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## Chapter 8

# Metaphor as Dynamic Myth in Ricoeur

Colby Dickinson

### FROM MYTH TO METAPHOR

As Roland Barthes once suggested in his book *Mythologies*, myth is what transforms a seemingly contingent history into an eternally fixed nature. Myth depoliticizes that which humanity wants to maintain as somehow wholly innocent, pure, or natural, and this despite the fact that myths do contain a wealth of politicized influences and undisclosed ideologies. Such a fictive exercise, he felt, must be confronted in the modern era with the equally formidable task of critique, which denaturalizes that which appears as “natural” within the myth and *politicizes* that which seems apolitical. The critique of a static depiction of nature, however, proves itself to be politically problematic for just this reason, as the dynamics that undergird reality are often far more complex than mythological narratives present (Barthes 2012: 240–258).

From Barthes’s perspective, such a critical tactic is no doubt part and parcel of the modern tendency to emphasize reason, or the power of the *logos*, over that of the myth. Mythology, in this sense, often portrays reality, or nature, *as* a fixed, static, and unchanging state that many in the modern era, Barthes being only one among many others, saw as in need of major, ongoing deconstruction. Unmasking the political elements operative within myth is indeed something of a rallying cry throughout modernity, leaving postmodern thinkers to wonder, in the meantime, if humanity can ever fully be rid of the myths that permeate every culture, religion, language, people, nation-states, or generally any aspect of society. As Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer suggest, the process of mythological critique cannot be separated from the many other myths that linger within modernity itself. As they would also seek to demonstrate, there can exist a simultaneous critique of both mythology *and* enlightenment for maintaining their own distinctive myths, including the latter’s myths regarding the power of reason itself (Adorno & Horkheimer 2007). As such, perhaps myth and reason are not mutually exclusive, but rather involve a relationship wherein the one signals the existence of the other. From this point of view, perhaps there is a much more dynamic interplay between reason and mythology wherein we might reconsider the function of mythology itself within a modern landscape. This relationship is not severed from politics, however, but is part and parcel of how politics has been constructed vis-à-vis myth

throughout the centuries, as I believe we will witness especially in the work of Paul Ricoeur.

As I will argue in what follows, it is in Ricoeur's thought that we find a display of the dynamic myth in contrast to its static portrayal that unveils the realm of the political in a new, symbolic light. In general, the process that he isolates is one wherein "secret affinities" exist between various, distinct mythological types allowing them to interact with one another in order to introduce a progressive development of mythological insight. In contrast to a static portrayal of distinct mythological types which remain self-contained and isolated from other myths—of which Ricoeur himself isolates four distinct kinds—a dynamic cycle of myths such as favored by Ricoeur in the final sections of his *The Symbolism of Evil* would see various subtle exchanges between each type of myth, allowing for movement between them and even a capacity to respond to each other. It is especially through their ability to interact with each other that we begin to grasp the more significant stakes of myths responding to one another, for one of Ricoeur's wagers is that this dynamic interplay between myths has allowed human understanding generally to evolve over time, introducing elements that undergird the capacity for self-understanding that underpins most modern rationalities.

Ricoeur also, however, leads this dynamism of otherwise distinct mythological narratives into new territory by exposing a fluid mythology that resists eternally fixed interpretations—the very issue Barthes had identified as political—and opens humanity up to its hyperbolic nature best captured in the existence and use of metaphor. Beyond static uses of analogy that serve to posit similarities between two dissimilar things in order to solidify their meaning, especially as found in those theological appropriations of the *analogia entis* (or "analogy of being"), metaphor offers the possibility of illustrating the force of dissimilarity and so the deconstruction (or de-totalization) of a thing's otherwise "fixed" form, offering new possibilities for meaning and symbolic understanding. As such, metaphor offers humanity a dynamic and creative force capable of politicizing and "de-naturalizing" fixed ("apolitical" or "natural") representations and relationships. Just as Ricoeur had favored the dynamic interplay between myths as a means of unsettling the typological rigidity of mythological forms, so too does he analyze metaphor in such a way as to unsettle the usual coordinates of Western metaphysics and their accompanying rationalities. In this way, we witness a parallel dynamic at work in both mythological forms and in the realm of metaphorical possibilities, directly linking Ricoeur's early study of myth with his later studies on "the rule of metaphor." The argument of this essay will therefore be that the connection between myth and metaphor that Ricoeur posits offers Western thought a new and creative avenue beyond the static uses of both myth and analogy—a task still waiting to be taken up more directly today.

