



NIETZSCHE, METAPHOR AND COGNITIVE SCIENCE

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Résumé

Dans le present essai, comme das d'autres écrits dans le meme esprit, J'ai tenté d'examiner l'épistémologie cachée de Nietzsche qui révèle le processus symbolique dans l'esprit humain.

ملخص

في هذه الدراسة كما كان الشأن في دراسات أخرى كتبت بنفس الروح، حاولت أن أفحص الاستيمولوجيا الضمنية لنيتشه و التي تكشف عن السيرورة الرمزية الخاصة بالعقل الإنساني.

Abstract

In the present essay, as in previous ones written in the same spirit, I have tried to examine Nietzsche' s hidden epistemology which reveals the symbolic processes in the human mind.

Nietzsche's particular interests for symbolic processes render him very near to our contemporary philosophers of the mind. One of them, Colin Murray Turbayne explains that now the problem is "of bringing to the surface these extended metaphors submerged or partially submerged in the account of influential metaphysicians of the past". In the present essay, as in previous ones written in the same spirit, I have tried to examine Nietzsche' s hidden epistemology which reveals the symbolic processes in the human mind. Indeed, in many texts, and especially in the *Philosopher's book*, Nietzsche stated that it was possible to find out a genesis of thought from the point of view of an artistic power selecting the images on the basis of similarity and contrariety. I will present Nietzsche's thought on this issue.



1. Nietzsche's observation: there are symbolic processes in the human mind

Nietzsche has seen the common origin of philosophy and science, the artistic genesis, favourable to philosophic and scientific approaches. In that origin, reason, art and nature were and are not separated: “the natural process is carried on by science”⁹⁶, exactly as it was in the times of Plato and Aristotle and even earlier with the presocratic philosophers. Before knowing the universe, we were jointly and severally liable to it. Nietzsche has conceived the way reason started to be active in human minds through artistic powers, producing images and making choice among them. All this activity would have been thereafter developed according to the rhetorical and logical laws. And Nietzsche evoked the “power to discover and to make operative that which works and impresses, with respect to each thing, a power that Aristotle calls rhetoric, [and which] is, at the same time, the essence of language”⁹⁷. For Nietzsche, indeed, metaphor was more important than metonymy and synecdoche: these last tropes are only particular operations and accessories useful to metaphor; they help to accomplish the main operation of metaphor. Metonymy substitutes an adjunct for the thing that is meant; and synecdoche substitutes a part for the whole thing or vice-versa. And what remains identical with metaphor, metonymy or synecdoche is always **substitution**, but it can be also **displacement** or **derivation**. Then, what is a symbolic process? Nothing else than a substitution with its properties of displacement and derivation. We can substitute the same for the same but also the same for its neighbour or its contrary: the contrary is then a justification of the same; for instance, the

⁹⁶ *Das Philosophenbuch. Theoretische Studien* (1872-1875), Nietzsches Werke, GOA, Kröner, X; see the different texts in *Nachlass*, KGW, IV, 2, 1. The French translation *Le Livre du philosophe*, was published with an Introduction and Notes by Angèle Kremer Marietti (Paris : Aubier Flammarion, 1969), corrected and reprinted 1978 with a new Introduction; now reprinted in GF-Collection (Paris: Flammarion, 1991) with a new Introduction: « Nietzsche sur la vérité et le langage (1872-1875) ». The English translation: *Nietzsche, Philosophy and Truth.. Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, is edited and translated by D. Breazeale, New Jersey: Humanities, 1979. See *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 38; *Le Livre du Philosophe*, p. 44.

⁹⁷ Sander L. Gilman, Carole Blair, David Parent, *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 20.



relation of hatred and love. The basis is always the body, that is *Leib* and *Leben*, and what is dynamical in it, that is Will to Power. As to the Metaphysics of Art, it is a *modus operandi* proper to this bodily basis. Art is something practical; it shows what cannot be told: even poetry and literature, made of words, are anyway showing what “cannot be said” but can artistically work. Nietzsche’s own interest for symbolic processes can be noticed in works so different as *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Human All Too Human*. Especially in the *Philosopher’s Book*⁹⁸ – where he explicitly noticed them – Nietzsche interpreted all symbolic processes as belonging to «fiction» (*Erdichtung*), that is as being artistic creations. This thinking activity would have been developed according to the rhetorical laws of metaphor – and subsequently of metonymy and synecdoche⁹⁹ – for ever at work in human language:

*“The drive toward the formation of metaphors is the fundamental human drive, which one cannot for a single instant dispense with in thought, for one would thereby dispense with man himself. This drive is not truly vanquished and scarcely subdued by the fact that a regular and rigid new world is constructed as its prison from its own ephemeral products, the concepts.”*¹⁰⁰

When Nietzsche refers to metaphor he refers to the structure of our thought, but conceived as incorporated in the structure of our body (*Leib*), because at the bottom of every thought there is always *Leib*. What seemed to be in the beginning esthetical progressively became a deep philosophical problem. Tragic knowledge concerns too the discovery of the bodily basis of what our culture found to be spiritual. And then the “Pathos der Distanz” can be the usual way that human beings take to forget together the body and its corporeal life. For Nietzsche, there were bodily states, mental states being only consequences or symbols of the former. From that point of view, everything has its beginning in *Leib* or its departure from *Leib*; especially *homo natura* is what is at the bottom of mankind (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 230).

⁹⁸ *Das Philosophenbuch.*

⁹⁹ Metaphor: “the application of a name or descriptive term or phrase to an object or action to which it is imaginatively but not literally applicable”; metonymy: “the substitution of the name of an attribute or adjunct for that of the thing meant”; synecdoche: “a figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole or vice versa”; definitions from *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary.*

¹⁰⁰ *Philosophy and Truth*, pp. 88-89; *Le Livre du philosophe*, pp.129-130.



Every symbolic process and also every moral judgment is a “language of signs”. And then what we call “truth” or *Wahrheit* has its roots in *Leib* and is a representation of life. That is why not only truth but also freedom, justice and love are *Wille zur Macht*, which is a dynamics coming from *Leib* and *Leben*. Therefore, the hardest thing is to be a servant of truth. In his course on *Rhetoric* (1872-1873), Nietzsche evoked the art of rhetoric as the « power to discover and to make operative that which works and impresses, with respect to each thing »¹⁰¹. Abstraction itself was seen as a product of metaphorical processes, as an enduring impression in the sets of images worth to be retained and solidified in the memory:

*“There are many more sets of images in the brain than are consumed in thinking; The intellect rapidly selects similar images; the image chosen give rise, in turn, to a profusion of images; but again, the intellect quickly selects one among them, etc.”*¹⁰²

Also Nietzsche gives us a genesis of thought from the point of departure of an artistic power selecting the successive images on the basis of **similarity** (and non similarity). As regards to the fundamental question of space and time, Nietzsche did not see them exactly as they were the a priori forms of sensitivity (*Sinnlichkeit*), enounced by Kant’s analysis. But space and time are surely according to Nietzsche particular metaphors of cognition; and the same may be said for causality. Besides, at the beginning of mankind what worked in any speech also was a « moral phenomenon »: that is a social obligation to ‘tell the truth’, coming from the community and which was artistically generalized¹⁰³ through metaphors, metonymies, synecdoche: tropes being used as processes of substitution, displacement and derivation – processes afterwards discovered by Freud in dreamwork (*Traumwerke*). And finally, truth itself was seen by Nietzsche as coming to life through symbolic processes:

“What then is truth ? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphism: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people

¹⁰¹ See Sander L. Gilman, Carole Blair, David Parent, *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*, p. 20.

