

*A Bigger Splash to the Narrative*¹

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Abstract: The objective of this article is to offer an example of a work of art identified with what Paul Ricœur named polysemy or linguistic density. Some works of art exemplify a metaphoricity in their constitution and the metaphor would be a privileged model for the analysis of figurative art and of allusive figuration. I believe that the painting *A Bigger Splash* by David Hockney has an image game that is also a language game: the aesthetic figuration as semantic link between the verbal and the non-verbal, between the poetic and the pictorial. I argue that figuration through metaphoricity also exemplifies an ambiguity in Ricœur's philosophy of language, and the distinction between the field of the pre-narrative and the narrative of the artwork clarify the aesthetic aspect of his theory of metaphor. The advantage of my example is that the immanent analysis of the metaphoric constitution of the work of art is compatible with the isolation of its narrative elements. The metaphoric redescription in painting should not be automatically extended to the narrative refiguration.

Keywords: Art, Metaphor, Ricœur, Aesthetic, and Image.

Résumé: L'objectif de cet article est d'offrir un exemple d'œuvre d'art correspondant à ce que Paul Ricœur a appelé la polysémie ou la densité linguistique. Certaines œuvres d'art exemplifient une métaphoricité dans leur constitution et la métaphore serait un modèle privilégié pour l'analyse de l'art figuratif et de la figuration allusive. Je crois que le tableau "*A Bigger Splash*," de David Hockney, présente un jeu d'images qui est aussi un jeu de langage: la figuration esthétique comme articulation sémantique du verbal et du non-verbal, du poétique et du pictural. Je défends l'idée selon laquelle le caractère métaphorique de la figuration met aussi en relief une ambiguïté dans la philosophie du langage de Ricœur, et que la distinction entre le champ d'application pré-narratif et le narratif de l'œuvre d'art permet d'éclaircir l'aspect esthétique de sa théorie de la métaphore. L'avantage de mon exemple c'est que l'analyse immanente de la constitution métaphorique de l'œuvre d'art est compatible avec l'isolement de ses éléments narratifs. Dans la peinture, la redescription métaphorique ne doit pas être automatiquement étendue à la refiguration narrative.

Mots-clés: Art, Métaphore, Ricœur, Esthétique, Image.

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Introduction

Paul Ricœur did not write an aesthetic theory in the strict sense, even his poetics comprises of hermeneutic studies about the surplus of meaning phenomenon that differ among themselves, like the symbol, the metaphor and the narrative. However, even the spread of these studies across articles and interviews did not prevent the use of common notions to characterize an aesthetic experience: redescription of the real, refiguration of the world, *mimêsis*. In “*Lógica herméneutique?*” aesthetic experience is related to the specific problem of hermeneutics with its own tradition and the capacity to epistemologically uphold its judgements.² In the article in question, the aesthetic experience of understanding reveals itself as an alternative to the criticisms that hermeneutics has received from the critical social sciences and from analytic philosophy of language. What is relevant, in Ricœur’s answer, is the possibility of hermeneutics being something directed to a “comprehensive experience” verbal or non-verbal. The example given of this experience is aesthetic pleasure.

His position on the Gadamer-Habermas debate also attests to his effective interest in the critical capacity of hermeneutics—he would subscribe to Gadamer’s urbanization of the Heideggerian province as a starting point, but would reiterate the subordination of the epistemological to the ontological plane as an obstacle. However, it was difficult for Ricœur to move away from the “*voie courte*.” In his hermeneutics, distancing is relatively autonomous and allows for a certain level of objectivity, but belonging to a tradition takes precedence over any critical distance. For him, we need to recognize both our inherent belonging to tradition and to the “critique of ideologies.” One question that must be asked regarding the aesthetic dimension of Ricœurian hermeneutics is whether moving away from ontological radicalization by taking a *détour* through the works is sufficient to achieve the required critical distance. This question stems from the distance that Ricœur takes from Heidegger and Gadamer when establishing a detour through the phenomenon of excess meaning. In this article, Ricœur’s suggestion of a “comprehensive experience” is analyzed from the visualization promoted by semantic innovation. I will address the role of metaphor and metaphoricity in aesthetic figuration. That is, the semantic innovation that occurs in the metaphorical statement will be examined based on the demand for interpretation that this statement makes upon the imagination. Seeking a better understanding of the figurative aspect of the metaphor, I search for an example of metaphoricity in the work of art that allows for an analysis of the semantic articulation of the image. The example should also allow us to distinguish between the pre-narrative and narrative aspects of semantic innovation. The goal is to conceive of a different—and autonomous—figuration process than the configuration inspired by narrative. The tensing experience that is characteristic of metaphorical figuration promotes an impertinence and differs from the ordering experience of the *mise-en-intrigue* narrative. My hypothesis is that both

readings of *A Bigger Splash* presented in this article help to clarify a conflict within a “vast poetic sphere.” Ricœurian theory of metaphor employs a Heideggerian vocabulary that causes some commentators to see it as a shift from a “surplus of meaning” to a “surplus of being.” This hypothesis is based on the assumption that the intelligibility of metaphorical reference is important for the aesthetic dimension of Ricœurian hermeneutics. The way we choose to present it is to contrast the “voir-comme” with the “être-comme”—that is, we look for a mediation between them, which does not imply that the former submits to the latter. In this sense, Ricœurian hermeneutics would be able to find another ground for the conflict of interpretations, which would allow us to analyze its relationship with tradition, taking the work of art as a starting point.