## STATIC VERSUS DYNAMIC MYTHOLOGY

In his early study of myth and symbol, Ricoeur delineates four essential types of myth that form the basis for his analysis, though he is careful to note that these types are "not to be confined to an attempt at classification" (Ricoeur 1967: 174). They are rather a means toward

understanding how humanity has variously attempted to situate its understanding of itself through the shaping of particular experiences as these specific mythological narratives. They are accordingly the symbols of consciousness itself that mythology has isolated and uplifted in order for humanity to see representations of itself. As such, he outlines and analyzes the following: (1) the drama of creation which involves the origin of evil and the God's struggle against chaos within the world; (2) the "tragic" myth, found most prominently in Greek tragedy, that does not witness any salvation for the tragic hero subject to a "wicked" deity; (3) the "Adamic myth," central to Ricoeur, concerned with the "fall" of humanity and a subsequent opening toward the possibility of salvation and its accompanying eschatological dimensions; and (4) the myth of the "exiled soul" that lives apart from one's embodied experience alongside the experience of salvation as a form of knowledge. Though they are distinct mythological types to be sure, Ricoeur makes clear how there is not a strict boundary between them either, as evidenced by various historical instances of such myths being interwoven and in competition with one another (e.g., the variety of Christian-Gnostic narratives wherein the chaos of creation is ordered by a God who is also able to overcome the tragedy of human existence, portrayed as "the fall," through obtaining knowledge of divine things within a highly dualistic world).

The "new type" of myth that Ricoeur takes up toward the end of *The Symbolism of Evil*—the fourth one in the aforementioned scheme—is one that clearly underlies many existing modern anthropological dualisms within theological discourse (Ricoeur 1967: 279). Never failing to notice the guiding light that dualities provide for the imagination, like the "quasi-dualism" that permeates biblical accounts of sin as an "inner experience of cleavage and alienation," Ricoeur portrays mythological dualities, much like Kantian antinomies, as that which structure the imaginative world (Ricoeur 1967: 333). Though a variety of dualisms permeate the four mythological types he analyzes, the Adamic myth in particular, he concludes, does not capitulate to the often dualistic reductiveness of other myths because it demonstrates a complexity and "inner tension" that other myths frequently lack. It is as such a privileged myth insofar as it reveals the dynamics foundational to the symbolic struggles between competing myths. It is consequently what establishes a general hermeneutics that would put "the revealing power of the symbol to the test of self-understanding," thereby providing for reason what reason could not provide for itself (Ricoeur 1967: 308). Echoing a tension we see in other modern accounts of the contrast between myth and reason, this is precisely why mythological narratives contain significant philosophical insight for Ricoeur.

Specifically regarding the dualism between the soul and the body, there is the prominence of the myth of the exiled soul that intertwines itself with various conceptualizations of the body, often defined as inherently evil. The gist of this contrast is that the interactions between them more or less pronounce how the soul becomes the true location of the self, or of "the Same," while the body becomes entirely "Other" and so risks a certain exclusion (Ricoeur 1967: 298). The body, as is commonly portrayed in the West and as illustrated through the various mythological and religious narratives that Ricoeur analyzes in this context, takes on characteristics of the Evil One, offering us an embodied tragedy through its "counterlikeness"

to the soul as an expression of its “non-humanity” (Ricoeur 1967: 313–314).

