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The Philosophical Conception of Metaphor

✉ Lemdjadie Souria
souriya.lemdjadi@univ-relizane.dz
Relizane University / Algérie

التصور الفلسفي للاستعارة

✉ لمجادي سوريّة
souriya.lemdjadi@univ-relizane.dz
جامعة غليزان / الجزائر

ABSTRACT:

Metaphor has taken on a significant position in the field of philosophical studies due to its role in revealing truth and acquiring knowledge, as it dissolves the boundaries of separation and creates connections between what is poetic truth and what is philosophical.

While philosophy, at certain stages, remained under the influence of traditional beliefs, the issue surrounding metaphor persisted. Philosophers stood between two stances: treating it as an essential tool in shaping philosophical discourses or considering it merely as decoration and embellishment.

In this context, it became necessary to expand the narrow view of metaphor into a broader scope, in which it becomes a means to shape concepts and provide alternatives, facilitating the approximation of meanings. It serves as an ontological bridge with its structure linking reality's systems, shaping the truth of existence by transforming it from the falsehood of what is unveiled to the truth of what is concealed, ultimately bringing it into the philosophical domain.

Keywords: Metaphor, Truth, Philosophy, Concept, Epistemological tool.

ملخص البحث

تبوأَت الاستعارة منزلة كبيرة في حقل الدراسات الفلسفية لما تؤديه من فعالية في كشف الحقيقة وحياسة المعرفة وظل الإشكال وارداً حول الاستعارة حين وقف الفلاسفة إزاءها موقف بينيا بين جعلها آلية جوهرية في تشكيل الخطابات الفلسفية، واعتبارها مجرد تزيين وتوشية .

ضمن هذا المنحى أصبح لزاماً تخطي المنظور الضيق للاستعارة إلى حيز رحب تغدو فيه السبيل في بلورة التصورات والبديل لتقريب المفاهيم وهيكلتها لحقيقة الوجود بتلثيمه لإخراجه من زيف المنكشف إلى حقيقة المتحجب، ومن ثم تنتهي إلى الحقل الفلسفي.

وركحاً على ما سلف خلصتا إلى جملة من النتائج نجملها فيما يلي :

✓ تتجاوز الاستعارة بوقعها البلاغي، وإن كانت قد قدت من نسق لغوي مضايق، اعتبارها زخرفة لغوية إلى مختبر تفعيل وظائفها، حيث تشكل واقع الخطاب ومقاصده الحجاجية.

✓ لم يعد أمر الاستعارة رهن المسنن من المقولات والمعايير الكابحة، بقدر ما تصعدت صوب تخوم التشكل، وعليه لابد من صياغة تصورات تلتفت إلى فعاليتها في المجال الفلسفي وحتى العلمي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استعارة، الحقيقة، الفلسفة، المفهوم، أداة معرفية

1. INTRODUCTION

The areas of interest in metaphor are varied, with perspectives on it differing greatly, and its study diverging into linguistic, rhetorical, and philosophical fields. While philosophy has devoted much attention to it, offering in-depth studies, opinions have fluctuated over time, from acceptance to rejection, praise and criticism, veneration and marginalization.

The question that arises in this paper is centered on the fate of metaphor in philosophical research: Has it been a subject within its inquiries and problems? Is it an essential tool in shaping philosophical discourses and the necessary implications of its existence, or is it merely an ornamental device easily dispensable?

Although philosophy, in some stages, remained under the influence of traditional beliefs, emphasizing reason and opposing art, neglecting it because it was thought to be concerned with the search for truth with precision and scientific rigor, can metaphor, seen as deception and illusion, still embody truth and knowledge?

Thus, it becomes accepted to search for the links between poetic truth, which results from imagination, and philosophical truth, which is produced by logical reasoning. Truth, as a philosophical issue, evades definitive definition due to the varying positions on it from "Plato" to our present day.

