

IMAGINATION, METAPHOR, LANGUAGE: DERRIDA IN DIALOGUE WITH RICOEUR

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The history of western philosophy, with the exception of Aristotle and Kant, presents a treatment of imagination that can be called reproductive, meaning, reproductive of an original. Put differently, imagination is often understood to be responsible for reproducing images, and therefore, has nothing productive in it. With this background in mind, I briefly demonstrate that some initial positive and promising accounts of imagination can already be apprehended in Hegel's "Psychology, the Mind" in the Encyclopedia and in Husserl's Logical Investigations. I further contend that Derrida and Ricoeur worked off Hegel's and Husserl's insights into imagination in what they demonstrated. Derrida, on the one hand, implicates imagination in the ideality operative in signs as they are utilised in the to-and-fro of communicative discourse. Ricoeur, conversely, argues that thought and imagination are intricately related in the symbol, in thought as it is involved in endeavors of imagination in utopias and literary fiction. Moreover, in both thinkers, an attempt can be seen to link imagination to language through expanding the way metaphor is understood, from a singular word, as in Aristotle's, to full-blown statements, with a subject and a predicate. Imagination enables one to penetrate through the statement's literal meaning to the metaphorical meaning. This claim approximates imagination to language and moves it effectively away from perception, from it being conceived as a residue of perception. As such, in Derrida and Ricoeur, there is a continuity and an increasing attempt to link imagination and language, hence a positive appraisal of imagination.

Keywords: Derrida, Ricoeur, imagination, metaphor, language

INTRODUCTION

Edmund Husserl in the *Logical Investigations II* (henceforth: *LI II*) and G.W.F. Hegel in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit* (hereafter: *Encyclopedia*) respectively conceive of forms of imagination which will have assumed a central role in language formation and thinking. Husserl, on the one hand, speaks of *Phantasie*

(phantasy, imagination) as an objectifying intentional act on a par with perception and signification, and Hegel, on the other hand, conceives of imagination as a certain moment, as spirit in the form of intelligence, within the dialectical unfolding of *Geist* from it being subjective to its objective shape. However, notwithstanding the promising accounts of imagination discernible in Husserl's *LI II* and Hegel's *Encyclopedia*, their conceptions are, in one way or another, consistent with the pattern evident in the western metaphysical tradition to treat of imagination as a form of mediation, with all that this entails for its ambiguous evaluation.¹ Although not a conscious or intended way of proceeding for them, Husserl's and Hegel's gestures to treat imagination *as such* can be attributed to their attempt to *toe the line* with regard to safeguarding philosophy from the alleged contaminating force of imagination. There is, thus, a continuity of the ambiguity in Hegel and Husserl.²

I argue that, notwithstanding their perpetuation of a negative evaluation or suspicion of imagination, there is a further positive valuation of imagination which can be seen in the confluence between Hegel and Husserl. This confluence sets a different tone, a context within which a more positive role can be attributed to imagination. This yields a further positive valuation of imagination that will come to create conditions within which Derrida's and Ricoeur's works on imagination and language can emerge. I demonstrate that Hegel's and Husserl's conceptions of imagination converge at that point where they implicate imagination as the agency responsible for the formation and apprehension of conceptual universals, of universals as they figure within conceptual signified meanings. Otherwise put, Husserl's and Hegel's conceptions of imagination give the impression that imagination operates fundamentally in language.³ I argue further that this burgeoning relation between imagination and language can be detected in the contemporary thinking on imagination, particularly in Derrida and Ricoeur, two philosophers concerned with the hermeneutics of the text. Derrida articulates the possibility of signification and linguistics as arising only through ideality, that is, through the possibility of the reproducibility of the sign and the signified. Ricoeur maintains that thought and imagination are intricately related in the symbol (which "gives to think"), in thought as it is involved in endeavors of imagination (in the thinking of utopias, in literary fiction) (Ricoeur 1962, 194). Hence, in Derrida and Ricoeur, there is a continuity and an increasing attempt to link imagination and language. This link is without the equivocal evaluation of imagination, that is, without imagination being seen as a threat to rational thought, but rather as its stimulus (Ricoeur) or its condition of possibility (Derrida)

My analysis is guided by three tasks. In section one, I sketch how and in what sense Husserl's and Hegel's differing conceptions of imagination operate in forming and apprehending universals, essence(s). In section two, I examine Derrida's treatment of imagination as it figures in conceptual ideality. Here, I engage Derrida in dialogue with Ricoeur. In section three, I offer an account of Ricoeur's imagination in metaphor and sustain the dialogue between them. In the final section, I round out the analysis performed and spell out some repercussions it might have for the ongoing debates on imagination, particularly on productive imagination. The overall goal is to demonstrate, albeit only preliminarily, that in Derrida and Ricoeur one can already find a promising positive account of productive imagination—one that can be distinguished from species of imagination evident in classical Western philosophy.