He subsequently comments on how the “tragic aspect of existence” characterized by the second type of myth is also addressed by the Adamic myth insofar as it struggles to produce a result that overcomes the inherent tragedy present within all human life. This “tragic aspect of existence” comes forth in particular through a type of self-awareness that begins with “the struggle of master and slave” which “once having consented to itself and to the universal, it must plunge anew into self-division”—a self-division such as we see in the soul/body dualism (Ricoeur 1967: 312). Through the reality of a self being constituted through the oppressive binary of master-slave relations, existence is precisely tragic because the two polarities cannot be reconciled into some sort of third element. The prevailing “non-dialectical contradiction” cannot be mediated and so remains forever within the domain of the tragic, he suggests, as it is unable to resolve itself within, or sublimate itself into, any new paradigm (Ricoeur 1967: 323). To the extent that the dualistic framework cannot be eradicated, each pole presents itself antagonistically to the other, engaging in a competition for value that cannot be effaced without remainder: “That a value cannot be realized without the destruction of another value, equally positive—there, again, is the tragic” (Ricoeur 1967: 323). What results, of course—and this is what so many myths capture brilliantly through the recounting of their tragic narratives—is the destruction, or suppression, of the one who bears whatever value contrasts with another fixed value. Hence Ricoeur discloses the true reality, and sheer difficulty, of comparative mythology in that myths function as competing political ideologies within whatever global and historical contexts they are found (cf. Flood 1996).

Ricoeur subsequently points out the precise nature of the relationship between the tragic myth and the Adamic myth, especially how the latter attempts to overcome the former, though they also reside in a perpetual tension that can only be overcome by a third element that attempts to transcend the contradiction itself. This tension between tragedy and the Adamic myth in fact provides a platform for the figure of the “suffering servant” to enter the picture as one who offers a possible alternative, *through* the act of suffering, to the destruction and retribution characteristic of typical clashes between competing values (Ricoeur 1967: 324–325). It is most significant that we can locate here as well the resolution of guilt, itself brought about by sin, in a state of mercy rather than that of judgment. In such a configuration, Ricoeur makes clear, the “Wrath of God” is absorbed by the “Love of God,” though, he confesses as well, the mystery of theodicy certainly remains problematic (Ricoeur 1967: 326). This context is what likewise generates the internal mythological need for a Christology—perhaps even a de-Christianized, general Christology—that allows for a depiction of the divine to absorb the figure of the suffering servant within its own inner life (Ricoeur 1967: 328). Though such a desire is beyond the scope of philosophical inquiry—which, for its part, remains mired in those theogonies that illuminate “the tragedy of being itself,” such as one finds in German idealism, existentialism and the like, as he suggests—the “quasi-dualisms” that characterize the biblical accounts of sin as alienation are nonetheless resolved through the Christological element (Ricoeur 1967: 327–329). Although the history of Christianity has also indicated its willingness to incorporate Neoplatonic spiritualities into

its representations—such as the soul/body dichotomy wherein the soul, like the Idea, is considered imperishable, whereas the body is corruptible and will eventually wither away (Ricoeur 1967: 335, 339)—there is something nevertheless within Christianity’s appropriation of the Adamic myth that signals a possibility for overcoming the tragic nature of existence once and for all.

The philosophical recovery of the symbols of consciousness that these myths portray therefore entails for Ricoeur the development of a hermeneutics and a “second naïveté” that moves beyond simply discarding them as untrue (Ricoeur 1967: 350–351). The modern quest for demythologization can only take humanity so far and ultimately cannot recover the “immediacy of belief” that is nonetheless central to human life. The hermeneutical “second naïveté” that allows modernity to transcend itself is one that restores the immediacy of belief as “the postcritical equivalent of the precritical hierophany” (Ricoeur 1967: 352). As such, the movement from static to dynamic mythologies—which monotheism in the West pointed humanity toward decisively in the course of history—is what allows a development of self-understanding to be established within the communities that experience a dynamic interplay between these myths (Ricoeur 1967: 354).

