

# **Aristotle and the Question of Metaphor**

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## Abstract

This doctoral dissertation aims to give a comprehensive and contextual account of Aristotle's theory of metaphor. The dissertation is organized around the central claim that Aristotle's definition of metaphor in Chapter 22 of the *Poetics*, as well as his discussion of it in Book III of the *Rhetoric*, commit him to what I call a *vertical* theory of metaphor, rather than to a *horizontal* one. Horizontal theories of metaphor assert that 'metaphor' is a word that has been transferred from a literal to a figurative sense; vertical theories of metaphor, on the other hand, assert that 'metaphor' is the transference of a word from one thing to another thing.

In addition to the introduction and conclusion, the dissertation itself has five chapters. The first chapter sketches out the historical context within which the vertical character of Aristotle's theory of metaphor becomes meaningful, both by (a) giving a rough outline of Plato's critical appraisal of rhetoric and poetry in the *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, *Ion*, and *Republic*, and then (b) showing how Aristotle's own *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* should be read as a faithful attempt to reform both activities in accordance with the criteria laid down by Plato in these dialogues. The second and third chapters elaborate the main thesis and show how Aristotle's texts support it, by painstakingly reconstructing the relevant passages of the *Poetics*, *Rhetoric*, *On Interpretation*, *Categories* and *On Sophistical Refutations*, and resolving a number of interpretive disputes that these passages raise in the secondary literature. Finally, the fourth and fifth chapters together pursue the philosophical implications of the thesis that I elaborate in the first three, and resolve some perceived contradictions between Aristotle's theory of metaphor in the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, his prohibition against the use of metaphors in the *Posterior Analytics*, and his own use of similes and analogical comparisons in the dialectical discussions found in the former text, the *De Anima* and the later stages of his argument in the *Metaphysics*.

In many ways, the most philosophically noteworthy insight uncovered by my dissertation is the basic consideration that, for Aristotle, all metaphors involve a statement of similarity between two or more things – specifically, they involve a statement of what I call *secondary* resemblance, which inheres to different degrees of imperfection among things that are presumed to be substantially different, as opposed to the primary and perfect similarities that inhere among things of the same kind. The major, hitherto unnoticed consequence I draw from this insight is that it is ultimately the philosopher, as the one who best knows these secondary similarities, who is implicitly singled out in Aristotle's treatises on rhetoric and poetry as being both the ideal poet and the ideal orator, at least to the extent that Aristotle holds the use of metaphor to be a necessary condition for the mastery of both pursuits. This further underscores what I argue in the first chapter is the inherently philosophical character of the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*, and shows the extent to which they demand to be read in connection with, rather than in isolation from, the more 'central' themes of Aristotle's philosophical system.

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## **Introduction: Aristotle and the Question of Metaphor**

### **1.1 General Introduction**

This doctoral thesis argues that Aristotle's definition of metaphor in *Poetics* 22 commits him to a vertical theory of metaphor, which concerns the relationship between words and things, rather than to a horizontal theory, which concerns the literal and figurative senses of individual words.

In arguing that Aristotle's theory of metaphor is a vertical rather than a horizontal one, this thesis aims to fulfill three primary objectives.

(1) The first objective is to highlight the continuity of presuppositions underlying Aristotle's views regarding poetry and rhetoric, on the one hand, and those that underlie his teacher Plato's on the other. As we shall see, Aristotle's discussions of metaphor are mostly concentrated in the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*, and they offer a unique perspective from which to consider the Platonic heritage of his teachings about what each pursuit is in general, what its essential function is, and what kind of knowledge is requisite to its mastery. If, as I argue, Aristotle's general treatment of rhetoric and poetry must be seen as a faithful response to the views expressed in a number of Platonic dialogues (*Ion*, *Republic*, *Gorgias*, and *Phaedrus*), then the vertical character of his theory of metaphor in particular must also be placed in the context of this response in order to become fully intelligible. This is because, on my account, the vertical character of Aristotle's theory of metaphor is inherently connected to his effort to Platonize the fields of rhetoric and poetry by yoking them to the philosophical pursuit of goodness and truth, in accordance with the guidelines laid down by Plato in the aforementioned dialogues.

(2) The second objective is to resolve the apparent contradictions that exist between (a) Aristotle's rhetorical and poetic theories, (b) his philosophy of science, and (c) his own discursive practice vis-à-vis the use of metaphors. To be precise, one of these apparent contradictions is propositional in character, while the other is performative. In the former case, there seems to be a lack of consistency between the different statements Aristotle makes in different texts about the theoretical value of metaphorical expressions: on the one hand he extolls their use in the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*, yet on the other he prohibits it in the *Topics* and *Posterior Analytics*. In the latter case, too, there is evidently a discrepancy between the aforementioned prohibition against the use of metaphors in scientific argumentation, and the liberal use Aristotle himself makes of similes and comparisons, which according to his definition in *Poetics* 22 are in fact metaphors. Ultimately, I argue that Aristotle's theory of metaphor is consistent, and that both of these contradictions are therefore only apparent ones, even if they do underscore a genuine complexity in his overall position regarding metaphors and their place in various kinds of theoretical discussion. For reasons that will only become apparent in what follows, the distinction between vertical and horizontal theories of metaphor is crucial to the resolution of this dilemma.

(3) The third and final objective is to determine what place, if any, Aristotle's theory of metaphor has in the contemporary philosophical debate concerning metaphors and their importance to human knowledge and its genesis. The first thing to be noted here is that the long history of this debate properly begins with Aristotle, who is the first thinker in the western tradition to advance an explicit account of what a metaphor is and how it functions. As will be shown, some recent commentators have mischaracterized

this account as being identical to those subsequently elaborated by classical rhetorical theorists such as Cicero and Quintilian, and partly on the basis of this premise have concluded that Aristotle's theory of metaphor is incompatible with most modern theories of the 20th and 21st centuries. Yet as I will show, the theories of Cicero, Quintilian and other classical rhetorical theorists are horizontal theories *à la lettre*, in that they consider metaphor to be a word that has been transferred from a literal to a figurative meaning. Based on the subtle but crucial distinction between horizontal and vertical theories of metaphor, I thus differentiate these classical positions from that of Aristotle, and thereby show that the aforementioned conclusion, according to which Aristotle's theory of metaphor is incompatible with contemporary theories, is based on at least one inaccurate premise.

Of the three aforementioned goals, the first two are short-term ones that will be fulfilled in the course of what follows. The third, however, is a more long-term goal for which this dissertation as a whole is a preparatory step. As will soon become apparent, simply arriving at a clear understanding of Aristotle's own theory of metaphor, its historical context, and its philosophical implications is no mean task; attempting in addition to this to compare it to its modern counterparts would be a massive undertaking, too large for a single dissertation. To the extent that a meaningful comparison of contemporary theories and that of the Stagirite is not a feasible goal for this dissertation, I will permit myself in what follows merely to outline the contours of the modern philosophical debate concerning metaphor, and then return to this general outline in the conclusion, once I have placed Aristotle's views in context and pursued their implications in detail. In so doing, I will offer some preliminary indications of what is at

stake in determining whether and to what extent Aristotle's theory has any insight to contribute to current philosophical discussions on the topic, but the work of verifying these preliminary indications will have to be deferred for future research.

## **1.2 Metaphor as a Contemporary Philosophical Question: Interaction or Similarity?**

Perhaps the most direct way of showing what is at stake in determining Aristotle's place in contemporary debates about metaphor is to begin by outlining the presuppositions of those who claim, either explicitly or implicitly, that Aristotle's theory has *no* place in this debate. Doing so requires an account of what since the 1960's has been called the *interaction theory of metaphor*, for it is subsequent to the development of this theory that some commentators and theorists have deemed Aristotle's original views to be outdated.

The notion of the interaction metaphor was first suggested indirectly by I.A. Richards in 1936, then taken up and developed in an explicit theory by Max Black in the 1960's, after which time research in what is now called metaphor studies began growing precipitously to its present state.<sup>1</sup> Most generally, as we shall see, proponents of the interaction theory of metaphor hold that it is the only kind of metaphor that can be of any interest to philosophical discussions, because it is impossible to translate by means of literal paraphrase. In order to explain the significance of this position and its context, it

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<sup>1</sup> Currently, metaphor is a widely debated topic in many fields of contemporary philosophy, and is therefore considered to be quite fashionable. Yet, as noted by literary critic Wayne Booth, there was hardly any mention of it in mainstream philosophical debate before the latter half of the 20th century. According to Booth, although '[t]here were no conferences on metaphor, ever, in any culture, until [i.e., the 20th century] was already middle-aged', '[e]xplicit discussions of something called metaphor have multiplied astronomically in the past fifty years [...]' "Metaphor as Rhetoric: The Problem of Evaluation", *Critical Inquiry* 5 (1978), p. 49. In what follows, all references will appear in footnotes with a complete bibliographical entry on the first citation, and subsequently will be given by means of the author's last name, the title (in some cases, a shortened title) and page number only. The works of Aristotle in particular will be referred to throughout according to the traditional Bekker pagination; in the case of the *Rhetoric* in particular, the Bekker pagination is divided into numbered sections rather than numbered lines, as in most

will be helpful to dig a little deeper into the history of ideas before looking at the views of Richards and Black in detail.

Writing in 1873, Friedrich Nietzsche affirms that ‘when we talk about trees, colors, snow, and flowers, we believe we know something about the things themselves, and yet we only possess metaphors of the things, and these metaphors do not in the least correspond to the original essentials.’<sup>2</sup> Speculation on the essential natures of things, in other words, seems for Nietzsche to be a matter of mere metaphors, which suggests the possibility that the philosophical search for the ultimate, underlying principles of things is driven primarily by linguistic confusion arising from the improper use of words. In the continental philosophical tradition, a similar suggestion emerges more recently in the thought of Jacques Derrida (1971), who likewise contends that metaphysical thinking is dominated *a tergo* by metaphorical language, and in particular by a special kind of metaphor called the *catechresis*.<sup>3</sup> Derrida’s thesis, elaborated with respect to the philosophical theorization of metaphor in “White Mythology,” points to the inherently circular character of the concept of metaphor in particular, insofar as this concept itself is the product of metaphysical assumptions about language and its relation to the world. This latter point is also made more cryptically by Martin Heidegger (1957), who asserts that ‘[t]he metaphorical exists only within metaphysics.’<sup>4</sup> Thus if the distinction between

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<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies in Their Extramoral Sense (1873)”, trans. Maximilian A. Mügge, in eds. R. Grimm & C. Molina y Vedia, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Philosophical Writings* (New York: Continuum, 1995), p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> Derrida develops this theme in “White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy,” arguing that traditional philosophical concepts may be properly characterized as what 19th century rhetorical theorist Pierre Fontannier calls *catechreses*: that is, metaphors whose status as metaphors has been effaced or forgotten in time. See J. Derrida, “White Mythology”, in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 250-55. Cf. P. Fontannier, *Les Figures du Discourse* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977) p 213.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, trans. R. Lilly (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), “Lecture Six”, p. 48. Silvana Borutti enlarges on Heidegger’s remark by noting that ‘la métaphore est une

the metaphoric and the non-metaphoric is a metaphysical invention, and metaphysics itself is dominated by metaphorical language, then there is reason to suspect, for Derrida, that the philosophical theorization of metaphor is just an instance of using one kind of metaphor to explain another. I will return to this point below.

What is crucial to see for the moment is that the notion according to which metaphysics is the result of confusion caused by language and, in particular, by metaphorical language, is at the historical origins of the Anglo-American traditions known as analytic philosophy and ordinary language philosophy as well. To substantiate this latter point, we may briefly consider the theory of meaning that emerges in the wake of an influential philosophical movement in the early 20th century, which has hitherto come to be known as logical positivism. As characterized by A.J. Ayer in 1936, the theory of meaning presupposed by positivism is based on what may be called a principle of verification. Ayer explains ‘the criterion of verifiability’ as follows: ‘[w]e say that a statement is factually significant to any given person, if, and only if, he knows how to verify the proposition that it purports to express – that is, if he knows what observations would lead him, under certain conditions, to accept the proposition as being true, or reject it as being false.’<sup>5</sup> Lacking such verifiability, Ayer continues, a given statement ‘may be emotionally significant to [i.e., the speaker]; but it is not literally significant.’<sup>6</sup> Thus, the verificationist theory of meaning posits that all meaningful statements must be

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invention de la philosophie,’ and consequently that ‘l’on peut parler de « métaphorique » seulement à l’intérieure des langues métaphysiques et représentatives. Autrement dit, chaque théorie de la métaphore signale une perspective philosophique [...]’. See “La métaphore et les philosophes, quelques réflexions sur l’invention philosophique de la métaphore”. *Recherches sur la philosophie et le langage 9: La Métaphore* (Cahier du groupe de recherches sur la philosophie et le langage: Département de philosophie, Université des Sciences Sociales de Grenoble, 1988), p. 173.

<sup>5</sup> A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1967), p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

analyzable into either (a) logical tautologies, which are analytical statements concerning the *a priori* relations among ideas; or (b) empirical statements, which are at least potentially verifiable by reference to the world of observed fact.<sup>7</sup>

For the purposes of the present discussion, we can draw two basic consequences from this verificationist theory of meaning: (1) firstly, that most metaphysical statements, to the extent that they are not analyzable into either (a) or (b) above, are fundamentally meaningless<sup>8</sup>, and that most metaphysical problems can therefore be explained away as *pseudo-problems* arising entirely from the unwitting misuse of language; and (2) secondly, that metaphorical expressions, if they have any meaning at all, derive this meaning from the literal statements for which they are seen to be substitutions. To the extent that a metaphor can be seen to replace a literal statement about the world, and can accordingly be paraphrased in terms of such a statement, it possesses what is called ‘cognitive’ content; to the extent that it cannot be cashed out in this way, it lacks properly

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<sup>7</sup> This characterization of positivism has more recently been called into question by Michael Friedman. Friedman argues convincingly that, although this verificationist theory of meaning may have been presupposed by the logical positivists in their attempts to account for the foundations of contemporary science, it was originally intended more a necessary methodological presupposition than an explicit dogma intended to reform philosophical thinking. Cf. *Reconsidering Logical Positivism* (New York: Cambridge, 1999), pp. xiv-v. Even if Friedman is correct in arguing that logical positivism should not be reduced to the verificationist theory of meaning, the fact that this is indeed how positivism was received by many in the Anglo-American world is important to the discussion that follows, insofar as the growth of interest in the question of metaphor evidently begins around the 1930’s in response to this reception.

<sup>8</sup> Ayer accordingly argues that, in light of the verificationist theory of meaning, most of the statements debated in properly metaphysical discussions turn out to be what he calls ‘pseudo-propositions.’ (*Language, Truth and Logic*, p. 45) Pseudo-propositions are accordingly statements that appear to have cognitive significance, but on analysis reveal themselves to be the product of linguistic confusion. Ultimately it is this fact that distinguishes the metaphysician from the poet: for when the poet writes ‘falsehoods’ (which Ayer argues is not always the case), he does so ‘because he considers it most suitable for bringing out the effects for which his writing is designed.’ (Ibid) The utterances of the metaphysician, however, result not from the intention to produce certain non-propositional effects but rather ‘through being deceived by grammar, or through committing errors of reasoning [...]’ (Ibid) On this positivist, ‘verificationist’ theory of meaning, the utterances of the metaphysician thus form a special subset of metaphorical statements, which in and of themselves are cognitively meaningless. What sets these utterances apart as a subset is the fact that most cognitively meaningless statements are simply irrelevant to the progress of science, whereas metaphysical statements are actually detrimental to this progress, because they are emotive statements that pretend to be cognitive ones.

cognitive content, yet may still have some second-order, ‘emotive’ content for the speaker.<sup>9</sup> The upshot is that metaphorical statements derive whatever properly cognitive meaning they have from the literal statements they are seen to replace, and metaphysical propositions, which are treated as a special subset of metaphorical statements, are to be avoided insofar as they impede scientific progress by pretending not to be metaphorical statements when in fact they are just that.

As a further implication of this positivist theory of meaning, the condition that must be met for any metaphorical expression to possess cognitive content of its own is untranslatability by literal paraphrase. In other words metaphors only possess whatever meaning they possess in virtue of the literal statements for which they are seen to be substitutions, then they are meaningless in themselves, and therefore irrelevant to our knowledge about the world. If conversely it can be shown that there is a kind of metaphor possessing cognitive meaning that is not derived from any literal statement for which the metaphor could be seen as a substitute, then it will necessarily follow that such

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<sup>9</sup> For example, the metaphorical expression ‘My head is killing me’ can be paraphrased as the cognitively meaningful statement ‘I am experiencing a sensation of pain in my head,’ and the metaphorical part of the expression itself, *killing*, merely serves to indicate how the speaker feels about this state of affairs: very badly. The perspective on metaphorical meaning that follows implicitly from these positivist assumptions is close to that of John Locke (1690), who observes that ‘figurative language’ has its place in various genres of discourse that aim primarily to gratify the listener, but ‘in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct,’ non-literal kinds of language are ‘wholly to be avoided [...]’ He continues: ‘I confess, in discourses where we seek rather pleasure and delight than information and improvement, such ornaments as are borrowed from them can scarce pass for faults. But yet if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness; all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats: and therefore, however laudable or allowable oratory may render them in harangues and popular addresses, they are certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided; and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the language or person that makes use of them.’ See *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. A.C. Fraser, in 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1959), Book III, Ch. 10, p. 146. To the extent that Locke does reserve some place for the use of metaphors in discourses not intended to inform or instruct, his position is somewhat more tolerant than that of Thomas Hobbes (1651), who in the *Leviathan* characterizes all metaphors as ‘senselesse and ambiguous words,’ whose use in reasoning he likens to ‘wandering in innumerable absurdities,’ and which he claims can only lead to ‘contention, sedition, or contempt.’ Cf. T. Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1985), I.5.36 (p. 116/7).

metaphors do in fact possess cognitive content of their own, and are therefore philosophically (and scientifically) relevant. It is precisely this role that the interaction metaphor in particular is proposed by Richards and Black to play.

On my reading, a subtle but important difference between Richards and Black is that the former uses the term *interaction* in a generic way, whereas the latter uses it in a much more specific way, as we shall shortly see. The generic way in which Richards uses the term is evident in his basic definition of metaphor in the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*: ‘when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction.’<sup>10</sup> Here, ‘interaction’ seems to refer to the generic relationship between the two thoughts that are brought together by means of a metaphorical word; that it is indeed a generic relation is confirmed several pages later when he notes furthermore that ‘there is an immense variety in these modes of interaction between co-present thoughts’<sup>11</sup>, meaning that interaction is the name for all forms of relationship that inhere between such thoughts.

Richards offers his own technical terms to distinguish the ‘co-present’ thoughts that are brought together by a metaphor: tenor and vehicle.<sup>12</sup> The tenor is the thought that is being described in terms of another, and the vehicle is that thought in terms of which the tenor is metaphorically described. Before turning briefly to Black’s views, we must note two additional features of Richards’ analysis: (1) ‘that, in many of the most important uses of metaphor, the co-presence of the vehicle and tenor results in a meaning

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<sup>10</sup> Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 93.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Precisely for this reason, Richards argues that ‘the whole task’ of a modern, critical study of metaphors ‘is to compare the different relations which, in different cases, these two members of a metaphor hold to one another’ (p. 98).

<sup>12</sup> Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 99.

[...] which is not attainable without their interaction'<sup>13</sup>, meaning that in many cases it makes more sense to say that a metaphor *creates* a similarity than that it reveals one that exists already; and (2) that, in many cases, the precise character of the interaction between tenor and vehicle cannot be characterized as one of resemblance at all, and in fact often depends on the perception of 'disparities' rather than similarities between them.<sup>14</sup>

Beginning as mentioned in the early 1960's, Black develops the analyses begun by Richards, emphasizing the importance of the notion of *interaction* for a correct understanding of how certain metaphors function. Yet it is crucial to see that, for Black, *interaction* no longer names a generic kind of interrelation between concepts, which as such can take many forms including resemblance or similarity. On Black's account, interaction metaphors are precisely those kinds of metaphor that cannot be explained according to a principle of similarity. Black accordingly attempts to develop a systematic theory to explain these metaphors, and distinguishes it from two other common types, one of which he calls a substitution theory, and the other an object-comparison theory.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 100.

<sup>14</sup> Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 108. Richards thus argues that, '[i]n general, there are very few metaphors in which disparities between tenor and vehicle are not as much operative as the similarities. Some similarity will commonly be the ostensive ground of the shift, but the peculiar modification of the tenor which the vehicle brings about is even more the work of their unlikenesses than of their likenesses.' (p. 127) Furthermore, on p. 106, he offers three examples of metaphors whose tenor and vehicle are evidently not related by a principle of resemblance: (a) 'giddy brink,' (b) 'jovial wine' and (c) 'daring wound'. On p. 127, he adds to these examples the use of the word *crawling* in Shakespeare's Hamlet, arguing that '[w]hen Hamlet uses the word *crawling* its force comes not only from whatever resemblances to vermin it brings in but at least as equally from the differences that resist and control the influences of their resemblances.'

<sup>15</sup> See M. Black, "Metaphor," in idem, *Models and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), pp. 25-47. Black's objective in this essay is to outline the different theories of metaphor that had been advanced by his own time, and to determine which one is most appropriate for analyzing and explaining the kinds of metaphors that, according to him, are most relevant to philosophical discussions. For Black, the metaphors that are philosophically most relevant are those that resist literal paraphrase, or that, in his words, possess 'cognitive content.' (p. 46) Yet it is precisely this kind of metaphor that neither the substitution theory of metaphor nor the object comparison theory can adequately explain. The former

In the words of one cognitive metaphor theorist, whose reconstruction of Aristotle's views will be considered in the second chapter of this dissertation, Black's essay on the interaction metaphor 'represented the start of a trickle of philosophical interest in metaphor that has now [i.e., in 1981] swelled to flood proportions.'<sup>16</sup>

If Black's cognitive theory of metaphor gained proponents and prompted further research surrounding interaction metaphors throughout the 1960's, it began to attract some critics as well. Starting with the former, one proponent who sought to modify and develop Black's theory is Monroe Beardsley. Beardsley's own interaction theory of metaphor, which he calls a 'Verbal-opposition theory,' holds that 'the opposition that renders an expression metaphorical is [...] within the meaning structure itself.'<sup>17</sup> Among other things, this theory presupposes that metaphors are the result of what Beardsley calls

a felt difference between two sets of properties in the intension, or signification, of a general term: first, those properties that (at least in a given sort of context) are taken to be necessary conditions for applying the term correctly in a particular sense (these are the defining, or designated, properties, or the central meaning of the term in that sort of context); second, those properties that belong to the marginal meaning of the term, or (in the literary critic's sense of the word) its connotation [...].<sup>18</sup>

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theory treats all metaphors as deliberately figurative expressions whose intent is purely decorative; the latter considers all metaphors to be based in the perception of similarities that are presumed to be objectively given. Accordingly, Black argues that the substitution theory is incapable of accounting for properly untranslatable metaphors, and conversely that the metaphors that this theory does account for 'have no serious place in philosophical discussion' (p. 34) because they are essentially trivial. On the other hand, he argues that the object comparison theory has certain advantages over the substitution theory (of which he considers it to be a special instance), but that it still cannot explain how some metaphors can have cognitive content that allows them to resist literal paraphrase. For Black, it is more appropriate to say that such metaphors *create* resemblances than to say that they disclose them, because the resemblances in question do not exist prior to the metaphorical expressions themselves (p. 37). Finally, Black turns to the interaction theory of metaphor after pointing out the limitations of the first two kinds of theory, and argues that it 'is free from the main defects of substitution and comparison views' (p. 38). He concludes by pointing out the importance of each theory for classifying all kinds of metaphors, but also claims that 'only the last kind (i.e., interaction metaphors) are of importance in philosophy.' (p. 45)

<sup>16</sup> M. Johnson, "Introduction: Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition", in (ed.) idem, *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), p. 20.

<sup>17</sup> M. Beardsley, "The Metaphorical Twist," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 22, no. 3 (March 1962), p. 299.

<sup>18</sup> Beardsley, "The Metaphorical Twist," p. 299.

For Beardsley, a metaphor is the result of the conceptual interaction between these two kinds of properties belonging to general terms. We might therefore say that metaphorical meaning is for Beardsley an effect of the differential interplay between the denotations and connotations of two terms. Black himself refers to these denotations and connotations, whose interaction produces the untranslatable character of properly cognitive metaphorical meaning, as ‘the system of associated commonplaces’ belonging to each term.<sup>19</sup>

Black’s preferred example for illustrating how this system of associated commonplaces functions is the metaphor, ‘Man is a wolf.’ In his words, ‘[t]he effect [...] of (metaphorically) calling a man a “wolf” is to evoke the wolf-system of related commonplaces. [...] A suitable hearer will be led by the wolf-system of implications to construct a corresponding system of implications about the principle subject. The new implications must be determined by the pattern of implications associated with the literal uses of the word “wolf.”’<sup>20</sup> It is for this reason that, according to both Black and Beardsley, interaction metaphors in particular cannot be explained by reference to the principle of similarity or resemblance: in many cases, the precise meaning of a metaphor is rather produced through the differences in the systems of associated commonplaces belonging to two terms.

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<sup>19</sup> Black, “Metaphor,” in *Models and Metaphors*, p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> Black, “Metaphor,” in *Models and Metaphors*, p. 41. Accordingly, Black argues furthermore that ‘the wolf-metaphor suppresses some details, emphasizes others – in short, *organizes* our view of man.’ He explains this latter point with an analogy: ‘[s]uppose I look at the night sky through a piece of heavily smoked glass on which certain lines have been left clear. Then I shall see only the stars that can be made to lie on the lines previously prepared upon the screen, and the stars I do see will be seen as organized by the screen’s structure. We can think of a metaphor as such a screen and the system of “associated commonplaces” of the focal word as the network of lines upon the screen.’ (Ibid)

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the interaction theory of metaphor, and the basic notion of cognitive metaphorical content that it supports, has been challenged in a number of ways. Firstly, it has been implicitly challenged by Derrida, whose views we briefly examined above. For Derrida, insofar as all theories of metaphor are metaphysical inventions, and insofar as metaphysical language itself is nothing more than ‘a system of catachreses, a fund of “forced metaphors”’<sup>21</sup>, then all theories of metaphor are necessarily circular, because they can only define metaphor by means of language that is metaphorical through and through.<sup>22</sup>

A similar, and similarly implicit challenge to the interaction theory of metaphor is suggested by Hans Blumenberg in *Paradigms for a Metaphorology* (1960). In this case, the challenge is evident in Blumenberg’s general reluctance concerning the very idea of a systematic understanding of metaphorical meaning. Blumenberg’s study neither attempts, nor even recommends a systematic articulation of those abstract interactions with which Richards, Black and Beardsley are preoccupied. Indeed, the idea of a complete, systematic mapping of the network of conceptual interactions that make metaphoric meaning possible is not strictly speaking viable for Blumenberg, insofar as he holds that ‘metaphor [...] is an essentially *historical* object [...]’<sup>23</sup> When it comes to the question of what Blumenberg calls ‘a metaphorological systematics,’ he accordingly refrains from speculating one way or another.<sup>24</sup>

Yet Blumenberg does at one point provide an indirect answer to the question of the possibility of a fully systematic articulation of metaphorical meaning, when he

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<sup>21</sup> Derrida, “White Mythology,” p. 257.

<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, Derrida argues that every attempt to define metaphor is rendered circular by the ‘implication of the defined in the definition’. See “White Mythology,” p. 253.

<sup>23</sup> Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, p. 63.

observes that ‘metaphorology – as a sub-branch of conceptual history [...] – must always be an auxiliary discipline to philosophy as it seeks to understand itself from its history and to bring that history to living presence.’<sup>25</sup> Consequently, insofar as metaphorology ultimately concerns the interrelations of concepts that are essentially historical, a systematic articulation of these relations seems impossible insofar as the history of concepts is an *ongoing one*. In other words, Blumenberg’s reluctance implies that a complete and systematic elaboration of the conceptual overlaps, which for Richards Black and Beardsley explain the way in which linguistic metaphors function in general, is no more possible than a systematic elaboration of the causes that led to Napoleon’s defeat at the Battle of Waterloo, and the effects that continue to issue from it.

Blumenberg’s contention that metaphor is an essentially historical object, rather than a properly scientific or theoretical one, subtly implies that the analysis of metaphor must remain at the level of particulars, pertinent to a specific time, place, person or idea, rather than on the general level of metaphor *as such*.<sup>26</sup> Conversely, it also implies that, in order to accomplish a systematic theory of metaphor, it is necessary to abstract the phenomenon from its inherently historical setting, and thereby to cut it off from its embeddedness in the concrete speech-acts of living, historical individuals. Underlying this idea, there is the implicit notion that metaphorical meaning in particular, and linguistic meaning in general, does not simply derive from the abstract interactions between systems of associated commonplaces belonging to general linguistic terms. This

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<sup>25</sup> Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, p. 77.

<sup>26</sup> This implication is borne out by Blumenberg’s study, which is entirely concerned with a taxonomy of particular, historical metaphors that he calls ‘absolute metaphors’, and the way in which these metaphors reflect the theoretical initiatives of various eras in the ongoing history of ideas.

is because, evidently, meaning seems to involve some necessary reference to an existing subject, and to the historical context in which the subject finds him- or herself.

These considerations come quite close to the critique that Paul Ricoeur (1972) explicitly elaborates in regard to the interaction theory of metaphor. It is crucial to recognize that Ricoeur agrees with the notion of interaction itself, and the concept of cognitive metaphorical meaning that this notion supports. His contention is rather that thinkers such as Black and Beardsley in fact destroy the possibility of such meaning by attributing it entirely to the differential interactions between pre-established systems of associated commonplaces. The problem, in other words, is for Ricoeur that it is impossible to see how a metaphor can create *new* meaning, and therefore have genuinely cognitive content, if the systems of associated commonplaces whose interactions produce metaphorical meaning are already in place prior to the speech-acts out of which metaphors emerge. Taking up the theories of Black and Beardsley at the point where they both hold that interaction metaphors create new linguistic meaning, Ricoeur thus asks, ‘d’où tirons-nous cette nouvelle signification?’<sup>27</sup>

Ricoeur ultimately claims that the notion of a system of associated commonplaces is incapable of answering this question in a way that supports the notion of genuinely cognitive metaphorical meaning. For Ricoeur, in holding that metaphorical meaning is entirely the product of these systems and their differential interactions, Black and Beardsley reduce the creative process of metaphor (le processus créateur de la métaphore) to an uncreative, static aspect of language (aspect non créateur du langage),

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<sup>27</sup> P. Ricoeur, “La métaphore et le problème central de l’herméneutique,” *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, Quatrième série, Tome 70, no. 5 (1972), p. 102. This article has been reprinted in *Écrits et conférences 2 : Herméneutique* (Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2010), pp. 91-122.

understood as a system of words and their interrelated meanings.<sup>28</sup> For Ricoeur, and as implied by Blumenberg, any thought of metaphorical meaning that does not take its phenomenal character (and its historical situatedness) into consideration is ultimately incapable of accounting for its production, insofar as this production is incomprehensible outside the context of a living act of predication, which means something to someone in a particular time and place, and in a particular respect.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, to the extent that some attention to the phenomenal character of metaphoric meaning is for Ricoeur essential to a complete explanation of its production, he ultimately questions whether the interaction theory of metaphor can explain such meaning without recognizing the role played by something like a principle of resemblance. Indeed, by rejecting the importance of similarity altogether, and by insisting furthermore that cognitive metaphorical meaning is produced entirely through the tensions and differences between tenor and vehicle, rather than by their similarities, Black and Beardsley's interactive theories largely downplay the iconic character of metaphor in general, and instead treat it as a fundamentally semantic, and therefore logical operation. As Ricoeur elsewhere contends, however, the semantic and iconic dimensions of metaphor are mutually implicative, and consequently in his view, 'the

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<sup>28</sup> Ricoeur, "La métaphore et le problème central de l'herméneutique," p. 103.

<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, Ricoeur argues that '[d]ire qu'une métaphore neuve n'est tirée de nulle part, c'est la reconnaître pour ce qu'elle est, à savoir une création momentanée du langage, une innovation sémantique qui n'a pas de statut dans le langage en tant que déjà établi, ni au titre de la désignation, ni au titre de la connotation. On pourrait demander comment nous pouvons parler d'innovation sémantique, d'événement sémantique, comme d'une signification susceptible d'être identifiée et réidentifiée [...]. Une seule réponse demeure possible : il faut prendre le point de vue de l'auditeur ou du lecteur et traiter la nouveauté d'une signification émergente comme la contrepartie, de la part de l'auteur, d'une construction de la part du lecteur.' (Ibid)

*fusion* of sense and the imaginary, which is characteristic of “iconized meaning,” is the necessary counterpart of a theory of interaction.<sup>30</sup>

Ricoeur’s argument is subsequently developed by Ted Peters (1978), who classes theories of metaphor under the two basic groups of ‘epiphorist’ and ‘diaphorist’, where the former include reference to a principle of similarity and the latter do not; ‘epiphors’ are thus for Peters metaphors that obey a principle of similarity, while diaphors are those that are produced by the differences between tenor and vehicle. Quite significantly, Peters argues that ‘pure diaphors – when they can be distinguished from nonsense – do not occur so purely; they are always accompanied by epiphors.’<sup>31</sup> Peters’ position places the whole debate surrounding the interaction metaphor and the notion of cognitive metaphoric content into perspective here. He points out explicitly what Ricoeur suggests more subtly: that proponents of the interaction theory of metaphor, such as Black and Beardsley, go too far in contending that interaction metaphors have *nothing* to do with the perception of resemblances. Although it may have been correct for Richards to suspect that there is more to many instances of metaphor than a static resemblance between two things, Peters argues that it is no less correct to suspect that there is more to such instances than mere differences as well. The new content produced by metaphor, according to Peters, emerges out of the interaction of both similarities and differences between tenor and vehicle, and therefore is at once a logical and an iconic phenomenon.

This is in fact a more moderate critique than the one advanced by Donald Davidson, who completely disavows the interaction theory and the basic notion of

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<sup>30</sup> P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. R. Czerny, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 214.

<sup>31</sup> T. Peters, “Metaphor and the Horizon of the Unsaid,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. 38, No. 3 (Mar., 1978), p. 361.

cognitive metaphorical content that it supports.<sup>32</sup> For Davidson, all metaphors are substitutions for certain literal expressions about the world, and whatever cognitive content they possess derives entirely from these expressions.

Consequently, in order to answer the question of what place, if any, Aristotle's theory of metaphor has in contemporary debate, it is first necessary to determine the extent to which the interaction theory of metaphor is a valid explanation of the way in which metaphoric meaning is produced. To the extent that, as we shall see, Aristotle upholds that the perception of similarities between things is essential to the production and comprehension of all metaphoric meaning, and to the extent that the interaction theory of metaphor denies this, the contemporary relevance of Aristotle's theory of metaphor is significantly reduced by the assumption that the interaction theory is indeed correct. Several subsequent theorists of metaphor take this to be the case, although they have not (to my knowledge) responded to the aforementioned challenges raised in the work of Derrida, Blumenberg, Ricoeur, Peters and Davidson. In the second chapter of this dissertation, I will outline the views of some of these theorists (George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, specifically), who staunchly support the cognitive and interactive view of metaphor, and who accordingly argue that Aristotle's theory of metaphor is simply wrong. Then, after presenting Aristotle's theory of metaphor, its context and philosophical implications, I will return to their views in the conclusion of this dissertation as well.

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<sup>32</sup> Davidson argues flatly 'that metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more.' Cf. "What Metaphors Mean," *Critical Inquiry* 5/1 (Special Issue on Metaphor, Autumn 1978), p. 32. Insofar as this amounts to an outright rejection of the cognitive character of interaction metaphors, it presupposes that the only possible explanation of how metaphors function is either (a) a substitution theory, or (b) an object comparison theory of metaphor. If Davidson's critique turns out to be valid, it would lead us to conclude that Aristotle's theory of metaphor in fact has a more important place in contemporary debate than what proponents of the interaction theory claim.

Above all, what is important to retain at this point is that the interaction theory of metaphor, and the basic notion of cognitive metaphoric meaning that it upholds, are by no means settled questions. If accordingly it can be shown that the interaction theory is either invalid, or in need of some kind of reference to the principle of resemblance, then it seems possible to argue that Aristotle's theory of metaphor still has some insight to contribute to contemporary debates about metaphors and their relevance to human thought. If on the other hand the interaction theory of metaphor can be seen to have an answer for the aforementioned criticisms, then Aristotle's theory of metaphor will be seen to have less importance to contemporary discussions of the topic. A clear answer to this question, as mentioned above, must be deferred for future research.

### **1.3 Metaphor as an Aristotelian Question: The Status of Rhetoric and Poetry**

If the issue of metaphor and its relation to human thought is indeed a question for Aristotle, it must be recognized at the outset that this is the case for entirely different reasons than the ones just discussed. Even though, on my account, the question of metaphor raises important philosophical issues at the very heart of Aristotle's philosophical *œuvre*, it still seems possible to doubt whether he explicitly thematized these issues as such. Is the question of metaphor an explicit philosophical problem that Aristotle recognized as a problem, in a way that is parallel to that in which metaphor is a problem for philosophers of the 20th century? While this is doubtful, there can be little question that Aristotle inherited his teacher's concerns about the problematic nature of poetry and rhetoric in general. Thus, to the extent that (a) Aristotle's main discussions of metaphor are located at the heart of his rhetorical and poetic treatises, and (b) the general status of both rhetoric and poetry is indeed an explicit philosophical problem that

preoccupied Aristotle in his thinking, we must grasp his approach to the question of metaphor in particular by way of his approach to the more general problem of the status of rhetoric and poetry.

The problem of the status of rhetoric and poetry concerns the question of whether each pursuit can, in its own right, be considered the product of art (τέχνη). For the Greeks in general, and for Plato and Aristotle in particular, certain conditions were necessary for something to be considered the product of τέχνη, which can also be translated adequately as ‘craft’ or ‘technical skill.’ While an exhaustive study of what the Greeks understood by τέχνη is outside the scope of the present discussion, we may satisfy ourselves with the basic consideration that τέχνη necessarily implies a disposition of rational control and self-possessed mastery over a given domain of experience. τέχνη thus suggests a regular and repeatable procedure that, perhaps most importantly, is based in a stable understanding of certain phenomena and their causes, which can consequently be communicated and taught to others through verbal instruction.

Leading up to and including the time of Plato and Aristotle, we find differing answers among the Greeks to the question of whether poetry and rhetoric were, or could be the products of τέχνη. Many in ancient Greece, particularly those who later came to be labeled somewhat derisively as ‘sophists,’ seem to have held that both rhetoric and poetry were indeed arts or τέχναι. While it is difficult to verify this claim adequately with textual evidence, it is an incontrovertible fact both that (a) the 6th and 5th centuries BCE are marked in general by the sophists’ prolific teaching activities throughout Greece

and Asia minor; and that (b) poetic composition and rhetorical persuasion were indeed two of the main, if not the only subjects of which they claimed to have knowledge.<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, not everyone in ancient Greece agreed with the supposition that rhetoric and poetry were genuine products of τέχνη. Beginning with the question of poetry in particular, at least two other possibilities seem to have been considered by the Greeks concerning the sources of poetic invention. Firstly, there is the notion, which goes back at least as far as Homer, that poetic invention is the product of divine inspiration rather than (or in addition to) the rational disposition characteristic of τέχνη.<sup>34</sup> Secondly, there is the notion, which goes back at least as far as Xenophanes, that poetic invention is the product not of art or divine inspiration (both of which presuppose that what the poets relate is in fact true, and therefore in need of some legitimating knowledge or authority), but rather of falsehood.<sup>35</sup> We find traces of both

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<sup>33</sup> Concerning the former subject, Stephen Halliwell confirms that '[i]t was the sophistic age [...] which had first broached the possibility of the formal and systematic treatment of poetry as an art.' S. Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 9. Nevertheless, Halliwell also notes that traces of the view that poetic composition is the product of τέχνη are evident in Homeric poetry (ibid, note). Cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 22.347, which according to Halliwell 'implies by contrast the existence of a teachable poetic craft.' (Ibid) Concerning the latter subject, there can be little doubt that rhetorical persuasion was indeed taught by the sophists to their students, judging by Aristotle's own remarks in Book I of the *Rhetoric*, which mention the existence of a number of treatises composed prior to his time concerning the art of rhetoric. In Chapter 1, he accordingly mentions previous 'compilers of "Arts" (οἱ τὰς τέχνας τῶν λόγων συντιθέντες)' by way of criticizing their approach. Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. J.H. Freese (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1354 2. According to Freese, the sophist Corax (exact dates unknown) 'was the author of the first of the numerous "Arts"'; after Corax came his pupil Tisias, who also composed a treatise, and then Tisias' more well-known pupils Gorgias, Isocrates, and Lysias. (J.H. Freese, Introduction to Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, pp. xii-xiv.) The very fact that the ancient sophists instructed their students in the subject of poetic composition, and furthermore produced written treatises on rhetorical persuasion, indicates quite clearly that they held these subjects to be worthy and capable of verbal instruction, and therefore suggests that they considered them, if only implicitly, to possess the regularity and repeatability that characterizes τέχνη most generally.

<sup>34</sup> Halliwell accordingly observes that the two 'principle elements' considered in Greek discussions of the sources of poetic invention were 'inspiration and craft.' (*Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 9)

<sup>35</sup> In Fragment 15, which I discuss briefly in the fifth chapter of this dissertation, Xenophanes famously questions whether, if dogs and horses had hands and could draw, they would depict the gods as dogs and horses. This clearly indicates a rejection of the anthropomorphic depiction of the gods in general, and therefore a deep suspicion of the veracity of what is related in all mythic poetry in general. In other words, for Xenophanes, poetic invention is the product of falsehoods regarding the true nature of the divine.

considerations in certain Platonic dialogues (*Ion* and *Republic*), which deny either explicitly or implicitly that poetry, in its existing form at any rate, is or could be the product of τέχνη. Each dialogue gives seemingly different answers to explain where poetic invention comes from: the *Ion* suggests on the one hand that it is rather the result of inspiration, and the *Republic*, on the other, claims that it is based in falsehood, at least to the extent that all forms of imitation are aimed at the appearances of particular things concerning which no real knowledge is possible in the first place. These claims provide part of the basis for the Platonic critique of poetry as an art, which we will examine in detail in the first chapter of this dissertation.

Concerning rhetoric, there is less historical evidence of ambivalent attitudes in ancient Greece as a whole towards the sources of the sophists' rhetorical instruction. Nevertheless, certain Platonic dialogues also reject the notion that rhetoric in its existing forms is or could be the product of τέχνη, in a way that is parallel to the one we have just encountered regarding the sources of poetry. Specifically in the *Gorgias*, Socrates interrogates the historical personage of Gorgias himself to determine what basis he has for claiming to be able to teach students about rhetorical persuasion. When Gorgias cannot answer Socrates' questions in a satisfactory manner, and must consequently be rescued by his student Polus (who is subsequently replaced by the arch-sophist Callicles), Socrates makes this Platonic rejection explicit by denying that rhetoric is the product of τέχνη; he claims instead that it belongs to a more general 'knack' or 'habitude,' to which he gives the name of 'flattery,' κολακεία. Ultimately, the reasons cited by Socrates in support of this claim are that (a) rhetorical persuasion, as practiced and taught by Gorgias himself, is not based on any legitimate understanding of the things concerning which

persuasion can be produced, and therefore cannot be the subject of any regular or repeatable instruction; and (b) the practice of rhetoric in general only aims to gratify its audience, by saying something pleasing, rather than to help it by saying what it thinks is best. These two reasons are identical to those offered in both the *Ion* and *Republic* for why poetic imitation too is not an art: it too is not based on any understanding of the things that it imitates, and it too is concerned primarily to please, rather than to instruct, its audience.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to grasp that both of these Platonic critiques are qualified in subtle but important ways. In Book X of the *Republic*, the notion that poetry is not an art culminates with Plato's famous exile of the poets from the ideal city, yet Socrates announces this exile with the proviso that poetry would be allowed to re-enter the city if it could demonstrate its value as a form of civic education, by proving (a) that it is based on some stable knowledge of the things it imitates; and (b) that it aims for more than just the gratification of those who come under its influence. Similarly, with respect to the critique of rhetoric, Socrates affirms at one point in the *Gorgias* that, although existing forms of (i.e., Gorgian) rhetoric do not qualify as τέχνη, rhetoric could *become* an art it were to reform itself by satisfying certain criteria. In the third section of Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates specifies these criteria as being (a) the ability to distinguish between those subjects concerning which people can be in doubt, and those concerning which they cannot; (b) a detailed, dialectical understanding of those subjects concerning which persuasion can be produced; and (c) an equally detailed understanding of the human soul, as the subject which must undergo persuasion, and its natural actions and affections.

In the *Phaedrus*, no less than in the *Gorgias*, the paradigm after which a true art of rhetoric ought to be modeled is, according to Socrates, that of medicine. If this means that the practitioner of a true art of rhetoric must administer speeches to his audience in a way comparable to that in which a doctor administers a cure to a sick patient, it also amounts to the claim that a true art of rhetoric, much like a true art of poetry, demands a fundamental concern for what is truly best for rhetorical audiences. In other words, the same two criteria that condition poetry's re-admission into the ideal city also condition the τέχνη-status of rhetoric. Insofar as the former is an epistemological criterion whereas the latter is an ethical one, I hereafter refer to them as the criteria of truth and goodness respectively.

As I argue in the first chapter of this dissertation, it is ultimately to these two conditions that Aristotle aims to respond in his presentation of rhetoric and poetry as genuine τέχναι. In other words, the fact that (a) Plato denies rhetoric and poetry the status of arts, and (b) Aristotle wrote treatises affirming them to be arts, does not reflect a disagreement between student and teacher. Rather, it reflects the student's efforts to overhaul each activity in accordance with guidelines laid down by his teacher, and thereby to establish two properly Platonized arts of rhetoric and poetry, whose status as arts derives precisely from their orientation towards the pursuit of goodness and truth. Furthermore, as I argue in the second chapter, it is ultimately in the context of this effort to reform rhetoric and poetry in accordance with these Platonic initiatives that Aristotle's vertical theory of metaphor must be placed in order to become fully intelligible.

In both the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*, Aristotle's discussions of metaphor form an important part of his discussions of the style (λέξις) that is appropriate to each art.

According to Aristotle himself, and for reasons that differ slightly in each case, metaphor is in fact the most important element of both rhetorical and poetic style. In order to understand the significance that I attach to this fact and its implications, it is necessary to see how Aristotle's presentation of the subject-matter of rhetoric and poetry, and specifically his definition of the essential function of each art, binds them both in subtle ways to the philosophical pursuit of goodness and truth. Without getting too immersed in details for the moment, what is crucial to grasp is that the essential functions assigned by Aristotle to each art implicitly require that anyone who aims to master poetry or rhetoric must necessarily be concerned with, and have some understanding of, the natures of the things with which they deal, and the well-being of the people who come under their influence. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle accordingly treats rhetoric as a 'counterpart (ἀντίστροφος)' of dialectic, and in the *Poetics* he argues that poetry is concerned more with the universal than with the particular – more, in other words, with the kinds of things that *might* happen to certain kinds of people, than with the things that actually have happened to particular historical individuals. Although these details may appear trivial, their implications on my reading are immense: they imply that the sufficient condition for the mastery of each art is in fact an orientation towards the dialectical understanding of the natures of things, and therefore, by consequence, that the one who knows best the natures of things, and is most concerned with the well-being of rhetorical and poetic audiences, is in fact the ideal orator and the ideal poet. This means, in other words, that in order fully to master the arts of rhetoric and poetry that Aristotle presents in his *Rhetoric* and his *Poetics*, one ought either to be, or to become, a philosopher.

On my reading, Aristotle's discussions of metaphor, located at the heart of his treatises on rhetorical and poetic style, simply reinforce what is already implied by his treatment of rhetorical and poetic content; they are in this respect like the latter half of a one-two punch combination. To see how and why this is so, we must take notice of the fact that Aristotle claims in both the *Poetics* and elsewhere that making and understanding metaphors requires the ability to perceive resemblances between disparate things. Crucially, as I show in the second chapter, Aristotle analyzes similarity or resemblance in the *Categories* under the heading of a 'relation (πρὸς τι)' between two or more things. Yet if similarity is a relation between two or more things, then it seems to follow that the knowledge of what each thing is in itself is a sufficient condition for the knowledge of what they share in common. Consequently, if (a) metaphor is the most important element of both rhetorical and poetic style; if (b) metaphor requires the ability to perceive similarities between disparate things; and if (c) the knowledge of similarities between things demands the knowledge of what they are in themselves, then whoever seeks to master rhetorical and poetic style must be skilled at making metaphors, which ideally requires the detailed knowledge of what things are in themselves. It follows implicitly from this, as it does from the functions assigned by Aristotle to each art, that the philosopher is the ideal poet and the ideal orator, and moreover, by implication, that whoever wants to master these arts should devote him- or her-self to the study of philosophy first and foremost.

That is ultimately why I argue that Aristotle's vertical theory of metaphor must be placed in the context of his response to Plato in order to become fully intelligible. The notion that Aristotle's theory of metaphor is a vertical one rather than a horizontal one is

certainly helpful in distinguishing Aristotle's views from those of the classical tradition of rhetoric, but its real significance lies in the way that it underscores Aristotle's efforts to establish the arts of rhetoric and poetry on a firm, philosophical basis. The fact that Aristotle's theory of metaphor concerns the relation between words and things, rather than between the meanings of individual words, means that the knowledge sufficient for making and understanding metaphors is above all the knowledge about things and their essential natures, rather than of words and their lexical meanings.

Furthermore, as I elaborate in the second chapter of this dissertation, the similarities that metaphors disclose are necessarily, according to Aristotle's definition in *Poetics* 22, of a *secondary* character. Primary similarities are those that inhere between things of essentially the same genus or species: two dogs, for example, are indeed similar in virtue of being generically and specifically the same kind of thing. Yet the presence of the word 'other,' ἄλλοτρίου, in Aristotle's definition of metaphor necessitates that the similarities disclosed by metaphors are always of a secondary nature, because they inhere imperfectly between things that are presumed by definition to be substantially different either in genus or species. In the same way that, as mentioned above, an orientation towards the knowledge of what things are in themselves is a sufficient condition for the knowledge of how they are similar to other things in certain respects, the knowledge of primary similarities, which permits the classification of things according to their genera and species, is likewise a sufficient condition for an awareness of their secondary similarities, and therefore of the ability to make and understand metaphors.

Furthermore, if the secondary likenesses that form the basis for metaphorical comparisons are fewest among things that are one in species, then they are necessarily

more abundant among things that are one in genus, and therefore most abundant among things that are one by analogy. According to Aristotle's discussion of the many senses of one, τὸ ἓν, in *Metaphysics* IV, analogical unity is the most encompassing form of unity, and is ranked above the generic and the specific. It is crucial to see that this analogical unity between things is also what First Philosophy aims to disclose by means of rigorous, dialectical argumentation. This is not necessarily to say, in agreement with the positivist theory of meaning examined above, that Aristotle's metaphysical discussions are mere metaphors in disguise; for in metaphysics, or First Philosophy, thought aims to articulate an identity between things that is not a secondary or imperfect identity, but rather a primary or perfect one.<sup>36</sup> This means that, even if metaphorical expressions and metaphysical propositions traverse the same analogical terrain, so to speak, they do so in different ways: metaphors, or at any rate the metaphors that Aristotle privileges in the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, disclose imperfect analogical likenesses between things, while metaphysical thought exposes the principles according to which things of all species and genera are actually and perfectly identified.

It is therefore also significant that, as I show in the third chapter of this dissertation, Aristotle places crucial emphasis on the notion of activity, ἐνέργεια, in his discussion of metaphor in *Rhetoric* III.10-11. In the context of this discussion, Aristotle intends this term to be understood in its common meaning, according to which it refers primarily to an incomplete motion, and not to its theoretical meaning, according to which

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<sup>36</sup> In the words of F. O'Rourke (2005), with whose views I am in fundamental agreement, '[m]etaphysical principles are affirmed proportionately of every entity by proper analogy, whereas metaphor is the proportional, but imperfect, transfer of a perfection or activity from its primary to a secondary subject.' See F. O'Rourke, "Aristotle and the Metaphysics of Metaphor," in (eds.) J. Cleary & G. Gurtler, *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 21 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 173. I return to O'Rourke's analysis in chapters 2 and 5 of this dissertation.

it refers to motions that are complete in every moment. In relation to metaphor, the principle of activity must be understood in the context of Aristotle's suggestion that the best kinds of metaphorical comparisons are those that portray things in a state of dynamic movement, which he says can be accomplished more often than not by depicting inanimate things as though they were alive. Even if this understanding of ἐνέργεια is certainly different from the one that, in *Metaphysics* IX.6, forms the explanatory bedrock of his account of substance or οὐσία, the important point is that ἐνέργεια is the ultimate principle of *both* the (imperfect) metaphorical resemblances between things in the *Rhetoric*, and the (perfect) metaphysical identity between them in the *Metaphysics*. It is no accident, in this regard, that the examples singled out in each text as paradigmatic of both the common and the theoretical meaning of ἐνέργεια are living beings and the activities by which they are defined.

As the foregoing considerations indicate, the elaboration of Aristotle's theory of metaphor in the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* demands an understanding of his epistemological, psychological and metaphysical thinking in order to be fully intelligible. Yet if this means that, in some sense, crucial concepts of Aristotle's theoretical system come into play in his theory of metaphor, it also seems to raise questions about why, in other texts, Aristotle expresses an entirely negative attitude towards the use of metaphors in the context of scientific reasoning and the formulation of definitions. If, in other words, Aristotle seems at least implicitly to recognize the theoretical character of metaphors and the similarities they reveal, why does he seem to exclude the use of metaphors from theoretical discussion in the *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics* and other texts? It is to this question that I turn in the fourth and fifth chapters of this dissertation, with a view to

determining whether Aristotle is, in the final analysis, a pro- or anti-metaphorical philosopher.

As I argue, Aristotle's position falls somewhere in between these poles, and the distinction between vertical and horizontal theories of metaphor is helpful in explaining why this is so. Ultimately, as I show in the second chapter, the vertical character of Aristotle's theory of metaphor, as indicated by the precise nature of his definition in *Poetics* 22, permits him to identify the simile as a kind of metaphor in Book III of the *Rhetoric*. This identification indicates that, even if Aristotle speaks at times as if metaphor were simply a special kind of word, it is by definition a much more pervasive kind of thing, corresponding to any comparative predication that juxtaposes two or more things in virtue of a secondary likeness they are seen to exhibit. In light of this fact, it can be seen that although Aristotle does exclude metaphors from certain domains of theoretical reasoning – specifically, the procedures of definition and the demonstrative syllogism (ἀποδείξις) – this does not reflect a universal condemnation of all metaphorical expressions, in all theoretical contexts, as such. It rather reflects the fact that (a) the conceptual operations of definition and scientific demonstration demand precise signification, because they depend on the proper use of univocal concept-terms in order to function correctly; and that (b) these operations also demand that whatever is predicated of a subject is predicated essentially, in light of what that subject is in itself. Thus, to the extent that metaphors both result in equivocation and present things in light of their secondary similarities to other things, they are conceptually irrelevant, and linguistically harmful, to these procedures.

In Book I of the *Metaphysics*, similar considerations appear to subtend Aristotle's critical doxography of his predecessor's views. Yet, as I argue, Aristotle does not criticize any previous thinker simply for using metaphors as such; he rather criticizes them for speaking obscurely, and this is not necessarily the same thing as speaking metaphorically. Similarly, in his discussion of Plato in chapters 6-9, he criticizes his teacher for speaking in 'poetic metaphors and empty talk', but this is directed at the specific character of the metaphor in question and not at the nature of metaphorical expressions as such. Although it is true that Aristotle's discussion of the law of non-contradiction does seem to imply the exclusion of all metaphorical expressions from the domain of metaphysical inquiry, it is crucial to recognize that Aristotle's vertical definition in *Poetics* 22 implies *two* kinds of metaphor: on the one hand, the transposed word, and on the other, the act of transposition itself, which corresponds to the simile. Rather than a blanket condemnation of the use of metaphor in metaphysical argumentation, Aristotle's critical doxography in *Metaphysics* I, and his discussion of the law of non-contradiction in Book IV, underscore his preference for one kind of metaphor (the simile) over another (the transposed word).

As mentioned, the distinction between vertical and horizontal theories of metaphor is crucial to the resolution of the apparent contradictions mentioned above. Ultimately, there is no real contradiction involved here because, firstly, (a) the procedures of definition and demonstration are not as relevant to metaphysical argumentation as they are to properly scientific argumentation, in virtue of the extreme generality of First Philosophy's subject matter. Although it is true that Aristotle maintains rigorous definitions for most of the terms he uses in the *Metaphysics*, this is

not true of all, nor for that matter of the most important, of these terms. Furthermore, although it is certainly possible to give a formal, syllogistic presentation of many of Aristotle's metaphysical arguments, formal validity is not in itself sufficient to make a syllogism demonstrative, in the sense in which Aristotle understands this term. For Aristotle, a demonstration is a formally valid syllogism that ideally takes an essential predication (of the form 'All X is Y') as its starting point; yet to the extent that metaphysics is concerned with being qua being, and such an essential predication cannot be given for all beings, as beings, First Philosophy cannot avail itself of these properly demonstrative syllogisms, and must accordingly use other means of exposition.

(b) Secondly, Aristotle himself very seldom, if ever, uses metaphorical words, opting rather to use a steady supply of similes as his preferred method of exposition, in addition to the *reductio ad absurdum*. To substantiate these claims, in the fourth and fifth chapters of this dissertation I offer a brief and schematic examination of a number of similes that Aristotle employs to illustrate crucial points in his epistemological, psychological and metaphysical discussions. On my reading, Aristotle's use of similes and analogical comparisons constitutes a philosophically productive deployment of metaphors that is consistent, despite the complications it raises, with his rhetorical and poetic theories and with his philosophy of science.

Not only is Aristotle's use of metaphors consistent with his rhetorical and poetic theories, it is in a way demanded by the fact that First Philosophy, as the inquiry into the principles of being qua being, lacks a precise methodology appropriate to the nobility and the accuracy of the object it studies. As a result, First Philosophy must remain open to other modes of exposition to compensate for this gap between form and content, and

this is why metaphor ultimately cannot be excluded from all forms of theoretical discussion as such.

In the *Phaedrus*, as we shall see shortly, Socrates indicates to his interlocutor that the key to a legitimate τέχνη of speaking is an orientation towards philosophy. While this could be taken to suggest that philosophy itself is the ultimate form of technical skill, Socrates precludes this suggestion elsewhere in the dialogue when he also characterizes philosophical reason as a form of divine madness. Ultimately, this indicates that philosophy requires, in addition to the disposition for rational argumentation, some form of inspiration. Philosophy is not, in Plato, conceived as a kind of self-possessed mastery over things by knowing them exhaustively in themselves. It is rather a human orientation towards such knowledge that remains necessarily incomplete, and consequently in need of some assistance from the outside. In the Platonic dialogues themselves, this assistance takes many forms, but most often it takes the form of myth. For his part, Aristotle turns not to the myth but to the simile for assistance in his most important theoretical discussions, so as to illustrate things that are maximally remote from the senses, by pointing out the similarities they share in common with other, more familiar things.

As I show in the second chapter, Aristotle indicates in the *Poetics* that the ability to make and understand metaphors is a sign of a natural disposition that he calls εὐφύια, insofar as this ability indicates the capacity to perceive resemblances. εὐφύια is indeed a kind of natural propensity or ability, but to the extent that it stems from nature (φύσις) rather than from technical skill (τέχνη), it cannot be learnt or taught. Insofar as philosophical argumentation, as exemplified by Aristotle's discussions in the *Metaphysics*, demands the capacity to see the similarities between things that are

maximally remote from one another, and insofar as this capacity evidently depends in turn on the natural disposition Aristotle calls εὐφύια, philosophical thought cannot in the final analysis be reduced to a technical skill or repeatable procedure. There is in other words always a need, in Aristotelian as well as in Platonic philosophy, for some kind of inspiration or insight, and it is within the context of this need that Aristotle's theory and uses of metaphor become philosophically significant.

The plan for this dissertation is therefore as follows. (1) In the first chapter, I outline Plato's critical appraisal of rhetoric and poetry in the *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, *Ion* and *Republic*, and then show how Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* constitutes an implicit response to this appraisal. (2) In the second, I examine Aristotle's theory of metaphor beginning with a detailed presentation of the definition he gives in *Poetics* 22, as well as its context in Aristotle's theory of signification as he elaborates this in *De Interpretatione* 1; I then turn to some recent reconstructions of Aristotle's theory of metaphor to show in what ways many commentators have mischaracterized his position as being a horizontal theory, and therefore identical to those of Cicero, Quintilian, and other classical theorists of rhetoric. (3) In the third chapter, I address a number of interpretive issues surrounding Aristotle's discussion of the concept of ἐνέργεια in *Rhetoric* III.10-11; by means of an exhaustive inductive argument, which takes into account what is common to all the examples offered by Aristotle to illustrate the concept of ἐνέργεια in this text, I demonstrate that this term can only mean motion, and then pursue the philosophical implications of this reading. (4) In the fourth chapter, I turn to the critical comments made by Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics* and *Topics* concerning the use of metaphors in formulating definitions, and argue that these comments only apply to those contexts in

which the terminological precision of a definition or a scientific demonstration is at stake; I also show why this is so, by connecting Aristotle's definition of metaphor to his discussion of homonymy in the *Categories* and other treatises, and by outlining Aristotle's theories of scientific demonstration and induction (ἐπαγωγή) as they are elaborated in the *Posterior Analytics* and elsewhere. (5) In the fifth and final chapter, I examine Aristotle's critical doxography in *Metaphysics* I, as well as the important role that similes and analogies play in the later stages of his argument in *Metaphysics* IX-XII, with a view to showing that there is no contradiction between his theory of metaphor, on the one hand, and his own discursive practice on the other; I argue instead that the complexities in Aristotle's comments on and uses of metaphor indicate his own preference for the simile over and against the metaphorical word, and suggest that this preference itself reflects an effort to transform (or reform) metaphor from a tool used by sophists to obscure the truth, into a tool used by philosophers to reveal it.

## **2. Chapter 1: Aristotle's Theories of Rhetoric and Poetry as Responses to Plato**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter argues that Aristotle's presentation of the basic functions of rhetoric and poetry in his *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* must be understood as a faithful response to the views elaborated in Plato's *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, *Ion* and *Republic*.

In arguing this, the chapter aims to provide a historical introduction to Aristotle's views on metaphor. In their most rudimentary formulation, these views are located in the *Poetics*, where Aristotle gives metaphor its first explicit definition in the history of western letters, as well as in Book III of the *Rhetoric*, which clearly presupposes the definition elaborated in the former text. These two texts therefore hold the key to arguably the oldest answers that the occidental tradition offers in response to the question of what a metaphor is, how it functions, and what intellectual operations, if any, are involved in its successful production and comprehension. In what follows, it will be demonstrated that the two discussions of metaphor are consistent and, in fact, complementary as two overlapping perspectives on one and the same phenomenon.

The reconstruction of Aristotle's theory of metaphor presents a difficulty, insofar as the remarks that constitute the theory itself are dispersed in two different texts, each of which has its own unique focus. Since Aristotle's theory of metaphor is divided between two separate treatises, one of which is about poetry and the other of which is about rhetoric, understanding how the theory hangs together requires an understanding of what poetry and rhetoric are in themselves, what their respective functions are, and how they are related to one another. Consequently, it is necessary to approach Aristotle's theory of metaphor with some prior understanding of his more general views on these activities.

As discussed briefly in the introduction to this thesis, Aristotle's general views on poetry and rhetoric are best understood in comparison with those of his teacher, Plato. On my reading, Aristotle's basic account of the nature and function of rhetoric and poetry must be placed within the context of Plato's critical assessment of these activities in dialogues such as the *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, *Ion*, and *Republic*. Because of this, and because there also remains some confusion about whether or not Aristotle and his teacher held opposing views on the status and educational value of rhetoric and poetry, I begin by examining Plato's ideas on the topic, and proceed from there to compare them to Aristotle's.

On the basis of this comparison, I advance a daring hypothesis: that the Platonic and Aristotelian approaches to rhetoric and poetry are compatible.<sup>37</sup> On the one hand this is counter-intuitive because, in the aforementioned dialogues, Plato famously denies rhetoric and poetry the status of genuine arts or τέχναι and repeatedly calls into doubt their educational value. On the other hand, the simple fact that Aristotle composed systematic treatises on both activities, as well as his corresponding affirmation of their educational importance, clearly indicate that he considered them to be genuine arts. As I will argue, this discrepancy is only apparent. It disappears once we recognize that Plato's

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<sup>37</sup> My hypothesis, in addition to being supported by the sources I cite below, is in fundamental agreement with Halliwell's main argument in *Aristotle's Poetics* (1986). Halliwell sees Plato's criticism of poetry in particular as a 'challenge' rather than an outright rejection, and holds that Aristotle's treatment of poetic imitation in the *Poetics* constitutes a legitimate response to this challenge. He thus observes on the one hand that 'it is a widely held conception of [i.e. the *Poetics*] that it addresses itself to only one part of the challenge issued in *Republic* 10, and that Aristotle's concern is only to show that there is a legitimate pleasure to be taken in poetry, but not that it has the moral and educational value which Plato seems to expect the true lover and defender of the art to claim for it.' In opposition to this view, Halliwell's 'central argument' is 'that such an understanding of the *Poetics* is inadequate, and that Aristotle does indeed set out to argue in his own way for poetry's intellectual and moral status, and hence for its potential place in the conception of the good life which is a common premise in all of Plato's and Aristotle's thought.' *Aristotle's Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 1. In what follows, I aim to expand Halliwell's argument to show that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* also demonstrates in a parallel way the extent to which he sought to respond to the challenge of Plato's repeated criticisms.

criticisms against rhetoric and poetry in the dialogues are made in a *de facto*, rather than a *de jure* manner.<sup>38</sup>

I borrow this distinction from Robin (1933), who uses it to characterize Plato's critique of rhetoric only. If I am correct in extending the distinction to apply to what Plato says about poetry as well, then Plato can be seen as arguing in the aforementioned dialogues that the rhetoric and poetry of his day, i.e., in the form in which they had hitherto been practiced, are not arts; he does not argue that rhetoric and poetry never could be arts. As discussed already, in the *Phaedrus* Plato introduces specific criteria that rhetoric in particular, conceived as the art of speaking, would have to satisfy if it were to be considered a genuine τέχνη; in the *Republic* he postulates analogous criteria with respect to poetic imitation or μίμησις. On my reading, Aristotle's account of the essential aims and subject matter of both rhetoric and poetry must be understood as an attempt to satisfy the criteria laid down by Plato in these dialogues. Consequently, the rhetoric and poetry he presents as τέχναι are not those attacked by Plato; they are rather a rhetoric and a poetry that have been reformed in view of Plato's own criteria for what constitutes an art as such.

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<sup>38</sup> In my application of the *de facto* / *de jure* distinction, I partially follow the lead of Robin (1933), who introduces it to qualify Plato's specific criticisms of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*. Commenting on the discussion of rhetoric in the third part of the *Phaedrus*, Robin thus argues that Plato opposes a 'rhétorique de fait' to a 'rhétorique de droit'. See L. Robin, preface to Platon, *Phèdre* (Paris: Coll. Budé, 1933), xxxviii. Whereas Robin explicitly mentions the *de facto* / *de jure* distinction to qualify Plato's criticism of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* only, in what follows I extend it to apply to the Platonic criticism of poetry, such as it emerges in the *Ion* and *Republic*. This approach is supported by Joe Sachs, whose reading is consistent with the notion that Plato's critique of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* is given in a *de facto* manner, as I have suggested. Sachs also asserts that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* must be seen as a faithful response to this critique, and furthermore, that a similar dynamic is at play in the relationship between Plato's critique of poetry in *Republic* X and Aristotle's treatment of poetry in the *Poetics*. See J. Sachs (trans.), *Plato Gorgias and Aristotle Rhetoric* (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2009), p. 1.

To be more precise, I contend that Aristotle's views on the nature of rhetoric and poetry constitute a response to Plato's position, and it is in this sense that the two positions are compatible. I do not understand the two views to be compatible in the sense that the propositional content of Plato's statements about rhetoric and poetry is identical with, or even similar to that of Aristotle's. I rather consider them to be compatible in the way that the two components of the musical style known as antiphony are compatible: that is, as a call and its answer. To avoid confusion about this, I accordingly hold that the key to understanding Aristotle's approach to both rhetoric and poetry is his intention to (re)orient these two activities towards the philosophical pursuit of goodness and truth, in accordance with Plato's comments in the dialogues we will examine below. I show that this intention is evident throughout the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, but I also emphasize that the question of whether or not Aristotle in fact succeeds in raising rhetoric and poetry to the level of moral and intellectual rigor that Plato evidently demanded of them is more difficult to answer. A full answer to this question would require an entire dissertation of its own, and to the extent that my aim in presenting Plato's ideas is above all to contextualize Aristotle's theory of metaphor, I permit myself to pass over certain issues and to leave certain questions unanswered, wherever these require too great a digression from my main topic.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Specifically, the question of whether or not Aristotle actually succeeds in meeting Plato's criteria is difficult to answer, because the precise nature of these criteria remains open to interpretation: in places, Plato suggests that the possibility of both the art of rhetoric and poetry rests on the *actual attainment* of a scientific understanding about the things with which these activities are concerned. At others, however, Plato seems to relax this rigorous demand and allow that an art of rhetoric and poetry rests on the possibility of an *orientation towards*, or a *concern for* what is true (and good). If we interpret Plato's demands in the former, more strict sense, then it becomes unlikely that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* could be taken to succeed in meeting them; but if we interpret them in the latter sense, there is a strong case to be made for Aristotle's success in having founded a Platonic art of both rhetoric and poetry. I will return to this question at the end of the chapter.

The plan for the current chapter is therefore as follows: (1) first, I will outline and explain Plato's claims in the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus* that rhetoric is not properly speaking an 'art' or τέχνη; (2) second, I will do the same for Plato's comments in the *Ion* and *Republic* concerning poetry's status as an art; (3) third, I will show in what ways the features of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* underscore his intention to reform the art of speaking in accordance with Plato's criticisms; and (4) finally, I will do the same with respect to Aristotle's *Poetics*.

