

THE VIRTUALITY OF THE SPIRIT AS AN ONTOLOGICAL HORIZON: THE METAPHOR BETWEEN BEING AND POSSIBILITY IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF VALENTIN KANAWROW

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Abstract. The present paper explores the problem of the ontological status of the spirit from the perspective of the virtualistic metaphysics developed by Valentin Kanawrow. The main thesis is that the spirit cannot be adequately thought of as a substantial reality, but should be understood as a dynamic field of virtual possibilities that are actualized through symbolic and linguistic structures. In this context, metaphor is considered not simply as a rhetorical figure, but as an ontological mediator between the virtual and the actual. Through critical analysis, it is shown that virtualistic metaphysics offers a radical rethinking of ontology, transforming it into a theory of possibility and process.

Keywords: ontology; spirit; metaphor; virtuality; metaphysics; possibility; actuality

1. Introduction: The crisis of substantial ontology

The concept of spirit occupies a central place in the history of philosophy, but its ontological status remains problematic. In classical metaphysics, spirit is thought of as a substance – self-identical, transparent to itself, and possessing a stable essence. This line can be traced from Platonism to German idealism, where spirit reaches the form of an absolute. In contemporary philosophy, however, the substantial model of being is proving increasingly difficult to defend. The influence of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and poststructuralism leads to a radical rethinking of the categories of identity, presence, and essence. Being is thought of not as presence, but as process, difference, and openness. In this context, the need arises for a new ontology of spirit that would take into account its dynamism and irreducibility to static definitions. The topic of the “ontological horizons of spirit” implies precisely such a shift –

from essence to horizon, from substance to possibility. The main question that will guide the present text is the following: How can spirit be thought ontologically if it is not a substance but a field of possibilities?

2. From Potentiality to Virtuality: Rethinking the Possible

2.1. The Aristotelian Framework: δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in Metaphysics

Aristotle's classical metaphysics offers a conceptual apparatus for thinking about possibility through the distinction between δύναμις (potentiality) and ἐνέργεια (actuality). The potential exists as a possibility for realization, which finds its realization in the act (Aristotel, 2017, 2019). However, this scheme presupposes a teleological structure of being: the potential is oriented towards a predetermined actualization. The possibility is subordinated to reality as its goal.

This Aristotelian schema is not merely a logical distinction, but an ontological architecture that governs the very intelligibility of becoming. Potentiality is not an open field of indeterminacy, but rather a structured capacity that already "knows" its fulfillment. In this sense, δύναμις is always indexed to a telos, and ἐνέργεια represents not simply occurrence, but completion – an arrival at form. The movement from potentiality to actuality is therefore not creative in a radical sense, but rather explicative: it unfolds what is already inscribed in the being of the thing.

Such a model presupposes a strong correlation between essence and realization. The essence determines the horizon of possible actualizations, and every becoming is ultimately a passage toward the fulfillment of what the thing already is "in itself." This implies that possibility is ontologically secondary: it does not possess autonomy, but is defined by its relation to actuality. Even when Aristotle allows for contingency, this contingency remains framed within a structured order of forms and ends.

From a contemporary perspective, this raises a crucial problem: if potentiality is always oriented toward a prefigured actualization, can it truly account for novelty? Or does it merely provide a conceptual language for the transition from latency to manifestation within an already constituted ontological order? In this sense, the Aristotelian framework appears to limit the scope of possibility to a regulated domain, in which difference is always subordinated to identity, and becoming is ultimately a movement toward self-coincidence.

This limitation becomes especially visible when we attempt to think processes that exceed formal determination – processes in which the outcome is not contained in advance within the structure of the possible. It is precisely here that the need arises to move beyond the potentialist model toward a different conception of possibility – one that does not presuppose a pre-given horizon of realization, but allows for the emergence of the new as such.

2.2. Limitations of the Potentialist Model

Within contemporary philosophy, this model proves to be insufficient for several reasons: it assumes a fixed essence that is realized; it reduces possibility

to a function of the actual; it does not allow for radical novelty. Thus, potentiality remains dependent on the already given, and does not open up space for true ontological innovation.