This situation is perhaps similar to Chiara Bottici’s call for the plurality of political myths (as then what Ricoeur calls “dynamic” myths) to coexist and so motivate each other in order to avoid the totalitarianism of a singular mythology (what Ricoeur refers to as “static” myths) (Bottici 2007: 260). At the least, the significance of this shift from static to dynamic myth is such that Ricoeur envisions a “second Copernican revolution” taking place wherein the symbols that motivate humanity to understand its own situatedness move deeper into the reality of existence than merely rational philosophizing can comprehend. This suggests the need for some form of an existentialism or phenomenology of existence that transcends the merely rational or traditionally philosophical (Ricoeur 1967: 356).

Nevertheless, with all of this analysis firmly in focus, we might yet ask of Ricoeur’s thought: How can one find a path toward an immediacy of belief without subscribing to the historical-literal truth of the ontological claims made by such mythological narratives? Can one still maintain a belief in a Christology without the historically specific figure of a Christ, much as Jacques Derrida’s spectral messianism, and its accompanying sense of a “religion without religion,” also imply? As I hope will become clear through Ricoeur’s critique of the analogy of being in *The Rule of Metaphor*, which I will take up in the section that follows, Ricoeur seems to hold a narrow line of rejecting the ontotheological baggage that traditionally has accompanied such myths and yet retaining the immediacy of belief through a “second naïveté.”

Such a position, I would suggest, might seem to parallel Karl Barth’s previous theological attempts to eschew the analogy of being in favor of an analogy of faith insofar as a “second naïveté” might somehow lead the believer straight back to historical-onto-theological claims—a possibility that the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar once suggested does not actually escape being an analogy of being in the end (von Balthasar 1992). For Barth, the analogy of faith was really an attempt to circumvent modern critiques of metaphysics while also

restoring the grounds for faith, much as Ricoeur's "second naïveté" appears to do. But, does Ricoeur actually, at the conclusion to *The Symbolism of Evil*, harbor something like a Barthian position, established in the face of a threat to demythologize the entire onto-theological-mythological foundations of our world? Or, by reading *The Symbolism of Evil* alongside his remarks made concerning analogy in *The Rule of Metaphor*, might we be able to further clarify his reading of myth and its possibilities vis-à-vis philosophical and theological reflection? It is my contention that the latter option is made directly available through his later discussion of metaphor, and that such an investigation offers an even deeper glimpse into the political implications of Ricoeur's work on mythology that were essentially dormant in *The Symbolism of Evil*.

## ANALOGY VERSUS METAPHOR

Analogy can function, as Nietzsche had already foreseen, as a tool to establish something like a *monumental* history, or to construct a particular, fixed historical representation once and for all through a connection between two dissimilar things (Ricoeur 1990: 237; cf. Nietzsche 1997). Ontotheologically, as Ricoeur himself noted, such activity is the basis for the *analogy of being* that has defined metaphysical depictions of the divine, and their relationships to human existence, for centuries. Analogy, as such, seeks to reduce the distance between two apparently dissimilar things—such as God and humanity—and to establish some relationship between them—such as being itself. As many theologians have noted, especially in the modern era, analogy is also a method utilized by theologians to secure transcendence in such a way as to elevate the human subject at the same time (see Hemming 2005: 207). In this fashion, it is a process bound up with an action that characterizes identity formation on the whole, and so is part of what typifies the presence of sovereignty in our world—from the divine right to rule to the almost sacral aura that surrounds nationalistic myths in our modern political landscape. It is, for such reasons, a significant part of a theological imagination that takes up the concrete or material in a way that philosophy, caught up in its abstract speculations, cannot (see also Lynch 2004: 212). With all of this background in mind, it is little surprise that the history of theology has been heavily dependent on the use of analogy in order to establish an onto(theo)logical conceptualization of the divine being. As the Catholic theologian Erich Przywara once argued in conjunction with much of this history, the analogy of being (*analogia entis*) is not just the central principle of metaphysics: it is the core dynamic that allows metaphysics to exist in the first place (Przywara 2014: 307–314).