¹⁰² KGW, IV, 2, 22 (64).

¹⁰³ *Philosophy and Truth*, 44.



to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins."¹⁰⁴

This activity of rational understanding, called by Nietzsche the "knowledge drive"¹⁰⁵, is "mastered by the imagination"¹⁰⁶, which gives us what we seek in order to think¹⁰⁷. And – if we come back to Kant – from this Nietzschean point of view we can say that the transcendental imagination is Kant's most original finding in the *Critique of Pure reason*, and it is thereafter also Nietzsche's idea, but combined with an original intuition about the unconscious processes of the mind:

*"There are many more sets of images in the brain than are consumed in thinking; The intellect rapidly selects similar images; the image chosen give rise, in turn, to a profusion of images; but again, the intellect quickly selects one among them, etc."*¹⁰⁸

Therefore, Nietzsche did not separate reason, art and nature; for him, "the natural process is carried on by science"¹⁰⁹. There is an archaeological ground for that: originally, we were (probably) jointly and severally related to the universe before knowing it. In the beginning of mankind, when reason started to be active in human mind, there would have been continuously "artistic powers", producing images and making a choice among them¹¹⁰. And this archaeological process is going on still nowadays:

*"Conscious thinking is nothing but a process of selecting representations. It is a long way from this to abstraction. (1) the power which produces the profusion of images; (2) the power which selects and emphasizes what is similar."*¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴ "On Truth and Lies in A Nonmoral Sense": *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 84 ; *Le Livre du philosophe*, p.123.

¹⁰⁵ "The Philosopher" § 63: *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 23 ; *Le Livre du philosophe*, p. 62

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

¹⁰⁷ "The Philosopher" § 63: *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 24 ; *Le Livre du philosophe*, p. 62.

¹⁰⁸ "The Philosopher" § 102: *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 38 ; *Le Livre du philosophe*, p. 79

¹⁰⁹ "The Philosopher" § 64: *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 24 ; *Le Livre du philosophe*, p. 62.

¹¹⁰ "The Philosopher" § 63: *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 24 ; *Le Livre du philosophe*, p. 62.

¹¹¹ KGW, IV, 2, 22 (64).



2. Symbolic processes in Nietzsche's mind

Deliberately, Nietzsche thought and wrote according to the opposition between concepts and images: his choice went at first to the imagery of myth and ancient thought with its rich poly-semantics. Later on, he would distinguish clearly his present intellectual constitution and became conscious of the state of mind in which he *was* and in which he *is* presently relatively to the previous one. He will be really conscious of the distance between his first constitution of mind and the new one, when, in spring 1877, he affirms that his previous works were like pictures for which he used to take colors from the subjects he represented, like an artist.¹¹²

With *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche began to put the problem of science in the manner of the artists, since the book is full of images of Greek art and myth. Nevertheless, in 1886 he depicted his work with severely excessive formulas: "images frenzied and confused, sentimental, in some places saccharine-sweet to the point of effeminacy"¹¹³. Indeed, symbolic processes in Nietzsche's mind appear clearly in his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which the central and huge metaphor is that of the dualism of two great opposites that is the diptych of Apollo and Dionysus: the first as the sun-god and the second as an agrarian god. This fundamental metaphor is concentrated on a complementary opposition between the two personalities - both sons of Zeus but half-brothers: Apollo's mother is Leto, Dionysus' mother is Semele -, because this duality presents contrasting characteristics, not in the logical sense but in existential interacting like the duality of the sexes.

The opposition between Apollo/Dionysus has been established at first by Plutarch (46-120 before J.-C.), well known to Nietzsche; it was also used by

¹¹² See "Attempt at a Self-criticism", in *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*, translated by Shaun Whiteside, edited by Michael Tanner, London: Penguin Books, Penguin Classics, 1993 ; see p. 5. Hence BT, followed by the section number and the page number.

¹¹³ The principle of reason according to which nothing happens unless there is a cause or a determining reason, that is to say a reason which could a priori explain why it is existing rather not and why it is so and not otherwise (see Leibniz, *Théodicée*, I, 44).



Michelet in his *Bible de l'humanité* (1864). The antithesis between Apollo and Dionysus connects us to the antithesis measure/excess; similarly to other antitheses: order/disorder, justice/*hubris*, form/force, beautiful/misshapen. We can distinguish in it the Kantian opposition beautiful/ sublime or the Rousseauist one between culture and nature. Similarly, in Apollo “representation” and in Dionysus “Will”, two Schopenhauerian concepts can be recognized. Then, we see that numerous images of Apollo and Dionysus, opposed or joined, are loaded with many superposed meanings. At the bottom, for Nietzsche, they have together to play the part of the parents of tragedy. Attic tragedy was born from the “struggle of the opposition only apparently bridged by the word ‘art’ ”. Nietzsche explains:

“ that art derives its continuous development from the duality of Apolline and Dionysiac; just as the reproduction of species depends on the duality of the sexes with its constant conflicts and only periodically intervening reconciliation. ”(BT,1, 14)

Beside this basic and generative opposition, the first derived opposition between these two figures consists in the separation of the two art worlds of *dream* and *intoxication*. Apollo is identified with the plastic art of the sculptor, and Dionysus with the non-visual art of music. Dream implies illusions which are a response to suffering and transcend it; but Nietzsche adds, “with restraining boundaries”: that is the beautiful illusion as “the precondition of all visual art”. Finally the symbol of the Olympian Apollo means individuation and consciousness:

“ as the glorious divine image of the principium individuationis, from whose gestures and looks all the delight, wisdom and beauty of ‘illusion’ speak to us ” BT, 1, 16).