## 2.2 Plato's Criticism of Rhetoric as an Art: *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*

Taken together, the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus* highlight Plato's denial that rhetoric is a genuine τέχνη. More precisely, in the *Gorgias* Plato argues that oratory in its existing form (i.e., as practiced and taught by Gorgias himself) should not be considered an art, but he also indicates that it could be considered an art if it were to satisfy certain requirements. Corresponding to this more negative assessment, the *Phaedrus* details the positive criteria that rhetoric must meet in order to become an art.<sup>40</sup> Parallel to the critique of poetry, the Platonic critique of rhetoric evaluates its status as an art by means of two different criteria, which I referred to above as epistemological and ethical respectively. The former criterion presupposes that an activity cannot be considered an art or τέχνη if it is not based on accurate knowledge of the things with which it is primarily concerned. The latter presupposes that an activity cannot be an art or τέχνη if it merely aims to please or gratify a person or group of people. Conversely, an activity will

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<sup>40</sup> My understanding of the relationship between the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus* concerning the status of rhetoric here is supported by the analysis of Kucharski, who observes that 'la critique que Platon fait de la rhétorique dans le *Gorgias* se signale par son caractère surtout négatif', whereas in the *Phaedrus* Plato 'se borne à indiquer la voie dans laquelle il faut s'engager pour transformer l'art oratoire en une véritable science'. "La rhétorique dans le *Gorgias* et le *Phèdre*," *Revue des Études Grecques* Tome 74, fascicule 351-353 (1961), p. 401.

qualify as an art for Plato if it both (1) issues from an accurate understanding of the nature of the things with which it deals, and (2) aims at the true well-being of those who come under its influence. A succinct way of describing these criteria, as indicated above, is to say that the latter is a demand for goodness, and the former for truth.

In the *Gorgias*, the evaluation of rhetoric's status as an art according to the first (i.e. epistemological) criterion is closely connected to the question of whether or not it is teachable. For Socrates, the very fact that Gorgias is employed as a teacher of rhetoric actually presupposes that he must have a detailed knowledge of rhetorical subjects, which he can then impart to his students in a regular and repeatable way. Nevertheless, Gorgias gives conflicting answers in response to Socrates' initial questions about whether or not rhetoric involves an actual knowledge of the subjects that it discusses. He initially assents to Socrates' definition of rhetoric as 'artificer' or 'producer of persuasion,' *πειθοῦς δημιουργός*,<sup>41</sup> and to the subsequent specification that the persuasion under discussion is that found 'in law courts and any public gatherings,' which concerns 'what is just and unjust'<sup>42</sup>. Next, Gorgias agrees to Socrates' suggestion that persuasion can in some cases be accompanied by knowledge, and in others by belief without knowledge.<sup>43</sup> Finally, in response to the question of exactly which kind of persuasion rhetoric produces in the law courts, in relation to the just and unjust, Gorgias claims that it produces the kind 'from which we get belief,' *ἐξ ἧς τὸ πιστεύειν*.<sup>44</sup> From this premise, Socrates therefore concludes that the orator 'does not know what is really good or bad, noble or base, just or unjust, but he has devised a persuasion to deal with

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<sup>41</sup> Plato, *Gorgias*, tr. W.R.M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 453 a.

<sup>42</sup> Plato, *Gorgias* 454b: 'περὶ τούτων ἃ ἔστι δίκαια τε καὶ ἄδικα'.

<sup>43</sup> Plato, *Gorgias* 454a: 'τὸ μὲν πίστιν παρεχόμενον ἄνευ τοῦ εἰδέναι, τὸ δ' ἐπιστήμην'.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

these matters so as to appear to those who, like himself, do not know to know better than he who knows.<sup>45</sup>

Although this conclusion is clearly supported by the premises that Gorgias himself has assented to, he backtracks from the explicit admission that he merely teaches his students to appear knowledgeable, while actually knowing nothing of what they say. Socrates attempts other lines of questioning, but they are impeded by Gorgias' reluctance to admit that he does not actually possess any firm knowledge of rhetorical subjects (i.e., the just and the unjust, the good and the shameful, etc). Later in the dialogue, after Gorgias' student Polus has come to his defense and taken over the discussion on his teacher's behalf, Socrates affirms explicitly what was merely implied in his interrogation of Gorgias, but which the latter was ashamed to admit out loud: that rhetoric is not an art, because it is not based on any real understanding of the nature of the things it discusses, and because it merely aims at flattering its audience. Consequently, at 462c Socrates denies to Polus that rhetoric ought to be considered an art (τέχνη); he claims that it is rather 'a certain habitude' or 'knack (ἐμπειρίαν [...] τινά).'<sup>46</sup>

Socrates justifies this claim by arguing that rhetoric is simply one branch of a more general practice that he calls 'flattery (κολακείαν).'<sup>47</sup> Socrates rejects the idea that

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<sup>45</sup> Plato, *Gorgias* 459c7 – 459d 3.

<sup>46</sup> Plato, *Gorgias* 462c 3.

<sup>47</sup> Plato, *Gorgias* 463b 1 – c 8. Initially, when pressed by Polus to explain exactly what the 'habitude' of rhetoric is for, Socrates declares that it is for 'producing a kind of gratification and pleasure (χάριτος τινος καὶ ἡδονῆς ἀπεργασίας).' (462c 7) Thereafter, having been asked further to clarify what he means by 'gratification (τὸ χαρίζεσθαι)', he does so by comparing the 'habitude' of rhetoric to another habitude, that of 'cookery (ὄψοποιία)' (462d 5 – e 4). Socrates' point in making this comparison is not, he tells Polus, that the two habitudes are the same, but rather that they are both 'parts of the same practice (τῆς αὐτῆς μὲν ἐπιτηδεύσεως μέρος).'(462e 4) Thereafter, as I have indicated, Socrates proceeds to give this 'practice', of which both rhetoric and cookery are parts, the name 'flattery (κολακείαν).' (463b 1 – c 8) As he goes on to explain, flattery is composed of four parts: 'one of them is cookery (ὄψοποιική)', another one rhetoric (τὴν ῥητορικὴν); the third is 'personal adornment (τὴν γε κομμωτικὴν)', and the fourth, 'sophistry (τὴν σοφιστικὴν)'. If what unites these four disparate practices is the fact that they all

‘flattery’ is truly an art for two main reasons: (1) firstly, because it ‘aims at the pleasant and ignores the best’<sup>48</sup>; and (2) secondly, and perhaps more to the point, he goes on to explain that ‘it is not an art, but a habitude, since it has no account to give of the real nature of the things it applies, and so cannot tell the cause of any of them.’<sup>49</sup> Here, we see both the epistemological and the ethical criteria, which I mentioned above, used to determine that rhetoric, or a specific kind of rhetoric, is not in fact an art, insofar as it is not based on any stable understanding of its subject matter, and only aims to please people without any concern for their real well-being.

Nevertheless, it is also crucial to point out that, near the end of the *Gorgias*, Socrates mentions another kind of rhetoric. This other rhetoric, unlike its shameful counterpart, ‘is noble’ because, according to Socrates, it takes as its purpose ‘the endeavor, that is, to make the citizens’ souls as good as possible, and the persistent effort to say what is best, whether it prove more or less pleasant to one’s hearers.’<sup>50</sup> Socrates immediately follows this with the remark that ‘this is a rhetoric you never yet saw’<sup>51</sup>. In this way, the fact that Plato recognizes the possibility of another kind of rhetoric, which would be different from the one he condemns in this dialogue, supports my (and Robin’s)

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aim to produce a certain gratification or pleasure, they are distinguished by Socrates from four other *true arts*, which are truly arts precisely because they aim not for pleasure but ‘for the best advantage respectively of the body and the soul (ἀεὶ πρὸς τὸ βέλτιστον θεραπευουσῶν τῶν μὲν τὸ σῶμα, τῶν δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν)’ (464c 5-7). In this sense, we are told, with respect to the ‘best advantage’ of the body we have the arts of ‘gymnastic and medicine (τὴν μὲν γυμναστικὴν, τὴν δὲ ἰατρικὴν)’; with respect to that of the soul, on the other hand, there are ‘legislation (τὴν νομοθετικὴν)’ and ‘justice (τὴν δικαιοσυνὴν)’ (464b 9 – c 1).

<sup>48</sup> Plato, *Gorgias* 465a 2-3: ‘τοῦ ἡδέος στοχάζεσθαι ἄνευ τοῦ βελτίστου’.

<sup>49</sup> Plato, *Gorgias* 465a 3-7: ‘τέχνην δὲ αὐτὴν οὐ φημι εἶναι ἀλλ’ ἐμπειρίαν, ὅτι οὐκ ἔχει λόγον οὐδένα ὧν προσφέρει, ὅποι’ ἄττα τὴν φύσιν ἐστίν, ὥστε τὴν αἰτίαν ἐκάστου μὴ ἔχειν εἰπεῖν.’

<sup>50</sup> Plato, *Gorgias* 503a 6-9: ‘τὸ δὲ ἕτερον καλόν, τὸ παρασκευάζειν ὅπως ὡς βέλτισται ἔσονται τῶν πολιτῶν αἱ ψυχαί, καὶ διαμάχεσθαι λέγοντα τὰ βέλτιστα, εἴτε ἡδίω εἴτε ἀηδέστερα ἔσται τοῖς ἀκούουσιν.’

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

contention that the Platonic critique of rhetoric is made in a *de facto* manner rather than a *de jure* one.

As mentioned above, the third section of Plato's *Phaedrus* (261d – 274a) repeats the denial that rhetoric is a genuine τέχνη, but then specifies the exact requirements it would have to meet in order to become one. Much as in the *Gorgias*, where the consideration that (i.e., existing) rhetoric is not an art follows from its definition as the 'artificer of persuasion,' in the *Phaedrus* it follows from the premise that rhetoric is, 'in its entire nature, an art which leads the soul by means of words,' τέχνη ψυχαγωγία τις διὰ λόγων<sup>52</sup>. To put it succinctly, if rhetoric's status as an art is dependent on its capacity to produce persuasion in a regular and predictable way, then a true art of rhetoric – that is to say a truly repeatable (and therefore teachable) art of producing persuasion in relation to any subject whatsoever – in fact requires an accurate knowledge of the subjects concerning which persuasion can be produced. The denial that existing rhetoric is a genuine art therefore assumes as an implicit premise that none of the teachers of rhetoric in Plato's day, as exemplified in the *Gorgias* by the historical personage of Gorgias himself, have succeeded in demonstrating that they possess this kind of knowledge. Therefore, if rhetoric's status as an art is dependent on its capacity to produce persuasion in a regular and repeatable way, and this capacity presupposes an accurate knowledge of rhetorical subjects that no teacher of rhetoric has hitherto obtained, then none of the extant forms of rhetoric will qualify as arts.

In numbered premises, the argument by means of which the *Phaedrus* arrives at this conclusion is as follows:

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<sup>52</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. H.N. Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 261a 8.

P1. Rhetoric is, ‘in its entire nature, an art which leads the soul by means of words’ (cited above).

P2. In e.g. law courts, where speaking concerns the just and unjust, rhetoric’s status as an art which leads the soul by means of words depends on the capacity to ‘make the same thing appear to the same persons at one time just and at another [...] unjust’<sup>53</sup>.

P3. Whether it concerns itself with the just/unjust, good/bad, etc., the rhetorical ability to make the same thing appear differently in speech to the same people assumes the ability to ‘produce a resemblance between all things between which it can be produced, and to bring to the light the resemblances produced and disguised by anyone else’<sup>54</sup>.

P4. Since producing persuasion, or leading the soul by words, depends on the ability to produce resemblances between all things between which any resemblance whatsoever can be produced, ‘he who is to deceive another, and is not to be deceived himself, must know accurately the similarities and dissimilarity of things’<sup>55</sup>.

P5. It is impossible (ἀδύνατον) to know that to which a thing is similar without an accurate knowledge of what that thing itself is.<sup>56</sup>

IC. Therefore, ‘he who does not understand the real nature of things will not possess the art of making his hearers pass from one thing to its opposite by leading them through the intervening resemblances, or of avoiding such deception himself’<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 261c/d: ‘οὐκοῦν ὁ τέχνη τοῦτο δρῶν ποιήσει φανῆναι τὸ αὐτὸ τοῖς αὐτοῖς τοῖς μὲν δίκαιον, ὅταν δὲ βούληται, ἄδικον’.

<sup>54</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 261e: ‘ἢ τις οἴος τ’ἔσται πᾶν παντὶ ὁμοιοῦν τῶν δυνατῶν καὶ οἷς δυνατόν, καὶ ἄλλου ὁμοιοῦντος καὶ ἀποκρυπτομένου εἰς φῶς ἄγειν’.

<sup>55</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 262a: ‘δεῖ ἄρα τὸν μέλλοντα ἀπατήσῃ μὲν ἄλλον, αὐτὸν δὲ μὴ ἀπατήσῃ, τὴν ὁμοιότητα τῶν ὄντων καὶ ἀνομοιότητα ἀκριβῶς διειδέναι’.

<sup>56</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 262b.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid: ‘ἔστιν οὖν ὅπως τεχνικὸς ἔσται μεταβιβάζειν κατὰ μικρὸν διὰ τῶν ὁμοιοτήτων ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος ἕκαστότε ἐπὶ τουναντίον ἀπάγων, ἢ αὐτὸς τοῦτο διαφεύγειν, ὃ μὴ ἐγνωρικῶς ὃ ἔστιν ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων’.

This is an intermediate conclusion, which is made more explicit by Socrates' repetition that 'he who knows not the truth, but pursues opinions, will [...] attain an art of speech which is ridiculous, and not an art at all'<sup>58</sup>. This effectively establishes that an art of rhetoric presupposes an accurate knowledge of rhetorical subjects, and that any teacher or practitioner of rhetoric that does not possess such knowledge is not actually practicing or teaching an art at all. Yet the argument continues from here, in such a way as to specify exactly what kind of knowledge is demanded by the regular, repeatable production of persuasion. As we shall presently see, this knowledge is in fact of two kinds. These two kinds of knowledge follow of necessity from P2 above, which holds that producing persuasion in relation to a given topic presupposes the ability, by means of words, to make the same thing appear differently to the same people at different times. As the ensuing argument makes clear, the knowledge of how to make a thing appear a certain way to a certain person or group of people involves not only a knowledge of the thing itself, which is to be made to appear in a certain way; it also involves knowledge of the person or people, to whom the object is to be made to appear in whatever way it must be made to appear.

For this reason, the *Phaedrus* goes on to establish that a genuine art of rhetoric, conceived as a repeatable method of producing persuasion, requires not only the knowledge of rhetorical topics, about which persuasion is to be produced, but also knowledge about the soul, as the subject that experiences this persuasion. Resuming Plato's argument from the intermediate conclusion that whoever lacks knowledge of

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<sup>58</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 262c: 'λόγων ἄρα τέχνων, ὧ ἐταίρε, ὁ τὴν ἀλήθειαν μὴ εἰδῶς, δόξας δὲ τεθηρευκῶς, γελοῖαν τινά, ὡς ἔοικε, καὶ ἄτεχνον παρέξεται'.

rhetorical topics will not possess a genuine art of rhetoric, the discussion continues as follows:

P8. The knowledge of things, on which the possibility of an art of producing persuasion rests, demands first of all that one ‘make a methodical division and acquire a clear impression of each class, that in which people must be in doubt and that in which they are not’<sup>59</sup>.

P9. In addition to this methodical division between the certain and the doubtful, the accurate knowledge of any given subject involves two necessary procedures: (a) ‘[t]hat of perceiving and bringing together in one idea the scattered particulars, that one may make clear by definition the particular thing which he wishes to explain’<sup>60</sup>; and (b) ‘[t]hat of dividing things again by classes, where the natural joints are, and not trying to break any apart, after the manner of a bad carver’<sup>61</sup>. Socrates calls the practitioners of this twofold procedure ‘dialecticians (διαλεκτικούς)’<sup>62</sup>.

P10. (Implied) The art of rhetoric and the art of medicine are analogous in that they both involve the application of certain devices to certain subjects. Just as medicine involves the application of drugs, poultices, leeches etc. to the body, so rhetoric involves the application of words and arguments about certain topics to the soul of an audience.<sup>63</sup>

P11. Because rhetoric applies words and arguments to the soul in a way that is parallel to the way in which medicine applies leeches etc. to the body, the art of rhetoric also

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<sup>59</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 263b: ‘τὸν μέλλοντα τέχνην ῥητορικὴν μετιέναι πρῶτον μὲν δεῖ ταῦτα ὁδῶ διηρῆσθαι, καὶ εἰληφέναι τινὰ χαρακτῆρα ἑκατέρου τοῦ εἶδους, ἐν ᾧ τε ἀνάγκη τὸ πλῆθος πλανᾶσθαι καὶ ἐν ᾧ μὴ’.

<sup>60</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 265d: ‘εἰς μίαν τε ἰδέαν συνορῶντα ἄγειν τὰ πολλαχῆ διεσπαρμένα, ἵνα ἕκαστον ὀριζόμενος δῆλον ποιῆ περὶ οὗ ἂν αἰεὶ διδάσκειν ἐθέλῃ’.

<sup>61</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 265e: ‘τὸ πάλιν κατ’ εἶδη δύνασθαι διατέμνειν κατ’ ἄρθρα ἢ πέφυκεν, καὶ μὴ ἐπιχειρεῖν καταγνύναι μέρος μηδέν, κακοῦ μαγείρου τρόπῳ χρώμενον’.

<sup>62</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 266c 1.

<sup>63</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 268a-b.

demands an understanding of the soul, in addition to the knowledge of rhetorical subjects, in the same way that medicine demands a knowledge of the body, in addition to the treatments used to heal it.<sup>64</sup>

P12. According to Hippocrates, the inquiry into a thing's nature demands that we ask 'first, whether that in respect to which we wish to be learned ourselves and to make others learned is simple or multiform, and then, if it is simple, enquire what power of acting it possesses, or of being acted upon, and by what, and if it has many forms, number them, and then see in the case of each form, [...] what its action is and how it is acted upon and by what'<sup>65</sup>.

Conclusion: A true art of rhetoric, conceived as a repeatable method of producing persuasion in the soul of an audience in relation to different topics, demands knowledge not only about the subjects concerning which persuasion is to be produced, but also about the soul. Specifically, the knowledge of the soul that is demanded by a true art of speaking must satisfy the following criteria: (a) it must first explain the soul's nature (φύσιν), i.e. 'describe the soul with perfect accuracy and make us see whether it is one and all alike, or, like the body, of multiform aspect'<sup>66</sup>; (b) secondly, it must 'say what its

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 270d. Socrates thus affirms that '[i]n both cases you must analyze a nature, in one that of the body and in the other that of the soul, if you are to proceed in a scientific manner, not merely by practice and routine, to impart health and strength to the body by prescribing medicine and diet, or by proper discourses and training to give to the soul the desired belief and virtue (ἐν ἀμφοτέραις δεῖ διελέσθαι φύσιν, σώματος μὲν ἐν τῇ ἑτέρᾳ, ψυχῆς δὲ ἐν τῇ ἑτέρᾳ εἰ μέλλεις, μὴ τρίβῃ μόνον καὶ ἐμπειρίᾳ ἀλλὰ τέχνῃ, τῷ μὲν φάρμακα καὶ τροφήν προσθέρων ὑγίειαν καὶ ῥώμην ἐμποιῆσεν, τῇ δὲ λόγους τε καὶ ἐπιτηδεύσεις νομίμους πειθῶ ἢ βούλη καὶ ἀρετὴν παραδῶσειν).'

<sup>65</sup> Ibid: 'πρῶτον μὲν, ἀπλοῦν ἢ πολυειδές ἐστὶν οὐ περὶ βουλησόμεθα εἶναι αὐτοὶ τεχνοκοὶ καὶ ἄλλον δυνατοὶ ποιεῖν, ἔπειτα δέ, ἂν μὲν ἀπλοῦν ἦ, σκοπεῖν τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ, τίνα πρὸς τί πέφυκεν εἰς τὸ δρᾶν ἔχον ἢ τίνα εἰς τὸ πάθειν ὑπὸ τοῦ [...] ἐὰν δὲ πλείω εἶδη ἔχη, ταῦτα ἀριθμησάμενον, ὅπερ ἐφ' ἑνός, τοῦτ' ἰδεῖν ἐφ' ἑκάστου, τῷ τί ποιεῖν αὐτὸ πέφυκεν ἢ τῷ τί παθεῖν ὑπὸ τοῦ'.

<sup>66</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 271a: 'πρῶτον πάσῃ ἀκριβείᾳ γράψει τε καὶ ποιήσει ψυχὴν ἰδεῖν, πότερον ἓν καὶ ὅμοιον πέφυκεν ἢ κατὰ σώματος μορφὴν πολυειδές'.

action is and toward what it is directed, or how it is acted upon and by what'<sup>67</sup>; and (c) it must thirdly 'classify the speeches and the souls and [...] adapt each to the other, showing the causes of the effects produced and why one kind of soul is necessarily persuaded by certain classes of speeches, and another is not.'<sup>68</sup>

As I have argued, the Platonic denial that rhetoric is a genuine art is made in a *de facto* manner. This is evident in the *Gorgias*, which on the one hand contends that the rhetoric practiced and taught by Gorgias himself is not an art, but on the other indicates that an art of rhetoric is nevertheless possible, pending the satisfaction of certain criteria. Plato's argument in the *Phaedrus* then establishes in detail what these criteria are.<sup>69</sup> The major consequence of the discussion I have just reconstructed is that, in order to become a genuine art, rhetoric must according to Plato align itself with the philosophical concern for truth, instead of aiming at what is plausible or probable only. This consequence is made explicit in the *Phaedrus*, when Socrates affirms that a true art of rhetoric depends on the orientation of speaking towards truth, rather than towards probability (τὸ εἰκὸς), which 'is accepted by the people because of its likeness to truth', δι' ὁμοιότητα τοῦ ἀληθοῦς<sup>70</sup>. The demand for this orientation towards truth is evident in another of

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<sup>67</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 271a 8: 'δεύτερον δέ γε, ὅτῳ τί ποιεῖν ἢ πάθειν ὑπὸ τοῦ πέφυκεν'.

<sup>68</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 271b 1-4: 'τρίτον δὲ δὴ διαταξάμενος τὰ λόγων τε καὶ ψυχῆς γένη καὶ τὰ τούτων παθήματα δεισι πάσας αἰτίας, προσαρμόττων ἕκαστον ἕκαστῷ καὶ διδάσκων οἷα οὔσα ὑφ' οἷων λόγων δι' ἦν αἰτίαν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἢ μὲν πείθεται, ἢ δὲ ἀπειθεῖ'.

<sup>69</sup> My understanding of the rapport between these two dialogues is again supported by Kucharski, who argues that 'il apparaît que les considérations sur la rhétorique développées par Platon dans le *Gorgias* et le *Phèdre* ne répondent pas seulement aux mêmes problèmes, mais qu'elles y apportent aussi des solutions analogues.' "La rhétorique dans le *Gorgias* et le *Phèdre*," p. 399.

<sup>70</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 273d.

Socrates' remarks earlier in the *Phaedrus*, where he tells Phaedrus that 'unless he pay proper attention to philosophy he will never be able to speak properly about anything'<sup>71</sup>.

At the same time, this raises an important question about the real nature of the Platonic critique of rhetoric. At times in the *Phaedrus*, as well as in the *Gorgias*, Socrates indicates that rhetoric must attain a kind of scientific knowledge of rhetorical subjects if it is to merit the status of an art. Yet, at other points, as in the last-cited passage, he rather claims that the key to an art of speaking is rather 'proper attention to philosophy'.

Nevertheless, are 'proper attention to philosophy' and the attainment of technical knowledge the same thing? Socrates' claim elsewhere in the *Phaedrus* that philosophical reason is a kind of madness<sup>72</sup>, a mania in which the philosopher is possessed and out of his mind, suggests that philosophical thought cannot be identified with the controlled, self-possessed mastery that accompanies technical knowledge of a given subject.

Therefore, if we follow the first kind of criterion, which states that a complete, scientific mastery of rhetorical subjects is necessary to found an art of rhetoric, Plato's standard for reform seems quite strict. But if we interpret the critique as presupposing the second kind of criterion, which states that an art of rhetoric demands 'proper attention to philosophy,' and therefore demands a concern for the truth and not necessarily its full possession or mastery, the possibility of a successful reform along Platonic lines seems more likely.

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<sup>71</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 261a 4-5: 'ἐὰν μὴ ἱκανῶς φιλοσοφήσῃ, οὐδὲ ἱκανὸς ποτε λέγειν ἔσται περὶ οὐδενός'.

<sup>72</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 249d – 250 a. Gonzalez's comments on this passage are very helpful: '[t]he madness or possession by a god that characterizes the philosopher is described as *recollection*, that is, being reminded by something beautiful here of the true beauty beyond the heavens [...]. This is a type of madness because, in transporting one to a beyond, it both neglects what is here below (□□□d□) and cannot clearly see what lies beyond.' See F.J. Gonzalez, "The Hermeneutics of Madness: Poet and Philosopher in Plato's *Ion* and *Phaedrus*," in (eds.) P. Destrée & F.-G. Hermann (Paris: Brill, 2011), p. 103.

To summarize, the Platonic criteria that rhetoric must satisfy to be counted as a genuine art of speaking are as follows: (a) it must be able to draw a global distinction between things concerning which people can be in doubt, and those concerning which they cannot; (b) it must be based on an understanding of, or at least an orientation towards truth concerning the subjects in regard which it is to produce persuasion (such as, for example, the just and the unjust etc); and (c) it must also possess, or be oriented towards a similar knowledge of the soul, concerning what the soul is in general, how it acts, how it is acted upon, and by what. These three criteria represent the substance of Plato's qualified critique of rhetoric as I have outlined it above.

### **2.3 Plato's Criticism of Poetry as an Art: *Ion* and *Republic***

As mentioned, Robin introduces the *de facto* / *de jure* distinction only with respect to the Platonic critique of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, and not with respect to what Plato says about poetry. Nevertheless, I will demonstrate in the following that this distinction can and should be extended to account for the Platonic critique of poetry as well.

As mentioned already, Plato's critique of poetic imitation (μίμησις) in the *Ion* questions its status as an art, and Book X of the *Republic* allegorically expels the poets from the ideal city, thereby calling poetry's educational value into doubt. Nevertheless, as in the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, Plato also suggests in the latter text that poetry could perhaps be allowed to return to the ideal city, if it could somehow render itself more amenable to the moral and philosophical education that is needed to steer the souls of its citizens towards what is best. Based on the fact that, here too, Plato leaves open the possibility of a reformation of poetic μίμησις that would allow it to re-enter the *polis*, I

accordingly argue that the Platonic critique of poetry is also made in a *de facto* manner rather than a *de jure* one. This reading is again supported by Halliwell, who even speculates that Plato's remarks in *Republic X* about the possibility of a reformed poetry, which would have a place in the ideal city, actually 'anticipates the riposte which his attack on the poetic core of traditional Greek culture was to receive from his own distinguished pupil.'<sup>73</sup> Whether or not Plato actually had Aristotle's views on poetry in mind when he wrote about the possibility of a reformed μίμησις, it will be shown in the following that his critique most certainly admits the possibility of such a reform.

Before examining the relevant passages of the *Ion* and *Republic*, it will be helpful to begin with a remark made by Socrates near the end of the *Gorgias*. In the passage in question, Callicles assents to Socrates' suggestion that not only rhetoric, but also tragic poetry, ἡ τῆς τραγωδίας ποίησις, 'is bent rather upon pleasure and the gratification of the spectators', and not upon their true well-being.<sup>74</sup> As a result of this Socrates classifies poetry too 'as a kind of public speaking'<sup>75</sup>, which effectively extends Plato's arguments against rhetoric in the *Gorgias* to include poetry as well. Another relevant consideration is Socrates' remark in the *Phaedrus* that '[a]ll great arts demand discussion and high speculation about nature'<sup>76</sup>. In this sense, if poetry, or rhetoric, or for that matter any other activity is to be considered a genuine τέχνη, Plato holds in the *Phaedrus* that it must be based on, or oriented towards an understanding of the nature, φυσέως περὶ, of its subject matter.

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<sup>73</sup> Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 1. Nevertheless Halliwell recognizes that this specific hypothesis would seem to imply that Aristotle's *Poetics* and Plato's *Republic* were published in relative proximity to one another, which is 'chronologically difficult' to uphold (ibid).

<sup>74</sup> Plato, *Gorgias* 502b 9 – c 2: 'πρὸς τὴν ἡδονὴν μᾶλλον ὤρμηται καὶ τὸ χαρίζεσθαι τοῖς θεαταῖς'.

<sup>75</sup> Plato, *Gorgias* 502c 9: 'δημηγορία ἄρα τίς ἐστὶν ἡ ποιητικὴ'.

<sup>76</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 269e 8-9: 'Πᾶσαι ὅσαι μεγάλαι τῶν τεχνῶν, προσδέονται ἀδολεσχίας καὶ μετεωρολογίας φυσέως περὶ'.

Yet, in the *Ion* specifically, this is precisely what poets lack according to Socrates. In fact, in turning to the *Ion* and *Republic* we will find that the Platonic critique of poetry employs more or less the same criteria of goodness and truth that are used in the *Gorgias* to argue that rhetoric is not an art. In the *Ion*, Socrates employs the latter to argue that poetic activity is not the result of any art, much as he argues in the *Gorgias* with respect to the art of speaking. He thus contends that poetry does not satisfy the epistemological requirement that a genuine art must satisfy, because it is not based on any real understanding of the things that poetry imitates. At 534b – c, for instance, Socrates claims to Ion that ‘it is not by art (οὐ τέχνη) that [i.e., poets] compose and utter so many fine things about the deeds of men [...] but by a divine dispensation (ἀλλὰ θεία μοίρα)’.<sup>77</sup> He repeats this several times throughout the dialogue, emphasizing that poetic imitation is caused ‘not by art [...], but by divine influence (θεία δυνάμει); since, if [i.e. poets] had fully learnt by art to speak on one kind of theme, they would know how to speak on all.’<sup>78</sup> Here, as in the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, the possibility of τέχνη is in part tied to that of knowledge.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Plato, *Ion*, trans. W.R.M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 534b 9 – c 1.

<sup>78</sup> Plato, *Ion* 534c 5-8: ‘οὐ γὰρ τέχνη ταῦτα λέγουσιν ἀλλὰ θεία δυνάμει· ἐπεὶ, εἰ περὶ ἑνὸς τέχνη καλῶς ἠπίσταντο λέγειν, κἂν περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων.’

<sup>79</sup> At the same time, it must also be recognized that Socrates himself lacks the kind of knowledge that he accuses Ion of lacking. For this reason, to the extent that throughout Plato’s dialogues Socrates frequently discusses those kinds of things that he observes the poets discussing in their verses, the dilemma into which he forces Ion at the end of the dialogue (542a 2-7) – that is, the dilemma of either admitting that he possesses technical knowledge of things *other* than poetry (i.e., warfare, navigation and other things that poets discuss), and therefore is a liar who misrepresents his real occupation, or admitting that his rhapsodies are the result of divine possession, and therefore not of any real technical knowledge – applies to him as well. This basic fact seems to undermine the sharp distinction suggested throughout both *Ion* between the poet and the philosopher, the madman who is out of his mind and the fully rational, self-possessed *technikos*. According to F.J. Gonzalez, ‘[g]iven that Socrates presents himself as neither a *technikos* nor out of his mind, the choice into which he forces Ion appears to be one from which he excludes himself.’ “The Hermeneutics of Madness,” p. 99. Rather than identify philosophical activity with either technical knowledge or divine inspiration, Gonzalez treats it (as exemplified in the person of Socrates) as their ongoing mediation.

In the *Republic*, we find both epistemological and ethical criteria at play in the censure and subsequent banishment of poetic imitation. It is crucial to understand that the *Republic* in fact contains *two* critiques of poetry: one in Book III, and another in Book X. In both cases the problematic nature of poetry is closely linked to the pleasure, ἡ ἡδονή, which it produces in the audience. Book III scrutinizes both the content (the ‘stories’ or λόγων themselves) and the form (λέξις) of different genres of μίμησις, and excludes precisely those that produce excessive gratification. The problem of gratification in this text underscores what Plato evidently considers to be the ethical shortcomings of poetic imitation, conceived as a form of civic education. According to *Republic* III, the pleasure produced by poetic μίμησις is closely connected both to the general variety of things imitated, and to the intensity of the emotions that human beings in particular are depicted as experiencing.

Concerning the latter, both the comic depiction of excessive gaiety, and the tragic depiction of excessive grief, can lead to a duplication of the same emotions in the soul of the audience. Specifically with respect to the tragic portrayal of grief, Halliwell explains that ‘tragedy appeals to powerful grief-directed impulses in the psyche; and the psychology of audiences can in turn be influenced by, through being *assimilated to*, that of tragic heroes.’<sup>80</sup> However, Plato’s point in Book III of the *Republic* does not simply concern the tragic depiction of excessive grief: it is rather that *all* portrayals violent emotion, as well as those of lying, plundering and all other kinds of impiety, risk setting a poor example for those who witness them, and thereby threaten the self-control

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<sup>80</sup> S. Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 112.

(σωφρόσυνη) of the citizenry.<sup>81</sup> Any representation of non-virtuous action, or of those emotions that typically accompany it, is therefore excluded as a result of this discussion.

The censorship of poetry is progressively extended in the ensuing lines of Book III from its content to its form. At 392c – 394 e, Socrates accordingly differentiates between three kinds of ‘style,’ τὸ δὲ λέξεως, in which events can be related: either (i) by ‘simple narrative,’ ἀπλῆ διηγήσει; (ii) ‘by means of imitation,’ διὰ μιμήσεως γιγνομένη; or (iii) ‘a combination of both,’ δι’ ἀμφοτέρων περαίνουσιν.<sup>82</sup> Socrates then poses the crucial question of the entire discussion, which is ‘whether we are going to let our poets compose their narrative using imitation, or have some works with imitation, others without, and which each shall be.’<sup>83</sup>

The answer to this question in fact rests on another question, which is according to Socrates ‘whether our guardians have to be capable of imitation or not.’<sup>84</sup> Here ‘imitation’ is understood in the more general sense of *impersonation*, regardless of

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<sup>81</sup> Plato, *Republic Books I-V*, trans. C. Emlyn-Jones & W. Preddy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). At 387e 9 Socrates accordingly suggests at 387e 9 that the ‘lamentations of men of good standing (τοὺς θρήνους τῶν ὀνομαστῶν ἀνδρῶν)’ should not be shown to citizens of the ideal city. Several lines below, he argues that it is equally unacceptable ‘when someone portrays men who deserve respect being overcome by laughter (οὔτε ἄρα ἀνθρώπους ἀξίους λόγου κρατούμενους ὑπὸ γέλωτος ἂν τις ποιῆ), and even less so if they are gods (πολύ δὲ ἦττον, εἰάν θεούς).’ (388 e 10) Socrates continues in this way to censor all those kinds of scenes that depict people behaving in ways that are at odds with the rational, self-controlled conduct of the ideal citizen: he thus excludes the depiction of lying (389b 2 – d 10), as well as any scene representing the excessive enjoyment of ‘drink, sex and food (αὐτοὺς δὲ ἄρχοντας τῶν περὶ πότους καὶ ἀφροδίσια καὶ περὶ ἐδοδᾶς ἡδονῶν).’ (389e 2-3) His justification for this censorship is that he doubts such depictions ‘are suitable for the young to hear for the benefit of their self-control (οὐ γὰρ οἶμαι εἷς γε σωφροσύνην νέοις ἐπιτήδεια ἀκούειν); but if it provides any other pleasure, that is not surprising (εἰ δὲ τινα ἄλλην ἡδονὴν παρέχεται, θαυμαστὸν οὐδέν).’ (390a 5-6) He then goes on to censor any scene that depicts heroes or gods taking part in ‘terrible plundering raids (δεινὰς ἀρπαγὰς)’ and all other ‘impious deeds (τολμῆσαι)’ (391d 1-2), and also excludes any kind of imitation that portrays a character profiting from evil, or else suffering as a result of just actions (392b-c).

<sup>82</sup> Plato, *Republic* 392d 6-7. As the next lines make clear, ‘imitation’ is when a poet ‘makes a speech as if he were another person (ὅταν γέ τινα λέγῃ ῥῆσιν ὡς τις ἄλλος ὢν)’ (393c 2).

<sup>83</sup> Plato, *Republic* 394d 2-4: ‘πότερον ἐάσομεν τοὺς ποιητὰς μιμουμένους ἡμῖν τὰς διηγήσεις ποιῆσθαι ἢ τὰ μὲν μιμουμένους. καὶ ὅποια ἑκάτερα.’

<sup>84</sup> Plato, *Republic* 394e 1: ‘πότερον μιμητικούς ἡμῖν δεῖ εἶναι τὰς φύλακας ἢ οὐ.’

whether this is done for ‘poetic’ purposes or not. The answer to this second question is a conditional one: it stipulates that *if* the guardians are to be allowed to engage in imitation of any kind, it should be the imitation of things that are ‘appropriate,’ προσήκοντα, to the education they have received since childhood: things such as ‘brave, temperate men, pious, free, and all such things’<sup>85</sup>. Conversely, the imitation of those things that are inappropriate to the guardians’ education is strictly forbidden: ‘they must not do anything contrary to liberty, nor be good at imitating it, nor anything else that is classed as shameful, in order that they may gain no enjoyment of the reality from their imitation of it.’<sup>86</sup>

The implication here is that the imitation of any action can have a powerful influence on the habits (ἥθη) of the imitator. The reason why the guardian class is forbidden from imitating anything that is inappropriate to their education is thus that, through the enjoyment of simply mimicking the impious and cowardly actions of others, they could inadvertently develop a taste for the real versions of these actions themselves. This is made explicit in the next line, where Socrates explains that ‘if imitations continue from childhood on, they become natural habits, physically, vocally and mentally’<sup>87</sup>. Consequently, imitation is permitted in Book III, but only with respect to the kind of action that coincides with the moral education of the ideal city’s populace.

Book III thus distinguishes between two kinds of imitation: a restricted kind, which is limited to depicting noble actions only, and an unrestricted kind, which is characterized by the variety of the things it represents. Socrates states that the

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<sup>85</sup> Plato, *Republic* 395c 2-4: ‘ἀνδρείους, σώφρονας, ὀσίους, ἐλευθέρους, καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πάντα’.

<sup>86</sup> Plato, *Republic* 394c 4-9: ‘τὰ δὲ ἀνελεύθερα μήτε ποιεῖν μήτε δεινούς εἶναι μιμήσασθαι, μηδὲ ἄλλο μηδὲν τῶν αἰσχυρῶν, ἵνα μὴ ἐκ τῆς μιμήσεως τοῦ εἶναι ἀπολαύσωσιν.’

<sup>87</sup> Plato, *Republic* 395d 1-3: ‘αἱ μιμήσεις, εἴαν ἐκ νέων πόρρω διατελέσωσιν, εἰς ἥθη τε καὶ φύσιν καθίστανται καὶ κατὰ σῶμα καὶ φωνᾶς καὶ κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν’.

unrestricted kind of imitation, which represents any number of things (thunder, wind, hail, the creaking of axels and pulleys, the sound of trumpets, flutes, dogs, sheep and birds etc.), requires a corresponding variety in its diction, mode and meter. It follows from this correspondence that the more variation there is in things that are imitated, the more variation there will be in the style of the imitation. Conversely, the less variation in subject matter, the less variation there will be in formal elements.

Importantly, the pleasure elicited by imitations is inherently tied to the variety of things that are imitated, and the corresponding variety in meter and diction that this requires: as Socrates affirms, ‘the one with the mixed elements is delightful; and by far the most delightful to children and their teachers and to the majority of the common people.’<sup>88</sup> It is precisely this kind of imitation, which produces the most pleasure in the audience by virtue of the variety of its content and form, that is excluded from the ideal city. Socrates suggests accordingly that, if an expert of this saccharine kind of imitation tried to enter the ideal city, the rulers ‘would revere him as inspired (ἱερὸν), wonderful (θαυμαστὸν) and delightful (ἡδύν),’ but would ultimately turn him away.<sup>89</sup> The reason for this is that, according to Socrates, the rulers ‘would employ a more austere and less pleasing poet and story teller on account of his usefulness (ὠφελίας ἔνεκα), who could reproduce for us the diction of a decent man and who would express his words in the forms which we laid down from the beginning when we undertook to educate our soldiery.’<sup>90</sup> In *Republic* III, it is therefore a question of two kinds of imitation, one of

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<sup>88</sup> Plato, *Republic* 397d 4-7: ‘ἡδύς γε καὶ κεκραμένος, πολὺ δὲ ἡδιστος παισί τε καὶ παιδαγωγούσιν [...] καὶ τῶ πλείστῳ ὄχλῳ.’

<sup>89</sup> Plato, *Republic* 398a 4-5.

<sup>90</sup> Plato, *Republic* 398a 9 – b 4: ‘αὐτοὶ δ’ ἂν τῶ ἀσθηροτέρῳ καὶ ἀηδεστέρω ποιητῇ χρώμεθα καὶ μυθολόγῳ ὠφελίας ἔνεκα, ὅς ἡμῖν τὴν τοῦ ἐπιεικοῦς λέξιν μιμοῖτο καὶ τὰ λεγόμενα λέγοι ἐν

which is restricted to the representation of noble actions and words only, and the other of which is unrestricted in scope. Most importantly, only the former kind of imitation has a place in Plato's ideal city, because only this kind is limited to the depiction of actions that are compatible with the moral education of the citizenry. As a consequence of this limited scope in content, this other kind of poetry does not generate excessive gratification in the audience.

In turning to examine Plato's banishment of the poets from the ideal city in Book X, we will see that pleasure remains an important criterion, but that the discussion also relies on the kind of epistemological considerations that we previously saw at play in the *Ion*. Nevertheless, in *Republic X* these epistemological considerations appear in a form that is in some ways different from that in which we have hitherto encountered them. To be precise, they appear at first in the form of considerations that are more properly described as ontological. Nevertheless, to the extent that being and knowing are for Plato necessarily correlated, these ontological considerations are in fact nothing other than the obverse of the epistemological critique that we have already seen. Their correlation follows necessarily from the discussion of the divided line and the analogy of the cave in *Republic VI* and *VII*, both of which presuppose that intelligibility and reality are reciprocally determined.<sup>91</sup>

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ἐκείνοις τοῖς τύποις οἷς κατ' ἀρχὰς ἐνομοθετήσαμεθα, ὅτε τοὺς στρατιώτας ἐπεχειροῦμεν παιδεύειν.'

<sup>91</sup> In one passage, Socrates accordingly mentions 'the real and intelligible,' τοῦ ὄντος τε καὶ νοητοῦ, as if the two are interchangeable (511c 7). Later in Book VII, this is confirmed when Socrates refers to the world outside the cave, which analogically represents the intelligible world as opposed to the visible world of becoming, simply as 'being,' τὸ ὄν (518d 1). This correlation between being and knowing, which is fundamental to the Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato's dialogues, means that only that which truly is can truly be known. In other words, Plato's epistemology and his ontology are two sides of the same coin.

In fact, Plato's critique of poetic imitation in *Republic X* begins with an ontological analysis of the imitated work, and proceeds from there to the epistemological corollary of this analysis, which is the contention we have already seen in the *Ion*, according to which the poet does not possess any real knowledge of the things he imitates. This ontological analysis begins by placing works of imitation in general within the context of the doctrine of Ideas. What is crucial to grasp here is that the Idea of a thing is what that thing really is in itself, καθ' αὐτό; the Idea of a thing is in other words the highest reality, the very truth of what that thing is. Using the example of a bed, Socrates shows that on this doctrine there are 'actually three beds': firstly there is 'one that really exists in nature,' i.e. the intelligible Idea of the bed in itself; secondly there is 'one created by a carpenter'; and finally 'one created by the painter.'<sup>92</sup> Crucially, according to this discussion, there is only one real bed, and that is the Idea of the bed in itself. Next in terms of reality is the particular bed, which is made by this or that craftsmen, and is therefore perishable. Finally, last in the series is the image of the bed that is made by the painter. Consequent to this analysis, the painted image of the bed is seen to be 'three stages away from nature'<sup>93</sup>. The tragic poet, whose products are on a level parallel to that of the painter, is likewise deemed to be 'three stages away from the king and the truth'<sup>94</sup>.

This conclusion is confirmed in the following lines by the addition of a crucial premise. Within the context of the three levels of reality distinguished above, the notion that the imitator's product is necessarily three times removed from the truth presupposes

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<sup>92</sup> Plato, *Republic* 597b-c: 'τριττὰι τινες κλῖναι αὐταὶ γίγονται [...] μία μὲν ἢ ἐν τῇ φύσει οὖσα [...] μία δὲ γὰρ ἢν ὁ τέκτων [...] μία δὲ ἢν ὁ ζωγράφος.'

<sup>93</sup> Plato, *Republic* 597e 3: 'τὸν τοῦ τρίτου ἄρα γεννήματος ἀπὸ τῆς φύσεως μιμητὴν'.

<sup>94</sup> Plato, *Republic* 597e 7-8: 'ὁ τραγωδοποιός [...] τρίτος τις ἀπὸ βασιλέως καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας πεφυκώς'.

that the thing imitated is not the real nature of the thing, i.e. the Idea itself, but rather the perishable thing, which is merely a likeness of the first. Again using the example of the bed, to show that the painted image of the bed is three times removed from nature, we must hold that the painter's model is the perishable bed made by the carpenter, and not the real nature, or Idea of the bed in itself.<sup>95</sup> To see the implications of this, we need only recall the mutual correlation between being and knowing, which follows of necessity from the analogies of the cave and the divided line in Books VI and VII. According to these analogies, only what truly is can be truly known. Yet according to the ontological analysis of imitation in Book X, it is clear that what the imitator imitates is not the reality of the Idea in itself, but rather the particular, *περὶ ἕκαστον*. Therefore, to the extent that this particular thing, whatever it is, belongs to the sensible world of becoming rather than to the intelligible world of *τὸ ὄν*, it is a thing about which no real knowledge is even possible.

The imitator's fundamental lack of knowledge about the real nature of the things he imitates thus follows of necessity from the premise that imitation, at least in its existing forms, is necessarily of particular, perishable things. From here, the critique of poetic imitation in *Republic X* briefly converges with that of the *Ion*, returning to the contention that imitators, tragic poets included, have no real knowledge about the things they imitate: 'the imitator knows nothing worth mentioning about the objects he's

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<sup>95</sup> See Plato, *Republic* 598b 1-3. Socrates therefore asks about the purpose of painting 'as regards individual objects (*ἡ γραφικὴ πεποιήται περὶ ἕκαστον*)'. Specifically, the question asks whether the aim of imitation in general is to imitate 'what the real object is (*πρὸς τὸ ὄν*),' or only 'its appearance (*ἡ τὸ φαινόμενον*)'. The answer is that imitation is of the appearance of a thing rather than its real nature or Idea, and this consideration effectively brings the ontological critique of *μίμησις* into agreement with the epistemological critique that we have already seen in the *Ion*.

portraying [...].<sup>96</sup> In the remainder of Book X, the fact that imitation is not based on any knowledge is also used to show that μίμησις appeals to a part of the soul other than the reasonable part. Here, we return once again to the ethical criteria that were employed in Book III. The products of both the poet and the painter are thus associated with a similar part of the soul, ‘but not with the best part.’<sup>97</sup> This again justifies the poet’s exile from the ideal city, but in this case it is not just the poet of the mixed variety, nor even just poetry in general, but rather *all* forms of imitation, to the extent that they imitate particular things and not the truth, which must be excluded for the good of the city. Ultimately, the reason for this is that the imitator ‘arouses and fosters this [i.e. lower] part of the soul, and by strengthening it he destroys the rational part’<sup>98</sup>.

The critique of poetic μίμησις in *Republic X* culminates with Socrates’ contention that tragic poetry is a product of ‘the Muse of delight,’ ἡ ἡδυσμένη Μοῦσα. As a result of this constitutive connection between poetry and gratification, Socrates once again rejects the educational value of poetic imitation in its existing forms, claiming at 607a that ‘if you allow the Muse of delight in lyric and epic, then both pleasure and pain will rule in your state instead of law and the thing which appears to be the best for the common interest at all times, namely reason.’<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, in the same way that Socrates mentions in both the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus* the possibility of a *reformed* rhetoric, which would be worthy of the status of an art, he also goes on in the subsequent lines of the *Republic* to indicate the possibility of reform for poetry as well. He observes

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<sup>96</sup> Plato, *Republic* 602b 5-6: ‘τὸν τε μιμητικὸν μηδὲν εἰδέναι ἄξιον λόγου περὶ ὧν μιμεῖται’.

<sup>97</sup> Plato, *Republic* 605b 1: ‘ἀλλὰ’ μὴ πρὸς βέλτιστον’.

<sup>98</sup> Plato, *Republic* 605b 3-5: ‘ὅτι τοῦτο ἐγείρει τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τρέφει καὶ ἰσχυρὸν ποιῶν ἀπόλλυσι τὸ λογιστικόν’.

<sup>99</sup> Plato, *Republic Books 6-10*, trans. C. Emlyn-Jones & W. Preddy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 607a 7-10: ‘εἰ δὲ τὴν ἡδυσμένην Μοῦσαν παραδέξῃ ἐν μέλεσιν ἢ ἔπεσιν, ἡδονὴ καὶ λύπη ἐν τῇ πόλει βασιλεύσει ἀντὶ νόμου τε καὶ τοῦ κοῖνη αἰεὶ δόξαντος εἶναι βελτίστου λόγου.’

that the rulers of the ideal city ‘would grant [i.e. poetry’s] champions, not those who are actual poets, but lovers of poetry, the right to make a defense on her behalf in prose, on the grounds that she is not only pleasing but also beneficial to political systems and human life [...]’<sup>100</sup>

This possibility of reform is also made explicit a few lines below, when Socrates reiterates that the rulers of the ideal city ‘will be well disposed toward [i.e. poetry], to have her appear the best and truest possible’<sup>101</sup>. In these words, we can clearly see the same two ethical and epistemological criteria, which we saw at play in the Platonic critique of rhetoric above. Specifically with respect to the possibility of a genuine art of poetic imitation, these two criteria postulate that poetry must on the one hand aim for more than mere gratification of its audience, and on the other, it must be based on, or oriented towards the truth of the things that it imitates. This last demand in particular requires that poetic imitation be modeled on the truth of that which really is, rather than on the appearance of particular, perishable things, concerning which no knowledge is even possible.<sup>102</sup> The implicit conclusion is therefore that *true* imitation is imitation of that which is true.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Plato, *Republic* 607d 1-5: ‘δοῖμεν δέ γε που ἂν καὶ τοῖς προστάταις αὐτῆς, ὅσοι μὴ ποιητικοί, φιλοποιηταὶ δέ, ἄνευ μέτρου λόγον ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς ἐπεῖν, ὡς οὐ μόνον ἡδεῖα ἀλλὰ καὶ ὠφελίμη πρὸς τὰς πολιτείας καὶ τὸν βίον τὸν ἀνθρώπινόν ἐστίν.’

<sup>101</sup> Plato, *Republic* 608a 2-3: ‘εὖνοι μὲν ἐσόμεθα φανῆναι αὐτὴν ὡς βελτίστην καὶ ἀληθεστάτην’.

<sup>102</sup> It is interesting to note that these epistemological and ethical dimensions of the Platonic critique of poetry are mutually implicative, in that the pleasure produced by poetic μίμησις is closely linked to the variety of particular things it is able to imitate. Accordingly the greater the variety of particular things portrayed in a work of imitation, the more pleasure it will generate by the corresponding stylistic variations of meter, diction and modes that are demanded by these frequent shifts in represented content.

<sup>103</sup> Accordingly, there is a strong case to be made for the idea that philosophy itself, and the virtuous life that it makes possible (as exemplified in the person of Socrates) are the real kinds of imitation. C. Collobert supports this view, arguing that ‘[t]he only relevant *mimēsis* is therefore that which exhibits itself in *praxis*, and philosophy is such *praxis* for Plato.’ “Poetry As Flawed Reproduction: Possession and Mimesis,” in *Plato and the Poets*, p. 61. As I will show in the final section of this chapter, Aristotle’s *Poetics* should be

## 2.4 Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as a Response to Plato

I will begin my discussion of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* by mentioning two interesting historical facts. First fact: Aristotle composed and published an unspecified number of dialogues, mere fragments of which have survived to the present day. Yet the contents of one lost dialogue in particular, the *Gryllus*, are mentioned by Quintilian in his *Institutio Oratoria* as evidence that Aristotle did not consider rhetoric to be a legitimate art. In the relevant passage, Quintilian lists the names of all known authors who have argued in one way or another that rhetoric is not a τέχνη, and gives examples of the arguments typically used to justify this claim. He states that 'Aristotle, it is true, in his *Gryllus* produces some tentative arguments [i.e. denying that rhetoric is an art], which are marked by characteristic ingenuity.'<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, Quintilian doubts that Aristotle was sincere in these arguments, judging by the fact that he also wrote three books about oratory, in the first of which he not only claims that rhetoric is an art, but also treats it as a subsection of politics and dialectic.<sup>105</sup> The point of departure for the present discussion is thus the apparent dilemma in Quintilian's two observations: on the one hand, Aristotle evidently wrote a dialogue denying that rhetoric is an art, and on the other he clearly

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read as an attempt to bring poetic imitation back in line with this notion of real, i.e., *philosophical* imitation.

<sup>104</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, trans. D.A. Russell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), II.17.14: 'Aristoteles, ut solet, quaerendi gratia quaedam subtilitatis suae argumenta excogitavit in Grylo.'

<sup>105</sup> Ibid: 'sed idem et de arte rhetorica tris libros scripsit, et in eorum primo non artem solum eam fatetur, sed ei particulam civilitatis sicut dialectices adsignat.' While it is not made explicit in this passage, the conflict Quintilian finds between Aristotle's arguments against rhetoric in the lost *Gryllus*, on the one hand, and the fact that he also wrote an *art* of rhetoric on the other, indicates that he may have classified Aristotle among those who, as he claims in the previous book, 'did not mean what they said, but wanted rather to exercise their intellect on a difficult theme (non tam id sensisse quod dicerent quam exercere ingenia materiae difficultae credo voluisse)' (II.17.4). Nevertheless, as will become clear in what follows, this supposition does not come close to explaining the discrepancy between Aristotle's alleged attack on rhetoric in the *Gryllus* and his more positive view of it in *The Art of Rhetoric*.

wrote an entire treatise, in three books, which bears the title *The Art of Rhetoric*. How can we resolve this dilemma?

More recently, A.-H. Chroust has offered a slightly more detailed account of the contents of the *Gryllus*, which if true would imply that the dilemma mentioned by Quintilian is a false one. Based on a review of the extant fragments of the dialogue, Chroust notes that ‘it was written in fairly close imitation of those passages in Plato’s *Gorgias* which denounce *certain types* of prevailing rhetoric.’<sup>106</sup> Chroust’s observation, although subtle, is thus different from that of Quintilian. Chroust furthermore suggests that the ‘certain type’ of rhetoric that Aristotle attacked in the *Gryllus* was specifically that of Isocrates. In support of this suggestion, he refers to a work by Cephisodorus, composed ‘around 360,’ which was entitled *Against Aristotle*. In this work, as Chroust reports, Cephisodorus ‘reproaches Aristotle for having criticized (and wholly misunderstood) Isocrates’ method, educational policy and philosophic outlook.’<sup>107</sup> For Chroust, this fact in turn ‘impels the surmise that Aristotle, in his *Gryllus*, had denounced Isocrates and the kind of rhetoric and philosophy he propagates.’<sup>108</sup> Chroust’s speculations are of course inconclusive, but they are still useful in that they offer an alternative to the more simplistic reading of Quintilian, who assumes that Aristotle renounces all rhetoric as such in the *Gryllus*. Chroust’s analysis provides some plausible support for my own argument, by clarifying that even if Aristotle had criticized rhetoric in the *Gryllus*, this does not commit him to an unqualified denial of its status as an art in every case. Chroust’s subsequent suggestion that it was Isocrates in particular that

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<sup>106</sup> A.-H. Chroust, “Aristotle’s First Literary Effort: The *Gryllus*, A Lost Dialogue on the Nature of Rhetoric,” in (ed.) K.V. Erickson, *Aristotle: The Classical Heritage of Rhetoric* (Methuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press: 1974), p. 38 (emphasis added).

<sup>107</sup> Chroust, “Aristotle’s First Literary Effort,” in *Aristotle: The Classical Heritage of Rhetoric*, p. 42.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

Aristotle attacked lends further support to this claim. Although Chroust's observations do not in themselves prove anything about the actual content of Aristotle's *Gryllus*, our second historical fact may shed some further light on the matter.

Second fact: in addition to having published literary dialogues, Aristotle is reported by several ancient sources to have taught a course in rhetoric, for a general audience in the afternoon, perhaps even while still in the Platonic academy. Many ancient biographical sources mention this fact in connection with a famous remark that Aristotle is said to have made, in justification of the decision to teach rhetoric to the public. The clearest and most comprehensive account of this episode is in Cicero's *De Oratore*, which reports that

when Aristotle observed that Isocrates succeeded in obtaining a distinguished set of pupils by means of abandoning legal and political subjects and devoting his discourses to empty elegance of style, he himself suddenly altered almost the whole of his own system of training, and quoted a line from *Philoctetes* with a slight modification: the hero in the tragedy said that it was a disgrace for him to keep silent and suffer the barbarians to speak, but Aristotle put it 'suffer Isocrates to speak'; and consequently he put the whole of his system of philosophy in a polished and brilliant form, and linked the scientific study of facts with practice in style.<sup>109</sup>

Similar versions of this anecdote also appear in Philodemus, Quintilian, Diogenes Laërtius and a number of other sources.<sup>110</sup> Yet none of these ancient sources go into

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<sup>109</sup> Cicero, *De Oratore*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942) III.141: 'itaque ornavit et illustravit doctrinam illam omnem rerumque cognitionem cum orationis exercitatione coniunxit.' Cicero similarly claims that Aristotle's decision to begin teaching rhetoric was motivated by the perceived success of Isocrates in *Tusculan Disputations* I.4.7 Cf. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. J.E. King (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950). The original line modified by Aristotle is thought to be from the *Philoctetes* of Euripides, which has been lost except for a number of fragments, among which can be found the line in question: 'Shameful to keep silent, however, when the whole Greek army is at issue, but to allow barbarians to speak (ὕπερ γε μέντοι παντός Ἑλλήνων στρατοῦ αἰσχρὸν σιωπᾶν, βαρβάρους δ' ἔαν λέγειν).' See Euripides, *Fragments*, ed. C. Collard & M. Cropp (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 796 (p. 398/9).

<sup>110</sup> The earliest recorded trace of this anecdote is found in the *Rhetorica* of Philodemus (110 – ca. 40 BCE). Cf. (ed.) S. Sudhaus, *Philodemus: Volumina Rhetorica II* (Amsterdam: Verlag Adolf Hakkert, 1964), p. 50 [col. 36]; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, III.1.14; Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of Eminent*

detail about the precise context of the remark. We must once again turn to Chroust, who argues on the basis of a survey of ancient sources that these biographical testimonia support the view that Aristotle's first course in rhetoric 'owed its origin to the general or personal feeling of antagonism and resentment which existed between the Academy (or Aristotle) and Isocrates and his school of rhetoric; and, perhaps, to Aristotle's or the Academy's conviction that Isocrates both as an orator and a teacher of rhetoric was worse than disappointing.'<sup>111</sup>

Chroust's speculations about the *Gryllus* on the one hand, and about Aristotle's first course in rhetoric on the other, compliment one another in an interesting, but inconclusive way. The gist of his combined argument is as follows: the historical Gryllus, after whom Aristotle's dialogue is named, was in fact the son of the powerful Athenian general and historian, Xenophon. Gryllus was killed at the second battle of Mantinea, around 362, and following his death many Athenian orators wrote encomia on his behalf, in the evident attempt to ingratiate themselves to his grieving father, and thereby benefit from the latter's political clout. Chroust opines that Isocrates may have been one of the orators who composed such an encomium, and that Aristotle accordingly must have seized on the opportunity to write his own dialogue, pointing out the shortcomings of existing rhetoric as exemplified by the numerous encomia to Gryllus.

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*Philosophers*, trans. R.D. Hicks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), V.3. Diogenes in fact claims that Aristotle's remark is directed against Xenocrates rather than Isocrates, but the fact that all other sources have Isocrates suggests that this is a scribal error.

<sup>111</sup> Chroust, "Aristotle's Earliest 'Course of Lectures on Rhetoric,'" in *Aristotle: The Classical Heritage of Rhetoric*, p. 27. This article first appeared in *L'Antiquité classique* 33 (1964): 58-72. The author speculates even further that '[p]erhaps Aristotle was also encouraged to offer this course and, incidentally, to attack Isocrates by what Plato had said recently about rhetoric in his *Phaedrus* (268a ff).' (Ibid) This assumes that the publication date of Plato's *Phaedrus* would have been much later than the date suggested by Schleiermacher, who considered it to be the first (and best) of Plato's dialogues. I can offer nothing definitive on this question.

Chroust points to the similarity in style between the *Gryllus* and the *Gorgias* as evidence supporting the conjecture that Aristotle's aim was to extend Plato's criticisms of rhetoric to new, more contemporary targets. As a reward for his efforts, Chroust speculates, Aristotle was given the opportunity to offer his own course on rhetoric in the afternoons in the Academy, based on the comprehension of Plato's views that he demonstrated in the *Gryllus*. While these observations are indeed purely conjectural, they do lend circumstantial support to my main argument, which is that Aristotle's views on rhetoric (and also on poetry) must be understood as an indication of his fidelity to Plato's ideas, rather than the rejection of those ideas.

The real proof of this argument requires that we examine the opening chapters of the *Rhetoric* in some detail. But before turning to the text, it will be helpful to recall the criteria that, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato indicates rhetoric must satisfy if it is to attain the status of a genuine τέχνη. These three criteria were: (i) the ability to draw a global distinction between things concerning which people can be in doubt, and those concerning which they cannot; (ii) the possession of, or the orientation towards an accurate understanding of the subjects concerning which it is to produce persuasion; and (iii) the possession of, or the orientation towards a similarly accurate knowledge of the soul, which is capable of explaining what the soul is in general, how it acts, how it is acted upon, and by what; or, if it is not a simple thing, of how many kinds of soul there are, the actions and passions that characterize each type of soul, those kinds of speech that each kind of soul finds compelling, and those that each finds unconvincing. With these three criteria now in view, it will be shown presently that the main features of

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* clearly demonstrate the degree to which he took seriously Plato's demands for what constitutes a legitimate τέχνη.<sup>112</sup>

(i) Aristotle draws the distinction between the doubtful and the certain in Book I, Chapter 2 of the *Rhetoric*. He states initially that '[t]he function of rhetoric [...] is to deal with things about which we deliberate, but for which we have no systematic rules'<sup>113</sup>. Significantly, Aristotle goes on to classify these 'things about which we deliberate' as 'things which seem to admit of issuing in two ways'<sup>114</sup>, which indicates that the domain of rhetorical argumentation is indeed, as suggested in the *Phaedrus*, that in which matters admit of the least certainty. Yet Aristotle's subsequent remarks demonstrate that rhetorical argumentation does not exclude necessity. It is rather the case that it can involve necessity, but *less so* than other fields:

since few of the propositions of the rhetorical syllogism are necessary, for most of the things which we judge and examine can be other than they are, human actions, which are the subject of our deliberation and examination, being all of such a character and, generally speaking, none of them necessary; since, further, facts which only generally happen or are merely possible can only be demonstrated by other facts of the same kind, and necessary facts by necessary propositions [...], it is evident that the materials from which [i.e. rhetorical] enthymemes are derived will be sometimes necessary, but for the most part only generally true [...].<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> My reading here is supported by Sachs, whom I cited above. Sachs justifies his decision to publish translations of the *Gorgias* and the *Rhetoric* in a single volume by noting that the two texts 'offer a useful example of the way the thinking of Aristotle is related to Plato.' (Sachs, *Plato Gorgias and Aristotle Rhetoric*, p. 1) He goes on to substantiate this claim by pointing to the fact that the first lines of the *Rhetoric*, which claim as we have seen that rhetoric is a counterpart of dialectic, are 'a pointed replacement of Socrates' assertion that rhetoric is the counterpart to the sort of cooking that panders to childish bodily tastes. [...] Aristotle begins his *Rhetoric* not by rejecting the *Gorgias* but by taking up where it leaves off.' (p. 16)

<sup>113</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1357a 12: 'Ἔστι δὲ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῆς περὶ τι τοιούτων πρὸς ὧν βουλευόμεθα καὶ τέχνας μὴ ἔχομεν'.

<sup>114</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1357a 12: 'βουλευόμεθα δὲ περὶ τῶν φαινομένων ἐνδέχεται ἀμφωτέρος ἔχειν'.

<sup>115</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1357a 14: 'Ἐπεὶ δ' ἐστὶν ὀλίγα μὲν τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἐξ ὧν οἱ ῥητορικοὶ συλλογισμοὶ εἰσὶ (καὶ γὰρ πολλὰ περὶ ὧν αἱ κρίσεις καὶ αἱ σκέψεις, ἐνδέχεται καὶ ἄλλως ἔχειν περὶ ὧν μὲν πράττουσι, βουλευόνται καὶ σκοποῦσι, τὰ δὲ πράττομενα πάντα τοιούτου γένους ἐστὶ, καὶ οὐδὲν ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἐξ ἀνάγκης τούτων), τὰ δ' ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ συμβαίνοντα καὶ ἐνδέχόμενα ἐκ τοιούτων ἀνάγκη ἑτέρων συλλογίζεσθαι, τὰ δ' ἀναγκαῖα ἐξ ἀναγκαίων [...],

Thus rhetoric is not cut off from other, more certain forms of reasoning, but is said to make use of them when its primary subject matter (i.e. human action, τὰ πράττομενα πάντα) allows. Yet because human action is contingent rather than necessary, most of the relevant facts that could conceivably be used as material for an enthymeme, which Aristotle calls a few lines above ‘a rhetorical syllogism’, ῥητορικὸν συλλογισμόν, likewise admit of contingency. For this reason, rhetorical argumentation, making use of examples and enthymemes primarily, can in fewer cases appeal to necessity, but for the most part is concerned with stating truths that are merely probable.<sup>116</sup> At the same time, as we shall presently see, this does not mean that Aristotelian rhetoric merely aims at what is probable only, or that it has no concern for truth.

(ii) In order to see how Aristotle’s presentation of the art of rhetoric aims to bind it to the dialectical inquiry into the real nature of things, it is necessary to begin by citing the first sentence of the treatise: ‘[r]hetoric is a counterpart of Dialectic; for both have to do with matters that are in a manner within the cognizance of all men and not confined to any special science.’<sup>117</sup> The connection suggested by these opening remarks between rhetoric and dialectic is in fact justified by Aristotle’s definition of the former in Chapter 2: ‘[r]hetoric then may be defined as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever’<sup>118</sup>. Most importantly, this definition does not conceive the function of rhetoric as does Gorgias in the dialogue named after

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φανερὸν ὅτι ἐξ ὧν τὰ ἐνθυμήματα λέγεται, τὰ μὲν ἀναγκαῖα ἔσται, τὰ δὲ πλεῖστα ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ.’

<sup>116</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1356b 8.

<sup>117</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1354a 1: ‘Ἡ ῥητορικὴ ἐστὶν ἀντίστροφος τῇ διαλεκτικῇ: ἀμφοτέραι γὰρ περὶ τοιούτων τινῶν εἰσὶν ἅ κοινὰ τρόπων τινὰ ἀπάντων ἐστὶ γνωρίζειν καὶ οὐδεμιᾶς ἐπιστήμης ἀφωρισμένης.’

<sup>118</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355b 14: ‘Ἐστω δὲ ῥητορικὴ δύναμις περὶ ἕκαστον τοῦ θεωρηῆσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν’.

him: that is, as the production of persuasion (453a). Aristotle already differentiates his position from that of Gorgias when he defines the function of rhetoric as one of discovery, θεωρησῶν, rather than one of production.

The difference between the two formulations becomes apparent when we consider the fact that persuasion can be produced in more than one way: on the one hand it can be produced by reference to what is true, while on the other it can also be produced by reference to what merely seems true but is not. On the Gorgian account of the nature and function of rhetoric in Plato's *Gorgias*, regardless of whether rhetoric makes use of the true or what merely appears to be true, it will have achieved its characteristic end simply by producing persuasion in regard to any subject whatsoever. By contrast, in giving rhetoric the function of discovering the possible means of persuasion rather than producing persuasion at any cost, Aristotle implicitly binds rhetorical argumentation to the field of dialectical inquiry, whose primary concern is the truth. Yet it is also crucial to recognize that this function of discovery that Aristotle attributes to rhetoric in Book I remains in tension with the function of influencing opinion, which Aristotle admits is the 'whole business of rhetoric' in Book III.<sup>119</sup>

Put somewhat differently, the global function of the art of rhetoric is to influence opinion, but to do this whenever possible by reference to the truth. Since persuasion is persuasion regardless of whether it is justified or not, Aristotelian rhetoric involves a

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<sup>119</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1404a 5: 'ὅλης οὔσης πρὸς δόξαν τῆς πραγματείας τῆς περὶ τὴν ῥητορικὴν'. For Ricoeur, this tension between discovery and production in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is the inevitable stakes of a reformed, philosophical art of speaking. He thus argues that 'what we now read under the title of Rhetoric is the treatise containing the equilibrium between two opposed movements, one that inclines rhetoric to break away from philosophy, if not to replace it, and one that disposes philosophy to reinvent rhetoric as a system of second-order proofs. It is at this point, where the dangerous power of eloquence and the logic of probability meet, that we find a rhetoric that stands under the watchful eye of philosophy.' See P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. R. Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 11-2.

concern not only for what merely seems true, but also for what is in fact true in relation to rhetorical subjects. Certainly, it is not the business of the rhetorician to valorize what is actually true over what merely appears to be so in every case. Yet to the extent that both the truth and its simulacrum can produce persuasion, and moreover to the extent that Aristotle defines the function of rhetoric in the way he does, both with respect to discovery in Book I and with respect to production in Book III, the concern for both is crucial to rhetoric as Aristotle understands it. In other words, as Aristotle states near the end of Chapter 1, ‘in fact, the true and that which resembles it come under the purview of the same faculty [...] wherefore one who divines well in regard to the truth will also be able to divine well in regard to probabilities.’<sup>120</sup> These remarks all indicate that for Aristotle, insofar as rhetoric is conceived as the faculty of discovering all existing means of persuasion in regard to any topic, its principle function requires it to take account of both the true and the merely probable. This requirement to know both the true and its likeness is the basis for the strong connection posited by Aristotle between rhetoric and dialectic, and shows in what way his approach responds to the criteria for a legitimate art of speaking that Plato lays down in the *Phaedrus*.