CONCEPTUALISING-UNIVERSALISING IMAGINATION: HEGEL IN DIALOGUE WITH HUSSERL

What does the confluence between Hegel and Husserl's conceptions of imagination consist in? The alleged vertex, so to speak, can be seen in the role they both bestow upon imagination in the formation of universals and conceptuality, as they are operative in language. In "Psychology, the Mind," Hegel posits an imagination that generates the network of interrelated images that are related to one another and not in their originary scene of intuition, from which it abstracts to form universals and universal representations. Universal representations fund, as it were, the Sign-making Imagination with meanings in the activity of signification. In §70 of *Ideas I*, Husserl paradoxically claims that "the *element* which *makes up the life of phenomenology as of eidetical science* is 'fiction,' that fiction is the source whence the knowledge of 'eternal truths' draws its sustenance" (Husserl 2012, 137). As such, Husserl maintains that phantasy assumes a vital role in eidetic seeing, that is, in the formation and apprehension of universals or essences. This demonstrates the active role of imagination in the philosophical enterprise. Let me briefly elaborate on these points.

In eidetic phenomenology, Husserl devises a method by which, through eidetic variation, as in the case of varying the particular act (e.g., the perceptual act), one sees what is essential to the act as having a transcendent object that I posit as existing. Hence, through variation, which I can perform at the level of executing the act *imaginarily*, rather than actually doing it, I can discern the essences of the intentional acts. Thus, I can vary in my imagination all possible acts of seeing a table, and come to see that having a rectangular, round, or square shape, for instance, is not the essence of the act of perceiving a table. This is usually performed by imagining the acts, of say, perception, of perceiving a table or different objects. Albeit in a different fashion, this variation of images is also evident in Hegel. The manifold of images which has been *erinnerte* in the *unconscious pit* are at the disposal of an imagination which reconfigures them *sponte sua*. Imagination polishes images by cancelling out their differences until what is common among them emerges. The common is the universal, which runs through the sets or repertoire of these images, as in the essence of a rose arising from the abstraction of whatever differences there are in the *erinnerte* images of roses populating the network of images. It may be deduced, therefore, that the "common" is already there, that is, it inheres among these images and is recognised, revealed through, and formed by the working of (associative) imagination. Hence, while the *common* inheres already in the images, it is not yet the "universal" properly so-called insofar as the differences they contain are not yet cancelled out, hence the necessity for the "polishing" of images, which Hegel speaks of extensively in §455 of the *Encyclopedia*. Hence, if Husserl posits eidetic variation as a way for philosophy to intuit essences or universals, Hegel posits the associative imagination as playing this role in the formation of universals—universals that will be the stuff or content of signified meanings when linguistic signs are created. As such, there is indeed a confluence between Hegel and Husserl's conceptions of imagination, notwithstanding their differences, i.e., of one being metaphysical and dialectical (Hegel), and of the other being phenomenological (Husserl).

However, I maintain that the confluence between Husserl and Hegel does not come to a complete halt with their insistence and recognition of the essential role imagination assumes in the formation or apprehension of universals, but extends to their treatment of the rapport between imagination and signification or language. The universals that proceed from imagination or the activity of imagining find their concrete form or expression in language and discourse. The conclusion Husserl arrives at in §7 of Investigation VI (*LI II*) regarding empirical nouns having "an ideally delimited manifold of possible intuitions" is relevant here. Husserl claims that nouns *with extension* refer to empirical objects and are related to real, empirical objects as *possible* intuitions. Thus, a perceived or imagined "table" can fulfill a proposition of the form: "That is a table." Hence, imagination has a role implicated not only in real intuitions but in *possible* intuitions as well. There is thus a universality operative in the abstract concepts of language. This suggests an imagination to be operative, at least implicitly, or potentially, by providing the possible intuitions that give concrete reference to concepts in their abstract universality. Hegel in the "Psychology" makes a parallel gesture when he maintains that imagination plays a decisive role in the formation of universals, the universal being the content that the *Zeichen machende Phantasie* (henceforth: *ZmP*)⁴, Hegel claims, will allocate to the arbitrary intuitable contents of words of linguistic signs, to create word-concept or sign-signified unities.

What is worth noting here is that Husserl and Hegel's conceptions of imagination, though not without a certain negative evaluation alongside the positive role attributed to imagination, demonstrate an increasing attempt to link imagination with the universal. This leads imagination to being linked with abstract conceptualisation, which thereby relates them to signification, language, and thought. The same increasing attempt, I argue, will come to have a vital influence on later developments in terms of imagination's role in philosophy or, more particularly, in signification and language as evinced by Derrida and Ricoeur. This alleged increasing influence of imagination in language and discourse occupies our inquiry in the following sections. While there are significant differences between Ricoeur and Derrida, as in their debate on the relation between metaphor and conceptuality, what I am concerned with here is how they could both come to discuss imagination as being unequivocally operative within language.

THE BOOK IS ON THE TABLE: A CONCEPTUAL FICTION?