On the contrary, intoxication implies, for one part, a return of the memory of the Titanic origins and sufferings, and for another part an oblivion of the individual reality, apart from the principle of sufficient reason¹¹⁴:

“the tremendous dread that grips man when he suddenly loses his way amidst the cognitive forms of appearance, because the principle of sufficient reason, in one of his forms, seems suspended” (BT,1, 16)

We can see that in *The Birth of Tragedy*¹¹⁵, but also on all stages of his writings, Nietzsche had recourse to a metaphorical style; he was not satisfied to assign generally to any language and thought a metaphorical origin, he also used metaphor more strongly to express his thought. It is so especially in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* which enjoys, in addition to the metaphor of the dance - since Zarathustra is a dancer. There is the significance of a whole bestiary including above all Zarathustra's domestic animals which are endowed with speech: the eagle, the proudest animal, and the snake, the craftiest one, but also the camel, the yellow lion, a flight of doves, frogs, the multicoloured cow, finally the monkey which is the derision of man. As for the great day of Zarathustra who is compared to the Sun, it is crossed by the solar phases: like the Sun Zarathustra rises and lies down the same way, descends and goes up the slopes of the mountain. Already, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Apollo, the solar god, referred to the understandable things and the *visual* arts, while the dark Dionysus revealed to man the hidden face of world and existence. The Sun as source of light is generally presented as the source of vital energy. In Nietzsche's metaphorical way, the Sun looks like an original eye and also signifies different particular eyes and especially the eye of knowledge. Nietzsche also evokes the eye of the spirit as well as the eyes of Ulysses¹¹⁶,

¹¹⁴ The principle of reason according to which nothing happens unless there is a cause or a determining reason, that is to say a reason which could a priori explain why it is existing rather not and why it is so and not otherwise (see Leibniz, *Théodicée*, I, 44).

¹¹⁵ See my contribution to the Conference *Nietzsche's Use of Language – Nietzsches Gebrauch der Sprache* – at the Nijmegen University, 21-23 September 2000: “Nietzsche's Philosophical Interpretation of Metaphor : A Metaphorical Genealogy” online at: <http://www.dogma.lu>

¹¹⁶ *Beyond Good and Evil* § 230.



even the third eye which “looks at the world through the two others”¹¹⁷, but in a definitely pejorative way the cyclopean eye of Socrates¹¹⁸. However, it is not the strictly accurate metaphor as brought back to expression which is the matter in the present essay, nor even the philosophical use of metaphor by Nietzsche¹¹⁹. Effectively, what can also be interesting from an epistemological point of view, is the Nietzschean analysis concerning the phases of the conceptualization following one another: starting from the current of the images passing by words to lead to concepts. In addition, I by no means intend to affirm that Nietzsche is a precursor of cognitive sciences; however, I want to show that the “rhetoric turn”¹²⁰ which belongs to Nietzsche (as one speaks now of ‘linguistic turn’) is far from being a mere speculation. If the Nietzschean positions have been judged, in more than one way, inopportune, they are from now on topical, since metaphor becomes an object of study in Cognitive Science, and especially since our principal concepts concerning the notions of significance, concepts and reason have to be reconsidered in the light of the most recent cognitive studies emphasizing the nature and the importance of metaphor as a fundamental process of thought¹²¹. We are finishing the third decade of Cognitive Science; this one relates to disciplines as varied as linguistics, artificial intelligence, cognitive psychology, neural sciences and naturally philosophy. “Cognitive” is any mental process generally associated with our comprehension, but still with the formulation of our beliefs and the proper acquisition of our knowledge. Among these sciences, the neural sciences study the operation of sensory factors. Thus, for example, thanks to these sciences we know that one sees¹²² with one’s brain;

¹¹⁷ *Damn*, § 509.

¹¹⁸ *The Birth of Tragedy* 14.

¹¹⁹ Angèle Kremer Marietti « Nietzsche’s Philosophical Interpretation of Metaphor: A Metaphorical Genealogy » (2000).

¹²⁰ Angèle Kremer Marietti, *Nietzsche et la rhétorique*, Paris, PUF, 1992.

¹²¹ Mark Jophnson, “ Why Metaphor Matters to Philosophy”, in *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, A Quaterly Journal, Vol. 10, N°3, 1995, 157-162.

¹²² Michel Imbert, « Théorie de la vision naturelle », in *Sciences de la cognition*, Grands Colloques de Prospectives, 28 janvier 1991, Ministère de la recherche et de la Technologie, 1991, p. 32; also Angèle Kremer Marietti, *La philosophie cognitive*, Paris, PUF, 1994; and see Pierre Jacob et Marc Jeannerod, « Quand voir, c’est faire », *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 3/1999, *Neurosciences*, pp. 293-319.



and that vision is a form of intelligence, because it can be connected with a true reasoning. Thus, perception is not a simple copy of reality; it occurs only as the result of a great number of calculations carried out by a great number of networks, at the precise time of a confrontation with reality. Currently detailed analyses could be carried out, relating to the way in which metaphors really structure our conceptualization and reasoning. In the complex subject of metaphor, there are now many distinctions conceived in the frame of Artificial Intelligence, for instance concerning representation schemes and conceptual graphs¹²³. We thus have the confirmation that metaphor is not a pure linguistic phenomenon, but that it is definitely a conceptual and 'experiential' process by which we structure our universe. Johnson Mark justly writes: "We obtained major outlines on the ways according to which our conceptual system and all the forms of interaction symbolic system are founded on our body experiment and, consequently, structured according to an imaginative mode"¹²⁴.

3. Metaphor at the origin of language and thought

Nietzsche's interest for the symbolic processes is present from its first works to the last one: in particular in the fundamental work, *The Birth of Tragedy*¹²⁵ - the texts date back to 1870 until 1872 - , as well as in the writings of 1872 unto 1875 published under the title *The Philosopher's Book*¹²⁶. Let us also us note that its youth essays also testify to symbolic processes¹²⁷ and that this concern is found even during the positivist period of the books published under the

¹²³ William A Woods, « What's in a Link, Foundations for Semantic Networks », *Representation and Understanding: Studies in Cognitive Science*, ed. D. G. Bobrow and A. M. Collins, Academic Press, New York, 1975.

¹²⁴ Angèle Kremer Marietti, *Nietzsche et la rhétorique*, Paris, PUF, 1992.

¹²⁵ Mark Johnson, "Why Metaphor Matters to Philosophy", in *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, A Quaterly Journal, Vol. 10, N°3, 1995, 157-162.

¹²⁶ Michel Imbert, « Théorie de la vision naturelle », in *Sciences de la cognition*, Grands Colloques de Prospectives, 28 janvier 1991, Ministère de la recherche et de la Technologie, 1991, p. 32; also Angèle Kremer Marietti, *La philosophie cognitive*, Paris, PUF, 1994; and see Pierre Jacob et Marc Jeannerod, « Quand voir, c'est faire », *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 3/1999, *Neurosciences*, pp. 293-319.

¹²⁷ William A Woods, « What's in a Link, Foundations for Semantic Networks », *Representation and Understanding: Studies in Cognitive Science*, ed. D. G. Bobrow and A. M. Collins, Academic Press, New York, 1975.



title *Human too human*¹²⁸, therefore in the years 1876-80. The same applies well beyond, that is in 1886 with an “Attempt at a self-criticism“, since Nietzsche affirms then explicitly that “the ground of art “ is that on which must be put and solved the problem of science. – But what did Nietzsche mean exactly by these words “the ground of art”?