Another indication that Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* is a response to Plato’s views is his recognition that the true, τᾶληθῆ, is by nature easier to prove, εὐσυλλογιστότερα, and more persuasive, πιθανώτερα.<sup>121</sup> This implies that one who knows what is actually true will be more persuasive in more cases than the one who only knows what seems to be true, but is not. At the same time, Aristotle also qualifies that it is not feasible for the

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<sup>120</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355a 12: ‘τὸ τε γὰρ ἀληθές καὶ τὸ ὅμοιον τῷ ἀληθεῖ τῆς αὐτῆς ἐστὶ δυνάμει ἰδεῖν [...] διὸ πρὸς τὰ ἔνδοξα στοχαστικῶς ἔχειν τοῦ ὁμοίως ἔχοντος καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἀληθειάν ἐστίν.’

<sup>121</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355a 30.

rhetorician to rely solely on what is true since, ‘in dealing with certain persons, even if we possessed the most accurate scientific knowledge, we should not find it easy to persuade them by the employment of such knowledge’<sup>122</sup>. In the same way that it is possible to be convinced by something that is not true, it is also possible to remain unconvinced when confronted with something that is. Because opinion can be either true or false, the ideal rhetorician must aim to discover all existing means of persuasion, regardless of whether they are real or merely apparent. Accordingly, the art of rhetoric demands a concern for both ‘the real’ means of persuasion, τό τε πιθανόν, and the ‘apparent means of persuasion’, καὶ τὸ φαινόμενον ἰδεῖν πιθανόν.<sup>123</sup> This demand for rhetoricians to take account of both the truth and its likeness is the basis for the connection traced by Aristotle between rhetoric and dialectic, which the opening line of the treatise claims are ‘counterparts’ with respect to one another.<sup>124</sup>

Rhetoric and dialectic are therefore intimately related because rhetoric, like dialectic, must take account of both that which is true and that which, while not the truth, resembles it. The orator is therefore not required to prefer the true to its simulacra in every case, for in some situations what is merely probable and suggestive, although not true, will be a more effective way of producing persuasion than reference to the truth itself.

A succinct way of formulating this requirement is Aristotle’s statement in Book I, Chapter 1 of the *Rhetoric* that ‘the orator should be able to prove opposites, as in logical

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<sup>122</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355a 15: ‘πρὸς ἐνίους, εἰ τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην ἔχοιμεν ἐπιστήμην, οὐδὲ ῥᾶδιον ἄπ’ ἐκείνης πείσαι λέγοντας’.

<sup>123</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355b 20.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1356a 7, which reiterates the same claim in slightly different language, stating that ‘rhetoric is a sort of division or likeness of dialectic (ἔστι γὰρ μῶριον τι τῆς διαλεκτικῆς καὶ ὁμῖωμα)’.

arguments'<sup>125</sup>. For any given situation, both true and false statements can be made, and both may have the capacity to produce persuasion to varying degrees. Thus, by cultivating the ability to prove contrary statements with respect to the same subject or situation, the orator is able to take stock of, and indeed augment the possible means at his disposal for producing persuasion. As Aristotle affirms a few lines below, the demand to prove opposites is one that rhetoric shares with its counterpart, dialectic: '[r]hetoric and dialectic alone of all the arts prove opposites; for both are equally concerned with them.'<sup>126</sup>

In the case of dialectic in particular, Aristotle explains that the need to be able to prove opposites, which in other words is the need to discover (ἰδεῖν) 'the real and apparent syllogism'<sup>127</sup>, stems from the need 'to counteract false arguments, if another makes an unfair use of them.'<sup>128</sup> Accordingly, rhetoric is incomplete without dialectic because its purview is the persuasive in general, which includes both the truth and its simulacra. Conversely, dialectic needs rhetoric because it is necessary for the dialectician to know all the different ways of arguing for and against a given point, including the illegitimate ones, since one must be able to recognize when one's interlocutor has put forward a fallacious or deceptive account in order to defend oneself against sophistical deceptions.

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<sup>125</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355a 12: 'ἔτι δὲ τάναντία δεῖ δύνασθαι πείθειν, καθάπερ καὶ ἐν τοῖς συλλογισμοῖς'.

<sup>126</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355a 12: 'τῶν μὲν οὖν ἄλλων τεχνῶν οὐδεμία τάναντία συλλογίζεται, ἢ δὲ διαλεκτικὴ καὶ ῥητορικὴ μόναι τοῦτο ποιούσιν· ὁμοίως γὰρ εἰσιν ἀμφότεραι τῶν ἐναντίων.'

<sup>127</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355b 14: 'συλλογισμὸν τε καὶ φαινόμενον συλλογισμὸν'.

<sup>128</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355b 12: 'οὕτως ἄλλου χρωμένου τοῖς λόγοις μὴ δικαίως αὐτοὶ λύειν ἔχωμεν.' This is closely connected to Aristotle's claim, in *On Sophistical Refutations*, that deception (ἡ ἀπάτη) occurs most often when discussing things with other people. Cf. Aristotle, *On Sophistical Refutations* 169a 37 – 169b 3.

Consequently, it is not possible on Aristotle's account to distinguish the sophist from the orator, but it is possible to distinguish him from the dialectician. This is because in rhetoric, the deliberate use of a persuasive but fallacious argument does not make one any less of a rhetorician than the use of a true argument, for in certain cases the truth may not be able to produce persuasion of certain (i.e. corrupted) souls. But in dialectic, the deliberate use of a false argument is the mark of the sophist. The dialectician knows false arguments as a matter of necessity; she acquaints herself with them purely in order to know how to recognize them, and better to defend herself when they are used against her. In Aristotle's words, 'what makes the sophist is not the faculty but the moral purpose.'<sup>129</sup> The difference, Aristotle goes on to explain, is that 'in rhetoric, one who acts in accordance with sound argument, and one who acts in accordance with moral purpose, are both called rhetoricians; but in Dialectic it is the moral purpose that makes the sophist, the dialectician being the one whose arguments rest, not on moral purpose but on the faculty.'<sup>130</sup> This means that orators are always allowed the choice or decision, προαίρεσις, to use the truth or what merely resembles it accordingly as the situation demands. In dialectic, while the knowledge of false arguments is necessary to defend oneself against them in discussion with an unruly opponent, their deliberate use is the mark of sophistry, for in dialectic the pursuit of truth proceeds not according to choice but according to the capacity, ἐν τῇ δυνάμει.

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<sup>129</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355b 14: 'ὁ γὰρ σοφιστικὸς οὐκ ἐν τῇ δυνάμει ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ προαίρεσει.'

<sup>130</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355b 14: 'πλὴν ἐνταῦθα μὲν ἔσται ὁ μὲν κατὰ τὴν ἐπιστήμην ὁ δὲ κατὰ προαίρεσιν ῥήτωρ, ἐκεῖ δὲ σοφιστῆς μὲν κατὰ τὴν προαίρεσιν, διαλεκτικὸς δὲ οὐ κατὰ τὴν προαίρεσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν δύνάμιν.' Freese's note helps explain the meaning of this very difficult, and very important passage: '[t]he essence of sophistry consists in the moral purpose, the deliberate use of fallacious arguments. In Dialectic, the dialectician has the power or faculty of making use of them when he pleases; when he does so deliberately, he is called a sophist. In Rhetoric, this distinction does not exist; he who uses sound arguments as well as he who uses false ones, are both known as rhetoricians.' (p. 14)

This means that the dialectician pursues the truth as far as her natural capacity to do so allows; the rhetorician pursues it according to choice. This complimentary rapport between dialectic and rhetoric reflects the second criteria that emerged above in Plato's *Phaedrus*. On the basis of this rapport, I contend that what Aristotle presents as the art of rhetoric is in fact a Platonized rhetoric, characterized by its (re)orientation towards truth. It is crucial to point out that, in spite of the link established by Aristotle between rhetoric and dialectic, they are not the same: they remain distinct, but inherently complimentary activities.<sup>131</sup>

(iii) Yet given that the use of truth or what merely resembles it is a matter of choice for the orator, on what basis is such a choice made? In the answer to this question, we will see more clearly how Aristotle's presentation of rhetoric as a genuine art responds to the third of Plato's three criteria listed above: namely, an understanding of the human soul, which is able to explain the different kinds of human souls in relation to the different kinds of things that each finds convincing. The first thing that is necessary

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<sup>131</sup> I think Ricoeur explains the matter aptly when he notes that '[w]ith Aristotle we see rhetoric in its better days; it constitutes a distinct sphere of philosophy, in that the order of the 'persuasive' as such remains the object of a specific *technê*. Yet it is solidly bound to logic through the correlation between the concept of persuasion and that of the probable. In this way a philosophical rhetoric – that is, a rhetoric grounded in and watched over by philosophy itself – is constituted.' (*The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 28) At the same time, it is possible to overstate the bond between rhetoric on the one hand, and dialectic and philosophy on the other. According to Butterworth, this is done by Averroes, who in his commentary on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* seems to exaggerate the connection established by Aristotle between rhetoric and both dialectic and politics. Cf. *Averroes' Three Short Commentaries on Aristotle's "Topics," "Rhetoric," and "Poetics"*, trans. C.E. Butterworth (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), pp. 63-73 *passim*. See also Butterworth, "Averroes' Platonization of Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric*," in (eds.) G. Dahan & I. Rosier-Catach, *La Rhétorique d'Aristote : Traditions et commentaires de l'antiquité au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1998), pp. 227-240 *passim*. I am not entirely convinced that Butterworth appreciates the full extent of the *Rhetoric*'s Platonic background, and as a result I suspect that he may underestimate the degree to which Aristotelian rhetoric is already Platonized in significant ways. Heidegger also is ambiguous on this point, but for understandable reasons. He claims on the one hand that 'Aristotle brought to realization the idea of rhetoric, the idea Plato himself positively elaborated with the help of his dialectic [i.e., in the *Phaedrus*],' but on the other that in Aristotle 'rhetoric comes by a more positive justification than it does in Plato [...].' Cf. *Plato's Sophist*, trans. R. Rojcewicz & A. Schuwer (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 234. Ostensibly, what Heidegger is getting at is the fact that, as I mentioned in the introduction, the propositional content of what Plato and Aristotle each say about rhetoric (and poetry, too) is opposed, at the same time as their shared intent is evident.

to point out is that Aristotle does not discuss the soul in general in the *Rhetoric*. Nevertheless, he clearly does so in the *De Anima* (specifically, Book II, Chapter 2), and his discussion of the affects and their respective causes in the *Rhetoric* evidently presupposes the account of the soul and its powers of acting and suffering that is elaborated in the latter text. Within the *Rhetoric* itself, our starting point is Aristotle's discussion of rhetorical proofs, of which he admits three kinds, *πίστεων τρία εἶδη*: '[t]he first depends upon the moral character of the speaker, the second upon putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind, the third upon the speech itself, in so far as it proves or seems to prove.'<sup>132</sup>

In particular, what concerns us here is the second kind of proof mentioned by Aristotle above: 'putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind'. In the following paragraph, Aristotle specifies further that '[t]he orator persuades by means of his hearers, when they are roused to emotion by his speech; for the judgments we deliver are not the same when we are influenced by joy or sorrow, love or hate'<sup>133</sup>. Consequently, as the subsequent paragraph makes explicit, 'since proofs are effected by these means [i.e., *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*], it is evident that, to be able to grasp them, a man must be capable of logical reasoning, of studying characters and the virtues, and thirdly the emotions – the nature and character of each, its origin, and the manner in which it is produced.'<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1356a 3: 'αἱ μὲν γὰρ εἰσιν ἐν τῷ ἡθελί τού λέγοντος, αἱ δὲ ἐν τῷ τὸν ἀκροατὴν διαθεῖναι πως, αἱ δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ λόγῳ, διὰ τοῦ δείκνυται ἢ φαίνεσθαι δείκνυται.'

<sup>133</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1356a 5: 'διὰ δὲ τῶν ἀκροατῶν, ὅταν εἰς πάθος ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου προαχθῶσιν· οὐ γὰρ ὁμοίως ἀποδίδωμεν τὰς κρίσεις λυπούμενοι καὶ χαίροντες ἢ φιλοῦντες καὶ μισοῦντες.'

<sup>134</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1356a 7: 'Ἐπεὶ δ' αἱ πίστεις διὰ τούτων εἰσὶ, φανερόν ὅτι ταύτας ἐστὶ λαβεῖν τοῦ συλλογίσασθαι δυναμένου, καὶ τοῦ θεωρῆσαι περὶ τὰ ἡθελί καὶ τὰς ἀρετὰς, καὶ τρίτον τοῦ περὶ τὰ πάθη, τί τε ἕκαστόν ἐστι τῶν παθῶν καὶ ποῖόν τι, καὶ ἐκ τίνων ἐγγίνεται καὶ πῶς.'

Accordingly, the knowledge of the human soul, which Plato postulates in the *Phaedrus* as one of the necessary preconditions for a genuine art of rhetoric, is compressed here in Aristotle's demand that orators know not only the characters and virtues, but also the emotions, τὰ πάθη, their origins, and the manner in which they can be produced. Indeed, it is in Book II of the *Rhetoric* that we find a detailed analysis of the different emotions, their causes and their opposites, and in this sense Aristotle can be seen to have established an art of rhetoric that seeks to answer to the aforementioned criteria laid down by Plato in the *Phaedrus*.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, it seems pertinent to ask whether Aristotle's understanding of dialectic is the same as Plato's. To put it succinctly, in binding rhetoric to dialectic Aristotle in one sense raises the former to the status of a genuine art; but, in another sense, the consequence of this elevation of rhetoric is at the same time a comparatively deflationary account of the status of dialectic, in comparison with the divine and infallible character that Plato apparently attributes to it in the dialogues. Throughout the Platonic dialogues, dialectic is frequently portrayed as the key to a firm and unchanging understanding of a thing's essential nature. In Book VI of the *Republic*, for example, the famous analogy of the divided line places dialectic on the level of *noesis* or 'understanding of the intelligible,' above even mathematics, which is characterized as merely hypothetical and relying on sensible images (510b – 511b). This seems to demand a firm distinction between dialectic and the realm of opinion, *doxa*. The analogy of the divided line makes this distinction quite clear, placing dialectical understanding *two* levels above that of opinion. Likewise, in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates criticizes all prior attempts to establish an art of rhetoric because, by limiting themselves to the mere production of persuasion by any means, they effectively limit the sphere of rhetoric to the probable, and cut it off from that which is true (272d 9 – e 3). On the other hand, however, Aristotle's conception of dialectic seems different from that of Plato in that the former does not emphasize its distinction from opinion in the same way the latter explicitly does. If the distinction suggested by Plato between dialectic and opinion is one between an infallible science of essences and a merely probable kind of conjecture, it has to be observed that Aristotle's conception of dialectic appears to weaken this distinction considerably. Indeed, Aristotle's notion of dialectic seems to reserve an important place for probabilities, and for the opinions of the majority about what happens 'for the most part' more generally. Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 81b 18-21. On the surface, this suggests that opinions and probabilities play a more productive role in Aristotle's conception of dialectic than they do in Plato's. Furthermore, this consideration receives support from the diligence with which Aristotle carries out his doxographies, which furnish the points of departure of all his major treatises. At the same time, although it is certainly true that Socrates often talks of dialectic as an infallible scientific method, it is also true that the dialectic *elenchus* that we actually see Socrates employ throughout the Platonic dialogues proceeds in and through a scrutinizing of other people's opinions. In this way, there is a case to be made for a tension between the way that dialectic is characterized in Plato, and the way that it is actually used in the dialogues themselves. This tension is playfully reflected in some of Socrates' remarks in the *Philebus*, where he states that this infallible method, which 'has often escaped [him] and left [him] behind, alone and helpless' (16 b8), 'is not very difficult to describe [...], but very difficult to use' (16 c1). Consequently, if one judges by the content of what is said about dialectic in the Platonic dialogues, then Plato's conception seems markedly different from that of Aristotle due to the roles that opinion and probability ostensibly play in each. Nevertheless, if one judges by what is actually carried out in the action of the dialogues themselves, the difference between the two conceptions does not appear so great.

## 2.5 Aristotle's *Poetics* as a Response to Plato

I will now show in what ways the main features of Aristotle's discussion in the *Poetics* can be taken as evidence of his effort to found a properly reformed, Platonic art of poetry. To this end, we must first recall the criteria that I above claimed to be the two basic demands that, according to Plato, a genuine art of poetic imitation must meet. These were (i) that poetry must produce more than mere gratification of its audience, and (ii) that its imitations must be aimed at the real nature, or truth of what things are in themselves, rather than on the appearance of these things considered as particular and perishable.

The first thing to note is that Aristotle does *not* attempt to dissociate poetry from pleasure. In fact, he identifies pleasure as essential to the experience of poetry, and all kinds of imitation more generally, as early as Chapter 4 of the *Poetics*. Yet it would be hasty to conclude on the basis of this fact that the pleasure Aristotle associates with imitation is the same as that with which Plato associates it in the *Republic*.<sup>136</sup> I will demonstrate the difference between these two kinds of pleasures in what follows, but it must be recognized at the outset that it is far from obvious. The place to begin is Chapter 6 of the *Poetics*, which presents Aristotle's general account of μίμησις and the pleasures it affords. It is first of all necessary to point out that, for Aristotle, 'it is an instinct of human beings, from childhood, to engage in mimesis [...]; and [it is] equally natural that

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<sup>136</sup> Halliwell accordingly stresses that the pleasure Aristotle associates with the experience of tragic imitation in particular must not be understood in a purely 'aestheticist' sense, as a kind of delight that is independent of intellectual and moral concerns. He rather contends that Aristotle's concept of mimetic pleasure 'is not to be taken as an undefined and self-sufficient gratification, but rather as the result of an underlying activity or experience.' (*Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 6) As we shall see, the experience that Halliwell finds at the basis of this pleasure is tied to an inherently *theoretical* operation.

everyone enjoys mimetic objects.’<sup>137</sup> Far from suggesting that the *Poetics* is actually a response to Plato’s invitation for reform, this sentence rather suggests that Aristotle does not even see the problem to which Plato objected when he criticized the pernicious effects of poetic imitation in the *Republic*. Yet the ensuing lines provide the first indication that Aristotle’s idea of mimetic pleasure is indeed different from Plato. In describing the enjoyment that naturally accompanies the human experience of mimetic objects, Aristotle right away introduces an array of terms drawn from the vocabulary of intellectual and theoretical operations: ‘learning (μανθάνειν),’ ‘contemplating (θεωρεῖν),’ even ‘deducing’ or ‘inferring (συλλογοῦν/ζεσθαι)’ are inherent components of mimetic experience as Aristotle understands it.

As a sign (σημεῖον) of the natural basis for imitation and the enjoyment of mimetic objects, Aristotle accordingly mentions the pleasure that people take in ‘contemplating (θεωροῦντες) the most precise images of things whose actual sight is painful to us, such as the forms of the vilest animals and of corpses.’<sup>138</sup> If this is somewhat surprising, Aristotle’s explanation in the next line is even more so: he argues that the enjoyment people take in the contemplation of such images is the result of a kind of learning (μανθάνειν) or ‘understanding’ (the latter is Halliwell’s translation), ‘which gives great pleasure not only to philosophers but likewise to others too, though the latter have a smaller share in it.’<sup>139</sup> This remark presupposes a good deal, and fully explaining it would require us to reconstruct Aristotle’s entire metaphysical and ethical systems at

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<sup>137</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. S. Halliwell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 1448b 4-5: ‘τὸ τε γὰρ μιμῆσθαι σύνφοτον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐκ παίδων ἐστὶ [...] καὶ τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς μιμήμασι πάντας.’

<sup>138</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448b 10-2: ‘τε μορφᾶς τῶν ἀτιμοτάτων καὶ νεκρῶν’.

<sup>139</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448b 12-4: ‘ὅτι τὸ μανθάνειν οὐ μόνον τοῖς φιλοσόφοις ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὁμοίως, ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ βραχὺ κοινωνοῦσιν αὐτοῦ.’

their precise point of convergence, which is the constitutive connection between contemplation (θεωρία), pleasure (ἡδονή), and a term I will leave untranslated for the moment: ἐνέργεια. What concerns us for the moment is simply the fact that Aristotle explains mimetic pleasure by reference to the properly theoretical pleasure that the philosopher takes in ‘learning,’ claiming that the former is a sub-species of the latter. It is true that the philosopher’s learning is more truly learning than that which accompanies mimetic experience, but the difference is clearly one of degree and not of kind. This is the first indication, however sketchy, of Aristotle’s effort to reform poetic imitation in view of Plato’s criticisms.

Nevertheless, to illustrate and further explain the intellectual pleasure that people naturally take in contemplating mimetic objects, Aristotle offers an example that seems to contradict my whole argument here. The example is one of ‘looking at images (τὰς εἰκόνας ὀρῶντες),’ which as Halliwell points out refers to ‘a portrait – a deliberately rudimentary instance of an interpretive process which could take more complex forms.’<sup>140</sup> Aristotle says that people enjoy contemplating such images ‘because, through contemplating them it comes about that they understand and infer what each element means, for instance that “this person is so-and-so.”’<sup>141</sup>

The reason this example appears to contradict my claim that Aristotle’s *Poetics* is a reformed, Platonized art of imitation is that, despite the frequency of words that seem to attribute an inherently intellectual character to mimetic enjoyment, the example he chooses to illustrate this intellectual character is of a portrait, or painted image. We must

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<sup>140</sup> Halliwell, in Aristotle, *Poetics*, p. 38, note.

<sup>141</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448b 14-6: ‘διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο χαίρουσι τὰς εἰκόνας ὀρῶντες, ὅτι συμβαίνει θεωροῦντας μανθάνειν καὶ συλλογίζεσθαι τί ἕκαστον, οἷον ὅτι οὗτος ἐκεῖνος.’

not forget that it is the very same example, that of painting, which Plato uses in *Republic* X to demonstrate that all forms of imitation are ‘three times removed from the truth,’ because they are based on particular, perishable models about which nothing can be known, rather than on the truth, or the real nature of a thing. Aristotle’s example in *Poetics* 4 therefore raises a crucial question: how can the enjoyment of mimetic objects involve intellectual operations like contemplating, learning and deducing if imitation is of particular objects, as Aristotle’s example of the painted image suggests?

An answer to this question demands one of two alternatives: either Aristotle is employing the terms *μανθάνειν*, *θεωρεῖν*, and *συλλογίζεσθαι* in an extremely loose way, or his understanding of specifically poetic *μίμησις* is more complex than the example of the portrait allows us to see. Halliwell’s comment above suggests that the second option is the correct one, and he argues convincingly in support of this reading in the second chapter of *Aristotle’s Poetics*. There, he argues that ‘[t]he example of a picture, or other visual work, which portrays an identifiable (though not necessarily a real) figure, and to which the mind of the beholder may respond with the reasoning, ‘this is so-and-so,’ might well be thought to shed little enough light on the type of cognition involved in the experience of paintings, and none at all on the understanding of poetry.’<sup>142</sup> For Halliwell, Aristotle’s example in Chapter 4 is perhaps an adequate account of what all forms of imitation share in common, but as a result of this generality it obscures precisely the dimension of poetic imitation in particular that, according to

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<sup>142</sup> Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics*, p. 73.

later chapters of the *Poetics*, sets it apart from history: this is the fact that ‘poetry relates more of the universal, while history relates particulars.’<sup>143</sup>

The reason for this, as Aristotle explains, is that ‘it is not the poet’s function to relate *actual* events, but the *kinds* of things that might occur and are possible in terms of probability or necessity.’<sup>144</sup> Although the characters depicted in tragic poetry might bear the names of historical individuals, they are not exact representations of any actual person. Aristotle therefore explains that, in relation to the action and characters of a tragic plot, universal (καθόλου) ‘means the kinds of things which it suits a certain kind of person to say or do, in terms of probability or necessity: poetry aims for this, even though attaching names to the agents.’<sup>145</sup> It is for this very reason that, a few lines above, Aristotle places poetry closer to philosophy than to history, arguing that poetry is ‘more philosophical and more elevated than history [...]’.<sup>146</sup> Tragedy is more philosophical than history because the action it imitates is the idealized action of a general character type, rather than something that a particular, historical individual has done. To the extent that this is the case, we can now see somewhat more clearly what it is about tragic mimesis that differentiates it from other kinds of imitation, as exemplified by Aristotle’s example of the painted image in Chapter 4: the painted image (much like a historical record) represents a particular aspect of a particular, perishable object or person, whereas tragedy

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<sup>143</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451b 6-7: ‘ἡ μὲν γὰρ ποιήσις μᾶλλον τὰ καθόλου, ἢ δ’ ἱστορία τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστον λέγει.’

<sup>144</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451a 34-5: ‘οὐ τὸ τὰ γεγόμενα λέγειν, ἀλλ’ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο καὶ τὰ δυνατὰ κατὰ τὸ εἶκός ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον.’

<sup>145</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451b 8-9: ‘τῶ ποιῶ τὰ ποῖα ἄττα συμβαίνει λέγειν ἢ πράττειν κατὰ τὸ εἶκός ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, οὐ στοχάζεται ἢ ποιήσις ὀνόματα ἐπιτιθέμενη.’

<sup>146</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451b 5: ‘φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδιαότερον ποιήσις ἱστορίας ἐστίν’.

(and comedy as well) represents character *types*, acting in conformity with generalized patterns of probability or necessity.<sup>147</sup>

In this, we begin see to see how Aristotle's treatment of poetic imitation in the *Poetics* answers to the epistemological criterion that, as I argued above, constitutes one of two Platonic requirements that poetry must satisfy if it is to be considered a genuine τέχνη. The other criterion, as mentioned, is an ethical criterion according to which poetry must aim at the true well-being of those that come under its influence, and not just their gratification. In fact, as well shall see presently, Aristotle responds to these two criteria in such a way as to indicate that, far from being two separate considerations, they mutually imply one another in a necessary way. We have already encountered this mutual implication in the connection posited by Aristotle between the pleasure inherent in mimetic experience, on the one hand, and the contemplative activity that this experience elicits in the minds of the audience, on the other. Yet to understand more precisely why poetic imitation in particular demands this kind of intellectual response from the audience, and thereby generates the kind of pleasure that Aristotle says it does, we must backtrack a little and examine the definition of tragedy.

Chapter 6 defines the genre of tragic imitation as 'mimesis of an action which is elevated, complete, and of magnitude; in language embellished by distinct forms in its sections; employing the mode of enactment, not narrative; and through pity and fear

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<sup>147</sup> Nevertheless, Aristotle suggests at one point that even painting represents types rather than facts: he accordingly mentions as examples of this the painters Polygnotus, who he says 'depicted superior people (κρείττους),' Pauson, who depicted 'inferior (χείρους)' people, and Dionysius, who depicted 'those like ourselves (ὁμοίους).' (1448a 5-6)

accomplishing the catharsis of such emotions.’<sup>148</sup> Specifically, three things interest us in this definition: (i) the first is that tragic action is complete, and of magnitude; (ii) the second is that this action is also of an elevated character; and (iii) the third is that the imitation of such action has for its function the *katharsis* (another word I will leave untranslated for the moment) of the emotions of pity and fear in the audience. I will deal with these three factors in succession, and demonstrate how they underscore the mutual implication of the intellectual and ethical dimensions of Aristotle’s philosophical poetics.

(i) In Chapter 7, Aristotle explains what he means in saying that tragic imitation is of an action that is necessarily complete, *τελείας*. Glossing completeness in terms of wholeness, *τελείας καὶ ὅλης*, he states first that ‘[a] whole is that which has a beginning, middle, and end.’<sup>149</sup> Concerning these three components, he affirms that a beginning is a point or an event from which other things naturally follow, and which does not necessarily follow from anything else; an end, conversely, is that which follows something either necessarily or usually, *ἢ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἢ ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ*, but which does not need to be followed by anything else; and a middle is ‘that which both follows a preceding event and has further consequences.’<sup>150</sup>

At the same time, completeness does not in and of itself explain what it means for an action, conceived as the object of the tragic plot (*μῦθος*), to have magnitude (*μέγεθος*). Aristotle observes at 1450b 25 that there can be wholes without magnitude, which shows that it is not sufficient for the action imitated by tragic mimesis to have a beginning, middle and end. Indeed, the point is not simply that the events should have

<sup>148</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449b 23-8: ‘ἔστιν οὖν τραγωδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης, ἡδυσημένῃ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἐκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι’ ἀπαγγελίας, δι’ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν.’

<sup>149</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450b 25-6: ‘ὅλον δὲ ἔστιν τὸ ἔχον ἀρχὴν καὶ μέσον καὶ τελευτήν.’

<sup>150</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450b 26-30.

magnitude, but more specifically that they should have a certain kind or degree of magnitude. The kind of magnitude that tragic action must possess is that which is neither too great nor too small, but rather that which an audience can apprehend in a coherent fashion. Aristotle therefore illustrates the ideal magnitude of tragic action by comparing it to the sight of natural bodies, and animals in particular: ‘just as with our bodies and with animals beauty requires magnitude, but magnitude that allows coherent perception, likewise plots require length, but length that can be coherently remembered.’<sup>151</sup>

The demand that the action imitated by tragic poetry be of a certain magnitude thus underscores the need for tragic plots to mediate excessive length, on the one hand, and excessive brevity on the other. As Aristotle states plainly (ἀπλῶς) in the closing lines of Chapter 7, ‘the size which permits a transformation to occur, in a probable or necessary sequence of events, from adversity to prosperity or prosperity to adversity, is a sufficient limit of magnitude.’<sup>152</sup>

(ii) It is important to understand the necessary consequences that the notions of completeness and magnitude have for the rest of Aristotle’s discussion of tragic plot and character. More precisely, we must see how the restrictions placed by Aristotle on the kind of action that tragedy imitates constitute restrictions on the kind of characters that it imitates as well. In fact, although Aristotle treats plot (μῦθος) and character (ἦθη) as two distinct elements of tragic mimesis, they are intimately connected.<sup>153</sup> To grasp the exact

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<sup>151</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451a 2-5: ‘ὥστε δεῖ καθάπερ ἐπὶ τῶν σωμάτων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ζώων ἔχειν μὲν μέγεθος, τοῦτο δὲ εὐσύνοπτον εἶναι, οὕτω καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν μύθων ἔχειν μὲν μήκος, τοῦτο δὲ εὐμνημόνευτον εἶναι.’

<sup>152</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451b 11-5: ‘ἐν ὅσῳ μεγέθει κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἐφεξῆς γιγνομένων συμβαίνει εἰς εὐτυχίαν ἐκ δυστυχίας ἢ ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν μεταβάλλειν, ἱκανὸς ὅρος ἐστὶν τοῦ μεγέθους.’

<sup>153</sup> Accordingly in Chapter 6, Aristotle observes that ‘tragedy is mimesis not of persons but of action and life (ἡ γὰρ τραγωδία μίμησις ἐστὶν οὐκ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ πράξεως καὶ βίου) [...]. So it is not in

nature of this connection, it is necessary to turn to Aristotle's discussion of the 'elevated (σπουδαίως)' stature of tragic action. What we need to focus on here is the way in which the necessary completeness and the magnitude that Aristotle prescribes in Chapter 7 actually demand that only certain kinds of characters, and certain kinds of transformations, are appropriate to tragic poetry.

To see how this is so, we need firstly to recall that Aristotle defines the sufficient magnitude for a tragic plot as one that permits a transformation (μεταβάσις) of fortunes to occur, either from prosperity to adversity or *vice versa*, such that the transformation, its causes and effects can be 'coherently remembered' by the audience. In Chapter 13, Aristotle further restricts the kind of action that can be imitated in tragic poetry by specifying that only a certain kind of μεταβάσις is in fact appropriate to it. In this chapter, his criterion is different from the one he uses to determine the sufficient magnitude of the tragic plot. There, tragic action was determined by the demand that it should be big enough to portray a transformation of fortunes, but small enough so that it can still be comprehended by the audience; here, the standard is rather the exact nature of the emotional response that different kinds of transformations necessarily elicit from the audience. Moreover, it is not even simply a question in this chapter of deciding whether tragedy must represent transformations from prosperity to adversity or vice versa; it is also a question of determining what kind of characters should be depicted undergoing these kinds of transformations.

As just mentioned, Aristotle's standard for answering these questions in Chapter 13 is the emotional response that the imitation of certain actions necessarily elicits in the

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order to provide mimesis of character that the agents act (οὐκ οὖν ὅπως τὰ ἔθη μιμήσονται πράττουσιν); rather, *their characters are included for the sake of their actions* (ἀλλὰ τὰ ἔθη συμπεριλαμβάνουσιν διὰ τὰς πράξεως). (1450a 20-21; emphasis added)

audience. We must accordingly bear in mind that Aristotle defines the essential function of tragic mimesis with reference to the *katharsis* of pity and fear in particular. Yet to grasp fully how these two emotions guide Aristotle's discussion of the kind of transformation that is appropriate to tragic poetry, we must know something about them in themselves, and this requires attending to their definitions in Book II of the *Rhetoric*. There, in Book II, Chapter 4, Aristotle defines fear as 'a painful or troubled feeling caused by the impression of an immanent evil that causes destruction or pain'<sup>154</sup>. Four chapters later, he characterizes pity as 'a kind of pain excited by the sight of evil, deadly or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it; an evil which one might expect to come upon himself or one of his friends'<sup>155</sup>.

It is crucial to point out that the object of pity is necessarily the undeserved suffering of *another*, whereas that of fear (ostensibly, as the definition is not specific) is one's own suffering, whether or not this is deserved. As we shall see, these definitions are consistent with the presuppositions that appear to guide Aristotle's understanding of the ideal transformation of fortunes in *Poetics* 13. Yet in order to see exactly how the above analyses of these two emotions guide Aristotle's decisions about what kinds of transformation is appropriate to tragic poetry, we must take our starting point from Book VIII of the *Politics*. It is there that Aristotle makes the crucial observation that 'habituation in feeling pain and delight at representations of reality is close to feeling

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<sup>154</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1382a 32: 'λύπη τις ἢ παραχῆ ἐκ φαντασίας μέλλοντος κακοῦ φθαρτικοῦ ἢ λυπηροῦ'.

<sup>155</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1385b 2: 'λύπη τις ἐπὶ φαινομένῳ κακῷ φθαρτικῷ ἢ λυπηρῷ τοῦ ἀναξίου τυγκάνειν, ὃ κὰν αὐτὸς προσδοκῆσειεν ἂν πάθειν ἢ τῶν αὐτοῦ τινα'.

them towards actual reality'<sup>156</sup>. This observation is crucial because, without it, there is no satisfactory explanation of exactly how an audience could be made to experience genuine fear in response to a work of imitation. If fear according to Book II of the *Rhetoric* involves the impression of 'immanent evil,' it begs extreme credulity on the audience's part to assume that a work of imitation could actually make it fear for its own safety. But to the extent that there is a correlation between the emotional responses to 'likenesses' or 'representations', on the one hand, and the emotional responses to the real things to which these likenesses correspond on the other, it becomes reasonable to assume that the representation of a fearful event will elicit feelings that are similar to, though not as intense as, those elicited by such events themselves in the people who fear them.

For this reason, it is clear that a tragedy's capacity to elicit fear in the audience presupposes the latter's ability to imagine the tragic character's suffering as if it were its own suffering. The experience of fear in response to a work of imitation already assumes that the audience can place itself imaginatively in the position of the protagonist, and to feel the same kind of emotion that it would feel if the same thing were really happening to it. The audience's relationship to the scenes it witnesses is therefore necessarily one of sympathetic identification, insofar as people are habituated in relation to likenesses in the same way they are habituated in relation to the real things, which such likenesses represent. This means that if person A is terrified of death by shipwreck, then the representation of person B dying by shipwreck will produce in person A an experience of terror that approximates, to a lesser degree, that which person A would experience in response to the real situation itself.

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<sup>156</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 1340a 24-5: 'ὁ δ' ἐν τοῖς ὁμοίοις ἐθισμὸς τοῦ λυπεῖσθαι καὶ χεῖρειν ἐγγύς ἐστι τῷ πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὸν αὐτὸν ἔχειν τρόπον'.

If the ability to experience fear in response to a work of imitation thus presupposes an audience's capacity to imagine the fictional portrayal of another's suffering as if it were real, and really its own, this also explains why this imaginative identification with the plight of a fictional character necessarily involves the emotion of pity as well. Indeed, as Aristotle specifies elsewhere in Book II, Chapter 8 of the *Rhetoric*, 'all that men fear in regard to themselves excites their pity when others are the victims.'<sup>157</sup> The experiences of pity and fear in response to a work of tragic imitation are in this way mutually implicative. On the one hand, if an audience is made to experience fear in relation to a likeness or representation, this is because the thing of which the latter is a likeness is something that the audience really does fear (e.g., death by shipwreck). On the other hand, Aristotle also points out that the things people pity in others are the same things they fear happening to themselves, and the corollary to this is the fact that, as the definition of pity makes clear, pity is felt in relation to those kinds of (undeserved) suffering that a person could imagine himself or one of his relations suffering. This means that the same kinds of representations elicit both these emotions: what audiences fear for themselves, they pity in others (so long as others are underserving of these things); and the things they pity in others are precisely those things they imagine could happen to themselves.<sup>158</sup>

This sympathetic rapport between audience and protagonist presupposes a delicate balance of similarity and difference in their respective ethical statures. The

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<sup>157</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1386a 13-4: 'ὅσα ἐφ' αὐτῶν φοβοῦνται, ταῦτα ἐπ' ἄλλων γιγνόμενα ἐλεοῦσιν.'

<sup>158</sup> Halliwell accordingly explains the relation between these two emotions as follows: 'our pity for others' underserved suffering depends in part on our sympathetic capacity to imagine, and imaginatively fear, such things for ourselves; and fear for ourselves (though this is not the main element in tragic fear) can in turn be created by the sympathetic experience of others' misfortunes.' (*Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 177)

protagonist must be similar enough to the audience that they can plausibly imagine his or her suffering as being their own, for without this the audience will not be able to feel fear. If the audience is to feel fear in response to an imitation or likeness, it must be a likeness of something they genuinely fear happening to themselves in real life. Yet for it to be a likeness of something they fear happening to themselves in real life, the fictional character to whom it happens must be someone they are at least partially capable of identifying with. For this to be the case, in turn, the tragic hero must be someone who characteristically performs the kinds of actions that plausibly lead to those outcomes that the audience truly fears. On the one hand, the condition that permits the audience to experience fear on behalf of the tragic figure is a degree of similarity between the former and the latter. On the other hand, for the audience to feel pity, the tragic figure's suffering must be undeserved; there can be no culpability, on the protagonist's part, for his or her own suffering. To the extent that it is only exceptional human beings that are generally regarded as being completely blameless, the requirement that the tragic hero's suffering be undeserved thus indicates that he or she must not be *too similar* to the audience either. The twofold need to elicit both pity and fear therefore necessitates that the tragic protagonist be (1) similar enough to the audience that they can identify with his suffering and recognize in it something they genuinely fear for themselves, but at the same time (2) different enough from them to remain ethically blameless. It is in this sense that Halliwell remarks on the general 'inseparability' of these two emotions in the *Poetics*, observing that 'it is probable that each of them [i.e., pity and fear] is also at least a partial condition for the other emotion too.'<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 178.

Now that we understand how the considerations of pity and fear dictate Aristotle's understanding of the kind of action, and the kind of character that are appropriate to tragic imitation, we can approach his discussion of the ideal transformation of fortunes. Aristotle arrives at this ideal transformation by process of elimination. He considers and subsequently rejects three different kinds of μεταβάσις: firstly, that of a 'decent man (ἐπιεικὴς ἄνδρας)' changing 'from prosperity to adversity (ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν)'; secondly, that showing 'the depraved changing from adversity to prosperity (τοὺς μοχθηροὺς ἐξ δυστυχίας εἰς εὐτυχίαν)'; and thirdly, a plot showing 'the very wicked (τὸν σφόδρα πονηρὸν)' falling from prosperity to adversity. Aristotle's reason for rejecting each of these three kinds of transformation is the same in each case: that each kind of μεταβάσις will fail to elicit the requisite emotions of pity and fear in the audience, ostensibly because in each case the protagonist is too either virtuous or too vicious.

To explain his point, Aristotle reiterates his comments from the *Rhetoric*, to the effect that pity must be felt 'for the undeserving victim of adversity, the other [i.e., fear] for one like ourselves'<sup>160</sup>. Consistently with my own explanation, this implies that each of the three kinds of transformation considered above fails to account for both pity and fear together, either by making the protagonist out to be too virtuous (and therefore too unlike the audience) or too vicious (and therefore not underserving of suffering). The consequence is that Aristotle's ideal tragic protagonist is someone who, while enjoying considerable renown and prosperity, is 'in-between these cases', ὁ μεταξὺ.<sup>161</sup> In other

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<sup>160</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1453a 4-5: 'ὁ μὲν γὰρ περὶ τὸν ἀνάξιόν ἐστὶν δυστυχοῦντα, ὁ δὲ περὶ τὸν ὅμοιον'.

<sup>161</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1453a 6.

words, '[s]uch a person is someone not preeminent in virtue and justice, and one who falls into adversity not through evil and depravity, but through some kind of error.'<sup>162</sup> Succinctly put, the ideal tragic μεταβάσις is one that portrays a character who is of moderately good character (but not so good as to be unlike the audience), falling from prosperity to adversity through a kind of error.

It is this that Aristotle has in mind in Chapter 6 when he states that tragedy is the imitation of an action that is 'elevated,' σπουδαίως. We have already seen part of the explanation for this particular aspect of tragic imitation in the notion that the tragic hero must not be so close to the ethical stature of the audience that he or she appears culpable, and so personally responsible for the tragic misfortune that is the necessary or probable outcome of the action imitated. The other part of the explanation for this characteristic of tragic action and the characters responsible for it is found in Chapter 2, where Aristotle explains the precise difference between tragedy and comedy. He begins by noting that all kinds of mimetic art 'represents people in action, and the latter should be either elevated or base'<sup>163</sup>. These two words, σπουδαίως ἢ φαύλος, aptly describe the characters typically represented in tragedy and comedy respectively. Aristotle therefore explains at the end of the chapter that comedy 'tends to represent people inferior (χείρους),' whereas tragedy tends to represent those 'superior (βελτίους)' to those of the current day.<sup>164</sup> Reading this passage together with Chapter 13, we can conclude that tragedy indeed represents people superior to those of the current day, but not to such an extent

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<sup>162</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1453a 8-10: 'ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ μήτε ἀρετῇ διαφέρων καὶ δικαιοσύνη μήτε διὰ κακίαν καὶ μοχθηρίαν μεταβάλλων εἰς τὴν δυστυχίαν ἀλλὰ δι' ἀμαρτίαν τινά.'

<sup>163</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448a 1-2: 'μιμῶνται οἱ μιμῶμενοι πράττοντας, ἀνάγκη δὲ τούτους ἢ σπουδαίως ἢ φαύλος εἶναι'.

<sup>164</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448a 18.

that existing people cannot imaginatively identify with the sufferings of the protagonist as if they were their own.

(iii) As shown above, Aristotle's definition of tragic mimesis progressively restricts its scope in terms of the kind of action it represents, the kind of characters that necessarily perform the represented actions, the kind of outcomes these actions can have, and the kinds of emotions such portrayals are intended to evoke. According to this definition, tragic action must be complete, having a beginning, middle and end, and it must be of such a magnitude as to permit the portrayal of a reversal of fortunes that the audience can coherently grasp. The purpose of such a reversal is to elicit pity and fear in the audience, and these emotions arise exclusively in response to representations of certain kinds of actions performed by certain character types. Specifically, pity and fear arise only in response to the sufferings of a character who is different enough from the audience to be plausibly considered blameless, but similar enough to them that they can still identify with his or her suffering as something that could conceivably happen to them.

We must now consider the emotions of pity and fear specifically in relation to the essential function of tragic mimesis in general, which according to Chapter 6 is one of *katharsis*. What exactly does Aristotle mean by this word? Standard translations range from 'purification' to 'purging.' Yet, as Halliwell observes, after its appearance in the definition of tragic mimesis, Aristotle never uses the word *katharsis* again in the whole of the *Poetics*. By turning to other sources both in and outside the Aristotelian corpus, he demonstrates that *katharsis* must be understood within the specific context of Aristotle's response to Plato's criticisms, which we have already seen, regarding the ethical and

psychological shortcomings of tragic poetry.<sup>165</sup> More precisely, Halliwell outlines three primary ‘areas of meaning’ in which the term *katharsis* normally appears in Greek usage.<sup>166</sup> Although not all of these areas constitute strictly literal senses for *katharsis*, taken together they underscore the overall ethical import of Aristotle’s understanding of tragedy, and the way in which he considers the experience of tragic imitation to be genuinely beneficial for those who are influenced by it. In order, these three primary areas of meaning within which *katharsis* is used are (A) medical; (B) religious; and (C) those areas in which (A) and/or (B) is extended in a more or less metaphorical way.

(A) The medical sense of *katharsis* is the most concrete. In Greek medicine, *katharsis* can refer to any physical ‘purging’ that is aimed at restoring balance among the body’s four humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile). The Greeks understood health as the result of this balance, and all illness conversely as the result of an imbalance, in which one of these humors predominates over the others. The role of the doctor was accordingly to determine which of the four humors was out of proportion, and *to purge* the body of its excess (by e.g. bloodletting, or another analogous treatment related to the other humors) so as to return it to its natural state of equilibrium.

(B) The religious usage of *katharsis* is similar to the medical usage in that it assumes the core concept of purging or eliminating harmful impurities and thereby restoring a kind of balance. At the same time it is also different, because the impurities in question need not be related to the body, nor even to the human being exclusively. As Halliwell observes, ritual *katharsis* was used in one sense for ‘the purification of a place

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<sup>165</sup> Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics*, p. 184-5: ‘Aristotelian *katharsis* is intended in some way to produce an answer to Plato’s objections to the psychological effects of tragic poetry. If this is right, then *katharsis* is likely to represent not only an attempt to characterize the emotional experience of tragedy as such, but also to indicate a view of the *consequences* of this experience.’

<sup>166</sup> Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics*, p. 185.

or area of land as part of its dedication to a deity or a sacred function.’<sup>167</sup> In another sense, where it applies as in the medical usage to the purification of a human being in particular, it could have either a remedial or a preparatory context: remedial in the sense of spiritually cleansing the human being through the absolution of guilt, especially as it relates to what Halliwell calls ‘the pollution of blood guilt’<sup>168</sup>; preparatory in the sense that *katharsis* was also used as a kind of provision for a person’s initiation into various religious mysteries and ceremonies.

(C) In turning to the third area of meaning in which the term *katharsis* is used, we do not depart from the core concept of eliminating or purging harmful impurities, which also underlies the previous two areas of meaning. Rather, in our third area of meaning the same core concept is extended to instances that I would like to classify as being in a general sense therapeutic, where therapy corresponds neither to the strictly medical treatment of the body, nor to the purely religious and ritual purification of the soul. As a kind of therapy, this third understanding of *katharsis* has a characteristic bearing on human emotional states, which suggests that this therapeutic form of *katharsis* relates to soul and body at the same time. According to Halliwell, there is evidence supporting the conjecture that this therapeutic understanding of *katharsis* as a kind of emotional purification derives from specifically Pythagorean ideas. He cites a fragment of one of Aristotle’s own students, Aristoxenus, who reports that ‘the Pythagoreans used medicine for the purification of the body, and music (μουσικῆ) for that of the soul.’<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics*, p. 186.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics*, p. 187, citing Aristoxenus fr. 26, in F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles vol II* (Basel, 1945).

Halliwell also points out that traces of this more therapeutic usage of *katharsis* can be found in both Plato and Aristotle. In the former, it appears in a number of passages in the *Phaedo*, one of which (114c) mentions those ‘who have duly *purified* themselves by philosophy (οἱ φιλοσοφία ἱκανῶς καθηράμενοι)’.<sup>170</sup> In the latter, it appears in Book VIII of the *Politics* (1342a 1-15), where Aristotle discusses the educational effects of music, considered as a kind of imitation. In this passage, Aristotle’s remarks assume that certain musical modes (i.e., the Dorian, Ionian, Phrygian etc.) correspond mimetically to certain human emotional states. Having established that all the harmonies are not to be used in the same way, Aristotle’s aim in the ensuing lines is to associate the various harmonies with the ethical states of soul to which they naturally correspond. The most ethical harmonies are to be reserved for education, πρὸς μὲν τὴν παιδείαν ταῖς ἠθικωτάταις, presumably because what makes these harmonies ‘the most ethical’ in the first place is the fact that they approximate, as imitations, the kind of emotional equilibrium that naturally characterizes the just soul.

By contrast with these ‘most ethical’ harmonies, Aristotle attributes to the others a specifically corrective, and therefore therapeutic role with respect to various forms of emotional excess. He recognizes on the one hand that some people are prone to more violent emotions than others, but on the other that the same kinds of emotions exist ‘with different degrees of intensity (τῷ δὲ ἦττον διαφέρει καὶ τῷ μᾶλλον)’ in everyone. In a way that suggests a strong connection between this passage and the definition of tragic

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<sup>170</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. H.N. Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 114c 3 (emphasis added; cited by Halliwell on p. 187). Halliwell also points to the use of similar language in earlier parts of the *Phaedo*, for example where ‘release or escape of the soul from the body is described as *katharsis* (67c), and the philosopher is compared to the purified initiate of a mystery sect (69c-d)’ (Halliwell, p. 188). These references to the Pythagorean language of *katharsis* in the *Phaedo* are consistent with the dialogue’s critical engagement with the Pythagorean understanding of the relation between body and soul.

mimesis in *Poetics* 6, Aristotle mentions pity (ἔλεος), fear (φόβος), and religious excitement (ἐνθουσιασμός) as examples of these emotions. As the ensuing lines make clear, Aristotle is interested in these three emotions in particular because each is commonly thought to cause the more pronounced kinds of imbalance that music in particular is effective at counteracting.

With respect to those who are ‘very liable (κατοχώχιμοί)’ to this form of emotion, Aristotle observes that music has an effect that is analogous to that of a medical purge: ‘we see these people, when they use tunes that violently arouse the soul, being thrown into a state as if they had received medicinal treatment and taken a purge’<sup>171</sup>. The point here is that the more violent kinds of orgiastic or ecstatic music have a therapeutic effect on those who are influenced by correspondingly violent emotions. Although the *katharsis* of these violent emotions by equally violent music is indeed an extreme case, Aristotle uses it to argue a more general point with respect to the relation between musical harmonies and the emotions. He affirms that ‘the same experience then must come also to the compassionate and the timid and the other emotional people generally in such degree as befalls each individual of these classes, and all must undergo a purgation and a pleasant feeling of relief.’<sup>172</sup>

Here we see the therapeutic function that Aristotle attributes to music in general, and ecstatic or orgiastic music in particular, as a means of exorcizing emotional excesses. It is important to emphasize two things with respect to the above passage: (i) it reflects Aristotle’s view that there is a range of possible emotional excesses, differing by degrees

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<sup>171</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* 1342a 9-10: ‘ἐκ τῶν δ’ ἱερῶν μελῶν ὀρώμεν τούτους, ὅταν χρήσωνται τοῖς ἐχοργιαζουσι τὴν ψυχὴν μέλεσι, καθιστάμενους ὥσπερ ἰατρείας τυχόντας καὶ καθάρσεως’.

<sup>172</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* 1342a 12-15: ‘ταῦτο δὴ τοῦτο ἀναγκαῖον πάσχειν καὶ τοὺς ἐλεήμονας καὶ φοβητικούς καὶ τοὺς ὄλως παθητικούς, τοὺς ἄλλους καθ’ ὅσον ἐπιβάλλει τῶν τοιούτων ἕκαστω, καὶ πᾶσι γίγνεσθαι τινα κάθαρσιν καὶ κουφιζέσθαι μεθ’ ἡδονῆς.’

of intensity, and that there is a corresponding range of emotionally cathartic experiences, which also differ by degrees of intensity; and (ii) Aristotle understands properly musical *katharsis* as being analogous to, and not the same as, a medical cure. The latter is important because it demonstrates that Aristotle's interest in *katharsis* pertains to ethical and psychological, rather than physical well-being: Aristotelian *katharsis* is in other words more concerned with the health of the soul than of the body. This explains why in the passage above Aristotle maintains a distinction between properly medical and therapeutic *katharsis*, observing that music affects people *as if* they had received medicinal treatment. The former is perhaps even more important because it allows a difference of degree to be posited between the violent, orgiastic *katharsis* caused by the kinds of Corybantic music referred to above, and the *katharsis* that is effected by tragedy in particular. According to Halliwell, tragic *katharsis* must be differentiated from Corybantic, i.e. musical *katharsis* precisely because the former presupposes a state of ecstatic possession in which the one who experiences such a state is not in control of his or her cognitive faculties. Halliwell argues that '[t]o suppose that something comparable holds for tragedy is out of the question'.<sup>173</sup> Why is that?

In the answer to this question, we discover how the intellectual, ethical and psychological dimensions of Aristotle's understanding of tragic mimesis are all mutually implied. In Halliwell's words, the disjunction between ecstatic and tragic *katharsis* is a direct consequence of the fact that, unlike the ecstatic kind, '[t]ragic *katharsis* and tragic pleasure are both grounded in the understanding of the plot structure, the 'soul' of

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<sup>173</sup> Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 194.

tragedy'.<sup>174</sup> To understand how and why this is so, we must take account of the frequent references that Aristotle makes throughout the *Poetics* to the principles of probability and necessity. In truth, Aristotle speaks of probability *or* necessity, τὸ εἶκος ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, rather than probability *and* necessity. As we have already seen, in his above explanation of what it means for tragic action to be complete, he describes the relationship between the beginning, middle and end of the tragic plot as being one of either probable or necessary causation. The reason for this returns us to the essential function of tragic mimesis, which is the *katharsis* of pity and fear: in *Poetics* 10, Aristotle makes the all-important declaration that pity and fear 'arise above all when events occur contrary to expectation yet on account of one another.'<sup>175</sup>

Effectively, this means that pity and fear are most certain to be felt in response to the representation of an action whose middle proceeds in a probable or necessary sequence from its beginning, and whose end proceeds in a probable or necessary sequence from its middle, but whose outcome – and here we should bear in mind the tragic reversal of fortunes – nonetheless comes about contrary to the audience's expectations.

The audience's capacity to respond to tragic imitation with the requisite emotions of pity and fear therefore depends above all on the intelligibility of the plot structure, and their comprehension of it. Events should unfold sequentially according to a general pattern of necessary or probable causation, yet not in such an obvious way that the outcome can be foreseen in advance. The sequence of events must therefore be intelligible enough for the audience to follow it, but it should lead to an outcome that,

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<sup>174</sup> Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 201.

<sup>175</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1452a 2-4: 'ταῦτα δὲ γίνεται καὶ μάλιστα ὅταν γένηται παρὰ τὴν δόξαν δι' ἄλληλα.'

although it follows rationally from the events that precede it, is nonetheless surprising and unexpected. The consequences of this insight are immense, because it establishes that the arousal of pity and fear in the audience, and by extension the therapeutic *katharsis* of these emotions that result, necessarily depend on the audience's comprehension of the causal connections between the events that make up the tragic plot.

We must recall here that the events related in the ideal tragic plot are not specific events that have actually happened, but rather the *kinds* of things that might happen according to a principle of probability or necessity. The characters responsible for these actions, in turn, represent similarly generalized character 'types' rather than particular, historical individuals. In Chapter 4's example of the painted image, which we examined above, Aristotle argues that the intellectual dimension of the mimetic experience is what gives pleasure, and that it derives from the realization that 'this is so-and-so.' In other words, there is a rudimentary kind of inference at work, for example, in the recognition that these colors and shapes in front of me are in fact the representation of a lion hunt. Yet when applied to poetic mimesis in particular this inference becomes much more complex, involving at least one more 'layer' of imitation, as it were. To put it in terms that are adequate to the fullest possible experience of tragedy (i.e., that of witnessing a tragic performance), there are two interrelated recognitions involved: firstly, there is the recognition that this person wearing a mask in front of me represents a character of a certain name (such as Oedipus); but secondly, and more importantly, there is the deeper recognition that this character, who is represented by the actor in front of me, is also the likeness of a more general type or 'kind' of person, who is recognizable in the general patterns of action and speech displayed by the former.

The upshot is that the arousal of pity and fear, whose *katharsis* is the essential function of tragic mimesis as Aristotle understands it in *Poetics* 6, is only possible to the extent that the audience can believe that the represented action and its outcome reflect a genuinely probable (or necessary) sequence of events, and yet still be surprised by it. Furthermore, the pleasure that Aristotle associates with all mimetic experience in *Poetics* 4 is necessarily tied to a recognition that ‘this is so-and-so,’ which in the specific case of poetic imitation depends once again on the audience’s capacity to comprehend the represented action as the universalized action that a certain general kind of person would plausibly perform. With respect to both pleasure, on the one hand, and the emotions of pity and fear on the other, Aristotle shows that the audience’s intellectual comprehension of the represented action and of the fictional characters to whom it is attributed is a necessary condition.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

It is for this reason I have argued that Aristotle’s understanding of tragic mimesis has to be understood within the context of, and as a response to, the Platonic criticisms we examined above. Recalling those of the *Republic* in particular, Plato argued that tragedy is the same as other kinds of mimesis (and the same as rhetoric also, according to the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*) because it imitates particulars, and therefore is not based on anything that can be known in the first place; it merely excites pleasure, rather than aiming for the true well-being of its audience; and finally, by exciting pleasure, it leads to a kind of pathological imbalance in the soul that prevents the best part (reason) from ruling as it should. Aristotle’s *Poetics* responds to these considerations by demonstrating first of all that poetic mimesis is more of universals and than of particulars. In the second

place, the *Poetics* shows that the pleasure experienced in response to tragic mimesis is an intellectual pleasure, which derives from the mind's activity and not from any physiological fluctuation. Finally, the *Poetics* assigns to tragic mimesis, as its essential function, the therapeutic *katharsis* of pity and fear in the audience. By giving tragic imitation this function, Aristotle places it in a relation to the soul that is analogous to the one that exists between medicine and the body: that is, he gives tragic imitation the status of an art whose objective is to restore to the soul its affective equilibrium through the homeopathic exorcism of precisely those emotions that, in excess, are most harmful to its well-being.

It should not escape notice that, in both the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, one of Plato's archetypes for what constitutes a genuine τέχνη is that of medicine. The fact that Aristotle describes the function of tragedy in terms of an analogy with the medical art indicates the distance separating the poetry attacked by Plato and the one advocated by Aristotle. It is of course possible to assume that Aristotle and Plato simply held opposing views on this topic, as they evidently did in regard to other topics as well. Yet Aristotle never once mentions Plato by name in the *Poetics*, and very rarely does so (perhaps only once) in the *Rhetoric*, whereas in his other disagreements with his teacher (as in the *Metaphysics*, *De Anima*, *Nicomachean Ethics* etc.) he normally offers a characterization of the relevant position before proceeding to show how and why he disagrees with it, and then offers an alternative. The fact that so much of what Aristotle says in both the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* seems to presuppose the Platonic critiques of these activities without explicitly mentioning them seems also to support my reading of these texts as

implicit rejoinders that agree, if not in letter then most certainly in spirit, with Plato's teachings.

Consequently, the foregoing considerations substantiate my claims that (a) Aristotle's *Rhetoric* presents a Platonized rhetoric, defined in its very function by its concern with the truth and its orientation towards dialectic; and that (b) his *Poetics* likewise presents a Platonized genre of poetry, characterized by its concern with universal truths and with the well-being of the soul of poetic audiences.

### **3. Chapter 2: Aristotle's Definition of Metaphor and its Philosophical Implications**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter argues that Aristotle's definition of metaphor in *Poetics* 22 commits him to a vertical theory of metaphor, rather than to a horizontal one. As I explain in what follows, I borrow the distinction between vertical and horizontal theories of metaphor from Paul Veyne and Irène Tamba-Mecz (1979), who use it to argue convincingly that Aristotle's theory of metaphor concerns the relation between words and things (via the intermediary of ideas), and not the literal and figurative meanings of individual words.

The argument I advance in this chapter serves four main purposes. The first is to outline Aristotle's original definition of metaphor in the *Poetics*, and to explain the precise context within which this definition must be understood, not only in relation to the former text and to the *Rhetoric*, but also in relation to Aristotle's general theory of signification. The second purpose is to show that Aristotle singles metaphor out as the most important element of rhetorical and poetic style, for reasons that vary slightly in each case. The third is to draw out the philosophical implications of the important role Aristotle attributes to metaphor in both the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*, by connecting it to his assertion that to use metaphor well is to perceive similarities between disparate things. The fourth and final goal is to examine some recent reconstructions of Aristotle's theory, and to point out in what ways many 19th and 20th century interpreters have misconstrued it by exaggerating its connection to the classical tradition of rhetoric.

Although, as mentioned, Aristotle's discussions of metaphor set it apart from all other stylistic devices that are available to orators and poets, it is also crucial to recognize that he does not limit the use of metaphors to specialists in these fields. While he clearly

analyses metaphor in both the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* as an element of rhetorical and poetic style, he also explicitly affirms that everybody uses metaphors in daily conversation. In order to make this point explicit, it is necessary to see how Aristotle's analysis of metaphor as an element of style, which begins from the consideration that it is a kind of word (ὄνομα), also presupposes his theory of signification as it is elaborated in the opening lines of the *De Interpretatione* and certain passages of *On Sophistical Refutations*. A brief investigation of these texts will show that, apart from their rhetorical and poetic functions, all words according to Aristotle have a natural signifying function, and that the discussion of metaphor in relation to poetic and rhetorical style presupposes this natural function without mentioning it explicitly.

Now that we understand the essential functions that Aristotle assigns to rhetoric and poetry, and have furthermore seen how these functions underscore his effort to reform both activities in line with the Platonic critiques examined in the previous chapter, we must grasp in what ways Aristotle's discussions of metaphor subtly reinforce this Platonic reformation from within the analysis of style (λέξις) in particular. In other words, as mentioned in the introduction, I argue in this chapter that Aristotle's discussions of metaphor in both the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* implicitly bind poetic and rhetorical style to the philosophical pursuit of goodness and truth, in a parallel way to that in which his definitions of the functions of rhetoric and poetry do more generally with respect to content.

This is above all evident in the fundamental association made by Aristotle between the ability to make and understand metaphors and the capacity to perceive similarities between disparate things. Even more to the point, it is evident in the fact that,

as I will show, Aristotle's discussions of metaphor in the *Rhetoric* subtly privilege those similarities that inhere between the most distant things (i.e., analogical similarities) over other kinds. Once it is recognized that these analogical similarities, which Aristotle's discussions of metaphor implicitly valorize, are imperfect versions of the genuine analogical resemblances investigated by the philosopher, then it becomes clear that, here too, the philosopher is implicitly singled out as being both the ideal orator and the ideal poet on Aristotle's account. Thus, to the extent that the vertical character of Aristotle's theory underscores its concern with the relations between things rather than between the senses of words, it provides another perspective from which to consider the philosophical annexation of rhetoric and poetry, which I suggested in the previous chapter is the real motivation of the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*.

The plan for the current chapter is therefore as follows. (1) I will firstly introduce Aristotle's definition of metaphor by placing it in the context of his theory of style, on the one hand, and his theory of signification on the other. (2) Next, I will give a detailed exegetical account of how and why Aristotle claims that metaphor is the most important element of style in both rhetoric and poetry, paying particular attention to the unique relationship that each art has to style, and the way in which it is ultimately metaphor that, for slightly different reasons in each case, optimizes this relation. (3) I will thereafter focus on the important role played in Aristotle's theory of metaphor by the perception of similarities, explain why he understands the simile to be a kind of metaphor and not *vice versa*, and indicate how the association between metaphor and the perception of similarities underscores the philosophical character of the rhetoric and the poetry he aims to establish. Finally (4) I will outline some of the more pertinent characterizations of

Aristotle's theory that have recently been offered, paying particular attention to those put forward by proponents of the cognitive view of metaphor, and argue on the basis of my own reconstruction of this theory that many of them are inaccurate.

### **3.2 Aristotle's Definition of Metaphor, and his Theories of Signification and Style**

We will now turn to Aristotle's explicit remarks concerning metaphor, beginning with the definition he gives in Chapter 22 of the *Poetics*, and proceed from there to outline the basic epistemological considerations that underlie his explanation of both the production and comprehension of metaphorical expressions.

We must approach Aristotle's account of metaphor as an element of style by way of his account of the 'word' or 'name,' τὸ ὄνομα,<sup>176</sup> in both the *De Interpretatione* and *De Sophisticis Elenchis*. This approach is demanded by the fact that Aristotle's analysis of the word in the *Poetics* is limited to explaining what different kinds of nouns can contribute to poetic style in particular; yet apart from their more or less specialized poetic usage, Aristotle also recognizes that all words have a more basic, natural function, which is to signify 'things,' τὰ πράγματα. The opening lines of *On Interpretation* thus state that

[w]ords spoken are the symbols or signs of affections or impressions of the soul; written words are the signs of words spoken. As writing, so also is speech not the same for all races of men. But the mental affections themselves, of which these words are primarily signs, are the same for the whole of mankind, as are also the

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<sup>176</sup> There is a subtle but important distinction to be made concerning Aristotle's use of the term ὄνομα. In Chapter 1 of *De Interpretatione*, Aristotle uses the term ὄνομα most generally to refer to all words in their natural function of signifying things outside the mind. In this general usage, ὄνομα must be said to include the verb (ῥῆμα). Yet in Chapter 2, as in his discussion of style in the *Poetics*, ὄνομα is also used specifically in reference to the noun, as opposed to the verb. ὄνομα can therefore be used to mean the same as the generic English 'word,' which includes the verb as one of its kinds, as well as the more particular 'noun,' which excludes the verb.

objects of which those affections are representations or likenesses, images, copies.<sup>177</sup>

Written words are symbols, σύμβολα, of spoken words, and spoken words are signs, σημεία, of the ‘affections of the soul,’ τὰ παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς. In turn, these latter are representations, likenesses, images or copies – all four of these words are an attempt to translate the single Greek word ὁμοιώματα – of what Aristotle calls τὰ πράγματα, translated here as ‘objects’. Thus, a chain is established here that connects written words to spoken words, spoken words to affections of the soul, and affections of the soul to objects or things outside of the soul. According to this account, the natural function of words is one of signifying, or denoting things, via the intermediary of what Aristotle calls ‘affections of the soul.’

The natural signifying function of words is confirmed again in the first chapter of *On Sophistical Refutations*, where Aristotle adds an important consideration to the ones we have just encountered. There, he repeats that ‘we use names as symbols in the place of things,’ but adds that ‘names and a quantity of terms are finite, whereas things are infinite in number; and so the same expression and the single name must necessarily signify a number of things.’<sup>178</sup> Aristotle thus gives polysemy – the capacity of a single word to signify more than one thing – a natural basis as a necessary (ἀναγκαῖον) consequence of the fact that words ultimately signify things. Polysemy necessarily

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<sup>177</sup> Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, trans. H.P. Cooke (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 16a 4-8: ‘Ἔστι μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθημάτων σύμβολα, καὶ τὰ γραφόμενα τῶν ἐν τῇ φωνῇ. καὶ ὡς περ οὐδὲ φωναὶ αἱ αὐταί· ὧν μὲντοι ταῦτα σημεία πρῶτως, ταῦτά πασι παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ ὧν ταῦτα ὁμοιώματα, πράγματα ἤδη ταῦτά.’

<sup>178</sup> Aristotle, *On Sophistical Refutations*, tr. D.J. Furley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 165a 6-14: ‘ἐπεὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἔστι αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα διαλέγεσθαι φέροντας, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ὀνόμασιν ἀντὶ τῶν πραγμάτων χρώμεθα συμβόλις, τὸ συμβαῖνον ἐπὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων ἡγούμεθα συμβαίνειν, καθάπερ ἐπὶ ψήφων τοῖς λογιζομένοις. τὸ δ’ οὐκ ἔστι ὅμοιον. τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὀνόματα πεπερανται καὶ τὸ τῶν λόγων πλῆθος, τὰ δὲ πράγματα τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἀπειρά ἔστιν. ἀναγκαῖον οὖν πλείω τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον καὶ τοῦνομα τὸ ἐν σημαίνειν.’

follows from this natural function because the number of things to be signified in the world is infinite (ἄπειρά), whereas the number of words that can be used to indicate them in any natural language is limited (πεπερανταί). Within the context of the theory of meaning elaborated by Aristotle in *On Interpretation*, this basic linguistic fact underscores the crucial importance of what he there calls ‘affections of the soul’. For, if words signify things through the intermediary of these affections, and if many individual words can also signify more than one thing, meaningful speech depends on the capacity to determine the precise thing to which a polysemic word refers, and this in turn depends on knowing just what affection or image a given speaker (or writer) has in mind.<sup>179</sup>

Now that we have examined Aristotle’s theory of signification, we can turn to his discussion of poetic style (translated by Halliwell as ‘diction’), and thereafter to his definition of metaphor. Aristotle begins Chapter 20 of the *Poetics* by declaring that ‘[t]he components of all diction are these: element, syllable, connective, noun, verb, conjunction, inflection, statement.’<sup>180</sup> He goes on to explain that ‘[a] noun is a compound, significant, non temporal sound, no part of which is independently significant’<sup>181</sup>. Having divided poetic diction or style into its component parts, and

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<sup>179</sup> To give a concrete illustration of how these ‘affections of the soul’ operate in Aristotle’s theory of signification, all we need to do is imagine a conversation between two people who both speak different languages. Let’s suppose that one of these people speaks English and the other speaks Korean. When the Anglophone says the word ‘car’, this word only signifies a car in the mind of the Korean speaker if the latter knows what the word means *in English*. If the Korean speaker has no understanding of English, the word ‘car’ will not signify a car; in fact it will not signify anything at all (unless the same sound means something different in Korean), and the word’s natural function will go unfulfilled. This basic situation demonstrates the important role played by what Aristotle calls affections of the soul. Words naturally signify things, but only via the intermediary of these affections, and only (i.e., in conversation) when both speakers belong to the same linguistic community and are aware of its basic conventions concerning the meanings of the words that are being exchanged.

<sup>180</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1456b 1-2: ‘Τῆς δὲ λέξεως ἀπάσης τὰ δ’ ἐστὶ τὰ μέρη, στοικεῖον συλλαβὴ σύνδεσμος ἄρθρον ὄνομα ῥῆμα πτώσις λόγος.’