2. Plato and the Anti-Poetry Stance:

For Plato, philosophy represents the highest form of discourse, the source of knowledge and the best means of seeking truth, whereas poetry descends to a lower level by distorting facts. This view stems from his understanding of imitation, through which poetry stands at the third level in relation to truth. He states: "The imitator lacks all real knowledge... tragic poets are nothing but imitators... isn't this imitation three times removed from the truth?"¹

Plato, the author of the Theory of Forms, established his republic in opposition to the aesthetics of poetry, widening the gap between poetry and philosophy to the extent of fueling a confrontation between them, representing a conflict between truth and illusion. Thus, metaphor would undoubtedly be rejected, as knowledge of the truth cannot come through what is concealed and imagined, but only through what is evident and real.

This view reflects Plato's stance, where he differentiates between philosophy and poetry. Both fields rely on means that serve to promote the act of separation, as metaphor continues to pose the dilemma of likeness versus difference. In his dialogues, Plato frequently uses metaphor, and it is through examples and allegories that he expresses the truth, as these suggest the truth². Even the core of his Theory of Forms could not be clarified except through the metaphor of the cave.

While Plato opposed imagination and rhetoric, he employed them in his style of reasoning and argumentation. Even though philosophy leads to truth, "art itself is truth"³ based on its own epistemological mechanisms. Thus, metaphor ultimately plays a role in revealing truth and acquiring knowledge, as it dissolves boundaries by creating connections between what is poetic truth and what is philosophical truth. Although Plato denied the epistemological function of metaphor, deeming it a distortion of truth, for Nietzsche, this truth becomes a form of deception and metaphor itself.

3. Aristotle and the Stance Between Viewing Poetry as Ornament and Epistemological Tool:

Poetry only reached its zenith with Aristotle, who redefined the concept of imitation, making poetry an imitation of what ought to be, as demonstrated in his work *Poetics*. He believed that "everything expressed through language is a form of thought and its parts: affirmation, negation, and the stirring of intense emotions such as pity, fear, and anger."⁴

From this perspective, Aristotle lays the groundwork for our theorization on the relationship between the poetic and the philosophical, as he assigns the function of catharsis to poetry, acknowledging its rhetorical power through linguistic, intellectual, and emotional techniques that achieve their intended goal. While these means, in Aristotle's view, oscillate between being "a rhetorical device (under the term 'witness' in the first book)" and "a verbal ornament in the third book,"⁵ this wavering position stems from his attempt to draw boundaries between poetry and rhetoric, asserting that each type has its own suitable style, and thus distinguishing between poetic language and the language of rhetoric based on proof.

From this standpoint, rhetorical devices become the reason for the distinction between the poetic and the philosophical realms. Both rely on tools that serve as a means to fulfill the act of departure, as metaphor carries multiple meanings and evokes emotions and passions, entering the domain of imagination, thus opposing philosophy, which seeks simplicity and clarity to achieve persuasion.

4. Nietzsche and the Metaphoric Nature of Concepts:

Nietzsche's project, in its essence, aims to oppose the philosophical heritage and the distinguishing boundaries set between poetry and philosophy. His view on the duality of metaphor and concept answers this connection, giving metaphor a new voice. Nietzsche's "speech"⁶ is defined by this new way of understanding the concept. He reverses the equation, making metaphor the discourse that leads to truth, as opposed to the deception of concepts. Therefore, his writings are heavily laden with metaphors, which contribute to their rhetorical power, being persuasive and captivating to the audience.

Nietzsche's approach extends into other conceptual areas, abolishing the boundaries between metaphor and concept and acknowledging the effective connection between them, even to the point of expanding their role in the foundational development of concepts. Metaphor plays an essential role in restructuring the systems of existence, revealing the truth of existence through it.