Taking his cue from Husserl's articulation of the status of the *logos* in expression (*Ausdruck*) and in silent monologue, Derrida in "Form and Meaning: A Note on the Phenomenology of Language" in *Margins of Philosophy* (1982) speaks of the possibility for there being a role for imagination in the text and discourse, in the possibility of the conceptual fiction being involved in language. This conceptual fiction is at the heart of the judgment of perception. Derrida analyzes Husserl's articulation of the "judgement of perception," the expression of an intuition in the form of the judgement or proposition in §124 of *Ideas I*.

Husserl articulates the judgement of perception as fundamentally consisting of two layers: the pre-expressive layer of sense and the expressive layer of conceptual

meaning. The pre-expressive layer is the layer of intuition, which is expressed by the expressive layer of the experience or the signitive act of expression, which is the intuition in the judgement of perception. This is a point which, as Derrida informs us, Husserl insistently reiterates in §124 of *Ideas I*. For Husserl, the pre-expressive and expressive layers of experience are enveloped within the domain of noetic-noematic correlation, a correlation which is operative in his articulation of the intentionality of consciousness, of the human *lived experience*. As Derrida writes: "[T]hus, it is already a given that however original the stratum of the *logos* would have to be organized according to the parallelism of noesis and noema" (Derrida 1982, 159).

This is, however, not surprising at all considering the thrust of Husserl's articulation of the intentionality of consciousness, which, as in the language of the *Ideas I*, is understood within the relation of the *noesis* and *noema* or the act-object correlation as it had been in *LI*.

Derrida stresses that for Husserl, meaning (*Bedeutung*) is founded on something other than it and that, as indicated by the metaphor of 'layer or stratum that Husserl employs, "meaning constitutes a stratum whose unity can be rigorously delimited" (Derrida 1982, 159). Interestingly, Derrida notes that there is a kind of "interweaving," so to speak, between language *per se* and other constitutive elements of experience. We may recall, as per the above, that Husserl maintains that there is a pre-expressive layer or stratum of intuition that is completely untouched by language and an expressive layer. Expression is the formulation of the intuition in the expressive layer, in the judgment of perception. Derrida questions the idea that the expressive layer simply iterates the layer of sense by pointing out the possibility of an ideality reproducible in language.

What I think escapes Husserl's notice for Derrida is that, insofar as the "form of the utterance" contains the universality of the "form" of the utterance, it is thus reproducible without its meaning being altered whatsoever. The *sense* is not altered from one usage of the proposition to the next, hence the possibility of the utterance being used on different occasions to refer to different states-of-affairs in which, for example, different laptops are claimed to be on different tables. But what makes this difference possible is an ideal, general meaning of the utterance, which is *indifferent* to these differences. It refers to any or every laptop being on a table, and thus to no *particular* case of such and such a laptop being on a table. There is a fiction, a "conceptual fiction" lying at the heart of the possibility of the simplest propositions, of propositions seemingly closest to empirical realities.

This, however, will not work when the meaning, as Husserl maintains, is founded on the punctual act of meaning-intention. What Derrida is arriving at is this: when I say, "the laptop is on the study table," one understands or comes to understand what I mean. This holds true even when the person uttering the same utterance is not physically present in *hic et nunc* when I first uttered the statement, and when there is no actual intuition of a laptop on the study table. Put differently, the same utterance will be "intelligible" to somebody who hears it said by me even when I utter it at some other time or place outside of the time and space of my "original" utterance of the statement.

The universality of the *logos* is thus operative in the form of the utterance, and this universality is a conceptual fiction—something which, as we have seen, is also

evident in Hegel and Husserl's conceptions of phantasy. As Derrida writes: "[H]ere, one could speak, in a sense, of a conceptual *fiction* and of a kind of *imagination* that picked up the intuition of a sense in the generality of the concept" (Derrida 1982, 166). It is in this case that Derrida's account suggests there to be an imaginative element or for an imagination to be involved in the reproduction of the universality of the form of the utterance (a conceptual fiction). Hence, my conceiving of a rose necessarily entails a rose that nowhere exists. In other words, it is not that one may think of a rose, but that thinking of a rose necessarily entails this abstraction, this fiction, this product of imagination, and that naming any particular rose will have involved this fiction. In other words, a universal, or the concept of a rose, is *neither this nor that* particular rose, but can be in a proposition *any particular rose*—*this* and *that* rose. Hegel speaks likewise of this universal in terms of it as being neither *this* nor *that* in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (2018). As Hegel writes: "it is neither this nor that, it is both a *not-this* and is just as indifferent to being this or that, and such a simple is what we call a *universal*" (Hegel 2018, 62). Thus, it is a conceptual fiction, that is, it is not any but all potential or possible roses.

The preceding point is strikingly related to what Derrida has to say in regard to the relation between the sign and the signified. For the sign and the signified to operate, they must be reproducible, that is, they remain the same in each iteration so that they refer to neither this nor that particular rose—not tied to any specific instantiation of a rose. It is precisely because of this lack of "particular determinacy," of the concept being indeterminate, of relating to possible intuitions, as Husserl puts it, that the concept can be used to refer to this specific rose on a particular occasion. This further implies that there is indeed a conceptual fiction or a linguistic imaginary that is essentially involved in the very possibility of language or discourse.

