ISSN 1853-6034
RÉTOR 15 (2), pp. 70-88 (julio-diciembre, 2025)
http://doi.org/10.61146/retor.v15.n2.267

DOSSIER

PROOF AND PERSUASION: THE POWERS OF CLASSICAL RHETORIC IN PAUL RICŒUR'S PHILOSOPHY

PRUEBA Y PERSUASIÓN: LOS PODERES DE LA RETÓRICA CLÁSICA EN LA FILOSOFÍA DE PAUL RICŒUR

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RECIBIDO: 30/04/02025
ACEPTADO: 15/06/2025

ABSTRACT

This article explores Paul Ricœur's philosophical reflections on the intersection of rhetoric and historiography, with particular attention to how narrative configuration and imagination play a central role in the representation of historical reality. Drawing primarily from *La Métaphore vive*, *Temps et récit*, and *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, the article examines how Ricœur conceives of the narrative act as a synthesis of epistemological rigor and rhetorical strategy. Ricœur argues that historical discourse cannot be reduced to mere factual reconstruction or to narrative artifice; rather, it involves a dynamic interplay between *proof* (documentary evidence), explanation and *persuasion* (rhetorical imagination, narrative configuration). The article emphasizes the ethical and cognitive function of rhetoric, especially through the concept of *faire voir*—the act of "making see"—which grants narrative its emotional and moral intensity. Drawing on Aristotle's *enargeia*/*energeia*, as well as insights from Louis Marin and Hayden White, Ricœur discusses the visual and affective power of metaphor and narrative in shaping historical understanding. Particular attention is given to how historiography deals with singular, traumatic events such as the Holocaust, where the vividness and visibility afforded by narrative imagination serve both mnemonic and ethical purposes. The article ultimately contends that Ricœur offers a robust epistemological framework for understanding the unique referentiality of historical discourse—one that resists both naïve realism and radical constructivism. In times marked by post-truth and disinformation, Ricœur's insistence on the bond between narrative, reference, and truth proves more relevant than ever. His thought warns against rhetorical closure and highlights the responsibility of historians to maintain both critical distance and ethical engagement through narrative representation.

Keywords: rhetoric, Ricœur, metaphor, history, hermeneutics, imagination.

RESUMEN

Este artículo explora las reflexiones filosóficas de Paul Ricœur sobre la intersección entre retórica e historiografía, prestando especial atención al papel central que desempeñan la configuración narrativa y la imaginación en la representación de la realidad histórica. Basándose principalmen-

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te en *La Métaphore vive*, *Temps et récit* y *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, el estudio examina cómo Ricœur concibe el acto narrativo como una síntesis entre el rigor epistemológico y la estrategia retórica. Ricœur sostiene que el discurso histórico no puede reducirse ni a una mera reconstrucción factual ni a un artificio narrativo; más bien, implica una interacción dinámica entre *prueba* (documentación), explicación y *persuasión* (imaginación retórica, configuración narrativa). El artículo subraya la función ética y cognitiva de la retórica, especialmente a través del concepto de *faire voir*—el "hacer ver"—que otorga a la narrativa su intensidad moral y emocional. A partir de los conceptos aristotélicos de *enargeia*/*energeia*, así como de los aportes de Louis Marin y Hayden White, se analiza el poder visual y afectivo de la metáfora y de la narrativa para moldear la comprensión histórica. Se presta especial atención al tratamiento de acontecimientos singulares y traumáticos, como el Holocausto, donde la vividez y la visibilidad que aporta la imaginación narrativa cumplen funciones tanto éticas como mnemónicas. El artículo sostiene que Ricœur ofrece un marco epistemológico sólido para comprender la referencialidad específica del discurso histórico, evitando tanto el realismo ingenuo como el constructivismo radical. En tiempos marcados por la posverdad y la desinformación, la insistencia de Ricœur en el vínculo entre narrativa, referente y verdad adquiere una relevancia crucial. Su pensamiento advierte contra el cierre retórico y subraya la responsabilidad del historiador de mantener tanto la distancia crítica como el compromiso ético en la representación del pasado.

Palabras clave: retórica, Ricœur, metáfora, historia, hermenéutica, imaginación.

I. INTRODUCTION

Paul Ricœur never devoted a full work to an extensive study of Rhetoric. Although he reflected deeply on the subject in various works and essays, as we aim to demonstrate, the truth is that he never provided a systematic presentation of that thinking. Even among scholars of rhetoric, Ricœur has received only limited attention, often restricted to specific concepts or isolated ideas (see Ritivoi, 2006, p. 3). The study by Andreea Ritivoi (*Paul Ricoeur: Tradition and Innovation in Rhetorical Theory*), although based on four concepts not explicitly Ricœurian (doxa, phronesis, polis, and epideictic), attempts to fill this gap by offering a broader view of Ricœur's thought on the rhetorical arts. However, as Ritivoi herself acknowledges, his intention was not to provide an explanatory and didactic exposition of Ricœurian rhetoric. Rather, she took the main threads of Ricœur's reflection on rhetoric, poetics, and hermeneutics and expanded them into other fields of political philosophy and contemporary rhetoric, raising new questions. Ritivoi herself (2006, p. 2) notes Ricœur's absence from major rhetorical treatises and anthologies of our time and seeks, in this way, to do justice to him[1].

Our proposal is to analyze a lesser-known and disseminated dimension of Ricœurian philosophy, in which rhetoric plays a central role—namely, its relation to historical science and memory.[2] To do

1 Curiously, the introduction to the Portuguese edition of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* acknowledges a certain prominence to Ricœur, crediting him with the creation of a "new rhetoric" with a literary and tropological orientation, based on elocution (Júnior, 2005, pp. 30–33). Júnior, however, argues that Ricœur overlooked another form of "new rhetoric," one rooted in the Aristotelian tradition of argumentation.

2 Ritivoi (2006) herself acknowledges this gap: "Ricoeur's endeavors in moral and political philosophy, or more

so, we begin with the most discussed and well-known facet of Ricœur's rhetorical thinking, as developed in *The Rule of Metaphor*. But we do not stop there. We aim to demonstrate how Ricœur inaugurates a set of philosophical principles in this work, which he maintains throughout his subsequent writings, adapting them—without fundamentally changing them—according to the issues at hand. This is not about demonstrating a progressive and coherent line of thought. Ricœur's theses show advances and setbacks, metamorphosing depending on the context and the problems addressed. Amid this apparent disorganization, is there something that remains consistent and coherent? There is. And that is what we intend to demonstrate through the pair: proof and persuasion.