In this way, truth takes on a new path, breaking free from the confines of narrowness and turning to the expansiveness of metaphor. Nietzsche underscores this by asking, "What is truth? A sum of moving metaphors, metonyms, and similes; in short, a sum of human relations, where poetry and rhetoric raise their value and beauty, but after prolonged use, they appear ordinary and familiar. Truths are illusions, deceiving images, and metaphors" (*The Philosopher's Book*, 182-183⁷). From this perspective, the truth that is the goal of philosophy becomes illusion and falsehood because it undergoes transformation. Truth flares up, wanes, and is reborn continuously, remaining fluid and in constant motion, generating new questions and emerging from the fertile womb of renewed, infinite existence. Thus, truth becomes equivalent to metaphor, as "indirect communication is the only way to connect with the original truth, and the only method suited to the obscurity of this truth"⁸. In this way, metaphor becomes a path for revealing truth and a means of attaining it, revitalizing it by shedding its coverings and renewing it with fresh life and continuous rebirth.

This view, which the author of "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" demanded by placing the metaphor in place of the concept, confirms its correctness. If philosophy claimed to be attributed to the intellect, and that it consists of mental reflections, it would not be able to embody and clarify ideas except through language, which is metaphorical, and metaphor is nothing but a mental product.

Nietzsche's ideas did not arise from a mere assumption or theory when he emphasized the interconnection between metaphor and concept; rather, he relied on evidence to substantiate his claim by offering a genealogical reading of some concepts. For example, the concept of "Being (L'être)" originally meant "Esse" (breathing), but over time, it gained new meanings, and therefore, the word "Being" is used, and we think it is original, but in fact, it is metaphorical⁹. Similarly, the concept of "punishment (Châtiment)" does not have one meaning but several meanings. If we go back to its history, we find that it was used for various purposes, which ultimately crystallized into a difficult-

to-analyze and understand unity, thus becoming indefinable¹⁰. Therefore, metaphor is an essential presence in philosophical discourses. Even when it claims to work on concepts, these concepts "are metaphors that become outdated; that is, over time, they lose their value, and they are no longer able to influence us, like a coin that was minted and then erased, and no longer has any significance except as a piece of iron" (Nietzsche, *The Philosopher's Book*, pp. 182-183).¹¹

According to this conceptual premise, Nietzsche's views practice a kind of transgression of the prevailing ideas by liberating them from the usual current, establishing a new discourse for metaphor that rivals the boundaries of knowledge, and he embodied its importance in his writings, as they were filled with fragments of it. He thus engaged in an open field, setting a threshold for writing, preparing it for the absolute anticipation of a metaphorical formation that reflects the uniqueness of his discourse and uncovers the truth in its ontological falsity.

In the course of this transformation, poetry would not become a procedure for truth except with Heidegger, who reveals in his discussion the nature of truth, which can only be grasped through the work of art. This forms a parallel to his conceptual push for understanding the interconnection of the poetic and the philosophical.

Nietzsche had "discovered the treasure of rhetoric related to its characteristics, as the basis of expression within the metaphorical discourse¹²" and thus metaphor becomes the daughter of this new direction, producing an effect on the structure of being.

While Nietzsche practiced the act of demolishing previous philosophical ideas about truth and metaphor, poetry would not become a procedure for truth except with Heidegger, who reveals in his discussion the nature of truth, which can only be understood through the work of art. This forms a parallel to his conceptual push for understanding the interconnection of the poetic and the philosophical.

5- Poetry and the Origin of the Work of Art:

Heidegger transcended Platonic beliefs and its critical conceptual excavations when he restored the essence of poetry, causing the boundaries between poetry and philosophy to dissolve through their interconnection. In his description of the truth that poetry performs, and based on this foundation, poetry takes a turn towards "being the name for the foundation of existence and the essence of all things, not just a word spoken randomly¹³." In this final direction of poetry, Heidegger's vision unfolds, as he attempts to establish being, highlighting the connection between it and philosophy in defining the essence of truth. From here, we can question the essence of truth in Heidegger's philosophy and its relationship with the work of art and how it can be reached.