Having articulated Derrida's conception of imagination and conceptual fiction, let us turn to metaphor—a point of contention for both thinkers, and one which approximates imagination to language, and broadly, to philosophy.

METAPHOR AND CONCEPT: A DIALOGUE BETWEEN DERRIDA AND RICOEUR

Before engaging Derrida in dialogue with Ricoeur, we briefly articulate what precisely 'metaphor' means in this context. Derrida and Ricoeur agree, one can argue, as to what metaphor is, but they differ as to its role and place in the philosophical enterprise.⁵ Drawing from Aristotle, who arguably was the first to provide a detailed account of metaphor, Ricoeur and Derrida—but most especially, Ricoeur—shift the focus of inquiry from singular metaphorical words (Aristotle) to full-blown metaphorical statements, with a subject and a predicate. In so doing, both thinkers expanded on what can be called a *sense* of metaphor. According to this view, one forges a metaphor by pulling together subjects and predicates that do not usually go together, thereby creating a semantic shock, a predicative impertinence. For instance, the statement "life is a journey,"—an example I will return to below—brings together "life" (subject) and "is a journey" (predicate). Literally, the statement does make sense. It creates shock, such that one seeks to find a way out of it. The way out of a shock

brings to life a *new* predicative pertinence. This is the labour of imagination. In other words, imagination enables one to make sense of what *initially* does not make sense. Now, having cursorily sketched what metaphor is, let us return to Derrida and Ricoeur.

As touched upon in the previous section, it is clear that for Derrida, imagination assumes a vital role in the formation of concepts and thus in language and discourse insofar as concepts actively circulate or operate in language. Thus, while Husserl insists on the "meaningfulness" of the *logos* as an expression as founded on the punctual meaning-intention, Derrida argues for the reproducibility of the sign and the concept, of their being iterable without this meaning being altered across its iteration.⁶ In the "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," in the *Margins of Philosophy* (1982), Derrida recognises further the role of imagination and/or metaphor in the formation of concepts—of metaphors lying buried, as it were, in the text or philosophical texts. Derrida writes: "metaphor seems to involve the usage of philosophical language in its entirety, nothing less than the usage of so-called natural language *in* philosophical discourse, that is, the usage of natural language as philosophical language" (Derrida 1982, 209). Ricoeur, however, disagrees with Derrida on this score by maintaining that philosophical concepts break free of metaphor. Ricoeur does posit, however, an imagination that is operative in semantic innovation and discourses other than philosophy, such as in works of literature and texts, and in the mapping out of possibilities for human action.⁷ But they both agree, however, that imagination is fundamentally involved in thought. Hence, for all their differences, Derrida and Ricoeur demonstrate continuity with the link or rapport between imagination and language (thought), which is evident in Hegel and Husserl.

In exposing Derrida's articulation of metaphors that appear to underlie concepts here, we recall Husserl's use of certain metaphors in the *layers* of experience articulated above. Derrida is interested in the metaphors that appear to underlie concepts. We may recall that we saw an example of this when Husserl spoke of a pre-expressive *layer* which is completely untouched by language, and an expressive *layer* or stratum (*Schicht*) of experience. The *logos* as an expression is the formulation of intuition in the expressive layer, in the judgment of perception. These are not uncommon metaphors used in philosophical discourse. Derrida questions Husserl's metaphor of *Schicht*. Derrida stresses that in asserting that the meaning of an expression is founded on the punctual meaning-intention, Husserl fails to take cognizance of the possibility of there being a conceptual fiction at work in language, in the reproducibility of signs. Derrida maintains that metaphor is indeed at work in philosophical discourse. Hence, imagination and/or metaphor are essentially engaged or involved in the formation of concepts—concepts which are essentially availed of in philosophical discourse. However, Ricoeur maintains that what produces the concept is the wearing away of the metaphor—its being forgotten and disappearing into the signifier—and the manner in which it is determined by philosophical discourse.

Furthermore, it must be noted that, as Derrida informs us, metaphor is already evinced in Hegel's grand recounting of the dialectical becoming of *Geist*. We may recall that Hegel accords a role to imagination in the formation of abstract concepts. However, the metaphor underlying the concept is for Hegel, *aufgehoben* (raised up). In other words, owing to the process of wearing away, the metaphor is thus forgotten or buried over once it has generated an intelligible meaning out of a sensible figure, as

in the case of *begreifen* (*greifen* meaning to grasp by the hand, *begreifen*, to understand). In *the Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language* (2003, 123), Ricoeur agrees on this when he recounts that the metaphor is negated, suppressed, and no longer plays any role in the concept. Derrida, however, disagrees by arguing that just because the metaphor is not present to consciousness does not imply that it will not have determined, and thus continue to orient, the concept. Ricoeur describes the wearing-away as a productive process that allows the metaphor to be determined in discourse and eventually to free the concept from metaphor. Derrida argues that this burying over is a forgetting of a factor that is instrumental in the very formation and determination of the concept. The point I am arriving at here is that imagination in the form of metaphor is discussed by both thinkers with regard to its operation in language. And while Derrida and Ricoeur disagree over the extent of its influence, they are both nonetheless recognizing imagination to be operative in language and to be important whether for philosophical discourse (Derrida) or for semantic innovation or for the mapping out of possibilities of human action (Ricoeur). We now investigate what Ricoeur has to say on this matter.