This insufficiency can be articulated more precisely as a structural limitation of the potentialist paradigm. First, the model presupposes that every possibility is grounded in a prior identity – an essence that functions as the measure of its realizations. In this way, potentiality is not genuinely open, but is circumscribed by a logic of prefiguration. The “possible” is always what can become actual under the conditions dictated by the essence of the entity. This renders possibility derivative rather than generative.

Second, the subordination of potentiality to actuality introduces a hierarchical asymmetry: actuality becomes the criterion of reality, while potentiality is reduced to a deficient mode of being. What is not actual is not fully real – it is merely “on the way” to reality. This ontological hierarchy limits the capacity to think of the non-actual as possessing its own mode of existence. As a result, the potential cannot resist its own actualization; it is always already destined to be fulfilled.

Third, and most importantly, the potentialist model fails to account for processes of genuine emergence. If the actual is already contained in the potential, then no real novelty can arise – only the repetition or unfolding of what is already implicitly given. This leads to a fundamentally conservative ontology, in which transformation is reduced to actualization, and difference is subordinated to identity.

From a critical perspective, this reveals a deeper metaphysical commitment: the privileging of identity over difference, of form over process, of completion over openness. In this sense, the Aristotelian model can be seen as an ontology of closure, even when it allows for movement and change. The movement it describes is always a movement within limits that are already fixed.

Contemporary philosophical developments – particularly in post-Kantian, post-Hegelian, and post-structuralist thought – challenge precisely this closure. They insist on the irreducibility of difference, the productivity of becoming, and the necessity of thinking possibility beyond the horizon of pre-given forms. In this context, the potentialist model appears not only insufficient, but restrictive: it blocks the conceptualization of processes that are not governed by teleology, identity, or predetermined ends.

Therefore, the critique of potentiality is not simply a rejection of Aristotle, but a transformation of the very problem of possibility. It opens the way toward a conception of the possible that is no longer subordinate to the actual, but is instead constitutive of reality itself. This shift prepares the conceptual ground for the introduction of the virtual as a distinct ontological dimension.

2.3. The Virtual as a Distinct Mode of Being

Valentin Kanawrow’s virtualistic metaphysics offers an alternative by introducing the concept of virtual. The virtual is not simply an unmanifested potentiality, but a

real mode of being that is not exhausted in its actualizations. It is characterized by the following: real, but not actual; multiple and indeterminate; not exhausted in its realizations. Therefore, the actual is not a complete realization of the virtual, but only one of its possible actualizations. Such an understanding of the virtual implies that difference cannot be exhausted by the concept and its ability to distinguish. In this sense, Gilles Deleuze insists that there are differences that remain outside conceptual determination and appear as conditions for the very multiplicity of the existent¹.

This reconfiguration marks a decisive break with the potentialist model. Unlike potentiality, which is defined in relation to a future actualization, the virtual possesses a form of ontological autonomy. It does not “await” realization, nor does it derive its being from the act. Rather, it constitutes a structured field of differential relations that persist regardless of their actualizations. The virtual is not a lack of actuality, but a surplus of reality.

In this sense, the virtual introduces a new modality of being – one that cannot be captured within the classical opposition between possibility and actuality. It is not a mere possibility, because it is real; but it is not actual, because it is not fully determined or present. This paradoxical status allows us to think of reality as inherently open, as exceeding any of its concrete manifestations.

The consequence of this shift is profound: actuality is no longer the fulfillment of possibility, but a selective, partial, and contingent actualization of a richer virtual field. What becomes actual is not what was “destined” to be realized, but what emerges through processes of differentiation, mediation, and selection. This implies that every actualization leaves something unactualized – not as a lack, but as a reserve of further differentiation.

In Boyan Manchev’s article “The Possibility That Desires (for a Dynamic Ontology)” we read the following: “(...) the most accurate description of the “substance” – modalization will be the dynamics of irreducible singularities” – we have “the effect[s] of an intensity of matter itself, inseparable from the matter of desire, which is a desire to transform, to alter matter: this desire carries out the transfer – the ontological metaphor! – of the desire of matter” (Manchev 2017, p. 13). This completely changes the thinking of Aristotle’s *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια*: a resistance of matter implies a counter-potentiality that is not exhausted in actualization, but on the contrary – it intensifies. From the perspective of a forceful virtuality in virtualist metaphysics, this means: the virtual, despite its devirtualization in the direction of experience (in Valentin Kanawrow’s terms), retains its power of resistance and thus generates new transcendentalizations (or, to put it another way, devirtualizations) through functionally reliable mediators.

