

As You Like It: Michel Meyer's Metaphor

By: [Stephen R. Yarbrough](#)

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Article:

Which comes first, the literal or the figurative meaning of a statement? Much of twentieth-century thought was directed toward answering this question. On its answer much seemed to depend: Does the world stabilize the play of language or does the play of language constitute our worlds? Is the figurative a deviation from the literal; or is the literal a deviation from the figurative?¹

Michel Meyer's answer to these questions is that they are faulty questions, for 'in truth, there is no first element, thus no linguistic deviation from whichever is chosen, the literal or the figurative.'² That so many thinkers have insisted that there must be a linguistic difference between the figurative and the literal is merely the consequence of their acceptance of what Meyer calls 'propositionalism: From a propositional perspective, statements—as propositions or judgments—are considered as the basic units of thought and language, with exclusive attention put on truth-values and propositional connections.'³

One of the forms of propositionalism, Meyer calls 'representationalism.' Here, the meaning of a statement is fixed by its 'outside' referent, so that two different statements will 'mean' the same thing, and thus be capable of substituting for one another, if they both have the same referent. For instance, 'Henri Bergson believed that pure duration was pure heterogeneity' and 'The author of *Time and Free Will* thought that when you attribute homogeneity to duration, you also introduce space' are identical to the extent that their referents are identical, and therefore their elements are substitutable and their meanings identical. Accordingly, interpretation becomes a matter of substitution. Meyer calls this 'the Xerox theory of meaning',⁴ for taken to its extreme the perfect interpretation of a statement can only be its identical repetition.

The other form of propositionalism is 'anti-referentialism,' the view propagated by Nietzsche and common among postmodern thinkers. Here, the structure of a linguistic system determines the meaning of a statement. When this view is taken to its logical limit, as in the work of Derrida, although meaning is still reference, signs refer ultimately only to other signs, so that the objects of discourse, far from grounding utterances, can themselves be established only by a *coup de force*.⁵ Accordingly, interpretation becomes impossible, for interpretative play is the only possibility.

Meyer argues that whereas both the referential and anti-referential forms of propositionalism isolate statements from their historical, rhetorical situations, only when we consider statements disconnected from any concrete context can we believe that their meaning derives from the formal relationships of the sentence's parts and the relationship of the whole statement to an exterior reality. But discourse is never isolated from context, from the dynamics of an historically situated exchange between and among interlocutors. Therefore, instead of continuing to accept the traditional propositionalist view of meaning, Meyer offers what he calls a 'problematological view.'⁶ This view, says Meyer, is 'based on the idea that language use is a response and therefore implies the presence, implicit or not, of an underlying problem in the mind of the locutor and the minds of the addressees.'⁷ When language use is understood this way, the *meaning* of an utterance is found neither by reference to the supposed linguistic system said to generate the signs used and their order, nor by its

reference to the objects of the utterance—things outside the system of language in the world to which the utterance refers—rather, the meaning lies in the questions or problems to which the utterance is an answer or solution. For instance, if I were to say, 'My coffee isn't hot,' what I intend the statement to mean depends upon when, where, and for whom I intend the statement to be the answer to a question. The meaning would be different if I had said it to the waitress walking toward my table with a carafe than if I had said it to the mother of the little girl who brushed my elbow as I was attempting to drink, and it means something entirely different as I write to you my reader for whom I offer the statement merely as an illustration.

The fact that meaning lies in the difference between answers and questions suggests that the function of linguistic form is to assist in this differentiation. Meyer tells us that 'questioning is *useful* on the sole condition that it differs from answering, and that is only possible if we know what is considered to be an answer and how it is different from what is considered to be a question.'⁸ Grammatical form directs our attention toward what for an utterance is in question, for what its answer is in answer to. Because when I speak or write I intend my interlocutor to refer my utterance to a specific question or questions, I must make the difference between questions and answers more or less implicit or explicit, and for that I use grammatical indicators. Even so, as Meyer insists, the degree of grammaticalization our speech requires depends upon the degree of context—of the situation's problematics—that the interlocutors share.