<sup>181</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457a 8: ‘Ὀνομα δὲ ἐστὶ θωνὴ συνθετὴ σημαντικὴ ἄνευ χρόνου ἧς μέρος οὐδὲν ἐστὶ καθ’ αὐτὸ σημαντικόν’.

having given a general characterization of the noun, τὸ ὄνομα, Aristotle proceeds in the next chapter to divide the general class of nouns into several different species, and it is here that he mentions metaphors for the first time: ‘[e]very word is either a standard term, loan word, metaphor, ornament, neologism, lengthening, contraction, or modification. By “standard term” I mean one used by a community, by “loan word” one used by outsiders.’<sup>182</sup> In a way that presupposes the theory of signification that we have just examined, Aristotle observes that it is of course possible for the same word to be both a standard term, κύριον, and a loan word, γλωτταν, ‘though not for the same groups’<sup>183</sup>.

Immediately following this general outline of the different kinds of words, Aristotle provides us with the first extant definition of metaphor in the history of western letters. The definition states that ‘[m]etaphor is the application (ἐπιφορὰ) of a word that belongs to another thing’<sup>184</sup>. In other words, metaphor is an instance in which the name customarily used to signify one thing is used in reference to a thing that is customarily signified by another name. As Aristotle goes on to indicate, this transference of the name of one thing to another can take place in four principal ways: ‘either from genus to species, species to genus, species to species, or by analogy.’<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b 1-3: ‘ἅπαν δὲ ὄνομα ἐστὶν ἢ κύριον ἢ γλωττα ἢ μεταφορὰ ἢ κόσμος ἢ πεποιημένον ἢ ἐπεκταταμένον ἢ ὑψηρημένον ἢ ἐξηλλαγμένον. λέγω δὲ κύριον μὲν ὧς χρώνται ἕκαστοι, γλωτταν δὲ ὧς ἕτεροι· ὥστε φανερόν ὅτι καὶ κύριον εἶναι δυνατόν τὸ αὐτὸ, μὴ τοῖς αὐτοῖς δέ’.

<sup>183</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b 4-5: ‘μὴ τοῖς αὐτοῖς δέ’.

<sup>184</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b 7: ‘Μεταφορὰ δὲ ἐστὶν ὀνομάτος ἀλλοτρίου ἐπιφορὰ’. Fyfe translates ὀνομάτος ἀλλοτρίου ἐπιφορὰ as ‘the application of a strange term’. Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*, tr. W.H. Fyfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973) 1457b 7 (emphasis added).

<sup>185</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b 7-9: ‘ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ γένους ἐπὶ εἶδος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶδους ἐπὶ τὸ γένος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶδους ἐπὶ εἶδος ἢ κατὰ τὸν ἀνάλογον.’

The first thing to note with respect to these four categories of metaphor is that the ability to distinguish between them already presupposes a theoretical understanding of the things being compared. In other words, the ability to differentiate between one kind of metaphor and another presupposes from the outset an awareness of things and the specific, generic and analogical relationships according to which they are grouped into classes of a progressively broadening scope. This suggests that a philosophical understanding of things and their metaphysical connections is already singled out here as the truly sufficient condition for mastering the use of metaphor.

Aristotle gives examples of each of the aforementioned categories. It is firstly important to stress that, as noted by a number of modern commentators, some of these examples demonstrate that Aristotle's definition of metaphor in fact extends to several kinds of language that, today at any rate, are treated as being distinct from metaphor. Noteworthy in this regard is the example Aristotle gives to illustrate his second species of metaphor, which moves 'from species to genus': '[a]n example of transference from species to genus is "ten thousand noble deeds has Odysseus accomplished"; [for] ten thousand is many, and the poet has used it here instead of "many."' (1457b 9-10) According to contemporary usage, saying 'ten thousand' in place of 'many' would arguably be classified as an instance of *hyperbole* or exaggeration, rather than of metaphor.<sup>186</sup> In addition to this, some commentators have argued that Aristotle's understanding of metaphor also includes other distinct tropes within it, such as metonymy and synecdoche.<sup>187</sup> The broadness of this original definition, as well as its

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<sup>186</sup> In fact, Aristotle himself recognizes the connection between metaphors and hyperboles, ὑπερβολαί, in Book III, Chapter 11 of the *Rhetoric* (1412a 14).

<sup>187</sup> Michel Magnien accordingly observes that 'Aristote emploie le mot métaphore dans une acception beaucoup plus large que ne le feront les théoriciens de la fin de l'Antiquité et leurs héritiers, les

almost tautological character (in Greek, the subject and predicate terms of Aristotle's definition share the same root, *φορα*, only the prefixes *μετὰ* and *ἐπὶ* being different), both contribute to various difficulties of interpretation that we must presently consider.

The first issue of interpretation that needs to be clarified concerns just what it is that Aristotle defines when he defines metaphor in the *Poetics*. Recall that this definition states *μεταφορά δὲ ἐστὶν ὀνόματος ἀλλοτρίου ἐπιφορά*: 'metaphor is *the application*' or '*the transference* of a word that belongs to another thing.' Crucially, this definition identifies metaphor not with the word that is thus transferred, but rather with the process of transference itself.<sup>188</sup> To make this a little more concrete, compare Aristotle's definition of metaphor with that found in a work entitled *Peri Tropōn*, uncertainly attributed to Tryphon of Alexandria, who is thought to have lived in the first century CE. Tryphon's account of metaphor, which is in many ways quite similar to that of Aristotle, nevertheless defines it as '*a word that is transferred* from its conventional sense to a meaning that is out of the ordinary'<sup>189</sup>. In this definition, two things interest us in particular: (a) there is no question that metaphor is understood here to be a substituted name, rather than a dynamic process through which such a substitution or transference takes place; and (b) the transference of which metaphor is the static effect is completely

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modernes. Pour nous, seul le dernier « glissement » [...], voulu par le rapport d'analogie existant entre l'élément comparé [...] et l'élément comparant [...], est une métaphore. Les autres glissements, et les exemples donnés ensuite étant pour nous selon les cas, soit des métonymies [...], soit des synecdoques [...].'  
*Aristote Poétique: Introduction, traduction nouvelle et annotation de Michel Magnien* (Paris: Livre de Poche Classiques, 1990), p. 183, note 5. The same point is raised by Jean-Claude Monod, who notes that '[l]e concept [i.e., aristotélicien] de métaphore subsume alors toutes les figures de déplacement, les manières de désigner une chose par une autre, de « faire image ».' See "La mise en question contemporaine du paradigme aristotélicien – et ses limites", *Archives de Philosophie* Tome 70/4 (2007), p. 540.

<sup>188</sup> Ricoeur also observes that, in this instance, '*metaphor is defined in terms of movement*. The *epiphora* of a word is described as a sort of displacement, a movement "from...to...". Ricoeur goes on to argue that this fact in itself indicates that Aristotle's interest here is 'in the transpositional movement as such, in processes more than in classes.' (*The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 17)

<sup>189</sup> Tryphon, ΠΕΡΙ ΤΡΟΠΩΝ 728.24 (my translation), in (ed.) L. Spengel, *Rhetores Graeci Vol. III* (Lipsiae: Sumptibus et Typis B.G. Teubneri, 1856), p. 192: 'Μεταφορά ἐστὶ λέξις μεταφερομένη ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου ἐπὶ τὸ μὴ κύριον ἐμφάσεως'.

internal to the word and its meanings, insofar as it proceeds from one sense, ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου, to another, ἐπὶ τὸ μὴ κύριον.

The same cannot be said of Aristotle's definition. Although he most certainly speaks in numerous places about metaphors in the nominal form, as lexical entities<sup>190</sup>, and although the definition of metaphor is located within an analysis of different kinds of words, the thing itself, which he defines in the *Poetics* under the name of μεταφορὰ, is clearly a process.<sup>191</sup> Moreover, this process itself is not simply internal to words and their meanings. Aristotle's metaphor proceeds not from one (i.e. literal) sense of a word to another (i.e. figurative) sense, but rather from one thing to another.<sup>192</sup> It is for precisely this reason that I argue Aristotle's theory is a vertical theory rather than a horizontal one.

As mentioned, in applying the distinction between vertical and lateral theories of metaphor, I follow the lead of Paul Veyne and Irène Tamba-Mecz (1979). To grasp the full significance of this distinction, and moreover to understand why it needs to be made in the first place, we have to begin by applying it to the examples that Aristotle offers to

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<sup>190</sup> For instances in which Aristotle refers to metaphors as lexical entities, in the nominal form, cf. Cf. *Met.* 991a 21-23, *Meteor.* 357a 25-28, *Rhet.* 1458a 27-8, and *Po.* 1458a 22-25.

<sup>191</sup> For precisely this reason, Stanford observes that Aristotle's use of the term μεταφορὰ 'has, like the English word Metaphor, two meanings, abstract and concrete, corresponding to the English general term *Metaphor*, and on the other its specific cases *a metaphor*, *the metaphor*, or *metaphors*.' (Stanford, *Greek Metaphor*, p. 6). He goes on to specify that 'the concrete sense of μεταφορὰ' is 'a word in its transferred or metaphorical application' (ibid), whereas the 'abstract' sense is the 'transference, the process of transferring a word from one object to another,' and that it is the latter that Aristotle defines in the *Poetics*. Cf. *Greek Metaphor: Studies in Theory and Practice* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), p. 9. The same point is raised by Veyne & Tamba-Mecz, who note that in spite of its placement within a theory of style, which above all locates metaphor among other kinds of words, metaphor as defined by Aristotle in the *Poetics* corresponds to the *translatio* rather than the *translatum*. Cf. P. Veyne & I. Tamba-Mecz, "Metaphora et Comparison selon Aristote," *Revue des études grecques* 92, fascicule 436-437 (1979), p. 84.

<sup>192</sup> Veyne & Tamba-Mecz accordingly argue that 'Aristote parle d'un *designatum* et de sa dénomination, et non d'un mot et de son sens ; il y a transfert de dénomination, c'est-à-dire application (*epiphora*) à un *designatum* d'une dénomination qui n'est pas la sienne propre ; mais le mot ne change pas de sens pour autant. C'est la chose qui, provisoirement, change de nom. Ainsi Aristote appelle *metaphora* l'opération à laquelle procède un locuteur qui passe d'une dénomination à une autre.' "Metaphora et Comparison selon Aristote," *Revue des études grecques* 92, fascicule 436-437 (1979), p. 80.

illustrate his first two categories of metaphor (genus-species, species-genus). But it should be borne in mind from the beginning that Aristotle's basic four-fold categorization of metaphors, as well as the examples he gives to illustrate it, have attracted the scorn of several modern commentators.<sup>193</sup> In fact, Veyne and Tamba-Mecz agree that there is something truly puzzling about these categories, and in particular about the first two: the example he gives to illustrate a genus-species metaphor seems in reality to be a species-genus metaphor, and the one he gives to illustrate a species-genus metaphor also appears to be a case of the opposite kind. Nevertheless, as we shall see after following Veyne and Tamba-Mecz's argument, this is only an apparent discrepancy, which follows of necessity from the erroneous assumption that Aristotle's theory is a horizontal one that concerns the meanings of a word, and not a vertical one that concerns the relationship between words and things. Therefore, once we understand exactly what kind of theory Aristotle's theory is, the discrepancy between the first two categories and their examples necessarily disappears.

Aristotle's first example, given to illustrate a genus-species metaphor, is a phrase borrowed from Homer: “‘my ship stands here’”<sup>194</sup>. Aristotle explains that this is indeed a genus-species metaphor because ‘mooring is a kind of standing.’<sup>195</sup> Yet what is at first glance surprising for Veyne and Tamba-Mecz is that this seems to be a transference from species-genus rather than *vice versa*, ‘puisque le poète a remplacé la dénomination

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<sup>193</sup> Cope, for example, claims not to understand how the four categories of metaphor listed by Aristotle in the *Poetics* could be seen to correspond to the examples that he gives to illustrate them, both in the latter text and elsewhere. He concludes that these categories must therefore be ‘a piece of carelessness, such as is extremely common in Aristotle's writings’. E.M. Cope, *An Introduction to Aristotle's Rhetoric, With Analysis, Notes and Appendices* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1867) p. 376. Likewise, Brooke-Rose argues on the one hand that Aristotle is ‘hardly consistent’ in discussing these categories, and on the other that the categories themselves are ‘peculiarly useless’. C. Brooke-Rose, *A Grammar of Metaphor* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1958), p. 3/4.

<sup>194</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b 9 (citing Homer, *Odyssey* 1.185): ‘νήυς δὲ μοι ἦδ’ ἔστεικεν’.

<sup>195</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b 10: ‘τὸ γὰρ ὀρμεῖν ἔστιν ἑστάναι τι.’

spécifique, être ancré, par celle, générique, qui désigne l'immobilité en général'.<sup>196</sup> The example given by Aristotle to illustrate the species-genus metaphor is also a phrase from Homer: “ten thousand noble deeds has Odysseus accomplished”<sup>197</sup>. Aristotle as we saw earlier explains this example by observing that ‘ten thousand is many’<sup>198</sup>, and again, Veyne and Tamba-Mecz register the same surprise as above, since the transference from ‘many’ to ‘ten thousand’ seems rather to be ‘un passage du genre à un des mots spécifiques qui désignent les différents nombres élevés,’ rather than from species to genus.<sup>199</sup>

Veyne and Tamba-Mecz’s resolution of this apparent contradiction is worth quoting at length:

[t]out s'explique, quand on voit qu'Aristote ne pense nullement au passage d'un mot à un mot de sens voisin, mais de l'attribution (ἐπιφορά) d'un nom à une réalité : le poète a baptisé d'un nom générique, *être immobile*, une réalité spécifique, *l'ancrage* ; il a baptisé d'un nom spécifique, *mille*, une réalité générique, *la multiplicité*. Il y a donc bien eu, comme le dit le texte, passage du genre (verbal) à l'espèce (réelle) dans le premier cas et, dans le second, de l'espèce (verbale) au genre (réel). Mais Aristote ne songe pas à un glissement latéral, d'un mot à un autre mot, à l'étage des mots, ou d'une chose à une autre, à l'étage des choses, l'immobilité prenant ainsi la place de l'ancrage ; mais à un mouvement vertical ou oblique, de l'étage des mots à l'étage des choses et c'est ce que veut dire *epiphora*.<sup>200</sup>

Here we see the basis of the distinction for which I have argued between a vertical and a horizontal theory of metaphor, and the reason why I follow Veyne and Tamba-Mecz in arguing that Aristotle’s theory must be understood as being of the former kind rather than of the latter. Indeed, the vertical nature of Aristotle’s theory, its concern with the

<sup>196</sup> Veyne & Tamba-Mecz, “Metaphora et Comparaison selon Aristote,” p. 79.

<sup>197</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b 11 (citing Homer, *Iliad* 2.272): ‘ἦ δὴ μυρί’Οδυσσεὺς ἔσθλα ἔοργεν’.

<sup>198</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b 12: ‘τὸ γὰρ μυρίον πολὺ ἐστίν’.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Veyne & Tamba-Mecz, “Metaphora et Comparaison selon Aristote,” p. 79-80.

relationship between words and things, rather than between different senses of a word, is the only way to make sense of the examples that Aristotle offers to illustrate his first two categories of metaphor. The only way to explain Aristotle's claim that the transference from 'anchoring' to 'standing' is a transference from genus to species is to assume that the transference is one made by a word between two kinds of thing and not between two lexical meanings.

If Aristotle's theory of metaphor were in fact a horizontal theory, which concerns the transference from one sense of a word to another, the first example would necessarily be one from species to genus, since 'anchoring' is a specific word, and 'standing' is more general. Similarly, on a horizontal theory of metaphor Aristotle's second example would be a transference from genus to species, since 'ten thousand' is a more specific kind of word than 'many.' In truth, however, Aristotle's metaphorical transference proceeds vertically from thing to thing: thus a genus-species metaphor is one in which a word normally used in reference to a general state of affairs is applied to a more specific thing; conversely, a species-genus metaphor is one in which a word normally used in reference to a specific reality is applied, or transferred, to another thing that is usually referred to by a more general term.<sup>201</sup>

It is in my view no coincidence that some of the same commentators who claim that Aristotle's four-fold categorization of metaphor makes no sense are also those who assume that his theory is a horizontal one. Cope, for example, states that 'the primary

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<sup>201</sup> We can also formulate the difference between a vertical and horizontal theory in this way: on the latter kind of theory, the metaphorical transference is a result of substituting word X *for* word Y, whereas on the former kind it is a result of transferring a word *from* thing X *to* thing Y. A genus-species metaphor on a horizontal theory would therefore be one in which specific word X is substituted for generic word Y. But on a vertical theory such as Aristotle's however, the example 'here stands my ship' is a metaphor in which the word (standing) is transferred *from* thing X (being immobile in general) to thing Y (being anchored, as a specific kind of immobility).

notion of metaphor (μεταφορά, μεταφέρειν, tralatio, transferre) is a mere ‘transfer’ of a word from one sense to another’.<sup>202</sup> The error on which this interpretation is based is the assumption that Aristotle’s theory of metaphor is essentially the same kind of theory as those found in the works of classical rhetoricians such as Cicero and Quintilian. It is worth noting that, in the last-cited passage, Cope includes the Greek and Latin words for metaphor under a definition that in truth applies only to the latter.<sup>203</sup>

Much like Tryphon, whose definition of metaphor we examined above, Quintilian considers metaphor as the commonest and most beautiful of all tropes to be a case of transference from one sense of a word to another. More precisely, and again much like Tryphon, he understands metaphor as a case of transference from the proper sense of a word (a propria significatione / ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου) to another, i.e. figurative sense (id aliam / ἐπὶ τὸ μὴ κύριον). Insofar as these theories treat metaphor as involving the transference from literal to figurative sense, and therefore as being completely internal to a word and its meanings, they are precisely what Veyne and Tamba-Mecz mean when they speak of a horizontal theory of metaphor. To the extent that Cope does not see the difference between Aristotle’s original definition of metaphor and that of Quintilian, it is not at all surprising that he should be puzzled by the examples that Aristotle offers to illustrate the different categories of metaphor. Nevertheless, the confusion is his and not Aristotle’s.

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<sup>202</sup> Cope, *An Introduction to Aristotle’s Rhetoric*, p. 376 (emphasis added).

<sup>203</sup> In fact, Cope’s definition of metaphor, which he erroneously attributes to Aristotle, is identical with that of Quintilian, who classifies metaphor as the archetypal ‘trope (tropus)’, which he defines in general as ‘the artistic alteration of a word or phrase from its proper meaning to another (est verbi vel sermonis a propria significatione id aliam cum virtute mutatio).’ (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* VIII.6.1, trans. Butler) Thus, according to Quintilian, the Greek *metaphora* (which he translates into Latin by means of the word *translatio*) is ‘the commonest and by far the most beautiful of tropes (frequentissimus est tum longe pulcherrimus)’. (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* VIII.6.4, trans. Butler)

To the extent that Veyne and Tamba-Mecz recognize that Aristotle's definition of metaphor commits him to a vertical (or, as they say, oblique) theory rather than a horizontal one, they are able to see the sharp distinction that must be drawn between his theory of metaphor and those of the later rhetorical tradition. For this reason, they characterize Aristotle's theory of metaphor in direct opposition to what they call 'the rhetorical conception of metaphor' (my translation). They explain:

[I]a conception rhétorique de la métaphore comme changement de sens d'un mot suppose que les mots sont investis d'une signification intrinsèque et que l'analyse se situe au seul plan des vocables. Dans cette optique, la métaphore devient un transfert horizontal, conférant à un mot un sens impropre ou figuré, « lion » se disant au lieu d'« Achille ». Nous sommes bien loin de cette perspective chez Aristote, pour qui le signifié des noms n'est autre que la chose qu'ils désignent [...]. Bref, il n'y a chez Aristote, ni théorie autonome du sens des mots, ni, à plus forte raison, théorie du sens figuré ou d'un changement de sens des mots considérés en eux-mêmes. Aristote s'intéresse, non aux mots en eux-mêmes, mais à leur rapport avec les choses ou avec nos intellections des choses.<sup>204</sup>

Aristotle's theory of metaphor thus has nothing to do with the consideration of which senses of a word are literal and which are figurative. Indeed, the very idea of a word's literal sense is foreign to Aristotle, insofar as he understands the meanings of words to be fixed entirely through convention, κατὰ συνθήκην.<sup>205</sup> Rather than talk about the literal or proper sense of a word, most often Aristotle simply refers to usage that is κύριον, which Halliwell translates as 'standard' and Fyfe as 'ordinary'. The reason for this, as Veyne and Tamba-Mecz rightly suggest, is that on Aristotle's theory of signification words do not possess any intrinsic signification. Although it is true that words refer to things, this

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<sup>204</sup> Veyne & Tamba-Mecz, "Metaphora et Comparaison selon Aristote," p. 82.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *De Interpretatione* 16a 19.

is not by virtue of any intrinsic significance that they have on their own; rather, they signify things solely according to the conventions of the linguistic community.<sup>206</sup>

The foregoing considerations establish conclusively that Aristotle's theory of metaphor is indeed what I have called a vertical theory, which is concerned above all with the rapport between words and things. Along with the properly theoretical categories into which Aristotle divides metaphors, the vertical character of his theory underscores the implicitly philosophical character of the knowledge that is requisite, on Aristotle's account, to mastering the use of metaphors. To the extent that, as we shall

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<sup>206</sup> It is clear from all of this that, unlike the classical tradition of rhetoric, Aristotle has very little interest in the classification of tropes and figures, considered as 'turnings' or 'departures' from literal sense. At the same time, outside the *Poetics* Aristotle does occasionally use different terms in reference to the kind of language that is opposed to the metaphorical: at *Rhetoric* 1404b 6, for example, he mentions 'proper and appropriate words,' τὸ δὲ κύριον καὶ οἰκείον; and again at *Rhetoric* 1407a 3-4, he points out that certain situations demand the use of 'proper terms,' τοῖς ἰδίοις ὀνόμασι, in contradistinction to 'circumlocutions,' μὴ τοῖς περιέχουσιν. Nevertheless, most often he refers to the kind of language that is opposed to the metaphorical using the term τὸ κύριον. Insofar as this word refers to what is ordinary in the sense of being conventional, we must be careful not to confuse it with the notions of 'literal' and 'proper' sense, which is conveyed by the Latin word *propria*. Such a confusion is evident in the deconstructive analysis of J. Derrida, who argues that 'although the difference between *kurion* and *idion* is never given thematic exposition, it seems that *kurion*, more frequent in both the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*, designates the propriety of a name in its dominant, master, capital sense. [...] By extension, *kurion* is interpreted as the primitive (as opposed to derivative) sense, and sometimes is used as the equivalent of the usual, literal, familiar sense [...].' See J. Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 247 (emphasis added). Derrida's translation/interpretation of *kurion* as having the same sense as *idion*, and therefore meaning 'proper' rather than 'ordinary,' obscures the difference between these two concepts and, by extension, the difference between Aristotle's theory of metaphor and that of the classical tradition of rhetoric. More recently, J.-C. Monod has argued convincingly against Derrida's reduction of the sense of *kurion* to the 'proper,' affirming to the contrary that '[l]e kurion est [...] foncièrement relatif.' See Monod, "La mise en question contemporaine du paradigme aristotélicien", p. 538. Insofar as I have shown that Aristotle considers τὸ κύριον to be relative to the conventions of a linguistic community, it is crucial to maintain in agreement with Monod a distinction between it and other, related conceptions of literal and proper sense. By downplaying this distinction, Derrida exaggerates the connection between Aristotle and the classical tradition of rhetoric, and thereby obfuscates the subtle but important differences that, as we have just seen, separate their respective understandings of metaphor. In fairness, it would be remiss not to point out that Derrida is clearly not a 'commentator' on Aristotle; he is not in my view concerned with reproducing the content of what the latter wrote, in a faithful and objective representation. To assume this is to completely misunderstand what deconstruction, as well as its progenitor *Destruktion*, is: it is not so much a question of commenting on, and reproducing Aristotle's meaning, but rather of deploying a performative concept or a series of performative concepts (such as trace, writing, etc.) whose meaning, if they have one at all, can only be ascertained by attending to the effects they produce in being applied to the texts of other writers, philosophers, theorists, etc. In a later chapter I will address Derrida's deconstruction of Aristotle's text in a more robust way, by giving a positive construction of the argument that it presupposes.

presently see, Aristotle holds metaphors to be the most important element of both rhetorical and poetic style, this means that an orientation towards the philosophical understanding of things is implicitly singled out here as the truly sufficient condition for mastering rhetoric and poetry in general.

### **3.3 Metaphor as the Most Important Element of Poetic and Rhetorical Style**

Having examined Aristotle's definition of metaphor, and cleared up some of the interpretive issues surrounding it, we may now turn to his comments about the unique contributions that metaphors make to style in both poetry and rhetoric. At the outset, it is crucial to see both that (a) metaphor is the most important stylistic device for both activities; and that (b) it is the most important stylistic device in each case for a slightly different reason. Specifically, the reason why metaphor is the most important element of poetic style is that, in addition to the fact that the skill to make them cannot be learnt, metaphors contribute to the 'elevated' character of the action that tragedy characteristically imitates, by giving the language in which tragic characters express themselves a foreign or dignified air. On the other hand, the reason why metaphor is the most important element of rhetorical style is that it permits orators to give the same pleasing air of foreignness to their speeches without, at the same time, betraying the deliberate artifice underlying the attempt to persuade, and thereby arousing the suspicion (rather than the conviction) of the audience. As I will argue below, the reason underlying metaphor's importance to poetic style is an intrinsic reason, related to the essential function of tragic imitation. That underlying its importance to rhetorical style is an extrinsic one, in that it contributes to the essential function of rhetoric only in virtue of what Aristotle calls 'the corruption of the audience.'

In both the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, Aristotle's general discussions of style are devoted in large part to what, according to him, metaphors contribute to the basic objectives of poetry and rhetoric. Yet to the extent that poetry and rhetoric have distinct functions – that of the former being to purify the emotions of pity and fear through an imitation of human action, that of the latter being to discover all existing means of persuasion in respect to any subject whatsoever – the value accorded by Aristotle to metaphor in either case must be understood within the context of the specific functions that he assigns to each. The question becomes more concrete when we place metaphor in its proper framework, which is in either case a theory of poetic and rhetorical λέξις or style. Yet the problem is that the difference in functions between poetry and rhetoric necessitates a difference in the role played by style itself in each context, and this means ultimately that metaphor, as an element of style, derives whatever importance it has from a different set of considerations in respect to each pursuit.

To begin with, Aristotle himself states in Book III, Chapter 1 of the *Rhetoric* that 'the style of prose is not the same as that of poetry.'<sup>207</sup> Why is this so? To answer this question, we need only recall that according to Aristotle's definition of tragic mimesis, the action that it imitates is necessarily one that is elevated, σπουδαίος. In the previous chapter, we saw how the elevated nature of the actions depicted in tragic poetry aligns with the relative nobility of the character 'types' who perform them. Aristotle thus observes that tragedy, in contrast to comedy, generally sets out to portray people as better, βελτιούς, than those of the present time (but, as we also saw, not too much better). If these criteria – elevated action, nobility of character – are essential to the

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<sup>207</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1404a 9: 'ἑτέρα λόγου καὶ ποιήσεως λέξις ἐστίν.'

function assigned by Aristotle to tragic *mimesis*, it is also important to see that their effective representation necessitates, at the level of style, a very particular kind of language. This is because the actions and characters themselves are the fictional objects of a poetic representation that is most often to be communicated to the audience in and through a mixture of physical gesture, music, costume and the utterance of different kinds of speech (chorus, dialogue, monologue) by various actors. Accordingly, in order for the actions and characters themselves to be elevated and noble (relative to us), they must first and foremost *appear* to the audience to be such. This in turn demands that the entire manner in which the characters, their thoughts and their actions are represented to the audience should also be noble and elevated.

For precisely this reason, Aristotle states in Chapter 22 of the *Poetics* that ‘[e]xcellence of [i.e., poetic] diction means clarity and the avoidance of banality.’<sup>208</sup> As with all other Aristotelian virtues, the virtue of poetic style demands a mediation of two extremes, which necessitates a mixture of ‘ordinary words’ (τὰ κυρία) on the one hand, and ‘unfamiliar’ (τὸ ξενικόν) language on the other. Both of these are needed to achieve the virtue of poetic style because, as Aristotle observes, ‘clearest is the diction that uses standard terms, but this is banal.’<sup>209</sup> Conversely, ‘[i]mpressive and above the ordinary is the diction that uses exotic language.’<sup>210</sup> In the same way that ordinary words are clear but banal, ‘exotic’ or ‘unfamiliar’ language, τὸ ξενικόν, is dignified, but, used in excess, creates obscurity. Aristotle explains as follows: [b]y “exotic” I mean loan words, metaphors, lengthenings, and all divergence from the standard. But if one composes

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<sup>208</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1458a 17: ‘Λέχεως δὲ ἀρετὴ σαφὴ καὶ μὴ ταπεινὴν εἶναι.’

<sup>209</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1458a 18-9: ‘σαφειστάτη μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ἢ ἐκ τῶν κυρίων ὀνομάτων, ἀλλὰ ταπεινὴ.’

<sup>210</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1458a 20-1: ‘σεμνὴ δὲ καὶ ἐξαλλάτουσα τὸ ἰδιωτικὸν ἢ τοῖς ξενικοῖς κεχρημένη.’

entirely in this vein, the result will be either a riddle or a barbarism – a riddle if metaphors predominate; barbarism, if loan words.<sup>211</sup> Insofar as the virtue of poetic style is at once ‘clarity and the avoidance of banality,’ the poet must employ a mixture of both standard and exotic or unfamiliar words. Without the former, the result will be a dignified poem that lacks clarity; without the latter, it will be a clear one that lacks dignity, and is therefore banal.

As mentioned, the demand for poetic style to be both clear and dignified points back to the elevation of action that partly defines the essential function of tragic poetry. Precisely because this action must be of an ‘elevated’ nature, and precisely because the characters responsible for this action must appear better, *βελτίους*, than people of current times, the language through which they express themselves ought also to satisfy these criteria. It is for this reason that Aristotle recognizes, in Chapter 6, that style is a ‘necessary’ or ‘essential’ component of tragedy: ‘[s]ince actors render the mimesis, some part of tragedy will, in the first place, necessarily be the arrangement and the spectacle; to which can be added lyric poetry and diction, for these are the media in which they render the mimesis.’<sup>212</sup> Although Aristotle goes on to admit that the different components of a tragic poem are not all equally necessary, he clearly holds that all components – style included – are essential to the ideal, perfected tragedy.<sup>213</sup> In this way, by virtue of

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<sup>211</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1458a 21-4: ‘ξενικὸν δὲ λέγω γλῶτταν καὶ μεταφορὰν καὶ ἐπέκτασιν καὶ πᾶν τὸ παρὰ τὸ κύριον. ἀλλ’ ἂν τις ἅπαντα τοιαῦτα ποιήσῃ, ἢ ἀνιγμὰ ἔσται ἢ βαρβαρισμὸς· ἂν μὲν ἐκ μεταφορῶν, ἀνιγμὰ, ἂν δὲ ἐκ γλωττῶν, βαρβαρισμὸς.’

<sup>212</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449b 31-3: ‘ἐπεὶ δὲ πράττοντες ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν, πρῶτον μὲν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἂν εἴη τι μόριον τραγωδίας ὁ τῆς ὄψεως κόσμος, εἶτα μελοποιία καὶ λέξις· ἐν τοιούτοις γὰρ ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν.’

<sup>213</sup> Aristotle accordingly states near the end of the chapter that ‘if someone lays out a string of speeches that express character and are well composed in diction and thought, he will not achieve the stated function of tragedy; much more successful will be a tragedy which, though deficient in these other elements, has a plot and structure of events.’ (1450a 28-32)

the need for poetic language to be dignified, Aristotle clearly and unambiguously links style in general to the global function of tragic poetry.

Yet, does the importance accorded by Aristotle here to poetic style in general also imply a privileged role to be played by metaphors in particular? Aristotle seems to answer this question in the affirmative when he states, near the end of Chapter 22, that ‘[i]t is important to use aptly each of the features mentioned, including double nouns and loan words; but much the greatest asset is a capacity for metaphors.’<sup>214</sup> At the same time, Aristotle does not explicitly say that this is because metaphor contributes most productively to the elevation of tragic action and the nobility of tragic character; he rather says that the use of metaphor is most important because only it ‘cannot be acquired from another’<sup>215</sup>. Consequently, on the basis of Aristotle’s explicit remarks, all that can be said is that metaphor is the most important among the elements of poetic style because it signifies a natural endowment that, presumably, is more valuable than any repeatable technical skill or artificial know-how.

Nevertheless, the special attention paid in this chapter to the use of metaphor, τὸ μεταφορικόν, has led Ricoeur in particular to suggest what he calls ‘a parallel between the elevation of meaning accomplished by the *muthos* at the level of the poem, and the elevation of meaning by metaphor at the level of the word’.<sup>216</sup> According to this parallel,

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<sup>214</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459a 2-5: ‘Ἔστιν δὲ μέγα μὲν τὸ ἐκάστῳ τῶν εἰρημένων πρεπόντως χρῆσθαι, καὶ διπλοῖς ὀνόμασι καὶ γλώτταις, πολὺ δὲ μέγιστον τὸ μεταφορικὸν εἶναι.’

<sup>215</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459a 5-6: ‘μόνον γὰρ τοῦτο οὔτε παρ’ ἄλλου ἔστι λάβειν’.

<sup>216</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. R. Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 41. Ricoeur presents the reasoning behind this suggestion as follows: ‘A poetic composition that is at once clear and base is precisely one that employs only the most familiar vocabulary in its most common usage. Here, then, is the right place for deviation. Two strands meet here, the strange and the noble (*semnē*); and we cannot avoid pushing this connection further. If the ‘strange’ and the ‘noble’ meet in the ‘good metaphor,’ is it not because the nobility of such language befits the grandeur of the actions being depicted? Now I readily admit that this interpretation goes beyond Aristotle’s intentions, but it is permissible in terms of his text and arose from my reading of it. In any case, if this interpretation is valid, we are forced to ask

which Ricoeur admits ‘goes beyond Aristotle’s intentions’<sup>217</sup>, metaphor is implicitly singled out in the *Poetics* as the most important element of tragedy next to the plot – it is for Ricoeur perhaps even as important as the plot – because it performs the same act of elevation on the level of the word that the tragedy itself does by means of the plot. In other words, for Ricoeur, it makes sense to say that the elevation of meaning at the level of the plot and that at the level of the word are reciprocal, and in some sense work together to achieve the essential function of tragic mimesis.

Although it is undeniable that the *Poetics* affirms the general importance of style to the global aim of tragic poetry, the privileged role that Ricoeur attributes specifically to metaphors in the functioning of the tragic plot certainly goes beyond what can plausibly be argued on the basis of Aristotle’s text. Ricoeur himself admits this, but he does not indicate precisely in what ways this reading may conflict with other aspects of Aristotle’s discussion. If Ricoeur’s reading amounts to the claim, as I have suggested, that the *Poetics* implicitly raises metaphor to a level of importance that is ‘parallel,’ in the final analysis, to that of the plot (*muthos*), then it must be pointed out that this is at odds with Aristotle’s prioritization of the different elements of poetry in Chapter 6. There, Aristotle states that ‘[t]ragedy as a whole [...] must have six components, which give it its qualities – namely, plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle, and lyric poetry.’<sup>218</sup> Several lines later, Aristotle lists these components again, in order of

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whether the secret of metaphor, as a displacement of meaning at the level of words, does not rest in the elevation of meaning at the level of *muthos*. And if this proposal is acceptable, then metaphor would not only be a deviation in relation ordinary usage, but also, by means of this deviation, the privileged instrument of that upward motion of meaning promoted by *mimēsis*. [...] Considered from a functional point of view, imitation constitutes a unitary whole in which mythic elevation, displacement of language by metaphor, and the purging of feelings of fear and pity work side by side.’ (Ibid)

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450a 7-10: ‘ἀνάγκη οὖν πάσης τῆς τραγωδίας μέρη εἶναι ἕξ, καὶ ὁ ποία τις ἐστὶν ἡ τραγωδία· ταῦτα δ’ ἐστὶ μῦθος καὶ ἦθος καὶ λέξις καὶ διάνοια καὶ ὄψις καὶ μελοποιία.’

importance: '[p]lot, then is the first principle and, as it were, the soul of tragedy, while character is secondary. [...] Third in importance is thought [...]. Fourth is the diction of the spoken sections [...]. Of the remainder, lyric poetry is the greatest embellishment, while spectacle is emotionally potent but falls quite outside the art and is not integral to poetry.'<sup>219</sup>

The major obstacle to Ricoeur's interpretation is thus the fact that style or diction, of which metaphor is one element among others, is explicitly ranked fourth in order of importance with respect to the other components of tragedy in the *Poetics*. Aristotle's remarks in Chapter 6 thus place diction in general, and, by extension, metaphor in particular, behind plot (ὁ μῦθος), character (τὰ ἦθη) and thought (ἡ δianoia) in light of what each contributes to the essential function of tragedy. Nevertheless, apart from the specific consideration of metaphor as an element of style, it is undeniable that Aristotle recognizes style itself as a necessary component of poetry as he understands it. Although it is the least important of the four most important components, it is nonetheless clearly 'integral to poetry,' οἰκείον τῆς ποιητικῆς, unlike both 'lyric poetry' and 'spectacle,' which are extraneous. Yet the fact that metaphor is the most important element of poetic style is not, strictly speaking, sufficient grounds for Ricoeur's claim that it eclipses both character and thought in order of importance, by virtue of the functional analogy it shares with the plot.

The fact that style in general, and metaphor in particular, are essential to the general function of tragic poetry is an important point of counter-distinction with respect

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<sup>219</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450a 37 – 1450b 17: 'ἀρχὴ μὲν οὖν καὶ οἷον ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος τῆς τραγωδίας, δεύτερον δὲ τὰ ἦθη [...] τρίτον δὲ ἡ δianoia [...] τέταρτον δὲ τῶν μὲν λόγων ἢ λέξις [...] τῶν δὲ λοιπῶν ἢ μελοποιία μέγιστον τῶν ἡδυσμάτων, ἢ δὲ ὄψις ψυχαγωγικὸν μὲν, ἀτεχνότατον δὲ καὶ ἥκιστα οἰκείον τῆς ποιητικῆς.'

to Aristotle's discussion of style in the *Rhetoric*. As we have just seen, *Poetics* 6 divides the six components of tragedy into two uneven classes: the first four components (plot, character, thought and diction) are integral, οἰκεία, while the last two are not. In shifting to Aristotle's discussion of metaphor in the *Rhetoric*, however, the first thing that needs to be noted is that λέξις is not integral to rhetoric as it is to poetry – or at least, not unequivocally so. As will become clear in what follows, the shift in the general importance of λέξις to the essential function of rhetoric has significant consequences for Aristotle's discussion of metaphor in particular.

Ricoeur, for his part, underscores the distinction I aim to make here, claiming that '[n]o one denies that the link is weak between *lexis* and the rest of the Treatise [i.e., of the *Rhetoric*], which is centered on argumentation.'<sup>220</sup> Above all, it is the difference in function between rhetoric and poetry that necessitates the difference in the role played by style or λέξις in each art. In other words, the fact that Aristotle associates rhetoric from the outset with argumentation and the influence of other people's opinions, rather than with the imitation of human action that is the function of poetry, causes a shift in the basic importance of style. The first thing to be noted with respect to this difference in function is that, whereas the art of poetry is composed of six elements, that of rhetoric is composed of only three: 1) proof, πίστις, which furnishes the 'content' or 'thought' (διάνοια) on which rhetorical argumentation is based; 2) style, λέξις, which concerns the manner in which these proofs are expressed in language; and 3) organization, or what Aristotle calls 'the arrangement of the parts of the speech.'<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 31.

<sup>221</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1403b 1: 'πὼς χρῆ τὰ μέρη τοῦ λόγου.' These are the three elements that, according to the opening lines of Book III of the *Rhetoric*, 'require special attention in regard to speech (Ἐπειδὴ τρία ἐστὶν ἃ δεῖ πραγματευθῆναι περὶ τὸν λόγον)' (ibid).

Concerning the first of these terms, it is important to emphasize here that διάνοια names more than what the English word ‘thought’ suggests. As we are told in the *Poetics*, “διάνοια” covers all effects which need to be created by speech: their elements are proof, refutation, the conveying of emotions (pity, fear, anger, etc.), as well as enhancement and belittlement.<sup>222</sup> The first two books of the *Rhetoric* deal exclusively with the different elements of διάνοια that are important for rhetorical argumentation. Taken together, Books I and II thus provide a detailed account of the three primary sources from which the proofs, which furnish the content of rhetorical argumentation, can be drawn. Book III, on the other hand, specifically concerns style or diction (λέξις), which Aristotle initially suggests is in some sense superfluous to the business of argumentation, in addition to ‘the arrangement of the parts of the speech.’ In the opening paragraph of Book III, Aristotle indicates that the consideration of the different kinds of rhetorical proofs is now complete: ‘[w]e have therefore next to speak of style; for it is not sufficient to know what one ought to say, but one must also know how to say it, and this largely contributes to making the speech appear of a certain character.’<sup>223</sup>

With respect to rhetorical argumentation, the distinction between λέξις and διάνοια is therefore a distinction between what is said and the manner in which it is said.

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<sup>222</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1456a 35 – b 2: ‘ἔστι δὲ κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν ταῦτα, ὅσα ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου δεῖ παρασκευασθῆναι. μέρη δὲ τούτων τὸ τε ἀποδεικνύειν καὶ τὸ λύειν καὶ τὸ πάθη παρασκευάζειν (οἷον ἔλεον ἢ φόβον ἢ ὀργὴν καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα) καὶ ἔτι μέγεθος καὶ μικρότητος.’ What Halliwell translates as “thought” thus includes the expression of emotions as well, and this corresponds in general to Aristotle’s basic distinction in the *Rhetoric* between the three sources of ‘artificial’ (ἐντεχνονοί) (1356a 2) proofs by which persuasion can be produced: firstly, persuasion can be produced by the ‘moral character of the speaker (ἐν τῷ ἡθελί του λέγοντος)’; secondly it can be produced by ‘putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind (ἐν τῷ τὸν ἀκροατὴν διαθεῖναι πῶς)’ via an appeal to the emotions; and thirdly it can be produced by ‘the speech itself (ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ τῷ λόγῳ), in so far as it proves or seems to prove (διὰ τοῦ δεικνύειν ἢ φαίνεσθαι δεικνύειν).’ (1356a 3)

<sup>223</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1403b 2: ‘Περὶ δὲ τῆς λέξεως ἐχόμενον ἔστιν εἰπεῖν· οὐ γὰρ ἀπόχρη τὸ ἔχειν ἄ δεῖ λέγειν, ἀλλ’ ἀνάγκη καὶ ταῦτα ὡς δεῖ εἰπεῖν, καὶ συμβάλλεται πολλὰ πρὸς τὸ φανῆναι ποιόν τινα τὸν λόγον.’

It is a distinction, in other words, between the essential content of speech, on the one hand, and the way in which this content appears (πρὸς τὸ φανῆναι) to those who hear it, on the other. Yet if style is largely concerned with the appearance of what is uttered, why is it necessary to consider it at all? In response to this question, two basic considerations can be offered. In the first place, it must be recalled that the third kind of proof, on which rhetorical argumentation can be based, is ‘the speech itself, in so far as it proves or seems to prove,’ διὰ τοῦ δεικνύναι ἢ φαίνεσθαι. Within rhetoric, it is in other words acceptable for the orator to produce persuasion using what we would today call pseudo-reasoning – that is, reasoning that, while not actually proving anything, nevertheless seems to prove something. Because the proofs that furnish the content of rhetorical argumentation are allowed to be either real or merely apparent, it is necessary to understand exactly how to give an invalid argument the appearance of proving something, and this is ultimately contingent on the language in which the argument is expressed.

In the second place, Aristotle confirms explicitly in the ensuing lines of *Rhetoric* III.1 that, ‘since the whole business of [r]hetoric is to influence opinion, we must pay attention to it [i.e., λέξις], not as being right, but necessary; for, as a matter of right, one should aim at nothing more in a speech than how to avoid exciting pain or pleasure. For justice should consist in fighting the case with the facts alone, so that everything else that is beside demonstration is superfluous; nevertheless, as we have just said, it is of great importance owing to the corruption of the hearer.’<sup>224</sup> Quite significantly, Aristotle here

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<sup>224</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1404a 5: ‘ὅλης οὔσης πρὸς δόξαν τῆς πραγματείας τῆς περὶ τὴν ῥητορικὴν, οὐκ ὀρθῶς ἔχοντος, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἀναγκαίου τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ποιητέον, ἐπεὶ τό γε δίκαιον μηδὲν πλείω ζητεῖν περὶ τὸν λόγον ἢ ὡς μήτε λυπεῖν μήτε εὐφραίνειν· δίκαιον γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἀγωνίζεσθαι τοῖς

claims that considerations of style are in fact ‘superfluous,’ περίεργα, to the proofs with which rhetoric is concerned in its basic function. Nevertheless, style is a necessary superfluity owing to what he calls ‘the corruption of the hearer.’<sup>225</sup> Consequently, insofar as rhetoric is conceived as the art of discovering all possible means of persuasion, style is from an intrinsic perspective superfluous. Nevertheless it is necessary for extrinsic reasons, which are explained above all by the reference to the corrupt mental states of certain audiences.

Aristotle therefore justifies his concern with rhetorical style by noting that ‘in every system there is some slight necessity to pay attention to style; for it does make a difference, for the purpose of making a thing clear, to speak in this or that manner; still, the difference is not so very great, but all these things are mere outward show for pleasing the hearer; wherefore no one teaches geometry in this way.’<sup>226</sup> What Freese renders here as ‘mere outward show’ – φαντασία – is given a more precise articulation in Pierre Chiron’s French translation: ‘[m]ais la différence n’est pas si grande, et tout cela n’est qu’*imagination* [...]’.<sup>227</sup> As this makes clear, the qualified importance attributed by Aristotle to rhetorical style must ultimately be understood as the importance of the way in which certain arguments can be made to appear convincing or unconvincing to an audience.

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πράγμασιν, ὥστε τὰλλα ἕξω τοῦ ἀποδειξῆαι περίεργα ἐστίν· ἀλλ’ ὅμως μέγα δύναται, διὰ τὴν τοῦ ἀκροατοῦ μοχθηρίαν.’

<sup>225</sup> This recalls Aristotle’s remark in Book I, Chapter 1 that ‘in dealing with certain persons, even if we possessed the most accurate scientific knowledge, we should not find it easy to persuade them by the employment of such knowledge’ (1355a 12).

<sup>226</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1404a 6: ‘τὸ μὲν οὖν τῆς λέξεως ὅμως ἔχει τι ἀναγκαῖον ἐν πάσῃ διδασκαλίᾳ· διαφέρει γὰρ τι πρὸς τὸ δηλῶσαι ὡδὶ ἢ ὡδὶ εἰπεῖν· οὐ μέντοι τοσοῦτον, ἀλλ’ ἅπαντα φαντασία ταῦτ’ ἐστὶ καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἀκροατὴν· διὸ οὐδεὶς οὕτω γεωμετρῆν διδάσκει.’

<sup>227</sup> Aristote, *Rhétorique*, tr. Pierre Chiron (Paris: GF Flammarion, 2007), 1404a 12 (emphasis added).

We have just seen why the consideration of how a speech appears to an audience is in one sense extraneous to the basic task of rhetorical argumentation, while in another sense it is necessary, owing to ‘the corruption of the hearer.’ In an ideal world, this last remark seems to suggest, a straightforward demonstration of the relevant facts alone would suffice to convince. But because, evidently, many audiences are not unbiased judges, public speakers must often sugarcoat their words with stylistic artifice in order to sway their listeners’ minds subliminally towards accepting the views they expound. Effectively, this means that the importance of style derives from largely strategic considerations. In cases where an audience would remain unconvinced by an unadorned demonstration of the relevant facts, orators must then resort to a kind of subterfuge, where the words, in which the content of a proof appears, themselves contribute to the production of persuasion. Precisely for this reason, however, the mastery of rhetorical style must be kept secret in order to be effective. This is because, as Aristotle goes on to explain, ‘those who practice this artifice [i.e., λέξις] must conceal it and avoid the appearance of speaking artificially instead of naturally; for that which is natural persuades, but the artificial does not.’<sup>228</sup> Aristotle illustrates the need for orators to conceal their artifice with the claim that ‘men become suspicious of one whom they think to be laying a trap for them, as they are of mixed wines’<sup>229</sup>.

Although in *Rhetoric* I.2 Aristotle defines rhetoric as the art of discovering (θεωρήσαι) all possible means of persuasion with respect to any subject whatsoever, Book III makes clear that rhetoric is, after all, concerned with producing conviction and not just finding out the different ways in which it could be produced. It is precisely

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<sup>228</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1404b 4: ‘διὸ δεῖ λανθάνειν ποιούντας, καὶ μὴ δοκεῖν λέγειν πεπλασμένως ἀλλὰ πεφυκότηως· τοῦτο γὰρ πιθανόν, ἐκεῖνο δὲ τούναντίον’.

<sup>229</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1404b 4: ‘καθάπερ πρὸς τοὺς οἴνους τοὺς μεμιγμένους’.

because of this fact that considerations of style become indispensable, not necessarily to good oratory, but to successful oratory. For, as Aristotle observes, there are times when the deliberate effort to produce persuasion in an audience can lead to the opposite effect (τοὺναντίον) – that is, it can arouse their suspicion of, rather than their belief in the truth of what is being argued. Regardless of the content of a rhetorical proof, there are times when the choice of diction itself can constitute the difference between a convincing argument and a suspect one. Therefore, as with mixed wines, it is crucial to conceal the deliberate artifice of one’s words, and thus to appear to speak naturally, πεφυκότηως. In addition to being the art of discovering the possible means of persuasion in connection to any given topic, rhetoric is also required by the mediocrity of certain audiences to be an art of appearing to speak naturally – that is, the art of appearing to speak without any artifice at all. This constitutes the major difference between rhetoric and poetry vis-à-vis the importance of style: the poetic audience is aware that the tragedy they are watching is the product of an art, and this in the end does not affect the tragedy’s capacity to elicit and purify the emotions of pity and fear. In rhetoric, on the contrary, the appearance of speaking artificially can lead to suspicion rather than to conviction.

The major consequence of this difference between rhetoric and poetry in relation to style is that the range of stylistic devices available to the poet is broader than that available to the orator. Poets, for example, can put their words into a number of different forms of meter. But more importantly, insofar as the virtue of poetic style is to be at once ‘clear and not commonplace,’ poets have more freedom to choose their words from among the different kinds of ‘unfamiliar’ (ξενικόν) language. The poet can therefore choose from ‘a rare word (γλῶτταν),’ ‘a metaphor (μεταφορὰν),’ ‘a lengthening

(ἐπέκτασιν),’ and in fact anything else that is outside the ordinary use of a word, and as long as this kind of diction suits the subject matter, and is adequately blended with ordinary words so as to produce the proper balance between clarity and nobility of diction, the style will be adequate to the function of poetic imitation. In fact, it is necessary in most cases for the poet to use unfamiliar, i.e. artificial language, since without this the tragic poem appears too common; it then lacks the gravitas that is demanded, in proper measure, by the elevated nature of the action that is being imitated. In rhetoric, conversely, there is less room for poetic grandiloquence. Yet this does not mean that the orator cannot make use of any unfamiliar language at all. It means rather that the orator does not have the same freedom as the poet in choosing from among the varieties of words that are unfamiliar.

Aristotle therefore observes in *Rhetoric* III.2 that ‘[i]n regard to [i.e., rhetorical] style, one of its chief merits may be defined as perspicuity.’<sup>230</sup> For this reason, ‘if [i.e. a speech] does not make the meaning clear, will not perform its proper function; neither must it be mean, nor above the dignity of the subject, but appropriate to it; for the poetic style [...] is not mean, but it is not appropriate to prose.’<sup>231</sup> He continues:

[o]f nouns and verbs it is the ordinary ones that make style perspicuous; all the others which have been spoken about in the *Poetics* elevate it and make it ornate; for departure from the ordinary makes it appear more dignified. In this respect men feel the same in regard to style as in regard to foreigners and fellow-citizens. Wherefore we should give our language a “foreign air”; for men admire what is remote, and that which excites admiration is pleasant. In poetry many things conduce to this and there it is appropriate; for the subjects and persons spoken of

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<sup>230</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1404b 1: ‘ὠρίσθω λέξεως ἀρετὴ σαφὴ εἶναι.’

<sup>231</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1404b 1-2: ‘ὁ λόγος, ἐὰν μὴ δηλοῖ, οὐ ποιήσει τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἔργον· καὶ μήτε ταπεινὴν μήτε ὑπὲρ τὸ ἀξίωμα ἀλλὰ πρέπουσαν· ἢ γὰρ ποιητικὴ ἴσως οὐ ταπεινή, ἀλλ’ οὐ πρέπουσα τῷ λόγῳ.’

are more out of the common. But in prose such methods are appropriate in much fewer instances, for the subject is less elevated [...].<sup>232</sup>

Insofar as the subject matter with which rhetoric deals is ‘less elevated,’ ἐλάττων, than that with which poetry deals, there are fewer opportunities for the orator to make productive use of unfamiliar language, since it is above all by this kind of language that style becomes ‘more dignified,’ σεμνοτέρων. By contrast with poetic style, which permits a more liberal use of unconventional terms, Aristotle thus explains that, in rhetoric, ‘we should use strange, compound, or coined words only rarely and in few places.’<sup>233</sup> Consequently, and quite significantly, ‘[p]roper (τὸ δὲ κύριον) and appropriate words (καὶ τὸ οἰκεῖον) and metaphors (καὶ μεταφορὰ) are alone to be employed in the style of prose’<sup>234</sup>.

In this we see the reduced scope of stylistic artifice that is available to the orator, by comparison with that which is available to the poet. The consequence of this slight difference is that, while poets are permitted to employ ordinary words, rare words, lengthenings, metaphors, and indeed any other kinds of language that are out of the ordinary, the orator’s stylistic repertoire is comparatively limited to proper and appropriate words – which are in fact two different names (τὸ δὲ κύριον καὶ τὸ οἰκεῖον) for the same thing, i.e., ‘ordinary words’ – and metaphors. In rhetoric, it is only by means of metaphors that the need for exotic charm, in appropriate measure, can be satisfied in a

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<sup>232</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1404b 2-3 (translation modified): ‘τῶν δ’ ὀνομάτων καὶ ῥημάτων σαφῆ μὲν ποιεῖ τὰ κύρια, μὴ ταπεινὴν δὲ ἀλλὰ κεκοσμημένην τᾶλλα ὀνόματα ὅσα εἴρηται ἐν τοῖς περὶ ποιητικῆς· τὸ γὰρ ἐξαλλάξαι ποιεῖ φαίνεσθαι σεμνοτέρων· ὡσπερ γὰρ πρὸς τοὺς ξένους οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρὸς τοὺς πολίτας, τὸ αὐτὸ πάσχουσι καὶ πρὸς τὴν λέξιν. διὸ δεῖ ποιεῖν ξένην τὴν διάλεκτον· θαυμασταὶ γὰρ τῶν ἀπόντων εἰσίν, ἡδὺ δὲ τὸ θαυμαστόν. ἐπὶ μὲν οὖν τῶν μέτρων πολλὰ τε ποιεῖ τοῦτο, καὶ ἀρμόττει ἐκεῖ· πλέον γὰρ ἐξέστηκε περὶ ἅ καὶ περὶ οὓς ὁ λόγος· ἐν δὲ τοῖς φιλοῖς λόγοις πολλῶ ἐλάττουσιν· ἢ γὰρ ὑπόθεσις ἐλάττων [...].’

<sup>233</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1404b 5: ‘γλώτταις μὲν καὶ διπλοῖς ὀνόμασι καὶ πεποιημένοις ὀλιγάκις καὶ ὀλιγακοῦ χρηστέον.’

<sup>234</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1404b 6.

way that does not jeopardize the essential function of rhetorical speeches, which is to produce persuasion.

Aristotle registers the importance of metaphor to both rhetoric and poetry, as well as the difference between rhetorical and poetic style, by noting that metaphor ‘is the most important both in poetry and in prose. But the orator must devote the greater attention to them [i.e., to metaphors] in prose, since the latter has fewer resources than verse.’<sup>235</sup>

Although both rhetorical and poetic style have to negotiate a balance between clarity and what is elevated, dignified, and foreign, in rhetoric this balance is more difficult to obtain, because it must be achieved in such a way that its achievement passes unnoticed. It is only metaphor that allows for this kind of effect.

The reason for this lies partly in the fact that ordinary words produce clarity, but are also banal, or commonplace (ταπεινή). On the other hand, the different kinds of exotic or unfamiliar language (τὸ ξενικόν) are impressive and pleasing, but they are obscure. What is crucial to see, especially in the case of rhetorical style in particular, is that metaphor produces both these effects, clarity (τὸ σαφή) and foreignness (τὴν ξένην), side by side. Metaphors are not new words; they are taken from among the repertoire of existing, ordinary words in a given language. What gives a metaphor its foreignness is the fact that it places an ordinary word in a new and unfamiliar context, by using it in reference to ‘another thing,’ ἄλλοτρίου. In this way, the ordinary and the unfamiliar are in fact blended in every metaphorical expression, thanks to the tension within each metaphor between the conventional word and its alien context.

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<sup>235</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1405a 8: ‘τοῦτο πλεῖστον δύναται καὶ ἐν ποιήσει καὶ ἐν λόγοις [...] τοσοῦτω δ’ ἐν λόγῳ δεῖ μάλλον φιλοπονείσθαι περὶ αὐτῶν, ὅσῳ ἐξ ἐλλατόντων βοηθημάτων ὁ λόγος ἐστὶ τῶν μέτρων.’

Aristotle therefore distinguishes metaphors from the other varieties of unfamiliar language by the consideration that, unlike ‘strange, compound, or coined words’, metaphor has the capacity to give a speech ‘something foreign (ξενικόν) about it’, while at the same time preserving clarity and successfully concealing the speaker’s artifice.<sup>236</sup> For this reason, Aristotle from this point in the *Rhetoric* focuses exclusively on metaphor as the most important part of rhetorical style, noting that ‘[i]t is metaphor above all that gives perspicuity [i.e. clarity], pleasure, and a foreign air, and it cannot be learnt from anyone else’<sup>237</sup>.

To see more concretely how the use of metaphors can according to Aristotle contribute to the function of rhetoric in particular, it will be helpful to examine one of the examples that he gives in *Rhetoric* III.11 to illustrate what he calls ‘smart and popular sayings,’ τὰ ἀστεῖα καὶ τὰ εὐδοκιμοῦντα. This example is particularly well suited to highlighting the subtle way in which metaphors, on Aristotle’s account, can contribute to the production of persuasion. This is also pointed out by Laks (1994), who draws attention to a connection between some of Aristotle’s remarks about the metaphor, on the one hand, and the enthymeme on the other. In the same way that Ricoeur, as we saw above, argues for a parallel between the mimetic operation of the tragic *muthos* and the lexical operation of metaphor in the *Poetics*, Laks argues for a parallel between the enthymeme, on the level of argumentation, and metaphor on the level of style in the *Rhetoric*.

In the first place, Laks’ argument points to the basic analogical parallel, which we examined in the previous chapter, that Aristotle posits between rhetoric and dialectic. In

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<sup>236</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1405a 7.

<sup>237</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1405a 8-9: ‘καὶ τὸ σαφές καὶ τὸ ἡδὺ καὶ τὸ ξενικὸν ἔχει μάλιστα ἢ μεταφορά. καὶ λαβεῖν οὐκ ἔστι αὐτὴν παρ’ ἄλλου.’

the same way that, for Aristotle, rhetoric is both a counterpart (ἀντίστροφος) and a likeness (ὁμοίωμα) of dialectic, so too are the sources of rhetorical argumentation the analogical counterparts or likenesses of the sources of dialectical argumentation. More precisely, as Aristotle observes in *Rhetoric* I.2, the sources of dialectical argumentation are ‘induction and the syllogism (τὸ μὲν ἐπαγωγή ἐστὶ τὸ δὲ συλλογισμὸς),’ and those of rhetorical argumentation are the example (παραδείγμα) and the enthymeme (ἐνθύμημα). Aristotle postulates an analogical relationship between these sources of argumentation, contending that the case is ‘the same (ἐνταῦθα ὁμοίως ἔχει)’ in rhetoric as it is in dialectic: for the example is induction, and the enthymeme a syllogism<sup>238</sup>.

Despite the differences separating the former two from the latter two, differences which concern both formal validity and the certainty of the starting points from which rhetorical and dialectical arguments are drawn, there is in other words a structural parallel between them.

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<sup>238</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1356b 8: ‘ἔστι γὰρ τὸ μὲν παράδειγμα ἐπαγωγή, τὸ δ’ ἐνθύμημα συλλογισμὸς’. As Aristotle explains in the *Posterior Analytics* and *Topics*, the difference between the syllogism and induction is that the former begins with a universal principle, in the form of a definition, and proceeds inferentially from there to deduce certain necessary truths about particular individuals or species of individuals falling under that definition. Induction, on the other hand, proceeds in the opposite direction, from particular to universal: presented with a group of disparate particulars, induction aims at an intuition of the universal genus underlying them. According to Book I, Chapter 12 of the *Topics*, ‘[i]nduction ‘is the progress from particulars to universals (ἐπαγωγή δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν καθ’ ἕκαστον ἐπὶ τὰ καθόλου ἔφοδος)’. See Aristotle, *Topics*, tr. E.S. Forster (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), 105a 13-14. The major differences between the example and induction, and between the enthymeme and the syllogism, are differences of formal validity, as well as difference in the certainty of the propositions that furnish the starting points for reasoning. When Aristotle speaks of induction and the syllogism in their complete and perfected sense, he means in the former case a formally valid inference from particular to universal; in the latter case he means the formally valid inference from a true and necessary definition of a given class to a necessary conclusion concerning certain members belonging to this class. He therefore calls the enthymeme ‘a rhetorical syllogism (ἐνθύμημα μὲν ῥητορικὸν συλλογισμὸν), and an example rhetorical induction (παραδείγμα δὲ ἐπαγωγὴν ῥητορικὴν).’ (1356b 8) These two argumentative forms, the enthymeme and the example, are the only sources of logical (or quasi-logical) ‘demonstration (δεικνύειν)’ that are available to orators (ibid). The notion of induction as a formally valid inference from a group of disparate particulars to the universal underlying them raises serious logical issues. I discuss some of these in the fourth chapter of this dissertation.

For Laks, the quasi-logical character of the enthymeme parallels the quasi-cognitive character of metaphor, as Aristotle analyses it in the *Rhetoric*: ‘[I]’ analogie entre analyse logique et analyse lexéologique [...] est importante pour situer à son juste niveau le statut cognitif de la métaphore. Car en vertu d’une seconde analogie entre logique et lexéologie, mais cette fois considérée dans sa partie lexicale, le théorie de la métaphore peut être mis en relation avec ce que l’on doit bien appeler les potentialités cognitive de l’enthymème.’<sup>239</sup> To substantiate this parallel, Laks points to some suggestive similarities in Aristotle’s account of the psychological and epistemological functioning of metaphors, on the one hand, and that of enthymemes on the other; he does not mention the example I intend to discuss. Nevertheless, insofar as this example substantiates his reading from a slightly different perspective, I offer it as supplemental support of his point, which I think is a good one.

As mentioned, Aristotle offers the example under discussion in *Rhetoric* III.11 as an illustration of the effective use of metaphors and similes that create vivid mental images. It is the phrase ‘thee, like a sacred animal ranging at will’<sup>240</sup>, which according to Freese is a reference to Isocrates’ *Ad Philippum*, ‘an appeal to [i.e. Philip II of Macedon] to lead the Greeks against Persia.’<sup>241</sup> As Freese explains in the same note, Isocrates’ main objective in writing to Philip II was to persuade him firstly to end the infighting that was going on at the time among Greek city-states, and thereafter to lead a unified Greek force against Persia. The exact sense of the simile is thus that, if Philip were to do as Isocrates recommends, ‘[a]s a sacred animal [ἄφρον] could roam where it pleased within the

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<sup>239</sup> A. Laks, “Substitution et connaissance : pour une interprétation unitaire (ou presque) de la théorie aristotélicienne de la métaphore,” in (eds.) D. Furley & A. Nehamas, *Aristotle’s Rhetoric: Philosophical Essays* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 304.

<sup>240</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1411b 2: ‘σὲ δ’ ὡσπερ ἄφρον’.

<sup>241</sup> Freese, in Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, p. 404 note g.

precincts of the temple, so Philip could claim the whole of Greece as his fatherland [...].<sup>242</sup> While this is an adequate paraphrase of Isocrates' meaning, it is important to see just how compressed the expression is in the original Greek: the text of Isocrates reads 'σὲ δ' ὥσπερ ἄφετον γεγεννημένον ἅπασαν τὴν Ἑλλάδα πατρίδα νομίζειν'; translated into English by Norlin, it reads 'it is your privilege, *as one who has been blessed with untrammelled freedom*, to consider all Hellas as your fatherland [...].'<sup>243</sup> The first thing to note is that the Greek text makes no explicit mention of untrammelled freedom whatsoever. A more literal translation of the phrase would be simply: 'but it is for you, like a sacred animal, to consider all of Hellas as having become your fatherland [...].' Where then does the notion of 'untrammelled freedom' come from?

In the answer to this question, we see from a slightly different perspective the relation between metaphor and the enthymeme, which Laks mentions above. The notion of untrammelled freedom, which is explicitly stated nowhere in Isocrates' Greek text, is nevertheless the implied similarity underlying the comparison between Philip II and a 'sacred animal,' ἄφετον. Sacred animals, like the 'silken beeves of Helios' in Book XII of the *Odyssey*, were protected and given special treatment by virtue of their association with various Greek deities (as cows are at Hindu temples and shrines in India). It was often customary for a temple or shrine that was consecrated to a specific deity to contain one or more animals associated with the deity in question, and these animals were allowed to roam unrestricted throughout the temple's precincts. Consequently, the notion of 'untrammelled freedom' is the intended conclusion of the comparison between Philip II and the ἄφετον: in the same way that a sacred animal roams freely throughout the

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Isocrates, *To Philip*, trans. G. Norlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 127 (p. 323; emphasis added).

temple of the deity with which it is associated, so Philip could roam freely, like a sacred animal, throughout the whole of Greece after uniting the warring city-states and defeating Persia. Yet this is left implicit in the comparison, and the translator therefore faces a choice between a literal translation, in which the conclusion remains implicit, and a paraphrase in which the conclusion is made explicit, but the comparison itself is lost.

Isocrates' point, paraphrased in the simplest way, does indeed take the form of an enthymeme, which according to Aristotle is a kind of informal syllogism:

P1. If Philip II follows Isocrates' advice, he will roam freely throughout Greece.  
P2. Sacred animals roam freely in their precincts.  
C. Therefore, Philip II will be like a sacred animal if he follows Isocrates' advice (i.e., it will be his privilege to consider all of Hellas as having become his fatherland).

The justification for the inference and the similarity underlying the comparison are one and the same: the moment one understands the simile, one also understands the implicit justification for the enthymeme. Conversely, this also means that if one does not grasp the simile, one misses the specific point of the enthymeme.

This demonstrates that, in certain cases, the successful deployment of stylistic devices can contribute substantially to the argumentative function of the art of rhetoric. Aristotle at one point in the *Rhetoric* refers to enthymemes as 'the body of proof', σώμα τῆς πίστεως, and at another compares style to a cloak, which implies that content and style remain independent of and separable from one another, as a body is independent of and separable from the clothes that cover it.<sup>244</sup> Yet the above example shows that in some cases the distinction between argumentation and style is difficult to uphold. In other words, this example shows in a concrete way how, as Aristotle affirms throughout Book

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<sup>244</sup> See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1354a 3 and 1405a 9 respectively.

III of the *Rhetoric*, metaphors contribute significantly to the aims of persuasion, and are for that reason the most important element of rhetorical style.

This is, I think, what Laks intends in drawing out the subtle connection between metaphor and the enthymeme, which is aptly illustrated by Isocrates' phrase above. This connection implicitly substantiates the claim that metaphor is the most important element of rhetorical style. Thus, to the extent that the key to both rhetorical and poetic style is mastering the use of metaphor, and mastering the use of metaphor, as discussed by Aristotle, demands an orientation towards the theoretical understanding of things in their specific, generic and analogical relatedness, then the importance attached to metaphor underscores Aristotle's philosophical reformation of both arts from a unique perspective.

Furthermore, with respect to the example just considered, it might be objected that this is a simile, and not a metaphor. This should not distract us for, as we shall presently see, Aristotle considers the simile to be a kind of metaphor, which differs from it only in the manner stated. The reason for this identity between the simile and the metaphor, as I will argue, is that Aristotelian metaphor is a fundamentally comparative operation, which (despite its place in the theory of style among different kinds of words) cannot be reduced to the status of a one-word trope. Aristotelian metaphor, which is defined above all by its vertical character, is any form of comparative predication in which two or more things are brought together in light of some likeness they are seen to exhibit imperfectly with respect to one another.

### **3.4 Metaphor, Simile, and the Perception of Similarities**

We now turn to the association posited by Aristotle between the ability to make and understand metaphors, and the ability to perceive similarities between disparate things.

Up until now, this feature of metaphor has largely remained implicit in our discussion. It was perhaps most evident in the examples that Aristotle offers to illustrate his first two categories of metaphor (genus-species, species-genus): for in the relation between ‘standing’ and ‘anchoring,’ on the one hand, and in that between ‘many’ and ‘ten thousand’ on the other, there is indeed a kind of similarity or family resemblance.

Yet the similarities involved in the first three categories of metaphor (genus-species, species-genus and species-species) are quite rudimentary in comparison to those involved in the fourth category, which is ‘metaphor by analogy,’ ἡ κατὰ ἀναλογίαν. This is on the one hand because the first three categories concern a single rapport of resemblance between two individual things, whereas analogical metaphor presupposes a duplication of this relationship into an equality of proportions between four things. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle therefore explains the analogical category of metaphor as follows: ‘I call “by analogy” cases where *b* is to *a* as *d* is to *c*: one will then speak of *d* instead of *b*, or *b* instead of *d*.’<sup>245</sup>

This kind of metaphor thus presupposes a proportional analogy between two different sets of things, which shows that these metaphors involve a comparison between no less than four individuals, divided into two parallel groups. Aristotle gives two examples of such metaphors, and explains the proportional analogies on which they are implicitly based. The first example is based on the analogy ‘the wine bowl is to Dionysus as the shield is to Ares: so one will call the wine bowl “Dionysus’s shield,” and the shield “Ares’ wine bowl.”’ (1457b 20-22) The second is based on the analogy ‘old age is to life as evening to day: so one will call evening “the day’s old-age,” or, like

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<sup>245</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b 15-9: ‘τὸ δὲ ἀνάλογον λέγω ὅταν ὁμοίως ἔχη τὸ δεύτερον πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον καὶ τὸ τέταρτον πρὸς τὸ τρίτον· ἐρεῖ γὰρ ἀντὶ τοῦ δευτέρου τὸ τέταρτον ἢ ἀντὶ τοῦ τετάρτου τὸ δεύτερον.’