A similar understanding of the virtual also finds philosophical resonance in Deleuze’s concept of *difference* as a productive force that precedes identity and does not obey the logic of representation (Deleuze 1994). For Deleuze, the virtual

is not simply a reserve of possibilities, but a structured field of differential relations that are actualized through processes of singularization.

In this sense, actualization is not the realization of a predetermined form, but the production of novelty through differentiation. The virtual is not “translated” into the actual, but is differentiated into it. This implies a radical rethinking of the very idea of possibility: the possible no longer precedes the actual as its counterpart, but is thought of as an internal dynamic of the real.

At this point, the transition from a theory of modality to a transformed ontology becomes unavoidable. If the virtual is real and constitutive, then ontology itself must be redefined – not as a theory of what is, but as a theory of how reality is structured through processes of virtual differentiation and actualization. It is precisely this shift that is systematically developed in Valentin Kanawrow’s virtualistic metaphysics.

3. Valentin Kanawrow’s Virtualistic Metaphysics

3.1. Basic Principles

Virtualistic metaphysics can be understood as an attempt to rethink ontology through the concept of virtuality. It opposes both substantialism and reductionist models of reality. Its basic principles include the primacy of possibility over actuality, the dynamic nature of being, the irreducibility of the virtual to the real, and the processuality of existence.

What distinguishes this project from earlier ontological frameworks is that it does not simply invert the hierarchy between potentiality and actuality, but redefines the very terms of this distinction. As shown in the previous section, the concept of the virtual displaces the classical schema by introducing a mode of being that is neither reducible to possibility nor to actuality. Virtualistic metaphysics therefore operates with a transformed ontology of modality, in which the real is structured as a field of virtual differentiation.

In this sense, it can be interpreted as a continuation and transformation of critical philosophy, in which the transcendental is not a static structure, but a field of variations. Kanawrow himself defines this project as “virtualistic transcendentalism,” in which the conditions of possibility are dynamic and subject to transformation (Kanawrow, 2003).

It is essential to emphasize here that if in Kant the transcendental functions as a universal and necessary structure of experience, then in Kanawrow this structure is “virtualized” – it loses its fixity and becomes a field of possible transcendental configurations. This means that the very condition of possibility becomes conditional, mobile, and open to transformation.

This shift has far-reaching consequences. The transcendental is no longer a fixed horizon that guarantees the unity of experience, but a dynamic field that itself undergoes processes of variation and reconfiguration. In other words, the conditions of possibility are no longer external to what they condition – they are immanent

to the processes they make possible. This immanence transforms ontology into a theory of processes rather than substances, of relations rather than entities.

3.2. The Virtual as a Structure of Reality

For Kanawrow, the virtual is not secondary to the real, but is its condition for possibility. Reality is structured as a field of virtual potentialities that are actualized in various forms. There is a basis for a transcendental critique of traditional metaphysics (and the corresponding “derivatively” posited ontology)². This means that reality is not complete – it is open to the future and contains more than it actually manifests.

However, this position also introduces a critical tension that must be explicitly addressed. If the virtual is the condition of reality, then it risks assuming the role traditionally occupied by substance or by the transcendental ground. In other words, does virtualistic metaphysics truly overcome foundationalism, or does it reintroduce it in a transformed form?

Kanawrow’s answer, as suggested in the cited passage², consists in refusing any direct ontologization of the virtual. The virtual cannot be posited as a stable ground without betraying its very nature. It must be approached only through mediators – through processes of actualization, schematization, and symbolic articulation. This preserves the critical dimension of the project: the virtual is not a “thing,” but a structural condition that can only be accessed indirectly.

In this sense, virtualistic metaphysics radicalizes the transcendental critique. It not only questions the givenness of objects, but also destabilizes the conditions of their givenness. The transcendental itself becomes dynamic, and thus cannot function as an ultimate foundation. Instead, it operates as a shifting field of conditions that are themselves subject to transformation.

Yet this radicalization comes at a price. If the virtual cannot be directly ontologized, how can it be thought at all without collapsing into indeterminacy? And if all access to it is mediated, does this not introduce a form of epistemic limitation that echoes the Kantian distinction between phenomena and noumena?

