as absurd or illogical needs to be examined and problematised. Every metaphor emerges from a crisis in linguistic relationships whether of resemblance or difference. In other words, metaphors are displacements of ordinary usage that force themselves into communities and their cognitive abilities. It does not however mean that the metaphoricity of the metaphor is self-referential or even self-contained. It should be noted that metaphors are not self-begotten figures. Usage is one aspect of the absorption of metaphors into a language system. Ricoeur however is alert to the possibility of users stretching a language—that is it's semiotic, semantic and cognitive loads—to extremely illogical and absurd limits by envisioning relationships as if in a stance. One could call this a moment of linguistic epiphany, that creates new relationships not through linkages but by way of violent breaks. Ricoeur's suggestion that poets create sense out of non-sense highlights this particular aspect of linguistic figuration. This has implications both for production and circulation of meaning in a linguistic community. For instance, a metaphor that refuses to surprise is not really dead but becomes a word. When a signifier and the signified are linked because of their apparent but not explicitly available substitution logic, metaphors come into force. A man is presented as a wolf or a tiger or a palm tree retains enough of his 'manness' at the very moment that he is supposed to generate 'tigerness', 'wolfness' or 'palmness'. Ricoeur's problematisation of the dead metaphor can be said to contextualise what Saussure, Derrida and Lacan seem to be saying. Every word is the culmination of metphoricity, that is the end of figuration that coincides with beginning of cognition or meaning formation. That is why, Ricoeur rightly says that "The word itself is a metaphor on the road to extinction" (168).

 Besides, creation of meaning in language comes from the specifically human production of new ways of expressing the varied experiences in the world through the words at hand. But the most remarkable point is the inventive power of human language despite the objective limits and codes which govern it, which reveals its diversity and potentiality at the same time. Having said that, it needs to be reiterated that philosophical discourse and poetic discourse are seemingly 'heterogeneous'. Hence, coming to the moot point, the distance between reality revealed by philosophical discourse and

imagination, a characteristic of poetic discourse, may be said to determine the gap between the word and the thing. The farther is the distance between "what appears to be" and "what is", the more remote is the word from the thing. But one thing is for sure: it is language that mediates the distance between fantasy and reality, and rather than ordinary or so-called "proper" language, it is the metaphorical language that has access to the world of things. Where metaphor cannot be easily translated into a conceptual discourse like philosophy without losing its particular tensive quality, philosophical discourse cannot become 'poetical' without blurring the need for conceptual clarity. But as already asserted, concepts too belong to the huge gamut of language. Concepts are derived from inscriptions laid out when meanings draw away from a more fundamental metaphorical process inherent to discourse, that is, "the conceptual order is able to free itself from the play of double meaning and hence from the semantic dynamism characteristic of the metaphorical order" (357). Hence, what seems to be a sharp disparity between the poetic and the philosophical is actually a type of "interplay" arbitrated by interpretation. Ricoeur's closing line to *The Rule of Metaphor* is emblematic of this dynamism:

> What is given to thought in this way by the 'tensional' truth of poetry is the most primordial, most hidden dialectic—the dialectic that reigns between the experience of belonging as a whole and the power of distanciation that opens up the space of speculative thoughts (371).

Philosophical discourse cannot dispense with its relationship with the rich resources of poetic discourse and metaphor to increase and augment the capacity of our language to mediate meaning. Metaphorical truth on the other hand opens up a wider dimension of reality to which our life belongs. In other words, we are condemned to the conflict of interpretations, from which we cannot hope to emerge via a hermeneutic philosophy. The text thus becomes, for Ricoeur, the model for belonging to a communication in and through the distance between the word and the thing. In interpretation we endeavour to 'reappropriate' those meanings that have been 'disappropriate' from understanding. We strive to recover that which has been removed.

CONCLUSION

FIGURING OUT

To say that language is figurative is tautological in a sense. For, language is what it is only because it is figurative. This dissertation examines how language users—that is, philosophers, poets, theorists and polemicists alike—look at the problem as if language was something other than itself. In a sense the reality of language is bound by the simultaneous emptiness and plenitude of the sign. The language that we use—the language that we understand, and/or are understood by—can be thought of as our language in contexts that we have seen or created. Therefore questions of emptiness and plenitude can be seen as context-bound. Again, given that some of what we say may be seen as valid beyond the contexts that we ourselves create or discover, plenitude and emptiness that may accrue in a given language instance can be attributed to the validity of a sign system beyond individual contexts. Thus we speak of a language community or a speech community or an interpretive community.

An important question may arise here as to the 'destiny' of a language or a language instance that is not immediately followed—or cannot be followed—by a given community. We may perhaps put the question differently by asking why the language of a user, presumably from the same community, cannot be followed. We may also ask if the inability of the community to follow a particular instance of language use has anything to do with social convention that does not take cognizance of exceptions to established codes of usage. We may still perhaps put the question differently by asking if –that is, why or how—the language coding by a user in a particular instance translated what was perhaps a personal epiphany into a public discourse. While this question may be asked by invoking structures, it can also be asked by way of looking at the way humans and other organisms translate individual experience into community codes, whether it is bees telling other bees where to look for food or mothers telling their children that 'food for thought' is not a market good.

In other words, translating any object-consciousness into words involves subject-centric transformation of orders of thinking into syntactic or paradigmatic orders. In essence, we never have words operating as exact equivalents of things or ideas. This dissertation undertakes a critical inquiry into the nature of the transformation of one order of sign systems into another: awareness into speech or writing, phenomenon into language, or arbitrary systems into stable-looking structures. It argues that that words can be seen signs that operate in and as sign systems, and we may do so without overstating the case.