Empedocles, call old age “the evening of life” of “life’s sunset.”<sup>246</sup> The discussion of metaphor by analogy demonstrates that, for Aristotle, certain kinds of metaphors imply a proportional resemblance between two different groups of things. In the first example, the resemblance is between the shield and the cup insofar as each is the characteristic symbol or sign associated with a specific deity. In the second, the resemblance is between old age and evening insofar as each is the end or completion of a cycle of time. In both cases, however, the proportional analogy and the metaphors that can be based on it all require, and in fact reflect, the perception of certain kinds of similarities between things that are, on the surface, very remote from one another.

In this, we encounter the crucial role played by similarities in the production and comprehension of metaphors as understood by Aristotle. Chapter 22 of the *Poetics* affirms this explicitly, where Aristotle argues that the natural capacity to make and understand metaphors is the greatest asset available to the poet. In fact, we examined this claim in the first section of this chapter but did not consider in detail all the reasons that Aristotle gives to justify it. The justification for why metaphor is the most important element of poetic style is that ‘a capacity for metaphor [...] cannot be acquired from another, and is a sign of natural gifts: because to use metaphor well is to discern similarities.’<sup>247</sup> Even more explicitly than the text of the *Poetics*, *Topics* VI.2 also associates metaphors with the perception of resemblances, claiming explicitly that ‘all

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<sup>246</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b 20-4: ‘λέγω δὲ οἶον ὁμοίως ἔχει φιάλη πρὸς Διόνυσον καὶ ἀσπίς πρὸς Ἄρη· ἐρεῖ τοίνυν τὴν φιάλην ἀσπίδα Διονύσου καὶ τὴν ἀσπίδα φιάλην Ἄρεως· ἢ ὁ γῆρας πρὸς βίον, καὶ ἐσπέρα πρὸς ἡμέραν· ἐρεῖ τοίνυν τὴν ἐσπέραν γῆρας ἡμέρας ἢ ὡσπερ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς, καὶ τὸ γῆρας ἐσπέραν βίου ἢ δυσμὰς βίου.’

<sup>247</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459a 5-8: ‘πολὺ δὲ μέγιστον τὸ μεταφορικὸν εἶναι· μόνον γὰρ τοῦτο οὔτε παρ’ ἄλλου ἔστι λάβειν εὐφυΐας τε σημειῶν ἔστι· τὸ γὰρ εὖ μεταφέρειν τὸ τὸ ὅμοιον θεωρεῖν ἔστιν.’

those who use metaphors do so on account of some similarity.’<sup>248</sup> Thus metaphor depends on the capacity to perceive similarities, τὸ ὅμοιον θεωρεῖν, and this capacity is a sign of what Aristotle calls εὐφυΐα.

In the remainder of this section, I will address three separate, but related issues raised by this passage: (a) I will draw out and make explicit some of what remains implicit in the importance attached by Aristotle to the perception of resemblances for the production and comprehension of metaphors; (b) I will briefly outline and explain what Aristotle means by εὐφυΐα and show why it is fundamentally different from what we mean by ‘special talent’; and (c) I will also show how the role played by similarities in the production and comprehension of metaphors justifies Aristotle’s identification of the metaphor and the simile. Having justified this identification, I will then argue (against a number of commentators) that it points implicitly to the predicative character of metaphorical attribution, despite Aristotle’s point of departure in considering metaphor as one kind of word among others in the *Poetics*.

(a) In the passage of the *Poetics* just cited, Aristotle says that the ability to make and understand metaphors is a sign of εὐφυΐα, because it indicates a capacity for perceiving resemblances. Nevertheless, Aristotle does not say anything in the *Poetics* about similarity in general, or about the kinds of similarities that metaphors reveal in particular. To answer the question of what a similarity is in general, we can turn to Chapter 7 of the *Categories*, which analyzes similarity (τὸ ὅμοιον) as an instance of the category of relation, πρὸς τι.<sup>249</sup> According to this analysis, we can therefore say that the

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<sup>248</sup> Aristotle, *Topics* 140a 11-2: ‘πάντες γὰρ οἱ μεταφέροντες κατὰ τινα ὁμοιότητα μεταφέρουσιν.’

<sup>249</sup> See Aristotle, *Categories* 6b 10 and 11a 15-8.

awareness of what two things share in common, or that by which they are related, requires a prior awareness of what each thing is in itself.

Now that we know a little more about how Aristotle understands similarity in general, we still need to ask about what is specific to the kinds of similarities that metaphors reveal. In fact, as mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, there are many different kinds of similarities between things and, although Aristotle does not say so explicitly, only some of these are relevant to the production of metaphors. Take the aforementioned example of two dogs, which are indeed similar in virtue of being the same genus and species of thing: insofar as Aristotle defines metaphor as the application or transference of a name belonging to *another* thing, it is presumed that the similarities disclosed by metaphors will be other than the similarities that indicate the essential identity between things of the same kinds. To borrow a distinction from O'Rourke, we can therefore say that the similarities with which metaphors are concerned are *secondary* ones, whereas the scientific classification of things according to genus and species, as well as the philosophical search for the analogical unity of things, are concerned with *primary* similarities.<sup>250</sup>

As also discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, it is important to see that the secondary character of the similarities with which metaphors are concerned is closely connected to the importance attached by Aristotle to metaphors 'by analogy' in particular. Aristotle indicates explicitly in *Rhetoric* III.10 that metaphors by analogy are

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<sup>250</sup> Speaking of analogical metaphors in particular, O'Rourke argues that, '[i]n metaphor, [...] and here is the point, what is affirmed is not a proper analogy but an *imperfectly analogous resemblance*: the quality, perfection or action belongs perfectly and intrinsically only to one substance, and is transferred to another because of some perceived but imperfect likeness. In the assertion "Achilles is a lion," the poet is not attributing to the hero either the nature of a lion, nor its beastly rapacious activity as such, but rather a certain secondary likeness. Metaphor is the proportional, but imperfect, transfer of a perfection or activity from its primary to a secondary subject.' See F. O'Rourke, "Aristotle and the Metaphysics of Metaphor," p. 173.

‘most popular’, and accordingly recommends their use over the three other kinds discussed in *Poetics* 22.<sup>251</sup> Although he does not explain why this is so, the distinction between primary and secondary likenesses, and the fact that metaphors are concerned with the latter rather than the former, provides an implicit justification for it. Primary likenesses are inherently more abundant among things that are generically and specifically united, and conversely, secondary likenesses are inherently more abundant among things that are one by analogy, rather than by species or genus. In other words, the secondary character of the likenesses revealed by metaphor suggests subtly that the ability to make and understand metaphors demands the ability to detect imperfect similarities between things that are maximally remote from one another, and the things that are maximally remote from one another are more often those things that are one by analogy than they are things that are one by species or genus. This is connected both to Aristotle’s valorization of analogical metaphors and to the fact that, as we shall see below, Aristotle’s taxonomy of ‘smart and popular sayings’ privileges metaphors that reveal similarities between sensible things, on the one hand, and things that are remote from the senses on the other. The privileged status accorded by Aristotle to these metaphors highlights once again that a philosophical comprehension of the analogical connections between things is implicitly singled out here as a sufficient condition for the mastery of the use of metaphor, and consequently of the arts of rhetoric and poetry more generally. I will return to this point below.

(b) Much like *katharsis* in the first chapter of this dissertation, it is best to leave the word εὐφύϊα untranslated for the moment. Many approximations have been offered

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<sup>251</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1411a 7: ‘Τῶν δὲ μεταφορῶν τεττάρων οὐσῶν εὐδοκιμοῦσι μάλιστα αἱ κατ’ ἀνάλογίαν’.

for it, including genius, talent, sympathetic nature, natural endowments and natural gifts. A survey of some of the more notable passages in which Aristotle discusses the term indicates that it is indeed a kind of ability, but one that issues from natural endowments, and in particular from the hylomorphic constitution of living natural bodies, rather than from technical skill or rational instruction.

*Poetics* 17, for example, suggests that εὐφυΐα is a kind of natural capacity of the imagination, which supports Halliwell's claim in *Aristotle's Poetics* that it refers to 'natural ability,' which he describes as 'a disposition less remote [i.e., than divine inspiration] from ordinary mental experience'.<sup>252</sup> This is the first important clue as to exactly what Aristotle means by εὐφυΐα.

In *Topics* VIII.14, εὐφυΐα is similarly discussed as a kind of natural ability, but not a natural ability for imagining things or for seeing similarities. It is rather a natural ability for choosing that which is true over and against that which is false. Aristotle describes this ability as the natural capacity for discriminating between what should be pursued and what should be avoided, and for choosing the former over the latter.<sup>253</sup> In other words, Aristotle here treats εὐφυΐα as it pertains to the faculty of desire in particular. εὐφυΐα is thus clearly a kind of talent, but it is a talent for precisely those kinds of activities to which the notion of talent seems not to apply. One speaks of a talent

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<sup>252</sup> Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, pp. 89-90. Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1455a 32-4: 'διὸ εὐφουῶς ἡ ποιητικὴ ἐστὶν ἢ μανικοῦ· τούτων γὰρ οἱ μὲν εὐπλαστοὶ οἱ δὲ ἐκστατικοὶ εἰσιν.' On Halliwell's translation, the word εὐπλαστοὶ refers concretely to the mind's ability to 'fit' itself imaginatively to whatever scene or situation needs to be imitated in the tragic plot. The more kinds of situations and events the poet is capable of imagining in vivid detail, the more he or she will have a natural ability for the construction of plots.

<sup>253</sup> Aristotle, *Topics* 163b 13-7: 'For such a process one must possess a certain natural ability, and with respect to the truth, natural ability consists in being able correctly to choose the true and avoid the false (δεῖ δὲ πρὸς τὸ τοιοῦτο ὑπάρχειν εὐφυᾶ· καὶ τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἢ κατ' ἀλήθειαν εὐφυΐα, τὸ δύνασθαι καλῶς ἐλέσθαι τἀληθές καὶ φυγεῖν τὸ ψεῦδος). Men of natural ability can do this; for they judge correctly what is best by a correct feeling of love or hatred for what is set before them (ὅπερ οἱ πεφυκότες εὖ δύναται ποιεῖν· εὖ γὰρ φιλοῦντες καὶ μισοῦντες τὸ προσφερόμενον εὖ κρίνουσι τὸ βέλτιστον).'

for the accordion, or a talent for horseback riding, but it would be strange to speak of a talent for imagining or a talent for choosing or desiring. These activities are precisely those for which no special talent is required, insofar as they are naturally possessed by all human beings (and indeed, many animals as well). Yet Aristotle's point is that these basic, natural activities can be done well or poorly, and εὐφυΐα is the disposition for doing them well.

Finally, *De Anima* II.9 also indicates that εὐφυΐα is a natural propensity for the kinds of activity that define the human species and set it apart from other animals. In this case, the activity in question is thought, τὴν διάνοιαν, and its correlation to the sense of touch.<sup>254</sup> To put it succinctly, Aristotle describes those who are well-disposed in relation to thought as εὐφυεῖς, and those who are poorly disposed in relation to it as ἀφυεῖς. Yet this passage goes further than those examined above by also giving some indication of what causes εὐφυΐα. Aristotle's point in tracing a correlation between touch and thought is to say that the natural ability to think is not equal in all humans, even though thought is what defines humans in common and sets them apart from the other animals. In this sense, even understanding εὐφυΐα as a kind of 'special ability' is misleading, since the human capacity to think is itself already understood at the outset as a natural, i.e. general ability. All animals already have, and in fact are defined by natural abilities by virtue of having the kinds of souls that they have. Yet Aristotle's point in saying that certain things are signs of εὐφυΐα is that, even among beings that are defined by certain natural

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<sup>254</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 421a 23-7. As proof (σημεῖον) of this correlation between touch and thought in humans, Aristotle refers to the fact that 'among the human race men are well or poorly endowed with intelligence in proportion to their sense of touch, and no other sense (ἐν τῷ γένει τῶν ἀνθρώπων παρὰ τὸ αἰσθητήριον τοῦτο εἶναι εὐφυεῖς καὶ ἀφυεῖς, παρ' ἄλλο δὲ μηδέν); for men of hard skin and flesh are poorly, and men of soft flesh well endowed with intelligence (οἱ μὲν γὰρ σκληρόσαρκοι ἀφυεῖς τὴν διάνοιαν, οἱ δὲ μαλακόσαρκοι εὐφυεῖς).'

capabilities, there are specimens in which these capabilities are especially pronounced, and cases where they are less so.<sup>255</sup> It is precisely this high degree of a natural capacity that is possessed in common by all the members of a genus or species, which Aristotle calls εὐφύϊα.

(c) Now that we have a deeper understanding of what Aristotle means by εὐφύϊα, we must examine his identification of the metaphor and the simile. What we must grasp above all is the fact that Aristotle identifies the metaphor and the simile by absorbing the latter into the class of the former, and not *vice versa*. In and of itself, this fact indicates that metaphor cannot simply be a one-word trope, but more fundamentally concerns any form of comparative predication in which two or more things are brought together in light of some secondary likeness they are seen to share. Put somewhat differently, it is the fact of comparing things in light of a secondary likeness, and not being a certain kind of word, that makes a metaphor what it is, and this also explains Aristotle's identification of it and the simile.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> The reason for this, although Aristotle nowhere says so explicitly, seems to concern the very material make-up of the living organism, conceived as a composite of matter and form, body and soul. In other words, εὐφύϊα concerns the very hylomorphic constitution of the natural body as a substrate underlying a series of active powers. Although these active powers of the soul are distributed equally among members of the same class, due to the material differences between natural bodies they are more salient in some than in others.

<sup>256</sup> This identification of the metaphor and the simile is another important point of counter-distinction between Aristotle and the classical tradition of rhetoric that comes after him. For classical rhetoricians such as Cicero and Quintilian, the metaphor is an abridged simile, whereas for Aristotle the simile is a lengthened metaphor. Consider in this regard Quintilian's discussion of the relation between the metaphor and the simile in *Institutio Oratoria* VIII.6: '[o]n the whole metaphor is a shorter form of simile (totum autem metaphora brevior est similitudo), while there is this further difference, that in the latter we compare some object to the thing which we wish to describe (quod illa comparatur rei quam volumus exprimere), whereas in the former this object is actually substituted for the thing (haec pro re ipsa dicitur).' See Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* VIII.6.8 (trans. Butler). The difference between Quintilian and Aristotle here demonstrates that, despite the latter's point of departure in considering metaphor as one kind of word among others, the view that metaphor concerns words and, in particular, single words, cannot be attributed to him in good faith. One commentator who interprets Aristotle's understanding of metaphor as a 'one-word' theory is Stanford, who argues that 'Aristotle, like nearly all his successors until the nineteenth century of the Christian era, neglected the true principle of language, that *the phrase or sentence, not the word, is the unit of speech.*' (Stanford, *Greek Metaphor*, p. 9.) While it is undeniable that Aristotle's

The identity posited by Aristotle between metaphor and simile indicates that, despite his point of departure in treating metaphor as a kind of word, he implicitly recognizes that language in general, and metaphoric language in particular, neither is nor could be a matter of individual words alone. This basic fact shows the extent to which he implicitly understands that words themselves are not really words unless they are taken to refer to something, and such reference can only be known through the context of the word in a complete, predicative act of speech (or writing). For those who, like Tamba-Mecz and Veyne, attach primary importance to the connection between the simile and the metaphor, rather than to metaphor's initial place in a theory of stylistic diction, the notion that Aristotle is only concerned with individual words requires, if not outright rejection, then at least a good deal of qualification. They argue that 'on trouve chez Aristote, linguiste du mot, quelques indications qui montrent que le philosophe a soupçonné aussi que le mot n'était pas l'unité élémentaire du langage.'<sup>257</sup> Among a number of indications that the authors mention, the identity postulated by Aristotle between the metaphor and the simile is by far the clearest and most important.

Aristotle identifies the simile as a kind of metaphor in *Rhetoric* III.4, affirming that that '[t]he simile also is a metaphor'<sup>258</sup>. As he explains, the two differ only 'in the

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definition of metaphor is located in a theory of style that, above all, is concerned to explain what different kinds of words can contribute to the global functions of poetry and rhetoric, this is not the whole story. Aristotle does in fact recognize the inherently predicative character of metaphorical attribution when he observes that the simile is a kind of metaphor. It is quite strange that Stanford himself recognizes this fact in the second chapter of his book, (Cf. Stanford, *Greek Metaphor*, p. 26.) yet does not see how it undermines his suggestion that Aristotle understands metaphorical language to concern nothing more than words and, at that, single words. Much like Cope and Brooke-Rose, Stanford does not recognize the subtle differences between Aristotle's understanding of metaphor and that of the classical tradition of rhetoric.

<sup>257</sup> Veyne & Tamba-Mecz, "Metaphora et Comparaison selon Aristote," p. 93.

<sup>258</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1406b 1: "Ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἡ εἰκῶν μεταφορὰ".

manner stated.<sup>259</sup> Aristotle illustrates this difference with an example from Homer's *Iliad*, affirming that '[w]hen the poet says of Achilles, "he rushed on like a lion," it is a simile; if he says, "a lion, he rushed on," it is a metaphor'<sup>260</sup>. The difference between a metaphor and a simile is thus the addition of the word 'like' or 'as' (in Greek 'ὡς,' 'ὡσπερ' or 'οἶον,') which simply makes the comparison implied by a metaphor explicit. Aristotle repeats this affirmation again in *Rhetoric* III.11, observing that similes 'are metaphors of a kind.'<sup>261</sup> Once again, it is worth citing Tamba-Mecz and Veyne, who note that '[I]oin de concevoir la *metaphora* comme une comparaison abrégée (suivant une doctrine qui est la nôtre depuis Quintilien au moins), Aristote voit dans la comparaison une espèce dont la *metaphora* serait le genre'.<sup>262</sup> For Tamba-Mecz and Veyne, the fact that Aristotle is able to classify the simile as a metaphor, which only differs in the manner stated, confirms that metaphor is essentially associated with the comparison of two things, and not with the deviation from literal to figurative sense within a single word.

If in other words the simile, which is an explicit comparison between two things by means of the words 'like (ὡσπερ)' or 'as (ὡς),' is identified by Aristotle as a kind of metaphor (and not vice versa), the only explanation for this is that metaphor involves a fundamentally comparative, predicative operation. As such, although it may be localized

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<sup>259</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1406b 3: 'διαφέρουσαι τῷ εἰρημένῳ.'

<sup>260</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1406b 1 (citing Homer, *Iliad* xxii.164): 'ὅταν μὲν γὰρ εἴπῃ τὸν Ἀχιλλεῖα "ὡς δὲ λέων ἐπόρουσεν," εἰκὼν ἐστίν, ὅταν δὲ "λέων ἐπόρουσε," μεταφορὰ'.

<sup>261</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1406b 13: 'αἱ δ' εἰκόνες ὅτι μεταφοραί.'

<sup>262</sup> "Metaphora et Comparaison selon Aristote," p. 81. The authors therefore caution against assuming at the outset that Aristotle's understanding of the relationship between metaphor and the simile is the same as that of classical rhetoricians: '[c]e seront les rhéteurs qui feront, de la comparaison et de la métaphore, deux figures sœurs, deux espèces. Si l'on attribuait à Aristote des conceptions forgées par les rhéteurs, de Quintilien à Fontanier, on méconnaîtrait ce qu'Aristote entend par *metaphora* et quelle différence il établit entre comparaison et métaphore dans la *Poétique* et la *Rhétorique*.' (Ibid)

in a single word, a metaphor always introduces more than just a word. By means of one word, a metaphor in fact introduces two things, whose comparison is suggested to the mind by the transference of a name from one to another.<sup>263</sup>

It is only insofar as this is the case that Aristotle could affirm that the simile is a kind of metaphor rather than vice versa. As Ricoeur affirms, ‘Aristotle saw that, underlying the *epiphora* of the alien name, a strange attribution operates: ‘this is that’ – an attribution whose grounds the simile makes clear only by displaying them *in deliberate comparison*.’<sup>264</sup> Based on Aristotle’s identification of the simile and the metaphor, we can say that the act of comparing two things in light of a secondary likeness they are seen to share is more important to the definition of metaphor than is its status as a certain kind of word. Quite significantly, this means that the knowledge required to master the use of metaphor is a knowledge of things and their secondary likenesses, and not a knowledge of words and their lexical meanings, taken independently of their connection to the world of things to which they refer.

As we shall see in the next chapter, Aristotle’s discussion in *Rhetoric* III.10-11 presupposes the necessarily comparative character of metaphorical attribution. Aristotle’s focus in discussing metaphor in this latter text is to specify precisely those kinds of things, whose comparisons generate the liveliest images in the minds of rhetorical audiences. According to *Rhetoric* III.2, the most important rule in choosing metaphors and comparisons is that of propriety, or proportion (ἐκ τοῦ ἀνάλογον). Aristotle

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<sup>263</sup> Ricoeur consequently finds a tension within Aristotle’s understanding of metaphor, between what he calls a ‘formal’ and a ‘dynamic’ perspective: ‘[w]hile it is true in a formal sense that [i.e., for Aristotle] metaphor is a deviation in relation to the ordinary use of words, from the dynamic point of view it proceeds from the encounter between the thing to be named and that foreign entity from which the name is borrowed.’ (*The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 24.)

<sup>264</sup> Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 26.

therefore argues that, depending on context, one thing is more appropriate than another for the purposes of a comparison, because it is ‘more of a likeness, and better suited to putting the matter before the eyes.’<sup>265</sup> The notion that metaphors place things ‘before the eyes,’ *πρὸ ὀμμάτων*, is one to which we will return in the next chapter. What is important to grasp here is that propriety, specifically in relation to the production of metaphors, dictates that the comparison implied by a metaphor should agree with one’s overall intention in the speech as a whole.

Consequently, Aristotle advises that ‘if we wish to ornament our subject, we must derive our metaphor from the better species under the same genus; if to depreciate it, from the worse.’<sup>266</sup> As an example of how to apply this rule, Aristotle points to the difference between ‘praying’ and ‘begging’ as two different species of the generic activity of asking (*αἰτήσεις*). The implication here is that one can ornament the activity of asking by calling it praying, and one can depreciate it by calling it begging, but the propriety of each metaphor can only be determined by the overall intention of the comparison itself. Significantly, in cases where the intention of a speech is indeed to ornament its subject, Aristotle notes that ‘[m]etaphors therefore should be derived from what is beautiful either in sound, or in potency, or in sight or to some other form of sensation.’<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1405b 13: ‘ἄλλο ἄλλου κυριώτερον καὶ ὁμοιωμένον μᾶλλον καὶ οἰκειότερον τῷ ποιεῖν τὰ πράγματα πρὸ ὀμμάτων.’

<sup>266</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1405a 10: ‘καὶ ἐάν τε κοσμεῖν βουλή, ἀπὸ τῶν βελτιόνων τῶν ἐν ταύτῳ γένοι φέρειν τὴν μεταφορὰν, ἐάν τε ψέγειν, ἀπὸ τῶν χειρόνων.’

<sup>267</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1405 b 13 (translation modified): ‘τὰς δὲ μεταφορὰς ἐντεῦθεν οἰστέον, ἀπὸ καλῶν ἢ τῆ φωνῆ ἢ τῆ δυνάμει ἢ τῆ ὄψει ἢ ἀλλῇ τινὶ αἰσθήσει.’ Freese paraphrases ἢ τῆ δυνάμει as ‘or in signification,’ but I can see no explanation for this. To the extent that the paraphrase does not make Aristotle’s meaning any clearer than would a literal translation (it is also hard to see what ‘potential’ could mean in this context), there is no reason to prefer the former to the latter. I therefore choose to stay as close as possible to the original Greek.

As we shall see in the next chapter, the notion that metaphors should be derived from the realm of sense perception is an important assumption for Aristotle's discussion in *Rhetoric* III. The importance of this consideration becomes more apparent when we recognize that most of the examples, which Aristotle offers in *Rhetoric* III to illustrate the successful use of metaphors, are cases in which an abstract notion is implicitly compared via metaphor to a sensible quality or event. In his survey of 'smart and popular sayings' in Chapter 10, the first example Aristotle offers is a reference to the *Odyssey*, where Homer compares old age to stubble (καλάμην), which in this case refers to the withered stalks of a cornfield after the autumn harvest. Aristotle affirms that 'when Homer calls old age stubble, he teaches us and informs us through the genus; for both have lost their bloom.'<sup>268</sup> In this way, the comparison of an abstract notion (old age) to a sensible thing (stubble), which is effected through an exchange of name from one to the other, allows the former to be illustrated in a vivid image. Specifically with respect to the abstract notion of old age, the comparison to stubble allows it to be pictured in the mind as the loss of life's bloom and vigor, and this picturing is precisely what Aristotle means when he mentions metaphor's capacity to place things 'before the eyes.'

In fact, the expression πρὸ ὁμμάτων is itself an example of the metaphoric capacity to place things πρὸ ὁμμάτων. More precisely, this formula is based on the analogical comparison between imagination and sight, the former of which is farther removed from the senses than the latter. In this way, even the formulation Aristotle introduces to elaborate the function of good metaphors, which is the function of mediating that which is remote from sense experience by means of a sensible image, is a

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<sup>268</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1410b 2-3 (citing Homer, *Odyssey* xiv.213): 'ὅταν γὰρ εἴπη τὸ γῆρας καλάμην, ἐποίησε μάθησιν καὶ γνώσιν διὰ τοῦ γένους· ἄμφω γὰρ ἀπηνηκότα.'

demonstration of this function itself. The fact that Aristotle considers the best metaphors to be precisely those that establish an analogical parallel between abstract notions on the one hand, and sensible qualities, things and events that are familiar to them on the other, underscores the central role played throughout his discussion by the perception of secondary, or imperfect similarities. Consistently with the claim in *Poetics* 23 that the capacity to make and understand metaphors involves the perception of similarities, Aristotle's discussion throughout *Rhetoric* X assumes that the best metaphors are in fact those that reveal similarities between the most distant things. On my reading, this claim is at the heart of the privileged place reserved by Aristotle for metaphors by analogy, insofar as it is this kind of metaphor in particular that reveals similarities between the most distant things.

In this sense, it must be recognized that the distance and the difference between the sensible and the abstract is of paramount importance for the discussion of *Rhetoric* III. In other texts, most notably in the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, Aristotle qualifies the distinction between the sensible and the abstract in terms of a distinction between what is knowable to us (ἡμῖν), and what is knowable in itself (καθ'αυτό), or by nature (φύσει). In this case, what is knowable to us corresponds to individual, sensible substances, and what is knowable in itself corresponds to the causes through which sensible substances can be known, and which are farthest from sense experience. Accordingly, in just the second paragraph of *Physics* I.1, Aristotle observes that 'the path of investigation must lie from what is more immediately cognizable and clear to us, to what is clearer and more intimately cognizable in its own nature; for it is not the same thing to be directly

accessible to our cognition and to be intrinsically intelligible.<sup>269</sup> For Aristotle, it is a basic methodological principle that all inquiry must begin with what is more familiar and accessible to the inquirer, and pass gradually from this starting point to arrive at what is knowable in itself, or by nature.

In Book I, Chapter 2 of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle explains this point a little further by indicating with more precision just what it is that is more accessible to us, and what is more knowable in itself. On the one hand, that which is more knowable to us is that which is sensible particulars, while on the other that which is knowable in itself is the universal (τὸ καθόλου), which is remote from the senses: ‘these are just about the most difficult things for humans to know, those that are most universal, since they are farthest from the senses.’<sup>270</sup> Aristotle makes the same point in Book II, Chapter 2 of the *De Anima*, affirming that ‘the definite and logically more intelligible conception arises from the vague but more obvious data of sense’<sup>271</sup>.

Therefore, when we turn to examine Aristotle’s discussion in *Rhetoric* III in more detail in the next chapter, it is important to bear two things in mind: (1) firstly that

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<sup>269</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, tr. P.H. Wicksteed & F.M. Cornford (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 184a 17-9: ‘πέφυκε δὲ ἐκ τῶν γνωριμωτέρων ἡμῖν ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ σαφεστέρων, ἐπὶ τὰ σαφέστερα τῇ φύσει καὶ γνωριμώτερα· οὐ γὰρ ταῦτά ἡμῖν τε γνώριμα καὶ ἀπλῶς.’

<sup>270</sup> Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, trans. J. Sachs (Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 1999), 982a 22-4: ‘χαλεπώτατα τούτα γνωρίζειν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, τὰ μάλιστα καθόλου· πορρωτάτω γὰρ αἰσθήσεών ἐστιν.’ There may seem to be a contradiction between the *Metaphysics* and the *Physics* about exactly what is more knowable to us, and what is knowable by nature. In the *Physics*, Aristotle goes on to explain that the path of inquiry into nature proceeds in the opposite direction to the one that he mentions in the *Metaphysics* above. Inquiry into nature, he claims in the *Physics*, is accordingly *from the universal to the particular*, whereas he seems to suggest in the *Metaphysics* that it is from the particular to the universal. In the *Physics*, however, the universal (τὸ καθόλου) refers rather to a particular thing, conceived as a whole consisting of various parts and elements, which are its constituent causes. In Book I of the *Physics*, Aristotle thus treats these elements as the particulars, and the physical thing that they constitute as the universal or whole. But in the *Metaphysics* it is the sensible individual that is the particular, and the causes or elements that are responsible for its being what it is that are treated as universal. Rather than constituting two incompatible orders of inquiry, these are instead to be viewed as two different perspectives on the same procedure.

<sup>271</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. W.S. Hett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 413a 11-13: ‘(ἐκ τῶν ἀσαφῶν μὲν φανερωτέρων δὲ γίγνεται τὸ σαφές καὶ κατὰ τὸν λόγον γνωριμώτερον’.

metaphors always disclose certain kinds of secondary resemblances between different individuals, species, genera etc; and (2) that many of the best metaphors are the properly analogical ones that succeed in vividly revealing similarities between abstract things, which are obscure to the senses, and other things that are familiar to them. There is no better illustration of this capacity, by which metaphors reveal similarities between things that are remote from the senses and those that are close to them, than the title of the 17th century treatise written by Emanuele Tesauro, which in Italian is *Il cannochiale aristotelico* – literally in English, *The Aristotelian Telescope*. Unsurprisingly, this work of over 600 pages, which has never been translated into English, is devoted in its entirety to an elaboration of Aristotle’s views on style. In keeping with the privileged place that Aristotle reserves for metaphor within his theory of style, Tesauro treats metaphor (metafora) as the very summit (più alto colmo) of what he calls ‘ingenious figures’.<sup>272</sup> First of all, Tesauro defines *l’ingegno*, which can be translated into English as ‘ingenuity,’ and into French as ‘l’ingéniosité’ (Hersant’s translation), according to two features: (1) ‘la perspicacité (perspicacia)’; and (2) ‘l’agilité (versabilité)’.<sup>273</sup> Tesauro then argues that the greatest merit of the former is that it perceives ‘les circonstances de chaque sujet, même les plus éloignées et les plus menues (le più lontane e minute circostanze)’.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> For my understanding of this work I have had to rely on Y. Hersant’s translation, into French, of a small number of excerpts, published under the title *La métaphore baroque : D’Aristote à Tesauro : Extraits du Cannochiale aristotelico* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2001). Due to the lack of an extant English translation of this work, all rendering into English of passages or words attributed to Tesauro in what follows will represent my own translations of Hersant’s French translation.

<sup>273</sup> Tesauro, *Il cannochiale aristotelico*, trans. Hersant, in *La métaphore baroque*, p. 85.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*

Quite significantly, Tesauro's justification for treating metaphor as the most ingenious figure is that it is pre-eminent in the kind of perspicacity that partly defines ingenuity most generally. Accordingly, Tesauro argues that

si l'ingéniosité consiste (comme nous l'avons dit) à établir un lien entre les notions éloignées et distinctes des objets proposés, telle est précisément la tâche de la métaphore (l'officio della metafora) plutôt que d'aucune autre figure : entraînant en effet d'un genre à l'autre tant l'esprit que la parole (traendo la mente, non men che la parola), elle exprime un concept par le moyen d'un autre fort différent, découvrant la ressemblance au cœur des choses dissemblables (trovando in cose dissimiglianti la simiglianza).<sup>275</sup>

It is precisely this capacity to discover similarities between the most distant things that leads Tesauro to consider metaphor as the most important element of what he calls *l'ingegno*. Indeed, the title of the work itself suggests that this discovery of similarities among the most different and distant things is a way of making visible that which is remote from the senses. It discretely suggests that style in general, and metaphor in particular, is for Aristotle (to whom he refers throughout the work simply as 'our author') analogous to that which the telescope is for Galileo: that is, a preferred method for making things that are originally remote from human sensory experience accessible to the mind.

### **3.5 Review of Some Recent Literature: Aristotle and the Cognitive View**

Now that we have reconstructed Aristotle's theory of metaphor, and resolved some of the interpretive issues surrounding it, we can proceed to examine the ways in which other theorists and commentators have approached it more recently. As we shall presently see, a good deal of the scholarly material that has been published on Aristotle's theory of metaphor from the 1980's onward is preoccupied with the question of how this theory

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<sup>275</sup> Tesauro, *Il cannocchiale aristotelico*, trans. Hersant, in *La métaphore baroque*, p. 102/3-4/5.

fits into the contemporary landscape of philosophical discussions about metaphors and their general epistemological relevance. More precisely, most of this material has been preoccupied with the comparison of Aristotle's theory and one other theory in particular: the cognitive view of metaphor, which was brought into the mainstream of scientific discussion with the publication, in 1980, of a work by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, entitled *Metaphors We Live By*.

In the debate about exactly how Aristotle's theory of metaphor compares to the cognitive theory, some of the most vocal participants are themselves proponents of the latter view, most notable among whom are the authors of the aforementioned work, Lakoff and Johnson. Since the publication of *Metaphors We Live By*, its authors have had to modify some aspects of their theory, but its core postulates remain intact, and it continues to draw support from empirical data in neuroscience, behavioral psychology, and other related fields.<sup>276</sup> It has been accepted by many both inside and outside the scientific community as the most up-to-date and scientifically verifiable account of what metaphors are, how they operate in relation to human thought, and what they allow us to do. As a result, many of the more recent discussions of Aristotle's views on metaphor, beginning with those of Lakoff and Johnson themselves, have sought to evaluate them against the backdrop of the cognitive view, and to determine their accuracy by the extent to which they agree or disagree with it.

Nevertheless, the question of whether and to what extent Aristotle's theory of metaphor is comparable to the cognitive view is in one way misleading, and in another philosophically uninteresting. It is misleading because the cognitive view of metaphor

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<sup>276</sup> I discuss some of these data in the conclusion of this thesis.

most certainly presupposes an understanding of human thought that is altogether alien to the way in which Aristotle understood it.<sup>277</sup> It is philosophically uninteresting, at least in the way the question has hitherto been posed by most interpreters, because the most it permits us to say about Aristotle's views is that they either (1) agree with the cognitive view; (2) disagree with it; or (3) both agree and disagree with it, in different respects. As we shall see, all three of these possibilities have been exhausted by various interpreters over the past few decades, with scholarly consensus settling most recently on the third. It has yet to be pointed out that a more legitimate way to determine whether or not Aristotle's theory qualifies as a cognitive theory of metaphor would be first to ask how he himself understands human cognition, and then to determine on the basis of an answer to this question whether and to what extent his theory of metaphor hangs together in a coherent way with his own epistemology and psychology. Instead, most have simply treated the cognitive view of metaphor as if it existed in a vacuum, leaving its epistemological or ontological presuppositions unexamined, and compared what Aristotle says about metaphor to it to see whether he was 'wrong' or 'right.'

In my view, these presuppositions have led the discussion into a cul-de-sac of more or less facile questioning. The presuppositions begin with Lakoff and Johnson

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<sup>277</sup> To get just an inkling of how and why this is so, we only need to consider that the cognitive theory of metaphor presupposes an understanding of cognition that is the result of neural interactions in the brain. This is evident especially in Lakoff and Johnson's account of what they call 'primary metaphors,' which they explain are 'neural connections learned by coactivation. They extend across parts of the brain between areas dedicated to sensorimotor experience and areas dedicated to subjective experience.' G. Lakoff & M. Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to the Western Tradition* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 57. To the extent that Aristotle does not believe that thought has anything to do with the brain (for him the center of perceptive and intellectual activity is the heart rather than the brain), we are clearly dealing with two different worldviews altogether, and not just two theories of metaphor that could be compared as if in a vacuum. A meaningful comparison of the two theories would need to take account of the difference in their underlying ontologies, epistemologies, and above all the differences between their respective understandings of causation. This is a massive undertaking, but in order for it even to begin it must first be demonstrated that Aristotle's theory of metaphor is not reflected in the straw man that proponents of the cognitive view have made it out to be.

themselves, insofar as the very manner in which they have presented their theory, since its publication in 1980, has assumed a straw-man reading of Aristotle as the progenitor of what they call ‘the classical view’ of metaphor, which they have claimed from the outset is opposed to their view on all counts. As will be shown below, it is necessary to draw a distinction in Lakoff and Johnson’s work between the theory of metaphor itself, on the one hand, and the rhetoric they employ to advocate it (as well as to discredit the theories of others), on the other. Among the many laudatory things the authors have to say about their own theory, one of the most frequent refrains is that it constitutes a fundamental revision of certain philosophical assumptions ‘that have been taken for granted within the Western tradition since the Greeks’.<sup>278</sup> In this way, the authors preface their theory of metaphor at the outset by underscoring its essential incompatibility with what they call ‘the Western tradition’. Their implied thesis, which Johnson elaborates explicitly in an article published a year later, is that Aristotle is the originator of these fundamental assumptions, which skew the Western tradition’s understanding of metaphor all the way up until midway through the 20th Century.

Nevertheless, as we shall presently see, Lakoff and Johnson’s reading of Aristotle rests on several assumptions that I have already shown to be false. In particular, their characterization of Aristotle’s theory assumes that it is essentially the same as those classical theories of metaphor, such as were advanced by Tryphon and Quintilian, which take metaphor to be a transference from one sense of a word to another. Above I labeled this kind of theory a horizontal theory, and showed that Aristotle’s theory must be distinguished from it as a vertical theory, because the latter concerns a different kind of

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<sup>278</sup> G. Lakoff & M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. ix.

relationship, not between two senses of a single word, but rather between a word, (at least) two things, and what Aristotle calls ‘affections of the soul’. Nevertheless, Lakoff and Johnson conflate these two kinds of theories consistently, and thus fail to see what is unique or original in Aristotle’s perspective.

In fact, before even beginning to characterize their specific views on metaphor in *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson announce them in a way that presupposes a very specific understanding of both ‘the Western tradition’ in general, and Aristotle as the originator of this tradition in particular. The problem is that they do not offer much to justify this understanding anywhere in the work itself. The closest either one comes to such a justification is in the aforementioned article by Johnson, in which he outlines the putative differences between the classical and cognitive views and shows how, on his reading, the former dominates western speculation about metaphor for 2300 years. Nevertheless, as we shall see, Johnson discusses Aristotle’s theory of metaphor in a highly schematic way and, in fact, rarely cites any of the texts in which Aristotle’s most important comments about metaphor are found. My objective in the remainder of this chapter is therefore to give a schematic characterization of the cognitive view of metaphor, and then a more detailed account of how proponents of this view, and especially Lakoff and Johnson, have mischaracterized Aristotle’s ideas in several ways.

To see how this is so, we must begin with the reconstruction of Aristotle’s views in the aforementioned article by Johnson (1981), and then proceed from there to examine how this (mis)understanding of Aristotle maps onto what proponents of the cognitive theory call the ‘Traditional View’. Above all, two things interest us in Johnson’s article, which is entitled “Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition” (1981): (a) the first is the

broad historical outline of the Western tradition's understanding of metaphor; (b) the second is the specific account Johnson gives of Aristotle's theory of metaphor, as the originator of this tradition. As for (a), Johnson starts at the end of the story, observing as I did in the introduction to this dissertation that the volume of philosophic and scholarly material devoted to the topic of metaphor suddenly 'explodes after 1960'<sup>279</sup>. The 2300 years of conceptual history leading up to this explosion, according to Johnson, can be summarized along the following lines:

- 1) Aristotle (384 – 322 BCE) develops the first explicit theory of metaphor, defining it in the *Poetics* as 'the application (ἐπιφορὰ) of a word that belongs to another thing', and elaborating on this definition with some more or less pertinent observations in the *Rhetoric*.<sup>280</sup>
- 2) For the next 2300 years or so, the alleged features of Aristotle's original theory, which will be considered in more detail below, are adopted by all subsequent theories of metaphor; in Johnson's own words, 'virtually every major treatment up to the twentieth century is prefigured in Aristotle's account'.<sup>281</sup> This fact permits him conveniently to group the entire network of features and presuppositions linking Aristotle's theory and 'virtually every treatment up to the 20th century' under the heading of 'the Traditional View.'
- 3) Beginning in the 20th century some time between the publication of two influential works – Ivor Richards' *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936), and Max Black's *Models and Metaphors* (1962) – the Traditional View of metaphor gradually begins to appear questionable in light of a new perspective,<sup>282</sup> which Johnson and others have gone on to label the Cognitive View. As Johnson puts it, 'Black's essay [...] represented the start of a trickle of philosophical interest in metaphor that has now [i.e., in 1981] swelled to flood proportions'.<sup>283</sup> From this 20th century 'flood' of philosophical interest in metaphor, other important publications also emerge: Monroe Beardsley's article, "The metaphorical twist" (1962), Paul Ricœur's *La métaphore vive* (1975), and the book that Johnson himself co-authored with George Lakoff, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980).

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<sup>279</sup> M. Johnson, "Introduction: Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition," in (ed.) idem, *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), p. 3.

<sup>280</sup> Johnson, "Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition," p. 5.

<sup>281</sup> Johnson, "Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition," p. 8.

<sup>282</sup> Johnson, "Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition," pp. 18-9.

<sup>283</sup> Johnson, "Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition," p. 20.

Having seen how Johnson summarizes the entire history of philosophical speculation leading up to his own theory of metaphor, we must now turn to (b), his specific characterization of Aristotle's position. Because Johnson's account of this position is so highly condensed, we will afterwards supplement it by turning to another summary of the 'traditional view' of metaphor, which is provided by another proponent of the cognitive view and is consistent with Lakoff and Johnson's way of reading Aristotle. To begin with, Johnson himself reduces Aristotle's position on metaphor to 'three main components: (i) focus on single words that are (ii) deviations from literal language, to produce a change in meaning that is (iii) based on similarities between things.'<sup>284</sup> These same three postulates appear, in addition to another two, in the summary of the traditional view found in Z. Kövecses' book *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (2002). Kövecses expands Johnson's original list of three, to what he claims are 'five of its most commonly accepted features'<sup>285</sup>:

First, metaphor is a property of words; it is a linguistic phenomenon. [...] Second, metaphor is used for some artistic and rhetorical purpose, such as when Shakespeare writes "all the world's a *stage*." Third, metaphor is based on a resemblance between the two entities that are compared and identified. [...] Fourth, metaphor is a conscious and deliberate use of words, and you must have a special talent to be able to do it and do it well. [...] Fifth, it is also commonly held that metaphor is a figure of speech that we can do without; we use it for special effects, and it is not an inevitable part of everyday human communication, let alone everyday human thought and reasoning.<sup>286</sup>

Kövecses evidently agrees with Johnson's estimation that Aristotle's account of metaphor is paradigmatic for the Traditional View. Accordingly, in support of the fourth feature listed above – that is, that 'metaphor is a conscious and deliberate use of words,

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<sup>284</sup> Johnson, "Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition," p. 6.

<sup>285</sup> Zoltan Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. vii.

<sup>286</sup> Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, pp. vii-viii.

and you must have a special talent to be able to do it and do it well’ – Kövecses cites the passage from the *Poetics*, which we have already examined, where Aristotle states that ‘much the greatest asset is a capacity for metaphor. This alone cannot be acquired from another, and is a sign of natural gifts.’<sup>287</sup>

Corresponding to that and the four other features of the Traditional View just listed, Kövecses proceeds to offer a five-point summary of the ‘new view of metaphor that challenged all these aspects of the powerful traditional theory’.<sup>288</sup> This new view, which he names ‘the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor’, is characterized in contradistinction to the Traditional View according to the following five marks:

(1) metaphor is a property of concepts, and not of words; (2) the function of metaphor is to better understand certain concepts, and not just some artistic or esthetic purpose; (3) metaphor is often *not* based on similarity; (4) metaphor is used effortlessly in everyday life by ordinary people, not just by special talented people; and (5) metaphor, far from being a superfluous though pleasing linguistic ornament, is an inevitable process of human thought and reasoning.<sup>289</sup>

Implicitly or explicitly, the conceptual outlines offered by both Kövecses and Johnson agree about both the respective characteristics of the Traditional View and of the new, Cognitive View,<sup>290</sup> and the role of Aristotle’s original theory with respect to the former. They both indicate in different ways that Aristotle’s theory of metaphor is the originator of the Traditional View, and suggest that in developing a cognitive view that is opposed to it, 20th century theorists will have finally succeeded in freeing themselves from the

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<sup>287</sup> Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, pp. vii-viii (citing Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459a 5-7).

<sup>288</sup> Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, p. viii.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Though the features listed by Kövecses – specifically the fourth and fifth – appear to mark a divergence from or an expansion of those given in Johnson’s article, these additional features are effectively accounted for in the opening lines of Lakoff and Johnson’s *Metaphors We Live By*: ‘[m]etaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish – a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language.’ George Lakoff & Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) p. 3.

primitive assumptions that for over two millennia had impeded progress in the conceptualization of metaphor.<sup>291</sup>

In what follows, my aim is not to argue against the cognitive theory itself, but rather to show that what some proponents of the cognitive theory, such as Lakoff, Johnson and Kövecses, have claimed to be Aristotle's position in fact distorts his views in fundamental ways. As we shall see, the sole postulate that can be attributed to Aristotle without qualification is the one according to which metaphors are based in the perception of similarities.

Let's begin with the fifth postulate of the traditional view as characterized by Kövecses: that 'metaphor is a figure of speech that we can do without; we use it for special effects, and it is not an inevitable part of everyday human communication, let alone everyday human thought and reasoning.'<sup>292</sup> To see that this is not in fact Aristotle's position, we need only open Book III of the *Rhetoric*, where he clearly states that 'all use metaphors in conversation, as well as proper and appropriate words'<sup>293</sup>. In this regard, as

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<sup>291</sup> This critical pronouncement concerning Aristotle's paradigmatic role in the history of 'metaphorology' is made explicit in the title of Liselotte Gumpel's book, *Metaphor Reexamined: A Non-Aristotelian Perspective* (1984). Gumpel's study begins with the claim that 'so closely has criticism in this area [i.e., theories of metaphor] adhered to Aristotelian ideas that I call the tradition from its ancient beginnings to the present "neo-Aristotelian."' *Metaphor Reexamined: A Non-Aristotelian Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. xi. Despite Gumpel's basic agreement with Johnson *et al.* concerning the alleged predominance of Aristotelian assumptions in the conceptualization of metaphor right up to the 20th century, her analysis is difficult to situate within the main stream of theories devoted to articulating the cognitive, or 'cognitive linguistic' view of metaphor. Unlike the proponents of this latter view, Gumpel characterizes her own 'non-Aristotelian theory' as beginning 'with the ontological placement, not of metaphor but of language as a bearer of meaning, a task achieved with the phenomenological semantics of [i.e., Roman] Ingarden (1893-1970)', and thereafter supplemented 'with the semiotic "Picture of Language" based on the sign classes of [i.e., C.S.] Peirce (1874-1945).' (p. xii) It remains unclear exactly to what extent the results of her structural semantic approach coincide with those of the cognitive linguistic approach.

<sup>292</sup> Lakoff also associates this claim with Aristotle's view, arguing that, since Aristotle, '[...] everyday language had no metaphor, and metaphor used mechanisms outside the realm of everyday conventional language.' G. Lakoff, "The contemporary theory of metaphor", in (ed.) A. Ortony, *Metaphor and Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 202.

<sup>293</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1404b 6: 'πάντες γὰρ μεταφοαῖς διαλέγονται'.

Kirby (1997) has pointed out, proponents of the cognitive view have completely misrepresented Aristotle's ideas in attributing to him the view that metaphors do not enter into the conversation of everyday people. Although the kind of language most often opposed by Aristotle to metaphoric language, τὰ κύρια, is commonly translated as 'ordinary' or 'conventional,' this should not be taken to mean that ordinary people do not frequently use such language in everyday discourse.<sup>294</sup>

In fact, as Kirby also points out, the view that metaphors are cases of extraordinary rather than ordinary language, and are accordingly the concern of specialists in poetry (and rhetoric) rather than of ordinary people, belongs to Aristotle's rival, Isocrates.<sup>295</sup> Kirby cites the passage of the *Rhetoric* we have just examined, arguing rightly that Aristotle 'explicitly contradicts Isocrates on this count'<sup>296</sup>. In this regard, at least, the characterization of Aristotle's position by Lakoff, Johnson and Kövecses misrepresents it to the point where it becomes conflated with another position to which it is, in fact, diametrically opposed. Consequently, in Kirby's own words, 'we must be wary of mapping [Lakoff and Johnson's] "classical theory" [i.e., the Traditional View] precipitously onto what Aristotle has actually said.'<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Kirby thus argues that, although 'one of [Lakoff and Johnson's] major objections to the "classical theory" is that it sets off a putative "figurative" or "poetic" language in contradistinction to everyday usage', Aristotle 'by no means restricted metaphor to poetic or extraordinary contexts.' J. Kirby, "Aristotle on Metaphor", *The American Journal of Philology* 118/4 (Winter 1997), pp. 538-9.

<sup>295</sup> Isocrates writes that the poets 'can write of gods interacting with humans, conversing and fighting alongside whomsoever they wish, and they can portray this not only with conventional language (τοῖς τεταγμένοις ὀνομάσιν) but also with borrowings (ξένοις), new terms, and metaphors (μεταφοραῖς), not neglecting anything but embellishing their compositions with every figure. *Such devices do not exist for prose writers; they must use with precision only words and arguments in current use and keep to their topic.*' *Evagoras* 9-10, in *Isocrates I*, tr. D.C. Mirhady & Y.L. Too (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), p. 142 (emphasis added).

<sup>296</sup> Kirby, "Aristotle on Metaphor", p. 538-9.

<sup>297</sup> John Kirby, "Aristotle on Metaphor", p. 539 note.

Having shown that the fifth postulate attributed to Aristotle by proponents of the cognitive view of metaphor is based on a misinterpretation, let's continue with the others. We can combine the second and fourth postulates into one, since they are mutually implicative: the former holds that 'metaphor is used for some artistic and rhetorical purpose,' and the latter that 'metaphor is a conscious and deliberate use of words, and you must have a special talent to be able to do it and do it well'. Both of these postulates are moreover connected to the one we have just examined, in that they further underscore the putative distinction between metaphorical speech and ordinary speech, by giving two specific reasons why metaphors are indeed something out of the ordinary: on the one hand, they are used for extraordinary purposes, and on the other they are the exclusive product of extraordinary talent.

These two postulates therefore imply the view that metaphors are extraneous to the language people use in everyday speech, and are considerably weakened by the fact that, as we have just seen, Aristotle actually holds the opposite view. Nevertheless, the second and fourth postulates are not as diametrically opposed to what Aristotle actually says as is the fifth one. Aristotle does in fact analyze metaphor within the context of both rhetorical argumentation and poetic imitation, but he is also explicit in his affirmation, in the opening lines of both the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, that argumentation and imitation are things for which all humans characteristically have a natural potential.<sup>298</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>298</sup> Concerning the former, Aristotle observes in the very first sentence of the *Rhetoric* that 'all men in a manner have a share of both [i.e., rhetoric and dialectic]; for all, up to a certain point, endeavor to criticize or uphold an argument, to defend themselves or accuse (πάντες γὰρ μέχρι τινὸς καὶ ἐξετάζειν καὶ ὑπέχειν λόγον καὶ ἀπολογεῖσθαι καὶ κατηγορεῖν ἐγχειροῦσιν).' (1354a 1-2) Concerning the latter, as we saw in the previous chapter, Aristotle observes in *Poetics* 4 that poetry has its origin in two factors, which are both natural factors and hence common to all humans (αἰτίαι δύο τινὲς καὶ αὐταὶ φυσικαί). The first factor is the natural human propensity for imitation, which according to Aristotle distinguishes the human being as the most mimetic of animals; the second is the natural delight taken by all humans in the experience of mimetic objects, which are common to people from childhood as a result of the fact that they

the fact that Aristotle also explicitly states that people use metaphors in everyday discussion shows that he does not consider their use to be limited to specialists of poetry and rhetoric. He obviously recognizes that metaphors are used in both ordinary and extraordinary contexts, yet Lakoff, Johnson and Kövecses characterize his position as if he considered metaphors to have an exclusive application to these specialized fields.

With respect to the fourth postulate – that ‘metaphor is a conscious and deliberate use of words, and you must have a special talent to be able to do it and do it well’ – Aristotle does indeed claim in the *Poetics* that the ability to make and understand metaphors well is ‘a sign,’ σημείον, of ‘natural gifts,’ εὐφυΐας (1459a 7). Yet, as we have seen in this chapter, it is problematic to understand εὐφυΐα as a ‘special talent’. Although it is true that Aristotle claims in *Poetics* 23 that the ability to make and understand metaphors cannot be learnt from another, to the extent that εὐφυΐα is not the same as special talent this claim cannot be taken to mean that only certain, special kinds of people have the ability to make metaphors. On my reading, insofar as εὐφυΐα names a natural disposition for precisely those abilities or powers that are common to all humans as a species, it must be understood as the kind of ability that all people have to an extent, but that some possess more than others. This is entirely consistent with Aristotle’s aforementioned remark that all people use metaphors in everyday conversation: for how else could all people use metaphors in conversation if all people, to a certain degree, did not share the natural ability for making and understanding them?

The third postulate attributed to Aristotle, which states that metaphors are based on the perception of similarities, is accurate. Even more explicitly than the text of the

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first learn by means of imitations (τὸ τε γὰρ μιμεῖσθαι σύμφυτον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐκ παίδων ἔστιν καὶ τούτῳ διαφέρουσι τῶν ἄλλων ζώων ὅτι μιμητικώτατόν ἐστι καὶ τὰς μαθήσεις ποιεῖται διὰ μιμήσεως τὰς πρώτας, καὶ τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς μιμήμασι πάντας) (1448b 5-10).

*Poetics*, Book VI, Chapter 2 of the *Topics* also associates metaphors with the perception of resemblances, claiming as we saw above that ‘all those who use metaphors do so on account of some similarity.’

All that remains to be examined is thus the first postulate, according to which metaphor is the property of words and, as Johnson specifies, of ‘single words.’ In a certain way, as we have seen, this is correct. In both the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle analyzes metaphor as one among several different kinds of word, τὸ ὄνομα. So if we judge Aristotle’s theory based on its point of departure alone, which is the theory of λέξις and, within the elements of λέξις, of the ὄνομα, we must agree with the proponents of the cognitive theory of metaphor that Aristotle understands metaphor as a property or kind of individual words. But once again, this is not the whole truth. While it is correct to say that Aristotle locates metaphor in the first instance among different kinds of words, it is also true that many of his other comments indicate that metaphors involve much more than individual names; indeed, the very concept of a ‘single-word’ metaphor is meaningless, insofar as it is only by reference to a word’s context in a sentence that its metaphoric status can be determined at all. In total, there are four main factors that show how Aristotle’s treatment of metaphor, in spite of its point of departure, goes well beyond a purely lexical theory of metaphor as a certain kind of individual word, and points to the inherently predicative character of metaphorical language. These four factors are (1) the precise nature of Aristotle’s definition of metaphor in the *Poetics*; (2) the theory of signification, elaborated in *De Interpretatione*, which Aristotle’s theory of metaphor implicitly presupposes; (3) the identification made by Aristotle between the metaphor and the simile in Book III of the *Rhetoric*; and (4) the specific examples

offered in both the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* to illustrate the different ways in which metaphors can be used.

We have already examined each of the first three factors in detail above. To recap, we saw that Aristotle defines metaphor in the *Poetics* not as the static result of a substitution of names, but as the dynamic process of attribution or designation, through which this substitution of names takes place. It was on the basis of this and other related facts that I argued that Aristotle's theory is a vertical theory, which concerns the relationship between words, ideas and things, rather than between literal and figurative senses of a single word. This rapport between words, ideas and things in Aristotle's theory of metaphor is a necessary consequence of his theory of signification, which is presupposed by his theory of style in both the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*. As I argued above, Aristotle's understanding of signification proceeds from words, τὰ ὀνομάματα, to 'things,' τὰ πράγματα, via the intermediary of 'affections of the soul,' τὰ παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς. Consequently, even single words themselves are more than just single words, for each word in its referential structure stands for a thing outside the mind, by means of an affection of the soul. This triangular rapport between word, thing and affection of the soul in Aristotle's theory of signification has led Kirby in particular to compare it to C.S. Peirce's account of the sign, which also involves no less than three basic components.<sup>299</sup> A sign, for Peirce, is accordingly 'something which stands to somebody for something in

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<sup>299</sup> Veayne and Tamba-Mecz support this 'triangular' reading as well, observing that the Aristotelian 'metaphora n'est donc pas une figure de rhétorique, au sens où nous l'entendons aujourd'hui, qui ressortit à l'analyse formelle et sémantique du seul langage. Elle met en œuvre toute une théorie sur les rapports entre les choses, la pensée, les mots.' ("Metaphora et Comparaison selon Aristote," ("Metaphora et Comparaison selon Aristote," p. 81).

some respects or capacity'.<sup>300</sup> As Peirce makes explicit elsewhere, what he calls 'semiosis' is therefore necessarily tripartite: '[b]y semiosis I mean an action, an influence, which is, or involves, a cooperation of *three* subjects, such as a sign, its object and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in anyway resolvable into actions between pairs'.<sup>301</sup>

Kirby accordingly observes that '[i]n the passage from *De Interpretatione* cited here [i.e., 16a 3-8], we have all the elements of the Peircean triad of semiosis: the sign (sumbolon or semeiori), the object it represents (pragma), and the interpretant (en tei psukhei pathemata)'.<sup>302</sup> Although there is some disagreement about whether Peirce's notion of interpretant is in all cases comparable to what Aristotle means by 'affections of the soul,' what is crucial to grasp here is just that Aristotle, much like Peirce, understands signification to involve a minimum of three elements.<sup>303</sup> Based on this structural parallel between the three poles of Aristotle's theory of signification and those of Peirce's semiotics, Kirby goes on to argue that 'a semiotic presentation of the Aristotelian model [i.e., of metaphor] can be made congenial to Lakoff's cognitive approach'.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> C.S. Peirce, *Collected Papers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 2.228. Cited in U. Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976) p. 15.

<sup>301</sup> Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.484.

<sup>302</sup> John Kirby, "Aristotle on Metaphor", p. 535.

<sup>303</sup> It is possible that Kirby pushes the comparison between Aristotle's theory of signification and Peirce's semiotics too far. As Eco explains, the main obstacle here is that Peirce's notion of 'interpretant' maps onto Aristotle's 'affections of the soul' only part of the time. Although 'Peirce also thought of the interpretant [...] as a psychological event in the mind of a possible interpreter', it is also 'possible to interpret Peirce's definition [i.e., of the interpretant] in a non-anthropomorphic way'. U. Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976) p. 15.

<sup>304</sup> John Kirby, "Aristotle on Metaphor", p. 538. Swiggers (1984) raises a similar point when he argues that Aristotle's theory of metaphor has what he calls a 'cognitive background'. "Cognitive Aspects of Aristotle's Theory of Metaphor", *Glotta* 62 1/2 (1984), p. 43. What he means by this is made clearer when he observes that, '[f]or Aristotle, metaphor can only function in the context of linguistic interaction: metaphors which are not understood are not functional.' (p. 45) To make this more concrete, we must recall the reason why specifically in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle isolates metaphor as the most important element of style that is available to orators. Ordinary words, he explains, are clear, but they risk boring the audience; strange words (including neologisms, borrowed and lengthened terms, and so on) are pleasing to

Consequently, although it is true to say that metaphor is localized in a word, the metaphor itself involves more than a word: indeed, it involves a word, but one that signifies another thing through the intermediary of the affections in the souls of the audience, and only after they have understood the real sense of the implied comparison. In this way, a whole comparative, predicative operation is condensed in a single word, but this only becomes apparent once the audience has understood the implied meaning, having ‘unpacked’ the metaphor by the mental juxtaposition of the word and its alien context. It is only once the underlying similarity between the word’s ordinary *designatum* and its new, alien context is determined in the mind of the audience that we can say the metaphor has been grasped. It is for precisely this reason that Aristotle claims that metaphors, more than any other element of style (μάλιστα), facilitate learning. Expanding on this claim, Tesauro contends that metaphors in fact condense an entire ‘theatre of marvels’ into a single word: ‘[v]oilà l’enseignement rapide et aisé d’où naît le plaisir ([e] questo è quel veloce e facile insegnamento da cui ci nasce il diletto), l’esprit de l’auditeur ayant l’impression de percevoir en un seul mot tout un théâtre de merveilles (parendo alla mente di chi ode vedere in un vocabulo solo un pien teatro de meraviglie).’<sup>305</sup> Once again, we see that it is only in a qualified sense that Aristotle can be said to hold the view that metaphor is a property of words and nothing else.

The third obstacle to claiming that Aristotle understands metaphor to be a property of words, and words alone, is the connection he posits between the metaphor

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the audience, but their meaning is obscure. The reason why metaphor is so important as an element of rhetorical style is that it effectively mediates between these two kinds of language. The metaphorical expression thus *appears* at first to be an ordinary word, and so does not arouse suspicion; it is only once the discrepancy between word and thing becomes apparent, i.e., *in the mind of the audience members themselves*, that the real meaning of the expression, the actual comparison implied by the transference itself, can be understood.

<sup>305</sup> Tesauro, *Il cannochiale aristotelico*, in *La métaphore baroque*, p. 106/7.

and the simile, ἡ εἰκῶν. We have already examined this connection above, so there is no need to say anything further about it. All that remains to discuss is the fourth factor, which is to be gleaned from a common characteristic among the examples Aristotle gives to illustrate what metaphors are and how they function. We have only examined a few of these examples as they appear in both the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*; most of them we will encounter in the next chapter, as part of our investigation into what Aristotle means when he says that good metaphors signify ἐνέργεια. I only want to draw attention to the fact that not one of these examples appears in the form of a single word.<sup>306</sup> Rather than instances of individual words, all of Aristotle's examples that we will see in the next chapter are predications, in which certain qualities (those of movement in particular) are attributed to certain subjects by means of certain words. What these examples illustrate is accordingly not qualities of words and their meanings, but rather the ways in which different kinds of properties can be predicated, through the use of words, to different kinds of subjects, and thereby produce different kinds of experiences or images in the mind. This fact demonstrates from another perspective that, for Aristotle, the idea of a 'one-word' metaphor is in fact meaningless and, as a result, the claim that he thinks metaphor involves no more than a word is not at all accurate.

Out of the five postulates that Lakoff, Johnson and Kövecses attribute to the Traditional View and, by extension, to Aristotle himself, only one actually reflects what Aristotle says without qualification. This is the view that metaphors are based in the perception of similarities between different things. As for the other four postulates, they

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<sup>306</sup> Again in the words of Veyne and Tamba-Mecz, with Aristotle 'l'analyse de la *metaphora* ne peut plus être celle d'une dénomination prise à part et du raisonnement par ressemblance ou par analogie qui aboutit à attribuer une dénomination impropre: elle doit être l'analyse d'un syntagme.' ("Metaphora et Comparison selon Aristote," p. 93)

all distort Aristotle's position to varying degrees, and in at least one instance (i.e., the fifth postulate) attribute to him a view that is the polar opposite of the one he actually holds. In total, only one of the things they say about Aristotle's theory of metaphor is unequivocally true, one is unequivocally false, and the remaining three are only true in a very narrow, qualified sense. Statistically, this means that roughly between 50 and 60 percent of what they have written about Aristotle's theory is factually incorrect.

By and large, this misinterpretation is the result of exaggerating the similarities between Aristotle's theory of metaphor and those of classical rhetoricians, such as Quintilian, Cicero, and Tryphon. According to the argument that I have advanced in this chapter, these classical theories must be distinguished from Aristotle's by virtue of the fact that the former are horizontal theories, whereas Aristotle's is a vertical one. In this sense, when proponents of the cognitive theory criticize what they call the Traditional View for assuming that metaphors are the properties of words only, they are incorrect in assuming that Aristotle is the originator of such a theory. This in turn considerably weakens their more general claim that Aristotle's ideas have skewed the western tradition's understanding of metaphor for 2300 years, and calls for a re-evaluation of the revolutionary character that they often attribute to their own work. Ultimately, as mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, such a re-evaluation would also necessarily involve an examination of the critiques that have been issued against the interaction theory of metaphor by other 20th century philosophers such as Davidson and Ricoeur, for the cognitive view of metaphor builds heavily on the conceptual framework of this particular theory.

### 3.6 Conclusion

By way of conclusion, it will be helpful to connect the results of the current chapter both to those of the previous chapter and those we will encounter in the following. Concerning the former point, it is crucial to see that the vertical character of Aristotle's theory of metaphor, which I argued for throughout this chapter, is inherently connected to notion that Aristotle's general theories of rhetoric and poetry, and his views concerning their status as arts in particular, must be understood as loyal responses to the Platonic critiques we examined in the *Ion*, *Republic*, *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*. This is so because the vertical character of Aristotle's theory means that metaphor is fundamentally a comparative operation, which brings two things together in light of some secondary or imperfect resemblance they are seen to share. Most importantly, it follows that the knowledge that permits metaphors to be made and understood is according to Aristotle a knowledge of things and the similarities between them, and not of the lexical meanings of individual words.

The significance of this fact becomes apparent as soon as it is recalled that Aristotle holds metaphor to be the most important element of both rhetorical and poetic style. Thus, in the same way that the essential functions assigned by Aristotle to rhetoric and poetry orient the content of each activity towards the philosophical pursuit of goodness and truth, Aristotle's discussions of metaphor in both the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* reinforce this orientation from the opposite side, as it were, by making a philosophical understanding of the analogical connections between things a sufficient condition for the mastery of rhetorical and poetic style as well. If, in other words, Aristotle's discussions of the functions and content of rhetoric and poetry already implicitly single out the

philosopher as being the ideal poet and the ideal orator, the same is necessarily true of his discussions of metaphor.

In the next chapter, we will address several pressing interpretive issues surrounding Aristotle's remarks, in *Rhetoric* III.10-11, that the best metaphors are those that depict ἐνέργεια. While the concrete meaning of these remarks is that the best metaphors are those that depict things imaginatively in a state of dynamic movement, the deeper philosophical implications of this meaning need to be drawn out and made explicit. While this will have to wait until the end of the next chapter, what can be said right now is that ἐνέργεια, or *activity*, is the key concept in Aristotle's whole metaphysical system. It unlocks the fundamental, ontological relatedness of all beings, as beings, in their analogical connections both to one another and to the *First Being*, on which everything that exists depends. The fact that ἐνέργεια is both (a) the central theoretical concept of Aristotle's theological ontology, and (b) the central criterion he employs in the *Rhetoric* to explain what makes metaphors successful, further underscores his effort to bind the study of rhetoric and poetry to philosophical contemplation. Indeed, if this means that *activity* is the key both to the metaphysical understanding of things and to the successful use of metaphor as Aristotle recommends it, it also suggests implicitly that the one who knows the former will be best at the latter as well.

## 4. Chapter 3: Metaphor, πρὸ ὁμμάτων and ἐνέργεια

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter argues that Aristotle uses the term πρὸ ὁμμάτων in *Rhetoric* III.10-11 to draw attention to the imagistic character of metaphorical expressions, and he uses the term ἐνέργεια to highlight a specific quality that, he thinks, makes the images conveyed by certain metaphors maximally vivid. As will be shown, this quality is movement, ἡ κίνησις, and the discussion of ἐνέργεια and its importance in *Rhetoric* III therefore underscores Aristotle's recommendation that orators should prefer metaphors depicting things in a state of motion above all others.

In arguing that ἐνέργεια simply means movement, this chapter aims to extend the analysis of the previous two chapters, according to which Aristotle's theories of rhetoric and poetry in general, and his discussions of metaphor as the most important element of rhetorical and poetic style in particular, must be seen as part of his effort to reform each pursuit in accordance with the guidelines suggested by Plato in the *Ion*, *Republic*, *Gorgias*, and *Phaedrus*. As we saw in the first chapter, these guidelines postulated that rhetoric and poetry both must be oriented towards the philosophical pursuit of goodness and truth in order to be considered genuine τέχναι. To see how this chapter's argument is consistent with those of the previous two, we must begin by repeating that ἐνέργεια also, and perhaps more importantly, refers to the ultimate explanatory concept of *activity* in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. The fact that the concept here also operates as the explanatory principle in Aristotle's discussion of what makes metaphors vivid therefore implies once again that the rhetoric and the poetry presented by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*,

insofar as these both require the successful use of metaphor, demand an orientation towards philosophy on the part of whoever seeks to master them.

The majority of this chapter will be devoted to the resolution of a number of interpretive issues surrounding the passages of the *Rhetoric* in which Aristotle discusses ἐνέργεια in relation to the use of metaphors. Although it is fairly straightforward to say that ἐνέργεια simply means movement, this is by no means obvious in the text itself, and furthermore it raises problems insofar as Aristotle elsewhere strenuously upholds a distinction between the concepts of ἐνέργεια and κίνησις. To the extent that a precise understanding of the theoretical value that Aristotle attaches to metaphors seems contingent on an understanding of what ἐνέργεια means in this specific context, we must clarify the interpretive issues surrounding it in order to verify its meaning to a satisfactory extent.