The difference, however, lies in the status of mediation. In virtualistic metaphysics, mediation is not a barrier, but a productive process. It is through mediators that the virtual becomes effective, that it enters into the field of experience. This means that mediation is not secondary, but constitutive – it is the very mode in which the virtual operates.

Thus, reality appears not as a stable domain of objects, but as a network of mediated actualizations of a virtual field. This redefines ontology as a study of these processes of mediation, rather than of substances or essences.

3.3. Spirit as Virtual Reality

In this context, spirit can be thought of as a privileged field of virtuality. It is not a substance, but a process of continuous actualization of meanings. Spirit is not given, but happens; it is not identical with itself, but is difference; it is not closed, but it is a horizon. Thus, spirit turns out to be not a “thing”, but a mode of being, characterized by openness and productivity.

This reconceptualization of spirit follows directly from the transformation of ontology outlined above. If reality itself is structured as a virtual field, then spirit cannot be understood as a separate domain or as a higher substance. Rather, it must be conceived as a specific mode of virtual organization – one in which meaning, language, and symbolic structures play a central role.

Spirit, in this sense, is not an entity, but a dynamic configuration of relations. It emerges through processes of articulation, interpretation, and transformation. Every act of understanding, every symbolic operation, every metaphorical transfer can be seen as an event of actualization within this virtual field. Spirit is therefore inseparable from its expressions – not because it is reducible to them, but because it exists only through them.

This implies a shift from a substantial to a performative ontology of spirit. Spirit does not possess properties; it produces them. It is not defined by what it is, but by what it does – by its capacity to generate meaning, to transform structures, to open new horizons of possibility.

At the same time, spirit retains a virtual dimension that exceeds all its actualizations. No expression exhausts it; no concept fully captures it. This excess is not a deficiency, but the very condition of its productivity. It is because spirit is virtual that it can continuously generate new forms of meaning.

Thus, spirit appears as a site of ongoing differentiation – a field in which the virtual and the actual are constantly intertwined. It is here that the ontological, the transcendental, and the linguistic converge, making spirit a key locus for understanding the dynamics of virtualistic metaphysics as a whole.

4. Metaphor as an Ontological Operator

4.1. From Rhetoric to Ontology

Traditionally, metaphor is considered as a linguistic figure that adorns speech. In the hermeneutic and phenomenological tradition, however, it acquires a deeper status – as a mechanism of meaning-making. This text proposes to take one more step: to think of metaphor as an ontological operator in transcendental philosophy.

Such a shift becomes necessary once we accept the ontological consequences of virtualistic metaphysics. If reality is structured as a field of virtual differentiation that can only become effective through processes of mediation and actualization, then the question arises: **what are the operators of this mediation?** Through what kind of processes does the virtual pass into actuality without being reduced to it?

In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant shows how the imagination functions as a mediator between reason and sensibility, producing figures that are not simply images, but conditions for a unity of meaning – analogy works in favor of indirect hypotyposia (symbols – according to Blumenberg these are “absolute metaphors”): “All perceptions that are placed under a priori concepts are therefore either schemes

or symbols; the former contain direct, and the latter indirect images of the concept” (Kant, 1993, p. 249). This indirectness nevertheless requires a “placing under,” which is itself a metaphor. In this sense, metaphor can be thought of as an extension of this productive function of the imagination.

In *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, Blumenberg introduces the concept of “absolute metaphors” as figures that cannot be reduced to conceptual determination, but instead function as conditions for the possibility of thought itself. Such metaphors do not merely illustrate concepts; they precede and orient them, providing a pre-conceptual horizon within which thinking becomes possible (Blumenberg, 2015, 13, pp. 13 – 17).

From this perspective, metaphor is not external to cognition, but constitutive of it. It operates at the level where conceptual language reaches its limits and must rely on figurative articulation to sustain intelligibility.

Within a virtualistic framework, this insight can be radicalized: absolute metaphors can be understood as operators that mediate between the virtual and the actual, articulating structures that cannot be fully captured conceptually, but nevertheless condition the emergence of meaning.

However, within a virtualistic framework, this Kantian model must be radicalized. If, as argued in section 3, the transcendental itself is virtualized and becomes a dynamic field of possible configurations, then schematism can no longer be understood as a fixed rule-governed mediation. Instead, mediation itself becomes variable, processual, and generative. It is precisely here that metaphor emerges – not as a derivative linguistic ornament, but as a **generalized schema of mediation**, capable of operating across heterogeneous domains.