If analogy can be used to establish a metaphysical-ontological sense of identity or unity, then it is metaphor that opens humanity up to cultural forms of plurality and relativism (Wu 2001: 339). Analogy functions similarly to an ideology that conserves society, while metaphor, as Ricoeur too will describe it, functions like a utopian desire that subverts every governing ideology or established political landscape (Ricoeur 2007: 308–324; see also Bottici 2007: 197). Hence, whereas metaphor points toward a plurality of meanings that threaten to destabilize the inherent, monolithic significance of society, analogy restlessly tries

to cement particular relationships in order to stabilize a given order or cosmological system. As Jacob Taubes had emphasized the distinction in an essay on “Dialectic and Analogy” some years ago, analogy is concerned with internalizing an external image, “as in the orthodox tradition, on the *basis* of an established cosmological correspondence,” whereas what remains “purely metaphorical” is an internal image that does not correspond to anything external in reality: “A theology that has lost the cosmological basis for the principle of analogy but nevertheless continues with the method of analogy becomes purely metaphorical” (Taubes 2010: 171–172). The “purely metaphorical,” according to him, is the only opportunity possible in a “Copernican universe” (Taubes 2010: 172).

Since metaphor is frequently described as a discourse concerned with excess and transgression, it is a favorite with many postmodern theorists and philosophers looking to challenge the presumptions of modern thought (cf. Punter 2007: 144). Such dynamics are what will allow Derrida, for example, to discuss metaphor as what is concerned with the “loss of meaning,” and as it is utilized as a self-destructive act (Derrida 1982: 270). As he will elsewhere continue, metaphor is ultimately capable of transcending fixed metaphysical concepts and their accompanying mythologies as long as it resists absolutizing itself into a concrete, historical, or fixed form (Derrida 2007: 68; see also Bigger 2005). Metaphor thereby promises its equivalencies to many varied, though interrelated, parties through a recognition of their divergence (much as Ricoeur had portrayed the ability of dynamic mythology to “overcome” the divergences between various static myths). And metaphor functions as such with little hope of practically implementing its vision within a given political sphere. Rather than being a complete disappointment as it must appear to those with vested interests in maintaining an analogical ordering for our world, however, this is precisely where we can locate its subversive and utopian potential. Despite its almost entirely critical function, metaphor has a very important role to play in the reformation of any given political order within society.

There is thus an opposition between analogy and dialectics, as some have put it, with dialectics being a stand-in term for the metaphorical processes of difference that refuse to ground any particular, historical power (Rosenberg 2017: 66–67). In more recent memory, such a negative dialectics are what we can see as immanently active within the use of metaphor through a movement that refuses to become fixed, but rather oscillates through an endless plurality of images, things, persons, and so forth. Though metaphor functions similarly to analogy to be sure, with both positing a similarity between two dissimilar things, metaphor has more recently been construed by various modern thinkers rather to emphasize the difference between the things compared. This difference is presented to such an extent that metaphor becomes the basis for claiming that no metaphysical, ontotheological grounds might be explored as the unquestioned basis for an established or “natural,” depoliticized identity. In other words, metaphor extends a completely poetic-symbolic gesture that refrains from declaring any ontological justifications for autonomy or power. Metaphor thus remains “weak” though it expresses a truth uniquely its own. If analogy can be used to legitimate sovereign power, metaphor can be utilized in order to deconstruct such powers, no matter



where they exist or how they function.