II. PROOF AND PERSUASION IN RHETORIC AND POETICS: THE RULE OF METAPHOR

The first part of *The Rule of Metaphor* seeks to establish the differences and similarities between rhetoric and poetics. Aristotle thus reappears as a guiding figure in Paul Ricœur's thought. Aristotle's treatise approached rhetoric broadly. Argumentation, the main axis and dominant theme of the work, ensured a connection with dialectics and, through it, with philosophy. In Ricœur's view, later rhetorical treatises neglected the dimension of argumentation and dialectics, focusing solely on elocution and figures of speech, which were only a minor part of Aristotle's treatise. In this way, rhetoric's link to philosophy was lost, and rhetoric itself became an "erratic and futile" discipline (Ricœur, 1975, p. 14) that died out in the 19th century. But Ricœur reminds us that before it became futile, rhetoric was dangerous. Dangerous when the art of speaking well detached itself from the concern for truth and, consequently, from philosophy. The mastery of persuasive technique through language gives its user the power to dissociate words from things and to manipulate people by manipulating language.[3] The philosophical discipline's claim to truth prevents it from assimilating this link between discourse and power. Unable to dismantle this link, Aristotelian rhetoric represents philosophy's first attempt to regulate it and draw the best from it, setting limits on the legitimate use of persuasive discourse. The recourse to dialectic aims to establish probability (*eikos*) as a regulator of rhetoric. The probable or likely is the kind of proof suitable for oratory, says Ricœur. Oratory is not bound by the same type of proof and necessity as the empirical sciences or philosophy. From this, Ricœur (1975) draws the following conclusion:

recently in memory studies have received little attention from rhetorical scholars, although they elaborate and clarify his work in hermeneutics and in the philosophy of language" (p. 3).

3 The sophist Gorgias was likely one of the first to become aware of the gap between words (*logoi*) and things (*erga*). His rhetorical treatise *Encomium of Helen* is a triumphant expression of this awareness of the power of discourse. Euripides masterfully conveys this tension between *ergon* and *logos* in several of his plays—*Helen*, for instance, is a striking example. Other authors and literary genres echo this new discovery, which underpins democracy itself—through freedom of speech in the assembly (deliberative discourse), in the courts (judicial discourse), and in the agora (epideictic discourse)—while also posing a threat to democracy. Thucydides, in *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, reflects this ambivalence more clearly than most, attempting to maintain a fragile balance, given that he frequently resorts to rhetorical discourse himself. Plato, in turn—as is well known—does not hesitate to denounce the abuses and dangers that rhetoric enables. The *Gorgias* dialogue is unequivocal in its condemnation and reduction of rhetoric and sophistry to arts of illusion (*apatê*) and deception (*pseudos*). See Eire (2002, pp. 185–199).

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> Plutôt donc que de dénoncer la *doxa* – l'*opinion* – comme inférieure à l'*épistêmê* – à la science, la philosophie peut se proposer d'élaborer une théorie du vraisemblable qui armerait la rhétorique contre ses propres abus, en la dissociant de la sophistique et de l'éristique (p. 17).

Ricœur credits Aristotle with the creation of a philosophical rhetoric based on the link between the rhetorical concept of persuasion (*to pithanon*) and the logical concept of probability (*to eikos*). This connection was lost in later treatises, more concerned with taxonomic classifications and rhetorical figures.

Although broader than later treatises, Aristotelian rhetoric did not encompass all areas of discourse, excluding, for instance, poetic discourse. However, the concept Ricœur seeks to analyze—metaphor—belongs to both domains of discourse. In both treatises, "metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else" (Arist. *Poet.* 1457b). Likewise, both emphasize the idea that "to use metaphors well is to perceive similarities" (Arist. *Poet.* 1459a). Perceiving, contemplating, seeing the similar is a natural talent that both poet and orator must possess. Despite sharing the concept of metaphor, rhetoric and poetics have distinct functions and contexts that must not be confused. The former aims at persuasion, the latter at *katharsis*, or the purification of emotions such as fear and pity[4]. Poetics does not depend on the art of argumentation, deliberation, praise, or accusation, because it is not oratory. As mentioned before, Aristotelian rhetoric is governed by argumentation, whose function is to invent or discover proofs, whereas poetics is exempt from proof. Its project is mimetic or fictional, Ricœur reminds us. The tragic *mythos* tells the truth about the acting and suffering condition of the human being through the essential representation of human actions. Rhetoric is thus considered a technique of proof (Arist. *Rh.* 1354a). The demonstrative argument called syllogism in Greek philosophy corresponds, in rhetoric, to the probability argument known as the enthymeme. For Aristotle, enthymemes are σῶμα τῆς πίστεως – "the body of proof" (Arist. *Rh.* 1355). As Ricœur (1975) comments: "la rhétorique tout entière doit être centrée sur le pouvoir persuasif qui s'attache à ce mode de preuve" (p. 42). Moreover, unlike the formal and closed nature of dialectic, rhetoric deals with real and concrete situations (the political assembly, the courtroom, the agora) and is oriented toward the listener. It therefore has a dialogical and intersubjective character. This requires the orator to master certain aspects of public discourse to persuade the audience—such as emotions, passions, habits, and beliefs. However, for Aristotle, Ricœur reminds us, these elements of persuasion must be subjected to the constraint of proofs, of probability—in short, of the enthymeme. It would thus

4 Ricœur explores this topic in two important essays published after *The Rule of Metaphor*: "Between Rhetoric and Poetics" (1996) and "Rhetoric, Poetics, Hermeneutics" (1997). In the latter, the author clarifies that the imagination characteristic of poetic discourse "stirs up the sedimented universe of conventional ideas which are the premises of rhetorical argumentation" (p. 66). It follows, then, that *doxa* and imagination belong to two quite distinct discursive universes: the former pertains to the domain of controversy, grounded in probabilities and social and discursive conventions, while the latter belongs to the fictional imaginary, whose goal is precisely to expand, challenge, and rupture conventions. However, the agonistic conception of rhetoric—as a confrontation of opinions in which one must emerge victorious and definitive—is also opposed to the irenic definition of hermeneutics. For Ricœur, the hermeneutic process is open and plural; therefore, rather than excluding interpretations, it seeks others. According to Ricœur himself, the hermeneutical freedom that characterizes the interpretive act stands in contrast to the argumentative intention to assert the dominance of one admissible opinion over others. Interpretation, on the contrary, is the act of allowing a text to signify "as much as it can," because "'to signify more'" is "to make us 'think more'" (Ricoeur, 1997, p. 69). Thus, when the interpretive act resorts to rhetorical argumentation, its ideal is not univocity, but rather to explain more in order to understand better. Cf. Ritivoi, 2006, pp. 78–79.

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be a mistake for rhetoric to merely deliver a collection of unverified commonplaces derived from public opinion. When that happened, it became confused with *topics* and was reduced to a purely aesthetic and formal object. From there to irrelevance and disappearance was but a step.

In short, the persuasive character that Aristotle establishes as the aim of rhetoric must adhere to the criterion of proof. This interdependence is clearly marked in the etymological and semantic interplay between the neuter *pithanon* (persuasive) and *pisteis* (proofs), which, according to Ricœur (1975): "marque la priorité de l'argument objectif sur la visée intersubjective de l'entreprise de persuader (p. 44)".

Thus, rhetoric oscillates between the two poles that constitute it: proof and persuasion. But there is, from the beginning, a tension and precarious balance between the external face (*lexis*) and the internal body of discourse. The danger that affects rhetoric in all times and places is that of giving primacy to verbal expression at the expense of factual truth. When the desire to please outweighs the need to argue, a divorce arises between discourse and reality.

> Quand la persuasion s'affranchit du souci de la preuve, le désir de séduire et de plaire l'emporte, et le style lui-même n'est plus figure, au sens de visage d'un corps – mais ornement, au sens « cométique » du mot (Ricœur, 1975, pp. 46–47).