Thus, metaphor can be thought of as a “schema without a concept” – as a dynamic operation that does not subsume intuitions under pre-given categories, but produces new relations between heterogeneous registers of being. It does not simply connect already constituted domains; it participates in their co-constitution. In this sense, metaphor is not secondary to ontology, but internal to its very functioning.

4.2. Metaphor as a Transfer of Being

Metaphor functions by transferring meaning between different domains. This transfer is not simply linguistic, but ontological: it creates new possibilities for being. When we say “time is passing,” we are not simply using an image, but we are constituting a certain way of understanding time. Therefore, metaphor does not describe, but creates reality; it does not reflect, but structures being; it is not secondary, but constitutive.

From the perspective of virtualistic metaphysics, this “transfer” must be understood more precisely as a **process of mediation between virtual structures and their actualization**. The metaphor does not merely map one domain onto another; it opens a passage through which a virtual configuration becomes actual in a specific form. In this sense, metaphor functions as an

operator that selects, organizes, and stabilizes certain differential relations from the virtual field.

This implies that metaphor is not arbitrary. It is constrained – not by fixed rules, but by the structure of the virtual itself. A metaphor “works” when it resonates with a real virtual configuration, when it successfully mediates a field of relations that can be actualized in experience. In this sense, metaphor has an ontological efficacy: it does not impose meaning from the outside, but draws it out from the virtual.

At the same time, every metaphor is selective. It actualizes certain aspects of the virtual while leaving others unexpressed. This selectivity introduces both productivity and limitation. On the one hand, it enables the emergence of new meanings; on the other, it risks stabilizing them into fixed forms, thereby obscuring the underlying virtual multiplicity.

This ambivalence reveals the double nature of metaphor: it is both generative and reductive, both opening and closing. It produces ontological novelty, but also risks sedimenting it into conceptual structures that may conceal their own virtual origin. In this sense, metaphor participates in the same tension that characterizes virtualistic metaphysics as a whole: the tension between openness and stabilization, between differentiation and form.

4.3. Metaphor as an Actualization of the Virtual

In the context of virtualistic metaphysics, metaphor can be thought of as a mechanism through which the virtual is actualized. It activates new semantic possibilities, connects different ontological levels, and produces new forms of reality. Thus, metaphor acts as a mediator between the virtual and the actual, between possibility and realization.

If we take seriously the distinction developed in section 2 between potentiality and virtuality, then metaphor cannot be understood as the realization of a pre-existing meaning. It does not actualize a potential that was already determined in advance. Rather, it participates in a process of differentiation, in which the virtual is structured in a new way through its actualization.

If we use Deleuze’s language, we could say that metaphor functions as an operator of differentiation: it does not simply convey meaning, but produces difference. Every metaphor is an event of actualization, in which the virtual field is configured in a specific manner. This means that metaphor is not a representation of being, but an event within being.

From this perspective, language is no longer secondary to ontology. It becomes one of the primary sites in which the virtual is actualized. The linguistic does not merely express the real – it participates in its production. This aligns with the idea, developed in section 3.3, that spirit is not a substance, but a process of continuous actualization of meaning.

Thus, metaphor can be understood as a key operator of spirit. It is through metaphorical processes that the virtual field of spirit becomes actual, that meanings are generated, transformed, and reconfigured. Every metaphor is

therefore an event of spirit – a moment in which the virtual horizon is opened in a new way.

In this sense, metaphor completes the ontological framework outlined in the previous sections. It provides the missing link between virtuality and actuality, between structure and process, between ontology and language. Without metaphor, the virtual would remain inaccessible; without the virtual, metaphor would lose its ontological force.

5. Spirit as a Topology of Possibility

If spirit is virtual, it cannot be thought of as a substance, but as a topology – a network of relations and possibilities. In a Heideggerian perspective, we could say “Signs always indicate primarily “wherein” [*worin*] one lives, where one’s concern dwells, what sort of involvement [*Bewandtnis*] there is with something.” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 111)

However, if we take into account the results of sections 3 and 4, this topology cannot be understood as a static network. It must be conceived as a **dynamically structured field of mediated relations**, in which the connections themselves are continuously reconfigured through processes of actualization. In this sense, the topology of spirit is not given once and for all – it is constantly produced.