In and of itself, the initial notion of πρὸ ὁμμάτων, which Aristotle mentions specifically with respect to metaphor in Chapter 10, is uncontroversial. It refers metaphorically to the capacity that certain metaphors and comparisons have to create vivid images in the mind, and thereby place things directly ‘before the eyes,’ as it were. This first concept must be understood at the outset within the context of the function that, as discussed in the previous chapter, Aristotle attributes to metaphors in the *Poetics*: that is, the function of revealing similarities or resemblances (τὸ ὁμοῖον). As I argued above, Aristotle understands metaphors to function by revealing similarities between disparate things, and above all he privileges metaphors that reveal similarities between things that are obscure to the senses, on the one hand, and things that are familiar to them on the other. Accordingly, the metaphorical notion of πρὸ ὁμμάτων underscores the

importance of drawing metaphors and similes from the domain of sense experience, which allow orators and poets to place abstract concepts and scenes vividly before the imagination (the mind's eye, as it were), by comparing them to sensible objects with which they share some salient resemblance. As we saw in the previous chapter, this preference for metaphors that illustrate abstract scenes and concepts by means of sensible images, and thereby place things 'before the eyes,' also leads Aristotle to valorize analogical metaphors over the other three categories that he introduces in *Poetics* 22.

Nevertheless, the casual way in which Aristotle introduces the notion of ἐνέργεια in *Rhetoric* III.11, in order to explain what he means by πρὸ ὁμμάτων, complicates the discussion. First of all, this is so because Aristotle does not offer a very detailed explanation of what he means by either expression. He illustrates each concept with a number of examples, but he is less than explicit in his remarks about what is common to all of them, and at times introduces explanatory principles whose general applicability does not appear to hold. The order of Aristotle's discussion in the relevant passages is as follows: he first introduces the notion of πρὸ ὁμμάτων in Chapter 10, and then offers eight examples of metaphors that according to him place things before the eyes; in the next chapter, he glosses πρὸ ὁμμάτων in terms of ἐνέργεια, but instead of going back to the initial eight examples of πρὸ ὁμμάτων and showing how they, too, are instances of ἐνέργεια, he proceeds in Chapter 11 to introduce two *new* series of examples to illustrate what he means by the latter expression. To complicate matters even further, before introducing the third and final series of examples, which are all drawn from the poetry of Homer in particular, he mentions the distinction between the animate (ἔμψυχον) and the inanimate (ἄψυχον), suggesting ostensibly that in some of these

examples at least, what he means by ἐνέργεια is explained by the depiction of what is inanimate as though it were animate. Finally, he concludes the entire series of examples in Chapter 11 with the declaration that ἐνέργεια here means movement, ἢ δ' ἐνέργεια κίνησις.<sup>307</sup>

As mentioned above, I will argue in what follows that this explanation is indeed the correct one. Yet a good deal of work is needed to substantiate this conclusion, because, first and foremost, there is a manuscript controversy that has been ignored by most commentators from the 20th century onwards, and which ought at least to be considered before any major decisions can be made as to what ἐνέργεια means here. Furthermore, as mentioned, Aristotle draws subtle but important distinctions between ἐνέργεια and κίνησις in both the *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*; his identification of these two concepts in the *Rhetoric* must therefore be squared with these distinctions to the extent that this is possible.

Lastly, as we shall see, many commentators assume that what Aristotle means by ἐνέργεια is simply explained by the distinction that he introduces in Chapter 11 between the animate and the inanimate, in discussing examples from Homeric poetry. But since Aristotle does not explain the distinction between the animate and the inanimate anywhere in the *Rhetoric*, we must turn briefly to his discussion in the *De Anima* in order to determine with certainty whether this distinction has the kind of explanatory purchase that the aforementioned commentators attribute to it. Once I have addressed these issues in succession, I will then offer a detailed, inductive analysis of all the relevant examples offered by Aristotle to illustrate both πρὸ ὁμμάτων and ἐνέργεια in *Rhetoric* III.10-11,

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<sup>307</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1412a 4.

and demonstrate that motion is indeed the only explanation capable of accounting for what these examples share in common.

On my reading, the ἔμψυχον / ἄψυχον distinction introduced by Aristotle in Chapter 11 explains a particularly prevalent way in which metaphors can express ἐνέργεια, but it is incapable of explaining what it means to signify ἐνέργεια in each and every case that he discusses. Before substantiating my own reading by means of an exhaustive survey of the examples offered by Aristotle to illustrate what he means by ἐνέργεια in this context, I will address the positions of other commentators and theorists who have advanced interpretations different from my own, and show why their readings fail to make sense of all the relevant texts.

Therefore, the plan for the current chapter is as follows: (1) first, I will introduce and explain the manuscript controversy at the heart of the text in question; (2) second, I will characterize Aristotle's understanding of both κίνησις and ἐνέργεια, as well as the distinction that he postulates between them in *Metaphysics IX* and *Nicomachean Ethics X*; (3) third, I will address the positions of those commentators who assume in various ways that the ἔμψυχον / ἄψυχον distinction is a satisfactory explanation of what it means for a metaphor or simile to signify ἐνέργεια, and explain the implications of this assumption by relating the notion of 'animating representation' to other similar concepts such as *personification* etc; (4) fourthly and finally, I will present all the examples offered by Aristotle in this passage, and group them into their relevant categories in such a way as to show that motion is indeed the only factor capable of explaining what is common to all of them. In the conclusion, having shown that ἐνέργεια does in fact refer

to movement in this context, I will draw out the philosophical implications of this fact and thereby connect the results of this chapter to those of the previous two.

#### 4.2 Textual Issues: κίνησις or μίμησις?

Evidently, most if not all 20th century editions of the *Rhetoric* are based on a Greek text in which Aristotle's survey of examples from Homeric poetry in Book III, Chapter 11 concludes with the words ἡ δ' ἐνέργεια κίνησις at 1412a 4. Although I will argue in what follows that this is indeed consistent with the sense of Aristotle's discussion, which begins half-way into Chapter 10, it is crucial to recognize at the outset that the text of the passage in question was emended in the mid-19th century. Consider, for example, the text of the *Rhetoric* edited by F.J. Parsons and published in 1836: the Greek for the passage in question reads ἡ δ' ἐνέργεια μίμησις.<sup>308</sup> Parsons explains in a footnote that the appearance of the word μίμησις must be understood in the context of Aristotle's reference to Homer in this passage: the association between ἐνέργεια and μίμησις, he argues, 'is brought forward as the reason that the ἐνέργεια is so much used by Homer and other poets: viz. that it is an imitation of things in real life, and therefore the peculiar province of poetry, whose whole object is μίμησις.'<sup>309</sup>

In fact, the emendation of the text from μίμησις to κίνησις was first suggested in the critical apparatus of Bekker's Greek edition, one year later.<sup>310</sup> Although we will not be able to grasp the justification for this emendation until we have reviewed all of the examples that Aristotle offers to illustrate what he means by both πρὸ ὁμμάτων and

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<sup>308</sup> Aristotle, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle, With Notes*, ed. Rev. F.J. Parsons (Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1836), 1412a 4 (p. 307; emphasis added).

<sup>309</sup> Parsons, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, p. 307 note 4.

<sup>310</sup> Cf. (ed.) I. Bekker, *Aristotelis De Rhetorica Libri III* (Oxonii: E typographeo Academico, 1837), p. 148 note P.

ἐνέργεια, we can get a basic idea of why the emendation may be necessary by focusing on what seems problematic about glossing ἐνέργεια in terms of μίμησις. In a general but vague sense, μίμησις does seem relevant to the discussion of how metaphors and similes can place things ‘before the eyes,’ since placing things before the eyes recalls the very function of poetic imitation as Aristotle understands it in the *Poetics*. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that Aristotle never once mentions ἐνέργεια in connection with μίμησις in that text. If Aristotle had introduced the term in the *Rhetoric* as a gloss for what he means by πρὸ ὀμμάτων only, it would make more sense. But the fact that he first introduces the term ἐνέργεια as a gloss for πρὸ ὀμμάτων makes it hard to see how μίμησις could add anything new to explain further what ἐνέργεια means in this context. Certainly, nothing in the text actually demands that either μίμησις or κίνησις should add something new to Aristotle’s discussion, but the way in which this discussion proceeds from concept to concept seems at least to suggest that each successive consideration is intended to reveal slightly more than the one before it.

Aristotle claims unequivocally in Chapter 1 ‘that things are set before the eyes by words that signify ἐνέργεια.’<sup>311</sup> This indicates that whatever ἐνέργεια means in this context, it has to do primarily with the precise nature of the representations that are accomplished through the artistic deployment of stylistic devices such as metaphors and similes. In other words, ἐνέργεια in relation to metaphor means that *specific kinds* of representations should be preferred over others in the selection of metaphors and similes for a rhetorical speech, because these kinds of representations are more effective at placing things before the eyes than others. If this is the basic sense of ἐνέργεια, then it

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<sup>311</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1411b 2: ‘λέγω δὴ πρὸ ὀμμάτων ταῦτα ποιεῖν, ὅσα ἐνεργοῦντα σημαίνει.’

does seem strange that Aristotle should introduce μίμησις as a further explanation of what it means at the end of the passage, since the latter notion merely returns us to the idea of representation in general.

It seems reasonable to expect that any further gloss on Aristotle's part would give a more precise explanation of exactly what it means to represent (or as Aristotle says, to signify, σημαίνει) things in a state of ἐνέργεια, yet the notion of μίμησις does not offer such an explanation. It more or less repeats what we already know, that is, that ἐνέργεια refers to a unique mode of representation (or signification), without explaining what is unique to it. These are the reasons why, on my own view, the appearance of μίμησις in this passage is suspect. Yet to understand why Bekker's suggestion of κίνησις or movement makes more explanatory sense, it is necessary to examine Aristotle's examples in detail. Whether or not μίμησις can be seen to work in this context, it will be shown that the examples Aristotle offers to illustrate what he means by ἐνέργεια all involve the depiction of movement, and that Bekker's emendation therefore works better. We must postpone the examination of these examples until two other interpretive issues have been settled.

#### **4.3 κίνησις, ἐνέργεια, and the Difference Between Them**

The first and most important issue of interpretation that must be settled is that raised by the identification of ἐνέργεια and κίνησις, the latter of which I will translate throughout as either 'movement' or 'motion.' If we are to accept Bekker's emendation of the text, we must first address the fact that it is inconsistent with the theoretical distinction that Aristotle strenuously upholds between these two concepts in both the *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. As I will argue in this section, although it is true that Aristotle

distinguishes between these two concepts in the texts just mentioned, he also indicates in the former that they are intimately related notions, and suggests moreover that an understanding of κίνησις is in fact a prerequisite for an understanding of ἐνέργεια. More precisely, Aristotle affirms in *Metaphysics* IX that ἐνέργεια is most commonly understood in association with κίνησις, but that in its most precise formulation it is distinct from it. In spite of this distinction, he indicates that in order to understand the precise sense of ἐνέργεια, in which it is independent from motion, it is first necessary to understand the more common sense of ἐνέργεια in which it is associated with it.

In order to grasp Aristotle's distinction between ἐνέργεια and motion, we must begin by attending to his discussion of the latter in *Physics* III.1. Aristotle there observes that there are a number of different ways in which something can be considered to move – as many, in fact, as there are ways in which something may be considered to be.<sup>312</sup> Before examining Aristotle's definition of motion in detail, it is crucial to point out an ambiguity that exists in the way motion is spoken of, both in English and ancient Greek. It is possible to speak of motion nominally, both in the concrete sense as referring to an individual motion, and in the more abstract sense as referring to the concept of motion, in itself. In the former case, when we speak of motion, it is crucial to see that we are speaking in the most basic way about a complete transition from A to B (it makes no difference whether these are taken as physical points in space, or as differing qualitative states of the self-same individual at different points in time). Understood in this concrete sense, motion can therefore be analyzed into no less than three components: (1) the point or state of origin A; (2) the point or state of termination B; and (3) the intervening

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<sup>312</sup> See Aristotle, *Physics* 201a 8-9.

transition from (A) to (B). When we speak of motion in this concrete sense, as for example when we speak of a person or thing moving with a quick or a slow motion, we are therefore referring to the whole motion, conceived as the complete transition from (A) to (B). On the other hand, when we speak of motion in the more abstract sense, we do not make reference to the entire transition from (A) to (B), considered in its completion. We rather speak of motion in this sense as *the state* of transition itself, by which a thing passes from point (A) to point (B), independently of the point of termination that constitutes the proper end of the motion.

There is a similar ambiguity in our way of speaking about ‘actualization’ or ‘realization.’ Considered in a broad sense, the notion of actualization or realization can refer to any transition in which a thing’s potential for some kind of change is activated, leading to a new qualitative state (or physical location). We can label the potential for a given change as (A), and the realization of this potential in a new state or location (B). In this case, the passage from (A) to (B), which is a realization or actualization, can be understood in no less than three ways: (i) it can be understood as the complete transition from (A) to (B), including its end and culmination in the new state or location; (ii) it can refer to the process itself, through which the transition from (A) to (B) takes place, but excluding reference to the end point or state in which the realization culminates; and (iii) it can also refer to the end result or the ‘finished product’ of the passage from (A) to (B) alone, excluding the transition through which the actualization is accomplished.

To make this more concrete, let’s map these distinctions onto the example of the construction of a house. Firstly, we may consider the construction as a kind of movement: it is a transition from state (A), in which various materials exist separately

with respect to one another, to state (B), in which they are brought together in the form of a house. Considered as a movement, the construction can refer either to the complete transition from (A) raw materials to (B) the finished house, or it can refer to the transition between these two states, excluding the end in which the movement terminates, which is the completion of the finished house.

Now, we may consider the construction of the same house in terms of the language of realization and actualization. The construction is a process in which the potential (A) of the building materials is realized, leading to a new state (B), that is, the completed house. In one sense, considered as the complete transition from potential building materials (A) to finished house (B), the entire process of construction including its completion is a realization or an actualization. In another sense, the process of construction itself, through which the transition from (A) to (B) takes place, is also a realization or actualization, independently of the finished product. And finally, in yet another sense, the finished product itself, independently of the process of construction through which it is created, can also be considered as an actualization or realization of the potential that exists in the building materials.

According to some of these ways of speaking, motions and realizations overlap, in that all kinds of motion can be classified as kinds of realization. Yet, because realization can mean in certain instances the finished product of a process, independently of the process itself, the overlap between the concepts of motion and realization is not exhaustive. Succinctly put, all cases of motion will be cases of realization, but not all cases of realization will be cases of motion. With respect to this last consideration, it is also important to see that, among the various kinds of movements and/or realizations that

exist and are possible, some are processes that necessarily terminate at the point at which they reach their characteristic end, as the construction of a house necessarily terminates when the house itself is finished. On the other hand, some processes or transitions need not stop when they achieve their end. One of Aristotle's preferred examples for this kind of phenomenon is the act of sight (ὄρασις), which continues even after it has been brought to completion in seeing a visible object. Crucially, it is just this kind of event or activity for which Aristotle reserves the term ἐνέργεια in its strict and theoretical sense.

On the other hand he considers motion, in its strict sense, as the kind of process that does not include its end or culmination, and that necessarily terminates on completion. Accordingly, Aristotle defines motion in *Physics* III.1 as 'the activity of the potential insofar as it is potential'<sup>313</sup>. This definition extends to all cases in which something's potential for any kind of change whatsoever is in a state of activity, and has not yet reached its end or culmination. Motion is in this general sense *the state* of being in passage from potential to actualization, to the extent that this passage remains as yet in progress and, therefore, incomplete.<sup>314</sup>

To see how Aristotle characterizes ἐνέργεια in opposition to this definition of motion, we must begin with his observation in Book IX, Chapter 3 of the *Metaphysics* that ἐνεργεία refers 'especially to motions', but 'comes to apply to other things' as

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<sup>313</sup> Aristotle, *Physics* 201a 11-2 (translation modified): 'ἡ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος ἐντελέχεια, ἢ τοιοῦτον, κίνησις ἐστίν'.

<sup>314</sup> Aristotle thus affirms that this universal formulation applies equally to 'the actual progress of qualitative modification in any modifiable thing *qua* modifiable (τοῦ μὲν ἀλλιωτοῦ, ἢ ἀλλιωτόν, ἀλλίωσις); the actual growing or shrinking [...] of anything capable of expanding or contracting (τοῦ δὲ αὐξήτου καὶ τοῦ ἀντικείμενου φθιτοῦ [...] αὐξήσις καὶ φθίσις); the process of coming into existence or passing out of it of that which is capable of so coming and passing (τοῦ δὲ γενητοῦ καὶ φθαρτοῦ γένησις καὶ φθορά); [and] the actual moving of the physical body capable of changing its place (τοῦ δὲ φορητοῦ φορά).' (201a 12-5)

well.<sup>315</sup> Aristotle proceeds in Chapter 6 to introduce these other things to which ἐνεργεία refers, admitting that ‘it is because we are inquiring after that other meaning that we went through this one [i.e., the one connected to motion].’ Instead of defining ἐνεργεία, Aristotle opts (as he also does in Book III of the *Rhetoric*) rather to illustrate it by means of specific examples, claiming that it is not necessary ‘to look for a definition of everything, but one can also see at one glance, by means of analogy’<sup>316</sup>.

Aristotle lists two consecutive series of examples to illustrate what he means by ἐνεργεία. Evidently, he offers the second series at 1048b 19 because the first one fails to arrive at a conclusive picture of what ἐνεργεία is.<sup>317</sup> This is because, after terminating the first series of examples, Aristotle observes that in some cases ἐνεργεία will be understood ‘in the manner of a motion to a potency,’ while in others it will be understood ‘in the manner of thinghood to some material.’<sup>318</sup> In other words, according to this first group of examples, ἐνεργεία implicitly means what we mean in English by ‘realization’ or ‘actualization.’ As I showed above, this can sometimes refer to the process through which a thing’s potential for change is activated (i.e., a motion or κινήσις in relation to a

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<sup>315</sup> Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, trans. J. Sachs (Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 1999), 1047a 31-2: ‘ἐπὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἐκ τῶν κινήσεων μάλιστα.’ Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent references to the *Metaphysics* will be to the translation of Sachs, and all references to the Greek text will be to that presented in the Loeb edition translated by Tredennick.

<sup>316</sup> Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* 1048 34-5: ‘οὐ δεῖ παντὸς ὄρον ζητεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἀνάλογον συνορᾶν’. I return to this passage in the fifth chapter of this dissertation.

<sup>317</sup> The initial series identifies ἐνεργεία as the first of two terms in five distinct conceptual pairs (I will italicize each of these in my quotation of the text, to make them more explicit). ‘Ἐνεργεία is accordingly ‘that which is as *the one building* to the one who can build (ὡς τὸ οἰκοδομοῦν πρὸς τὸ οἰκοδομικόν), and *the awake* to the asleep (καὶ τὸ ἐγρηγορὸς πρὸς τὸ καθεῦδον), and *the one seeing* to the one whose eyes are shut but who has sight (καὶ τὸ ὄρων πρὸς τὸ μύον μὲν ὄψιν δὲ ἔχον), and *what has been formed* out of material to the material (καὶ τὸ ἀποκεκριμένον ἐκ τῆς ὕλης πρὸς τὴν ὕλην), and *what is perfected* to what is incomplete (καὶ τὸ ἀπειργασμένον πρὸς τὸ ἀνέργαστον).’ (1048b 1-5) Nevertheless, Aristotle afterwards notes that there are in fact *two* understandings of ἐνεργεία at work in these examples.

<sup>318</sup> Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* 1048b 8-9: ‘τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὡς κινήσις πρὸς δύναμιν, τὰ δ’ ὡς οὐσία πρὸς τινα ὕλην.’

potential, πρὸς δύναμιν), and sometimes to the finished product of this process, or what Aristotle calls ‘thinghood’ or ‘substance’ in relation to some material (οὐσία πρὸς τινὰ ὕλην). Considered once more in relation to the example of a house, Aristotle’s point here is that ἐνέργεια, understood as a realization or actualization, is ambiguous: it can either mean the process in which a potential for motion or change is activated, i.e., the actual construction of the house; or it can mean the finished product of this process, i.e., the house itself, independent of the process through which it was formed.

Nevertheless, as I also pointed out above, there is a third sense in which realization can be understood, and that is as a *complete* realization, taken in the sense of a process and the end in which it culminates, together. This kind of realization is unique in that most processes necessarily exclude their ends: they admit of motion on the one hand, and an end of the motion on the other, but cannot hold these two moments together because the latter essentially brings with it the termination of the former. This is true of the construction of a house, since at the moment the house is finished the construction must necessarily have stopped as well. Yet the second series of examples shows that there are in fact very special kinds of realization in which the process and its end are mutually inclusive, rather than the opposite.

Therefore, what is problematic about the first series of examples is that it prevents us from seeing an important distinction between two kinds of realizations. On the one hand, there are those realizations (such as the construction of a house, losing weight, and walking), whose completion necessarily entails the termination of the process itself. In these kinds of processes, the motion and its end are mutually exclusive, insofar as the end and culmination of the process is necessarily external to it. On the

other hand, there are other kinds of processes that do not terminate on completion, because they are already in some sense in possession of their characteristic ends or objects. For these kinds of ‘processes’ or ‘realizations,’ the culmination of the act does not necessitate the end or termination of the process itself, and it is precisely these kinds of activities, which characterize the vital and perceptive processes of living beings in particular, that Aristotle will call true ἐνεργείαι.

Consequently, the second group of examples differentiates between two kinds of processes: on the one hand, a kind of process whose end is external to it, which is for that reason incomplete (οὐ τελεία γε), and on the other a kind of process that is complete (τελεία) by virtue of the fact that its end is internal to it. In light of this new distinction, Aristotle argues that only that kind of process in which the end is internal is an ἐνέργεια truly speaking. To illustrate this basic contrast, Aristotle offers the examples of losing weight (ἰσχανασία), learning (μάθησις), walking (βάδισις) and building (οἰκοδόμησις) as examples of motions, which remain incomplete insofar as they exclude their end.<sup>319</sup> On the other hand, as examples of complete ἐνέργεια Aristotle focuses on the cases of sight (τὸ ὄρα̂ν), understanding (τὸ φρονεῖν) and contemplative thought (τὸ νοεῖν), as well as, later on, the more general ones of living (τὸ ζῆ̂ν), living well (τὸ εὖ ζῆ̂ν), and being happy (τὸ εὐδαιμονεῖν).

When discussing this proper, i.e. complete kind of ἐνέργεια, Aristotle introduces an important criterion that allows him to clarify the distinction he aims to make between it and motion: the mutual implication of (1) past perfect and (2) present continuous grammatical tenses. In other words, Aristotle stipulates that only those processes whose

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<sup>319</sup> Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 1048b 28-30.

past perfect and present continuous tenses coincide in speech are true ἐνεργείαι.<sup>320</sup> He thereafter applies this criterion successfully to all the examples he claims are ἐνεργείαι and not motions, stating that ‘one has seen and is at the same time seeing the same thing, understands and is at the same time in a state of having understood, or thinks contemplatively and is at the same time in a state of having thought contemplatively [...]’.<sup>321</sup> A few lines below, Aristotle makes the same point with respect to the three more general notions of living well, being happy and living more generally, stating that ‘[o]ne does live well at the same time one is in a state of having lived well, and one is happy at the same time one is in a state of having been happy [...], [and] one is living and one is in a state of having lived.’<sup>322</sup> Having applied this tense test to all the specific examples he claims are instances of real, i.e. complete ἐνέργεια, Aristotle concludes that ‘I call this [i.e., complete] sort of action an ἐνέργεια, and that [i.e., incomplete] sort a motion.’<sup>323</sup>

Another important, and closely related consideration that allows Aristotle to distinguish between κίνησις and ἐνέργεια is found in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he argues that pleasure, ἡ ἡδονή, is an ἐνέργεια and not a motion. In the course of this discussion, Aristotle affirms that motions take place in and can be measured by time, whereas ἐνεργείαι do not. To begin with, Aristotle observes that ‘we

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<sup>320</sup> As F.J. Gonzalez explains, ‘[o]ne way [...] in which Aristotle distinguishes an activity (ἐνέργεια) from a motion is by claiming that in speaking of the former the present tense implies the perfect tense. [...] The perfect tense can be used of an activity which is presently taking place only if this activity is complete and perfect at any given moment in time. In the case of motion the present tense excludes the perfect tense. If it is true that one is presently building a house, it cannot be true that one has already built the house. This exclusion of the one tense by the other exhibits the imperfection and incompleteness of the motion. At any point in its duration it has not yet attained its end.’ “Aristotle on Pleasure and Perfection,” *Phronesis* 36, no. 2 (1991), p. 146.

<sup>321</sup> *Aristotle’s Metaphysics* 1048b 33-4: ‘ἐώρακε δὲ καὶ ὄρα ἅμα τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ φρονεῖ καὶ πεφρόνηκε καὶ νοεῖ καὶ νενόηκεν [...]’

<sup>322</sup> *Aristotle’s Metaphysics* 1049b 24-7: ‘εὖ ζῆ καὶ εὖ ἔζηκεν ἅμα, εὐδαιμονεῖ καὶ εὐδαιμόνηκεν [...] ζῆ καὶ ἔζηκεν.’

<sup>323</sup> *Aristotle’s Metaphysics* 1049b 34-45: ‘τὴν μὲν οὖν τοιαύτην ἐνέργειαν λέγω, ἐκείνην δὲ κίνησιν.’

hold it to be a property of all motion to be quick or slow<sup>324</sup>. In accordance with the fact that it is understood in the *Metaphysics* as inherently incomplete (οὐ τελεία), and as its definition in Book III of the *Physics* makes explicit, motion is the very state of being in process towards achieving an end insofar as this end remains as yet unrealized, and therefore still external to the motion itself. In turn, insofar as the end of the motion is necessarily external to it, the passage towards the realization of this end, of which motion itself is the abstract state, can take place quickly or slowly.

In fact, as Aristotle goes on to indicate, the reason why it belongs to all motions to be quick or slow is that all motions necessarily occur ‘in time,’ ἐν χρόνῳ: ‘[f]or every motion or process of change involves duration, and is a means to an end, for instance the process of building a house; and it is perfect when it has effected its end.’<sup>325</sup> He expands on this point by offering an example that corresponds to the process of ‘building a house’ mentioned above, pointing out that the temporal character of such processes is revealed by the fact that they consist of a number of smaller motions or ‘parts’ that precede one another in a necessary, sequential order:

[t]he several motions occupying portions of the time of the whole are imperfect, and different in kind from the whole and from each other. For instance, in building a temple the fitting together of the stones is a different process from the fluting of a column, and both are different from the construction of the temple as a whole; and whereas the building of the temple is a perfect process, for nothing further is required to achieve the end proposed, laying the foundation and constructing the triglyphs are imperfect processes, since each produces only part of the design.<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947), 1173a 32: ‘πάση [i.e., κινήσει] γὰρ οἰκίῳ εἶναι δοκεῖ τάχος καὶ βραδυστής’.

<sup>325</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1174a 19-22: ‘ἐν χρόνῳ γὰρ πᾶσα κίνησις καὶ τέλος τινός, οἷον ἡ οἰκοδομική, καὶ τελεία ὅταν ποιήσῃ οὐ ἐφίεται.’

<sup>326</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1174a 22-27: ‘ἐν δὲ τοῖς μέρεσι τοῦ χρόνου πᾶσαι ἀτελεῖς, καὶ ἕτεροι τῶ εἶδει τῆς ὅλης καὶ ἀλλήλων. ἡ γὰρ τῶν λίθων σύνθεσις ἕτερα τῆς τοῦ κίονος ῥαβδώσεως, καὶ αὐταὶ τῆς τοῦ ναοῦ τελεία (οὐδενὸς γὰρ ἐνδενῆς πρὸς τὸ προκείμενον), ἡ δὲ τῆς κρηπίδος καὶ τοῦ τριγλύφου ἀτελής (μέρους γὰρ ἑκατέρου).’

As processes that are inherently incomplete, all motions are necessarily comprised of smaller, incomplete parts, which differ both with respect to one another and to the entire motion of which they are parts, and occur in a necessary temporal sequence. This temporal character of motion is exemplified above all in processes of construction, where the completion of the whole product (a house or a temple) depends on the correct order of each distinct step or part into which the process is divided.

We might say on the one hand that every motion is therefore temporally heterogeneous. On the other hand, it is crucial to see that ἐνεργείαι lack this temporal heterogeneity with respect to their parts, because they are not in time as motions are. Consider by way of a contrast Aristotle's claim, at the beginning of Chapter 4, that 'the act of sight appears to be perfect at any moment of its duration; it does not require anything to supervene later in order to perfect its specific quality.'<sup>327</sup> It is crucial to recall here that sight is one of the paradigmatic cases of ἐνέργεια that Aristotle argues for in the passage of the *Metaphysics* we have just considered. Taking this fact into account, there is reason to suppose that Aristotle's point in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is not simply that sight in particular is temporally homogenous in this way; it is rather that all forms of what is properly called ἐνέργεια, as exemplified by sight (and pleasure too, as Aristotle argues in the *Nicomachean Ethics*), are thus complete in every moment.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1174a 14-6: 'δοκεῖ γὰρ ἡ μὲν ὄρασις καθ' ὀντινοῦν χρόνον τελεία εἶναι· οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἐνδενῆς οὐδενός ὃ εἰς ὕστερον γενόμενον τελειώσει αὐτῆς τὸ εἶδος.'

<sup>328</sup> If this passage neglects to make this point explicit with respect to activity in general, it is because Aristotle's objective in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is not to specify the character of activity or motion themselves, but rather to determine whether pleasure, ἡ ἡδονή, belongs to the class of the former or the latter. Ultimately Aristotle identifies pleasure with activity because it, too, is a kind of 'whole (ὅλον γὰρ τι ἐστὶ)' at every moment (1174a 17). As Gonzalez explains, '[a] motion, precisely because it is a potentiality in regard to some end distinct from itself, exists only through time. Though a pleasure is capable of lasting a certain amount of time, this fact is completely accidental to its nature; according to its nature it exists outside time. This means that its completion or fulfillment does not require time.'

According to this complex series of arguments, although the most common meaning of ἐνεργεία, which Aristotle evidently has in mind at *Rhetoric* III.11, is associated with motion, there is a more precise and theoretical meaning that applies to actions in which the end is internal to the act itself – actions, we might say, that are their *own ends*. It is this more precise meaning that Aristotle associates with true ἐνεργεία in both the *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, whereas every kind of incomplete process, in which the end necessarily remains external, is associated with the concept of motion in its proper sense. It is important to point out at this point that all the examples cited by Aristotle as illustrating what he means by ἐνέργεια are, in fact, precisely those activities that define the very being of living things. Sight, thought, understanding, and life in general are in other words paradigmatic for what Aristotle means by ἐνέργεια in its theoretical sense, whereas in its more common formulation it refers simply to motions, which are necessarily incapable of containing their ends internally, and are therefore subject to time and divisible into smaller parts that correspond to earlier and later stages of development.

Although they are indeed conceptually distinct, we must recall Aristotle’s remark that motion and ἐνέργεια are most commonly understood in relation to one another. The partial overlap in the concepts of motion and realization, which I indicated at the outset

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(“Aristotle on Pleasure and Perfection,” p. 147) In itself, the fact that Aristotle is able to identify pleasure and activity because they both share this temporal homogeneity demonstrates that Aristotle’s specific remark about sight applies to *all* cases of activity. This reading is supported by M. Stone, who argues that ‘[b]ecause the parts of a motion are different in kind, we might characterize a motion as heterogeneous. From this point of view, we can see clearly that a motion requires time. Each of the different parts of a motion is incomplete; each lacks something which coming into being at a later time will make the motion complete. So only with the passage of time will it be possible for a motion to become complete. By contrast, if one were to divide an activity into parts, each of the parts would be the same in kind as every other part and the same as the whole activity. Though one may see different things at different times, one’s act of seeing as such is uniformly the same. Since seeing and other activities lack internal differentiation in their parts, we might describe activities as homogenous.’ “Aristotle on Motion and Activity,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (Jan. 1985), p. 15.

of this discussion, explains what Aristotle means here: all motions are in a sense realizations or actualizations of some potential, but not all realizations or actualizations are strictly speaking motions.

In light of these considerations, it is in one sense unsurprising that Aristotle's identification of ἐνέργεια and motion occurs at the heart of a treatise devoted to rhetorical argumentation and style. The art of rhetoric, as Aristotle explains in Book I of that treatise, is characterized by its general applicability. It does not pertain exclusively to any special field, and its mastery does not demand specialized knowledge as do the sciences proper, such as physics, astronomy or geometry. Rhetoric is an art that anyone can learn, because it is a realization of certain potentialities that all human beings possess by nature, and that accordingly operates in reference to what the majority of people find plausible. Given the decidedly popular context of the *Rhetoric*, it therefore makes perfect sense for Aristotle to discuss ἐνέργεια in this treatise as though it simply were the same as motion, even if he recognizes in other, more explicitly theoretical works that the two concepts are in fact distinct.<sup>329</sup> If this is the case, there need not be any grave

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<sup>329</sup> The idea that Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* uses ἐνέργεια in its common meaning, as referring to motion, is supported and explained by what Sachs says in general about the nature of Aristotle's discussion in that text. For Sachs, it is crucial to see that Aristotle appeals to the common understanding of all the concepts he discusses in the *Rhetoric*; two of the most important of these are pleasure and happiness, which Sachs notes are defined and discussed at length by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Yet '[t]o carry over those definitions into the *Rhetoric* would be useless without the development of thought that gives them meaning, and still useless with that fullness of reasoning, since it could never be brought into any rhetorical occasion in a way that an audience could take in. [...] Aristotle understands [...] that the study of rhetoric must take place where its audiences are, and not above their heads.' See *Plato Gorgias and Aristotle Rhetoric*, Introduction, p. 19. Accordingly, in a note to the passage of *Rhetoric* III in which Aristotle identifies ἐνέργεια and κίνησις, Sachs argues (rightly, in my view) that this 'is not strictly true, as Aristotle demonstrates in Bk. IX, Chap. 6 of the *Metaphysics*. The distinction between motion (*kinēsis*) and activity (or being-at-work, *energeia*) is at a level of precision that goes beyond anything relevant to rhetoric, and is ignored here just as it was ignored in the definition of pleasure adopted for rhetorical purposes at the beginning of Bk. 1, Chap. 11.' (p. 266, note 231) In further support of this, there is a tradition among ancient authors and critics according to which Aristotle's teachings were divided into 'esoteric' and 'exoteric' subjects. According to this tradition (proponents of which include Cicero, Quintilian and Plutarch among others), the *esoterica* represented the more complex, theoretical topics, and

contradiction involved in accepting Bekker's emendation of the text of *Rhetoric* III.11, even it does raise some complications.

Having resolved to a satisfactory extent the apparent contradiction involved in Aristotle's remark in the *Rhetoric* that ἐνέργεια is motion, it is now time to verify and explain my claim that, for Aristotle, words signifying ἐνέργεια are those that represent things in a state of movement. Above all, what still needs to be clarified is whether or not the things that are to be represented as moving must be things that already, i.e. naturally are things that do in fact move, or if the attribution of movement to them only counts as signifying ἐνέργεια if it is a metaphorical or imaginative attribution, i.e. to a thing that does not itself move by nature. Signifying ἐνέργεια, taken as representing movement in an unqualified sense, can in this way be understood in one of no less than four ways: (1) it can be understood as representing things that naturally move as such, using ordinary words that describe this movement in a more or less conventional way; (2) it can be understood as representing things that do not naturally move as if they were moving, i.e. in a metaphorical or fictive way; (3) it can be understood as attributing one kind of motion to a thing that is naturally associated with another kind of motion, again in a metaphorical or fictive way; or (4) it can be understood as a combination of (2) and (3). As will become clear, the examples that Aristotle offers to illustrate what he means in the *Rhetoric* indicate that (4) is the correct option.<sup>330</sup>

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were taught to a restricted circle of initiates in the morning. The *exoterica* consisted of less scientific topics, and were taught to a more general audience after mid-day in the Academy. If there is any truth to this tradition, it would make perfect sense for Aristotle to refer in the *Rhetoric* to the more common understanding of activity that associates it with motion, and to leave the more theoretical sense of activity for discussion in one of his more advanced seminars. Cf. Chroust, "Aristotle's Earliest 'Course of Lectures on Rhetoric,'" passim.

<sup>330</sup> This is another way of saying, in accordance with what was argued in the previous chapter, that the likenesses pointed out by metaphors are necessarily secondary likenesses. For this reason, the motion

#### 4.4 Animating Representation, προσωποποιΐα, and Personification

As mentioned, most if not all editors and translators of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* have subsequently accepted, wittingly or otherwise, the emendation of the text originally suggested by Bekker in the mid-19th century. Nevertheless, even if it is agreed that the text should in fact read that ἐνέργεια is κίνησις rather than μίμησις, there is very little consensus regarding how this identification is to be understood in relation to metaphor specifically. Most commentators take ἐνέργεια to concern the precise character of the objects, which are represented by means of metaphors or similes, but there are a few others who take ἐνέργεια to refer rather to the mental act itself, which is a subjective response to this kind of metaphorical or comparative representation in the mind of the rhetorical audience. One interpreter in particular (i.e., Moran, 1996), combines both readings.

In what follows, I will focus mainly on the interpreters who hold the former view, as this is the only reading that can be directly verified one way or another by reference to the text of the *Rhetoric*. The notion that ἐνέργεια refers to the 'actualization' of an image in the minds of a rhetorical audience, which is upheld by both Moran and Newman (2002), is suggestive but ultimately goes beyond Aristotle's meaning in my view.<sup>331</sup>

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depicted by metaphors must be depicted in relation to things that either do not naturally move at all, or do not move in the particular way they are depicted to move by a given metaphor or comparison.

<sup>331</sup> See R. Moran, "Artifice and persuasion: The work of metaphor in the *Rhetoric*," in (ed.) A.O. Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 392. Moran argues that there are not one but two sides to Aristotle's discussion of ἐνέργεια as it relates to metaphor. On one side, he claims that there is ἐνέργεια in the sense in which I will analyze it below, as the movement that is metaphorically attributed to a given object, in speech or writing. On the other side, he also claims that there is a corresponding ἐνέργεια or movement in the mind of the audience, once they have understood the expression and formed the requisite mental image: 'the "activity" in question when something is figuratively "set before our eyes" is not on one side only. Rather, it is part of what Aristotle means when he speaks of something "set before the eyes" that the mind of the hearer is provoked, set into motion, and engaged imaginatively with the metaphor.' (p. 396.) For reasons that will become apparent in what follows, only the first side of Moran's understanding of ἐνέργεια is confirmed by the text – that is, the side

Certain passages of the *De Anima* clearly show that Aristotle does not accept the language of ‘alteration,’ ἀλλιώσις, as a legitimate way of describing the activation of any potentiality possessed by the soul<sup>332</sup>; alteration is moreover one of four kinds of motion that fall under Aristotle’s definition in *Physics* III.1. In the *De Anima*, the ‘alterations’ through which the soul is activated to perform its essential functions are

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where it pertains to the movement that is metaphorically attributed to a certain kind of object. Nevertheless, the question must ultimately be left open, because the text does not conclusively rule out the other reading. See also S. Newman, “Aristotle’s Notion of ‘Bringing-Before-the-Eyes’: Its Contributions to Aristotelian and Contemporary Conceptualizations of Metaphor, Style, and Audience,” *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 20, no. 1 (Winter 2002), p. 4. A more or less identical version of this article is reprinted as the fifth chapter of Newman’s book, *Aristotle on Style* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), pp. 109-130. Strangely, Newman altogether rejects the reading of ἐνέργεια as movement (in the first sense of movement attributed to an object), on the basis of the fact that, as I have already indicated, Aristotle dissociates ἐνέργεια and κίνησις in several places. For Newman, ἐνέργεια has nothing to do with movement depicted in objects; it refers *only* to the movement in the mind of the audience, or what she repeatedly calls the immediate ‘actualization’ of an image in the mind or, to use Aristotle’s own metaphorical expression, ‘before the eyes’ of the audience. In fact, however, Newman’s reading is even more problematic than Moran’s, because she does not apply Aristotle’s distinction between ἐνέργεια and κίνησις in a consistent way. In order to unravel the confusion on which Newman’s reading is evidently based, it is necessary to go back to Cope’s commentary. In an explanatory note to the passage in which Aristotle first mentions ἐνέργεια (1410b 6), Cope erroneously claims that the sense of ἐνέργεια that Aristotle has in mind here ‘is borrowed from the metaphysical use of the term, to express “realization”, as opposed to δύναμις, the mere capacity or potentiality of life and action.’ (Cope, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle, With a Commentary*, p. 111.) Cope thus mistakes Aristotle’s use of ἐνέργεια in its more common sense, according to which it refers to motion, for its more theoretical and metaphysical sense, according to which it refers to complete motions that are in possession of their end. But he then doubles down on this mistake by claiming that the ‘metaphysical’ sense of ἐνέργεια means the same as ‘realization,’ by which he actually intends the same thing as what Aristotle means by motion or κίνησις. In other words, Cope is wrong firstly because he thinks Aristotle has the metaphysical meaning of ἐνέργεια in mind, rather than the common one according to which it refers ‘especially’ to motions; and he is wrong secondly because he reverses these two meanings, by suggesting that the metaphysical sense of ἐνέργεια is that of a ‘realization,’ which is in fact not sufficient to distinguish what Aristotle means by the theoretical sense of the word from its more common understanding, in which it refers ‘especially to motions.’ Essentially, Newman makes the same twofold error in her reading of this passage. Firstly, she rejects Moran’s identification of ἐνέργεια and κίνησις on the basis of the fact that Aristotle rigorously distinguishes these two concepts in other texts. This in itself indicates that she assumes Aristotle uses the term here in its metaphysical sense, rather than the more common one according to which it refers to motion. Yet in her explanation of exactly how this understanding of ἐνέργεια operates in Aristotle’s discussion of metaphor, she consistently discusses the term, in what she assumes to be its metaphysical sense, as if it meant ‘actualization,’ which is precisely the same as what Cope means by ‘realization.’ The problem for Newman is thus that she is misled by Aristotle’s metaphorical expression ‘before the eyes’ into thinking that he understands ἐνέργεια in the *Rhetoric* in the same way that he understands sight in both the *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, as an activity whose end is internal to it, which is therefore complete at any moment. But, on my reading, the case is rather the opposite.

<sup>332</sup> See Aristotle, *De Anima* 417b 2-9: ‘[s]o it is not sound to describe that which thinks as being altered when it thinks, any more than it is true to say that the builder is altered when he builds (διὸ οὐ καλῶς ἔχει λέγειν τὸ φρονεῖν, ὅταν φρονῇ, ἀλλοιοῦσθαι, ὡς περ οὐδὲ τὸν οἰκοδόμον ὅταν οἰκοδομῇ).’

quite strange as alterations or transitions, because they bring the soul into itself, rather than taking it out of its own nature and displacing it, as alteration typically does to the things that undergo it. Aristotle therefore goes on to note that, ‘since there is no name corresponding to this difference in meaning, [...] we must continue to use the phrases “to be acted upon” and “altered” as though they were precise terms.’<sup>333</sup> This shows that it is strictly speaking wrong to talk about the activities of the soul in the language of motion or alteration. But it is also strictly speaking wrong to characterize ἐνέργεια as movement, yet Aristotle clearly does this in *Rhetoric* III. There is simply no direct way of determining whether Aristotle intended his discussion of ἐνέργεια as κίνησις in the *Rhetoric* to be extended to describe the way the mind functions in its comprehension of metaphorical expressions; yet the fact that there is nothing preventing this reading does not offer very strong support for it either.

There is, I believe, an indirect way of showing that the ‘actualization’ of a mental image cannot be what Aristotle means by ἐνέργεια in relation to metaphor. In *Rhetoric* III.11, Aristotle introduces two metaphors by way of contrast, saying that one (Isocrates’ expression ‘of one having the prime of his life in full bloom’) is an instance of ἐνέργεια, whereas the other (Simonides’ statement that ‘a good man is “four-square”’) is not.<sup>334</sup> The difference between them is clear: the notion of blooming clearly involves motion, whereas the comparison of a man to a square does not. Yet what is crucial to grasp is

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<sup>333</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 418a 1-3: ‘ἐπεὶ δ’ ἀνώουμος αὐτῶν ἡ διαφορὰ [...] χρῆσθαι ἀναγκαῖον τῶ πάσχειν καὶ ἀλλοιοῦσθαι ὡς κυρίοις ὀνόμασιν.’ As Polansky explains, ‘[a]s flawed as the terms “to be acted upon” and “to be altered” may be, and Aristotle has repeatedly questioned them in the chapter, he says we have to use them as [or “as if”, cf. note 33] legitimate or the standard names. Any transition from potentiality to actuality seems a case of being acted upon since something has to serve as “mover,” “agent,” or cause leading to actuality. Having been told why such transitions of special interest in the *De Anima* are not ordinary alterations, we may nonetheless continue to call them cases of being acted upon and alterations.’ (*Aristotle’s De Anima*, p. 245-6)

<sup>334</sup> See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1412a 2.

that, although it does not involve movement, the latter metaphor does involve the image of a geometrical shape. Clearly, this image can be actualized in the mind no less than can an image that involves movement; Aristotle's point in contrasting these two metaphors is rather to show that certain images are *more vivid* than others. If ἐνέργεια simply referred to the basic fact that a mental image is formed in response to metaphorical expressions, there would be no justification for his assertion in *Rhetoric* III.11 that Simonides' statement does not involve ἐνέργεια, whereas Isocrates' expression does. Aristotle's point in differentiating these two metaphors is precisely that one is more vivid than the other because it portrays movement, which is more familiar to people through sense experience than is a square, contrary to what Newman (and, to a lesser extent, Moran) suggest.

We must now examine the views of those interpreters who argue, in different ways, that the notion of ἐνέργεια concerns the exact character of the representations accomplished by means of metaphorical expressions. In what follows, I will demonstrate that this fundamental assumption is correct. At the same time, I will also argue that most have not succeeded in isolating the precise feature, to which ἐνέργεια refers in each of the examples offered by Aristotle to illustrate it. Many simply assert that what Aristotle means by signifying ἐνέργεια is explained *for the most part* by what I will call 'animating representation,' which involves the depiction of inanimate things (ἄψυχα) as though they are animate (ἔμψυχα). Aristotle finds this animating representation exemplified above all in Homeric poetry in Chapter 11, and while most commentators whose views we will analyze below seem to recognize that the animating representation does not fully explain what it means to signify ἐνέργεια in each and every case, they go

no further than to say that, in most cases, this is what ἐνέργεια means. Yet because these commentators have merely indicated what ἐνέργεια means in most cases, rather than in every instance, we still lack an exhaustive explanation of the meaning of this concept.

Moreover, the matter is complicated even more by two other, interrelated factors. Firstly, some of the same commentators who assume that ἐνέργεια is explained for the most part by animating representations, also assume that animating representations are explained for the most part by what we call personification in English. Secondly, the same commentators who loosely identify ἐνέργεια, animating representation and personification also assume that personification is the same as the trope that is referred to in ancient Greek as προσωποποιία, and in Latin as *prosopopœia*, *conformatio*, *fictio personae* and other technical terms. As I shall presently show, ἐνέργεια, animating representation, personification and προσωποποιία are distinct, but related concepts. In order to understand how they are related, it is first necessary to see how they are distinct from one another. To give an indication of the basic gist of my argument in this section, I hold that ἐνέργεια refers simply to motion, and ‘signifying ἐνέργεια’ therefore means portraying things in a state of motion by comparing them metaphorically to things that move, or to things that move in a specific way. Consequently, animating representations, which portray inanimate things as having animate qualities or behavior, are one notable way in which it is possible to signify ἐνέργεια metaphorically, but this cannot be taken as an exhaustive explanation of what it means to represent things in a state of ἐνέργεια in general. In turn, personification, which is not the same in all cases as the Greek προσωποποιία, is a specific instance of animating representation.

If these contentions are accurate, then those commentators who hold that signifying ἐνέργεια is explained by animating representation confuse the concept itself with one of its most prevalent instances. Among the ancients, one such commentator who interprets Aristotle in this way is Demetrius, who may or may not be the third century BCE author of the work *On Style*. Demetrius remarks that ‘to Aristotle the best metaphor appeared to be that which is called metaphor by ἐνέργεια, which results whenever the inanimate is introduced as if it were animate’.<sup>335</sup> It is important to see how a number of modern commentators both agree and disagree with his view. As mentioned, most do not go as far as Demetrius, in suggesting that signifying ἐνέργεια is simply the same as representing the inanimate as though it were animate. They rather claim that this explains ἐνέργεια in most cases, yet do not specify any further what it could mean to signify ἐνέργεια in some other way.

This view is the most common among modern interpreters. Differing slightly from Demetrius, both Whatley (1828) and Cope (1877) hold that signifying ἐνέργεια is explained in most cases by animating representation, and that this latter is explained in most cases by personification, which for Whatley is the same as the ancient trope of *prosopopœia*.<sup>336</sup> Stanford (1936) likewise argues that Aristotle’s discussion of ἐνέργεια

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<sup>335</sup> Demetrius, *On Style*, trans. D.C. Innes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), §81 (my translation): ‘Ἀρίστη δὲ δοκεῖ μεταφορὰ τῶν Ἀριστοτέλει ἢ κατὰ ἐνέργειαν καλουμένη, ὅταν τὰ ἄψυχα ἐνεργοῦνται εἰσάγηται καθάπερ ἔμψυχα’. Subsequent references to the text of *On Style* will be given by author’s name and paragraph number, indicated by the § symbol. In this and other relevant passages, my reasons for preferring my own translation to that of Innes will be explained as my argument proceeds.

<sup>336</sup> Consider in this regard the following remark from Whatley’s 1828 treatise, *Elements of Rhetoric*: ‘Of metaphors, those generally conduce most to that energy or vivacity of style we are speaking of, which illustrate an *intellectual* by a *sensible* object [...]. But the highest degree of energy (and to which Aristotle chiefly restricts the term) is produced by such metaphors as attribute *life* and *action* to things inanimate [...]. The figure called by rhetoricians *prosopœia* (literally, personification,) is, in fact, no other than a metaphor of this kind.’ *Elements of Rhetoric. Reprinted from the 7th (octavo) Edition* (London: Parker, Son & Bourne, 1863), p. 184. Similarly, E.M. Cope writes in his commentary to the *Rhetoric* that what

places ‘paramount emphasis on the personifying or animating function of metaphor’,<sup>337</sup> and Kennedy (1991) observes not much differently that ἐνέργεια ‘is sometimes, but not always, “personification” [...]’.<sup>338</sup> As we shall see when we examine Aristotle’s examples in detail, it is true that a majority of the expressions by which he illustrates what it means to signify ἐνέργεια are indeed what I have called animating representations. Yet among the examples that qualify as animating representations, only a few correspond to what we mean by personification in English. For this reason, to the extent that there is a need to avoid the overhasty identification of signifying ἐνέργεια and animating representation, there is an even greater need to avoid the identification of the former with personification. I will accordingly begin this part of my discussion by characterizing προσωποποιΐα, personification and other related concepts, and thereafter give a detailed explanation of animating representations.

If it is inaccurate to gloss signifying ἐνέργεια in terms of ‘animating representation,’ it is even less accurate to gloss it in terms of personification. Certainly, the aforementioned commentators are cautious enough to qualify their statements by claiming that personification is *mostly* the same as animating representation, and that the latter is *mostly* the same as signifying ἐνέργεια. But at least one other is misled by the similarities between these concepts into assuming that they are identical. Consider in this regard Innes’ translation of *On Style* §81, which renders Demetrius’ phrase ἡ κατὰ

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Aristotle means by ἐνέργεια ‘is principally shown in *animation*, literally and metaphorically, in a vivid, vivacious, style, and in animating, vivifying, inanimate objects; investing them with life, motion, and personality’. *The Rhetoric of Aristotle, With a Commentary* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1877), p. 110, note.

<sup>337</sup> W. Stanford, *Greek Metaphor: Studies in Theory and Practice* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), pp. 12-3.

<sup>338</sup> G. Kennedy, *Aristotle on Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 222, note 117.

ἐνέργειαν καλουμένη simply as ‘the personifying metaphor’,<sup>339</sup> and therefore presupposes that signifying ἐνέργεια simply is the same as personification. In fact, this translation assumes two things at once: firstly, that what Aristotle means by signifying ἐνέργεια is the same as what Demetrius means by προσοποποιία; and secondly, that what Demetrius means by προσοποποιία is the same as what we mean in English by personification. Strictly speaking, neither of these assumptions is accurate.

To see why the second of these assumptions is inaccurate, let’s begin with the standard definition of personification, which according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* is ‘[t]he attribution of human form, nature, or characteristics to something; the representation of a thing or abstraction as a person (esp. in a rhetorical figure or a metaphor); (*art*) the symbolic representation of a thing or abstraction by a human figure.’<sup>340</sup> This is indeed similar to Demetrius’ account of προσοποποιία in *On Style*, but a comparison of the two concepts is hindered by an ambiguity in the formulation of the latter. Much like Aristotle’s accounts of ἐνέργεια in both *Rhetoric* III and *Metaphysics* IX, Demetrius defines προσοποποιία by reference to specific examples only. Yet these examples can be read in two ways, one of which gives προσοποποιία a broader extension than the other. It is only on the narrow reading of προσοποποιία that it can be seen as identical to personification.

Beginning at §263, Demetrius introduces προσοποποιία as one item on a list of figures (σχημάτια) that lend ‘force,’ δεινότης, to rhetorical and poetic style. Instead of defining it he immediately illustrates it with three examples: “Imagine that your ancestors are rebuking you and speak such words, or imagine Greece, or your country in

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<sup>339</sup> Innes, *On Style*, p. 499.

<sup>340</sup> Cf. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/141506?redirectedFrom=personification#eid>.

the form of a woman.<sup>341</sup> As a further example of προσωποποιία, the author then mentions the funeral oration in Plato's *Menexenus*, in which Socrates assumes the persona of Menexenus' dead ancestors in order to address words of advice and admonishment, from beyond the grave, to the living descendants who have survived them.<sup>342</sup>

So far, according to the earliest extant account of προσωποποιία, it therefore means the attribution of either human form, and/or conscious thought and speech to something that does not actually possess these attributes in its own right (such as Greece, or one's dead ancestors). This is essentially the same definition of personification that we saw above. Nevertheless, in the very next line of *On Style*, the author makes an explanatory remark that raises a crucial question about whether προσωποποιία is indeed limited to the attribution of human form and direct speech to things that are in fact not human, and cannot speak. He states that the passage of the *Menexenus* just mentioned qualifies as προσωποποιία because Socrates 'does not speak in his own person but in that of their fathers.'<sup>343</sup> The question raised, and left unanswered by this remark is accordingly whether προσωποποιία refers to *any* attribution of direct speech to a character other than that of the speaker him/herself, regardless of whether this character is originally a human being or not; or whether it refers only to the attribution of speech and human form to things that, in themselves, are non-human. In other words, does προσωποποιία extend to every instance in which an orator or poet speaks in the voice

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<sup>341</sup> Demetrius, *On Style* §263-5: 'παραλαμβάνοιτο δ' ἄν σχῆμα διανοίας πρὸς δεινότητα <ή> προσωποποιία καλουμένη, οἷον "δόξατε ὑμῖν τοὺς προγόνους ὀνειδίζειν καὶ λέγειν τὰδε τινὰ ἢ τὴν Ἑλλάδα ἢ τὴν πατρίδα λαβοῦσαν γυναικὸς σχῆμα.'

<sup>342</sup> Cf. Plato, *Menexenus*, trans. W.R.M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 246d – 247c.

<sup>343</sup> Demetrius, *On Style* §266: 'οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ ἰδίου προσώπου λέγει ἀλλὰ ἐκ τοῦ τῶν πατέρων.'

of someone other than himself, i.e. by impersonation (including the impersonation of both human and non-human things); or does it refer in a more restricted sense only to instances where the orator or poet directly attributes speech and human form to things that in actual fact neither speak nor have human form?

If we take the former, more inclusive reading, then προσωποποιία will sometimes involve what we call *personification* in English, and at other times what we call *impersonation*; if we take the latter, more restricted view, it will only refer to what we call *personification* in English.<sup>344</sup> This is an important distinction because, in its translation into the Latin trope sometimes referred to by the transliterated *prosopopœia*, sometimes by *conformatio*,<sup>345</sup> and sometimes by *fictio personae*,<sup>346</sup> Latin writers

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<sup>344</sup> The author of *On Style* does not settle this dilemma. He only states that προσωποποιία ‘makes the passage much more lively and forceful (πολύ γὰρ ἐνεργέστερα καὶ δεινότερα φαίνεται ὑπὸ τῶν προσώπων), or rather it really turns it into a drama (μᾶλλον δὲ δράματα ἀτεχνῶς γίγνεται).’ (§265) The fact that Demetrius associates προσωποποιία and ἐνέργεια through the use of the word ἐνεργέστερα seems partly to explain why Innes is misled into identifying Aristotle’s notion of signifying ἐνέργεια and Demetrius’ understanding of προσωποποιία. But the fact that the two are related, in the sense that the latter can contribute to the former, does not mean they are the same thing.

<sup>345</sup> The author of *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, for example, refers to the trope by the name of *conformatio* (personification), which he claims ‘consists in representing an absent person as present (cum aliqua quae non adest persona confingitur quasi adsit), or in making a mute thing or one lacking form articulate (aut cum res muta aut informis fit eloquens), and attributing to it a certain definite form and a language or a certain behavior appropriate to its character (et forma ei et ratio attribuitur ad dignitatem adcommodata aut actio quaedam) [...]’.<sup>345</sup> Pseudo-Cicero, *Rhetoric Ad Herennium*, trans. H. Caplan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), IV.l.ii.66. Here, *conformatio* can refer to the direct attribution of speech to any character other than the orator himself, provided that the character is ‘not present,’ *non adest*. But it can also refer to the attribution of speech and ‘a certain form’ to ‘a mute thing,’ *res muta*. Much as in Demetrius’ account of προσωποποιία, *conformatio* can thus either be personification (the attribution of human form and/or speech and thought to a thing that is neither human, nor speaks nor thinks in actual fact); or it can be impersonation (the direct attribution of speech to a living human being who is not present).

<sup>346</sup> Cicero makes well-known use of προσωποποιία in his own oratorical speeches. Two of the more famous examples this trope are *In Catilinam* I.18 and I.27, where he personifies *patria* by having her address words directly both to Catilina (I.18) and to himself (I.27); and *Pro Caelio* xiv.33, where he summons Appius Claudius Ceacus from the dead in order to have him rebuke his descendant Clodia. Cf. Cicero, *In Catilinam I-4*, trans. C. Macdonald (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 1.18/1.27; idem, *Pro Caelio*, trans. R. Gardner (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), xiv.33-34. Nevertheless, he does not define it or discuss the trope at length in any extant work. In Book III, Chapter 53 of *De Oratore*, he briefly mentions ‘the impersonation of people (personarum ficta inductio), which he lists as ‘an extremely brilliant method of amplification (vel gravissimum lumen augendi),’ but he is not specific. Cf. *De Oratore* (trans. H. Rackham), III.l.iii.205.

evidently understand προσωποποιΐα according to the more inclusive reading, on which it involves both *impersonation* (i.e. of other humans, living or dead) and *personification* (i.e. the attribution of anthropomorphic qualities, and in particular speech and thought, to non-human things).<sup>347</sup> On this more inclusive understanding of προσωποποιΐα and its correlates, there is only a partial overlap between it and personification.

Now that we understand both what personification and προσωποποιΐα are and how they relate to one another, we must grasp the exact nature of what I have called animating representations. As mentioned, in *Rhetoric* III.11 Aristotle finds these kinds of representations exemplified in Homer's use of metaphor in particular. Before listing a series of Homeric examples, Aristotle affirms that 'Homer often, by making use of metaphor, speaks of inanimate things as if they were animate; and it is to creating ἐνέργεια in all such cases that his popularity is due'<sup>348</sup>. In opposition to the aforementioned commentators, who take this remark to be an adequate explanation of what it means to signify ἐνέργεια in general, I understand it to refer specifically to the way in which Homeric poetry most often signifies ἐνέργεια, and not to all cases of signifying ἐνέργεια as such. Rather, insofar as signifying ἐνέργεια simply means

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<sup>347</sup> Quintilian gives a detailed analysis in Book IX, Chapter 2 of the *Institutio Oratoria* of what he calls '[i]mpersonations (fictiones personarum), or *prosōpopoiiat* as they are called in Greek (quae προσωποποιΐα dicuntur).' He explains the use of this trope as follows: '[w]e use them (1) to display the inner thoughts of our opponents as though they were talking to themselves (adversariorum cogitationes velut secum loquentium protrahimus) [...], (2) to introduce conversations between ourselves and others, or of others among themselves (et nostros cum aliis sermones et aliorum inter se credibiliter introducimus) [...], and (3) to provide appropriate characters for words of advice, reproach, complaint, praise, or pity (et suadendo, obiurgando, quaerendo, laudando, miserando personas idoneas damus). We are even allowed in this form of speech to bring down the gods from heaven (deducere deos) or raise the dead (inferos excitare concessum est); cities and nations even require a voice ([u]rbes etiam populique vocem accipiunt).' Cf. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* (trans. D.A. Russell) ix.2.29, 30-1. Quintilian's account of prosopopoeia, much like those found in both *On Style* and *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, thus gives the trope a broad extension according to which it can be both personification and impersonation.

<sup>348</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1411b 2: 'κέχρηται Ὅμηρος πολλαχοῦ τῶ τὰ ἄψυχα ἔμψυχα λέγειν διὰ τῆς μεταφορᾶς. ἐν πᾶσι δὲ τῶ ἐνέργειαν ποιεῖν εὐδοκιμεῖ'.

metaphorically representing things in a state of movement, Homer's animating representations are one specific way in which this can be done, but not the only way. In fact, as we shall see, the final Homeric example considered by Aristotle is of a simile in which Homer signifies ἐνέργεια in the opposite way, by representing an animate thing as though it were inanimate.

To see precisely what is at stake in the notion of animating representations, and to grasp why they do not explain what it means to signify ἐνέργεια in every case, we must examine the distinction between the animate (ἔμψυχον) and the inanimate (ἄψυχον) in more detail. To this end, we must turn to Book II of the *De Anima*, for Aristotle does not explain this distinction anywhere in the *Rhetoric*.

According to Aristotle's argument in *De Anima* II, it is more or less uncontroversial to say that the general class of 'animate' or 'ensouled' things, τὰ ἔμψυχα, is comprised of the three kinds of living things that possess the power to nourish themselves: plants, animals, and humans.<sup>349</sup> On the other hand, the class of inanimate things, τὰ ἄψυχα, will be comprised of both non-living things (natural elements, products of art, abstract concepts and qualities), and whatever living things there are whose life is not rooted in the potential of natural bodies (gods and/or heavenly spheres, the unmoved mover, etc). To apply the results of this discussion to Aristotle's comments about ἐνέργεια in *Rhetoric* III.11, let's recall that he there explains Homer's

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<sup>349</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *De Anima* 412a 28-9. That this is so is suggested by the word ἔμψυχον itself. The important thing to grasp is that ἔμψυχον or 'the ensouled/animate' means 'that which has a soul.' But what is it that has a soul? The answer to this question must be gleaned from Aristotle's general definition of the soul at 412a 28, which states that the soul, ἡ ψυχὴ, is 'the first actuality of a natural body potentially possessing life (ἐντελέχεια ἢ πρώτη σώματος φυσικοῦ δυνάμει ζωὴν ἔχοντος)'. The soul is the principle of life in natural bodies, but it is the living natural body itself that has a soul. The word ἔμψυχον therefore refers to the kind of natural body that has life through the causal agency of the soul's powers, and ἄψυχον refers either to a natural body that does not live, or else to a living being that is not a natural body. This means that only plants, animals, and humans can be described as ἔμψυχα.

ability to signify activity by means of metaphors and similes as an ability to depict inanimate things, τὰ ἄψυχα, as though they were animate, ἔμψυχα. Based on the foregoing examination of the *De Anima*, we can now say that animating representation necessarily means representing a thing that is neither a human, nor an animal, nor a plant, as though it had the characteristics of a human, or an animal or a plant. As we shall see presently, although this explains the majority of the examples offered by Aristotle to illustrate what he means by signifying ἐνέργεια, it cannot explain each and every example. The only concept capable of accounting for what every example shares in common is, as mentioned above, that of movement.

#### **4.5 Aristotle's Examples of πρὸ ὁμμάτων and ἐνέργεια in *Rhetoric* III.10-11**

Now that we have a detailed understanding of what is involved in personification, προσωποποιία, and animating representation, we can turn to the examples themselves, by which Aristotle illustrates what it means to signify ἐνέργεια in *Rhetoric* III.10-11. It was necessary to proceed in this manner, because the three aforementioned concepts are considered by the aforementioned commentators to hold the key(s) to what Aristotle means by ἐνέργεια in this passage. It will presently be shown that, as I have argued throughout this chapter, the basic meaning of signifying ἐνέργεια is the metaphorical, i.e., *fictive* representation of things in a state of movement. Animating representations, which involve a metaphorical or comparative transfer of qualities and/or behavior from an animate (ἔμψυχον) thing to an inanimate (ἄψυχον) subject, are indeed the most prevalent way in which ἐνέργεια, understood as motion, can be signified. Yet, as we shall see, the metaphorical representation of things in a state of motion is not limited to ἔμψυχον-ἄψυχον (animate-inanimate) transferences. In terms of Aristotle's examples,

this kind of transference is indeed the most common among those that Aristotle offers as instances of signifying ἐνέργεια, but close attention to the examples themselves demonstrates that the same effect can be accomplished by three other kinds of transferences: (1) ἔμψυχον-ἔμψυχον (animate-animate) transferences; (2) ἄψυχον-ἄψυχον (inanimate-inanimate) transferences; and (3) ἄψυχον-ἔμψυχον (inanimate-animate) transferences.

To my knowledge, I am alone in contending that these four categories are pertinent to Aristotle's discussion of metaphor in this passage. The categories themselves (animate-inanimate, animate-animate, inanimate-inanimate, inanimate-animate) are nevertheless found explicitly outlined in a number of Hellenistic and Roman discussions of metaphor, most notably in those of Tryphon and Quintilian.<sup>350</sup> Neither of these authors mentions Aristotle as the source of the categories, but it will presently be shown that all of Aristotle's examples implicitly admit division along the same lines. Since the commentators mentioned above have focused exclusively on the animate-inanimate kind of transference, which I have called animating representation, we will examine this category last, after we have seen the outlying groups in advance. I will begin with the category of inanimate-animate transferences, because this category is the logical contrary of the animate-inanimate category. Therefore, by demonstrating that at least one of Aristotle's examples is of this kind, I will be able to prove that animating representations simply cannot be taken as a valid explanation of what is common to all the examples in question. I will label each group with a capital letter, and where a group contains more than one example I will give each example a number, so that e.g. A.1 will refer back to

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<sup>350</sup> Cf. Tryphon, ΠΕΡΙ ΤΡΟΠΩΝ 728.24-730.20, in (ed.) L. Spengel, *Rhetores Graeci Vol. III*, p. 192; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* VIII.6.9-10.

the first example of the first group. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by Freese, in the Loeb edition.

*(A) First Category of Metaphor: Animate-Inanimate Transference*

Out of all the examples offered by Aristotle to illustrate what it means to signify ἐνέργεια, only one involves the transference of motion from an inanimate subject to an animate one. The sole member of this group is in fact the last example that Aristotle mentions in Chapter 11; it thus concludes both his discussion of ἐνέργεια in general, and his discussion of Homeric poetry in particular. The example itself is problematic for a number of reasons, the first of which is that Aristotle's text only contains a partial reference to the Homeric passage in question. According to Aristotle, the example is meant to illustrate Homer's use of similes, and it is for this reason different from the preceding five examples, which illustrate his use of metaphors. Yet the quoted line does not display a simile: it contains the words '[a]rched, foam-crested, some in front, some in behind'<sup>351</sup> and nothing more. We must therefore reconstruct the entire Homeric passage to see what the simile is, and to understand what is at work in it.

Yet before even doing this, it is first necessary to reconstruct the text in which Aristotle introduces this simile at 1412a 3-4, because Freese's translation of this passage obscures its meaning, and partially prevents us from seeing what differentiates this Homeric simile from the five preceding Homeric metaphors, which are all examples of animating representations. In fact, Freese's translation of this text creates the impression that Aristotle understands the final example, which as I have said is of a Homeric simile, to be another instance of an animating representation. Yet the Greek text clearly does not

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<sup>351</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1412a 4: 'κυρτά· φαληριόωντα· πρὸ μὲν τ' ἄλλ', αὐτὰρ ἐπ' ἄλλα'.

associate the final example with an animating representation; it rather implies that in some of Homer's well-known similes, i.e., in contradistinction to his animating metaphors, he actually signifies ἐνέργεια in the opposite way, that is, with respect to the inanimate. To see how this is so, we must pick up the discussion at the point where Aristotle has just cited his fifth example of a Homeric metaphor. At this point, the Greek text states (in my translation) that 'in all these cases things appear to be in a state of ἐνέργεια due to the fact they are represented as animate.'<sup>352</sup> Two lines below, the Greek text then states (again in my translation) that, '[o]n the other hand, in his popular similes [i.e., Homer] also does these things [i.e., signifies activity] with respect to the inanimate.'<sup>353</sup>

On my translation, the δὲ καὶ is therefore meant to introduce a shift in sense from the foregoing discussion of Homeric metaphors. Yet Freese's translation gives the opposite impression: '[i]n his similes also he proceeds in the same way with inanimate things'.<sup>354</sup> Through the addition of the words 'in the same way,' which are not accounted for in the Greek text, Freese's version therefore suggests a sense of continuity between the previous examples and the one Aristotle is about to offer. It suggests furthermore that Aristotle's point here is that, just as Homer depicts the inanimate as if it were animate through his use of metaphors, so also does he do this through his use of simile, *in the same way*. In the first place, it must be recognized that this is more a paraphrase than a

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<sup>352</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1412a 3: 'ἐν πᾶσι γὰρ τούτοις διὰ τὸ ἔμψυχα εἶναι ἐνεργούντα φαίνεται.'

<sup>353</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1412a 4: 'ποιεῖ δὲ καὶ ἐν ταῖς εὐδοκίμουσας εἰκόνες ἐπὶ τῶν ἀψύχων ταῦτα.'