Heidegger clearly illustrates the procedure of the convergence between poetry and philosophy, beginning with the question, "What do we usually mean by 'truth'? This noble word, but exhausted from overuse to the point that it has become empty of meaning, means what makes what is true, true¹⁴." Based on this statement, we conclude that Heidegger's understanding of truth can only come through the intersection of philosophy and art, which takes on the task of establishing truth as "itself in the work of art¹⁵ as a void between enlightenment and concealment, which is present in the contrast between world and earth, and this struggle arises from the work of art." He used the paintings of "Van Gogh," titled "The Shoes of the Peasant," as a means to explain his idea of the embodiment of the work of art in existence. Therefore, truth is only understood metaphorically, through the work of art¹⁶.

Thus, the result reached by the interweaving, as it forms the justification for the intersection of poetry with philosophy, creates a mode of divergence to surpass conformity, making communication a means to achieve the purpose and confer beauty. Neither poetry nor oratory can fully achieve its potential except by resorting to the other.

From here, the aim is to create a pattern of divergence, moving beyond conformity with what is real to the step of revealing what exists. This can only happen in the work of art, which is so only by its foundation in truth.

In the course of this transformation, the effectiveness of metaphor is revealed as it enjoys the expansion of the work of art, taking it beyond the scope of expressing emotions and sensations to the vastness of conceptualizing and establishing existence and the truth.

Finally, it must be accepted that truth can only be grasped through the work of art, which takes the place of metaphor when it hides its revelations through its intensity, inviting contemplation and interpretation, considering it a metaphorical creation, becoming a tool for knowledge and uncovering the truth. If Heidegger has positioned art in this way, with art being the foundation of truth, then it is his acknowledgment of what metaphor provides in the structure of the systems of being and the realization of truth. It is no longer tied to the constraints of propositions and restrictive standards but has ascended towards the limits of formation. Therefore, there was a need to formulate ideas that focus on its effectiveness in the philosophical and even scientific field.

6- Lakoff and Johnson and the Ontological Dimension of Metaphor:

The book "Metaphors We Live By" by Lakoff and Johnson represents a pivotal turning point that changed the course of metaphor research, as they stated: "Our view of metaphor contradicts the traditional approach. For us, metaphor is a fundamental mechanism in human understanding [...] We oppose central currents in Western philosophy, which regard metaphor as a subjective factor, thus a destructive element against the search for absolute truth."¹⁷

According to them, metaphor is a cognitive tool for shaping most of our concepts, and they emphasize in several places that the way we think, deal with, experience, behave, and act is mostly metaphorical. Thus, metaphor is present in all areas of our daily lives, including cultural, social, political, and religious spheres. They conclude that metaphor "is not just a linguistic matter. It is connected to thought, to the conceptual structure, and the conceptual structure is not only related to thought but also encompasses all the natural dimensions of our experience, including the sensory aspects of our experiences, such as color, form, essence, and sound"¹⁸. Since metaphor is a conceptual structure linked to the mind and leads to understanding and the production of knowledge, they have proven its importance and dominance through metaphors that are based on systematic connections within our experience. With it, we think, communicate, and expand our intellectual capacities. Even more so, we live as metaphorical beings, where a structure is conceived from another conception, such as the metaphor "argument is war," or the directional metaphor, which is based on our spatial experiences like "higher is better," "the future is brighter," and the ontological, where abstract systems of metaphors are based on physical or mental experiences, such as "the mind is a machine," "time is a resource," "love is a journey."¹⁹

Based on the foregoing, it is clear that metaphor invades all of our conceptual frameworks. How credible is this opinion, and is there thinking beyond the realm of metaphor? Answering such a question requires demonstrating the passage points and the strength of the connections between metaphor and concept. Metaphor cannot stand on its own and captivate its audience to confuse their minds unless it is carefully thought out, reflected upon, and contemplated to embody a specific concept. A concept cannot be embodied except through metaphor, as demonstrated by Lakoff and Johnson when they stated that "metaphor is imaginative cognition [...] ordinary cognition is imaginative by nature."²⁰

On the other hand, Paul Ricœur believes that metaphor fulfills the functions of a concept when it becomes incapable of conveying ideas, which means that the existence of one negates the existence of the other.²¹

Therefore, it is worth acknowledging the effectiveness of metaphor in filling gaps and resources of inability, and its essential role in shaping thought systems and crystallizing its concepts. How could it not be, as Lakoff and Johnson stated, "we live by them!"