We need grammatical indicators because we seldom share exactly the same discursive conditions with our interlocutors. That is, even when we are face to face, we seldom are engaged in exactly the same problematics, and therefore we require something besides context to be able to make explicit the problematic differentiations. Grammar is a mechanism for formally marking these differences, and the context we assume or do not assume we share with our interlocutors determines which forms we use and the extent to which we need to use them. For example, a topic of conversation with my wife for the last few days has been that we need to prepare the garden soil for planting as soon as the weather turns warm. My saying to her 'It's nice outside!' will serve to indicate to her that today we can till the garden. In contrast, if I had been thinking about this outdoor chore but had not discussed it with my wife, I would have had to say much more and have used interrogative forms and causal indicators before she could have understood my intentions.

Meyer calls this inverse relationship between form and context the 'law of complementarity'⁹ or 'the law of symbolic weakening': 'The more explicit a problem is, the less figurative the language used to deal with it and vice versa.'¹⁰ When someone speaks or writes he has a question in mind. Sometimes the context alone is explicit enough to allow us to differentiate questions from answers; sometimes the speaker must make explicit the problematological differences through form. In other words, 'The richer the context, the more form will deliteralize itself, the context serving as a problematological and figurative mediator. The less context is able to be invoked, the greater the grammaticalization of the meaning (that is, of the problematic) will be.'¹¹ Thus, 'It's nice outside,' in the context of my wife's and my ongoing conversation, literally *means* 'Let's till the garden today' for my wife for whom along with me the question of the weather has been a question of gardening. Of course, for someone else, 'It's nice outside' can mean literally something entirely different, such as for my daughter who was wondering if she needed to take an umbrella to school today.

The literal can always be opened to multiple interpretations, and so opened to figurative meanings. And a response to a statement as figurative will come as a surprise to one not cognizant of the problematics that make it figurative—as when my daughter raises her eyebrows quizzically when my wife replies to 'It's nice outside' by saying 'I put the gas for the tiller in the garage.' Figurality, says Meyer, 'appears when discourse is susceptible of saying something else, that is, of referring to the implicit, of upsetting the expectation (i.e., by suggesting a query) that the grammatical constituents lead one to believe. This is achieved by displacing that expectation onto another response.'¹² In order to have appropriately interpreted the intention of my wife's answer, then, my daughter would have had to take it figuratively and inquire about the context of my wife's utterance; she would have had to ask my wife to make explicit the question in her answer, or she would have had to infer the answer to that question from what followed in my wife's and my speech and action. The only

difference between the figurative and the literal is that 'literality means there are no surprises; we have here an answer which poses no question and which expresses what was in question as ceasing to be questionable.'¹³

As the above example suggests, at least *two* meanings can be attributed to any utterance since every utterance gives rise to at least two question-answer relationships. Meyer says that 'by answering a definite question or problem, a statement raises another question which, in fact, *it also answers*.'¹⁴ While there is 'no primacy of the literal or, inversely, of the figurative,' that is, while neither the literal nor the figurative is a linguistic deviation from the other 'because all discourse can mean something other than what it says,'¹⁵ we tend to call the first meaning we arrive at the literal, while the other we call figurative; the one implies the other, but the one cannot substitute for the other. That is, we could not do without one or the other without changing their meanings, without requiring the answering of more or different questions. If I had said to my wife, 'Let's till the garden today,' she would have had to ask explicitly, 'Is it nice outside?'