The Nietzschean references to art play without interruption the part of an epistemological criterion: Nietzsche offered a new concept for art as something mixed with feeling, which was and still is at the beginning of conceptual thought. He presented the philosopher of desperate knowledge as becoming necessarily the philosopher of tragic knowledge, because he thought that this philosopher had to master “the uncontrolled knowledge drive, though not by means of metaphysics”¹²⁹ (metaphysics being taken here in its traditional sense). As master of uncontrolled drives, the philosopher of tragic knowledge penetrates the arcana of language and science from the point of view of the relation truth/untruth, understood in a non-moral sense, in order to finish by asking the philosophic question on the cultural opposition of science and wisdom. Nietzsche interpreted the symbolic processes of every thought as pertaining to fiction (in German: *Fiktion* or *Erdichtung*) understood as the activity of art which, according to him, generally characterizes thought, inasmuch as creations are at the same time on the field of art and nature, and as they relate to several human generations, nature itself being apprehended by Nietzsche on the ground of art¹³⁰. Thus, Nietzsche evoked the “complete fiction“ (*vollständige Fiktion*) which represented to him the logical thought, or, in other words, “our fiction “ of what are in fact the things – or finally the “necessary“ fiction consisting in the philosophical concepts of ‘subject’, ‘substance’ and ‘reason’. However Nietzsche affirmed that without fiction –

¹²⁸ Mark Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

¹²⁹ A. Kremer Marietti: « Le Naissance de la tragédie trace la voie de la vérité radicale », Nietzsche, *La naissance de la tragédie*, Paris: Le Livre de Poche, Classiques de la philosophie, 1994.

¹³⁰ A. Kremer-Marietti, « ‘Le terrain de l’art’, une clé de lecture du texte nietzschéen », in *Nouvelles lectures de Nietzsche*, textes recueillis par Dominique Janicaud, Lausanne, Cahiers L’Âge d’Homme, N°1, 1985.



which means then in fact without thought –, and especially without recognizing a value to the logical fictions, human beings could not live. Nevertheless, for Nietzsche some fictions would be “empty”: for example that of ‘being’; others unusable out of any context: they are the “fictions” of ‘spirit’, ‘reason’, ‘thought’, ‘conscience’, ‘soul’, ‘will’, ‘truth’. Finally, other “fictions” would have the virtue of regulating our conducts, like the extreme fiction of the unconditional or the absolute (“*das Unbedingte*” by Kant). And, when he treated interpretation, Nietzsche saw it depending on psychological fictions. For Nietzsche, what is supposed in the great art is only the intelligence of the world through symbols. From this heuristic point of view, Nietzsche considered art, therefore not as a “paralyzed effect”, but as an “extraordinary cause”, or a “remedy for knowledge”. Under all the Nietzschean metaphors, it should be understood that the systems of symbolic processes are comparable to the artistic processes; however, Nietzsche stressed that these processes are at the origin of the understanding of all that is surrounding us. This is why the process originating any appearance is, according to Nietzsche, primarily artistic. And in consequence, since any form of art comprises by the way a degree of rhetoric, one can say that when art is considered, rhetoric is not far. Anyway and besides, rhetoric itself may be considered as an art of speech and the art of presenting our thoughts. Definitely, the rhetorical figures are very important not only for language but also for thought: Nietzsche appreciated them as the very essence of language¹³¹. Indeed, rhetoric is quite present at the same time in speech and in speech objects: that is, in form and in content, Nietzsche noticed very early an existing close link between thought and language; this is why he wrote, in the draft of a course on the origin of language: “very conscious thought was not possible without using language“. Language and thought have no other origin for Nietzsche but rhetoric. Language conveys the copy of an impression or an emotion by sparing its reception to it: so does rhetoric. Not different from rhetoric, language itself

¹³¹ *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 48; KSA, VII, 486.



does not grant the truth of things, but it is an extraordinary means of expression and communication between all the men or women. One knows the passage of this text from 1873, “On truth and lie in the extra-moral sense”, in which Nietzsche presented truth like a “moving multitude of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphism, in short, a sum of human relations which poetically and rhetorically were raised, transposed, decorated, and which, after a long use, seem to people steady, canonical and constraining : truths are illusions which one forgot that they are, metaphors which were worn and which lost their significant force, coins which lost their print and which enter consequently in consideration, no more like coins, but like metal.”¹³² The phenomenology of consciousness (and also of unconscious¹³³ or conscious¹³⁴ thought) suggested by Nietzsche, begins with a nervous excitation; and what translates this nervous excitation in images is articulated in successive stages. The expressiveness appears in the tropes. In his course on Old Rhetoric (1872-1873), Nietzsche characterized the processes which are synecdoche, metaphor and metonymy: i.e. the tropes, which are “the artistic process, the most significant of rhetoric thought“. Metaphor moves all the meanings, transposes the place over time; for example, in German one says curiously: “Zu Hause”, in the house, and “Jahraus“, during the year. Synecdoche quotes a part for the whole, the sail instead of the boat: one can find in language the application of this model of designation; thus, the Latin term “serpens“ (in French ‘serpent’) comes from the characterization of what crawls; it is certain that “serpens“ could have meant snail, but it has not been the case. Lastly, metonymy is the commutation of cause and effect: in some cases, one can really say “sweat” for work, or even “the stone is hard” instead of saying only that it appears hard to us. All these current rhetorical expressions are inherent in the language by its manner of constituting the literal meaning starting from the ancient figurative meaning.

¹³² *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 84; KSA, VII, 880-881.

¹³³ KSA, VII, 454.

¹³⁴ KSA, VII, 445.



Jean-Jacques Rousseau had noticed in his *Essay on the Origin of Languages* (1781)¹³⁵ the necessary passage from the figurative meaning to the literal meaning of every particular term. Nietzsche has also noticed that any speech starts with an original figuration. However, once the language is made up, this originating process does not exempt from following rules in order to defend the clearness of language and thus from avoiding linguistic faults, some of which relate to the negligence of the propriety of words. The propriety (in Greek, *kyriologia* being the proper meaning of a word) is the use of a word with the maximum of its significance. It is because of this wish for clearness that Cicero demurred to the abuse of metaphors; for him the proper expressions existed in a sufficient number to avoid the use of metaphors. However, Aristotle thought that metaphor was useful because it was used to visualize the relations; and he illustrated his matter by a sentence of Empedocles “old age is to life what the evening is to day; therefore can one call the evening the old age of the day and old age the evening of life” (*Rhetoric*, III, 2). In addition to metaphor, Nietzsche recognized in synecdoche a strongly active phenomenon in the formation of language: he noted that, in Sanskrit, *kesin* means ‘the hairy’ and indicates the lion seen the “hairy one“. While synecdoche transfers the meaning of an object from a part of it to its whole, metonymy transfers the meaning of an object to the nearest or contiguous object to the first one. In Greek and Latin, the word *Metaphora* means transfer or transport and is convenient to express the movement of meaning in a particular metaphor as well as in synecdoche or in metonymy. But particularly with regard to the formation of concepts – and therefore beyond language – in the field specific to thought, the most effective trope was for Nietzsche metonymy, because the abstract terms indicate qualities in us and out of us; however we perceive those stripped of their support and consequently these terms acquire in our eyes the autonomy of