The use of metaphor is not limited to philosophical discourses alone but also serves as the ideal refuge in solving many of their dilemmas, such as the issue of "language and thought" and which comes first. Opinions on this issue have been contradictory and views have varied until metaphor emerged, with both language (signifier) and thought (signified) being inseparable, much like the two sides of a coin. Thus, its effectiveness emerges in creating and innovating truths. The potential for metaphors to innovate truths challenges traditional views on metaphor, as it was traditionally seen as a linguistic matter, not primarily a means of shaping our conceptual framework.²²

When discussing the effectiveness of metaphor in building concepts and creating new truths and knowledge, since "it is not mere embellishment of discourse, but it has more than an emotional value because it gives us new information, and in brief, metaphor tells us something new about reality," it became necessary to focus on its role in weaving scientific discourse, establishing its landmarks, and building its systems.

But how can scientific knowledge, which demands precision and clarity, rely on metaphor, which is difficult to pin down to a fixed and stable meaning due to its ambiguity and multiple interpretations? Will scientific knowledge become, like metaphysical knowledge, subject to the same issue, or will the employed metaphor free itself from the stains of condemnation and settle on a fixed and clear meaning?

Norman Claudine, in her book "Metaphor and Concept," addressed the epistemological view and the history of science regarding metaphor, where opinions were divided between supporters and opponents. "It has become traditional in modern science history to raise the issue of metaphor, especially the dangers it entails,"²³ which refers to the nature of metaphor, its emotional triggers, and its imposition of ambiguity and multiple meanings, all of which clash with the rigor and consistency required by scientific discourse. For example, "Bachelard" in his book "The Revolution of Scientific Thought" mentioned the drawbacks of metaphor, while "Romer" demanded the liberation of scientific knowledge from metaphor due to its lack of stability and its failure to stick to a single meaning, arguing that "the danger of metaphor is that it does not always represent what happens but presses on independent thinking."²⁴

This view is also supported by "Hempel," who argued that "good scientific explanation has a precise meaning (+/-), and should be shortened into clear, easily understandable language without requiring effort to comprehend. The goal of scientific thought is not to evoke feelings in us, where natural phenomena become familiar to us, viewed metaphorically, lacking any explanatory value"²⁵. His rejection stems from the emotional responses metaphor triggers, as it is subjective, unlike the objectivity of scientific knowledge. Furthermore, it varies from one recipient to another and is unclear, whereas science is governed by general laws that regulate and organize people's lives and requires simplicity and clarity. For these reasons and others, supporters of this view condemned the use of metaphor in scientific discourse, considering its role purely ornamental, as Romer concluded: "We conclude that metaphor should come 'after' scientific thought. Its role is merely decorative, and it cannot occupy a place before theory, as it functions as a representation linking it to basic and self-evident knowledge."²⁶

Although this view may be valid in some respects, how can we then crystallize concepts, embody abstractions, and build systems of thought, and what is the alternative when scientific language fails to present its discourse? How can we explain the presence of metaphor in scientific discourses despite their precision? Without metaphor, would they not be as clear and precise as they are?

Any scientific dish, no matter how complex, is not without the spices of metaphor. If we claim that metaphor and science are incompatible, the necessity calls for closeness rather than distance. Those who rejected it cannot do without it. For example, when "Fouker" examined Bachelard's dismissal of metaphor, he noticed that he did not offer a convincing reason for rejecting its presence in scientific discourse. He stressed that the relationship between ideological and emotional frameworks is complex, and cannot be separated. For instance, the concept of "cell" in sociology is a metaphor borrowed from biology, from the concept of tissue by Bechat.²⁷ Moreover, "Moscovici" went as far as saying that "we cannot consider social psychology a science except by metaphor."²⁸