IMAGINATION IN DISCOURSES *OTHER THAN* PHILOSOPHY

What does the alleged further positive valuation of imagination consist of in Paul Ricoeur's account? How does Ricoeur treat imagination? For the purposes of this current section, let me concentrate only on two out of the three interrelated functions or powers of imagination that Ricoeur speaks of in *From Text to Action* (1991). This is in keeping with the thrust of this paper, which is to demonstrate the consensus being reached in contemporary hermeneutic philosophy as regards imagination being operative within language and discourse.

Ricoeur recognises the vital role imagination assumes in discourse, in texts and in language—that of imagination being fundamentally operative in metaphor, in mediating between the literal and metaphorical levels of meaning (Ricoeur 2003, 157–245). Such a role is vital in that imagination not only performs this mediating role but also creates possibilities for shaping the world of possible action. Already here, we see Ricoeur echoing in a way, if not drawing from, but more importantly, going beyond what Sartre proposes in *The Imaginary* (2004) – that imagination is an intentional act which intends its object, i.e., the image, in four distinct phenomenological experiences, namely, (a) as nonexistent, (b) as absent, (c) as existing somewhere, and (d) as neutralisation. Briefly put, by nonexistent, Sartre (2004, 12) means that imagination intends an image that is fiction. By absence, he (2004, 4; 12) means imagination intends, which is not given in the here and now but can be given in a certain temporal future. In this case, expectation is involved. I expect β to be present in, say, the library, but β is not there, thus, my intention is frustrated. By existence somewhere, Sartre (2004, 12) suggests that imagination intends its object as present somewhere, meaning my intention is not, as in the case of *absence*, frustrated, because I know that the object exists somewhere. Finally, by neutralisation, Sartre (2004, 12) comes close to Husserl's conception of *Bildbewusstsein* (image consciousness) in Hua XXIII (Husserl 1980). When I, for instance, look at Dr. Jose Rizal's portrait, I *neutralise* the portrait as such,

as a given object, so as to focus on what it depicts, that is, Jose Rizal himself, the, as in Husserl's language, *Bildsobjekt* (image subject).

Returning to metaphor, Ricoeur argues that imagination in the form of metaphor assumes an essential role in *semantic innovation*—a role which serves as a foundation for further developments. As Ricoeur writes: "the tie[s] between *imagination and semantic innovation*, the core of the analysis, will thus be suggested as the initial stage of subsequent developments" (Ricoeur 1991, 168). Furthermore, imagination creates possibilities that inhabit the domain of the fictional world that open up horizons for human action or present human action with possibilities that are derived in part from fiction, novels, symbols, and literature. Ricoeur attempts to free imagination or the image from its often-construed limiting ties with perception, of it being taken as simply a fading entity of what is empirically perceived, as Hume (1991, 171) would have it—of it being "an appendix to perception, a shadow of perception." As such, Ricoeur concurs with Husserl and is no doubt working off Husserl's insights into imagination in what he recounts. It is noteworthy that in so doing, Ricoeur links imagination to language, and thus, to signification.

The use of metaphor, Ricoeur argues, is the entry point to identifying the role of imagination in discourse and language. This is so because metaphor, Ricoeur (1991, 171) writes, "invites us to relate imagination to a certain use of language, more precisely, to see in it an aspect of *semantic innovation*, characteristic of the metaphorical use of language." But he clarifies that the concentration should be on the metaphorical *utterance* rather than simply on the words employed metaphorically. Alluding to Aristotle's *Poetics* (1459a7-8), Ricoeur maintains that imagination plays a mediational role in penetrating through the semantic absurdity that is literally presented in a metaphorical utterance to the meaning hidden or buried within it. Life is not literally a journey if a journey entails merely setting out from one physical place to reach another. Imagination is thus operative in "grasping" and seeing or detecting the "similar" from an apparent dissimilarity between the metaphorical or literal utterance and the meaning it seeks to convey. Life is *like* a journey; if life entails an arduous endeavor, a striving with goals (destinations), it entails reaching. Hence, for Ricoeur, imagination is a "method," in that it grasps or takes hold of the *similar* amidst dissimilarity, a making sense of what at the literal level is apparently non-sense. As Ricoeur (1978, 146) writes: "metaphorical meaning does not merely consist of a semantic clash but of the *new* predicative meaning which emerges from the collapse of the literal meaning, that is, from the collapse of the meaning which obtains if we rely on the common or usual lexical values of our words." Thus, one may see "the sprouting and the falling of the leaf" as man's coming to life through birth and his eventual demise, a fading away, or, as in Ricoeur's own examples: "we see old age as the dusk of day, time as a beggar, nature as a temple with living pillars" (Ricoeur 1991, 173). Within its literal construct, these metaphorical statements or utterances do not immediately lend themselves to a straightforward interpretation or meaning. Imagination allows us, therefore, to *see* the similarity between the sprouting of the leaf and coming to life (of something) and its fading away or withering as the culmination of life (i.e., death or physical demise). Interestingly, there seems to be a close parallel, a similarity between the literal structure of the utterance and its metaphorical implication, such that what are juxtaposed are brought closely together.