As Meyer has explained, these problematic *s* make figuration the 'identifying feature of argumentation' because argumentation always 'contains a request addressed to the audience to make a move that the author does not want to or cannot directly make himself.'¹⁶ The author's statement is 'left implicit, although it is implied in the explicit.'¹⁷ A well-known example of this feature is Marc Antony's oration at Caesar's funeral in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Antony's repetition of 'But Brutus says he is ambitious, / And Brutus is an honorable man' (III, ii, 88-89), interspersed among examples that imply Caesar was not ambitious, requests the audience to infer that Brutus is anything but an honorable man. Antony's repeated assertion of Brutus' honor in this context is, as Meyer puts it, 'a literal expression of what is non-literally said'; it is an answer 'that presents itself as a question' in such a way that the audience is 'explicitly *asked* to respond to what is said and to look for another answer which answers to the question under consideration.'¹⁸ Yet, what makes Antony's statement figurative is not this second answer (that Brutus is not an honorable man) but that this second answer refers back to a second question. The real question, then, is not 'is Brutus honorable' but something else. What the real question is, what the actual problem is that Antony wants the Romans to answer, is never made explicit but is made evident to Shakespeare's audience by Antony's audience's response—the question of who is fit to rule Rome.

Antony's funeral oration nicely illustrates the fact that in figurative language the meanings of statements as answers cannot be 'explicated in terms of the specific questions they appear to answer; rather, more primary questions are implied.'¹⁹ This is especially true of tropes and, most especially, of metaphor. Metaphors are a special case because, Meyer argues, 'literally, they are meaningless or recondite, so one must assume they have another significance.'²⁰ We can take Meyer's observation in one of two ways. In the one sense, we may take Meyer to be saying that metaphor has no literal meaning but has a *figurative* meaning. In another way, we may take him to be saying that metaphor has no meaning *at all* but performs something other than a meaning-making function. He claims that 'we cannot associate a second statement with metaphors which would express the original and literal meaning of the metaphorical statement, since there is no such meaning, unless they have already become *culturally fixed* stereotypes.'²¹ By this Meyer must mean that metaphorical statements cannot be paraphrased (as it may be said that I just paraphrased him)—that the same cannot be said in different words. Here he agrees with Paul Ricoeur that 'the substitution view utterly fails in the case of metaphors,'²² if by substitution one means that two statements mean the same thing if they have an identical outside reference such that one could substitute for the other.

Yet, in Meyer's problematological view of interpretation, '*understanding* is a substitution process.'²³ However, understanding requires a substitution not of the statement's referents but of the question to which it is answer. If metaphor is literally meaningless, it is not because a metaphorical statement is an answer for which there is no question, but because a metaphorical statement is not an answer at all. In fact, it poses a question. Just as a rhetorical question is figuratively not a question but an answer in question form so, too, a metaphor is a rhetorical answer. And figuratively it is not an answer but a question in answer form, one in which the actual answer for which it is the question is to be inferred from the context.

How, then, is metaphor different from any other trope or figurative expression? When Antony says ironically, 'But Brutus is an honorable man,' the statement *does* make immediate sense as an answer to the literal question 'Is Brutus honorable?' Yet Antony's audience does not accept it as the answer because its context makes it questionable, leading them toward the opposite answer (Brutus is not honorable), an answer which, in turn, 'refers back to a second question' (Who is fit to rule Rome?) which must be answered 'Not Brutus (or his fellow senatorial conspirators).' When, however, Shakespeare has Jaques say metaphorically in *As You Like It*, 'All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players' (II, vii, 139-40), that statement *cannot* make sense as an answer to the literal question 'Is the world a stage?' Subsequently, whereas in the example from *Julius Caesar* we can substitute (and indeed must if we are to 'get' the figure) the question, 'Who is fit to rule Rome?' for 'Is Brutus honorable?', we can find no question to substitute for 'Is the world a stage?' None. Something else is happening when we interpret metaphor.

We can, of course, interpret metaphor as we would any other figure of speech, and we have been encouraged to at least since Aristotle. In the *Rhetoric*, he says that metaphors work exactly like similes: 'A simile is also a metaphor; for there is little difference: when the poet says, "He rushed as a lion," it is a simile, but "The lion rushed [with *lion* referring to a man]" would be a metaphor; since both are brave, he used a metaphor [i.e., a simile] and spoke of Achilles as a lion... [Similes] should be brought in like metaphors; for they *are* metaphors differing in the form of expression.'" When we regard them as similes, we understand metaphors in terms of a concept we already comprehend.