I) The “generalized metaphor” and the figuration through metaphoricity

Ricœurian theory of metaphor is linked to contemporary semantics through its interpretation of the Aristotelian definition of transference (*epiphora*.) Unlike a tradition that promotes a theory of denomination, and a substitution between the literal sense and the figurative sense, the metaphorical statement is explained by a theory of the tension between the terms—semantic impertinence is a phenomenon of predication. There is a conflict of interpretations in the terms and the reader builds a figurative resolution. This resolution process is identified with a way of seeing, an insight associated with the iconic function of metaphor. The metaphor works as a visualization device to construct images through statements. This “language to image path” uses the structure of productive imagination as a model for how to treat the verbal aspect of the image. The metaphor reveals the image—in both its poetic and rhetorical dimensions—as discourse production and visualization power: it “sets something before the eyes.” This power of visualization comprehends the image as a possibility of the creative and aesthetic aspects of language.³ Unlike a tradition that regards the image as the vestige of perception, or which emphasizes the restitution of an absent thing, Ricœur sees a reversal in the Kantian distinction between the reproductive and productive aspects of the imagination. The emphasis on the productive aspect of the imagination is essential to the Ricœurian theory of metaphor—the semantic description of the imagination is only possible through this reading of the Kantian schematism doctrine. Imagination could—finally—be treated as a dimension of language. Ricœur thus assumes a connection between the “voir-comme” of metaphor and the power of imagination. The visualization of similarity through the metaphorical statement is precisely the construction of similarity through verbal and visual invention.

Ricœur seeks to overcome the treatment of imagination based on perception and link it to the verbal aspect of image, thus establishing a schematism of metaphorical attribution. As the end product of a semantic theory, the image is now shaped according to its meaning. The semantic bias of imagination must be comprehended as a “seeing-as”—maintaining ambiguity via the imaginary. Linked to an intuitive act, “seeing-as” is fundamental for the pictorial function of language. The image that emerges from that link is not an image-copy that restores an absent thing. It is present in the redescription process, which itself is the result of the metaphorical process, as heuristic fiction. The iconic augmentation, which will be compared to the work of a painter, is a formula to build the image:

It is from this iconicity proper to the predicative assimilation that we can perceive the image's game. It is not an associated image, as an image evoked and developed by the schematization of the metaphorical attribution. What does the image add to the information? Two things, essentially: in the first place, the image bears in itself its dimension of the unreality of fiction [...] the poetic language is this game of language in which the intention of words is to evoke, originate images. The sense is iconic due to this power of revealing itself through images. The image plays, then, its double valence: as a suspension of the real it sets the dimension of fiction; as a flow of representations it inserts the sense in the almost-perceived depth. [...] However, this horizon of metaphor philosophy can achieve only through long analysis, which still concerns the destiny of image. Indeed, it is still needed to fight the preconception that the suspension through image means simply the removal of all reference. As the comparison between metaphor and model suggests, the poetical fiction still has a referential dimension, that is, its power to re-describe reality.⁴

In "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality," Ricœur is clear about the need to link image, fiction and work; painting emerges as an example of the productive aspect of the imagination – a paradigm of the power of fiction to change reality when inserted in a work. In another text, the polysemy present in the metaphor, compared to certain configurations of works of art, is defined as a linguistic form in which "several levels of meaning are held together in a single expression [...] integrating levels of sense that are overlaid, preserved and contained together."⁵ The example he uses is *Nuclear Energy*, a sculpture by Henry Moore located at the University of Chicago, above the laboratory where the first controlled nuclear reaction took place. It was described as polysemic for representing several possibilities—the skull of a scholar, an exploding atom, the Earth itself – and for having the capacity to enhance meanings by condensing them. Besides the fact that the sculpture has been described as *polyfigurative*, I consider it an inadequate example because it is not clear whether it is the *effect* of the work of art that we can compare with the metaphor. Ricœur says little about its *cause* and about the structurally metaphorical nature of the work of art, only that it represents many possible figures. Another problem is that these figures relate to contextual, external factors: the place where the work of art is located, what happened there, who was responsible for the action (e.g., the scientist.)

An analysis of the figurative work of art or of the allusive figuration based on metaphoricity becomes progressively more difficult as it moves beyond this comparison between sculpture and a "generalized metaphor." Ricœur also affirms that there is a singular figuration in each work, a structure rendered comprehensible by language even when it is supposedly absent, as in music. By saying that Cézanne never paints the same mountain, and that the painter makes an addition to the pure representation of an object, Ricœur argues that the iconic augmentation communicated by the painting promotes a break from reality. However, could the idea of addition as a pictorial function also be extended to non-figurative painting? The absence of figuration is important, as it signals a withdrawal from reality in which the function of representation is more fragile, or even nonexistent:

One could say that nonfigurative painting freed what was in reality already the properly aesthetic dimension of the figurative, a dimension that remained veiled by the function of

representation that fell to pictorial art. And it is when the concern with the internal composition alone was disconnected from the representative function that the function of *manifestation* of a world was rendered explicit; representation once abolished, it becomes obvious that the work expresses the world in a manner other than by representing it; it expresses it by iconizing the singular emotional relation of the artist to the world, which I have called the *mood*.⁶

A game of non-verbal language or a logic based on the pictorial image are apparently not enough to make this a coherent extension. Another problem is the notion that all works of art, including musical pieces, correspond to a “mood,” a lost emotion that is restored by the work. The challenge lies in knowing what kind of figuration would be present in those *état d’âme*, or what it means to open an emotional space where the feelings are figurative; and whether it is at all necessary to talk about the transfiguration of feelings.

When treating the figuration of metaphor as a discourse strategy for discussing an aesthetic experience—knowing that its tensive structure refers to the oscillation between semantics and ontology—, I take some methodological precautions. Not ignoring the return path to symbolic opacity is one of them. Another and more important precaution is not to rush through the trajectory between *The Rule of Metaphor* (henceforth, RM) and *Time and Narrative* (henceforth, TR,) disregarding the notion that these are twin works that deal with the same phenomena of semantic innovation. This is done so as not to overburden the treatment of innovation in the discussion on tropes with the problems of a phenomenology of reading that is directed towards historiography, temporality, narrative identity and an ethical opening. Although narrative refiguration could be understood as a particular application of metaphorical reference, the phenomenology of reading in RM is merely implicit. One assumption that must be questioned is that the theory of reading is added because of the problematic nature of metaphorical reference. In order to question this assumption—and, more importantly, to differentiate between the experience of metaphor and the emplotment in aesthetical dimension of Ricœurian poetics—, the discussion has to adopt the vocabulary that would allow the *glissement* of “seeing-as” to “being-as.” By questioning an inevitable solution that would allow the theory of metaphor to reach the practical roots of a *langagière* creation, I understand that the vocabulary used by Ricœur indicates his participation in a specific hermeneutic thesis and the philosophy of language found in such thesis. Regarding the work of art, I argue that figuration through metaphoricity can shed light on two different approaches to the question of language—perhaps we should identify the first as being closer to late Heidegger, while the second is closer to a concern for the epistemological aspects of metaphorical reference.