The poetic work or art woven in metaphorical fashion evokes and requires an act of imagining, but an imagining which is irreducible to the mere presenting of images and one that requires operating with linguistic meanings. The poetic work reveals something beyond its literal constitution. But Ricoeur (1978, 153) maintains that metaphor is "no less *about* reality than any other use of language but refers to it by the means of a complex strategy which implies, as an essential component, a suspension and seemingly an abolition of the ordinary reference attached to descriptive language." It has a meaning which is not immediately given but is gradually revealed in the interplay between the subject and the text in the activity of reading—an interplay mediated by imagination. What is vital for Ricoeur (1991, 174) in regard to this labor of imagination in the "poetic image" is that imagination possesses the power to create possibilities which are then suspended "in the neutralized atmosphere, in the element of fiction."⁸ In recognizing that just like the sprouting and the falling of the leaf, one lives *temporarily* and passes away, one will be propelled to envisage possibilities—possibilities which will occasion him to live his life well.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that, as Ricoeur stresses, this element of imagination, i.e., its power to create possibilities, assumes a role in the formation of ideology and utopia. Hence, imagination in the text—on metaphor and fiction—lies at the very root of the human capacity to imagine other worlds other than it is. Imagination is not just an imagination of the image, i.e., of the dangerous copy of a copy, but imagination as brought to fruition in the text, in the literary fiction, in an ideology preserving a *shared* identity, and the political work envisaging a utopia. Thus, Ricoeur maintains that within the domain of *noninvolvement*, the possibilities born out of imagination allow or occasion us to rethink or revisit our ways of "being in the world" consequently finding ways by which we may be able to reform our ways of being in the world, our ways of living, and thus making ourselves into better human beings.

But this rethinking and/or revisiting occurs only within the ambit of the *world of the possible*, detached from the "real" or practical world. Hence, these possibilities will be put to waste when we fail to relate them to language, that is, they remain products of our *imagining* that are prone to vanishing and are perhaps already vanishing without us even noticing it. As Ricoeur (1991, 174) maintains: "but this 'common sense' attached to the notion of imagination is not fully recognized as long as the fecundity of imagination has not been related to that of language, as exemplified by the metaphorical process." This is precisely so, insofar as metaphor occasions us to "revise" or "reconfigure" how we engage with the world, or as Ricoeur (1978, 152) puts it: "metaphor may be seen as a model for changing our ways of looking at things, of perceiving the world." In penetrating beyond the literal implications of the metaphorical utterance, one forms an insight into the meaning of the metaphor. Thus, one recognises for instance that "life is *like* a journey" implies going through the labyrinths of life. The metaphor changes one's conception of life and prepares one to live through it, to journey through it. Indubitably, this conception moves imagination far away from its identification with *daydreaming*, with art as a dangerous threat to philosophy, parallel to that of a phantastic imagination which Plato criticizes and categorically condemns in *Politeia*. Here, Ricoeur's treatment of imagination is a step ahead of his predecessors Hegel and Husserl.

But even when these possibilities are "related to" language or are articulated in language, imagination will still confront the challenge of whether it is really operative in "practice." Ricoeur recognises this when, in the section immediately following his exposition of "imagination in discourse," he speaks of the challenge imagination faces both in theory and practice. There is thus an apparent "schism" between the fictional world of imagination and the real or practical world, the former thus having no effect or fruitful impact whatsoever in the practical world and human life. But this "schism" will be bridged by what Ricoeur refers to as the transition from the theoretical to the practical—a "connection" or a "bridging" which is fundamentally constitutive of the human lived experience, so to speak. This is a point very much related to Heidegger's expositing of *Dasein* as inherently confronted by its potentiality-for-being.

As Ricoeur maintains, humans begin to "make sense of" or to understand the practical field by making "representations," so to speak, of the practical in fiction. Put differently, Ricoeur implies that we spell out truths about human existence through metaphors and fiction; that is, we imagine what the practical world will be like. The movement is, therefore, from "within" to "with-out," from the inside to the outside, that is, I imagine possibilities myself first before I try to live them out concretely. This attempt is exemplified in artistic or poetic works such as "tragedy" in ancient Greek novels, literature, epics, or legends. These works undoubtedly convey universal truths about human nature. Here, Ricoeur reiterates Aristotle's position in the *Poetics* that poetry is superior to history insofar as the former speaks of universal truths about human existence, while the latter is merely composed of empirical accidents that are confined to the realm of facts. Hence, commenting on Aristotle's *Poetics*, Ricoeur (1991, 176) writes: "poetry goes right to the essence of action precisely because it ties together *muthos* and *mīmēsis*, that is, in our vocabulary, fiction and redescription."