Suppose we admit that philosophers used metaphor in their discourses unconsciously, without realizing the origins of the concepts they proudly work on. Does that mean that if they knew the truth about this, they would have disapproved of it and turned to explore pure concepts untouched by falsehood, either from their front or behind? And did they only employ metaphors that have, with the passing of ages, become concepts often disconnected from their origin, or what are called "dead metaphors," or did they go beyond that to create new images that evoke emotions and tickle the senses? To what extent can philosophical discourse use metaphor, and is it indispensable, with no alternative to it? Will it present itself dominantly or fleetingly and randomly? Do the metaphors used in philosophical discourse differ from poetic metaphors?

The use of metaphor in philosophical discourse is inevitable and a law that cannot be overlooked, a natural instinct that most philosophers have, and they employed it in their discourses due to its essential role in shaping their concepts. "It is difficult to find a philosophical or scientific discourse free from metaphor, which is why the language of Plato, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Marx, Freud, Saussure, Barthes, and Derrida is filled with metaphors²⁹." Moreover, they did not hesitate to create new metaphors when they found themselves unable to express their ideas and clarify their thoughts, as they could not escape its enchantment in embodying abstractions and approximating concepts.

In this context, Richards asserts that "we cannot step forward with confidence without strictly understanding the metaphor we use and that our audience uses [...] even though we pretend to avoid using metaphor, we do so only by revealing it, and this is especially true the more philosophy is rigorous and abstract. The more we engage in abstraction, the more our thinking relies on metaphor."³⁰

Furthermore, the metaphor used in philosophical or scientific discourse differs from poetic or literary metaphor, as it has different purposes, varying stances, and what the former requires in terms of rigor, precision, and clarity, while the latter conveys emotions, ambiguity, and multiple meanings. It is employed solely to aid understanding and clarify issues, and is only used to resolve problems and clarify matters.

Lakoff and Johnson clarified that this embodiment of abstractions is what gives them significance and dominance in our lives. "Since many of the important concepts we have are either abstract or not clearly defined in our experience (such as emotions, thoughts, time, etc.), we need to grasp them through other concepts we understand [...] This need introduces metaphor into our conceptual system," and thus, it is used as an emotional tool but for the purpose of facilitating understanding. However, we do not agree that the two types of metaphor are separate, or that their functions are distant from one another. In scientific metaphor, there remains a trace of the poetic, and in poetic metaphor, there remains a trace of the scientific.

7-CONCLUSION

Metaphor unfolds, with all that it produces, into a vast circle of conceptions, without prior structuring or constraints, as it serves as an ontological passage with its structure for the frameworks of reality, supporting the truth of existence by unveiling it from the falsehood of the apparent to the hidden truth. This is achieved through the disruption of the familiar and the transcendence of the

ordinary towards an undefined horizon and multiple formations, which enables it to extend beyond rhetoric, detaching itself from the excavation field of connection to the vast space, positioning it as a cognitive mechanism. Hence, philosophy embraced it, as it forms the foundation of argumentation. From the above, we can derive a set of conclusions that contribute to the philosophical conception of metaphor, which can be presented as follows:

- Metaphor is not merely a linguistic ornament but a cognitive tool and an argumentative mechanism that contributes to shaping the frameworks of reality.
- Metaphor transcends its rhetorical impact, even though it originates from a constrained linguistic framework. It is not simply a linguistic decoration but a laboratory for activating its functions, where it shapes the reality of discourse and its argumentative purposes.
- Since metaphor contributes to constructing the frameworks of existence and the perception of truth, its significance is no longer confined to the predetermined norms of propositions and standards that limit it. Instead, it ascends towards the boundaries of formation. Therefore, there is a need to formulate conceptions that focus on its effectiveness in both the philosophical and even the scientific domains.
- Philosophers cannot escape it, as it has empowered them to structure their conceptions and clarify their ideas.
- It helps embody abstractions and bring concepts closer.

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