II) Metaphoricity and Arts of language

It seems to me that the attempts to attest to the unity of the phenomenon of a surplus of meaning and to suggest the outlines of an aesthetical theory based on such unity, run into the problem of hesitating between the two different approaches mentioned above. Before I provide my example of metaphoricity in a work of art, I will analyze some of these attempts, given that some solutions have been suggested for what I refer to as the hesitation between continuing the inquiry into the question of Being and the risk of breaking from hermeneutics. In “L’unité de la

‘vaste sphère poétique,’” for example, Yvon Inizan reaffirms a poetic unity through the heuristic function of “mood” and generalized reference.⁷ He understands that there is a methodological prudence in Ricœurian analysis—a circumscription to certain objects that, nonetheless, does not prevent a future expansion. That is, we could comprehend these objects together or within an analysis that includes a reflection on art. He also argues that the move from “metaphor” to “narrative” affirms the poetic unity by more than just the mere recognition of a *gémellité* between MV and TR. The application of metaphorical reference to the human action dimension is supported by the suggestion that “seeing-as” unveils “being-as.”⁸ The question is to determine whether this unity, which refers to a “creative act,” also unveils a horizon for a reflection on the work of art.

In his article, Inizan defends a complementarity between the feeling articulated by a poem (an approach that provides the vocabulary for the “mood”) and generalized reference. According to the author, the privilege given to narration to the detriment of lyrical poetry—or, in the synthesis of creative imagination, of a new plot to the detriment of a new pertinence—reveals an imbalance that stems from a reaction to the Heideggerian hierarchy between poetry and literature. This reaction supposedly led Ricœur to defend the novel. Following Inizan’s argument, the division of functions between metaphor and narrative seems restricted to the metaphorical field. It is the refiguration of the plot that temporarily structures the action—in other words, the plot combines both passivity and action. Nonetheless, the development of a “tensional” concept of truth suggests that the reaction was timid and did not prevent Ricœur from seeing the metaphorical redescription as a condition of inhabiting the world.⁹ For Inizan, the horizon for reflection on art is opened by a dialectics in which a denotative theory of metaphor would correct the suspected subjectivity of a “state of mind” expressed by a poem. He understands that there is an effort of complementarity in the meeting between the theories of poetic congruence and of generalized denotation (the respective approaches of Frye and of Goodman.)

The relationship between the *epoché* of reference and the subsequent redescription would designate the dual orientation—emotional and descriptive—of the poetic act. This metaphorical synthesis offers elements for the answer to the problem of the unity of the “vaste sphère poétique.” The unity in the field of poetical composition becomes apparent when we compare it to the poetic act that produces the *muthos*. In the seventh chapter of MV, “Métaphore et référence,” the articulation between *mimesis* and *muthos* is used to compare lyrical poetry with tragic poetry, through an association between metaphoricity and the plot of the tale.¹⁰ Inizan follows this articulation to affirm that the difference between lyrical poetry and tragic poetry is that the production of “mise en intrigue” is more apparent in the second one. It is also important to follow the displacement of the “hypothetical created by the poem” from tragic poetry to lyrical poetry—that is, from *muthos* to “mood.” This is where Ricœur suggests this as a model for “seeing-as” and for “feeling-as”:

The mood is no less heuristic than fiction in the form of a story [...]. If this heuristic function of mood is so difficult to recognize, it is doubtless because ‘representation’ has become the sole route to knowledge and the model of every relationship between subject and object. Yet feeling has an ontological status different from relationship at a distance; it makes for participation in things.¹¹

This heuristic function of “mood” refers to the ontological dimension of feeling, to the affective tonality in a Heideggerian sense. Thus, the tension between fiction and redescription caused by the metaphorical statements would refer to an experience of reality that combines manifestation and creation. Inizan uses this experience as his starting point to arrive at the reflection on the work of art in *Critique and Conviction*—which would constitute a two-way encounter between language and art resulting from the comparison with sculpture.¹² If Ricœur’s methodological prudence restricts his analysis to certain creative activities, that does not prevent the analysis from expanding its frontiers to other operations—“vers l’ensemble des opérations de configuration et le refiguration.”¹³ The dialectics that Inizan proposes as fundamental in relation to poetic and tensive figures of metaphor and narrative is between the “position” and “l’accueil.” It is in this dialectics that the meeting between creation and revelation takes place, and this is also where the reflection about “seeing,” which is also “doing,” receives the treatment of the “seeing-as” exposed in MV. Most importantly, this is where the relationship between this seeing/doing with the “attestation de l’être comme” is highlighted.¹⁴

It seems to me that if the *attestation* is the endpoint of the reference of metaphorical statements there should be neither a hesitation per se, nor a risk of breaking from hermeneutics. But then how should we understand the demand for rigor in the reference analysis that is put together with this *attestation*? The difficult part in the poetic feeling proposition—the reciprocity of the inner and the outer that the metaphor would transform from something confusing into a bipolar tension—is precisely the *glissement* of “seeing-as” to “being-as.” The insistence in the eclipse of ordinary reference turns “mood” into the moment in which the “expérience d’appartenance” is more prominent and the “pouvoir de distanciation” is less capable of being dialectically justified. The “feeling-as” related to the “mood” becomes an obstacle to the intelligibility conquered through the theory of metaphorical reference. This intelligibility is an important element that allows us to question the notions of “truth” and “reality,” and at the same time seek an explanation for phenomena whose reference is not ostensive. In this sense, it determines Ricœur’s place in the hermeneutic tradition, with the explanation being offered as a complement to interpretation.