¹³⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, précédé de « Jean-Jacques Rousseau ou la double origine et son rapport au système Langue-Musique-Politique » par Angèle Kremer Marietti, Paris, Aubier, 1974, 1981. Title of chapter III: « Que le premier langage dut être figuré ».



essences. Nietzsche takes up this idea by criticizing it in the first book of *Human, All Too Human*, § 15: “thus the philosophers in general transport the concept of inside and outside to the essence and the phenomenon of the world”. An example of this transfer is the reification of the concept which is at the origin of Platonism: the schema of two worlds, one perfect and original, the other as the simple copy of the first one which is its model. In fact, Nietzsche thought that concept is “neither inside nor outside in the world”. Indeed, Socrates started prudently by questioning on the beauty as Idea starting from the observation of beautiful pots and beautiful girls. For Nietzsche, concepts have been elaborated starting from our sensitivity, but we let us consider them wrongly as if they were for ever the essence of things. Thus, what was at first only the appearance of things originates for us the essence of things. Consequently, abstract terms seem to indicate realities which would be the cause of qualities, whereas they are only the effect of the same qualities¹³⁶. For Nietzsche causal reality lies in the concrete qualities of the things of our perception, and the abstract concept taken as essence is purely metaphorical, the simple effect of these concrete qualities: here Nietzsche’s theory of knowledge is a fundamental nominalism.

In his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant already saw *hypotyposis* as the significant image being able to be presented either in diagrammatic form and related to science, or like symbolic system and related to art. The epistemology considered by Nietzsche¹³⁷ is, a particular sort of a radical result from Kantian positions or - if one prefers - the parody of some Kantian theses. By conceiving this epistemology as “reflective” – i.e. not as “determining” – I apply the Kantian distinction between determining judgments and reflective judgements. The Kantian concept of “reflection” relates to the awakening of the relation of active representations to the various sources of our knowledge in relation with

¹³⁶ See *Nietzsche et la rhétorique*, pp. 129-134.

¹³⁷ See: A. Kremer-Marietti, « Nietzsche et l'épistémologie réfléchissante » in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, N°211, 1/2000



our understanding and sensitivity (see, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the Amphiboly of the concepts of reflection). Not having necessarily to do with the objects themselves, the reflection can, according to different adopted points of view, give place to different forms of “truth” – or be a perspectivist truth in Nietzsche’s meaning – i.e. truth whose criterion lies only in evaluation and, more precisely, in one of the various possible types of evaluation. Indeed, whereas for Kant the schema gives to a concept its image, Nietzsche reverses the approach and considers the image as such in itself, from the point from which a concept can be thought or to which it can be given. Especially, Nietzsche joined there the ultimate or first images of *time* and *space*, which were for Kant the a priori forms of our sensitivity; and, adding *causality* to them, he writes: “Time, space and causality are only metaphors of the knowledge by which we interpret all things”¹³⁸. But Nietzsche in a way remain Kantian since he counts primarily on the imagination which, according to Kant in the *Critique of Judgment*, is exerted “for the contents of the reflection“ and which, through the aesthetic idea, gives rise to thinking without any concept being adequate for it. From these original data, it is possible to locate Nietzsche in the context of a research that is contemporary to us. First of all one can include his ideas on the origin of thought in the field of knowledge (it maybe a philosophical fiction) concerning the supposed subject. I think in particular of psychological and psychoanalytical work, and especially of the oneiric processes and their interpretation, for which Nietzsche preceded Freud. Indeed, in *Human, All Too Human*, I, 1, § 13, Nietzsche studied what he called the “logic of the dreams“. In his opinion, this logic uses “the visual impressions of the day “: because Nietzsche conceived humanity in its beginning as thinking in the same way as we continue to dream today. And when he is also taken in the “world of the dream”¹³⁹, the thinker does not directly reach the stage of abstraction. Besides, in what is currently called ‘philosophy of mind’ and even in Cognitive Science, one finds out some

¹³⁸ KSA, VII, 484.

¹³⁹ *Philosophy and Truth*, p.24; KSA, VII, 446.



Nietzschean assertions which were a long time considered to be inopportune a long time, whereas Nietzsche only tried to be lucid on the true progress of thought through the originating processes of symbolic systems. To a large extent, the questions and answers of current research are related to the Nietzschean theses. I will follow the texts concerning the question raised by some rhetorical processes. I think that some of the contemporary theses on metaphor are close to Nietzschean theses. Colin Murray Turbayne was among the first to explain why the problem of the philosophy of mind was "to make go up on the surface these wide metaphors submerged or partially submerged in the considerations of the influential metaphysicians of the past"¹⁴⁰. More precisely and more recently, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson¹⁴¹ developed a position which they name 'experientialist', at the same time opposite together with objectivism and subjectivism, which Thomas Leddy¹⁴² takes again, by dealing with the ontological statute of metaphor. In this direction, Leddy goes further than Lakoff and Johnson while affirming just like Nietzsche: "we think the world in terms of conceptual metaphors – that the components of our experiment of the world are metaphorical"¹⁴³. Like Nietzsche, Leddy makes the thought objects of traditional philosophy depend on the metaphorical process, until "truth" itself also becomes for him "metaphorical". Thus, just like Nietzsche, for Leddy, essences are by nature metaphorical with, as basis, an idea that Lakoff and Johnson entertain of it, the idea that truth (thus also metaphorical truth) is, at the same time, a question of correspondence, coherence and pragmatism. The interest that I feel myself to direct me

¹⁴⁰ Colin Murray Turbayne, "Metaphors for the Mind", in *Logic and Art. Essays in honour of Nelson Goodman*, Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs Merrill Comp. Inc., 1972, p.61. Cf. Colin Murray Turbayne, *The Myth of Metaphor*, New Haven: Yale, University Press, 1962. See also: Earl R. Mac Cormac, *A Cognitive Theory of Metaphor*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1985; Eileen Cornell Way, *Knowledge representation and Metaphor*, Kluwer Academic Publisher, 1991; Vincent de Coorebyter ed, *Rhétoriques de la science*, Paris, P.U.F., Collection L'Interrogation Philosophique, 1994: A. Kremer-Marietti, 133-148: « Le figuré et le littéral dans le langage scientifique ».

¹⁴¹ George Lakoff & Mark Johnson, *Metaphors we live by*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980; also *Philosophy in the Flesh. The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*, New York: Basic Books, 1999.

¹⁴² Thomas Leddy, « Metaphor and Metaphysics », in *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, 10 (3), 205-222.