This production is not random. It follows certain patterns of articulation, and it is precisely here that metaphor acquires a decisive role. If metaphor functions as an operator of mediation between virtual and actual, then it also functions as an operator of **topological reconfiguration**. Every metaphor establishes a new relation, a new proximity, a new pathway within the field of spirit.

Thus, topology is not merely a description of the structure of spirit – it is the result of ongoing metaphorical operations. The “space” of spirit is not pre-existing; it is generated through processes of articulation that continuously reshape its internal relations.

5.1. Characteristics of This Topology

Openness – spirit is never complete; dynamism – it is realized in processes; multiplicity – there is no single form of spirit; relationality – spirit exists through connections.

These characteristics can be further specified if we understand them through the lens of virtualistic mediation. Openness means not simply incompleteness, but the presence of an irreducible virtual excess that cannot be exhausted by any actualization. Dynamism refers not only to change, but to continuous processes of differentiation, in which new structures emerge without being predetermined. Multiplicity is not a plurality of already given forms, but a field of singularizations that arise through actualization. Relationality is not an external linkage between entities, but the very mode of being of spirit.

Metaphor plays a constitutive role in all these dimensions. It is through metaphor that openness becomes articulated, that dynamism becomes structured,

that multiplicity becomes intelligible, and that relations are established. In this sense, metaphor is not an external tool used within the topology of spirit – it is one of the mechanisms through which this topology exists.

Each metaphor introduces a local reconfiguration: it connects previously unrelated domains, establishes new correspondences, and creates pathways that did not exist before. These local operations accumulate and interact, producing a complex and evolving network. Thus, the topology of spirit is not only relational, but also **historically and processually sedimented** through metaphorical acts.

5.2. Language as a Space of the Spirit

Language plays a key role in the actualization of the spirit. It is not just a means of expression, but a space in which the spirit is realized. Metaphor as a linguistic mechanism becomes the main tool for deploying the virtual structures of the spirit. Language plays a key role in the actualization of the spirit. It is not just a means of expression, but a space in which the spirit is realized.

If we integrate this with the previous sections, language must be understood not as a neutral medium, but as a **field of virtual-actual mediation**. It is within language that the virtual structures of spirit find their articulation, not as fixed meanings, but as dynamic configurations that are constantly reworked.

In this context, metaphor emerges as a privileged operator within language. It is through metaphor that language exceeds its own established structures and opens new horizons of meaning. Metaphor disrupts fixed semantic relations and introduces new ones, thereby expanding the topology of spirit.

In this sense, language can be thought of as a transcendental field, but not in the Kantian sense of a fixed a priori structure, but as a dynamic system of possible articulations. It does not precede experience as a completed form, but is constituted together with it, constantly rearranging the boundaries of the thinkable.

Thus, language is not simply where spirit is expressed – it is where spirit **happens**. And metaphor is one of the primary mechanisms through which this happening takes place.

6. Critical Perspectives

6.1. The Problem of Reality

If the virtual has an ontological status, the question arises: how do we distinguish the real from the possible? Doesn't this lead to a blurring of the boundaries of being? Valentin Kanawrow metaphysizes the form and thus thinks from the perspective of possibility the actualizations passing through the mediators (schemes) as "portals" and leading to the field of experience – "the genesis of transcendental phenomena at the *Apriori-Aposteriori* portal is spontaneous" (Kanawrow, 2020, p. 60). Also:

"The need for a clearer topologizing, precision and characterization of the pure form of thinking leads to the specification of its virtual metaphysical existence. The fixation of this moment gives in this case an importance that fits into the worldview

of metaphysics. The power of thinking enables its passage through the a priori-a posteriori portal (= transcendentalization) and its rationalizing work in the field of experience (= transcendental synthesis of a concept and a sensory form of a phenomenon).” (Kanawrow 2021)

The virtual itself is forbidden to be ontologized directly without a mediator and thus to freeze in a being that grounds the scope of regional ontologies. This guarantees a pure critical version of metaphysics from the perspective of virtuality. Can thinking of the potential be thinking of the potential in the actual? Darin Tenev gives an interesting answer to this question:

“(…) how does concretization occur if there is non-predetermination of the action, but at the same time the figurative [3] opens the potential as potential in the actual? Here an answer allows us to give a concept introduced by Kristiyan Enchev and combining the Derridian “stricture” with what Boyan Manchev calls “illustration” [“the body of the concept, its impossibility” – it “tries to give a name to the plastic mode of an open concept”, it “is nothing other than the immanent difference of the concept” (Manchev 2007: 6)]. We are talking about the concept of “illustructure” [...]. Illustructure is a concept that shows through the play of imagination and reason how something external to the transcendental finds itself in a position that structures the transcendental itself (i.e. the transcendental of the transcendental), thus singularly limiting each time the very capacity of the transcendental (which, as it becomes clear, will not be one), while at the same time allowing for an illustration that exemplifies and at the same time breaks the concept.” (Tenev, 2017, pp. 26 – 27).

If we now take into account the role of metaphor as a mediator, this problem becomes even more acute. If metaphor is one of the operators through which the virtual is actualized, then the boundary between ontology and rhetoric becomes unstable. Does this not risk transforming ontology itself into a function of figurative operations?

The answer depends on how we understand mediation. If mediation is seen as arbitrary, then indeed the distinction between real and possible collapses into a play of representations. However, as argued in section 4, metaphor is not arbitrary – it is constrained by the structure of the virtual. It does not invent reality ex nihilo, but articulates real virtual configurations.

Thus, the distinction between real and possible is not abolished, but transformed. The real is not opposed to the possible; it includes the virtual as its condition. What distinguishes the real from mere possibility is not actuality, but **efficacy** – the capacity of a virtual configuration to be actualized through mediation.

In this sense, metaphor does not dissolve reality into language; it reveals that reality itself is accessible only through mediated actualizations. The risk is therefore not relativism, but rather the **opacity of mediation**: the difficulty of distinguishing between productive and non-productive metaphorical articulations.

This brings us to the necessity of a critical criterion – not external to the virtual, but immanent to its processes of actualization.

6.2. Risk of Relativism

The plurality of actualizations can lead to the loss of criteria for truth. If every actualization is valid, how can we think of truth? Can we think of the truth of virtual being as a metaphor? Metaphor becomes a condition of possibility as considered at a meta-level, but it “descends” and as a mediator, plays the role of a schema. We have a movement within the transcendental itself, which means transference, metaphor (this is a strong hypothesis and engaging with it carries a certain risk). We have a metaphysics without a subject, the virtual occupies a higher position and governs the entire construction of virtualistic metaphysics. Relativization goes to critical ontologies, but this requires a higher regulation that goes beyond multiplicity and guarantees the unity of the edifice.

This risk becomes particularly visible once metaphor is granted ontological status. If metaphor produces reality, then it seems that any metaphorical articulation could claim validity. This would lead to a radical relativization of truth, where the distinction between true and false collapses into a plurality of equally possible interpretations.

However, such a conclusion would be premature. As already suggested, not all metaphors are equally productive. Some metaphors open new fields of intelligibility, while others remain superficial or even distortive. The question, therefore, is not whether metaphor produces reality, but **how to distinguish between different regimes of metaphorical production.**

Here Kant’s concept of regulative ideas can acquire a new function: not as a guarantee of objective truth, but as a principle of orientation in a field of multiple actualizations. Truth in this context is not conformity, but consistency of the processes of actualization. From a Deleuzean perspective, this would mean thinking of truth as immanent to the processes of differentiation themselves, rather than as an external criterion.

In this sense, metaphor does not abolish truth, but transforms it. Truth becomes a function of the coherence, productivity, and transformative capacity of metaphorical articulations. A “true” metaphor is not one that corresponds to a pre-given reality, but one that successfully mediates a virtual structure and enables its productive actualization.

Thus, the risk of relativism can be addressed not by returning to fixed foundations, but by developing an **immanent criterion of evaluation**, grounded in the dynamics of virtual-actual mediation.

7. Conclusion

Virtualistic metaphysics makes it possible to rethink the ontological status of spirit beyond the limits of substantial ontology. Rather than conceiving spirit as a self-identical entity, it can be understood as a dynamic field of virtual relations that are continuously actualized through processes of mediation. In this framework,

ontology is no longer concerned with what is, but with how reality is structured as a field of differential possibilities.