This is even more evident and concerning when the discourse is written, "parce que l'écriture constitue une extériorisation de second degré" (Ricœur, 1975, p. 47), or, in Aristotle's words (*Rh.* 1404), "written speeches have more effect by their expression than by their ideas."

III. THE RHETORIC-IMAGISTIC POWER OF THE LIVING METAPHOR

As we have already mentioned, metaphor, structurally understood as the transfer of meaning from words, is part of the elocutionary (*lexis*) dimension of both rhetoric and poetics through structure, but it performs a distinct function in each of these fields. In Book III of the *Rhetoric*, metaphor is presented as part of the strategies of persuasion in public discourse. Aristotle attributes to metaphor virtues such as clarity, warmth, breadth, convenience, and, above all, good words. By clarity, Ricœur understands the ability of metaphor to show. However, it is the reflection on the elegance and liveliness of metaphor that gives Ricœur the possibility of extracting interesting insights about the cognitive and imagistic dimension of metaphor. Metaphor not only allows us to grasp similarities and enhance our knowledge of two seemingly distinct realities, but it also possesses the virtue of πρὸ ὀμμάτων ποιεῖ, "to set things 'before the eyes'" (Arist. *Rh.* 1410b). The Greek term used by Aristotle to refer to this literary process is *energeia* (Ross, 1959). Some editions use the term *energeia*. *Energeia* is the resource that allows for the representation of actions of both animate and inanimate things. *Enargeia*, on the other hand, is a rhetorical technique well known to classical authors, closely linked to *ekphrasis*, and consists of the detailed description of an object, scene, or action, to make it visible to the mind's eye.[5] Ricœur seems to merge the

5 About the concept of *enargeia*, vide Zanker, 1981; Calame, 1991; Walker, 1993; Kemman, 1996; Plett, 2012; Webb, 2009; Soares, 2017.

two concepts in his analysis. Ignoring the Greek *enargeia*, he explores the iconic dimension of metaphor from a more fortunate and popular concept in Greek philosophy, the *eikon*, taking as a starting point Charles Peirce's semiotic philosophy. He also points out an interesting connection between metaphor and elocution (*lexis*), as both aim to point out, show, and make visible, concluding the following: "'Placer sous les yeux' is not, then, an accessory function of metaphor, but the very essence of the figure" (1975, p. 49). It follows that the primary function of metaphor is to make the inanimate appear as animated. Not the invisible in the visible, in the manner of Platonic *mimesis*, but to show inanimate things as in action (*energeia*). *Rhetoric* does not provide further details on this function of metaphor. To find more, one must turn to *Poetics*, where it is stated that tragic *mythos* results from a *mimesis physeos*, that is, from an imitation of nature. The reference for Aristotle's *mimesis* is the real world, the realm of nature. It is, of course, important to understand what nature this is, but before that, Ricœur aligns *mimesis* with metaphor.

It follows from Aristotle's words that the *mimesis* of tragedy consists of an enhanced and ennobling representation of human actions. This augmenting and differentiating power of *mimesis* strengthens the connection with metaphor. Metaphor, on the one hand, is subjected to reality, while on the other, it is capable of fabulous invention. According to Ricœur (1975), metaphor participates in the dual tension that characterizes *mimesis*: "submission to reality and fabulous invention; restitution and elevation" (p. 57). He further argues that metaphor does not consist merely in the substitution of one word for another or just in a deviation of meaning relative to ordinary language. He draws a parallel between the elevation of meaning brought about by *mythos* at the level of tragedy and the elevation of meaning brought about by metaphor at the level of the word, which can also be compared to the elevation of emotion in *katharsis*.

Now, let us return to the topic of nature, unanswered above. The Greek concept of *physis* does not fully correspond to our inert idea of nature. The Greeks viewed nature as something living and creative, and only in this way was it possible to imitate it not in a servile manner, but equally creatively. The same applies to metaphor. Metaphor "places before the eyes" because "it signifies things in action," just as *mythos* represents characters acting, as in action (*energountas*) (Arist. *Poet.* 1448a). Ricœur (1975) asks: "N'existerait-il pas une souterraine parenté entre « signifier l'actualité » et dire la *physis* ?" (p. 61). If this is the case, both *mimesis* and metaphor have the ontological power to reveal the truth of being in the world. This is not an empirical truth, but an imaginary one. And it is not about merely saying what is or simply describing that-thing-over-there. As *mimesis physeos*, they link this referential function to the revelation of the "Real" as "Act" (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 61). Thus, Ricœur concludes this chapter on classical rhetoric, saying the following:

> Présenter les hommes « comme agissant » et toutes choses « comme en acte », telle pourrait bien être la fonction *ontologique* du discours métaphorique. En lui, toute potentialité dormante d'existence apparaît *comme* éclose, toute capacité latente d'action *comme* effective. L'expression *vive* est ce qui dit l'existence *vive (1975, p. 61)*.

Ricœur revisits the theme of the iconicity of metaphor in the sixth study of *The Rule of Metaphor* (1975, p. 221-272). Keeping Aristotle's idea in mind that metaphor places something before the eyes, Ricœur reflects at length on the figurative dimension of metaphor as a mental image and the paradox that seems to exist between vision, image, and imagination on one side, and discursivity, text, and semantics on the other. After attempting to understand, with little success,

Aristotle's enigmatic statement in light of various semantic theories of metaphor, Ricœur turns to the psycholinguistic analysis of Marcus Hester in *The Meaning of Poetic Metaphor* (1967). This reflection is presented in study number 6, under the title "Icon and Image." (1975, p. 262-272). Ricœur begins by stating that the union between "saying" and "seeing-as" is of a psycholinguistic order. This type of analysis, instead of being strictly semantic or linguistic, emphasizes the sensitive and mental dimension of metaphor, aligning with Aristotle's proposal about the vivid nature of metaphor, or its power to place before the eyes. Metaphor has both a verbal and a non-verbal dimension. Therefore, it is no longer a matter of asserting the verbal dimension of the icon, but rather the iconic dimension of the verb. In metaphor, as in poetic language, there is an articulation between semantic meaning and visual meaning. What Marcus Hester's analysis proposes anew is the exaltation of the sensory, even sensual, aspect of poetic language, within which metaphor can be situated. Just like the icon in Byzantine worship, the poetic verbal icon consists of this fusion of meaning and the sensorial. Stripped of its referential function or its everyday, merely instrumental use, poetic language becomes a hard or material object, like marble for the sculptor. Reading a literary text suspends reality and evokes a series of mental images (sensory impressions) that open the reader to a new imaginary reality. The meaning is iconic because of its power to release images. The imaginary evoked by reading generates a virtual experience of quasi-vision and quasi-experience. It is important to remember that "quasi" in Latin has a comparative connotation, "as if," which fits well with the adverbial sense we currently give it, "very close to." We can then say that the act of reading triggers a "seeing-as," a notion that Hester draws from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, although in a very different context. The imaginary, Ricœur reflects, is concretized as a "seeing-as." By painting time with the features of a beggar, metaphor allows us to see time as a beggar. The "seeing-as" imposes itself as the sensitive face of poetic language; half-thought, half-experience, the "seeing-as" is the intuitive relationship that harmonizes meaning and image. Moreover, the "seeing-as" is what establishes the similarity that metaphor seeks to convey. Before the reader's own "seeing-as," there exists the "seeing-as" of the metaphor's creator. The verbal and non-verbal are thus closely united through the imagistic function of language.