¹⁴³ Thomas Leddy, *op. cit.*, p. 206: "I argue, however, that not only do we understand the world in terms of conceptual metaphors but that fundamental constituents of our experienced world are metaphoric".



towards this aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy joined my previous concern with knowing what Husserl called "our epistemological origin", and which I expressed, among other works, in *La Symbolicité*¹⁴⁴, also in an article which I wrote in English on philosophy considered as the theory of symbolic system, just like in *La raison créatrice* and in another article entitled "the fictional reference of the text". One finds the same spirit in my previous works on Nietzsche and in those which followed them. But I must add that the orientation of my curiosity relative to these issues does not have anything subversive against scientific rationality and its statute: I think that it works to constitute the full and whole objectivity of scientific concepts, even if, ultimately, the conceptualization of scientific ideas depends indirectly on an originating and fundamental metaphorization.

4. The symbolic processes evoked by Nietzsche

Actually, Nietzsche narrowly connected the fact of knowing the processes of symbolic systems with the hope of a philosophical therapy inherent in this setting up to date and even with the idea of a quite simply therapeutic philosophy which would have as a finality the proper medication of culture¹⁴⁵. Thus – well beyond what could seem a conflict between art and science that he evoked besides¹⁴⁶, and even beyond the idea of a philosophy accentuating a possible opposition which would move away science from wisdom¹⁴⁷ - Nietzsche's intuition of symbolic processes imposes on the attention of those which seriously study what is called mind or thought. Admittedly, Nietzsche extrapolated his position until the idea that philosophy would come from there to control the development of science and to fix the table of the values of a given civilization¹⁴⁸. Then, the truth would be held, for Nietzsche, in a zone

¹⁴⁴ Angèle Kremer-Marietti, *La symbolité*, Paris, P.U.F., 1982; and *Les racines philosophiques de la science moderne*, Bruxelles, Mardaga, 1987; also "La référence fictionnelle du texte", *Encyclopédie philosophique*, IV, Paris, PUF, 1998.

¹⁴⁵ *Philosophy and Truth*, pp. 67-76; KSA, VII, 557-617

¹⁴⁶ *Philosophy and Truth*, pp. 1-58; KSA, VII, 417-517

¹⁴⁷ *Philosophy and Truth*, pp. 125-146; KSA, VIII, 108-115.

¹⁴⁸ *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 8, pp. 22,23; KSA, VII, 424.



which would no more be either subjective or objective, but still as Thomas Leddy advances: in the simple fact that the essences are finally only metaphors. Nietzsche spoke about the abstracted terms, the called **abstracta**, that once obtained one takes for essences, where Leddy speaks only about essences. Leddy distinguishes essences and concepts; the latter which lie in theory in the mind can however structure our objective world. Besides Nietzsche affirmed that the produced concepts select us, therefore act pragmatically, beyond the correspondence and the coherence which characterize them nevertheless, as well for Nietzsche as for the 'experientialists' (according to Leddy). Indeed, for Nietzsche, even if *abstracta* are only effects and by no means causes, they correspond metaphorically to the world: they correspond to it; moreover they can maintain between them a certain coherence and then act physically on us, as we can act through them in the world. The origin and the end of the "artist process" remain physiological, while passing by the medium of the material world: "the science of nature now opposes to that the absolute natural truth: higher physiology will include undoubtedly already in our becoming the artistic forces, not only in man's becoming, but also in the becoming of the animals: it will say that the artistic one also starts with the organic one."¹⁴⁹. Whatever would be the philosopher's positions, the deductions which he can draw concern his responsibility. What remains objectively interesting for the researchers in cognitive philosophy, are the data that Nietzsche released and of which he sees himself being propagated in later progress. Precisely, the processes of symbolic systems consist in selective developments of images and representations in the course of thought, before becoming perfectly abstract while being reduced unto the form of concept. Nietzsche noted in this movement a double course: on the one hand, he saw that there is a force, a capacity or a faculty able to produce images; and from which, on the other hand, he discovered the action of another capacity being able to choose

¹⁴⁹ KSA, VII, 436.



among these same images¹⁵⁰. On this level, a double question can be raised; it relates to the production of the images and their choice or at least the criterion of their choice. First of all, the production of the images is a fact: the image "was born" so to speak without its birth making any question. It is the image which acts in our brain and puts, for example, the members moving. As for the general "aesthetic state" which inspires the images, it is a product of the states of pleasure and of, Nietzsche affirms, pertaining with excessive physical strength.

As for the question of the choice of the images and their selection, it is not without being connected with the question of the standard and the criterion, at least with a diversified requirement which is likely to escape consciousness. This question thus appears in the texts of the years 1872-1873 joined together in *The Philosopher's Book*; but it is again evoked later and is treated, inter alia, in *The Gay Science* (III, §111)¹⁵¹, where Nietzsche describes the "process of thoughts and logical conclusions in our current brain 'as guarantor' with a process and a fight of impulses which by themselves are extremely illogical and iniquitous". Nietzsche pointed out that what is held then is no other than "the old mechanism" of the first humanity, but "in so fast a way and if dissimulated that we never realize but result of the fight". However, this struggle is carried on taking into account our evaluations "which are perhaps the means thanks to which something primarily different must be reached, as what seems inside the consciousness"; however what seems to us to be the interior stake is perhaps itself finally "only one means for us of reaching something which is held outside our consciousness"¹⁵². Here are what would be, on Nietzsche's part, a vision, so to speak, interior or mental, of the processes, but which refers to a whole physiological basis. The contemporary cognitivists recognize a system of exchanges between the neurons of the brain. The external vision

¹⁵⁰ *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 24; KSA, VII, 445

¹⁵¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Le gai savoir. Fragments posthumes*. Textes et variantes établis par G. Colli et M. Montinari. Traduits de l'allemand par Pierre Klossowski. Paris, Gallimard, 1967, p. 129.

¹⁵² KSA, 1882-1884, p. 654.



causes the concepts of thought to be superimposed on the sensory data, so that the modes of ordering would be an accommodation of these data, while the conceptualization would not be different from the cognitive process even on its lower level¹⁵³. It seems that Nietzsche already went in this direction. On this organic basis, affluent of such a system of knowledge, the grammatical structure is the first one for Nietzsche - let us note that such is the point of view of Chomsky's generative grammar¹⁵⁴ - compared to the conscious thought and the opposition subject/object. For Nietzsche, it is truly an instinct "which pushes us to form metaphors"; and this instinct is "fundamental"¹⁵⁵: on this basis, initially language then science work with the construction of the concepts¹⁵⁶. Meanwhile, nowadays, one finally dares to speak of "the instinct of language": see the title of the book of Steven Pinker¹⁵⁷ who writes that all the new-born children come into world with linguistic abilities¹⁵⁸. For Nietzsche, "the language instinct" was without any doubt, consequently, the instinct of science. It is, in other words at least, what is called 'common sense', but one does not hear the latter in a formal nor logical way ; it is as a naturalist that Nietzsche wrote: "As the bee works at the same time to build cells and to fill these cells with honey, thus science works unceasingly with this large columbarium of the concepts, with the sepulchre of the intuitions, and always builds the new ones and higher stages, it works, cleans, renovates the old cells, it especially endeavours to fill up this half-timbering raised unto monstrous and to arrange the entire empirical world there, i.e. the anthropomorphic world."¹⁵⁹ In the above text, the term ' anthropomorphic' is certainly not used in the sense of a primary education anthropomorphism. The actually produced science corresponds directly to the capacity of the human brain. It is not thus a

¹⁵³ *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 8, pp. 22,23; KSA, VII, 424.