A question to be asked is whether an extension of metaphoricity could divert from a metaphorical reading of affects, or if it could take on a different sense other than an aesthetic of affective metaphorization of emotions. Eugene F. Kaelin may have been the first to link metaphoricity to the aesthetic pleasure experience.¹⁵ Analyzing the extension to the aesthetic use of discourse, together with the triple *mimesis*, he suggests a scheme of comprehension that accompanies metaphoricity in the schematization of the feeling generated by works of art, and in the ontological postulate of poetry. In his reading of MV, more exactly in the Ricœurian reading of Beardsley, a poem acquires signification when it is organized as a “representational world” through the dimension of meaning, the intelligibility of its verbal design, and the plane of reference. This constitutes the “metaphorics of fiction” that is later extended beyond poetry.

Most of Kaelin’s critique of Ricœur revolves around his reading of *Poetics*. In it, Kaelin says, the catharsis is limited to the intellectual role of comprehension in the pleasure that the spectator of tragedy experiences. He also mentions the recognized problem of circularity in the refiguration experience, that is, that *mimesis* 3 is already contained in the structure of *mimesis* 1. However, he goes further by suggesting a non-metaphorical reading of reference based on

semiotics, in which the tension of metaphorical reference is literally comprehended as “describing the state of our consciousness as we ‘live’ within the universe of the work of art.”¹⁶

The answers given to Eugene F. Kaelin’s criticism are significant for a consideration of the limits of aesthetic pleasure. In a rereading of his own theory, Ricœur describes the metaphorization of emotions as the phenomenon in which they are retained and superseded in the aesthetic experience. He affirms that the concept of metaphoricity is expanded and enriched through catharsis, but suggests that the prominence of pleasure in the metaphorization of emotions would be more appropriate in an analysis of tragic pleasure. Ricœur questions the fact that the aesthetic dimension of metaphoricity is restricted to pleasure, and inquires about the possibility of “a vaster idea of metaphoricity itself, and hence of the pleasure attached to it.”¹⁷ Starting with the notion of the “world of the text” and the refiguration of the reader’s experience, he reaffirms both the extension of metaphoricity to the narrative theory as well as the specificity of metaphor. And, in fact, he expresses a belief in some kind of poetic unity:

The separate treatment of these procedures should not mask what is at issue in a metaphorization, which is expected to include narrative fictionalization within its poetic space. Should one not therefore say that the ultimate referent of aesthetic pleasure is the creativity common to the metaphorization of feelings and to the fictionalization of narrative plots? This would be the best way to give *catharsis* itself a scope equal to that of the metaphoricity that irrigates all the forms of semantic innovation, without thereby abolishing the characteristics proper to tragic *catharsis*.¹⁸

Of all the difficulties concerning the “surplus of meaning” experience, the last one remaining is the statute of truth in poetic creations. Apparently, we return to the same problem of understanding what this “truth” and its consequent “experience” are. The search for poetic unity through “mood” and reference is explicit as to the possibility of a reflection on the work of art, but we could choose other starting points.

The work of metaphor together with productive imagination is an articulation of the fictional; it results in a fictionalization of reality. Poetic creativity is a part of it, but so too is utopia as well as the surplus of meaning in the evangelical discourse and the common representation of history and narrative. In *Symbole, métaphore et récit: le statut du fictionnel chez Ricœur*, Jean Luc-Amalric researches the genesis of the fictional and its importance for the unity of a creativity matrix. In this reading, the interest in metaphor is to clarify the experience of a fictional schematism based on a general theory of imagination. Its contribution, when affirming that the metaphor represents the logical articulation of the fictional work of imagination is precisely to delimit it. It is true that he suggests that the reflection on the metaphor, still uprooted from praxis, advances toward the narrative to be complemented—in this case, both functions would complement the fictional. However, the methodological direction is what makes his work stand out; that is, rather than being an interpretation that expands the virtual aspect of narrative to other phenomena, it is a “return inquiry” (*Rückfrage*) that seeks to lay the foundation for metaphoricity and narrativity on an implicit or immanent symbolism. The possibility is that metaphoricity includes the update of virtuality indicated by the reservation of meaning, by the implicit symbolic meaning.

In Amalric, we find the proposition for a dialectics between a virtual fictional (pre-reflexive) and an actual fictional (the semantic and reflexive work of poetic imagination.) He affirms that a virtual metaphoricality would precede all metaphorical invention, and that this process involves a fictional imagination and an “almost” fictional experience, both verbal and non-verbal:

As Ricœur shows, the metaphorical “seeing-as” is the translation of an “imaginative function of language” capable of intuitively linking the sense and the image, the semantics and the sensitive. It is, at the same time, an *experience* that *affects* us—to the extent that the wave of images escapes all voluntary acts—, and an *act* that we perform—to the extent that the comprehension of a metaphor is an act of reading and interpretation which the iconic flux finds oriented and orderly. [...] thus appears that the *fictional imagination* operates a *radical rupture with the order of the real*. It is to the extent that this *neutralization of the real* is equivalent to the *neutralization of a symbolism always there* [*neutralisation d’un symbolisme déjà là*] which becomes, then, possible a *refiguration of our experience*.¹⁹

The dialectics between the virtual and actual dimensions, essential to a general theory of imagination, is also essential for an aesthetic dimension based on the notion of metaphoricality—a signification that operates in a transgressive manner, albeit linked to a *logos* that can be explained, an explanation that should not be final and univocal, but rather should preserve its polysemy and intelligibility. It indicates that the reserve of meaning, the implicit symbolic, would be present in the work of art as updated metaphoricality. That would be my choice to supersede what Amalric calls the static treatment of metaphor, in which the practical potentialities of semantic innovation cannot be recognized.