As Ricoeur, for one, reminds us, “Being-as means being *and* not being [*Être-comme signifie être et ne pas être*]” (Ricoeur 1977: 362/Ricoeur 1975: 388). This is the nature of all metaphorical statements and that which constantly throws a wrench into our continuous attempts to base our political representations upon ontotheological (transcendent) and analogical claims—though it should be said that this view of representation does not ultimately do away entirely with such ontotheological supports either. Seeing metaphor as always-already fractured from within is perhaps the only way, he warns us, to do justice to the relationship between metaphorical truth and ontology (Ricoeur 1977: 302/Ricoeur 1975: 321). Those previous discourses based upon the analogy of being have fought too hard for an autonomous sphere for speculative thought, one that ended up being completely severed from its poetic-metaphorical roots (Ricoeur 1977: 307/Ricoeur 1975: 326). This sentiment, I would only add, is what has often caused more orthodox positions to migrate into the ivory tower of a certain scrupulous moralism—a point not wholly unfamiliar to Ricoeur’s earlier discussion of scruples in *The Symbolism of Evil*.

Ricoeur was not wrong, I would suggest, to link the inherent ambivalence of the metaphor to the rise of ontotheology and its sovereign claims, for the contested domains of representation and their historical ties to the philosophical-theological legacy of transcendence runs straight through the rule of metaphor. It is a necessity that proceeds “from the very structures of the mind, which it is the task of transcendental philosophy to articulate” (Ricoeur 1977: 355/Ricoeur 1975: 380). There is a “tensional truth” immanent to the rule of metaphor, a “dialectic that reigns between the experience of belonging as a whole and the power of distancing that opens up the space of speculative thought” (Ricoeur 1977: 371/Ricoeur 1975: 399). The historical-theological contrast between transcendence and immanence is perhaps then little more than a replaying of this “tensional truth” that exists in the contrast of speculative (abstract) thought and poetic (concrete, even materialistic or artistic) expression. Beyond the contested games of power that masquerade as either transcendence or immanence, there possibly lies another reality that we cannot do without. It would be as difficult to sever ourselves from it as it would be to dissociate ourselves from either language or religion, according to Ricoeur’s reading of the situation. Whether or not the divine dwells within this substratum of representations is another question, however, one that could only be addressed once humanity takes a sobering look at the politics of analogizing, and of the “static” myths such acts engender. The very fate of any modern theology, at the very least, certainly would seem to hang in the balance.

In the end, what Ricoeur makes abundantly evident is that there is a certain power within metaphor that exceeds the *static* representations established through analogy—also a subset of metaphorical processes—in order to deconstruct whatever ontological form is presented before us. Every analogy of being is met with a metaphorical resonance that simply but powerfully undoes the static “nature” of being, denaturalizing whatever form has been given and offering us a political response to those forms considered as “natural” in our world. Myth, as but one type of “absolutized” metaphor—and as what is in reality *the* definition of

the *analogia entis*—runs the risk of being forever eternalized as a part of nature, though it also, in its more *dynamic* and interactive state, is capable of producing an internal drive to undo its otherwise apparently fixed forms. Through the metaphorical-poetic processes that characterize the overcoming of a perpetual competition, as between the divine and the human, that typifies any static mythology, a new “third element” is brought forth as perhaps a possibility. Such a possibility, I am arguing, is precisely what Ricoeur had described in his juxtaposing of the tragic and Adamic myths in *The Symbolism of Evil* as they searched together for a Christological element that would forever destabilize the dualistic frameworks generated by static mythological narratives (which the fourth type of myth most directly embodied through the body/soul division). It is the activity of metaphor, constantly destabilizing and deconstructing the fixed mythological forms within human existence, that allows the absolutized metaphors—*as* myths, *as* analogies—to be undone and restored to the fluidity of a more dynamic mythology.