¹⁵⁴ KSA, VII, 436.

¹⁵⁵ *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 24; KSA, VII, 445.

¹⁵⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Le gai savoir. Fragments posthumes*. Textes et variantes établis par G. Colli et M. Montinari. Traduits de l'allemand par Pierre Klossowski. Paris, Gallimard, 1967, p. 129.

¹⁵⁷ KSA, 1882-1884, p. 654.

¹⁵⁸ See : Lenneberg, *Biological Foundations of Language* (1967).

¹⁵⁹ Jean-Yves Pollock, 1997, *Langage et cognition. Introduction au programme minimaliste de la grammaire générative*, Paris, PUF



question of confusing this Nietzschean position with the contemporary epistemological relativism. Nietzsche's relativism - there is one - is strictly related to the physical constitution of the human being in general, and not with social determinations which would build scientific truth out of nothing, as some sociologists of sciences believe. This notion of the anthropomorphical character noticed by Nietzsche thus closely follows the achieved extension starting from the instinctive activity of the language which he noted. Before the logical *logos*, humankind knew and practised the word of the *muthos*. Myth does not know the principle of contradiction and the Nietzschean myth has the same particularity. Anyone may signify anything according to his proper qualities. As representing dream, nevertheless Apollo may be together rational and irrational in spite of his clarity and distinctness. Dionysus may be Zagreus. In fact, it is what the myth taught us. Zagreus was Dionysus 'name in Orphism, under of which influence he became the symbol of universal life. Zagreus was worshipped because he was dismembered by the Titans and came to life again; then he could be anywhere under the form of an element: air, water, earth and fire. Therefore, Dionysus is anywhere and anything. Through his two-phased intoxication, he could be under the effect of a fermented drink¹⁶⁰, or, on the contrary, under the sublime pleasure of music¹⁶¹. Nietzsche's intuition has been followed by the great studies of Greek religion: I am particularly thinking of Jane Harrison's works. The Nietzschean intuition is thus that rhetoric activity is the oldest activity of the brain; it would be also, according to Nietzsche, the same activity which continues tacitly still each day when we carry out the operations of our thought, even the most logical. Mental activity would be at work in the human language applying the laws of rhetoric, according to its capacity of expression and communication¹⁶². Thus, from the point of view of thought, the abstraction is finally only the product of systems of symbolic processes having nevertheless a metaphorical origin,

¹⁶⁰ *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 88; KSA, VII, 487.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct*, William Morrow and Company, 1994. *L'instinct du langage*, tr. par Marie-France Desjeux, Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 1999.



since it is: “a durable impression which was fixed and hardened in the memory”¹⁶³. And if the concepts are thus produced by metaphorical processes, consequently, for Nietzsche, science itself indirectly owes its existence to rhetoric: “To the construction of the concepts works originally, as we saw it, the language, and later also science”¹⁶⁴. Under these conditions, the natural laws are “simple relations of one thing to the other and to man”¹⁶⁵: for Nietzsche, they do nothing else but continue “the laws of feeling”¹⁶⁶. Here we need to explain our need for identity and for non contradiction! Nietzsche has approached the real work of language as being exerted according to the variety of individuals. On the one hand, the concepts are the work of language: philosophy is built-in through language, the phenomenon under which it appears. But, in addition, science is another system independent from the individual who receives the concepts which dominate him. Curiously, the illogical element of the metaphor lives in the language which then connects us in the bonds of logic¹⁶⁷: this seems to be a mysterious metamorphosis of language and thought. Thus it was in the heart of the original chaos of representations that logic was born, while the majority of them were vanished¹⁶⁸. Also Nietzsche asks: “What is properly 'logical' in the thought in images?”¹⁶⁹. The existence of the logical judgement is explained because it could surface, “while measuring with current and frequently checked chains”¹⁷⁰; and, without any doubt for Nietzsche, “even the same nervous

¹⁶³ *L'instinct du langage*, p. 262.

¹⁶⁴ KSA, VII, 487.

¹⁶⁵ See Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1903), New York, Meridian Books, 1955, p. 450: “In fig. 137 from a red-figured stamnos [note: Brit. Mus. Cat. E 439, pl. XV] in the British Museum we have the Thracian Dionysos drunk with wine, a brutal though still splendid savage; he dances in ecstasy brandishing the fawn he has rent asunder in his madness.”

¹⁶⁶ See Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena*, op. cit., p. 450-451: “In the second picture [note: Bibliothèque Nationale, Cat.576] (fig. 138), a masterpiece of decorative composition, we have Dionysos as the Athenian cared to know him. The strange mad Satyrs are twisted and contorted to make exquisite patterns, they clash their frenzied crotala and wave great vine branches. But in the midst of the revel the god himself stands erect. He holds no kantharos, only a great lyre. His head is thrown back in ecstasy; he is drunken, but with music, not with wine.”

¹⁶⁷ See : Sander L.Gilman., Carole Blair, David Parent, *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*, p. 20.

¹⁶⁸ *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 49; KSA, VII, 487.

¹⁶⁹ *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 88; KSA, I, 886.

¹⁷⁰ KSA, VII, 625.



activity reproduces the same image”¹⁷¹. But the strength of art in action “does not carry an interest equal to everything perceived”¹⁷²: it reinforces the principal features by forgetting the secondary ones. Conscious thought is for Nietzsche a process of representations which leads to abstraction by a long way. There are thus many stages; at first, “1. the force which produces the profusion of images; then, 2. the force which chooses the similar one and accentuates it”¹⁷³: “the analogue points out the analogue and is compared by this means”¹⁷⁴. The brain in its activity carries series of images useful for the development of the thought, and of which the understanding is the effective and rapid referee when it selects the similar images, which themselves still give rise to a profusion of images among which understanding selects again¹⁷⁵. By doing this, understanding distinguishes the Same and the Other, categories and names; it establishes headings according to the principle of its surface force of choice: if the eye attaches us to the forms, understanding obeys the “artistic force” which reigns on us¹⁷⁶. As Nietzsche well indicates, metaphor does not relate only to language nor thought, but still to **perception**. However, some researchers in Cognitive Science, currently study the metaphors of perception. I return to Lawrence E Mark’s essay (1996), “On perceptual metaphors”¹⁷⁷, which testifies that we had to wait until 1982 so that one could speak of “pictorial metaphor”¹⁷⁸: he quotes the work of J.M. Kennedy on the question. It is true that there can already have been an influence of the linguistic metaphor on the pictorial metaphor; but there are cases where colors and sounds are answered metaphors directly as in Rimbaud’ s Sonnet of the Vowels. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche asked: “With which title does the

¹⁷¹ KSA, VII, 625.