I follow his proposition of deepening the reflection about metaphor towards the *vive* experience of the metaphorical truth.²⁰ By connecting artistic figuration to metaphoricality in the work of art, I also believe that its importance depends on the relationship that it could establish with philosophical discourse. However, when we modify the ground for interpreting our existential relationship with the world, I think that we need to not only highlight the rejection of a direct ontology, but also consider the change in the vocabulary that describes it. As we saw, the unity of the creativity matrix crafted through a methodological change of direction, the aesthetic experience of figuration, as an innovation, demands its own autonomy.

III) *A Bigger Splash* to the narrative: work-in-progress

This section presents two readings of *A Bigger Splash* and suggests an alternative to identifying the “mood” with an emotion that has been restored by the work of art based on an analysis of the painting. The “mood” reaffirms the ineffability of the work of art and its use would mark the hesitation between two vocabularies familiar to Ricœur—one of which identifies the “state of mind” as an ontological indicator of a way of being, rooted in the reality that he created/discovered; while the other identifies *work* and *world*, confronting the limitation of “mood” as a merely virtual hypothetical against the paradox of privileged poetic feeling.

In 1967, David Hockney painted *A Bigger Splash*, as part of a three-painting series made in California, in which he explored the representation of water as a singular question to be

answered.²¹ Faced with the difficulty in depicting the image of water—even taking a photograph of it seemed to him like trying to capture something that is entirely foreign—, Hockney introduces intelligibility in painting by alluding to a splash. He was not just interested in representation, but rather in some correlated questions or problems that concerned both the history of painting and the philosophy of art.²² That is how the white lines of *A Bigger Splash* constitute a singular answer—polysemic, irreducible to a mimetic representation of water: they cause a metaphorical redescription. We can follow those lines assuming that they delay—within the painting and in the viewer’s eye—integration in a textuality that is close to a narrative, in Hockney’s vocabulary, a “theatrical device.”²³ While it may seem obvious that meaning in this painting is determined by the agent of the splash, the painter uses a figuration based on an absence. Part of this figuration is the semantic and pictorial impertinence: isolated, it is composed of a white blur brushed on a blue background, and the effect is on the edge of figurative allusion.²⁴ The blur becomes the precise answer that Hockney found through his attempt to reverse the ephemerality of a splash of water by painting it as slowly as possible. The choice of the painting style, the color pallet, the painting’s composition—the durable elements of architecture, the ephemeral ones in nature—constitutes a style.²⁵ It is the idea of style, something both technical and spiritual, that Ricœur gives precedence to in his old text about the work of art.²⁶ The indirect exploitation of human beings by the work of art, the expression of a style, would look at physical matter as the technical solution for a problem, and at the spiritual projection in material symbols—the “mood” had not yet been incorporated into his vocabulary, the “possible world” of the painting had.

I understand that the metaphoricity in a work could be isolated from its narrative elements, and that Hockney’s painting is an example of the figuration that occurs through the tensive structure of metaphor. In addition, it guides the sense and reference, even though the painting incorporates other elements. These other elements, in Ricœurian figuration, would update the virtual metaphoricity inscribed by the artist. There is a metaphorical redescription in the pre-narrative dimension of painting—a modeling of real experience in its allusive figuration. However, we could think of figuration as the affirmation of inhabiting or reorganizing the “world.” Keeping to the elements of the painting, I will assume that the edge of the pool is a dividing line between the element of allusion represented by the blur (of water) and the architectural element represented by the house. The house and its spatial disposition can be thought of as representation—although not by similarity—and also as habitation, in a phenomenological sense. Therefore, we can introduce the question of narrative refiguration, present in the triple *mimesis*, and suggest that this introduction provides an alternative (the opening of a world which I can inhabit) to reorganizing the world in terms of works.

In “Architecture and Narrativity,” Ricœur affirms the parallelism between the temporal inscription of narrative (the act of narrating) and the spatial edification of architecture (the act of constructing.) He suggests the possibility of interweaving both: narrative time configuring the experience of the past and the living present of the now, and constructed space as the place of life in the durability of the inhabitable. To address this temporality and this spatiality, the strategy is based on the three levels where the poetic *mimesis* operates until it corresponds with the act of inhabiting (pre-figuration,) the act of constructing (configuration,) and the re-reading of our inhabiting places (refiguration.) At the first level, the pre-narrative, it corresponds to the vital necessity of humans to inhabit/construct this world—architectural operations built by

the dialectics of refuge and displacement that characterizes the most elementary level of life. A living space is needed so that a life story can unfold. At the second level, the narrative, a *mise-en-intrigue* configures a plot, shapes events and provides intelligibility for the story being narrated, integrating it with others in an intertextuality. The correspondence that Ricœur establishes is between a temporal synthesis of the heterogeneous elements and a special synthesis present in the architecture—the architectural work as polyphonic message that requires a reading. It is at this level of intertextuality, of traditions transformed by the dialectics of innovation and tradition, that the work of architecture will be considered as an aesthetic and utopic project.