Beginning with Saussure's early twentieth study on the signifier-signified link, one looks at the central concerns of twentieth century literary-critical theory—raised by Derrida, Lacan and Ricoeur—as one hinged in a linguistic issue. Having said that, the linguistic issue cannot be understood fully, unless taken up in a larger philosophical context.

We may perhaps sum up the findings, not one by one, but as a whole. In Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* we find an argument that is not generally seen in discussions of structuralism and literary theory. Contrary to what is said, there are in Saussure's work various instances of the word-thing distance and dissonance. Saussure in fact says that the distance between the words and the thing is punctuated by varied instances of linguistic involvement where speakers have changed or challenged not only meanings but also meaning systems. He repeatedly pleads for abandoning the idea that words are either concrete examples or concrete units. Saussure offers several instances of metaphors failing normal word systems but gathering meaning in contexts that may appear innovative and/or disruptive, opening up issues of individual usage and speech community validation for analysis in terms of language hierarchy and social hierarchy. We may have situation where what Saussure calls effects of motivation, demotivation and remotivation can be directly related to power and social systems. Human beings make use of figurations to define themselves in a sign system.

Austin and Searle suggest that expression and communication are medium-dependent. In other words what we call meaning is a linguistic or social obligation. When a speaker uses or rejects a certain meaning in a certain situation, it is essentially an individual anticipation of or resistance to social acts. Speech and act are related socially, and reflect the investments that make social systems possible. The availability of a certain exit from a social system may be the result of a certain individual intervention, but its validity is directly proportional to its acceptability as a case of social intervention. The pairing of saying and doing, meaning and performing, structure and practice, locution and illocution is valid only when language in itself opposes language in context. This is clearly akin to social praxis resisting and allowing for reforms. To look at meaning and context in a linear fashion is therefore counter-productive.

Derrida's freewheeling treatment of metaphoric language and the figure of the figure remains central to this inquiry of language relating to the object world. His deconstruction of grammatology by way of teasing out the very meaning of meaning

pushed language to a world of indeterminacy. All meaning is caught in a process of deferral given that every instance of meaning production is an instance of exposing the multiplicity of layers that make language possible in the first place. Derrida says that displacement is not a characteristic of language but the very condition of language. Without displacement and deferral there would be no room for language to work with its inner metaphoricity, that is, its capacity for creating meaning by invoking difference but by converting difference into *differance*, a productive instance of the negativistic nature of signs and systems. However, to think that there is an outside of language that decides how language ought to work is an illusion. He shows the paradox of Rousseau's paradoxical engagement with the impossibility of taking a position outside of language. No judgement of metaphoricity is free from its own metaphoricity. To say that there is nothing outside of language need not mean that the world does not exist. The world creates language and is created by it. So figurations are important to engage with this very paradoxical situation.

Lacan returns meaning to its originary moment by showing how the axiality of words in relation to words is fictive and factual at the same moment. He draws on the language of poetry and the unconscious and challenges the way we normally see metaphor and metonymy. Given that metaphors are supposed to operate by way of vertical substitution—as opposed to metonymies that operate by way of horizontal extension or substitution—Lacan begins by showing that the very process of substitution challenges any sense of linearity. He in a way suggests that the critical hierarchy of metaphors and metonymies is without much sense. Lacan not only challenges the fundamental assumptions that go into meaning formation—linearity, articulation, correspondence, substitution, and the signifier-signified divide—are bound by desire and imagination. So the difference between word and thing lies in the fiction-facticity continuum and rupture, a figuration of the figure, something that is cared by the user's desire for emptying or filling a word. The context of the letter therefore is not superior to the content or the instance. He relates to Derrida by re-visiting the figure of the figure but also by re-investing in the figure acts of social re-distribution of meaning and power. Metaphors are not just cases of poetic or philosophical figurations of reality; they are also cases of individual desire resisting or modifying social desire. Linguistic substitution and psychological substitution—words or images—are figurations of redistribution of power.

It is Paul Ricoeur who examines the trajectories of metaphor making both in language and philosophy. In his *Rule of Metaphor* he argues that every word is the culmination of metaphoricity, in a way consolidating Saussure's linguistic work in a philosophical template. He shows how meaning production is not just context-dependent but also context-producing. Each time a word is pushed into the domain of meaning-making, it creates new contexts that may perhaps see validation of thinking in different ways. He returns to the sharp disparity that appears to divide poetic and philosophical explanation of figures and says that what divides them is not contradictions but a type of interplay arbitrated by interpretation. Echoing Derrida he says that we are condemned to a conflict of interpretations from which we cannot emerge either by way of hermeneutics or phenomenology. What is possible, however, is mediated interpretation of the world by the word that also allows for the world interpreting the world. We cannot therefore attribute the validation or rejection of meaning to a unilinear distribution of power between society and individual. Conflicts not only produce interpretations but also validate them. To this extent the text is a model case of communication that draws on the distance and proximity between word and thing, that is, the word and the world.

Any secure interpretation of the world through the word necessarily partakes of the word-ness of the world and the world-ness of the word. Figurative language is the condition and consequence of this bridge and divide. The focus on figurative language in twentieth century critical theory offers a broad-spectrum of history and praxis of language as a social and philosophical tool.