In his wonderful book *Philosophy and the Passions*, Meyer suggests that our tendency to reduce the uncommon and strange to comfortable familiarity is not rational in the usual sense but passionate. Our deepest passion, one might say, is to maintain the stability of our world, the 'continuity of the real.'²⁵ The primary process of maintaining this continuity Meyer calls 'rhetoricization,' and 'passion is essential to this rhetorical process, which permits the real to maintain its stability despite diverse changes in how it [reality] is considered.'²⁶ Passion is thus 'a kind of reaction to a situation,'²⁷ but this reaction takes two forms, or, more accurately, manifests itself in two modes.

In the first mode, passion is 'a glance upon the real which annuls all problematics, placing us in the domain of pre-constructed answers.'²⁸ Here, if I understand Meyer correctly, passion functions through emotion to reaffirm our current sense of the world. If 'literality means there are no surprises,'²⁹ then figurality is always a consequence of, or presents us with, a surprise (depending upon whether we are the figure maker or interpreter), an event we do not reasonably expect—that is, a figure expresses or induces a reaction to a problem, and such reactions are emotional. Thus passions are in the first instance 'dispositions to diverse emotions'³⁰ which are corporal 'gut reactions,' as it were, to the unexpected, reactions which differ depending, in part, upon what we are passionate for. When the situation throws at us something surprising, thus throwing the situation—and ourselves who expected differently—into question, passion is our answer in the form of emotion as 'an answer imposed upon what is problematic, that either explains it or responds to it: through evasion, flight, survey, passion can situate the person in question outside.'³¹ Thus, when the lion escapes from his cage, we respond emotionally in a way already determined by our passion, whether we are the child fearfully staring, petrified; the mother frantically rushing to shield her child; or the zookeeper dutifully stepping forward to press the lion's retreat. Our passion 'deals with the problematic as though it were resolved,'³² as if the solution to the problem had been already worked out.

The same is true of the interpreter of the enigmatic statement. The passionate interpreter of 'Achilleus is a lion' does not in the first instance view the statement as a problematological answer. Rather, he takes the question of how Achilleus is a lion as a rhetorical question, confirming whatever understanding of Achilleus he already has through a 'mechanism of inference... [which] consists of concentrating on an aspect which can make a passion into an obsession that constantly confirms one's point of view, and which projects it upon all other problems.'³³ Accordingly, the problem of the statement's meaning 'is resolved in advance, such that there is no question except a rhetorical one.'³⁴

According to Meyer, the rhetoricization of the problematic statement follows a 'logic of substitution':

All rhetorical figures work this way: "Richard is a lion," the classic example of the metaphor, which signifies that Richard is courageous, because he, *x*, like *y* (the lions), is courageous (A); we suppress the properties that differentiate him from lions, like B, C, and D, and maintain this one property, A, and thus make an equivalence between *y* and A. This means that we annul the subject-predicate distinction: "to be *y*," or "to be *a y*" is the same thing, even if we know that the lion reflects courage, one of its principle attributes."

Through this process the metaphor is reduced to a meaning we already understand. In effect we 're-literalize'³⁶ it so that 'Richard is a lion' literally means 'Richard is courageous' much as in the above-mentioned discussion with my wife 'It's nice outside' came to mean literally 'Let's till the garden today.' Of course, 'Richard is a lion,' through this process, could just as easily be interpreted as 'Richard is vicious' or 'Richard is a male who lets the females do the work' or 'Richard is powerful,' or any of a number of other plausible substitutions, depending upon how the interpreter had read the context and judged Richard prior to encountering the metaphorical statement.