IV. MIMESIS AND RHETORIC: READING AS A STRATEGY OF PERSUASION

In the trilogy *Temps et Récit*, published a decade after *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricœur returns to Aristotle's *Poetics* to develop his well-known theory of triple mimesis, which he bases on the Aristotelian triad *mythos-mimesis-katharsis*. It is precisely in the third stage of mimesis, called "mimesis III"—equivalent to the refiguration of the text by the reader—that rhetoric finds its place.

Ricœur (1983) argues that the dynamism of mimesis seeks not only the literariness of the poetic text but also the (pat)hetic effect on the receiver/reader: "le récit a son sens plein quand il est restitué au temps de l'agir et du pâtir dans la mimesis III" (p. 136). In this process, the act of reading plays a fundamental role, that of creating the intersection between the world of the text and the world of the reader, for it is in the reader that the mimetic process culminates. Every text seeks to convince and move the reader's emotions. A theory of reading seems at first to derive from poetics—inasmuch as every reading is pre-structured by the composition of the work—but it also stems from other disciplines and persuasive strategies, such as rhetoric, since communication with the reader through persuasion is the writer's ultimate aim. In turn, the reader responds to the writer's persuasive strategy, following the configuration and appropriating the world of the text.

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RÉTOR 15 (2), pp. 70-88 (julio-diciembre, 2025)
http://doi.org/10.61146/retor.v15.n2.267

To better understand this dialectic between the "world of the text" and the "world of the reader", bipolarized between author and reader, Ricœur (1985, pp. 284–328) reviews several reading theories that illustrate three key stages: (1) the author's strategy addressed to the reader (from poetics to rhetoric); (2) the insertion of this strategy into literary configuration (rhetoric between the text and the reader); and (3) the reader's or audience's response (phenomenology and aesthetics of reading).

A theory of reading centered on the author's activity—namely, the strategies employed to persuade the audience—must necessarily lean toward rhetoric. In this sense, Ricœur draws on Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) to reflect on the techniques used by the author to make their work communicable. He does so without conceding to psychography or to the semantic autonomy of the text: he aligns neither with the thesis of the real author, the object of biography, nor with the structuralist view of the text as semantically autonomous, ignoring the author's action.

The theme of poetic reference runs throughout Paul Ricœur's hermeneutic thinking from *The Rule of Metaphor* onward. There, he devoted the entire seventh study to the defense of the referentiality of both text and metaphor, or rather, of their link to the world, contrasting on the one hand sense and semiotics, and on the other, reference and semantics. In *Temps et Récit* and in the various hermeneutical essays—particularly in *From Text to Action*, and echoing in *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*—he reiterates the thesis developed from Benveniste's linguistic analysis: the idea that the sentence is the unit of discourse, since "avec la phrase, le langage est orienté au-delà de lui-même: il dit quelque chose sur quelque chose" (Ricœur, 1983, p. 147).

The first stage, then, is to justify the inclusion of the category of the implied author (in and by the work) in a rhetoric of fiction. The implied author is the result of the concealment of the real author and is discovered by the reader in the marks of the text. This category plays a fundamental role in a comprehensive theory of reading, insofar as the reader perceives its presence when intuitively grasping the work as a unified whole. This unification arises not only from the rules of composition (poetics) but also from the rhetorical artifices and strategies that make the text the product of an enunciator (rhetoric).

Still on the subject of the author's rhetorical strategies, Ricœur makes several remarks regarding the reliable and unreliable narrator. According to him, the trust a narrator must earn from the reader is to fiction what documentary proof is to historiography. Since the novelist has no documentary evidence for what is narrated, they ask the reader to trust them and to grant the right to comment on or judge the situations or characters described. When the author introduces (or dramatizes) a narrator in the text, this narrator enjoys the same privilege as the implied author: access, if desired, to the inner lives of the characters. This privilege is part of the rhetorical powers invested in the implied author by the tacit agreement between author and reader. The case of the unreliable narrator, frequent in modern fiction, is particularly interesting for the way it appeals to the reader's freedom and responsibility (cf. Ricœur, 1985, p. 296). But this type of literature, which challenges the moral and literary conventions established by tradition, demands a new kind of reader, capable of matching the narrator's unreliability with critical awareness.

At this point, a rhetoric focused on the author, such as Wayne Booth's, reveals its limits: it only accounts for the initiative of an author eager to communicate their vision of the facts. It lacks the dialectical counterpart—a new kind of reader, also distrustful—because reading has ceased to be a safe journey with a reliable narrator and has become a confrontation with the implied author.

The second stage highlights the act of literary composition in its necessary correlation with reading. It assumes that the text has no life of its own, that it exists for reading, and that reading is

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an intrinsic part of the text. This essential idea—that reading is inscribed in the text—is corroborated by M. Charles in *Rhétorique de la Lecture* (1977). Charles explores several renowned literary texts in which reading is explicitly prescribed or guided. The examples lead to a paradox. On the one hand, there is "reading within the text"—reading imposed on the reader, no longer manipulated by an unreliable narrator but now terrorized by the decree of reading. On the other hand, the prospect of infinite reading, allowing countless interpretations and thereby structuring the very text that prescribes it, restores to reading a disquieting indeterminacy. Thus, we are placed at the heart of a tension between constraint and freedom.

In the third stage, Ricœur abandons the rhetorical perspective to focus on the reader's response to the implied author's strategies. This appeal for a theory of reading centered on the reader's response resonates more with an "aesthetics" (in the Greek etymological sense of *aisthesis*) than with a "rhetoric." The aim is to understand how a work affects the reader, how it acts upon them. Being affected (*pâtir*) carries both active and passive connotations, allowing us to say that receiving the text is the very act of reading it. To this end, Ricœur draws on two key figures of the so-called Reception School: Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser. Distancing themselves from the Marxist school—which reduces art to a "reflection" of society—and from American formalism, which tends to view the artwork as something entirely self-contained, the Reception School emphasizes the communicative aspects of literary and artistic works, focusing on their effects on the public and the historical transformation of these effects. From here, Ricœur embarks on an extended reflection on the phenomenology of the individual act of reading—where the rhetoric of persuasion meets its limit, namely when the category of the implied author is confronted with the idea of the unfinished text, leading Ricœur into the realm of phenomenology.

V. RHETORIC AND HISTORY: "SEEING-AS"

The complex relationship between rhetoric and history is a recurring theme in Paul Ricœur's thought, addressed not only in a range of essays and scholarly articles but also in two of his major works: *Temps et Récit III (1985)* and *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*. It is not feasible, even in summary form, to elaborate all the dimensions and implications of this longstanding problem that Ricœur developed over several decades.[6] Of particular interest here, however, are those aspects that allow us to draw a logical connection with *The Rule of Metaphor*. This engagement with the philosophy of metaphor opens a new perspective for understanding the enduring relevance and scope of both classical and contemporary rhetoric in Ricœur's thought. The selective account we offer here is guided by ideas and insights either developed or merely suggested in *The Rule of Metaphor*, which we see as continuing in the subsequent works mentioned.