In more pronounced terms, Ricoeur audaciously claims that imagination maps out possibilities for human action. He (1991, 177) writes: "[W]ithout imagination, there is no action, we shall say. This is so in several different ways: on the level of projects, on the level of motivations, and on the level of the very power to act." In other words, there is no plan whatsoever to carry out such and such goals in the first place without imagination mapping out possibilities against the backdrop of a horizon. Hence, "means" and the "end(s)" to which these "means" are geared towards, are "projected" towards, are conceived precisely by imagination. On this score and as attested to by Ricoeur, imagination anticipates the future, which is not yet, by drawing something from the past, from the latter's "narrative." Furthermore, Ricoeur (1991, 177) maintains that imagination compels us to examine our motives—motives which are "as diverse as desires and ethical obligations [...] as disparate as professional rules, social customs, or intensely personal values." In other words, imagination "levels off" these various "motives" and allows for the possibility of "comparison" and "meditation" to take place between these "motives." This, however, does not describe an operation of visual imagining, but of discursive imagination, not an operation of images but rather of possibilities conceived intellectually.

What Ricoeur implies by this is that imagination occasions in us the need to identify which among these motives are worth pursuing and which ought to be discarded. The result of weighing these motives, as Ricoeur (1991, 178) stresses further, finds *its articulation in language*, in statements such as this: "I would do this

or that, if I wanted to." Finally, imagination propels me to act or carry out the possibilities which have been brought about by my imagining, as is made manifest in my projecting some plans, in my trying to weigh the "pros" and "cons" of my "motives," and eventually, acting upon these possibilities. Hence, for Ricoeur, there is a dynamic progression and/or continuity of these manifestations of the powers of imagination. This is precisely what Ricoeur, as I pointed out earlier, meant by imagination's transition from the theoretical to the practical. Not only does imagination form possibilities or map out human action, but it also propels the human person to concretize these possibilities. Imagination is thus directed towards *realizing* these possibilities. As Ricoeur (1991, 178) writes: "this progression point[s] towards the idea of imagination as the general function of developing practical possibilities." Hence, imagination plays a vital role in the deliberating, thinking, reflecting subject, that is, imagination is in no way cut-off from the linguistic subject, and in no way relegated to imagination's supposedly primary phenomenon of *daydreaming* and *phantasying*.⁹

Ricoeur proceeds to articulate the "intersubjectivity" or the "intersubjective dimension" of imagination, which he refers to as "a higher dimension of imagination." As he closes the chapter on "Imagination in Discourse and in Action," he lays out or outlines the seedbed for the role imagination will assume in the formation of ideology and utopia, the two distinct yet complementary poles of the "social imagination or imaginary." These are topics that are thoroughly treated in his other works, most notably in his *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986). I will not pursue an analysis of this latter point here, for such requires looking into the vast *corpus* of Ricoeur's works and will mean a separate project. Suffice it to say that in Ricoeur, relative to his predecessors Hegel and Husserl, there is an increasing attempt to link imagination to language or discourse. He demonstrates this when he maintains that the poetic work of art and the metaphorical weaving of utterances allow imagination to mediate between what literally appears and the meaning that the text conveys—a meaning that inspires concrete actions. For instance, the "sprouting and the eventual falling of the leaf" reminds us of the reality of life, that is, that we all come and go like the sprouting and the falling of the leaf. In this sense, I think, metaphor propels us to revisit or reassess our lives, allowing us to map out possible actions by which we may be able to live our lives well, a life defined and enriched by meaning and purpose. This increasing attempt thus keeps imagination away from its confinement to the mere image.

Imagination thus finds its expression, its practical and/or concrete form in language, in the weaving of myth, in the activity of writing—and in its finished product, whereby the reader, in reading, penetrates through the text, its interpreted meaning potentially resonating with the reader. Thus, the reader can be subsequently propelled to consider possibilities and eventually carry out sets of actions to realize these possibilities. Indeed, imagination assumes a vital role in language or discourse not only in that it assumes such a role but in that it creates or is essentially in itself the foundation of further developments. It is in this case, as I have sought to prove, that the seed of imagination's role in language, which has been dormant in accounts of Husserl and Hegel, will be explicitly articulated. Hence, the earlier developments regarding the supposed collaboration between imagination and language, particularly those that are evinced in the accounts of Hegel and Husserl, find an increasing and