In this way, reductive interpretation, or rhetoricization, preserves our old understandings by subordinating novel experiences to them. Passion in this mode is, as Meyer says, 'the instrument of suppression of all problematics.'³⁷ We find this passionate process everywhere in literary criticism where in order to make texts make sense critics read them figuratively; the critic must, as Coleridge says, suspend his disbelief. Readers of fiction must, in other words, read passionately because, as Meyer insists, 'we cannot take literally what is apparently contradictory.'³⁸ We find this process also in philosophy—for instance in the figure of Plato's Socrates, whose daemon is said to prevent him from saying an untruth, thus forcing Plato's readers to take metaphorically Socrates' mythical fabrications and logical contradictions. And, of course, we find the process everywhere in theology, where it is best expressed by St. Augustine in his dictum that we must believe first before we can understand.

In this mode of passionate expression and interpretation, confronted by the unexpected event or statement, emotion accepts the situation as already interpreted; it annuls 'the reality of the real and make[s] of it but an *a priori* emanation or, in other words, what everyone would like to see rather than what is really there.'³⁹ When we respond to the unexpected through fear or anger or joy or compassion we preserve our understanding of the situation and orient ourselves within it in a way that preserves our sense of ourselves. We render the unexpected statement a rhetorical question, a question for which we already have an answer. However, sometimes this move is either impossible or unwanted, and passion drives us beyond emotion into a different mode of passionality. Meyer says, 'We go from *emotion*, which situates people in duration' to this different mode of passion 'when the subject can no longer assume the situation and the problems raised thereby without having to reflect expressly upon those problems.'⁴⁰ In this passionately reflective mode, our reaction does not adapt to but, in contrast, 'modifies the context, alters it' because if it did not we would have to reject 'that which in this context conditions the impossibility of resolution.'⁴¹ It is here, in this mode, I suggest, where we locate the function and mechanism of metaphor *as* metaphor rather than the rhetoricized metaphor as simile.

Whereas Meyer clearly delineates the mechanism by which we rhetoricize metaphor, he says little about this second mode, a mode which is less a distinct modality than an extreme on a continuum of what he calls 'the mechanism of the passions, which goes from stimulus to corporal response, right up to intellectual and affective response that passions engender at the end of the process.'⁴² According to Meyer, 'These passions operate according to the order of the answer, which can go from the repression of the question that is to be resolved (and thus of itself as answer) to its thematization in the most passionate interrogations about the self that humanity can encounter, at certain crucial moments of its existence.'⁴³ At this far end of the continuum, emotion is not so much surpassed as it ceases to preserve the past and reconfigures the present to establish the future. Confronted not merely by the unexpected but by the inexplicable, we move from regarding a statement as a rhetorical question—which is, in fact, an answer to a question already obtained through our understanding

of the situation—to regarding it as a rhetorical answer, an answer which is a question we must ask about the situation that gave rise to it. This second question we must answer if we are to understand the 'first answer *as an answer*.

A first step toward understanding this second mode of passionality and its way of interpreting metaphor is to look more closely at the first, emotional, mode. Aristotle may be useful here. He defines anger as 'desire, accompanied by distress, for conspicuous retaliation because of a slight that was directed, without justification, against oneself or those near to one.'⁴⁴ Note not only the force of desire thwarted by an unexpected event but also its interpretation in terms of an ethical component expressed by the term 'slight'—the actual *cause* of the emotion. Our understanding of things and events is not merely ontological in the metaphysical sense but ethical. We have certain ethical expectations about everything, person, and event we encounter, and these accepted ethical relations determine what things *are* for us, as well as how we expect them to interact with us, and how we interact with them. The causal relations a thing or event exhibits *matter* to the degree they fulfill the ethical relations that determine what the thing or event is to us. Thus, the coffee cup on my desk is a coffee cup because it fulfills certain expectations I have for it—what I expect it to be able to do and what I can do with it and to it. This is why, I believe, Meyer can describe the mechanism of inference in the rhetoricization process as 'circular[.]... whereby conclusions are hidden behind the principles that contain them.'⁴⁵ In such a process, whatever questions we have about anything are 'resolved in advance, such that there is no question except a rhetorical one.'⁴⁶ So, for example, if we were to debate about whether my cup or yours is the better coffee cup, the issues are resolved in advance because the ethical relations that determine for us what a coffee cup is in the first place are the criteria for our judgment (e.g., my cup retains heat better than yours).