Let us return to the central idea of the previous section: that reading is indispensable for the intersection between the world of the text and the world of the reader, since it is in the reader that the mimetic process—initiated by the author and mediated by *mythos* or narrative—is ultimately fulfilled. As Ricœur (1985) notes, this is valid for both fiction and historiography, insofar as "toute

6 Soares presented the core of his thought in a volume derived from his doctoral dissertation, as well as in several scholarly articles. See Soares (2014 and 2017).

graphie, dont l'historiographie, relève d'une théorie élargie de la lecture" (p. 336). Yet, unlike the novelist, the historian—through documents and documentary evidence—seeks to reconstruct a past considered real: something that once occurred but no longer exists, except in the traces it left behind. The historian, Ricœur (1985, p. 253) argues, is driven by a sense of debt toward the past and the dead. This sense of indebtedness compels the historian to engage with the testimonies of the past, which Ricœur conceptualizes under the notion of the *trace*.

This gives rise to the need to account for the enigmatic nature and mimetic value of the trace, which does not function as a direct copy or transposition of the past but rather as *représentance* or *lieu-tenance*. *7* What ontological status does the trace of the past possess, insofar as it reveals something that once existed but no longer does—and which can in no way be conflated with the object to which it refers? What distinguishes something that occurred but no longer exists from something that never occurred at all? These are the questions guiding Ricœur's philosophical inquiry.

In a distinctive move, Ricœur approaches this enigma concerning the "reality" of the past by examining a range of theories of history, which he categorizes according to the dialectic set out by Plato in the *Sophist*, between the overarching categories of the Same and the Other—adding a third category, the Analogous, conceived through Aristotle's notion of proportional metaphor, or analogy (Arist. *Rh.* 1411). The category of the Same emphasizes total identification between historiographical text and the past, positing a relationship of identity between the present trace and the historical event. In contrast, the category of the Other encompasses those theories that introduce a temporal rupture between the historical event and the historian's reconstruction, emphasizing the past as radical alterity. Under the category of the Analogous, Ricœur places theories that conceive of history as a metaphorical reconfiguration of the past.

To develop this latter perspective, Ricœur draws on the work of Hayden White, a contemporary thinker with whom he engages in sustained intellectual dialogue throughout his writings on the philosophy of history. White's theory of tropes, elaborated in *Metahistory* (1973) and further developed in essays compiled in *Tropics of Discourse* (1985), is central to Ricœur's analysis. His appeal to White's tropological framework stems from the distinctive structure of historical discourse, which differs fundamentally from that of fiction. The historian's task, Ricœur maintains, is to transform narrative structure into a model, an icon capable of representing the past. But how can tropology meet the challenge of remaining faithful to the past as attested in documentary sources?

White's thesis posits that the coherence and internal consistency of a historical work—its distinctive stylistic and formal characteristics—are essentially poetic in nature, grounded in language. He argues that historians and philosophers of history have apprehended the past through four

7 The concept of "représentance" is developed by Ricœur in *Temps et Récit 3* (1985, pp. 252-283) and revisited later in *La Mémoire, L'Histoire, L'Oubli* (2000, pp. 359-369). The notion of *représentance* emerges within Ricœur's philosophy to account for the ontological specificity of the "real" past targeted by historical science, and is directly related to the ontological question of the "trace," as both a sign and an effect. The concept results from the intersection of Hayden White's tropological theory and Ricœur's thesis of reference and metaphorical redescription, as developed in *La Métaphore Vive*. The significance of *représentance* lies in its ability to preserve history as both science and fiction, safeguarding its truth-seeking intent. History is a construct that aims to reconstruct an object toward which it tends—an object that is no longer directly observable but is instead memorable. Therefore, history cannot be merely representation but must be représentance. This concept frees history from the confines of discursive immanence and directs it toward an external referent that, though no longer existing, has left traces of itself behind.

ISSN 1853-6034
RÉTOR 15 (2), pp. 70-88 (julio-diciembre, 2025)
http://doi.org/10.61146/retor.v15.n2.267

fundamental rhetorical tropes: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. Of these, metaphor possesses the greatest representational power. White's theory of tropes thus provides a framework for characterizing dominant modes of historical thought that emerged in nineteenth-century Europe, enabling us to discern the underlying structure of historical imagination during that period. Each mode may be understood as a stage or moment in a discursive tradition that evolves from metaphorical through metonymic and synecdochic understandings of the historical world, ultimately arriving at an ironic awareness of the irreducible relativism that permeates all knowledge.

This tropological grid of consciousness represents a considerable advantage for the representative ambition of history, insofar as rhetoric governs the description of the historical field in the same way that logic governs explanatory argumentation. While logic aids in determining the type of plot (romantic, tragic, comic, satirical), tropology assists in grasping and conferring a mental form (*forma mentis*) to the set of events that history, as a system of signs, seeks to describe. This distribution between the rhetoric of tropes and the logic of explanatory modes—through plot composition, argumentation, and ideological implication—is equivalent to the fundamental distinction between fact (information) and interpretation (explanation). Therefore, there is no relationship of reproduction, duplication, or equivalence between a narrative and a series of events. What exists is a metaphorical relationship: the reader is oriented toward a type of figure that renders the narrated events similar to a narrative form that is culturally familiar. According to White (1985), metaphor does not reproduce or describe a thing; rather, it functions symbolically: "[The metaphor] tell us what images to look for in our culturally encoded experience in order to determine how we should feel about the thing represented" (p. 91). The same can be said of historical narratives: "They succeed in endowing sets of past events with meanings […] by exploiting the metaphorical similarities between sets of real events and the conventional structures of our fictions" (p. 91).

Ricœur notes that this theory of tropes, due to its fundamentally linguistic character, can be integrated into the framework of the modalities of historical imagination, though it cannot encompass its properly explanatory modes. In this sense, we may say that it constitutes only the deep structure of historical imagination. On the one hand, Ricœur appreciates that Hayden White safeguards access to what actually happened in the past; on the other, he finds it paradoxical that such access can only be achieved through a prior tropological prefiguration executed by the configurative gaze of the historian.[8] In other words, Ricœur (1985, p. 275) finds it troubling that one can only access past facts through figurative language (cf. White, 1985, p. 94). Nevertheless, in *Time and Narrative* he acknowledges the significant contribution of this theory to the exploration of the third dialectical moment of the idea of *lieu-tenance* or *représentance*, through which Ricœur attempts to explain the relationship between historiography and the past it targets. Broadly speaking, White's proposal consists in asserting that things must have happened *as* they are narrated in the present account; that is, through tropes, it is possible to bring into the text the *being-as* of the historical event. By proposing the mediation of tropology to align a specific conventional structure of fiction with a given sequence of events, White lends credibility to Ricœur's suggestion that

8 Hayden White's prefiguration has nothing to do with that theorized by Ricœur within the framework of *mimesis I*; it refers to a linguistic operation that takes place at the level of the still undifferentiated documentary material.