The narrative refiguration, the reception of a work provided by the reading, is the moment when the comprehension of itself identifies with the opening of a possible dimension. Spatially, it corresponds to habitation as a human answer: a reply to the act of constructing. It is the construction of the object as a literary text and as a place of memory that spatial intertextuality makes possible. Thus, the narrative element configured by Hockney's work registers the invasion of modernist architecture in California. The story being narrated—half-accusation, half-invitation—is that of the hedonistic lifestyle of the late 1960s.²⁷ Thus, a phenomenology of reading could register the near *mise-en-abyme* of the architectural work within the painting. And it could, also, through the parallel between construction (hard physical matter available for viewing) and narration (a work of language available for reading), question it as an architectural project. In fact, Ricœur makes the comparison between the structuralism of language and the formalism of space a first reading key: an architectural project becomes a project of civilization, a proposition for how a city should be configured.²⁸ A second reading indicates that the ideological aspect is present in the pretension of denying it through some sort of purism:

That explains the reaction in the opposite direction of those who advocate a return to pure architecture, disconnected from all sociology and all social psychology, that is, from all ideology. We are then faced with a claim quite comparable to that which the theorists of the *Nouveau Roman* have raised, in the celebration of language, for its own glory, the 'words' having dissociated themselves irrevocably from 'things' and representation giving place to game. Thus, narrativity and architecture follow similar historical courses.²⁹

Ricœur does not explicitly treat architecture as a work of art—in an architectural project, the practical function highlighted by ideology or by its outright denial prevails over the aesthetic function. However, questioning whether the critics of the architectural project reveal a conservative stance towards contemporary works is perfectly valid—in fact, the comparison with *nouveau roman* allows for it. The criteria of what is correct and incorrect when interpreting a work – Nelson Goodman's proposition for a constructive relativism—suggests a retreat to a different dialectics, or to two key moments for interpretation. Deconstruction as a prelude to a "reconstruction" serves to move away from the absolutist viewpoint that the work represents the architect's intentions, and from the deconstructionist position and its interpretative inconsequence, in which one interpretation is worth as much as any other.³⁰

Goodman's approach towards architecture in *How Buildings Mean*, in which he defends a neutral analysis between the arts and other symbolical systems such as science, incorporates the practical and aesthetic functions of the building within the symbolic function.

His approach is very similar to that of Ricœur, especially the priority given to reference in his analysis. Promoting the language *for its own sake* or preaching in the name of a pure art, free of any symbolism, as they both compare, is to take a restricted notion of reference as basis. The vocabulary of denotation and metaphorical expression conjures up the churches, which represent through the characteristics possessed and exemplified by the building—for Goodman, these are the main forms of representation through buildings. The intersection of *ogives*, which Ricœur mentions in his article of 1957, can be thought of as the metaphorical dynamics of the gothic cathedral that elevates and exalts based on the distinction between metaphorical truth and literal falsity. Ricœur is updated on this vocabulary in the example of the color that exemplifies grey and expresses sorrow. For paintings or buildings, as works of art, there is an exemplification of literal or metaphorical proprieties (expression.) Goodman is concerned with architectural works, and is not thinking of figurative buildings inside other works of art. Having said that, and going back to the rereading that Ricœur offers of his symbolic theory, we can note an important difference between the semantic innovation of metaphor and narrative, one that is remembered by Amalric: that the former brings an element of disorder, and the latter, an element of order. Isn't this distinction relevant for an analysis of contemporary works of art, which so often lean towards the avant-garde or a break from tradition?³¹

The metaphor inserted into the problem of reference, of the literally false and the metaphorically true, allows for a second interpretation of modernist house figuration created by Hockney. If, as Ricœur affirms, reference and denotation could be treated as synonymous (the language describes, the art represents) when different labels are applied, a new distinction is introduced to deal with the orientation of reference. It can now go both from the symbol to things as well as from things to the symbol. It is how a painting exemplifies grey—it designates a *possession* of the grey predicate—to express sorrow: the metaphor as a transfer operation of a non-verbal predicate. An entire scheme for metaphoricity emerges when exemplification and denotation are identified as cases of reference production, which differ only in their specific directions. In painting, the metaphorically sad is the predicative use in an inverted denotation. Ricœur complements generalized reference with the theory of models and his concept of heuristic fiction.³² With the idea of general reference, we can think of figuration in my example in the following manner: the figure of the house *possesses* the lines of modernist architecture, it exemplifies a modernist house—not like many modernist houses built in California in the late 1950s, but one that is singularized by the painter's style. The lines denote the house, they comprise a sample of their characteristics, but this literal exemplification is accompanied by metaphoric exemplification—that is, by the *expression* of hedonism that accompanies both the composition of objects and the allusive figuration of the splash. It is an inverted denotation: the house is denoted by what it exemplifies. The metaphorical application of a symbol is the kind of transference that allows us to speak of colors as sounds by extending “figures” to the “schemes.” The key for understanding this transference is provided by Ricœur's reading of Goodman:

A painting expresses properties that it exemplifies metaphorically in virtue of its status as pictorial symbol: “Pictures are no more immune than the rest of the world to the formative force of language even though they themselves, as symbols, also exert such a force upon the world, including language”.³³

There are advantages to generalized reference theory. From both an aesthetic and poetic point of view, the main advantage is that, in the expression of representations, the qualities now belong to things and are no longer considered subjective effects experienced by the spectator. The disadvantage, which requires hermeneutic complements to the pragmatist and nominalist aspects of this theory, is that, without exploring the possibilities of null denotation, Goodman does not realize the capacity for ontological vehemence of the works of art—something that the union of fiction and redescription allows us to do when it is included in the theory of metaphor.

It was in his defense of an ontological vehemence that Paul Ricœur found the paradox of the tensive character between literal truth and metaphorical truth. To believe that the (metaphorical) “is” is a determination and not an equivalence would lead us to an ontological naivety by ignoring the “is not” (literal); it would amount to considering metaphor as an innocent artifice, overlooking the fact that its heuristic function “[...] tends to lose sight of its nature as fiction and take on the dimensions of perceptual belief.”³⁴ According to Ricœur, the application of a critical indicator to the fictional “as if” is the level of consciousness we reach when putting on the mask of metaphor, rather than to deny it. The mere literary artifice prevents us from becoming conscious of the violence embedded in interpretation and lying. A negative answer to the paradox is not the solution. We need to accept the invitation extended by the poetic, while renouncing the “as if” of ontological naivety.