The same goes for people, of course. What I can do to and with others depends upon the ethical relations I accept that determine who they are for me. Thus, what I say or do, and how I say or do it, to or with the president of my university is quite different from what I will say or do, and how I will say or do it, to or with one of my students—and, of course, my expectations about their speech and action differ in the same way. Accordingly, the same thing spoken by one may well seem a 'slight' to me while it may seem perfectly proper when spoken by the other. Emotion registers a certain kind of broken expectation—an ethical expectation. And an emotional reaction, such as anger, reasserts our prior understanding of the ethical relationships governing the situation and, in fact, often will function to restore the situation to re-conform it to those expectations. Of course, these ethical relationships that determine what things are for us change all the time: when my colleague marries his student, when I eat the candy bar and throw away the wrapper, when we cut down trees and transform them into lumber and then into houses, when the hair on the sofa becomes evidence for a murder investigation, and so on. Such 'ethical shifts' reconfigure for us the 'properties' of things that matter. As Meyer would put it, these shifts determine what is questionable and what is 'out of the question.'

Sometimes these shifts affect single objects or events; sometimes the effects are global. In order for Antony's audience at Caesar's funeral to accept his figurally induced question of 'Who is fit to rule Rome?', they had to completely reconfigure their apperception of the ethical relations that defined the Roman state, the status of individuals within the state, and so forth. When Oedipus recognizes that he has killed Laius and that Laius was his father, in the same instant who Oedipus *is* changes—the husband becomes son, the father becomes sibling, the brother-in-law becomes nephew, the king becomes criminal. In that same instant, what Oedipus can do, and with and to whom he can do it, changes utterly; what was once rational for him to think is now irrational. I have argued elsewhere that the 'paradigm shifts' in scientific disciplines Thomas Kuhn describes in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* are, in fact, caused by ethical shifts of this same kind.⁴⁷

This sort of 'ethical shift' is, I believe, what we are asked to do when we treat a metaphor as a 'rhetorical answer.' A metaphor such as 'All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players' asks us to make 'a passionate interrogation about the self,' that is, about the self's ethical relations to, in this case, the world and everyone in it. In the same way, 'Achilleus is a lion' asks us nothing about the 'properties' Achilleus shares with lions but asks us to regard Achilleus ethically just as we regard lions. Similarly, when Goneril says of Lear, 'Old fools are babes again' (*King Lear* 1.3.19-20), it is a *literal* answer to the question 'What should be our

ethical relationship to Lear now?' What we must do in the case of metaphor is not much different from what we do when, having torn open the candy wrapper and eaten the candy, we cease to regard the wrapper as a protective covering for our food and now regard it as trash. As far as our ethical relations toward it are concerned; what was a wrapper is now trash; what was Achilles is now lion; what was old fool is now babe. Metaphor induces us to take up a whole new set of ethical relationships toward the metaphorically defined object. When the government of the United States started talking about a 'war on terror,' it authorized itself to treat certain individuals not as alleged criminals having the rights of the accused but as 'enemy combatants' without such rights. When Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians refers to the Church as 'the body of Christ,' it is a rhetorical answer to the question of how the individual Christian is ethically related to other members of the Church. When Friedrich Kekule switched from the 'sausage formula' to the 'ring' formula for benzene, the metaphor induced scientists to consider a whole new set of relationships among benzene's elements and so a whole new set of questions about what could be done to and with benzene.

Metaphor, like any other strange event, can be read in one of two ways, depending upon the tenor of our passion. In the first passionate modality we react emotionally to the unexpected, reaffirming our sense of reality, that is, the ethical relations we already believe to apply to the situation. The second modality is not passive and preservative, like the first, but active and creative, requiring an act of will to perform the 'ethical shift' necessary to transform our sense of the way things are. The ethical shift, in this regard, is analogous to our perception of graphic illusions, such as Jastrow's famous duck-rabbit sketch (where we can, at will, switch from seeing a rabbit to seeing a duck) or a stereogram (where if one stares intently in the right focus, an image will appear out of the apparently chaotic graphic in perfect clarity). When we perceive such illustrations in different ways with astonishingly different results, nothing in the graphic itself changes except how our perception relates its various elements to one another.