ISSN 1853-6034
RÉTOR 15 (2), pp. 70-88 (julio-diciembre, 2025)
http://doi.org/10.61146/retor.v15.n2.267

reference to the reality of the past must successively pass through the grids of the Same, the Other, and the Analogous. Thus, tropological analysis underpins the category of the Analogous:

> «L'analyse tropologique est l'explication cherchée de la catégorie de l'Analogue. Elle ne dit qu'une chose: les choses ont dû se passer *comme* il est dit dans le récit que voici ; grâce à la grille tropologique, l'être-comme de l'événement passé est porté au langage» (Ricœur, 1985, p. 279).

However, Ricœur had already cautioned in *Temps et récit* about an issue that would become more pronounced in *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*: in order to preserve the boundary between history and fiction, the use of tropology cannot be detached from the context of the other two genres (Same and Other), and even less so from the specific historiographical constraint imposed on the discourse by the face-to-face encounter with the "having been" of the past event. The emphasis placed on the rhetorical procedure cannot result in the concealment of the intentionality that drives the *tropoi* of the discourse toward past events (Ricœur, 1985, p. 279). The past is always the reference. Therefore, the historian must remain attentive to the provocations that the past continuously offers to rewrite and correct history. In other words, a certain tropological arbitrariness cannot obscure the type of constraint that the event exerts on historical discourse, through known documents, requiring endless rectification. In this sense, the relationship between history and fiction is indeed very complex, as they intertwine but do not equate.

Nonetheless, it is necessary to abandon two uncritical prejudices to which White rightly draws attention. First, the historian's language is never fully transparent and capable of letting the facts speak for themselves; it will always be contaminated by the figures of poetry. Second, it is equally erroneous to think that imaginative literature, because it constantly resorts to fiction, has no connection with reality. Both aim to provide a verbal image of reality.

The expression of the German positivist historian, Leopold Ranke, "the facts as they actually happened" (apud Ricœur, 1985, p. 272, 336), reflects for Ricœur the role of tropology as the internal articulator of the notion of *représentance*. Ricœur, drawing on White's theses, argues that in the "analogical" interpretation of the function of *représentance*, the "actually" can only be signified by the "as". This is possible because the "as" functions not only rhetorically but also ontologically, as Ricœur had already proposed in *La Métaphore Vive* (1975, pp. 388-392). Through the focus on a *being-as* corresponding to a *seeing-as*, which summarizes the work of the metaphor in the linguistic plane, the metaphor reveals a referential scope, serving as a vehicle for an ontological claim. This means that being itself is metaphorized under the species of being-as, so that the metaphor assumes an ontological function compatible with its living character in the linguistic plane, that is, its capacity to enhance the initial polysemy of words by establishing a new semantic relevance. According to Ricœur (1985):

> L'être-même doit être métaphorisé sous les espèces de l'être-comme…, si l'on doit pouvoir attribuer à la métaphore une fonction ontologique qui ne contredise pas le caractère vif de la métaphore au plan linguistique, c'est-à-dire sa puissance d'augmenter la polysémie initiale de nos mots. La correspondance entre le voir-comme et l'être-comme satisfait à cette exigence (p. 281).

ISSN 1853-6034
RÉTOR 15 (2), pp. 70-88 (julio-diciembre, 2025)
http://doi.org/10.61146/retor.v15.n2.267

To better understand this statement by Ricœur, it is necessary to revisit an essential topic from *La Métaphore Vive* that we have not yet addressed in this study. In the seventh study of *La Métaphore Vive* (1975, pp. 273-321), titled "Metaphor and Reference", Ricœur presents the central thesis of his book, which asserts the following: just as metaphorical meaning emerges from the development of a new semantic pertinence over the ruins of literal semantic pertinence, metaphorical reference proceeds from the dissolution of literal reference. This rhetorical thesis has an ontological scope. Ricœur correlates the "seeing-as" of the metaphorical statement with an extralinguistic "being-as" revealed through poetic language. The "being-as" gives justice to the inaccessible realities of everyday, direct, and literal language, and in this sense, poetry detects what prose cannot. Thus, analogy functions as the mark of the relationship between language and the world. On the other hand, the correlation between the "seeing-as" and the "being-as" allows Ricœur to counter the structuralist thesis that language points to itself, admitting only immanent relationships. Against this view, Paul Ricœur sees in poetic language the greatest virtues for expressing the secret of things, for redescribing reality. In *Temps et Récit*, Ricœur does not abandon this thesis but instead identifies a gap: the absence of a link between the metaphorical reference inherent in the metaphorical statement and the "being-as" to which it tends; this link is reading. A statement in itself has no capacity to refer; it requires someone to establish the reference. That is the mission of the reader. It is the reader who captures the new semantic pertinence and updates it as impertinent to the literal meaning. Only the reader can establish the correspondence between a new "being-as" and the "seeing-as" evoked by the metaphorical statement left by the poet. Ricœur (1995) repeatedly emphasizes the role of the reader in this process of metaphorical apprehension and the opening of the text to the real world: "c'est le monde du lecteur qui offre le site ontologique des opérations de sens et de référence qu'une conception purement immanentiste du langage voudrait ignorer" (p. 48).

Thus, we can say that, just as the poet who uses a metaphor looks at an object as another thing, that is, searching for contiguities or similarities between two distinct realities, so too does the historian, according to White's view, supported by Ricœur, give meaning to the facts they apprehend by seeing them through a particular tropological form. In both cases, reality is always a "as-if." Only in fiction is this "as-if" free; in history, it is compelled to justify and explain itself.

In the context of *La Métaphore Vive*, the creative power of metaphor was referred to as "redescription." In *Temps et Récit*, the concept of metaphorical redescription gives way to its counterpart of refiguration, emphasizing the role of figure and reading. The narrative refigures time, constructing a figure (trope) of time that unfolds through reading. However, while the rhetorical and ontological functioning of metaphor enjoys considerable autonomy within the realm of poetic language, the same cannot be said for the Analogue of history, which depends on the other two genres, with which it must be articulated to account for the essentially temporal function of *représentance*—a "being-as" that, enigmatically, both is and is not.

> Dans la chasse à l'avoir-été, l'analogie n'opère pas isolément, mais en liaison avec l'identité et altérité. Le passé est bien ce qui, d'abord, est à réeffectuer sur le mode identitaire : mais il n'est tel que pour autant qu'il est aussi l'absent de toutes nos constructions. L'Analogue, précisément, retient en lui la force de la réeffectuation et de la mise à distance, dans la mesure où être comme, c'est être et n'être pas (Ricœur, 1985, p. 281).

ISSN 1853-6034
RÉTOR 15 (2), pp. 70-88 (julio-diciembre, 2025)
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The techniques that the historian uses so discreetly in the narrative configuration, aimed at the emotional and ethical involvement of the reader and the transmission of a message, form what Ricœur calls the role of fiction in historical representation. The historian's task is to imbue their text with the necessary and true moral and emotional intensity; the reader's task is to complete the process of narrative configuration through the refigurative reading of what the author has embedded in the plot. It is in reading, therefore, that the mutual engagement of history and rhetoric is sealed. If the historian is so deeply invested in constructing his narrative, it is because he wants the reader to see as he does, to trust him, and to be affected. To achieve this, it is not enough to merely tell; one must show, make the reader see.