<sup>354</sup> Freese, Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, p. 407 (emphasis added).

translation, as Freese's translation of ἐπὶ τῶν ἀψύχων as 'with inanimate things' goes beyond the accepted grammatical senses of the Greek preposition ἐπὶ.<sup>355</sup>

In the second place, in addition to the rules of Greek grammar, the principle of charity requires that we translate the passage in the way I suggest, since otherwise Aristotle himself will be mistaken about the nature of the example under discussion. If Freese's translation is to stand, then Aristotle himself must be seen to think that the Homeric simile he is about to cite (in a truncated form) is an instance of an animating representation, when in fact it is just the opposite: an inanimate-animate transference. To see how and why this is so, let's turn to the passage of Homer from which the example is taken (*Iliad* xiii.795-801). The scene from which the line quoted by Aristotle is derived is a familiar one in Homer: two Trojan heroes, Hector and Alexander, lead their men into battle against the Greek horde. Homer thus writes that

[...] they came on like the blast of dire winds that rushes on the earth beneath the thunder of father Zeus, and with wondrous din mixes with the sea, and in its track are many surging waves of the loud-resounding sea, high-arched and white-with foam, some ahead and behind them others (κυρτά· φαληριόωντα· πρὸ μὲν τ' ἄλλ', αὐτὰρ ἐπ' ἄλλα); so the Trojans in close array, some ahead and some behind the others, flashing with bronze, followed their leaders (ὡς Τρῶες πρὸ μὲν ἄλλοι ἀρηρότες, αὐτὰρ ἐπ' ἄλλοι, χαλκῶ μαρμαίροντες ἅμ' ἠγεμόνεσσιν ἔποντο).<sup>356</sup>

A look at the full passage from which Aristotle cites one line in Book III, Chapter 11 of the *Rhetoric* thus reveals that it contains a comparison between Trojan soldiers, heading

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<sup>355</sup> Grammatically, ἐπὶ τῶν ἀψύχων cannot mean 'with inanimate things'; in fact, the sense of 'with' that Freese's translation gives to the preposition ἐπὶ is rather far from its accepted lexical meanings. According to Liddell & Scott, there is a fairly exceptional sense in which ἐπὶ can be translated into English as 'with,' as in the adverbial phrase ἐπ' ἀρωγῆ, 'with favor'. Nevertheless this cannot be the sense that Aristotle has in mind here, because ἐπὶ only has this sense with the dative case, and he here uses it with the genitive plural, τῶν ἀψύχων. A more plausible reading would accordingly be, as I have done, to take ἐπὶ τῶν ἀψύχων to mean 'in respect of,' or 'with respect to the inanimate' (L&S list two other instances where Aristotle uses ἐπὶ in this way); and secondly to read δε as introducing a disjunction with the preceding discussion leading up to the previous line.

<sup>356</sup> Homer, *Iliad* xii.795-801 (trans. Murray).

into battle behind their leaders, and waves in the sea that have been whipped up by strong winds. As mentioned above, this example stands out among all of Aristotle's examples because it effectively compares an animate thing to an inanimate thing. It is not hard to see why this is the case: on the one hand, the Trojans, Τρῶες, are most certainly animate beings; on the other, both wind (ἄνεμος) and the waves (κύματα) of the sea are inanimate. The passage therefore portrays the animate as though it moved with the movements of inanimate things, and yet Aristotle states that this, too, is an example of ἐνέργεια. If my reading of the text is accurate, this in itself proves that what Aristotle means by signifying activity cannot be explained by animating representations. Still, to substantiate this claim further, we will now proceed to examine the second category of transference, which is the inanimate-inanimate transference.

*(B) Second Category of Metaphor: Inanimate-Inanimate Transference*

Much like the previous category, this one has only a single example in it. The example that belongs in this category is introduced by Aristotle in Chapter 10, as an illustration of what he means by πρὸ ὁμμάτων. Aristotle himself attributes the expression to the orator Iphicrates, whom he quotes as follows: 'as Iphicrates said, "The path of my words leads through the center of the deeds of Chares"; here the metaphor is proportional and the words "through the centre" create vividness.'<sup>357</sup> The proportional analogy, which Aristotle notes above, needs to be made explicit here. The basic comparison is between a speech and a road, neither of which are animate things. In the same way that a speech has a subject, topic or intention, so a road has a general direction

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<sup>357</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1411b 7: 'καὶ ὡς Ἰφικράτης εἶπεν "ἡ γὰρ ὁδὸς μοι τῶν λόγων διὰ μέσων τῶν Χάρητι πεπραγμένων ἐστίν." μεταφορὰ κατ' ἀναλογίαν, καὶ τὸ διὰ μέσου πρὸ ὁμμάτων ποιεῖ.' Freese's translation of the *Rhetoric* alternates between 'setting' or 'placing' things 'before the eyes,' and being 'vivid,' as approximations of Aristotle's formula πρὸ ὁμμάτων.

for the one who travels on it. The orator Iphicrates thus introduces his audience to the topic of his speech by saying that his words are a road, which leads through the center of the deeds of Chares – meaning, in other words, that his speech is directed towards Chares’ deeds as their target or object.

Portraying a rhetorical speech as a road that ‘leads’ straight through the center of its topic therefore signifies ἐνέργεια, understood as the representation of things in a state of motion, by attributing a certain kind of movement to something that does not naturally move in that way (i.e., words), regardless of whether that thing is animate or not. It matters very little that a road cannot actually be said ‘to move’ according to any of the senses in which Aristotle’s definition of motion allows us to understand the phenomenon. What matters is only the image or appearance of motion, which a person automatically forms in his or her mind on hearing a speech described as a road or a path that passes through the center of its intended subject matter, as through the center of a court-yard. Even though a road itself does not actually move, the metaphor creates the appearance for the audience that they are themselves travelling along a road in listening to a speech about the deeds of Chares.<sup>358</sup> This metaphor, which presupposes an analogical comparison between words and a road, is clearly not an animating metaphor, as it

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<sup>358</sup> In fact, Aristotle makes explicit in the *De Anima* that the perception of motion, κίνησις, is involved in the perception of all common sensibles. These common sensibles, which are characterized as such because they can be perceived by more than one sense (as opposed to proper sensibles, such as color and sound, which can only be perceived by one sense), include ‘motion (οἶον κινήσεως), rest (στάσεως), shape (σχήματος), magnitude (μεγέθους), number (ἀριθμοῦ) and unity (ένός)’ (425a 14-7). Although motion is in fact one of the common sensibles, Aristotle gives it a privileged place among the others when he notes that none of the common sensibles could be perceived apart from the perception of motion. As he affirms, ‘we perceive all these things by movement (ταῦτα γὰρ κινήσει αισθανόμεθα)’ (425a 17-8). Thus, to the extent that the above example concerns the image of a ‘road,’ ὁδός, it is the image of a magnitude whose perception, whether real or imaginary, necessarily involves the perception of motion. To the extent that signifying ἐνέργεια means on my reading representing things in a state of movement, Aristotle’s reference to Iphicrates counts as such because it involves an image whose presentation to the mind necessarily implies the imaginary perception of a kind of movement. It is in other words a *moving image*.

involves a transference between two inanimate subjects. Yet Aristotle clearly says it places things ‘before the eyes,’ and this means it signifies ἐνέργεια as well. Much like the previous example, this one therefore shows that signifying ἐνέργεια cannot be explained in every case by animating representation.

(C) *Third Category of Metaphor: Animate-Animate Transference*

The next two categories of metaphor are more populous than the previous two. Because there are more than one example to consider in this and the next group, I will proceed in what follows by listing all the relevant examples in succession, and then discussing their contexts and any problems they raise afterwards. There are four examples that we need to consider in this group. The first two are from Aristotle’s discussion in Chapter 10, and the last two from Chapter 11:

1. ‘Cephisodotus bade the Athenians take care not to hold their “concourses” too often’<sup>359</sup>;
2. ‘and in the same way [i.e., as the above example] Isocrates, who spoke of those “who rush together” in the assemblies’<sup>360</sup>;
3. ‘thee, like a sacred animal ranging at will’<sup>361</sup>;
4. ‘[t]hereupon the Greeks shooting forward with their feet’.<sup>362</sup>

Examples C1 and C2 are animate-animate transferences because they both compare Athenian public assemblies to the running together of a mob. C1, which is attributed by

<sup>359</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1411b 7: ‘καὶ ὡςπερ Κηφισόδοτος εὐλαβεῖσθαι ἐκέλευε μὴ πολλὰς ποιήσωσι τὰς συνδρομὰς’.

<sup>360</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1411b 7: ‘καὶ Ἰσοκράτης πρὸς τοὺς συντρέχοντας ἐν ταῖς πανηγύρεσιν’.

<sup>361</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1412a 2: ‘σὲ δ’ ὡςπερ ἄφετον’. As we saw in the previous chapter, this is a reference to Isocrates’ *Ad Philippum*.

<sup>362</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1412a 2: ‘τοῦντεῦθεν οὖν Ἕλληνες ἄξαντες ποσίν’. Again according to Freese (p. 405, note *h*), this fourth example is a slightly misquoted reference to Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis* 80. Aristotle evidently misquotes the passage as reading ποσίν, ‘with their feet,’ rather than δορί, ‘with their spears,’ as in the original text. Cf. Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, trans. D. Kovacs (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002) 80 (p. 174/5). Here, Euripides depicts the advance of the whole Greek army to the straits of Aulis by means of the word ἄξαντες, the nominative plural first aorist form of the Greek verb αἴσσω. Liddell and Scott give the primary sense of this verb as ‘[t]o move with a quick shooting motion, to shoot, dart, glance’. *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 7th Edition), p 23.

Aristotle to Cephistodotus, uses the word *συνδρομάς* in reference to these meetings; C2, attributed to Isocrates, uses the word *συντρέχοντας* in reference to the people themselves, who ‘rush together’ in the assembly. As Freese explains in a note to this passage, ‘[b]oth *συνδρομάς* and *συντρέχοντας* refer to the collecting of a mob in a state of excitement.’<sup>363</sup> In this example, there is thus no transference of animate qualities to an inanimate subject. There is rather a transference of a certain kind of movement from animate beings to other animate beings. More precisely, the transference is between one kind of human movement (the rushing together of a violent mob of people) and another kind of human movement (the meeting of a political assembly).

Similarly, C3 does not follow the animate/inanimate distinction either. As we have already seen in our examination of this expression in the previous chapter, Isocrates here compares King Philip II, addressed in the second person simply as *σὲ* (you), to a sacred animal, *ἄφετον*, moving freely throughout its sanctuary. Once again, it is a question of transferring qualities from one kind of animate being (non-human animal) to a subject that is already itself animate (a human being).

C4 is also of the kind that transfers qualities from one kind of animate being (a non-human animal) to another kind of animate being (a human or group of humans). In this particular example the Greek soldiers, *Ἕλληνας*, are described by Euripides as ‘shooting forward,’ *ἄξαντες*, in their advance towards Aulis. Although it is not as obvious as it is with respect to the previous example, this phrase also compares the movements of one kind of animate being (human) to those of another kind (non-human

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<sup>363</sup> Freese, p. 402, note *c*.

animal).<sup>364</sup> This last point requires some support, for it remains obscure as long as we simply understand ἄξαντες according to the lexical definition of ἄισσω, which evidently extends in a more or less neutral way to any quick or sudden movement.<sup>365</sup> On this lexical definition, there is no obvious reason to assume that such a movement should describe the behavior of non-human animals over and against those of humans, as both kinds of animate beings are capable of moving themselves with varying degrees of quickness and suddenness. Nevertheless, a brief survey of the ways in which some other Greek authors have used the word ἄισσω and its cognates suggests that it does apply more properly to (i.e. wild) non-human animals than to humans.

There are four passages that deserve attention: three from Homer, and one from Sophocles. The first, at *Iliad* vi.510, initially describes the gait and appearance of a horse, using the word ἄισσονται to describe the ‘glancing’ movement with which its mane bounces off of its shoulders as it trots; Homer then transfers this description to the Trojan hero Paris, characterizing his appearance as he ‘strode down from high Pergamus’.<sup>366</sup> The second, at *Iliad* xi.417, initially describes a hunting scene in which a pack of ‘hounds and lusty youths (κύνες θαλεροί τ’ ἀίζηοί)’ confronts ‘a wild boar (κάπριον)’. The word ἄισσονται is used here to describe the rushing movement with which the

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<sup>364</sup> Concerning these two examples, I disagree with Cope, who offers both as instances of ‘a metaphor which [...] vivifies and animates’ (Cope, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, p. 126, note). To the extent that both subjects of which these metaphorical words are predicated are already animate beings, it makes no sense to say that the metaphors animate or vivify something, if this means attributing animate qualities to the inanimate.

<sup>365</sup> Liddell and Scott give the primary sense of this verb as ‘[t]o move with a quick shooting motion, to shoot, dart, glance’. *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 7th Edition), p. 23.

<sup>366</sup> Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. A.T. Murray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), vi.506-512 (emphasis added): ‘[...] [e]ven as when a stalled horse that has fed his fill at the manger breaketh his halter and runneth stamping over the plain [...] and exulteth; on high doth he hold his head, and about his shoulders his mane floateth streaming (ἄμφι δὲ χαίται ὤμοις ἄισσονται), and as he glorieth in his splendor, his knees nimbly bear him to the haunts and pastures of mares; even so Paris, son of Priam, strode down from high Pergamus [...].’

hunting party descends on the boar; Homer thereafter transfers it to characterize the movements of the Trojan soldiers as they rush to attack Odysseus.<sup>367</sup> Thirdly, at *Iliad* xii.145 and 148 Homer twice uses cognates derived from the word αἴσσω to depict yet another hunting scene. This time, however, the words are used initially to describe the movements of a wild boar under attack, rather than those of the hunting party itself; the scene is then transferred to characterize the movements of two Greek soldiers under attack by a group of Trojans. Homer accordingly describes the two Greek soldiers as ‘[rushing] forth (αἴξαντε)’, in much the same way that a pair of wild boars ‘[charge] from either side (αἴσσοντε)’ to defend themselves.<sup>368</sup> In all the cases examined so far, αἴσσω and its cognates function in Homeric poetry by establishing an analogical parallel between the motions and actions of wild animals, on the one hand, and those of human beings on the other.

The last example I wish to consider is from line 1074 of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*. After the abrupt departure of Iocaste from the stage, the Chorus asks: ‘[w]hy has the lady *sped away*, Oedipus, in bitter pain?’<sup>369</sup> Here, apart from the explicit comparison to an animal, Iocaste is described as having ‘sped away,’ ἄξασα. The

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<sup>367</sup> Homer, *The Iliad* (trans. Murray), xi.414-420 (emphasis added): ‘[...] And even as hounds and lusty youths (κύνες θαλεροί τ’ αἰζηοὶ) press upon a wild boar (κάπριον) on this side and on that, and he cometh forth from the deep thicket, whetting his white tusks in his curving jaws, *and they charge upon him on either side* (ἀμφὶ δέ τ’ αἴσσονται), and thereat ariseth the sound of the gnashing of tusks [...]; even so then around Odysseus, dear to Zeus, did the Trojans press.’

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., xii.143-150 (emphasis added): ‘[...] but when they saw the Trojans rushing upon the wall, while the Danaans with loud cries turned in flight, *forth rushed the twain* (ἐκ δὲ τῶ αἴξαντε) *and fought in front of the gate like wild boars* that amid the mountains abide the tumultuous throng of men and dogs that cometh against them, *and charging from either side they crush the trees about them* (δοχμῶ τ’ αἴσσοντε) cutting them at the root, and therefrom ariseth a clatter of tusks, till one smite them and take their life away; even so clattered the bright bronze about the breasts of the twain, as they were smitten with faces toward the foe.’

<sup>369</sup> Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, trans. H. Lloyd-Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 1073-1074, p. 437; emphasis added): ‘τὶ ποτε βέβηκεν, Οἰδίπους, ὑπ’ ἀγρίας ἄξασα λύπης ἢ γυνή;’

qualifying expression ὑπ' ἀγρίας [...] λύπης moreover tells us two additional things about the particular movement with which she departs: 1) it is caused by a sensation of pain; and 2) the pain in which the movement originates is furthermore 'bitter,' or perhaps even 'wild,' 'savage,' or 'fierce,' all of which are given as common senses of ἄγριος by Liddell and Scott.<sup>370</sup> Another English translation of *Oedipus Tyrannus* thus gives the sentence as '[w]hat is it, Oedipus? *What savage grief has hurled your wife away?*'<sup>371</sup> Much as it does in Homer, the metaphorical use of the word ἄίσσω in this passage of Sophocles therefore serves to depict the movements of a human being at precisely the point where they resemble those of a wild, non-human animal, acting under the influence of intense passion.

The examples in this group demonstrate once again that, even when the thing to be described is already a kind of animal, such as a human, comparing its movements to a non-human animal can signify ἐνέργεια better or in a greater degree, which is to say it can create an even more vivid impression of movement. Why is that? To answer this question, it is instructive to consult Aristotle's comments, in the *De Anima*, concerning the serial order (ἐφεξῆς) in which the soul's powers exist with respect to one another in animate beings.<sup>372</sup> As a result of this order, only the nutritive capacity can exist apart

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<sup>370</sup> *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, p 8.

<sup>371</sup> Sophocles, *Theban Plays*, trans. P. Meineck & P. Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2003), 1074 (p. 107; emphasis added).

<sup>372</sup> See Aristotle, *De Anima* 412a 14 – 414b 31. With respect to the class of natural bodies that have life, Aristotle gives a very specific account of what it means to live: he affirms that by 'life' we mean the possession of an internal principle of nourishment, growth and decay (ζωὴν δὲ λέγομεν τὴν δι' αὐτοῦ τροφήν τε καὶ αὐξήσιν καὶ φθίσιν). (412a 14-15; my translation) Life is therefore limited among natural bodies to those that are capable of self-nourishment. Aristotle's point here is not that life is limited to beings that possess nutrition *only*. His point is rather that, in beings that have a soul, it is only the nutritive capacity that can exist independently, or separately, with respect to the other powers of the soul.<sup>372</sup> In all other kinds of animate beings, the nutritive power exists in conjunction with that of locomotion, perception and thought. As Aristotle states in the opening line of Chapter 3, '[o]f the psychic powers above enumerated some kinds of things [...] possess all, some less than all, others one only (τῶν δὲ δυνάμεων

from the other powers of the soul; in non-human animals, it exists in conjunction with the powers of sensation and locomotion; and in humans it exists together with thought, sensation and locomotion. Aristotle in fact compares the relationship between different powers of the soul in animate beings to that between different kinds of geometrical shapes: in the same way that the triangle is in a sense contained ‘in potential,’ *δυνάμει*, in the square, and the square in the pentagon, the pentagon in the hexagon and so on, so is the nutritive capacity, which exists alone in plants, contained in potential in the sensitive and locomotive capacities of animals; and so are these latter two powers of the soul contained in potential in the human being, which alone possesses the capacity for thought.

This is of course not to say that the nutritive capacity is not actually operative in animals and humans. It means rather that its operation, which exists alone in plants and therefore defines them, does not constitute the pinnacle of the soul’s activity for animals and humans. This is because animals and humans have other capacities in addition to the nutritive, for which the nutritive capacity acts as a kind of material support or substrate. Similarly, animals and human beings share in common the capacities for both sensation and locomotion, but only one – the specifically non-human animal – is actually defined

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τῆς ψυχῆς αἰ̇ λεχθεῖσαι τοῖς μὲν ὑπάρχουσι πάσαι [...] τοῖς δὲ τίνες αὐτῶν, ἐνίοις δὲ μία μόνη.’ (414a 29-31; McKeon, p. 559; translation modified) Because of the order that determines the relationship between the soul’s various powers in animate beings, only the nutritive power is capable of existing apart from the others, as it does in plants. All animate beings that possess perception also possess nutrition, and those that possess the capacity for thought necessarily possess these latter powers as well. Consequently, Aristotle goes on in Chapter 3 to observe that there is a certain serial ‘order’ or ‘succession,’ *ἐφεξῆς*, that determines the relationship between the soul’s different powers in animate beings. On the basis of this serial order, Aristotle in fact compares the relationship between different powers of the soul to that between different geometrical solids at 414b 28-31. This serial order in which the soul’s powers exist necessarily means that if a natural body cannot nourish itself, it necessarily cannot move itself, perceive or think either, because these higher capacities all presuppose the existence of the nutritive capacity as their material support. Conversely, if a natural body possesses the capacity for thought, it necessarily also possesses the capacity for nutrition, sensation, locomotion, growth and decay.

by these as its highest and most developed capacities. Insofar as humans possess the capacity for thought in addition to those for nutrition, sensation and locomotion that they share with both plants and animals, the human is defined by thought alone, and the capacities of locomotion, sensation and nutrition exist in a sense in potential with respect to it. In humans, these capacities operate as a kind of potential substrate for thought, and therefore do not define the human being as they do non-human animals.

In this sense, when we speak of an animate being, whether plant, animal or human, it is crucial to recall that we are speaking about a natural body whose life derives from having a soul as its active form. Up to and including the locomotive and sensitive capacities, the soul's role as causal agent of the life in natural bodies is accounted for precisely by the fact that it is the form of a natural body. Yet Aristotle observes that this may not be the case with respect to the soul's capacity for thought, because this capacity might not be dependent on the soul's role as the form of a natural body. On the one hand, he argues in Book II, Chapter 1 of the *De Anima* that the soul in general, and certain of its parts (if it has parts), are inseparable from the body, because the activities of these parts or powers of soul involve the exercise of a particular bodily organ (as sight is dependent on the eye etc). Yet on the other hand, he also claims that this does not prevent certain other of the soul's parts or powers from being separable from the body, 'because they are not the activities of any body.'<sup>373</sup> Although Aristotle does not specify in this passage which of the soul's capacities may be separable from the body, he suggests in the next chapter that, if there is a capacity of soul that *could be* separable from the body, it is thought: 'in the case of the mind and the thinking faculty nothing is yet clear; it

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<sup>373</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 413a 7-8 (translation modified): 'διὰ τὸ μηθενὸς εἶναι σώματος ἐντελεχείας.'

seems to be a distinct kind of soul, and it alone admits of being separated, as the immortal from the perishable.<sup>374</sup>

This means that the soul's capacity for thought, which defines the being of the human animal as the capacity to which its highest and most developed activity corresponds, relies least of all (or perhaps not at all) on the body. What determines the being of the human is therefore, paradigmatically, the capacity for thought alone (both theoretical and practical). Humans are in other words exemplars of this capacity, which most characterizes and distinguishes them from all other animate beings. Although they also share characteristics such as locomotion and sensation in common with other, i.e. non-human animals, the latter possess these characteristics pre-eminently, in an exemplary fashion, whereas in humans they exist in some sense 'in potential,' as Aristotle says above, as a support for the capacity of thought. The most cursory biological comparison of humans and non-human animals bears this reflection out with very few exceptions. Although the human being is in many ways a more developed form of life than a non-human animal, this difference in development does not at all manifest itself in physical characteristics; indeed, if we compare the two groups of animate creatures in terms of their physical capabilities, we must conclude without question that animals are much better endowed than humans.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 413b 25-7: 'περὶ δὲ τοῦ νοῦ καὶ τῆς θεωρητικῆς δυνάμεως οὐδὲν πω φανερόν, ἀλλ' ἔοικε ψυχῆς γένος ἕτερον εἶναι, καὶ τοῦτο μόνον ἐνδέχεται χωρίζεσθαι, καθάπερ τὸ αἶδιον τοῦ φθαρτοῦ.'

<sup>375</sup> In terms of their capacities for both locomotion and sensation, non-human animals are in the majority of instances much more developed than human beings. There are countless species of animal that can move themselves with much more speed and force than humans can, and there are no fewer species whose capacities for sensation (most senses, at any rate) are much more developed than those of humans. When we compare the human animal's capacity for locomotion and/or sensation to the speed of a cheetah, or even an ostrich; to the strength of an orangutan or an elephant; to the hawk's keen eyesight; to the bat's ability to perceive sound; or the dog's sense of smell; it seems in fact that humans are the *less* developed class out of the two. With respect to the capacity for sensation in particular, Aristotle observes in Book II

In other words, what defines the human being and sets it apart as a more developed animate creature than non-human animals is not immediately observable to the senses. Certainly there are some observable traits that distinguish humans from non-human animals, but these are traits that suggest the former are in fact *less* developed than the latter. It is consequently obvious that animals are able to move themselves, and also to be moved by things that they perceive in their environment, much more effectively than humans, even though humans do possess these capacities as well. We can therefore say that the powers of the soul that are connected to the body, and which necessarily involve certain kinds of physical movement (conceived as both the capacity for self-motion and for being moved in sensation), are indeed exemplified above all by non-human animals.

This is why, in the *Rhetoric*, where ἐνέργεια is understood as specifically physical locomotion, this is represented more paradigmatically by animals than by humans. Although there are times when, acting under the influence of intense passion, the physical movements of human beings *resemble* those of non-human animals in their suddenness and impetuosity, it is in non-human animals that these kinds of movements have their proper context. This explains why, in example 2.4 above, Aristotle observes that Euripides' use of the word ἄξαντες in reference to the Greek army is an instance both of metaphor and of ἐνέργεια: it signifies ἐνέργεια because it is a word that vividly expresses movement, and it is a metaphor because this kind of movement is ordinarily

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of the *De Anima* that this difference between humans and non-human animals holds for every sense *except* for that of touch. As he argues, 'in the other senses [i.e., man] is behind many kinds of animal, but in touch he is much more discriminating than the other animals (ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις λείπεται πολλῶν τῶν ζώων, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἀφήν πολλῶ τῶν ἄλλων διαφερόντως ἀκριβοῖ).' (421a 21-3) Yet in terms of physical characteristics, having a heightened sense of touch (in addition to a lack of protective covering such as fur or scales) is a disadvantage insofar as it means a lower tolerance for extremes in temperature specifically, and therefore a greater degree of vulnerability with respect to the elements.

used to refer to the motions of non-human animals, such as a wild boar.<sup>376</sup> It makes no difference whatsoever that this metaphor is not applied across the inanimate-animate distinction, for ἐνέργεια simply means movement. The third category of metaphor thus shows, yet again, that animating representation is not an exhaustive explanation of what it means to signify ἐνέργεια.

*(D) Fourth Category of Metaphor: Animate-Inanimate Transference*

We now come to the final category of metaphorical transference, which is the animate-inanimate transference that I have referred to throughout as animating representation. It should be clear by now that, even if a statistical majority of Aristotle's examples belong to this category, it is invalid to assume that this kind of metaphor explains what it means to signify ἐνέργεια in each and every case. As we have seen, signifying ἐνέργεια, which simply means representing things in a state of motion, can be accomplished through no less than three other kinds of transference. Nevertheless, animating representations are a particularly salient way of doing this, as is evident in Aristotle's praise for Homer's use of metaphors in Chapter 11. The first four of these

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<sup>376</sup> It is coincidentally worth noting that, parallel to the way in which Homer repeatedly singles out the wild boar (κάπρος) as being paradigmatic of the quick and impetuous movements to which the word αἰσσω normally refers, Aristotle mentions the boar in Book II, Chapter 4 of *De Partibus Animalium*, as being exemplary among animals for its 'passion,' θυμός. This is above all because, according to Aristotle's physiological analysis, the boar (as well as the bull) has especially fibrous blood, which causes it to heat very quickly. The heating of the blood is in turn the physiological correlate of violent passion, or *thumos*: '[...] there are animals that have specially plentiful and thick fibres in their blood; these are of an earthier nature, and are of a passionate temperament and liable to outbursts of passion (τὰ δὲ πολλάς ἔχοντα λίαν ἴνας καὶ παχείας γεωδέστερα τὴν φύσιν ἐστὶ καὶ θυμώδη τὸ ἦθος καὶ ἐκστατικά διὰ τὸν θυμόν). Passion produces heat (θερμότητος γὰρ ποιητικὸν ὁ θυμός); and solids, when they have been heated, give off more heat than fluids. So the fibres, which are solid and earthy, become as it were embers inside the blood and cause it to boil up when the fits of passion come on (αἱ δ' ἴνες στερεὸν καὶ γεῶδες, ὥστε γίνονται οἷον πυρίαι ἐν τῷ αἵματι καὶ ζέσιν ποιούσιν ἐν τοῖς θυμοῖς). That is why bulls and boars are so liable to these fits of passion (διὸ οἱ ταῦροι καὶ κάπροι θυμώδεις καὶ ἐκστατοκοί). Their blood is very fibrous (τὸ γὰρ αἷμα τούτων ἰνωδέστατον) [...]' Aristotle, *Parts of Animals*, trans. A.L. Peck (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), 650b 33 – 651a 4.

examples are from Aristotle’s discussion in Chapter 10, and the last six are from Chapter 11. They are as follows as follows:

1. ‘Aesion used to say that they had “drained” the State into Sicily, which is a metaphor and sets the thing before the eyes.’<sup>377</sup>
2. ‘His words “so that Greece uttered a cry” are also in a manner a metaphor and a vivid one [i.e., literally, set things before the eyes].’<sup>378</sup>
3. ‘And the example in the Funeral Oration, that “Greece might well have her hair cut off (go into mourning) over the tomb of those who died at Salamis, for her freedom and their valor were buried in the same grave”; for had he only said “that she might well weep for the virtue that lay buried with them”, it would have been a metaphor and a graphic touch [translating *πρὸ ὀμμάτων*], but the (addition of) “freedom with the virtue” carries with it a kind of antithesis’.<sup>379</sup>
4. ‘And Lycoleon said on behalf of Chabrias, “not at all ashamed at seeing his statue reduced to supplication,” a metaphor for the moment, not for all time, but still vivid; for while Chabrias is in danger, his statue, which is a memorial of his deeds for the polis, supplicates on his behalf’.<sup>380</sup>

<sup>377</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1411b 7: ‘Αἰσίωον δὲ, ὅτι εἰς Σικελίαν τὴν πόλιν ἐξέχεαν· τοῦτο γὰρ μεταφορὰ καὶ πρὸ ὀμμάτων.’

<sup>378</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1411b 7: ‘καὶ “ὥστε βοῆσαι τὴν Ἑλλάδα”· καὶ τοῦτο τρόπον τινὰ μεταφορὰ καὶ πρὸ ὀμμάτων.’

<sup>379</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1411b 7 (translated by Cope): ‘καὶ οἶον ἐν τῷ ἐπιταφίῳ, διότι ἄξιον ἦν ἐπὶ τῷ ταφῷ τῶ τῶν ἐν Σαλαμίῳ τελευτησάντων κείρασθαι τὴν Ἑλλάδα ὡς συγκαταθαπτομένης τῆ ἀρετῆ αὐτῶν τῆς ἐλευθερίας· εἰ μὲν γὰρ εἶπεν ὅτι ἄξιον δακρῦσαι συγκαταθαπτομένης τῆς ἀρετῆς, μεταφορὰ καὶ πρὸ ὀμμάτων, τὸ δὲ “τῆ ἀρετῆ τῆς ἐλευθερίας ἀντίθεσιν τινὰ ἔχει’. Cf. E.M. Cope, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle, With a Commentary* (London: The University Press at Cambridge, 1877), p. 120 (emphasis added). Freese’s translation of this passage runs as follows: ‘[a]nd as Lysis says in his Funeral Oration, that it was fitting that Greece should cut her hair at the tomb of those who fell at Salamis, since her freedom was buried along with their valor. If the speaker had said that it was fitting that Greece should weep, her valor being buried with them, it would have been a metaphor and a vivid one, whereas “freedom” by the side of “valor” produces a kind of antithesis.’ Although Aristotle’s Greek is itself not as explicit as one would like, Cope’s translation of this passage is preferable to that of Freese in that the former makes it slightly clearer that antithesis and metaphor are not mutually exclusive devices. Freese’s translation could be taken to imply that only the second expression would be a metaphorical one that places things before the eyes, whereas the former is an instance of antithesis and not of metaphor. Cope’s translation emphasizes somewhat more clearly that both expressions are vivid metaphors, but that the former differs from the latter by the ‘addition’ of words that produce the effect of antithesis *as well*. In his commentary, Cope moreover substantiates this translation in a note to this passage, observing that ‘[t]he metaphor lies of course in the word κείρασθαι, by which Greece is personified and compared to a woman who, according to the national custom, cuts off her hair as a sign of mourning’ (p. 121). This in itself demonstrates that, although Aristotle himself is somewhat vague here, the first expression is an instance of metaphor *in addition* to antithesis, whereas the second would have been an instance of metaphor *only*.

<sup>380</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1411b 7 (my translation): ‘καὶ Λυκολέων ὑπὲρ Χαβρίου “οὐδὲ τὴν ἰκετηρίαν αἰσχυνθέντες αὐτοῦ, τὴν εἰκόνα τὴν χαλκῆν”· μεταφορὰ γὰρ ἐν τῷ παρόντι, ἀλλ’ οὐκ αἰεὶ, ἀλλὰ πρὸ ὀμμάτων· κινδυνεύοντος γὰρ αὐτοῦ ἰκετεύει ἢ εἰκῶν, τὸ ἄψυχον δὲ ἔμψυχον, τὸ ὑπόμνημα τῶν τῆς πόλεως ἔργων’. Freese obscures the meaning of the quoted section in this passage by

5. ‘of one having his life in full bloom’<sup>381</sup>.
6. ‘Again the ruthless stone rolled down to the plain.’<sup>382</sup>
7. ‘The arrow flew.’<sup>383</sup>
8. ‘[The arrow] eager to fly [towards the crowd].’<sup>384</sup>
9. ‘[The spears] were buried in the ground, longing to take their fill of flesh.’<sup>385</sup>
10. ‘The spear point sped eagerly through his breast.’<sup>386</sup>

Having established that signifying ἐνέργεια most generally concerns either (a) the attribution of any kind of motion whatsoever to a thing that does not naturally move at

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translating οὐδὲ [...] ἀίσχυνθέντες as ‘not even reverencing’ (p. 403). The French translation of Pierre Chiron is more accurate: “sans même *rougir* de voir sa statue de bronze réduite à supplier”. Cf. Aristote, *Rhétorique*, trans. P. Chiron (Paris: GF Flammarion, 2007), p. 475 (emphasis added). This translation makes more sense given the context of the expression, part of which Freese himself explains as follows: [t]he statue of Chabrias, erected after one of his victories, represented him as kneeling on the ground, the position which he had ordered his soldiers to take up when awaiting the enemy. The statue was in the agora and could be seen from the court. Lycoleon points to it and bases his appeal on its suppliant attitude.’ (p. 403) Cope relates more or less the same story, but adds the crucial fact that, after distinguishing himself as a general in battle and having the aforementioned statue erected in the agora in his honour, Chabrias was subsequently ‘brought to trial with Callistratus, the orator, on a charge of misconduct leading to the loss of Oropus.’ (Cope, p. 122) The exact context of the phrase cited by Aristotle is thus that Chabrias’ apologist Lycoleon points to his kneeling statue from the court where he is speaking on his behalf, and demands of the judges if they are not ashamed to see what was formerly a hero and defender of the polis reduced to the attitude of a supplicant, as if the statue itself were brought low by the trial against Chabrias. With this expression, as Aristotle explains, the inanimate statue is thus made ‘animate,’ and a stone memorial to the past is transformed by metaphor into a living supplication for the actual person of whom it is the lifeless image. This is why Aristotle says it is a metaphor ‘for the moment,’ ἐν τῷ παρόντι; for it is only while Chabrias is in danger, i.e. only as long as the trial continues, that the statue could be described metaphorically as supplicating on his behalf.

<sup>381</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1412a 2: ‘τὸ “ἀνθοῦσαν ἔχοντος τὴν ἀκμήν.”

<sup>382</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1412a 3: ‘αὐτίς ἐπὶ δάδεπόνδε κυλίνδετο λάας ἀναιδής.’ This is a reference to Odysseus’ encounter with Sisyphos in his journey to the underworld in Book XI of the *Odyssey*. Fitzgerald translates the metaphor here as ‘the cruel boulder’. Cf. Homer, *The Odyssey*, tr. Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1998), xi.598 (p. 205).

<sup>383</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1412a 3: ‘ἔπτατ’ οἰστός.’ This refers to the arrow shot by Menelaos to avenge the death of Deipyros by the Trojan Helenos in Book XIII of *The Iliad*. Fitzgerald translates this line as ‘the bitter arrow bounced up and away’. Cf. Homer, *The Iliad*, tr. Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Doubleday, 1974), xiii.587 (p. 317).

<sup>384</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1412a 3: ‘ἐπιπτέσθαι μενάινων.’ This is a reference to the initial volley, made by Pandaros after being encouraged by Athena in disguise, which effectively starts the Trojan War in Book IV of the *Iliad*. Fitzgerald translates the line as ‘the arrow whizzed away, needlesharp, vicious, flashing through the crowd’. Cf. Homer, *Iliad* iv.126 (Fitzgerald, p. 92).

<sup>385</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1412a 3: ‘ἐν γαίῃ ἴσταντο λιλαϊόμενα χροὸς ἄσαι.’ This refers to a scene described by Homer in Book XI of the *Iliad*. Fitzgerald translates the line as ‘the rest [i.e., of the spears] stood fixed midway in the earth before they reached the white flesh they were famished for’. Cf. Homer, *Iliad* xi.574 (Fitzgerald, p. 269).

<sup>386</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1412a 3: ‘αἰχμηὶ δὲ στέρνοιο διέσσυτο μαιμώωσα.’ This is a reference to the scene in Book XV of the *Iliad* where Menelaos rescues Mégês by sneaking up and killing his aggressor Dólops from behind. Fitzgerald translates this line as ‘the famished spearhead, driven hard, passed through his chest’. Cf. Homer, *Iliad* xv.541 (Fitzgerald, p. 366).

all, or (b) the attribution of one kind of motion to a thing that naturally and characteristically moves according to another kind, we are now in a better position to understand why animating representation is a *prevalent instance* of signifying activity, and not an exhaustive explanation of it. Example D1, according to Freese, refers to ‘the disastrous Sicilian expedition’<sup>387</sup>, in which Athens attempted to conquer Sicily in 415-413 BCE. The expedition was much longer and more costly than at first expected and, ultimately, despite a massive armada sent partway through to reinforce the Athenians, unsuccessful. The metaphor in D1 thus compares the expedition itself to the physical act of ‘pouring out’ or ‘draining’ the contents of a container, which is ‘the state,’ τὴν πόλιν, itself. In the same way that a jar contains its contents, then, a state ‘contains’ its citizens; and the loss of life connected to the Sicilian expedition was so significant that Aesion could say that, as a result, the people responsible for the war had ‘drained (ἐχέχεον)’ the contents of the state into Sicily. The metaphor thus compares the war itself, which is inanimate, to the physical act of emptying a container, which suggests human (and therefore animate) behavior.

Example D2, ‘so that Greece uttered a cry’ is more straightforward, in that it transfers the animate movement of crying to the inanimate subject of Greece, τὴν Ἑλλάδα. Similarly, example D3 depicts Greece as ‘cutting her hair (κείροσθαι)’ in mourning over the deaths of those who fell at Salamis, once again transferring a movement associated with animate (human) beings to Greece, conceived abstractly as the land itself. In example D4, the statue of Chabrias is said to be ‘supplicating’ on behalf of Chabrias the man (see note 380 for a full explanation of this phrase and its context),

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<sup>387</sup> Freese, p. 402, note *b*.

which again attributes a movement characteristic of animate beings to an inanimate object. D5, which compares the prime of a person's life (τὴν ἀχμὴν) to a flower's blooming (ἀνθοῦσσαν), is another instance of an inanimate-animate transference, since although a person is indeed an animate being, the acme or prime of that person's life, conceived as an abstract point in time, is not.

Lastly, examples D6-10, which are all drawn from Homer's metaphors, are certainly transferences of this kind (inanimate-animate), according to Aristotle's own explicit remarks. At the same time, since Aristotle does not go into detail about exactly how each Homeric example depicts an inanimate thing using animate qualities, I will attempt to explain each one briefly. D6 ('the ruthless stone') transfers the animate and human quality of cruelty (or shamelessness, depending on translation) to an inanimate rock; D7 ('the arrow flew') depicts the flight of an inanimate object as though it were that of a bird, which is self-moving; D8 likewise attributes an affective state of 'eagerness (μενεαίνων),' which exists only in animals and humans, to an inanimate arrow; D9 similarly attributes the affective state of 'longing (λιλαϊόμενα)' to a spear buried in the ground; and similarly, D10 attributes the animate quality of 'hunger (μαϊμώωσα)' to the inanimate tip of a spear. Among all the examples in this animate-inanimate group, only four (D2, D3, D4 and D6) qualify as what is called personification in English, since only these examples contain reference to exclusively human qualities.

It should be evident by now that, as I have argued throughout this chapter, movement (κίνησις) is indeed the only factor capable of establishing a meaningful link among all these disparate examples. In some cases (such as B1), it need not even be a legitimate sense of movement, as any word that creates the mere appearance or

impression of movement in the mind will be a word that according to Aristotle signifies ἐνέργεια. In other cases, signifying ἐνέργεια means metaphorically attributing the capacity for self-movement to an inert object (such as a wooden arrow) or abstract concept; in still others, it means attributing an emotional state (which is a special kind of qualitative alteration, and therefore falls under Aristotle's definition in the *Physics*) to an inert object (such as a spearhead); and sometimes it involves representing one kind of animate thing (such as a human being) as having the movements of another kind of animate thing (a non-human animal). These examples themselves are the main reason why it seems advisable to accept Bekker's emendation of the Aristotle's text from μίμησις to κίνησις.

The foregoing considerations are sufficient to show that the aforementioned commentators are right to assume that Aristotle's discussion of ἐνέργεια in *Rhetoric* III.10-11 concerns the precise nature of the representations that are accomplished in a rhetorical speech through the use of metaphors and similes. Yet the above analysis of Aristotle's examples also shows that most of these commentators are wrong to assume that signifying ἐνέργεια is adequately explained by what I have called animating representation, which we can clearly see by now only represents one out of four different kinds of transferences that, according to Aristotle, are capable of depicting ἐνέργεια.

Of all the views we have examined so far, the position that is closest to the one I have advocated is that of Moran. Although Moran goes further than I am willing to, by arguing that ἐνέργεια also refers to the mental image provoked by a vivid metaphorical expression, his account of the 'first side' of ἐνέργεια, according to which it refers to motion in an object that is metaphorically depicted, agrees with my understanding of the

text. In fact, there is another commentator who takes the view I have advocated for, but his views are not commonly (or ever, to my knowledge) consulted in this context: this is the 17th century Italian literary critic and professor of rhetoric, Tesauro, whom I mentioned at the end of the previous chapter. Before I cite him as an authority, it must be noted that Tesauro is regarded by many to depart from Aristotle's views on style both freely and frequently, at least to the extent that he seems to want to elevate the study of style to a level of importance that is independent of, and possibly even greater than those of poetic imitation and rhetorical argumentation, which are the main foci of Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* respectively.<sup>388</sup> Nevertheless, his specific comments on ἐνέργεια accurately represent it as concerning the depiction of movement (movimento) in the objects that are signified by metaphors and comparisons.

In Hersant's translation, Tesauro thus advises his reader that, 'quand tu voudras donner de la force et de la vivacité à tes propos (dar forza e vivezza al tuo dire), tu auras recours à des métaphores pleines de vie, *signifiantes le mouvement et la violence* (adopreraï metafore vivaci, significanti movimento e violenza).'<sup>389</sup> Although Tesauro does not mention either Aristotle or ἐνέργεια explicitly in this passage, that this is his view concerning the precise sense of ἐνέργεια is confirmed by other commentators more familiar with his work as a whole. R. Montgomery supports this view, pointing out that Tesauro, in a passage not included among the excerpts translated into French by Hersant, holds 'that *energeia* comes from metaphors of proportion that use terms of movement

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<sup>388</sup> See in this regard H. Hatzfeld, "Three National Deformations of Aristotle: Tesauro, Gracián, Boileau," *Studi Secenteschi* 2 (1961): 3-21.

<sup>389</sup> Tesauro, *Il cannochiale aristotelico*, in *La métaphore baroque*, p. 117 (emphasis added).

and adds that these give “force and nerve to an oration”.<sup>390</sup> Still, even if Tesauro is not to be trusted as a faithful commentator on Aristotle, the exhaustive survey that I have conducted in this chapter of the examples themselves, which Aristotle provides to illustrate the concept of ἐνέργεια in its rhetorical context, leaves little room for doubting that ἐνέργεια refers to the attribution of movement through the use of metaphors and similes.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

The close association traced by Aristotle between certain metaphors and the representation of ἐνέργεια (understood here simply as motion, κίνησις) must be placed within the context of the function that Aristotle explicitly attributes to metaphor in the *Poetics*: that is, the discovery of similarities between disparate things. In the previous chapter, I argued that Aristotle privileges precisely those similarities that exist between sensible things, on the one hand, and things that are remote from the senses, on the other. Remoteness from the senses can here be understood to refer either to a physical event that has taken place in a distant time and/or place, and or a general or abstract quality, state or affection, which is immaterial and therefore, by nature, imperceptible. In appending the notion of ἐνέργεια as motion to his discussion of metaphors in *Rhetoric* III.10-11, Aristotle thus elaborates on what kind of similarities metaphors should ideally be employed to disclose. Expanding on the basic notion that metaphors should be drawn from the domain of sensible things, Aristotle thus further illustrates with examples that

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<sup>390</sup> *Terms of Response: Language and Audience in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Theory* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), p. 20 (citing Tesauro, *Il cannochiale aristotelico*, p. 332). Although Montgomery recognizes that Tesauro interpreted Aristotle’s discussion of ἐνέργεια in this way, he himself ignores this view, claiming rather that ἐνέργεια concerns animation and personification only (ibid).

the metaphors most effective at comparing things that are remote from the senses to things that are familiar to them are metaphors involving the representation of motion.

As I have already mentioned, motion has a very special place in Aristotle's account of sensation in the *De Anima*, not only as a phenomenon that is accessible to all the senses in common, but moreover as that without which none of the other common sensibles would be perceptible in the first place. In itself, the fact that sensation is so tightly intertwined with motion of different kinds explains the latter's importance in the examples Aristotle gives to illustrate *πρὸ ὀμμάτων* and *ἐνέργεια* in *Rhetoric* III. To the extent that they signify *ἐνέργεια*, metaphors reveal similarities between things, placing one of them before the eyes by (ideally) comparing it to something that moves. If the thing that is to be compared is already a thing that moves, metaphors and similes can still place that thing before the eyes by comparing its movements to another thing that moves to a greater extent (more quickly, more powerfully).

There is in fact no reason why metaphors *must* signify activity. Indeed, there are many metaphors (such as 'a good man is four-square') that do not do so, and there are many words that signify activity in perfectly non-metaphorical contexts. Aristotle's point in Book III of the *Rhetoric* is rather that metaphors are most effective at placing things before the eyes when they compare these things, through the exchange of names, to things that are in a state of movement. The reason why *ἐνέργεια*, considered as movement, is so important to Aristotle's discussion is that movement is what is most familiar to everyone through sense experience. Thus, when the comparison underlying a metaphorical transference is an analogical one that allows the compared thing to be

imagined as though it were moving, it thereby makes that thing more accessible to the mind and places it directly, as it were, ‘before the eyes.’

It will be helpful to connect this consideration to the results of the previous two chapters, by drawing out its philosophical implications a little more. To this end, O’Rourke’s comment on the importance of ἐνέργεια to Aristotle’s discussion of metaphor is a good point of departure. For O’Rourke, the fact that Aristotle valorizes analogical metaphors in general and, among these, those that depict things in a state of movement in particular, suggests that ‘it is action [i.e., ἐνέργεια] which constitutes the metaphysical foundation of metaphoric resemblance.’<sup>391</sup> If this is true, then it also means that in binding the production of metaphors to the comprehension of what ἐνέργεια is, Aristotle once again links the study of rhetoric and poetic style to the philosophical understanding of things in their analogical connectedness, subtly implying that the latter is a sufficient condition for the former. In other words, if ἐνέργεια is the principle of both the perfect metaphysical likenesses that lead to a philosophical comprehension of the cosmos, and of the imperfect, secondary likenesses that, according to Aristotle, underlie the most popular metaphors and similes, then the one who knows the former will necessarily have the highest aptitude for the former. This means, in concrete terms, that in order to master the rhetoric and the poetry established as τέχνη by Aristotle, one ought ideally either to be, or to become, a philosopher.<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> O’Rourke, “Aristotle and the Metaphysics of Metaphor,” p. 174.

<sup>392</sup> It also must not be forgotten that, according to some of the historical sources we consulted in the first chapter, Aristotle’s course in rhetoric was allegedly delivered in the afternoons to a general audience, who would not necessarily be familiar with his or the Academy’s more theoretical teachings. Introducing ἐνέργεια in this context, on the one hand, provides a concise explanation of how to develop a clear and lively oratorical style through the use of metaphors and similes; but on the other hand, for any students in the audience who might become interested in the study of more esoteric, theoretical topics, introducing ἐνέργεια as motion may also have been intended by Aristotle to provide a starting point from which they

## 5. Chapter 4: Metaphor and Science

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter argues that Aristotle's prohibition against the use of metaphors is limited to those contexts in which the terminological precision of a definition, or of a scientific demonstration, is at stake.

In arguing this, the chapter aims to present and elaborate Aristotle's complex position regarding the use of metaphors in the context of scientific reasoning. The first thing to be noted about this position is that it is, as just indicated, a critical one. This is surprising insofar as it seems to be at odds with Aristotle's aforementioned discussions in the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, which by and large extoll the use of metaphors, to the extent that this is appropriate, in virtue of their didactic merits. Nevertheless, as we shall presently see, there are a small number of other, isolated texts (*Topics*, *Posterior Analytics*) in which Aristotle universally censures the use of metaphors in the context of scientific discussions. It will be shown in what follows that, to the extent that this censure can be given a precise justification, it must be seen to follow implicitly from the important place given to the procedure of definition in Aristotle's theory of science. Furthermore, it will be shown that the importance of definition, in turn, must be understood in its connection to scientific demonstration or ἀποδείξις, which according to Aristotle is a special kind of syllogism ideal for expressing scientific knowledge (ἐπιστήμη).

If, as I hold, there is a critical dimension in Aristotle's theory of metaphor, it must be recognized that it has largely been ignored by many of the recent commentators who

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could more readily grasp its more abstract meaning, which is the central concept of Aristotle's entire metaphysical system.

have sought to reconstruct this theory. As we saw in the previous two chapters, much of the scholarly literature published on this topic in the past 30 years or so seems preoccupied with the question of how Aristotle's original assessment of metaphor compares to one or more contemporary theories – in most cases, to the dominant 'cognitive view of metaphor' elaborated most fully by Lakoff and Johnson. Consequently, in the effort to determine whether or not Aristotle's theory of metaphor agrees with contemporary theories (and more often than not, with one theory in particular), most recent commentators have focused exclusively on Aristotle's remarks in the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*. As a result, many recent reconstructions neglect even to mention that there is another side to Aristotle's views on metaphor, which in fact seems inconsistent with the laudatory things he says about metaphors in the two aforementioned texts.<sup>393</sup> As will be shown in what follows, a complete account of Aristotle's theory of metaphor must take this other side into consideration, for it is only such an approach that can fully show how this theory fits into the broader context of Aristotle's epistemological, psychological, logical and metaphysical teachings.

If, in other words, there is another side of Aristotle's theory of metaphor that appears to contradict the one we have already examined, any account of the theory that neglects this other side necessarily remains incomplete. Consequently, it is to the examination of this other side of Aristotle's views, and the resolution of the apparent

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<sup>393</sup> Indeed, among those who have commented on this and/or related topics, very few even mention that there is another side to the more or less laudatory assessment of metaphor given by Aristotle in the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*. One of these few is G.E.R. Lloyd, who recognizes that Aristotle's treatment of metaphor can be characterized as a 'negative evaluation'. *The Revolutions of Wisdom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 183. Lloyd's awareness of this negative evaluation is evident in an earlier of his works as well, where he notes that Aristotle 'condemns [i.e., metaphor's] use in reasoning altogether.' *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 405. More recently, both A. Marcos (1997) and F. O'Rourke (2005) have drawn attention to this critical side of Aristotle's comments about metaphor. I will address the views of both Marcos and O'Rourke in this and the following chapter.

contradiction that it raises, that this and the following chapter will be dedicated. As mentioned in the general introduction to this dissertation, the apparent contradiction raises the question of whether Aristotle is, in the final analysis, a pro- or anti-metaphorical philosopher. Since, as we shall see, Aristotle's extant texts present evidence of varying strength in support of both alternatives, the answer to the above question, to the extent that one is possible, seems likely to fall somewhere in between them. In that case, the way in which and the reasons for which it does so demand a nuanced explanation that, for reasons that will shortly become apparent, must take into consideration Aristotle's understanding of scientific knowledge and the means by which it is attained and expressed.

Once we have examined the texts in which Aristotle censures the use of metaphors in formulating definitions, and explained them by placing them in the context of Aristotle's definition of homonymy and his theory of science, we will see two things: on the one hand, that Aristotle censures the use of metaphors in science because they undermine the terminological precision of definitions, and therefore threaten the material necessity that distinguishes scientific demonstration from other kinds of syllogism; and on the other, that this consideration still does not preclude the use of a certain kind of metaphor in philosophical discussions, insofar as these discussions are of a dialectical, rather than a demonstrative, nature. The role played by metaphors of a certain kind in Aristotle's own dialectical discussions of various philosophical subjects will be taken up at the end of this chapter and pursued throughout the next, with particular attention paid to his discussion in the *Metaphysics*.

The plan for the current chapter is therefore as follows: 1) I will first examine Aristotle's critical comments in *Posterior Analytics* II.13 about the use of metaphors in formulating definitions, and then place these comments in context by highlighting the implicit connection between metaphor and homonymy, according to Aristotle's discussion of the latter in *Categories* 1; 2) second, I will underscore the importance of definition to scientific knowledge by relating it to Aristotle's discussions of the syllogism in the *Prior Analytics*, and of demonstration, as a special kind of syllogism, in the *Posterior Analytics*; and finally, (3) I will outline Aristotle's discussion of induction (ἐπαγωγή) as the epistemological counterpart to demonstration, and show in what ways this discussion ultimately relies on his account of the human intellect (νοῦς) in *De Anima* III.4-6 for its intelligibility.

## **5.2 Definition, Metaphor and Homonymy**

We will begin, as mentioned, by examining Aristotle's critical attitude towards the use of metaphors in formulating definitions. In this section, Aristotle's criticisms can be taken in a general way as implying that the use of metaphors is universally to be avoided in formulating definitions. Yet to the extent that Aristotle's comments in *Posterior Analytics* II.13 evidently presuppose this view without elaborating or justifying it explicitly, it is necessary to connect Aristotle's basic understanding of the metaphorical word to his analysis of homonymy in *Categories* 1. If, as I hope to show, there is an overlap between the concepts of metaphor and homonymy, then Aristotle's comments about homonymy can be used as a supplement to explain why metaphors, as well as homonymies, are to be avoided in formulating definitions. This approach is recommended in part by the text of *Posterior Analytics* II.13 itself, which seems to

suggest a vague connection between the two concepts by implying that they can both be prevented by one and the same procedure.

Before proceeding to the text in question, it must be noted that Aristotle's views on definition (ὀρισμὸς) raise many important philosophical questions that it will not be possible to consider in sufficient detail here. It will therefore be helpful to begin by saying something general about how Aristotle understands definitions. Above all, it is crucial to grasp that, as Aristotle affirms in *Posterior Analytics* II.10 and elsewhere, 'definition means "an account of what a thing is"'.<sup>394</sup> In other words, a definition is a linguistic expression intended to reveal what it is to be a certain kind of thing. According to M. Deslauriers (2007), Aristotle inherits the concern that definitions should express the real essences of things, rather than an arbitrary collection of properties, from his teacher Plato. Not only that: he inherits, and revises, the method of collection and division mentioned and practiced in various Platonic dialogues (i.e., *Phaedrus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Theaetetus*, *Philebus*) as the proper procedure for arriving at such definitions.<sup>395</sup> Aristotle characterizes this procedure in *Topics* VI.1, noting that 'he who defines must put the subject into its genus and add its differentia; for, more than any of the other component parts of the definition, the genus is generally regarded as indicating

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<sup>394</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 93b 29-30: 'Ὀρισμὸς [...] λέγεται εἶναι τοῦ τί ἐστί'. This definition of definition emerges also in *Topics* I.5 (101b 38 – 102a 1), where Aristotle affirms that '[a] definition is a phrase indicating the essence of something (ἐστί δ' ὄρος μὲν λόγος ὃ τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι σημαίνων).' Similar formulations can also be found in *Metaphysics* VII.5 and VIII.1 as well.

<sup>395</sup> M. Deslauriers, *Aristotle on Definition* (Boston: Brill, Philosophia Antiqua, 2007), p. 11. On the reading of Deslauriers, Aristotle and Plato agree on three fundamental points: (1) that 'the purpose of definition through division to be to make clear the nature of kinds'; (2) that 'there are natural kinds to be defined, kinds that have unity quite apart from our recognition of them'; and (3) that 'definitions are unique, and hence that there will be only one correct division, or set of divisions, which will render exactly one characterization of a kind.' (p. 26)

the essence of a subject of the definition.<sup>396</sup> Definition ‘by division’ therefore indicates the process of dividing genera into their component parts through a progressive delineation of specific differences. *Posterior Analytics* II.23 presents some of the innovations by which Aristotle sought to improve this method of division, whose Platonic heritage is suggested subtly by the remark in the opening lines of the chapter that we must ‘now consider how we should *hunt* (πῶς δὲ δεῖ θηρεύειν) for the attributes which are predicated as elements in the definition.’<sup>397</sup> Concerning precisely what is unique about Aristotle’s approach to definitions vis-à-vis that of Plato, Deslauriers observes that, whereas Plato recognizes the danger of arbitrary divisions, and merely cautions against them, Aristotle in fact introduces a number of methodological requirements evidently intended to prevent them altogether.<sup>398</sup> For the purposes of the present discussion, it is not important to go into detail about these requirements. Rather, what we need for our starting point are simply the facts that (1) Aristotle inherits and revises the Platonic method of definition by division, and that (2) he adds certain considerations to this method in an attempt to prohibit the possibility of arbitrary

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<sup>396</sup> Aristotle, *Topics* 139a 29-31: ‘δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ὀρίζομενον εἰς τὸ γένος θέντα τὰς διαφορὰς προσάπτειν· μάλιστα γὰρ τῶν ἐν τῷ ὀρίσμῳ τὸ γένος δοκεῖ τὴν τοῦ ὀρίζομενου οὐσίαν σημαίνειν’.

<sup>397</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 96a 22-3 (emphasis added). It is difficult not to see this remark as an oblique reference to Plato’s *Sophist*, in which the theme of hunting emerges over and over in the course of the discussion. On the one hand, Socrates and his interlocutors employ the method of division initially to ‘the angler’ for practice, and then proceed from there to define the sophist by comparison with the angler, repeatedly likening him to a ‘hunter’ of young, rich men (see 216a – 222a). On the other hand, and more importantly, at 261a Theaetetus compares the very search for the sophist’s attributes, and therefore the search for definitions itself, to a hunt: ‘[t]he sophist is a hard kind to *hunt down* (δυσθήρευτον εἶη τὸ γένος).’ (Trans. White, in *Plato: Complete Works*, p. 284)

<sup>398</sup> Deslauriers, *Aristotle on Definition*, p. 26/7: ‘Plato does not suggest systematic ways in which one might ensure natural divisions, contenting himself with warning of the danger of arbitrary divisions and issuing general guidelines for avoiding such divisions. [...] Aristotle, by contrast, is motivated in part by the concern to avoid arbitrary divisions to introduce several modifications to the procedure of division.’ According to Deslauriers, the modifications introduced by Aristotle are (1) ‘the prohibition on dichotomous and privative divisions,’ and (2) ‘the requirement for successive differentiation.’ Deslauriers offers an extended discussion of these two requirements on pp. 27-32 passim.

divisions, and thereby that of imprecise definitions. As we shall see in the following section, the importance of precise definitions cannot be overstated because the possibility of scientific demonstration depends in part on the former.

Aristotle's implicit injunction in *Posterior Analytics* II.13 against the use of metaphors must be understood within the context of (2). Specifically, one of several considerations suggested by Aristotle to avoid arbitrary divisions in the formulation of definitions is that 'it is easier to define the particular [i.e., the species] than the universal [i.e., the genus]; and therefore we should proceed [i.e., in formulating definitions] from particulars [i.e., species] to universals [i.e., genera].'<sup>399</sup> Aristotle's point here is that it is easier to define a genus by first defining the particular species that belong to it, than by attempting to grasp directly what defines the genus in itself. Significantly, the reason given by Aristotle to explain why this is easier is that ambiguities, αἱ ὁμωνυμῖαι, 'are harder to detect in universals than in *infimae species*.'<sup>400</sup> Consequently, the method Aristotle recommends here requires that one define the genus 'separately in each class of objects (ἐν ἐκάστῳ γένει ὀρίζεσθαι χωρὶς) [...] and so advance to the general definition, taking care not to become involved in homonymy (μὴ ὁμωνυμῖα ἐντύχη).'<sup>401</sup>

An example Aristotle gives to illustrate this method is the definition of 'sharpness in respect of sound (ὄξυ τὸ ἐν φωνῇ)'.<sup>402</sup> The point of this example is to show that sharpness means one thing in reference to sound, but another in reference to, say, a knife or other physical object. Aristotle means in this passage that one should posit a definition

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<sup>399</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 97b 28-30: 'Ρᾶν τε τὸ καθ' ἕκαστον ὀρίσασθαι ἢ τὸ καθόλου· διὸ δεῖ ἀπὸ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα ἐπὶ τὰ καθόλου μεταβαίνειν.'

<sup>400</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 97b 30-1: 'καὶ γὰρ αἱ ὁμωνυμῖαι λανθάνουσι μᾶλλον ἐν τοῖς καθόλου ἢ ἐν τοῖς ἀδιαφόροις.'

<sup>401</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 97b 33-7: '[...] καὶ οὕτως ἐπὶ τὸ κοῖνον βαδίζειν, εὐλαβούμενον μὴ ὁμωνυμῖα ἐντύχη.'

<sup>402</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 97b 35.

of the predicate sharpness with respect to each species of thing of which it can be predicated before proceeding to define it universally. By doing this, one can determine in advance whether any of these are merely homonymous forms of predication, which ought not to be included in the real definition of the predicate (for reasons I explain below).

In fact, Aristotle differentiates between the different senses of the predicate ‘sharp’ in *Topics* I.15, observing that it has different and unrelated senses depending on whether it refers to a musical ‘note (ἐν φωνῇ)’ or a ‘material substance (ἐν ὄγκῳ)’. Since the different meanings refer to essentially unconnected things, Aristotle there concludes that ‘sharp is a homonymous term (ὁμώνυμον τὸ ὄξυ)’.<sup>403</sup> In a similar way, as we have just seen, Aristotle’s remarks in *Posterior Analytics* II.13 also imply that proceeding from particular (specific) to universal (generic) definitions is concomitant with the effort ‘to avoid homonymy.’ According to this passage, homonymy (ὁμώνυμία) therefore appears as the undesirable consequence of imprecise definitions, which do not posit individual accounts for each separate species before postulating a more general one of the genus in question. As the effect of such imprecision, homonymy here seems to arise whenever a merely nominal connection between things is mistaken for, or simply glossed over as a substantial one.

What is most significant for the purposes of the present discussion is that, after mentioning homonymy as something his proposed method of definition is supposed to mitigate, Aristotle shifts in the next line to speaking about the avoidance of metaphors as well: ‘[i]f we are to avoid arguing in metaphors, clearly we must also avoid defining in

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<sup>403</sup> Aristotle, *Topics*, 107b 22-5 (translation modified).

metaphors and speaking in metaphorical terms; otherwise we are bound to argue in metaphors.<sup>404</sup> On a superficial reading, this passage seems to suggest that the avoidance of homonymy and the avoidance of metaphors are one and the same thing. But exactly how strong a connection does the passage allow us to establish between the two concepts? Indeed, there is some kind of connection posited between metaphors and homonymy here, but the connection is not made clear.

Two questions need to be posed here: (1) what, if anything, connects homonymy and metaphor? And (2) why does Aristotle seem to want to exclude both homonymy and metaphor from the sphere of scientific reasoning, as being in some sense inadequate to it? In the remainder of this section, I will answer the first of these questions; the second can only be answered precisely once we have examined Aristotle's accounts of demonstration and induction, and must accordingly be postponed until the end of this chapter. As for (1), let's begin by asking what can be argued on the basis of the passage just considered. Although the claim that both metaphor and homonymy are capable of being avoided by the same procedure does suggest some kind of relation between them, is this a necessary relation? A counter example suffices to show that the passage does not provide conclusive evidence for an answer to this question. Consider the example of yoga: doing yoga is commonly said to reduce both (a) bad posture and (b) mental stress. But does this mean that (a) and (b) are necessarily related? Certainly, the fact that they can both be reduced by the same procedure implies a relation between them, but it does

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<sup>404</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 97b 35-39 (translation modified): 'εἰ δὲ μὴ διαλέγεσθαι δεῖ μεταφοραῖς δῆλον ὅτι οὐδ' ὀρίζεσθαι οὔτε μεταφοραῖς οὔτε ὅσα λέγεται μεταφοραῖς· διαλέγεσθαι γὰρ ἀνάγκη ἔσται μεταφοραῖς.' I have altered Tredennick's version of this passage, which in the same line gives two different translations of the Greek word διαλέγεσθαι ('defining' and 'arguing'), and then in the next line uses one of these same English words ('defining') to translate a completely different Greek word (ὀρίζεσθαι).

not in and of itself explain what this relation is. Similarly, the passage under consideration is therefore suggestive of a certain relation between metaphor and homonymy, but inconclusive as to whether this relation is necessary or merely accidental.<sup>405</sup>

Aristotle's schematic definitions of both metaphor and homonymy also suggest a proximity between the two concepts. For starters, recall that Aristotle defines metaphor in the *Poetics* as 'the application of a word that belongs to another thing' (1457b 7). Quite similarly, in the opening lines of the *Categories* he defines homonymy, ἡ ὁμωνυμία, according to the following formulation: '[t]hings are homonymously named, when they have the name only in common, the definition [...] corresponding with the name being different.'<sup>406</sup> These two formulations thus present an overlap between the concepts of homonymy and metaphor, insofar as the latter is conceived in terms of an act in which the name of one thing is transposed to another thing, and the former is conceived as the relationship inhering between two different things sharing a name in common. Homonymy seems precisely for this reason to be a relationship in 'name only (ὄνομα μόνον κοινόν)'.

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<sup>405</sup> A similar passage that could be taken to suggest an implicit connection between metaphor and homonymy can be found in Aristotle's discussion of imagination, φαντασία, in Book III, Chapter 3 of the *De Anima*. At 428a 1, Aristotle says that '[i]f imagination is (*apart from any metaphorical sense of the word*) the process by which we say that an image is presented to us (εἰ δὲ ἔστιν ἡ φαντασία καθ' ἣν λέγομεν φάντασμα τι ἡμῖν γιγνεσθαι καὶ μὴ εἶ τι κατὰ μεταφορὰν λέγομεν), it is one of those faculties or states of mind by which we judge and are either right or wrong (μία τίς ἐστι τούτων δύναμις ἢ ἕξις, καθ' ἣν κρίνομεν καὶ ἀληθεύομεν καὶ ψεύδομεθα)' (emphasis added). The fact that Aristotle here brackets the metaphorical sense(s) of imagination as irrelevant to his analysis seems to imply that these senses bear no necessary connection to what imagination essentially is. In the language of the *Categories* – as we will come to see briefly – this also suggests that the metaphorical senses of imagination are merely homonymous. Yet as we shall also shortly see, a connection between metaphor and homonymy cannot be made without qualification.

<sup>406</sup> Aristotle, *Categories*, 1a 1-2 (translation modified): 'ὁμωνυμία λέγεται ὡν ὄνομα μόνον κοινόν, ὁ δὲ κατὰ τοῦνομα λόγος τῆς οὐσίας ἕτερος'. As explained in note 4, I have opted to alter the translation of ὁμωνυμία λέγεται from 'equivocally named' to 'homonymously named', so as to be consistent with the discussion of homonymy that follows.

Nevertheless, a passage from *Topics* VI.2 makes any straightforward identification of metaphor and homonymy problematic. There, Aristotle observes that '[w]ords are sometimes used neither equivocally, nor metaphorically,'<sup>407</sup> which in itself indicates quite clearly that homonymy and metaphor are distinct concepts. Otherwise, there would be no need to mention the metaphorical use of words in addition to the homonymous one; but what then is the difference between the two?

To answer this question, it is first of all necessary to recall the example of a homonymous term, which we saw Aristotle address in *Topics* I.15: that of the predicate 'sharpness,' τὸ ὀξύ. This predicate is deemed equivocal because it can be used in relation to sounds, material objects and, although Aristotle does not explicitly mention this, tastes and odors as well. Another example that can be used to illustrate this point is the word 'bark': the English language permits the use of this word in reference both to (a) the protective covering of a tree's trunk, and (b) the sound that a dog makes. Yet to the extent that a tree's bark and a dog's bark are essentially unconnected things, Aristotle would seemingly agree that the word 'bark' is a homonymous term, much like the Greek ὀξύ. In other words, both these terms seem to correspond to what Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* calls 'things that bear the same name merely by chance (τοῖς γε ἀπὸ τῆς τυχῆς ὁμωνύμοις).'<sup>408</sup> While this passage does not indicate in and of itself whether all homonymous terms will be homonymous 'by chance,' ἀπὸ τῆς τυχῆς, it does establish that at least some cases of homonymy will disclose entirely empty (and therefore meaningless) connections between essentially unrelated things.

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<sup>407</sup> Aristotle, *Topics*, 140a 7 (emphasis added): 'οὔτε καθ' ὁμωνυμίαν οὔτε κατὰ μεταφορὰν'.

<sup>408</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), 1096b 26 (emphasis added).

Had Aristotle said no more after defining metaphor in the *Poetics* as ‘the application of a word that belongs to another thing,’ his conception would be general enough to permit an identification between it and homonymy. Yet, as we have seen, what Aristotle’s subsequent discussion of metaphor in both the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* adds to this conception is the consideration that it is not simply the exchange of names between any two things that makes metaphor what it is; it is rather an exchange of names between two things that, while remaining specifically, generically or analogically distinct, nevertheless bear some perceptible similarity to one another. We have already seen Aristotle affirm this in the *Poetics*; he does so in *Topics* VI.2 as well, stating that ‘those who use metaphors always do so on account of some similarity.’<sup>409</sup>

At this point, it seems possible to establish a tentative account of the relationship between metaphor and homonymy as follows: homonymy is a purely empty relation between things that share a name only, and nothing more; whereas metaphor, although connecting things that are essentially unrelated, nevertheless reveals how they are similar in some noteworthy respect. According to this preliminary adumbration, it seems that homonymy and metaphor both concern essentially unconnected things, but the former has its basis in chance, while the latter has its basis in the perception of a certain non-essential resemblance. Metaphor can therefore be distinguished from homonymy by the consideration that it reveals more than a chance relation between things, but less than an essential one, while homonymy (at least according to the texts we have examined thus far) appears restricted to purely chance connections.