more pronounced articulation in Derrida and Ricoeur. To this end, imagination is indeed vital to language and discourse.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We retrace what I have articulated thus far. First, I have argued that there is a confluence between Hegel's and Husserl's conceptions of imagination. This is demonstrated by the fact that in both conceptions, imagination forms and apprehends universals, and imagination assumes a vital role in the formation or development of language. Second, I have argued that Derrida, by articulating the universality of the form of the utterance as operative in language and in the reproducibility of the expression, establishes a certain labor of imagination in language and the text. Third, I have argued that Ricoeur not only recognises the role of imagination in discourse, in the text, and in language but goes further in claiming for imagination a capacity to allow texts to project metaphorical possibilities and literary fictions that open up new horizons for human action. Therefore, what the adumbrations constituting the content of this paper have thus far demonstrated is that, although imagination is not without a certain ambiguity, it is essentially relevant to philosophizing, to conceiving, whether in conceptual abstraction (Derrida) or in human possibilities (Ricoeur). This is contrary to the classical tendency to treat it as a threat to *logos* and reason. It is a necessary and indispensable mediator that extends its influence to the domain of language or discourse, and without it, there can be neither philosophical nor linguistic progress to speak of. There is indeed a role for imagination in language and discourse, and Derrida and Ricoeur, for all their differences, affirm the same possibility. More importantly, in implicating imagination in the apprehension of universals or essences, and in approximating it to language through metaphor, Derrida and Ricoeur offer, relative to Hegel and Husserl, a more positive appraisal of the role of imagination in philosophy—*positive* in the sense that their respective treatments move imagination away from its proximity to perception, of imagination being conceived as nothing but *a residue of perception* and responsible for simply *reproducing a copy of a copy*, as is the case for Plato with his 'phantastic imagination' (Plato 2016, 277-304).

NOTES

1. Cf. Sallis, J. *Delimitations, Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics*, 2nd ed. (Indiana University Press, 1995). In Chapter One, Sallis traces the treatment of imagination in classical Western metaphysics. See also Brann, Eva T.H. (1991). *The World of Imagination: Sum and Substance* (Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 1991). And more recently, Geniusas, Saulius. *Phenomenology of Productive Imagination: Embodiment, Language, Subjectivity* (Ibidem Press, 2022).

2. On the ambiguities beclouding Hegel's and Husserl's respective theories of imagination, cf. Jalalum, Mark Antony. *Phantasie in Language Formation?: Imagination in Hegel's "Psychology"*. *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (2022): 74-95. <https://doi.org/10.25138/16.1.a4>.; Perception, *Phantasie*, Signification: The Ambiguous Status of Imagination in Husserl's *Logical*

Investigations. Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy 17, no. 2 (2023): 62-88. <https://doi.org/10.25138/17.2.a3>.

3. I am referring particularly to Husserl's imagination (*Phantasie*) as it figures in the first and second volumes of the *Logical Investigations*. In a way, I focus on what may be called the early version of Husserl's imagination. Husserl offers a more detailed analysis of *Phantasie* in *Husserliana XXIII*, i.e., *Phantasie, Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung*, ed. E. Marbach (Kluwer Academic Publishers) [in English: Husserl, E. *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory*, trans. J.B. Brough (Springer, 2005)].

4. This is G.W.F. Hegel's *Sign-making Imagination*. Mark Raftery-Skehan, in his Ph.D. thesis, has worked on this concept in Hegel, among others (see: Mark Raftery-Skehan, "Deconstructing Hegel's Sign-making Imagination: Derrida and the Textual Imagination," (Ph.D. Dissertation: Trinity College Dublin, 2012).

5. I shall return to this point in the latter part of the paper.

6. This is only true insofar as Husserl's account of signification in the *Logical Investigations Vol 1* is concerned (Husserl, Edmund. *Logical Investigations Vol. 1*, Translated by J.N. Findlay. Edited by Dermot Moran. London: Routledge, 2001a). Husserl did revise his theory of signs in much later texts, in *Hua XX-1* and *XX-2*, respectively (cf. Husserl, Edmund. 2002. *Logische Untersuchungen. Ergänzungsband. Erster Teil. Entwürfe zur Umarbeitung der VI. Untersuchung und zur Vorrede für die Neuauflage der Logische Untersuchungen*. Edited by U. Melle. Den Haag: Kluwer Academic Publishers.; Husserl, Edmund. 2005. *Logische Untersuchungen. Ergänzungsband Zweiter Teil. Texte für die Neufassung der VI. Untersuchung. Zur Phänomenologie des Ausdrucks und der Erkenntnis*. Edited by U. Melle. Den Haag: Kluwer Academic Publishers.).

7. For further discussion of tension in metaphor, how metaphors are formed, and how we make sense of them, see: Lawlor, Leonard. *Imagination and Chance: The Difference Between the Thought of Derrida and Ricoeur*, (State University of New York Press, 1992); Goodman, Nelson. *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1976).

8. Ricoeur's thesis here draws from Husserl's analysis of imagination as fiction in *Ideas I*, i.e., the neutralising power of phantasy. Ricoeur speaks of this point a length in the *Lectures on Imagination* (2024). This text is a series of lectures devoted to imagination that Ricoeur delivered at the University of Chicago in 1975. In the same text, Ricoeur has analysed Husserl's concept of phantasy as it figures in the *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*.

9. Saulius Geniusas offers a nuanced analysis of these phenomena (cf. Geniusas, Saulius. *Conscious and Unconscious Phantasy and the Phenomenology of Dreams. Research in Phenomenology*, 51, no.2 (2021), 178-199. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15691640-12341470>).

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