VI. RHETORIC AND HISTORY: "MAKING SEE"

At the level of refiguration (*mimesis III*), fiction assists history in two distinct ways: in order to "see-as" and to "make-see" (Ricœur, 1985, pp. 336–342). The first modality encompasses the traits of the imaginary previously mentioned, which are derived from the metaphorical function of *seeing-as*. The second concerns the visibility and vividness the historian must impart to the narrative, particularly when the task is to recount events "uniquement uniques"—events that must not be forgotten (Ricœur, 1985, p. 341). In both instances, the aim is to grant the vision of the past a quasi-intuitive fulfilment. To develop this idea, Ricœur revisits the Aristotelian topic of *enargeia*/*energeia*, the former signifying the visual and imagistic vividness of metaphor, the latter denoting metaphor's capacity to animate—to bring to life, to set in motion, to actualize—inanimate entities (Ricœur, 1975, pp. 388–392).

Once it is acknowledged that historical writing is not extrinsically added to historical knowledge, but forms a unified whole with it, we may further admit that history, in its written form, imitates the narrative compositions inherited from literary tradition. This is precisely what Hayden White proposes when, borrowing from Northrop Frye, he pairs the literary categories of the tragic, the comic, the romantic, and the ironic with the tropes of rhetorical tradition. These borrowings that history makes from literature are not limited to narrative composition or emplotment; they also serve the representative function of historical imagination. As Ricœur (1985) affirms: "(…) nous apprenons à voir comme tragique, comme comique, etc., tel enchaînement d'événements" (p. 337). It is thus unsurprising that many historical works, today outdated in scientific terms, remain relevant due to the way their poetic and rhetorical artistry aligns with their distinctive vision of the past. It is not uncommon, therefore, to appreciate the same work both as a major historical account and as a remarkable novel. Moreover, Ricœur notes: "L'étonnant est que cet entrelacement de la fiction à l'histoire n'affaiblit pas le projet de représentance de cette dernière, mais contribue à l'accomplir" (p. 337).

Ricœur (1985, p. 338) further recalls that this method of "painting the scene" or of lending vividness to a situation or discourse, in order to achieve a persuasive effect, is mentioned by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*. *Elocutio*, or *dictio*, possesses the virtue of "placing before the eyes"—that is, of *making see*. Such *making see* introduces us to a genuine, controlled illusion[9]—an aesthetic illusion

9 «Je parlerais volontiers d'*illusion contrôlée* pour caractériser cette heureuse union qui fait, par exemple, de la

ISSN 1853-6034
RÉTOR 15 (2), pp. 70-88 (julio-diciembre, 2025)
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in which disbelief is voluntarily suspended, allowing this *"as-if-seeing"* of belief to give way to a kind of perception (of) the present.

Events that generate intense ethical sentiments within a community—whether fervent commemoration or condemnation—cannot be ethically neutralized on the technical grounds that the historian must maintain distance to better understand and explain the object of study. Naturally, this does not imply abandoning the principles of impartiality and objectivity, but rather integrating an ethical dimension. Horror, Ricœur argues, constitutes the ultimate ethical motivation behind the history of victims. The victims of Auschwitz stand in our memory for all the victims of history. The value of fiction, in this specific case, lies in its power of *quasi-intuition* (*quasi-intuitivité*), in the creation of the *illusion of presence*, an illusion moderated by critical distance. This illusion is not intended to please or entertain, but to serve the individuation of the *uniquely unique*—the effect of horror or admiration. And without this *quasi-intuition* enabled by fiction, we would remain blind and insensitive to horror. As Ricœur (1985) writes: "La fiction donne au narrateur horrifié des yeux. Des yeux pour voir et pour pleurer" (p. 341).

In *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (2000), Ricœur returns to the question of the representation of the Shoah in historical discourse. This time, his objective is twofold. On the one hand, he reaffirms the persistent difficulty of finding a literary form capable of representing or rendering visible the unspeakable and unrepresentable monstrosity perpetrated by the Third Reich in the Nazi concentration camps. On the other hand, the controversy surrounding Holocaust denial had intensified, fuelled in part by a postmodernist approach to historiographical practice—an approach in which H. White stood as one of the most influential voices of the so-called *linguistic turn*. [10] These developments compel Ricœur—who, in *Temps et récit*, had expressed both admiration and reservation toward White's ideas, particularly highlighting their shortcomings at the level of extra-narrative explanation—to adopt a more cautious stance. He insists that historiographical operation must not be confined, as White advocates, to narrative configuration and literary rhetoric alone, but must fulfill the entire trajectory of historical epistemology, including documentary proof and the process of explanation and understanding.

> Il faut patiemment articuler les modes de la représentation sur ceux de l'explication/compréhension et, à travers ceux-ci, sur le moment documentaire et sa matrice de vérité présumée, à savoir le témoignage de ceux qui déclarent s'être trouvés là où les choses sont advenues. On ne trouvera jamais dans la forme narrative en tant que telle la raison de cette quête de référentialité. C'est ce travail de remembrement du discours historique pris dans la complexité de ses phases opératoires qui est totalement absent des préoccupations de H. White (Ricœur, 2000, p. 328).

peinture de la Révolution française par Michelet une œuvre littéraire comparable à *Guerre et Paix* de Tolstoï, dans laquelle le mouvement procède en sens inverse de la fiction vers l'histoire et non plus de l'histoire vers la fiction» (Ricœur, 1985, p. 338).

10 The controversy originated at a 1992 colloquium organized by Saul Friedländer, where White was strongly criticized, notably by Carlo Ginzburg, who accused him of advocating a poetic theory that posed a threat to historical truth. He was charged with narrative radicalism, formalism, and indifference toward a referent that, during the 1990s, was assuming increasingly problematic proportions.

ISSN 1853-6034
RÉTOR 15 (2), pp. 70-88 (julio-diciembre, 2025)
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What Ricœur proposes is a thesis capable of accounting for the specificity of referentiality in historiography. This referentiality cannot be considered exclusively at the level of the figures of historical discourse; rather, it must encompass the full trajectory of historical epistemology, which begins with documentary evidence, proceeds through the stage of explanation/comprehension, and culminates in literary configuration. "Cette triple membrure reste le secret de la connaissance historique" (Ricœur, 2000, p. 323). In this way, Ricœur establishes the foundations of a historical epistemology capable, to some extent, of restoring the past and fulfilling the reading pact, grounded in a commitment to truth between historian and reader.

It is in relation to the third phase—the representation of the past—that Ricœur reintroduces the theme of the image and of *"faire voir"*, evoked by the uncriticized pair *enargeia/energeia*. Yet, as is characteristic of his method, he does not merely reprise earlier material. Drawing on the reflections of Louis Marin (1981; 1993), Ricœur develops a robust and sophisticated argument intended to highlight the rhetorical privileges of the image at the most specific moment of historical representation (Ricœur, 2000, pp. 339–358). It is at the intersection of legibility and visibility, at the level of the reception of the literary text, that it becomes most meaningful to speak of historical fiction or scientific fiction in relation to history. A historical narrative is a tapestry—it has frame and sequence, image and story, or alternatively, description and narration. Ricœur (2000) asserts that "le récit donne à comprendre et à voir" (p. 341). However, visibility does not stem solely from this interplay between the imagistic and sequential dimensions; in other words, the symbiosis between visibility and legibility cannot be reduced to the description of a situation, a landscape, a battle, places, a figure, a behavior, or a character. In any case, narrative places something before our eyes—it makes us see.