¹⁷² KSA, VII, 441.

¹⁷³ *Philosophy and Truth*, p.24 ; KSA, VII, 445.

¹⁷⁴ *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 45; KSA, VII, 475.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁶ *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 19; KSA, VII, 435.

¹⁷⁷ See : *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, *Figurative Language and Cognitive Science*, Vol.11, N° 1, 1996, pp. 39-66.

¹⁷⁸ J. M. Kennedy, “Metaphor in pictures”, *Perception*, 11, 589-605.



music in the mirror of mental imagery and concepts *appear*”¹⁷⁹. Also, after Schopenhauer, Nietzsche affirmed that, according to the concept of its essence, music is not will (as Schopenhauer thought), but “seems will”; so that according to the concept of its appearance, it had for it to do with the universal one. Nietzsche would not change his opinion, when, in the same spirit as Hanslick¹⁸⁰, he refused to see in music a semiotics of affects, even if, in *Dawn*, §142, he will admit that it can however be so for us who are listening to it as “the imitation of an imitation of feelings”¹⁸¹.

The inaccuracy of sight and hearing are at the basis of corresponding arts: “art rests on the inaccuracy of the sight. With the ear even inaccuracy in the rhythm, the temperament, etc. And on top rests again, art”¹⁸². Starting from metaphorical perception, we pass to art related to this perception and then only to thought, since “the images are original thoughts, i.e. surfaces of the things concentrated in the mirror of the eye”¹⁸³... just as understanding is itself a mirror¹⁸⁴. At this point in time, the philosopher comes who, as Nietzsche said, endeavours “to pose, in the place from the thought in images, a thought by concepts”¹⁸⁵. Men and women have the vocation to create forms and rhythms, this is why they believe in “being” and in “things”¹⁸⁶. By the difference of the rhythms, perceptible to human sense, number, time and space are given to the mental activity. By conceiving the human thought, Nietzsche saw a new form of reality appear. Thus bringing back all the human and material phenomena to the elements of feeling and memory, Nietzsche suddenly raised a fugitive assumption: and what if matter itself were endowed

¹⁷⁹ BT 6, 34.

¹⁸⁰ Eduard Hanslick, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen.. Ein Beitrag zur Revision der Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (1854). Neue durchgesehene Auflage J.A. Barth, Leipzig 1896.

¹⁸¹ *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 19; KSA, VII, 435.

¹⁸² *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 19; KSA, VII, 440.

¹⁸³ *Dawn*, § 121, p. 127.

¹⁸⁴ KSA, VII, 454.

¹⁸⁵ KSA, 1882-1884, p. 651: “Der Mensch glaubt an ‘Sein’ und an Dinge, weil er formen- und rhythmusbildendes Geschöpf ist.“

¹⁸⁶ KSA, VII, 469-471.



with feeling and memory? Mankind, in return, would have the privilege of knowing the essence of things: coming out of a dream, it would be able to see itself in a dream; since “*Der Mensch glaubt an ‘Sein’ und an Dinge, weil er formen- und rhythmusbildendes Geschöpf ist.*”¹⁸⁷

5. Conclusion: Metaphor as an effect of imitation

Thus, with the principle of the processes of symbolic sets of images and with thought, Nietzsche primarily saw a principle of similarity at work; the same attracting the same and allowing the comparison with what is different: identity and analogy are criterions of choice between the images of the mind. Whereas the current debates on the processes suitable for thought divide today the theorists into two camps, and Nietzsche’s position put him obviously in the camp of those who to-day believe that thought is governed by a principle of similarity among the ideas; while the other camp affirms, on the contrary, that what governs the unfolding of the mind is a whole of mental rules¹⁸⁸. Probably, both camps are right, since language and thought follow rules and then render possible the rigorous scientific activity. What Nietzsche tried to build up is much more than a theory of knowledge; it is a phenomenology of knowledge which would go down the last roots, further than the first metaphor, until the origin of any sign of life and its impression of pleasure or displeasure, very far in the genesis of the intellectual thought, to the emotional root from where the images are born long before the thoughts themselves. However, we should not omit that for Nietzsche the source of truth has also to do with moral and political constraints, in the sense that the community imposed the obligation “to tell the truth”. What will become later a scientific knowledge has a moral origin, thus it owes its birth to the obligation of truth imposed by the community. Admittedly, 'moral' means here, in fact, 'useful for society', or even 'what supports life'; however, for

¹⁸⁷ KSA, 1882-1884, p. 651.

¹⁸⁸ Steven A. Sloman et Lance J. Rips, *Similarity and Symbols in Human Thinking* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998; Ray Jackendoff, Paul Bloom, and Karen Wynn, *Language, Logic and Concepts*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999.



Nietzsche, this vital truth would turn an enemy to life, since Nietzsche noted: “truth kills”, and “it kills itself”¹⁸⁹.

Moreover, on the basis of a definition of knowledge like "measures on a scale", Nietzsche restores the ditch which seems to separate mankind from the universe that it wants to know. Because, whatever the adopted scale of measures, one does not know one's own scale. Therefore absolute objective knowledge is illusory according to Nietzsche, because the difference of measurements cannot be established without some fixed external reference which we miss. Consequently and logically, the model of any knowledge is no other than metaphor. However, the latter is justified by imitation and the subsequent assimilation. Thanks to this will to imitate and assimilate, at least it is not necessary to seek a proof of the existence of the external world, since the world essentially exists as real or as alien to the individuals who want (desperately or tragically ?) to assimilate it as to their own knowledge. Contemporary studies show that metaphor can be used as a model for structuring knowledge, often better than that of first-order logic. There are numerous scientific studies such as this one: *Cognition and the Symbolic Processes*, edited by Robert R. Hoffman and David S. Palermo¹⁹⁰. There is also the journal : *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* : in volume 10, 1995, Thomas Leddy wrote : “I argue [...] that not only do we understand the world in terms of conceptual metaphors but that fundamental constituents of our experienced world are metaphoric”. Nietzsche was led to explain reason on the ground of art. History and natural sciences, which are the product of reason in modern times, worked for Nietzsche as a tool against the way taken by reason itself, either directly in metaphysics or indirectly in science. Indeed, Nietzsche discovered an original scientific problem: the problem of ‘metalanguage’, according to which we meet the necessity to use ‘metalanguage’ in order to study a specific object. Under pain of being void, our study must take the object in another perspective than its own.

Thanks to Eliane Cuvelier for english assistance with this essay

¹⁸⁹ KSA, VII, 623.

¹⁹⁰ Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991.



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