Such a recognition of dynamism and fluidity is similar, I would only add, to David Tracy’s suggestion that we are always caught between analogical reasoning and a negative dialectics that undoes the foundational acts of analogy (Tracy 1981: 405–438; cf. Milbank 2005: 419 and Desmond 2008: 419–420). At the minimum, what Ricoeur offers us is a profound meditation on the politics of mythology and metaphor that drives straight to the heart of traditional theological and philosophical insights concerning the nature of analogical reasoning and mythological narratives. What we are given to understand through this investigation, moreover, is that the political stakes of myth and its processes of naturalization are not only present within the domains of mythology, but lie too at the heart of Western philosophical and theological discourses.

## THE END OF MYTH?

Interestingly, and as a conclusion to the present essay, Ricoeur’s position has seemingly been confirmed by its overlap with the reading of myth and metaphor in Hans Blumenberg’s work. For Blumenberg, one can only claim to end myth with “one final myth” that can never become fully embodied either, allowing us to enter a state of reality that must learn to point beyond any attempt to establish autonomy through the tactics of self-legitimation (through a generally perceived natural, static state of existence) (see also Ricoeur 1992). For Blumenberg, there is only the “work” that we do *on* myth, carried through an incessant process throughout the centuries in interpreting and applying particular myths to ever new situations. Every attempt to end myth through the instantiation of a *logos*, as was the dream of both Western philosophy and Christian theology in particular, ends only with the metaphor of myth as an “absolutized metaphor” (Blumenberg 1985: 629). There is, to be sure, a plurality of myths competing with one another in a somewhat Darwinian fashion, as Ricoeur himself too had noted, ensuring that the work on myth is a never-ending process. Likewise, the dichotomy between myth and reason (*mythos/logos*) is not resolved through the eradication of myth; rather we are always caught in-between, much as Ricoeur’s theory of

symbols had already intimated.

Blumenberg's critique of mythology, read alongside his own discussion of a metaphorology wherein "absolute" metaphors offer humanity a path beyond conceptual language altogether and therefore provide a surer ground for a potentially theological language, illustrates the risks of metaphor *as* analogy, more precisely in this context, ossifying into myths that refuse to be critically analyzed in any sense. Removing myth from the modern period, as many have tried to do, would mean to dismiss the temptation to absolutize metaphor or to take a particular metaphor as fixed in its meaning, reducing its plurivocal valences to a singular instance. This is the dynamic that will allow Blumenberg to state that "Metaphysics has often revealed itself to us to be metaphoric taken at its word; the demise of metaphysics calls metaphoric back to its place," though it is a place that such metaphors (here understood as analogies insofar as metaphors becomes absolutized) may not be able to maintain on its own (Blumenberg 2010: 132). Once myth, genetically linked to the "absolute metaphor" that grounds it, disappears, so too will the analogical reasoning that grounded it seem to dissipate into the air. All modern critiques of metaphysics and ontotheology originate from this location.

It is for this reason that Blumenberg, like Ricoeur, senses another possibility for mythology and metaphor in the modern era. Myths, like metaphors, provide a counterbalance to the conceptual, clearly defined world. Myths operate within, and *as*, paradigms, giving life to an entire worldview that cannot be eradicated from human life. This was the reason that Ricoeur, for his part, could not eliminate the static myth altogether, nor cease his efforts to categorize them. What both Ricoeur and Blumenberg advocate is rather a balanced approach wherein myth and metaphor exist in a critical relationship with reason and philosophical inquiry so that the fullness of language, religion, and politics might be allowed to flourish as a dynamic and pluralistic affair. The necessary sequence of static myths is continuously undone by their dynamic interaction, though they are not surpassed entirely. There is a subversion of established meaning that takes place, to be sure, but only insofar as the imaginative play of creative insight allows humanity to establish new meanings. If myth is to have a future, it must work in tandem (and so, at times, in harmony, and, at other times, in tension) with reason in order to push alongside metaphor to that which lies beyond (*meta*) whatever framework has limited the fullness of our human experience.

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