Regarding the example of metaphoricity in works of art, both readings of *A Bigger Splash* are not complementary and exemplify yet another theoretical incompatibility.³⁵ However, a definition of a work of art that is compatible with this poetics is an excellent starting point for a hermeneutics of the “comprehensive experience.” Developing the analysis in the direction of the power of the ontological revelation of works of art increases the risk of it collapsing into a form of unintelligibility, that is characteristic of the hermeneutics of revelation. We know that, at the end of MV, “seeing-as” is complemented by “being-as”—and the metaphorical reference moves in this direction. Was there some hesitation? It is understandable to suppose that this hesitation was brief, and that a continuation of the reflection on metaphor and narrative should be understood as a furthering of such reflection into the ontological mode of the *unconcealment* of a world that I can inhabit. Then we should be prepared to assume that, when searching for an aesthetic dimension in Ricœurian hermeneutics, we will only find his promised poetics.

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² See Paul Ricœur, “‘Logique herméneutique’?,” In *Écrits et conférences 2. Herméneutique*, ed. Daniel Frey and Nicola Stricker, Paris, Seuil, 2010, pp. 123-196.

³ “Picture thinking” describes the pictorial power of language. Thus, in the construction of the metaphorical sense, the verbal icon is understood as a hard object similar to the sculpture. On the other hand, from the viewpoint of the image: “Consequently, to form an image is not to have an image, in the sense of having a mental representation; instead, it is to read, through the icon of a

relation, the relation itself. Image is less 'associated' than evoked and displayed by the schematization. Language remains the bearer of the predicative relation, but in schematizing and illustrating itself in a pictorial manner, the predicative relation can be read through the image in which it is invested. The seeing created by language is therefore not a seeing of this or that; it is a 'seeing-as'. Paul Ricœur, "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality," In *A Ricœur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, ed. Mario J. Valdes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991,) 127.

- ⁴ Paul Ricœur, "Cinque lezioni. Dal linguaggio all'immagine," In *Aesthetica Preprint* 66, ed. Rita Messori (Palermo: Centro Internazionale Studi di Estetica, 2002), 60-61. "Cinque lezioni. Dal linguaggio all'immagine" is the edition of Lectures conducted by Paul Ricœur between 1973 and 1974 at the Centre de Recherches Phénoménologiques de Paris in a seminar named "Phenomenological Research on the Imaginary". The Lectures was firstly published in Italian under the curatorship of Rita Messori. One translation into Portuguese was published in 2013: "Cinco lições: da linguagem à imagem," In *Sapere Aude*, nº 4 (2013): 12-36. Translated by Vinicius Sanfelice and Marcelo Fabri.
- ⁵ "This would be comparable to the density of certain forms of language, such as metaphor, in which several levels of meaning are held together in a single expression. The work of art can have an effect comparable to that of metaphor: integrating levels of sense that are overlaid, preserved and contained together." Paul Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998,) 172.
- ⁶ Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 181.
- ⁷ See: Yvon Inizan, "L'unité de la 'vaste sphère poétique'," *Études Ricœuriennes/Ricœur Studies* 7, nº 2 (2016), 111-113. Accessed March 10, 2017. DOI: 10.5195/errs.2016.384.
- ⁸ Paul Ricœur, *Temps et récit*, t. 1, *L'intrigue et le récit historique*, Paris, Seuil, 1983, p. 13.
- ⁹ Inizan, "L'unité de la 'vaste sphère poétique'," pp. 112-113.
- ¹⁰ See: "... because, on the one hand, the *muthos* takes the form of a 'story' and the metaphoricity is attached to the plot of the tale, and because, on the other hand, the referent consists in human action which, due to its motivational course, has a certain affinity to the structure of the story". Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. by Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, SJ (London and New York: Routledge, 2004,) 289.
- ¹¹ Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 290.
- ¹² See note 5.
- ¹³ Inizan, "L'unité de la 'vaste sphère poétique'," 120.
- ¹⁴ See: "Je me risque à dire que, voir quelque chose comme, c'est rendre manifeste l'être-comme de la chose. Je mets le 'comme' en position d'exposant du verbe être et je fais de l'être-comme le référent ultime de l'énoncé métaphorique. Cette thèse porte incontestablement l'empreinte de l'ontologie post-

heideggérienne”. Paul Ricœur, *Du texte à l'action*. Essais d'herméneutique II, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1986, 34.

- ¹⁵ See: Eugene F. Kaelin, “Paul Ricœur’s aesthetics: on how to read a metaphor,” In *The philosophy of Paul Ricœur*, ed. by Lewis E. Hahn (Chicago: Open Court, 1995): 237-255.
- ¹⁶ Kaelin, “Paul Ricœur’s aesthetics: on how to read a metaphor,” 253.
- ¹⁷ Kaelin, “Paul Ricœur’s aesthetics: on how to read a metaphor,” 257.
- ¹⁸ Kaelin, “Paul Ricœur’s aesthetics: on how to read a metaphor,” 258. As in the previous note, Ricœur answered to Kaelin’s criticisms on these pages.
- ¹⁹ Jean-Luc Amalric, “Símbolo, metáfora e narrativa: o estatuto do ficcional em Ricœur,” In *Pensar Ricœur: vida e narração*, eds. by Roberto Wu and Cláudio Reichert do Nascimento (Porto Alegre: Clarinete, 2016,) 162.
- ²⁰ See also: Jean-Luc Amalric, “L’épreuve de la métaphore: éléments pour une critique du discours philosophique,” *Remate de Males* 35, nº 2 (2015): 423.
- ²¹ *A Bigger Splash*, 1967, Acrylic on canvas, 243.8 X 243.8 cm (96 X 96 in). Tate, London. The two paintings are *The Little Splash* and *The Splash* (1966).
- ²² About California and life-style: “The work of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg from the late fifties raised serious questions that undermined ‘common sense’ ideas concerning the difference between the visual and the linguistic, the figurative and the abstract, illusion and reality. The ways in which modern art was thought about and defined continued to preoccupy Hockney in California [...] his work demonstrates his excitement at the way objects can be represented by signs that hardly resemble them. In paintings, prints and drawings, he worked his way through a whole series of different types of sign, nowhere more abundantly than in the depictions of transparent surfaces, such as water [a bigger splash]. What we see is a great variety of decorative marks, abstract coloured shapes and carefully delineated contours. Our delight in seeing how these unnaturalistic signs can, indeed do, represent water is a consequence of the artist’s intelligence and wit.” Paul Melia and Ulrich Luckhardt, *David Hockney Paintings* (Munich—London—New York: Prestel Verlag, 2000,) 56.
- ²³ This point about Hockney’s vocabulary, as procedure of modern painting, can be understood as a specific insertion into the debate about modernism and minimalism. The painter would also be inserted in what Ricœur calls a verbal culture, which is key to understanding the possible answers to the problem—in this case, the abstractionism and the minimalist object (and its theatricality.) According to Melia and Luckhardt, Hockney would overcome this dichotomy both in the representation of buildings as in the temporal involvement with some “theatricality.” It is also in this sense, I believe, that we can say that a work of art can propose an inquiry—figuring—into conceptual problems concerning philosophical theories.