This capacity is allied with the distinctive mark of rhetoric: the capacity to persuade, which is, in turn, the origin of all the prestige the imagination can draw from the visibility produced by rhetorical figures. Legibility itself already produces visibility, insofar as narrative renders things readable, places them before the eyes in order to persuade us and make its content more convincing or plausible. In other words, discursive rhetoric, *faire voir*, is a consequence of the very act of *mise en intrigue*. The rhetorical prestige of the image, as described by Louis Marin, aids Ricœur in developing a notion first outlined in *Temps et récit III*, in relation to the fictionalization of history: namely, that the rhetorical prestige of the image serves to create a controlled illusion of presence—of those *uniquement uniques* events that provoke in a community intense ethical sentiments, whether of fervent commemoration or of execration. More than any other, the history of suffering and horror cries out for justice and calls for narration. Some events, like Auschwitz, are unique in the history of humanity and demand from the historian a level of imagistic vividness capable of overcoming the risk of forgetting. It falls to the imaginary of *représentance* to "paint," to "place before the eyes," those intolerable events, by configuring the victims' narrative and preserving the memory of suffering.

Historiography may be practiced without memory, when animated merely by curiosity; but with the aid of fiction in the service of the unforgettable, historiography rises to the level of memory insofar as it produces an image of the past. In this way, the demonstrative power of the icon is placed at the service of historiography and, through it, of the event it narrates. Nevertheless, this image is never a copy of the event, since only memory can produce such copies; but even memory, once archived, is subject to a critical distance that prevents an exact recovery of the original. Despite this, through the *having-been* of the past, historical intentionality—in the mode of *représentance* or narrative reconstruction—aims at what truly happened and captures it, with the

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help of imagination and the tropes of literary tradition, as it truly happened. Rhetoric and fiction, far from being obstacles, thus become valuable instruments for the representation of the past, bringing history closer to the imagistic and recognitive capacities of memory.

VI. CONCLUSION

Paul Ricœur's philosophy can be explored through a series of dichotomies, so deeply is it marked by tension and dialectic. Multiple paths can be followed: *ipseity–alterity*; *ideology–utopia*; *just–unjust*; *ethics–morality*; *history–fiction*; *meaning–reference*; *text–action*; *explanation–understanding*. We have chosen a less frequently traveled path—*proof and persuasion*—which, in turn, implies several of the previously mentioned dichotomies, such as *history–fiction*, *meaning–reference*, *text–action*, and *explanation–understanding*. If we were to translate this binomial into more encompassing concepts, we would say that what is at stake is the confrontation between *Rhetoric and Truth*.

Three major works from Ricœur's bibliography have served as thematic pillars to consolidate a central thread of his thought: the textual imaginary—be it poetic (*La Métaphore vive*), narrative (*Temps et récit*), or historiographical (*La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*)—only acquires cognitive and ontological value if it fulfills a set of epistemological conditions. The proofs—whether enthymemes, trust, or historical documents—are the guarantee that textual rhetoric, arising from its imaginative capacity (the production of mental images), preserves a link to reality through the act of reading. The function of metaphor and of reading is eminently rhetorical: to persuade. Both metaphor and reading affect the reader's imagination and emotions through their naturally imagistic character. The image, here, is the key element. Nothing affects us as deeply as what our eyes can see. The ancients already knew this. Soares (2017) explores this relationship—which Ricœur did not explicitly articulate—between the *faire voir* of metaphor and narrative and the classical techniques of *enargeia* and *ekphrasis*, of which a historian like Thucydides is a skilled practitioner. What François Hartog (2005) calls the *evidence* of history—from the Latin *evidentia*, corresponding to the Greek *enargeia*—was already defined by Aristotle as the rhetorical effect of *dictio* (discourse), and Ricœur identifies it as a fundamental element of historical representation. This rhetorical technique, which in fact is intrinsic to any poetic or narrative text, acquires ethical value when it comes to narrating the history of horror and paying mnemonic tribute to its victims.

A final note, more contemporary and beyond the scope of Ricœur's own concerns: in times of post-truth and disinformation, Ricœur's theses gain immeasurable significance. Offering a robust epistemological framework for understanding the unique referentiality of historical discourse—one that resists both naïve realism and radical constructivism— Ricœur's theory of history can be useful to curb post-truth and disinformation. What he tells us is that no narrative can be closed upon meaning alone, isolated from the external referent from which its denotative power derives. A narrative understood as a closed network of signs is a strictly virtual, semiotic narrative—purely rhetorical, without referent or adherence to reality. It is mere image, mere imaginary, without proof, and therefore without denotative or ontological force. It is yet another form of rhetoric devoid of probability, of ideology without ethics, of utopia without a world. Conversely, the positivist belief in the possibility of fully and transparently reconstructing the past or the present through textual means can no longer be upheld, insofar as it disregards the inherent gap between language and reality.

The risks and threats to credibility that affected historical science in the second half of the twentieth century—and against which Ricœur fought by defending the regulation of rhetoric through epistemic instruments of reliability—have now spread across virtually all domains of verbal and visual expression. The growing desire for persuasion and the manipulation of emotions has infiltrated political, journalistic, commercial, historical, and even scientific discourse, leading in recent decades to a pronounced violation of the rules of discourse that, since classical antiquity, were meant to govern Rhetoric.

Both Aristotle and Ricœur warned us of the necessity to keep *lexis* under the control of logic, and non-fictional narrative under the control of evidence. Today, as in the past, we are witnessing the infamous attempts of populist and authoritarian regimes—and ideological groups—to rewrite the past, alter collective memory, and control the present. The age-old temptation that affects Rhetoric—identified by both Aristotle and Ricœur —to impose an idea, to seduce and please at the expense of methodological rigor, now assumes broader and more expressive forms through news information and communication technologies. Never before has it been so easy and so effective to produce and distort evidence, information, documents, and images.

The question of the image is another topic on which the philosophy of these thinkers challenges us to reflect. More than ever before, our eyes are flooded by an avalanche of images. The relationship between text and image, as uncovered by Ricoeur, appears to be completely reversed, with the supremacy of the visual over the textual, and of seeing over reading. The image has ceased to be a product of the imagination elicited by the word and has instead become the opposite: it is now images—many of them false, generated by artificial intelligence—that aim to generate words and mental narratives lacking any real foundation.

The overabundance of images is not, in itself, a negative phenomenon, provided these images appeal to our imagination and enrich our thinking. However, the proliferation of prosaic, accessory images—devoid of symbolic or metaphorical power and purely ornamental in nature—undermines the principle of the poetic image and challenges the meaning of the classical adage *ut pictura poiesis*.

Thus, to reread Ricœur in 2025 is to discover a message that has not been frozen in time, but that still sounds like a red alert—one whose signal might guide us through the labyrinths woven by technological, political, and social transformations.

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