The shift from potentiality to virtuality proves decisive in this respect. While the Aristotelian model subordinates possibility to actuality within a teleological framework, the concept of the virtual introduces a mode of being that is both real and irreducible to its actualizations. This reconfiguration allows for a conception of reality as inherently open, processual, and capable of generating genuine novelty.

Within such an ontological horizon, metaphor acquires a fundamentally new status. It can no longer be treated as a merely rhetorical or secondary linguistic device. Instead, it functions as an ontological operator: a mechanism of mediation through which virtual structures are actualized. Metaphor does not simply represent reality, but participates in its production by articulating relations that would otherwise remain virtual. In this sense, it provides the operative link between virtuality and actuality, between structure and process.

This insight also transforms the understanding of spirit. Spirit emerges not as a substance, but as a topology of mediated relations – a field in which meaning is continuously generated, transformed, and reconfigured. Language, and particularly metaphor, plays a central role in this process, not as an external medium of expression, but as a site of ontological actualization. Spirit thus appears as an event rather than an entity, as a process of ongoing differentiation rather than a fixed identity.

At the same time, this framework raises important critical questions. If the virtual is accessible only through mediation, and if metaphor plays a constitutive role in this mediation, then the distinction between ontology and rhetoric becomes unstable. The risk of relativism or conceptual inflation cannot be ignored. However, this risk does not invalidate the project; rather, it calls for the development of immanent criteria capable of distinguishing between productive and non-productive actualizations. In this context, truth can no longer be understood as correspondence, but as the consistency and efficacy of processes of differentiation.

Ultimately, virtualistic metaphysics can be seen as an attempt to bring together two major philosophical trajectories: the transcendental inquiry into the conditions of possibility and the philosophy of difference. From the former, it retains the critical question of how experience is possible; from the latter, it adopts the primacy of difference, process, and becoming. The result is an ontology that does not merely describe what is given, but accounts for the dynamic processes through which reality – and spirit in particular – comes into being.

NOTES

1. "The question is: are there other natural blockages besides those of discrete extension and finite comprehension? Let us assume a concept with indefinite comprehension (virtually infinite). However far one pursues that comprehension, one can always think that it subsumes perfectly identical objects. By contrast with the actual infinite, where

the concept is sufficient by right to distinguish its object from every other object, in this case the concept can pursue its comprehension indefinitely, always subsuming a plurality of objects which is itself indefinite. Here again, the concept is the Same – indefinitely the same – for objects which are distinct. We must therefore recognise the existence of non-conceptual differences between these objects. It is Kant who best indicates the correlation between objects endowed with only an indefinite specification, and purely spatio-temporal or oppositional, non-conceptual determinations (the paradox of symmetrical objects). However, these determinations are precisely only the figures of repetition: space and time are themselves repetitive milieux; and real opposition is not a maximum of difference but a minimum of repetition – a repetition reduced to two, echoing and returning on itself; a repetition which has found the means to define itself. Repetition thus appears as difference without a concept, repetition which escapes indefinitely continued conceptual difference. It expresses a power peculiar to the existent, a stubbornness of the existent in intuition, which resists.” (Deleuze 1994, p. 13).

2. “The procedure of ontologizing the initially given objects of arbitrary nature mystifies and fetishizes both sensibility and imagination, as well as metaphysical intuition as cognitive productivity, by attributing to them the functions of direct representation or positing ontology that are not specific to them, taking away their constructive potentialities and their reflexive extensions, i.e. the possibility of relating and dialogizing with beings that are characteristically different from them “by nature”, building their mediatory models by examining the possibility of their cognitive relevance and involvement in human experience and, therefore, constructing those metaphysical-cognitive conditions that additionally reveal the possibility of their givenness as objects that are relevant to knowledge and the human world” (Kanawrow, 2003, p. 41).
3. “First of all, the figurative is the complex of rhetorical figures, or the con-figuration of figures, characteristic of a given work or group of works. Second, the figurative is a more general rhetorical dimension, related to linguistic shifts and changes and their effects. In this sense, “figurative” is used as that which allows the undermining of the secure positions that the narrative (which wants to hide that it is figurative) (attempts to) assign. In this aspect, the word is often used by Dimitar Kamburov, but before him by Hillis Miller and others.” (quote from personal correspondence with Darin Tenev).

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