Such phenomena do not suggest, on the one hand, that our consciousness constitutes its objects: try as one may, one cannot see a frog in the duck-rabbit sketch. This is true also for metaphor. So that the metaphor makes sense, the relations which metaphor calls us to put into focus must already be there in the context if the ethical shift is to make them manifest. 'All the world's a stage' makes perfect sense in *As You Like It*, whereas 'All the world's a restaurant,' while literally just as (un)intelligible and false, would have been utterly meaningless. On the other hand, those who see a duck will never see the rabbit unless they want to and try to, and those who see a world of souls will never see a world of roles unless they want to and try to. It is the difference between seeing a rhetorical question and seeing a rhetorical answer.

If I am reading Meyer correctly, then, from a problematological perspective, although your world may not be of your own making, it may be, indeed, as you like it.

Notes:

1. Nick Turnbull has considered these issues in terms of the 'rhetorical turn' and the debates in the last century over the apparently 'diametrically opposed' relationship between the 'agency of rhetoric and the necessity of logic.' Turnbull, 'Rhetorical Agency as a Property of Questioning,' *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 37(3) (2004): 209. Turnbull argues that Meyer resolves the dilemma by reformulating 'the foundational and the human in terms of questioning' and establishing a 'rhetorical anthropology' through a problematological analysis which 'founds the right of the other to throw any answer back into question' so that, along with this freedom of questioning, 'we have a responsibility, as questioner and respondent in turn, to justify ourselves' (ibid., 221). According to Turnbull, 'This places ethical limits, if not "necessary limits," on the agency of discourse' (ibid.). I agree almost entirely with Turnbull, but the inference to be drawn from my argument in the present essay is that the ethical is not so much an 'outside' constraint upon discourse generated by the fact of our agency, but that our agency is our ability to shift our ethical apperception, that our ethical apperception determines our passions (and so what will concern us), and that our passion determines the problematics of our world (the questions we ask and the answers we give).

2. Michel Meyer, *Of Problematology: Philosophy, Science and Language*, trans. David Jamison with Alan Hart (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 241.

3. Michel Meyer, *Rhetoric, Language and Reason* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 103.
4. Michel Meyer, *Meaning and Reading: A Philosophical Essay on Language and Literature* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1983), 11.
5. Meyer, *Problematology*, 240.
6. For a good general introduction to Meyer's problematology, see James L. Golden and David L. Jamison, 'Meyer's Theory of Problematology,' *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 44(3) (1990): 329-51.
7. Meyer, *Rhetoric*, 103.
8. Meyer, *Problematology*, 214.
9. Meyer, *Rhetoric*, 77.
10. Meyer, *Meaning*, 6.
11. Meyer, *Rhetoric*, 76-77.
12. *Ibid.*, 75.
13. Meyer, *Problematology*, 242.
14. Meyer, *Meaning*, 75.
15. Meyer, *Rhetoric*, 75-76.
16. Meyer, *Meaning*, 75.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, 77.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3.4. 1-2; 1406b.
25. Michel Meyer, *Philosophy and the Passions: Toward a History of Human Nature*, trans. Robert F. Barsky (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 216.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*, 220.
28. *Ibid.*, 221.
29. Meyer, *Problematology*, 242.
30. Meyer, *Passions*, 239.
31. *Ibid.*, 220.
32. *Ibid.*, 225.
33. *Ibid.*, 231.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*, 233.
36. *Ibid.*, 213.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, 221.
40. *Ibid.*, 220.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, 222.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1.2.1; 1378a.
45. Meyer, *Passions*, 231.
46. *Ibid.*
47. See Stephen R. Yarbrough, *Inventive Intercourse: From Rhetorical Conflict to the Ethical Creation of Novel Truth* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006), especially chapters 5 and 6.

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