- ²⁴ See: "A Bigger Splash could be considered figurative in the sense that there was a figure who's just gone under the water. The splash must have been made by something; presumably it was made by a figure. But if you take away the chair, for instance, and the reflection in the glass, it becomes much more abstract. You could even take away the glass, and then it becomes even more so; no colour—absolutely flat". David Hockney, *David Hockney by David Hockney: My Early Years* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 126. An affirmation that can be compared with this (on the part of the viewer): "What leaves me with reservations about it [figurative/non-figurative] is the narrative assumption of most of the canvases [Poussin painting's]. One has to be able to identify the stories being staged. But the eye educated by nonfigurative painting only manages to see the extraordinary play of color and of line and the perfect balance of the two." Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 178.
- ²⁵ "[Hockney about style]: 'I want to use different styles, or a vocabulary of different styles, in the same way a writer uses different words. I think it is part of the technique of painting to be able to adapt yourself to different styles...' [...] Hockney's self-consciousness about style, and his interest in using one that did not betray individuality, indicates that the received idea of style as an index of the artist's inner self could no longer facilitate a full, imaginative engagement: it was capable of giving rise only to work characterized by visual cliché." Melia and Luckhardt, *David Hockney Paintings*, 32-38.
- ²⁶ "La place de l'oeuvre d'art dans notre culture" was published in 1957, in the journal *Foi & Education* 38. The definition of "mood" based on Cézanne's paintings does not clarify the nature of the process of iconic augmentation. On the contrary, a provisional definition limited to the notion of style allows us to understand that it is as figuration inserted into the work due to its style that iconic augmentation becomes a singular response provided by the artist.
- ²⁷ "For an artist as preoccupied with surfaces as Hockney, L.A. and specially Hollywood (which has derived great rewards from exhibiting itself) provide an ideal setting. Here, reality had been turned into images so often that it was, and still is, sometimes difficult to distinguish between image and reality. Hence the artist's comment: "I love California. Everything is so artificial." Melia and Luckhardt, *David Hockney Paintings*, 61.
- ²⁸ "There is also the fact that, in a still recent past, from which current builders endeavor to distance themselves, the members of the Bauhaus school, those loyal to Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, thought their art of building in connection with the values of civilization to which they adhered, according to the place they assigned to their art in the history of culture". Paul Ricœur, "Architecture and Narrativity." *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies*, Vol 7, No 2 (2016): 38.
- ²⁹ Ricœur, "Architecture and Narrativity," 38.
- ³⁰ See: Nelson Goodman, "How Buildings Mean," *Critical Inquiry* 11, n° 4 (1985): 650.
- ³¹ This aesthetic subversive relationship was better understood by Alberto Martinengo. He expands the dialectics between innovation and sedimentation to artistic revolutions. Just as, in metaphorical language, the meaning emerges from the rubble of contradiction, the new canon (its best example is

the avant-garde) comes from an ordered violation of the traditional artistic paradigm. It emerges as a consequence of metaphorical reference, of the moment in which the metaphor produces a second reference to the world, expanding or transforming the structure of artistic movements. If, in symbolic systems, the violation is an evolutionary process that redefines its boundaries in continuity and innovation, in artistic styles the processes of innovation and sedimentation act as laboratories that insert a new canon without eradicating the previous one. The vanguard, exemplified here by Kandinsky's abstractionism, is an art style that puts itself in competition with the world—the radicalism of abstractionism breaks with the naturalist principle of Western tradition and replaces it with a new reference. Alberto Martinengo, "Metaphor and Canon in Paul Ricœur: From an Aesthetic Point of View," *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics 2* (2010): 309.

³² "I say that the painting is sad rather than gay, *even though* only sentient beings are gay or sad. Nevertheless, there is a metaphorical truth here, for the mistake in label application is equivalent to the reassignment of a label, such that 'sad' is more appropriate than 'gay.' The literal falsity, through misassignment of a label, is transformed into metaphorical truth through reassignment of the label. I will show later how the intermediary of the theory of models allows one to interpret this reassignment in terms of redescription. The heuristic device of fiction must be inserted between description and redescription, and this will be accomplished by the theory of models" (278.) Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. by Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, SJ (London and New York: Routledge, 2004,) 278.

³³ Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 281. Also, Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1968,) 88.

³⁴ Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 298.

³⁵ Jean-Marc Tétaz, "La métaphore entre sémantique et ontologie. La réception de la philosophie analytique du langage dans l'herméneutique de Paul Ricœur," *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies* 5, n° 1 (2014): 76. Accessed August 10, 2016, doi: 10.5195/errs.2014.246. The analysis of Ricœur's concept of metaphor, close to a Heideggerian concept of language, runs into a contradiction in terms of the innovation produced by the writer/poet. It is interesting to confront this interpretation with Tengelyi's, which affirms that closeness. Although he makes a distinction between redescription and refiguration, there is some continuity with regards to metaphorical truth. "Redescription and Refiguration of Reality in Ricœur," *Research in Phenomenology* 37 (2007): 164.

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