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<sup>409</sup> Aristotle, *Topics*, 140a 11-2: ‘πάντες γὰρ οἱ μεταφέροντες κατὰ τινα ὁμοιότητα μεταφέρουσιν.’

Yet one important factor complicates this neat conceptual distinction. Specifically, it concerns an issue of interpretation with respect to Aristotle's definition of homonymy in the *Categories*, which we briefly analyzed above. Precisely what is at issue is whether or not Aristotle's notion of homonymy is fully restrictive, or whether it admits of a variety of degrees of connection between homonymously related things. If this means that on Aristotle's account there may in fact be more than one kind of homonymy, one of which would be based in chance, and the other(s) in an overlap of common, yet non-essential features between two things, then the association between homonymy and metaphor becomes somewhat more complicated. If, in other words, Aristotle's treatment of homonymy allows for a connected as well as a chance variety, then the former kind of (connected) homonymy could be seen to disclose a parallel relationship to that which metaphors disclose between two distinct things: that is, an overlap or identity of certain features that, nonetheless, fall outside a substantial identification of the things in question.

In order to address this issue, it will be helpful to begin by placing Aristotle's definition of homonymy alongside those of its sister-concepts in the *Categories*, synonymy and paronymy. The former of these two is articulated as follows: '[t]hings are univocally [i.e., synonymously] named, when not only they bear the same name but the name means the same in each case'.<sup>410</sup> The latter, *paronymy*, is defined as inhering between things 'that derive their own name from some other, that is given a new verbal

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<sup>410</sup> Aristotle, *Categories* 1a 6-8: 'συνώνυμα δὲ λέγεται ὧν τό τε ὄνομα κοινὸν καὶ ὁ κατὰ τοῦνομα λόγος τῆς οὐσίας ὁ αὐτός'.

form, as, for instance, ‘grammarian’ from ‘grammar’, from ‘heroism,’ ‘hero,’ and so on.’<sup>411</sup>

It is important to place these relationships within the context of Aristotle’s project in the *Categories* as a whole. The categories, κατηγορίαι, are basic modes of predication. As such, they represent different ways in which something may be predicated of, or said ‘to be’ another thing. In Chapter 4, Aristotle lists 10 of these categories or ‘predicables’ in terms of the interrogatives to which each can be seen to answer: (1) ‘what {or substance} (οὐσίαν)’; (2) ‘how large {that is, Quantity} (ποσὸν)’; (3) ‘what sort of thing {that is, Quality} (ποιόν)’; (4) ‘related to what {or Relation} (πρὸς τι)’; (5) ‘where {or Place} (ποῦ)’; (6) ‘when {or Time} (ποτέ)’; (7) ‘in what attitude {Posture, Position} (κεῖσθαι)’; (8) ‘how disposed {State or Condition} (ἔχειν)’; (9) ‘how active, what doing (or Action) {ποιεῖν}’; and (10) ‘how passive, what suffering {Affection} (πάσχειν).’<sup>412</sup> The fact that there are no less than 10 ways in which one thing may be predicated of another is the basis for Aristotle’s frequent remarks, in the *Metaphysics* and elsewhere, that being is said in many ways, τὸ ὄν λέγεται πολλαχῶς. Yet this is not primarily a semantic observation on the lexical senses of the word being. Rather, the many ways in which being can be said is a reflection of the many modes in which one thing can be predicated of, or said ‘to be’ another.

Effectively, this means that homonymy and synonymy must be understood to arise from the different ways in which things may be predicated of one another. The example given by Aristotle to illustrate the former concept is that of the predicate

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<sup>411</sup> Aristotle, *Categories* 1a 12-5: ‘παρῶνυμα δὲ λέγεται ὅσα ἀπὸ τινος τῇ πτώσει τὴν κατὰ τοῦνομα προσηγορίαν ἔχει, οἷον ἀπὸ τῆς γραμματικῆς ὁ γραμματικὸς καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀνδρείας ὁ ἀνδρεῖος’

<sup>412</sup> Aristotle, *Categories* 1b 25-8 (translation modified).

‘animal’ in relation to ‘a man and a portrait’: animal can be predicated of both ‘man’ and ‘a portrait’, yet ‘if you are asked to define what being an animal means, you give in either case a definition appropriate to that case alone.’<sup>413</sup> In this way, ‘animal’ can be predicated of both a man and a portrait, but in each case the predication is in a different mode: in the case of a man, the predicate ‘animal’ picks out a feature that answers the question ‘what’ a man is; it therefore is predicated of man as a ‘substance (οὐσίᾳ).’ In the case of a portrait of a man, however, the predicate ‘animal’ picks out a different feature than it does when it is said of a real, living man. It signals that the portrait is a likeness or representation of an animal (i.e., a man), and therefore is predicated in the mode of a relation (πρὸς τι).<sup>414</sup> Since ‘animal’ is predicated of a man and a portrait under different categories, it is said homonymously of both things. Conversely, with respect to synonymy, ‘animal’ can be predicated of both a man and an ox, and because the predication picks out the same feature in both of them (i.e., the substance), it is used in the same mode for each. Animal is therefore said synonymously of both.<sup>415</sup> While it is

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<sup>413</sup> Aristotle, *Categories* 1a 4-5: ‘ἂν γὰρ τις ἀποδιδῶ τί ἐστι αὐτῶν ἐκατέρῳ τὸ ζῶν εἶναι, ἴδιον ἐκατέρου λόγον ἀποδώσει’.

<sup>414</sup> Indeed, as we saw already, in Chapter 8 of the *Categories* Aristotle affirms that similarity, τὸ ὁμοίον, is predicated as a form of relation (πρὸς τι) between two or more things.

<sup>415</sup> Aristotle explains synonymy in relation to the examples of man and ox by saying that ‘if you are asked what is meant by their both of them being called “animals,” you give *that particular name* in both cases the same definition (ἐὰν γὰρ ἀπωδιδῶ τις τὸν ἐκατέρου λόγον, τί ἐστὶν αὐτῶν ἐκατέρῳ τὸ ζῶν εἶναι, τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον ἀποδιδῶσει).’ (1a 6-12; emphasis added) Yet Cooke’s translation here seems to superimpose on the text an interpretation that is in fact quite controversial. He translates τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον ἀποδιδῶσει as ‘you give *that particular name* in both cases the same definition’; but in the Greek text there is no mention in this sentence of the word ὄνομα or its cognates. Accordingly, this translation already seems to lean in the direction of a purely semantic reading of Aristotle’s treatment of homonymy and synonymy, according to which this and other analyses of homonymy concern the relationship between the meanings of words. This linguistic, or semantic interpretation of homonymy is explicitly elaborated by G.E.L. Owen’s seminal article, “Logic and Metaphysics in Some Earlier Works of Aristotle”. There, Owen addresses the apparent contradiction between fact that (1) in Book I, Chapter 7 of the *Eudemian Ethics* (1217b 33-5), Aristotle claims that because both being and good are said in many ways, there can be no special science of either of them (οὐδὲ ἐπιστήμη ἐστὶ μία οὔτε τοῦ ὄντος οὔτε τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ); and (2) in Book IV, Chapter 2 of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle says that a general science of being *is* possible, because the many senses of being ‘[point] toward one principle (ἅπαν πρὸς μίαν ἀρχήν).’ *Aristotle’s*

tempting to view homonymy and synonymy as exclusively concerning the meanings of words, they are instead to be viewed ontologically in relation to the different modes of predication. On this reading, the different meanings of words are in fact indications of the many ways in which something can be predicated of another. This means that, for Aristotle, it is primarily because things can be predicated of others in different modes that words come to take on different significations, and not the other way around.

As mentioned, the issue of interpretation that confronts us with respect to the passage under consideration concerns exactly how restrictive Aristotle's definition of homonymy is. On the surface, homonymy and synonymy here seem to be defined in strict opposition to one another. They accordingly seem to occupy two extreme poles of a spectrum, at one end of which (homonymy) are things with no essential relation to one another, sharing only a common name, and at the other end of which (synonymy) are things sharing both a common name and a definition. On this reading, it would fall to a

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Metaphysics, trans. J. Sachs (Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 1999), 1003b 6 (translation modified). Owen supposes firstly that the idea of a *pros hen* relationship uniting the various meanings of being is a sign that Aristotle's thoughts on homonymy developed in between the time of writing the *EE* and *MP*, and secondly that the *pros hen* relationship is one between the different meanings of the word being, which are united in reference to what he calls a 'focal meaning'. See (eds.) I. Duing & G.E.L. Owen, *Aristotle and Plato in the Mid-Fourth Century* (Goteborg: Elanders, 1960) p. 169. Cf. also J. Hintikka, "Different Kinds of Equivocation in Aristotle", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* IX, 3 (July, 1971), p. 371. Nevertheless, the semanticist reading of Aristotle's treatment of homonymy and related topics has since been called into question, especially by Irwin (1981). Irwin attempts to retain the idea of a focal connection, which Owen posits, but insists rather that the connection is one between the natures of things and not primarily between the meanings of the names that refer to them. He claims that the idea of focal connection improves on that of focal meaning because it '[avoids] the misleading suggestion that Aristotle means to indicate a relation between senses of a word [...] rather than the things the word applies to.' "Homonymy in Aristotle," *The Review of Metaphysics* 34, no. 3 (March 1981), p. 531, note 12. This same criticism is made by K. Fraser, who argues that 'homonyms are entities, not words. Homonymy in language – words corresponding to multiple definitions – would seem to arise from homonymy in entities.' "Aristoteles ex Aristotele: A Response to the Analytical Reconstruction of Aristotelian Ontology", *Dionysius* XX (Dec., 2002), p. 57. Shields nevertheless argues that Aristotle's theory of signification, on which the theory of homonymy is founded, involves both an ontological and a semantic dimension. His answer to the problem is at once to allow that signification is a relationship of meaning, and to posit a distinction between 'deep' and 'shallow' meaning, according to which shallow meaning concerns words and deep meaning concerns the essential natures of things: '[f]or meaning relations are sufficiently elastic that they accommodate essence specification as a form of deep meaning.' C. Shields, *Order in Multiplicity: Homonymy in the Philosophy of Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), p. 101.

third concept – that of paronymy (παρωνυμία) – to explain the relationship between things with the same or similar names, and partially overlapping definitions, which do not satisfy the criteria for either homonymy or synonymy.

Yet some recent commentators have sought to exploit a conceptual ambiguity in Aristotle’s discussion of homonymy to show that this reading is not the only possibility. The ambiguity in question concerns whether the conditions outlined in the definition of homonymy are both necessary and sufficient, or merely sufficient ones. The definition posits that the conditions allowing things to be considered homonymous are (1) that they have *only* the same name in common; and (2) that the definition corresponding to the name is different. Nevertheless, this can be taken logically to mean either (a) that homonymous things share a name in common *and nothing else*; or (b) that homonymous things have the same name but not the same definition. In other words, on reading (a) the word ‘only (μόνον)’ serves to exclude *all* other forms of commonality between two things with the same name, meaning that the relation between them is purely nominal. Yet on (b), μόνον operates by excluding a common definition underlying two things of which the same term can be predicated, while leaving open the possibility that they may still share one or more common features that fall short of an overlap in essential definitions.<sup>416</sup> Consequently, depending on whether one takes (a) the extreme reading or

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<sup>416</sup> As noted by both Irwin (1981) and Ward (2008), the first reading leads to a restricted definition of homonymy according to which two things will be homonymous *if and only if* they share nothing but a name in common, whereas the second allows that things could also be homonymous by possessing the same name *as well as* certain shared characteristics, as long as these characteristics do not amount to a complete identity of definitions. Ward argues that, with respect to the two possible readings noted above, if we take the first reading ‘all cases of homonymy become cases of what we might call accidental homonymy [...]. In contrast, by adopting the second reading [...], we leave open the possibility that homonymous things may possess overlapping features and definitions although they lack identical natures.’ (p. 16). Irwin labels the latter as the ‘moderate view’, and the former the ‘extreme view.’ He notes that the moderate view allows both “‘unconnected homonyms,” with different definitions having nothing in common, and “‘connected homonyms,” with different definitions having something in common.’

(b) the moderate reading, homonymy can mean either a fundamental lack of connection between two things with the same name, or it can indicate a range of possible connections between such things, extending from a total lack of connection to a partial overlap in certain unessential features.

On the basis of this ambiguity, some recent commentators have attributed to Aristotle a doctrine of ‘connected’ (Irwin), ‘core-dependent’ (Shields), ‘related’ or ‘systematic’ (Ward) homonymy. On these readings, Aristotle’s account of homonymy in the *Categories* allows for both a connected and an unconnected variety. The unconnected kind would then correspond to what we have seen Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* call ‘things that bear the same name merely by chance.’ Indeed, the fact that Aristotle feels compelled to specify certain kinds of homonymy as chance or accidental, ἀπὸ τῆς τυχῆς, seems to imply the existence of another kind of homonymy that expresses more than a purely nominal, empty connection, yet less than a fully substantial identity between things that share the same name.<sup>417</sup> On the other hand, the moderate reading also

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Conversely, on the extreme view ‘all homonyms are unconnected homonyms.’ (“Homonymy in Aristotle,” p. 524.)

<sup>417</sup> Accordingly, the aforementioned proponents of the moderate reading (especially Irwin and Ward) have sought to provide examples of what could be seen as connected homonymies from Aristotle’s other works. Although some of these examples are more problematic than others, they nevertheless demonstrate a range of possible connections outside of the identity of definitions to which synonymy is limited. At the forefront of these examples are the πρὸς ἓν λεγόμενα – things said in relation to a common principle – which Aristotle mentions in Book IV of the *Metaphysics*. As examples of things that are said *pros hen*, Aristotle there mentions ‘the healthy (τὸ ὑγιεινὸν)’, ‘the medical (τὸ ἰατρικὸν)’, and ‘being (τὸ ὄν)’ (1003a 33 – 1003b 10). Yet he also says that, precisely because these things are understood in relationship to a primary referent, they are not said ‘ambiguously (οὐχ ὁμώνυμως)’ (1003a 34). This is a problem for proponents of the moderate reading of *Categories* 1 who want to suggest that these terms are examples of connected homonymy, since Aristotle’s claim in *MP* IV, 2 that the terms are not said ‘ambiguously’ must then be taken to mean that they are not *wholly*, i.e. accidentally homonymous. While this is not entirely convincing, there are yet other examples of things that Aristotle claims are said in many ways, yet which are not for that reason said to be homonymous. One such example is Aristotle’s discussion of the different senses of ‘not to see (μὴ βλέπειν)’ in Book I, Chapter 15 of the *Topics* (106b 16-7). Although Aristotle concludes that this means ‘not to see’ is said in many ways (πλεοναχῶς), it is by no means the case that the instances to which its two possible meanings refer are unrelated. ‘Not to possess sight (τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ὄψιν)’ and ‘not to exercise the faculty of sight (τὸ μὴ ἐνεργεῖν τῇ ὄψει)’ are connected because their contraries – ‘to possess sight (τὸ ἔχειν [i.e. ὄψιν]’ and ‘to exercise the faculty of sight (τὸ μὴ ἐνεργεῖν

raises some fairly common sense questions about why Aristotle would bother to introduce a third modality – paronymy – if he recognized that the connected variety of homonymy already serves as an intermediary between synonymy and (unconnected) homonymy. In this way, proponents of the extreme view of homonymy retain a crucial place for paronymy as the intermediate between homonymy and synonymy, whereas proponents of the moderate view (such as Irwin, Shields and Ward) tend to arrive at a deflationary account of its importance, because connected homonymy can do the work that, on the extreme view, is left to paronymy to do.<sup>418</sup>

In fact, however, it seems possible to question whether it is necessary to associate what Aristotle means by paronymous terms either with (a) the notion of connected homonymy in general, or with (b) the *pros hen legomena* (such as being, good etc.) that some commentators have sought to relate to the notion of connected homonymy. It must be admitted that Aristotle simply characterizes paronymous terms in the *Categories* as those that derive their names from other terms (as ‘grammarian’ is derived from

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[i.e. τῆ ὄψει ]’ – are fundamentally related as two interdependent species of what Aristotle calls activity, ἐντελεχεία, in the *De Anima*. There Aristotle suggests that all kinds of sensation admit of two interconnected kinds of activity, which correspond to the distinction made within activity itself in Chapter 1 between the possession of a disposition and its active exercise. Far from being two unconnected things, the different senses of both ‘to see’ and ‘not to see’ reflect an overlap in their essential definitions as related instances of activity, ἐντελεχεία, and its opposite. In this regard I agree with Ward when she distinguishes the senses of ‘not to see’ from the properly accidental kinds of homonymy examined by Aristotle earlier in *Topics* I.15: ‘being able to see and actually seeing are but two modes of one thing, enumerated as a first and second actuality of the sense faculty [...]. So, the ways in which something is seeing or not contrasts with the previous examples of accidental homonymy, being sharp or light. As is evident, the case of seeing [...] refers to two states that have overlapping definitions [...].’ (p. 60)

<sup>418</sup> Accordingly, both Ricoeur (1977) and Ross (1924) take Aristotle’s discussion of things said *pros hen* in *Metaphysics* IV.2 to be paronyms rather than homonyms, because they evidently take a restrictive reading of homonymy. Ricoeur thus claims that ‘there is a continuous chain formed from the paronyms in paragraph 1 of the *Categories* to the reference *pros hen, ad unum* in *Metaphysics* G 2 and E 1.’ *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 272. Ross, for his part, holds that the things said *pros hen* in *Metaphysics* IV.2 must be ‘intermediate between *synōnyma* which [...] have both a common name and common definition and *homōnyma* which have only a common name.’ He therefore concludes that the healthy, the medical and being all ‘answer to the definition of a third class recognized in *Cat.* [...] namely, *parōnyma*, things called by a name derived from some other name.’ W.D. Ross, *Aristotle Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), p. 256 (cited in Ward, p. 17 note 22).

‘grammar’); he does not say anything in that text about the reason why such derivations take place. Conversely, in *Metaphysics* IV, he characterizes *pros hen legomena* as those that are understood in reference to a primary sense, but is this the same thing as a name being derived from another name? Although the commentators mentioned in the previous note have pointed to some very suggestive parallels between the examples given by Aristotle in the *Categories* to illustrate paronymous terms, and those given in the *Metaphysics* to illustrate *pros hen legomena*, this connection perhaps goes beyond what can be argued strictly on the basis of the text. Had the text of the *Categories* stated that paronymous terms are derived from other primary terms because they point to a single meaning, then it would be possible to argue this; as it is, the text is inconclusive.

What are the conclusions that can be drawn from this discussion with respect to the relationship between homonymy and metaphor? To the extent that the similarity revealed by a metaphor can be taken as evidence of an overlap or identity in certain non-essential features between two things, the moderate reading of *Categories* 1 suggests a partial connection between metaphors and what some commentators call ‘connected’ homonymies, while maintaining a distinction between metaphors and the unconnected (i.e., chance) variety. On the other hand, the restrictive reading of *Categories* 1 demands a clearer distinction between the two concepts, on the basis of the fact that homonymy is limited to a purely chance relationship between two things that necessarily share nothing more than a name in common, whereas a metaphor discloses a partial overlap in inessential features in the form of a resemblance between them.

In fact, there is no need to take a stand on this issue for the purposes of the current discussion. Regardless of which reading one assumes, it is possible to arrive at a

preliminary formulation of the implicit reasoning according to which Aristotle opposes the use of metaphors in formulating definitions. The reasoning is that, even if metaphors reveal similarities between things, these similarities express an overlap in merely accidental properties – that is, the kinds of properties that tell us little about the essential natures of the things in question. In other words, the similarity revealed by a metaphor, which Aristotle claims in the *Topics* ‘in a way adds to our knowledge’<sup>419</sup>, nevertheless reflects an overlap in precisely the kinds of features with which the essential definition of a thing is not concerned.

As we shall see in what follows, all scientific knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) is for Aristotle dependent on an understanding of the necessary causal factors that determine a thing’s essential properties. In the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle therefore indicates that the necessary connections between things, with which the scientific understanding of the world is above all concerned, are to be found in the essential properties that define the genera to which they belong.<sup>420</sup> This means that, as already mentioned, the possibility of a scientific understanding of things is tied partly to the possibility of defining them by means of precise linguistic formulations that reveal their essence. As Deslauriers argues, in this sense, ‘[t]he importance of accurate and natural definitions for Aristotle is then that the elaboration of bodies of knowledge depends on the accuracy of the definitions

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<sup>419</sup> Aristotle, *Topics* 140a 9: ‘ἡ μὲν μεταφορὰ ποιεῖ πῶς γινώριμον’.

<sup>420</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 75a 28: ‘[s]ince in each genus it is the attributes that belong essentially to that particular genus that belong to it of necessity (ἔπει δ’ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὑπάρχει περὶ ἕκαστον γένος ὅσα καθ’ αὐτὰ ὑπάρχει), it is evident that scientific demonstrations are concerned with essential attributes and proceed from them (φανερὸν ὅτι περὶ τῶν καθ’ αὐτὰ ὑπαρχόντων αἱ ἐπιστημονικαὶ ἀποδείξεις καὶ ἐκ τοιούτων εἰσίν).’

which serve as the starting-points of demonstrative syllogisms.<sup>421</sup> Yet Aristotle explicitly states in the *Topics* that ‘metaphorical expressions are always obscure’.<sup>422</sup>

Consequently, insofar as this obscurity undermines the clarity and terminological precision of the formulations in which definitions must be expressed, from a linguistic standpoint metaphors (like homonymies) are actually an obstacle to the communication of scientific knowledge. Put somewhat differently, metaphors and homonymies both contribute to the kind of deception, ἀπάτη, that Aristotle in *On Sophistical Refutations* attributes to similarities that are merely nominal.<sup>423</sup> To the extent that they reveal (non-essential) similarities between things, metaphors provide knowledge *in a way* (πῶς), and thus can be conceptually distinguished from homonymy. But this qualified knowledge is nonetheless inadequate to the epistemological demands of the definition, which ought to disclose a thing’s essential nature and thereby form the starting-point of a scientific demonstration, which is capable of logically proving the inherence of various properties in a given subject (or subjects). It is for this reason that, even if metaphors can be conceptually distinguished from homonymies by the consideration that the former are based on some perceptible resemblance whereas the latter are based in chance, the fact that a metaphor reveals inessential traits means that, scientifically speaking, the similarities between metaphor and homonymy outweigh their differences.

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<sup>421</sup> Deslauriers, *Aristotle on Definition*, p. 15.

<sup>422</sup> Aristotle, *Topics* 139b 34-5: ‘πάν γὰρ ἀσαφές τὸ κατὰ μεταφορὰν λεγόμενον.’

<sup>423</sup> Aristotle, *On Sophistical Refutations* 169a 37 – 169b 3. In this passage, Aristotle closely links the problem of deception with that of purely linguistic, or nominal similarities. Accordingly, deception occurs more often when discussing a topic with other people, for which language is a necessity, than when contemplating something alone: ‘firstly, because the deception (ἡ ἀπάτη) occurs more commonly when we are inquiring with others than by ourselves (for an inquiry with someone else is carried on by means of words (διὰ λόγων), whereas in our own minds it is carried on quite as much by means of the thing itself (δι’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ πραγμάτος); secondly, because, even in solitary inquiry, a man is apt to be deceived when he carries on his inquiry by means of words; and thirdly, the deception arises from the similarity, and the similarity arises from the language (ἡ μὲν ἀπάτη ἐκ τῆς ὁμοιότητος, ἡ δ’ ὁμοιότης ἐκ τῆς λέξεως).’

### 5.3 Demonstration and the Syllogism

In this section I will show that, in principle, Aristotle's injunction against the use of metaphors in formulating definitions is consistent with his account of scientific demonstration ( $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\xi\iota\varsigma$ ) in the *Posterior Analytics*. To the extent that, as we shall see, scientific demonstration requires precise, essential predication of concept-terms in the premises of a formally valid syllogism, and to the extent that the use of metaphorical words undermines this kind of predication, the latter are indeed disruptive to the proper expression of scientific knowledge as Aristotle understands it. Moreover, it will be seen that this injunction against the use of metaphors applies no less to the metaphorical word than it does to the simile or comparison, which as we saw in the previous two chapters also qualifies as a metaphor according to Aristotle's own broad definition in *Poetics* 22.

In what follows, two things must accordingly be borne in mind: (1) the first is that, because Aristotle's own definition of metaphor allows it to be taken in a more narrow or more broad way, I will hereafter refer whenever relevant to metaphor taken in the narrow way (i.e., as the metaphorical word) as metaphor-A, and metaphor taken in the broad way (i.e., as an act of comparative predication) as metaphor-B. In cases where I use the generic word 'metaphor' in an unspecified way, it must be understood that I mean it in the a neutral way, as referring to either –A) or –B) above. (2) The second is that Aristotle's theories of induction and demonstration, which we will be examining in this and the next section, have been subject of intense debate for over two millennia, and have generated an immense tradition of commentary that continues to this day. Although I will attempt to draw on these theories in the following, it is crucial to recognize at the outset that they are both fraught with interpretive issues whose resolution, to the extent

that it is possible, would necessitate an entire thesis (or several entire theses) of its own. Accordingly, insofar as my focus here is to elaborate Aristotle's justification for why metaphors of any kind are inadequate to the purposes of scientific knowledge, I will permit myself to leave certain questions unanswered wherever their resolution requires too great a digression from my main topic.<sup>424</sup>

To begin with, in order to understand demonstration as a means of expressing and organizing scientific knowledge, it is first necessary to say something more about scientific knowledge itself. As mentioned above, Aristotle understands scientific knowledge, ἐπιστήμη, to be characterized by the kind of account that can explain why a thing is what it is, and also (in the case of natural beings) why it is becoming the thing it is becoming. In other words, scientific knowledge is inherently tied to the discovery of a thing's essential causes. This point is made explicit in the opening lines of the *Physics*, where Aristotle affirms that 'we conceive ourselves to know about a thing when we are acquainted with its ultimate causes and first principles, and have gotten down to its elements.'<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> Specifically, it may be noted that my account of induction in the final section of this chapter perhaps goes beyond what can plausibly be attributed to Aristotle on the basis of extant textual evidence. In this section I follow the reading of Biondi (2004), who turns quite liberally to the Aristotelian tradition of medieval, scholastic and modern commentators in order to fill in the gaps left by the paucity of texts in which Aristotle says anything substantial about induction. In order to address this potential objection, it would be necessary to determine whether and to what extent this traditional reading is supported by Aristotle's own text, which would require another thesis of its own.

<sup>425</sup> Aristotle, *Physics* 184 12-5: 'τότε γὰρ οἰόμεθα γινώσκειν ἕκαστον, ὅταν τὰ αἴτια γνωρίσμεν τὰ πρῶτα καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ μέχρι τῶν στοιχείων.' Aristotle reiterates this claim in *Physics* II.3 (and elsewhere), stating that 'we never reckon that we understand a thing till we can give an account of its "how and why"' (εἰδέναι δ' οὐ πρότερον οἰόμεθα ἕκαστον πρὶν ἂν λάβωμεν τὸ διὰ τί περὶ ἕκαστον, τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ τὸ λάβειν τὴν πρώτην αἰτίαν)' (194b 19-20). In the same chapter, Aristotle suggests that the question of a thing's cause (αἰτία) can be answered in no less than four distinct, but interrelated ways. Although this seems to contradict Aristotle's claim in Book I, Chapter 7 that there are only *three* primary causes or 'principles (ἀρχαί)' (191a 21) and not four, there is in reality no contradiction between the two enumerations; the second one in Book II is simply a more detailed, and more abstract elaboration of the causes articulated in Book I. Aristotle himself explains this in Book II, Chapter 7 when he notes that three of the four causes often 'coincide (ἔρχεται δὲ τὰ τρία εἰς ἓν πολλάκις); for the essential nature of a

It is in the *Posterior Analytics* that Aristotle outlines the means by which scientific knowledge is to be accessed and communicated. As we shall see in what follows, Aristotle characterizes two basic processes for the acquisition and expression of scientific knowledge: ‘induction (ἐπαγωγή)’ and ‘demonstration (ἀποδείξις)’. Succinctly, Aristotle claims in *Posterior Analytics* I.18 that ‘we learn either by induction or by demonstration.’<sup>426</sup> Beginning with the latter, in order to understand what demonstration (ἀποδείξις) is, we must begin with Aristotle’s account of the syllogism (συλλογισμὸς) in the *Prior Analytics*, because demonstration is conceived in the *Posterior Analytics* as a special kind of syllogism. For starters, in the first chapter of the *Prior Analytics*, Aristotle defines the syllogism as follows: ‘[a] syllogism is a form of words in which, when certain assumptions are made, something other than what has been assumed necessarily follows from the fact that the assumptions are such. By “from the fact that they are such” I mean that it is because of them that the conclusion follows; and by this I mean that there is no need of any further term to render the conclusion necessary.’<sup>427</sup> According to this definition, we can say that the syllogism is composed of

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thing and the purpose for which it is produced are often identical (τὸ μὲν γὰρ τί ἐστί καὶ τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα ἔν ἐστι) [...], and moreover the efficient cause must bear some resemblance in ‘form’ to the effect (τὸ δ’ ὅθεν ἢ κίνησις πρῶτον τῷ εἶδει ταῦτὸ τούτοις)’ (198a 25-27). In this way, because of the overlap that often occurs between the formal and final, and again between formal and efficient causes, it makes sense in the case of some natural things to speak of there being only three causes, and in others to speak of four. In the abstract, however, a thing’s causes can always be analyzed into four distinct categories, even if more than one of these turn out to be the same cause (i.e. the form) considered from slightly different standpoints.

<sup>426</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 81a 40 – 81b 1: ‘μανθάνομεν ἢ ἐπαγωγῇ ἢ ἀποδείξει’.

<sup>427</sup> Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*, trans. H. Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 24b 19-23: ‘Συλλογισμὸς δὲ ἐστὶ λόγος ἐν ᾧ θεθέντων τινῶν ἕτερόν τι τῶν κειμένων ἐξ ἀνάγκης συμβαίνει τῷ ταῦτα εἶναι. λέγω δὲ τῷ ταῦτα εἶναι τὸ διὰ ταῦτα συμβαίνειν, τὸ δὲ διὰ ταῦτα συμβαίνειν τὸ μηδενὸς ἕξωθεν ὅρου προσδεῖν πρὸς τὸ γένεσθαι τὸ ἀναγκαῖον.’ For a more or less identical definition of the syllogism, see *Topica* 100a 25-26. Biondi offers the following as an alternate translation: ‘[a] syllogism is discourse in which, certain things being posited or laid down, something other than what is posited follows of necessity from their being so. By “from their being so” I mean that they produce the consequence, and by this, that no further term is required from without in order to make the consequence necessary.’ P. Biondi, *Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19: Introduction, Greek Text*,

an antecedent (that which is assumed or ‘laid down’) and a consequent (that which ‘follows’ from [i.e. the antecedent’s] being so). The antecedent is in turn composed of two premises, in the form of propositions each predicating a certain property of a given subject, such that their conjunction produces the consequent of necessity, ἐξ ἀνάγκης.

To illustrate how syllogistic reasoning functions, let’s consider the following well-known example:

All men are mortal.  
Socrates is a man.  
Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

In the same way that the syllogism taken as a whole can be divided into two parts (antecedent and consequent), each proposition taken individually can be divided into two terms (subject and predicate). In syllogistic reasoning, the terms of each proposition are given technical names (major term, minor term, middle term) in light of the role played by each in generating the conclusion.

The logical force of the syllogistic inference, which necessitates the movement from antecedent to consequent (or from premises to conclusion), results from the rapport of subordination between the terms of each proposition, one of which is a subject and the other a predicate, as well as that between the propositions or premises themselves. In the *Prior Analytics*, Aristotle outlines several different ways in which the major, minor and middle terms may be organized, and accordingly presents several different ‘figures’ of syllogistic reasoning. In addition to the differences in the arrangement of terms in each figure, two other factors affect the logical force of a syllogistic inference: the first of these is the quantification of the subject terms (i.e., whether the predication is universal

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*Translation and Commentary Accompanied by a Critical Analysis* (Saint-Nicolas: Les Presses de l’Université de Laval, 2004), p. 71.

or particular, or in other words whether the predicate is attributed to all or only some of the subject), and the second is the quality of each proposition in the antecedent (i.e., whether the predication is affirmative or negative).<sup>428</sup> Depending on these factors, a consequent will either follow from its antecedent, or it will not. It is only when the inferential movement from antecedent to consequent follows of necessity that there is truly a syllogism.<sup>429</sup>

The fact that the logical force of a syllogistic inference depends partly on the way in which the terms are predicated of one another in the premises means that, as in the formulation of definitions, there is a need for precise signification in all syllogistic reasoning. The syllogism is a conceptual operation but it is only by means of words that concepts can be signified. Consequently, logic demands a precise use of words so as to avoid the kind of confusion that arises when one word refers to more than one thing. In this sense, as Biondi observes, Aristotle's account of the syllogism constitutes an implicit backdrop to his discussion of the law of non-contradiction in *Metaphysics* IV. There, Aristotle argues that the law of non-contradiction is not 'the demand that one say something either to be or not to be [...], but rather that what he says must *mean* something to both himself and someone else (ἀλλὰ τὸ σημαίνειν γέ τι καὶ τῷ αὐτῷ

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<sup>428</sup> As Biondi explains, '[f]or an affirmative proposition, only part of the predicate's extension is in use, while for a negative one the entire extension is being considered. Whether one says *all* or *some animals are mortal*, *animal* is subordinate only to part of the extension of *mortal* because the latter is conceived as being predicabile of things other than animals. If one says *all* or *some animals are not mortal*, it is necessary to place animals outside the entire extension of *mortal* [...]' (*Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 74)

<sup>429</sup> In Biondi's words, '[o]ut of all the possible systems of subordination using three terms, a syllogism arises only when the consequent follows from an antecedent whose terms are arranged in such a way that the predication of one term of another in the premises and the subordination of one premise to another leads necessarily to a conclusion strictly by the terms' "being so." If the conclusion is not produced with necessity, there is no syllogism.' (*Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 75)

καὶ ἄλλω); for this is necessary, if he is going to say anything.’<sup>430</sup> In other words, the law of non-contradiction concerns the meaning of words used to refer to things in the world, and to explain what kinds of things they are. Consequently, Aristotle affirms that obedience to this law demands consistent definitions for the words we use, which in turn calls for a precise delineation of the many things to which a given word can refer. As a result, Aristotle goes on to conclude, ‘[i]t makes no difference if one says [i.e., a word] means more than one thing, but only a limited number, since one could set down a different word for each formulation [...]. But if one were not to posit this, but said it meant infinitely many things, it is clear that there would be no definition; for not to mean one thing is to mean nothing’.<sup>431</sup>

The use of univocal concept terms, which signify something definite and unitary both to the one doing the reasoning and whoever else is listening (or reading), are necessary to the proper functioning of the syllogism as Aristotle understands it. Consequently, insofar as scientific demonstration (ἀποδείξις) is conceived as a specific kind of syllogism, the univocal signification of concept-terms is a necessary condition of the latter as well. As mentioned, the *Posterior Analytics* presents Aristotle’s account of scientific demonstration as a specific kind of syllogism, and also (in a much sketchier form) of the process of induction through which the mind accesses the indemonstrable principles of the former. It is clear that Aristotle’s account of demonstration presupposes,

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<sup>430</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1006a 19-23, trans. Sachs (p. 60).

<sup>431</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1006a 35 – 1006b 8, trans. Sachs (p. 61): ‘τὸ γὰρ μὴ ἓν σημαίνειν οὐθὲν σημαίνειν ἐστίν’. Reading this passage in connection with Aristotle’s account of the syllogism in *Prior Analytics*, Biondi accordingly reasons that ‘[s]ince the act of predication [i.e., in a syllogistic proposition] is performed according to the signification of the terms involved, it is therefore necessary that each term signify something definite and unitary. In logic, this means using only univocal concept-terms, concept terms that unambiguously express only one meaning. [...] In other words, predicating something of something [...] is rooted in the prior and more fundamental activity of expressing something significant.’ (*Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 77)

and is intended to answer to the conception of knowledge that we examined briefly above: the conception, that is, that knowledge is fundamentally a knowledge of causes responsible for a thing's being what it is.

Before defining demonstration in *Posterior Analytics* I.2, Aristotle thus repeats the definition of knowledge he gives in both the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*: he argues that we suppose ourselves to know whenever we grasp the cause through which a thing exists and is, and understand that the cause is of that thing alone, and that it could not be otherwise.<sup>432</sup> Six lines below, Aristotle then defines ἀποδείξις as ‘a syllogism which produces scientific knowledge, in other words one which enables us to know by the mere fact that we grasp it.’<sup>433</sup> The important thing to see here is that, as Biondi explains, ‘Aristotle affirms that science is a knowledge of that which is necessary [...], and since the necessary is only that which belongs to something in itself (or *per se*) [...], a demonstration can only be about that which belongs to a thing in itself.’<sup>434</sup> Above all this means that a scientific demonstration is characterized not only by the necessity of the inference from antecedent to consequent, but also by the fact that the predications on which each premise is based must be essential, rather than accidental predications. In Biondi's terms, this means that demonstration exhibits material as well as formal necessity.

Given the framework of Aristotle's discussion of scientific demonstration, there is thus a very clear reason why metaphors of whatever kind do not promote the

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<sup>432</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 71b 9-12: ‘Ἐπίστασθαι δὲ οἴομεθ' ἕκαστον ἀπλῶς, ἀλλὰ μὴ τὸν σοφιστικὸν τρόπον τὸν κατὰ συμβεβηκός, ὅταν τὴν τ' αἰτίαν οἴωμεθα γινώσκειν δι' ἣν τὸ πρᾶγμα ἐστίν, ὅτι ἐκείνου αἰτία ἐστὶ, καὶ μὴ ἐνδέχεται τοῦτ' ἄλλως ἔχειν.’

<sup>433</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 71b 18-9: ‘ἀπόδειξιν δὲ λέγω συλλογισμὸν ἐπιστημονικόν· ἐπιστημονικὸν δὲ λέγω καθ' ὃν τῷ ἔχειν αὐτὸν ἐπιστάμεθα’.

<sup>434</sup> Biondi, *Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 81.

communication of what Aristotle understands to be scientific knowledge. From the assumptions that (a) scientific knowledge takes the form that Aristotle claims it does, and that (b) metaphors function in the way that they do, it follows logically that not only can demonstrative science function properly without metaphorical expressions and comparisons, the latter may in fact be an obstacle to scientific knowledge because they merely present things in relation to what they are like, rather than to what they are in themselves.

Moreover, insofar as one can be said fully to possess scientific knowledge of a subject by possessing a demonstration about it, and a demonstration is a kind of syllogism that requires the use of strictly univocal concept-terms, metaphors could not but disrupt this procedure, and lead it astray. This applies no less to metaphor-A, which is the metaphorical word, than to metaphor-B, which is the transpositional process of comparing two things. The former can only threaten the movement of scientific demonstration by generating terminological ambiguity in virtue of the fact that the word it presents actually refers to something other than its purported referent. The latter is not necessarily a threat, but it does not contribute anything positive, because scientific demonstration is only concerned with the essential and necessary properties that reveal what a thing is in itself, without which it could not be the thing it is. To the extent that metaphor-B, in the form of a simile or comparison, can only reveal what a thing is like rather than what it is itself, it is irrelevant to the expression of properly scientific reasoning. Regardless of whether we take metaphor in its narrow or broad meanings, at best it can have no significant role in the process of demonstration, and at worst it can actually undermine it.

As mentioned, however, demonstration is only one of what I have called the two ‘poles’ of Aristotelian science. The other is what Aristotle calls ἐπαγωγή, which is conventionally translated in English as ‘induction.’ In order to understand the role played by induction in scientific knowledge as Aristotle understands it, we must first ask why demonstration in and of itself is insufficient to account for the acquisition and development of science. The answer Aristotle gives to this question in the *Posterior Analytics* is that, although scientific knowledge is said to be had in the form of a demonstration, the knowledge of principles (ἀρχαὶ) on which demonstration is based is itself *indemonstrable*. By principles, presumably, Aristotle means both the propositions that form the premises of a demonstrative syllogism and the concept terms that play the role of subject and predicate in each of the premises.<sup>435</sup> Aristotle thus contends that ‘if knowledge is such as we have assumed, demonstrative knowledge must proceed from premisses which are true, primary, immediate, better known than, prior to, and causative of the conclusion.’<sup>436</sup> In the next paragraph, he adds moreover that the premisses ‘must be

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<sup>435</sup> There is some uncertainty here over exactly what constitutes the principle of a scientific demonstration. On the one hand, it seems that the principle of a demonstration can be taken as what Aristotle calls an ‘immediate (ἄμεσος)’ proposition or premise. Biondi notes that ἄμεσος can be taken in two closely related ways: both as meaning that a proposition depends ‘on no prior proposition’, and also that the terms in a given proposition are themselves not related by any middle term. As he explains, ‘these two meanings of *immediate* are actually intimately linked: an immediate proposition cannot be the result of a syllogism, for there would then be propositions prior to it; as a result, the two terms in such a proposition cannot be joined through a middle term but must instead be united through themselves.’ (*Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, pp. 91/2) In other words, to the extent that Aristotle understands the principles of scientific demonstration to be *indemonstrable qua immediate*, and immediacy applies in one sense to the proposition taken as a whole and in another sense to the terms of which the latter is composed, the immediate, *indemonstrable* principles of science can be taken *either* as the propositions on which a demonstration is based, *or* the terms from which these propositions are composed. Biondi thus observes that ‘the terms used to form such primary *indemonstrable immediate* premisses can also be understood to be primary since all the terms used in a science would be reducible to these.’ (*Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 93)

<sup>436</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 71b 20-3: ‘Εἰ τοίνυν ἐστὶ τὸ ἐπίστασθαι οἷον ἔθεμεν, ἀνάγκη καὶ τὴν ἀποδεικτικὴν ἐπιστήμην ἐξ ἀληθῶν τ’ εἶναι καὶ πρώτων καὶ ἀμέσων καὶ γνωριμωτέρων καὶ προτέρων καὶ αἰτίων τοῦ συμπεράσματος’.

primary and indemonstrable (ἐκ πρώτων δ' ἀναποδείκτων), because otherwise we shall not know them unless we have proof of them'.<sup>437</sup> What exactly does this mean?

It means that, as Aristotle explains in the following chapter, the demand for a demonstration of the first principles on which scientific demonstration is based necessarily leads to an infinite regress, which would in fact make scientific knowledge impossible. In this chapter, Aristotle develops his position concerning the indemonstrable nature of first principles with a view to mediating two extreme viewpoints, one of which holds that 'there is no knowledge,' and the other of which holds that knowledge is possible but that 'all facts are demonstrable.'<sup>438</sup> Aristotle's own way out of this dilemma steers a middle path between these two extremes: he agrees with the former view that the need to demonstrate all scientific facts leads to an infinite regress, but does not assert that all knowledge is therefore impossible. His solution to the problem is to declare

that not all knowledge is demonstrative; the knowledge of immediate premises is not by demonstration. It is evident that this must be so; for if it is necessary to know the prior premises from which the demonstration proceeds, [...] the latter must be indemonstrable. [...] Indeed we hold not only that scientific knowledge is possible, but that there is a definite first principle of knowledge by which we recognize ultimate truths.<sup>439</sup>

In a footnote to this passage, Tredennick indicates that what Aristotle means here by 'a definite first principle of knowledge by which we recognize ultimate truths' is in fact

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<sup>437</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 71b 26-8: 'ἐκ πρώτων δ' ἀναποδείκτων, ὅτι οὐκ ἐπιστήσεται μὴ ἔχων ἀποδείξιν αὐτῶν.'

<sup>438</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 72b 5-7: 'Ἐνίοις μὲν οὖν διὰ τὸ δεῖν τὰ πρῶτα ἐπίστασθαι οὐ δοκεῖ ἐπιστήμη εἶναι, τοῖς δ' εἶναι μὲν, πάντων μὲντοι ἀποδείξις εἶναι'. Aristotle goes on in this passage to point out that both of the aforementioned positions are in fundamental agreement about the fact that knowledge must be demonstrated; the former simply argues on the basis of this assumption that knowledge is not possible, because the need to demonstrate first principles leads to an infinite regress, while the latter argues that knowledge is possible, because it is possible to arrive at all facts by demonstration.

<sup>439</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 72b 19-25: 'Ἡμεῖς δὲ φαμεν οὔτε πᾶσαν ἐπιστήμην ἀποδεικτικὴν εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τὴν τῶν ἀμέσων ἀναπόδεικτικὴν (καὶ τοῦθ' ὅτι ἀναγκαῖον, φανερόν· εἰ γὰρ ἀνάγκη μὲν ἐπίστασθαι τὰ πρότερα καὶ ἐξ ὧν ἡ ἀποδείξις, ἴσταται δὲ ποτε τὰ ἄμεσα, ταυτ' ἀναπόδεικτα ἀνάγκη εἶναι) – ταῦτα τ' οὖν οὕτω λέγομεν, καὶ οὐ μόνον ἐπιστήμην ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀρχὴν ἐπιστήμης εἶναι τινὰ φαμεν ἢ τοὺς ὅρους γνωρίζομεν.'

‘νοῦς or intuition’, which is taken up in Book II, Chapter 19.<sup>440</sup> More precisely, as we shall presently see, this chapter deals with the process through which the human intellect abstracts the first principles of science from sense experience, and accordingly dovetails with Aristotle’s discussion of the faculty of νοῦς in Book III of the *De Anima*. As mentioned, the name given by Aristotle to this process of abstraction is ἐπαγωγή or induction.

#### 5.4 Induction and Intuition

Before turning to examine Aristotle’s comments on induction in detail, two things must be noted at the outset. (1) The first is that there is a startling disparity between the relative abundance of extant writings in which Aristotle discusses demonstrative and other forms of deductive reasoning, on the one hand, and the scarcity of those in which he discusses induction on the other.<sup>441</sup> This is all the more puzzling given Aristotle’s contention above that, not only are the indemonstrable principles of demonstration seen to be true, they are in fact ‘better known than’ and ‘prior to’ (γνωριμωτέρων καὶ προτέρων) the knowledge expressed in the conclusion of a demonstrative syllogism, which effectively means that they are *true* than the latter as well.<sup>442</sup> (2) The second is that the two extant texts in which Aristotle seems to give a general characterization of

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<sup>440</sup> Tredennick, in Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, p. 38, note *a*.

<sup>441</sup> Accordingly, as Biondi observes, *Prior Analytics* II.23 and *Posterior Analytics* II.19 are ‘the sole passages throughout the entire Aristotelian *corpus* that deal with the mechanics of induction in any detail.’ (Aristotle *Posterior Analytics* II.19, p. 219)

<sup>442</sup> Indeed, this is consistent with Aristotle’s claim in the very first line of the *Posterior Analytics* that ‘[a]ll teaching and learning that involves the use of reason proceeds from pre-existent knowledge (Πᾶσα διδασκαλία καὶ πᾶσα μάθησις διανοητικὴ ἐκ προϋπαρχούσης γίγνεται γνώσεως).’ (71a 1-2) As pointed out by Biondi, if the indemonstrable principles of science are considered by Aristotle to be the cause of the truth of a demonstration’s conclusion, then they are in fact *true* than the latter: ‘Aristotle generally says that something is more of or to a greater degree an X or a better X when it is the reason why (*aitia*) other things possess the property of X.’ (Aristotle *Posterior Analytics* II.19, p. 96) Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 993b 25-30, where the same point is made with respect to the specific example of fire, which is the hottest thing, as the cause of hotness in other things. As we shall see, this is confirmed by Aristotle’s comments in the closing lines of the *Posterior Analytics*.

induction are both, for their own reasons, quite problematic. The text of *Prior Analytics* II.23 is problematic insofar as it can be taken to claim that all induction requires a complete enumeration of particulars falling under a given class, which according to many commentators makes induction (and therefore science) impossible. The text of *Posterior Analytics* II.19 is problematic because, even if it presents a slightly more feasible account of the abstractive process through which the mind naturally intuits the essence of the particular things it encounters in sense experience, this explanation itself is metaphorical. In the latter case, Aristotle's discussion of induction relies on metaphors in two ways: firstly, it explains the nature of sense perception prior to induction by comparing it to the chaos of a military rout; and secondly, to the extent that the discussion as a whole dovetails with Aristotle's discussion of the human intellect ( $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ) in *De Anima* III.4-6, it also derives part of its intelligibility from the analogical comparisons Aristotle makes there between the passive part of the intellect and a drawing tablet, on the one hand, and between the active part of the intellect and physical light ( $\phi\omega\varsigma$ ), on the other.

Before approaching the text of *Prior Analytics* II.23, it will be helpful to look at some other passages, which are indeed limited in number, where Aristotle mentions induction. For starters, *Topics* I.12 defines induction as 'the progress from particulars to universals'<sup>443</sup>. According to this brief definition, induction can be seen to move from a manifold of disparate particulars to the unity of an essential attribute or set of attributes that they share in common, which is for that reason universal. Nevertheless, to avoid confusion in what follows, it is necessary to specify, as Biondi does, that 'the terms *particular* and *universal* become relative to the matter or content taken into consideration

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<sup>443</sup> Aristotle, *Topics*, 105a 13-14: 'ἐπαγωγή δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστον ἐπὶ τὰ καθόλου ἔφοδος'.

in a given type of induction.<sup>444</sup> This means, for example, that induction can be a process beginning with a manifold of individual, sensible human beings (Callias, Socrates etc) and culminating in the (proximate) universal *human being*; it can also be a process beginning from a manifold of these proximate universals (or species), such as *human being, dog, and elephant*, and culminating in the still more general universal *animal*.

This initial sketch of induction as the passage from particulars to universals is supported by a later section of the *Topics* in which Aristotle argues that, for the purposes of constructing inductive arguments in dialectical discussion, the consideration of similarities (ἡ τοῦ ὁμοίου θεωρία) is particularly important. He thus argues that ‘it is by induction of particulars on the basis of similarities that we infer the universal; for it is not easy to employ inference if we do not know the points of similarity.’<sup>445</sup> Right away, it must be recognized that induction and metaphor seem to share a common concern for similarities between things. The putative distinction between them, which Aristotle never draws explicitly, seems to be that induction selects substantial similarities that inhere between things of the same kind, whereas metaphors select accidental similarities between things of different kinds (or different species). This distinction is made clear by Ernst Cassirer (1953), who argues that, for Aristotle,

the concept is no mere subjective schema in which we collect the common elements of an arbitrary group of things. The selection of what is common

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<sup>444</sup> Biondi, *Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 193.

<sup>445</sup> Aristotle, *Topics*, 108b 7-12: ‘Ἡ τοῦ ὁμοίου θεωρία χρήσιμος πρὸς τε τοὺς ἐπακτικούς λόγους καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἐξ ὑποθέσεως συλλογισμούς καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἀπόδοσιν τῶν ὀρισμῶν. πρὸς μὲν οὖν τοὺς ἐπακτικούς λόγους, διότι τῇ καθ’ ἕκαστα ἐπὶ τῶν ὁμοίων ἐπαγωγῇ τὸ καθόλου ἀξιούμεν ἐπάγειν· οὐ γὰρ ῥάδιόν ἐστιν ἐπάγειν μὴ εἰδότας τὰ ὅμοια.’ This passage seems to suggest that it is at least possible to gain a view of universals by some means *other* than the perception of similarities between a number of sensible particulars, insofar as Aristotle merely says it is ‘not easy’, but does not go as far as to claim it is impossible. As we shall see in what follows, Aristotle can be taken to hold in the *Posterior Analytics* that it is possible for the human intellect to intuit the causal nature of a thing from only a single instance. To the extent that at least two things are needed in order for there to be a similarity, this means that the perception of similarities is important, but not indispensable to induction.

remains an empty play of ideas if it is not assumed that what is thus gained is, at the same time, the real *Form* which guarantees the causal and teleological connection of particular things. [...] The process of comparing things and of grouping them together according to similar properties, as it is expressed first of all in language, does not lead to what is indefinite, but if rightly conducted, ends in the discovery of the real essences of things.<sup>446</sup>

Cassirer is correct to recognize that induction, ‘if rightly conducted,’ leads on Aristotle’s account to the discovery of the real, essential forms responsible for making things what they are; it is precisely for this putative reason that the similarities uncovered by metaphors, and those uncovered by induction, are able to be distinguished at all. What he does not explain is exactly what criteria Aristotle offers to facilitate a distinction between those similarities that indicate an essential, causal connection between things and those that indicate merely inessential connections between them. In other words, taking for granted that one thing may be similar to another in innumerable ways, and that some similarities will indicate an essential connection while others will not, the question is how, according to Aristotle, the mind is able to distinguish the meaningful similarities between things, which lead to the discovery of the first principles of science, from the meaningless ones, which highlight purely contingent relations.

As mentioned above, one answer Aristotle appears to give to this question is that, in order to be valid, induction must be based on a complete enumeration of the particulars falling under a given class. Nevertheless, as also mentioned above, if the standard of complete enumeration that Aristotle introduces in *Prior Analytics* II.23 is to be taken as a programmatic statement concerning the validity of all induction as such, it seems to problematize the whole picture of induction as operating through the perception of similarities between several distinct particulars or species of particulars. This is

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<sup>446</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *Substance and Function & Einstein’s Theory of Relativity*, tr. W.C. Swabey & M.C. Swabey (New York: Dover Publications, 1953), p. 7.

because the notion of a total set implies that the mind must *actually* count each and every instance of a given species or kind in order for any induction to be valid, yet it is unclear how this could be possible without the use of circular reasoning.

In the passage in question, Aristotle thus affirms that the enumeration on which induction is based must consider ‘all the particular instances; for it is by taking these into account that induction proceeds.’<sup>447</sup> In order to grasp precisely what is problematic about this passage, it is crucial to see that Aristotle’s meaning in this final sentence can be taken in two different ways, depending on how we understand his intention in the passage as a whole: it can be taken either (1) as saying something about all induction in general; or (2) as saying something about a specific context in which induction can be used. On the second reading, Aristotle’s point would seem to be that in certain cases, an enumeration of particular instances can be used as the middle term of a syllogism, and consequently that the formal validity of the syllogistic inference in these cases demands *in principle* that this enumeration itself be formally valid. This in turn requires (again *in principle*) the examination of a complete set of particulars falling under the class in question. Biondi takes the second reading, arguing that the words ὁ ἐκ ἐπαγωγῆς συλλογισμὸς in the first line of the chapter must be taken to refer to “a syllogism

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<sup>447</sup> Aristotle, *Prior Analytics* 68b 28-30: ‘δεῖ δὲ νοεῖν τὸ Γ τὸ ἐξ ἀπάντων τῶν καθ’ ἕκαστον συγκείμενον· ἢ γὰρ ἐπαγωγὴ διὰ πάντων.’ Aristotle raises a similar point in *Posterior Analytics* II.13, where he formulates three criteria for establishing a definition by division (τὸ κατασκευάζειν ὄρον διὰ τῶν διαφέρεισεων). The first criterion is ‘to select attributes which describe the essence (τοῦ λάβειν τὰ κατηγούμενα ἐν τῷ τί ἐστί)’; the second ‘to arrange them in order of priority (καὶ ταῦτα τάξαι τί πρῶτον ἢ δεύτερον)’; and the third is ‘to make sure that the selection is complete (καὶ ὅτι ταῦτα πάντα).’ (97a 23-26; emphasis added) As in *Prior Analytics* II.23, the phrase ‘ὅτι ταῦτα πάντα’ thus stipulates that a proper induction is one that takes into consideration *all* of the relevant particular instances before any generalizations are made about what these particulars share in common. In *Prior Analytics* II.23, Aristotle illustrates his point by giving the example of a syllogism concerning ‘long-lived’ and ‘bileless animals’.

coming from induction,” and not to the inherently syllogistic nature of all induction in general.<sup>448</sup>

The main reason cited by Biondi for adopting the second reading is that, if Aristotle means here that all induction depends on a complete enumeration of particular instances, this would seem to make it impossible. Specifically in cases where the induction depends on an enumeration of sensible individuals, the verification of whether or not a set of instances is complete presupposes that one already has in view the underlying species or genus to which they belong, which in fact serves as a criterion for selecting them in the first place. In other words, considered as the activity of counting, the actual enumeration of particular instances already presumes that what is counted are instances of the same kind, and therefore if all induction must satisfy the condition of complete enumeration it can only prove itself to have done so by means of *petitio principii*.<sup>449</sup> Moreover, as noted by Biondi, the notion of a complete enumeration of

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<sup>448</sup> In this passage, Aristotle begins by considering ‘[i]nduction, or inductive reasoning (Ἐπαγωγή [...] καὶ ὁ ἐκ ἐπαγωγῆς συλλογισμὸς),’ which has puzzled many commentators since induction is commonly understood in opposition to the syllogism (or *de*-duction). (Aristotle, *Prior Analytics* 68b 15, emphasis added) Nevertheless, Biondi argues convincingly that ‘much of the confusion generated by the assimilation of induction to the syllogism can be dissipated if one respects Aristotle’s restriction that the inductive syllogism is, in fact, “a syllogism coming from induction,” because instead of having a properly universal term serving as middle of the syllogistic inference, there is an enumeration of particular instances.’ (Aristotle *Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 195) Groarke (2009) takes a different approach, and following J.S. Mill argues that there is a way to syllogize inductive arguments by finding in them a hidden premise that implicitly affirms the essential regularity of experience. On this reading, for example, the inductive argument *It looks like a duck, it quacks like a duck, therefore it’s a duck* can be turned into a formally valid syllogism by adding the implied premise that *Whatever looks and quacks like a duck is necessarily a duck*. Groarke thus cites Mill’s claim that ‘every induction is a syllogism with the major premise suppressed,’ where this major premise affirms in some way ‘that the course of nature is uniform.’ Cf. J.S. Mill, *System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1952), Book 3, Chapter 3, §1, 201-2; cited in L. Groarke, *An Aristotelian Account of Induction* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009), p. 110/1.

<sup>449</sup> Considering as an example the induction *All crows are black*, one can see why such a statement cannot legitimately be based on a complete enumeration. For without prior knowledge of the exact number of crows that currently exist – which already demands an understanding of what crows are in the first place – it is impossible to know when one has counted the last crow. And insofar as it is impossible to know when one has counted the last crow, it is impossible to know whether the next crow one counts will be white or

particulars seems not only to demand a total survey of all the particular instances that currently exist in the world right now, but also of all those that have ever existed and will ever exist.<sup>450</sup> Biondi therefore argues that, ‘if taking the requirement of all cases in this simplistically literal sense of having to actually enumerate all the sensible individuals in order to have a complete or perfect induction is too far-fetched, unbelievable and, in fact, impossible [...], and therefore something that can never exist, then “all cases” must mean something else.’<sup>451</sup>

Though I follow Biondi’s solution to this problem, it is important to recognize that others have been offered (see note 448 above). My aim in what follows is not to provide an exhaustive presentation and resolution of the problems inherent in the concept of induction, but rather to show how Aristotle’s theory of science, which constitutes the backdrop for his view that metaphors have no place in the formulation of definitions, nonetheless depends on a series of interrelated metaphors, in the form of analogical comparisons and similes, for its intelligibility. To see how this is so, we must grasp how Biondi resolves the problem of perfect or complete induction by way of Aristotle’s doctrine of the human intellect (*νοῦς*), which according to *De Anima* III.6 is the faculty by which the soul infallibly grasps the universal essence of things. Aristotle thus asserts that ‘the thinking (*νοῦς*) of the definition in the sense of the essence is always true and is not an instance of predication’.<sup>452</sup> In accordance with this formulation, Biondi also argues that ‘an induction can be held to have gone through all the particular instances,

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black. The counter-example to foil the induction could always be around the corner, which means that the completeness of a given set of sensible particulars cannot be verified in practice.

<sup>450</sup> Biondi thus notes that the criterion of an *actually* complete enumeration of instances ‘appears to be a totally unrealistic demand.’ (*Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 202)

<sup>451</sup> Biondi, *Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 203.

<sup>452</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 430b 28-9: ‘ὁ δὲ νοῦς [...] ὁ του τί ἐστι κατὰ τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι ἀληθής, καὶ οὐ τί κατὰ τινος’.

not because it has actually enumerated every single particular instance possible for enumeration, but because it has done so potentially by having acquired the cognition of the universal essence of the particulars being enumerated.<sup>453</sup> Rather than a complete enumeration of instances, what induction requires on Biondi's reading is that the mind considers as many instances as are needed in order to grasp the common essence underlying them. In some cases, this could require many instances; in some, few; and in some, at least according to certain commentators such as Groarke (2009), the mind can discover this underlying essence from the consideration of only a single instance.<sup>454</sup>

The approach advocated by both Biondi and Groarke is thus to assume that Aristotle's subordination of induction to the standard of formal validity is limited to just those cases in which the inductive enumeration of particular instances plays the role of the middle term in a syllogism.<sup>455</sup> Therefore, if Aristotle's comments in this passage are

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<sup>453</sup> Biondi, *Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 207. The author explains the reasoning behind the distinction between potential and actual enumeration as follows: '[o]ne way of dealing with having to actually enumerate an indefinite number of particulars would be to call on the aid of *nous* (as Aristotle himself does) at some point in the induction. One could then maintain that the noetic grasp of all the particulars signifies an imagining or assuming that all the particulars have been actually enumerated.' (*Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 204)

<sup>454</sup> Like Biondi, Groarke opposes the idea that Aristotle intends the complete enumeration of particulars to be a criterion of validity for induction in general. Yet Groarke goes further than Biondi in contending that, on Aristotle's account, induction can be successfully accomplished through the consideration of a single instance. In support of this reading, Groarke refers to *Posterior Analytics* I.31, where Aristotle considers the question of induction through the specific example of the transparency of a 'burning-glass' (ὑαλος). On Groarke's interpretation of this passage, Aristotle's point is to show that the mind can intuit the causal essence underlying a number of particular instances just by viewing a *single example*. Although Groarke's point seems not to contradict Aristotle's understanding of the human intellect in the *De Anima*, I am not completely convinced that Aristotle means what Groarke says he means in this passage. Nevertheless, Groarke does agree with Biondi concerning Aristotle's comments about complete induction: 'Aristotelian inductive reasoning is not about the enumeration of repeated instances but the understanding of the most fundamental causes of things.' See L. Groarke, *An Aristotelian Account of Induction*, p. 137.

<sup>455</sup> Lloyd also agrees that the criterion of complete enumeration only makes sense in the context of a subordination of induction to the formal demands of the syllogism: '[w]hen induction is judged from the point of view of the syllogism, the enumeration of particulars is clearly of key importance, for only if the induction is "perfect" is the conclusion formally valid.' Cf. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy*, p. 411. In the same passage, Lloyd also observes that 'if we consider *the actual instances* of what are called "inductive arguments" in Aristotle, we find that it is extremely difficult to point to a single clear instance where he carries out in practice a complete enumeration of particulars [...]' (p. 410/11) Earlier in the study, he cites

not to be taken as a programmatic statement concerning induction in general, then we are left with *Posterior Analytics* II.19 as the sole text in which Aristotle can be seen to give a general characterization of induction and the way it operates. Putting aside the preliminaries of Aristotle's discussion in this chapter, the point of departure here is to see that induction is contemporaneous with the transition in the human soul from memory (μνήμη) to experience (ἐμπειρία).

This means that our understanding of induction depends to a degree on how we understand these powers of the soul, and to the extent that a full elaboration of Aristotle's *De Anima* is outside the scope of this discussion, it is necessary to summarize the basic account of memory and experience that supports Biondi's account of induction.

Succinctly, for Biondi, memory records the composite images of individuals perceived piecemeal through the five senses and reconstructed by the common sense, but the principle according to which it records them is necessarily one of sensible likeness. The mind perceives one individual of appearance X, and on perceiving another individual of similar appearance X it can have a memory of the first individual perceived. Still, what characterizes memory is that it is a more or less mechanical activity of organizing individual images along the lines of sensible or phenomenal resemblance. The human mind, on perceiving other individuals of appearance X, continues this process until the point at which it recognizes that the sensible similarities linking these individual perceptions are in fact indicative of an essential or logical connection between them.<sup>456</sup>

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Aristotle's discussion of the function of the testes in *On the Generation of Animals* (788a 3-10) as one of many examples of incomplete induction throughout the Aristotelian *corpus*. For Lloyd, this is an incomplete induction because Aristotle's 'theory of the *function* of a part or organ in the body is influenced by his observation of a similarity of *form* between it and some object outside the body.' (p. 366)

<sup>456</sup> Also crucial to this reading is the distinction drawn by Aristotle in the *De Anima* between three different kinds of sensible object (αἰσθητὰ): (1) proper sensibles (ἴδια); (2) common sensibles (κοίνα);

At this point, the mind is able to recognize an individual perception, which is held in common with a number of other memories with respect to which it is seen to be the same, as an instance of a determinate kind of thing. In other words, it is at this point that the mind recognizes the phenomenal similarities linking several memories together to be no mere coincidence; they are thereafter seen to indicate an essential rather than an accidental relation. Regardless of whether or not the mind knows what kind of thing this is, the passage from memory to experience, in which the mind first recognizes an individual thing in its essential universality, is the most basic form of induction, and constitutes the human intellect's intuitive grasp of a thing's universal essence, which forms the basis not only for the regularity and continuity of human experience, but also for the higher universals that constitute the ultimate principles of science.

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and (3) accidental sensibles (κατὰ συμβεβηκός). Cf. Aristotle, *De Anima* 418a 7-26 passim. On Biondi's reading, the common sense (κοινή αἴσθησις) is a unique faculty whose function is to gather 'sensible objects received through the external senses to form a composite, unified appearance of the sensible reality constituting the actual field of sensation at any given moment.' (*Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 147) Insofar as substance (οὐσία) corresponds to what Aristotle means when he mentions 'the son of Darius' and 'Cleon's son' as instances of accidental sensible objects (*De Anima* 418a 22, 425a 26), there is a difference for Biondi in the ways that substance is 'accidentally' or indirectly perceived by the five external senses, on the one hand, and the common sense on the other: '[w]hereas the external senses are said to sense substance *per accidens* because it is completely imperceptible to them, the common sense can be said to sense substance *per accidens* because the whole appearance it composes from the sensible qualities captured through the external senses can be a presentation of an individual substance in its sensible integrity or wholeness, thus permitting an indirect and vague perception of its universal substance. [...] In other words, the coherence of sensible qualities perceptible to common sense, their unity and wholeness, is a sign of the presence of a principle and a cause of this unity. The principle and cause of this sensible (material) unity is the substantial form itself, and though it is not itself perceived by the common sense, the effect of its causality is certainly perceived; and in this restricted sense substance becomes an indirect and vaguely sensible object.' (*Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 150) This both shows that only intellect can directly intuit substance, and underscores the role played by the senses in furnishing the material for this intuition by presenting the intellect with an indirect image of substance as a unique and integral sensible whole. At its most basic level, the intellect's immediate intuition of the essence underlying a sensible image (or images) is what Aristotle means by ἐπαγωγή.

Aristotle accordingly characterizes experience in the following lines as ‘the universal in the soul’, and argues that it ‘is the principle of art and science’.<sup>457</sup> These latter two, he claims, are

are neither innately existing in us in a determinate form, nor do they come to be from other higher states of knowing; instead they come from (sense-)perception, *the way that, in battle, after [soldiers] in combat have been in flight, one stands firm, then another, then another, until some degree of (self-)control is reached.* The soul is (such as to be) capable of undergoing this.<sup>458</sup>

Immediately following this rare image (100a 14-5), Aristotle admits that his account of induction has been stated unclearly, οὐ σαφῶς δὲ ἐλέχθη, and resolves to reformulate it (πάλιν εἴπωμεν). In so doing, he reiterates that ‘one of the logically undifferentiated [perceptions] standing firm [is] the primary universal in the soul; (for though the act of [sense-]perception is of the particular, the capacity of [sense-]perception is of the universal, for example, of man, not of Callias the man.) Again in these [logically undifferentiated perceptions another universal] stands firm, until the partless and universal stands firm, for instance, such-and-such an animal [stands firm] until animal [stands firm], and similarly in the latter case.’<sup>459</sup>

Indeed, even if it is expressed in more precise theoretical terminology, Aristotle’s subsequent reformulation of his military simile itself seems to raise as many questions as

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<sup>457</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 100a 6-9: ‘ἐκ δ’ ἐμπειρίας ἢ ἐκ παντὸς ἡρεμήσαντος τοῦ καθόλου ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, τοῦ ἐνὸς παρὰ τὰ πολλὰ, ὃ ἂν ἐν ἅπασιν ἐν ἐνῇ ἐκείνοις τὸ αὐτό, τέχνης ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐπιστήμης, ἐὰν μὲν περὶ γένεσιν, τέχνης, ἐὰν δὲ περὶ τὸ ὄν, ἐπιστήμης.’ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of *Posterior Analytics* II.19 in what follows are Biondi’s. Cf. Biondi, *Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, pp. 17-9.

<sup>458</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 100a 10-14 (emphasis added): ‘οὔτε δὴ ἐνυπάρχουσιν ἀφωρισμένα ἀἰετῆς, οὔτ’ ἀπ’ ἄλλων ἕξεων γίνονται γνωστικώτερον, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ αἰσθήσεως, οἷον ἐν μάχῃ τροπῆς γενομένης ἐνὸς στάντος ἕτερος ἔσται, εἴθ’ ἕτερος, ἕως ἐπὶ ἀρχὴν ἦλθεν. ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ ὑπάρχει τοιαύτη οὔσα οἷα δύνασθαι πάσχειν τοῦτο.’

<sup>459</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 100a 14 – 100b 2: ‘στάντος γὰρ τῶν ἀδιαφόρων ἐνὸς, πρῶτον μὲν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ καθόλου (καὶ γὰρ αἰσθάνεται μὲν τὸ καθ’ ἕκαστον, ἡ δ’ αἰσθησις τοῦ καθόλου ἐστίν, οἷον ἀνθρώπου, ἀλλ’ οὐ Καλλίου ἀνθρώπου)· πάλιν ἐν τούτοις ἴσταται, ἕως ἂν τὰ ἀμερῆ στῆ καὶ τὰ καθόλου, οἷον τοιονδὶ ζῶον, ἕως ζῶον, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ὡσαύτως.’

it purports to answer; as Biondi observes, [i]t is rather unfortunate that Aristotle's clarification is itself so unclear.<sup>460</sup> Specifically, according to Biondi, the words *στάντος γὰρ τῶν ἀδιαφόρων ἐνὸς* at 100a 15-6 ("one of the logically undifferentiated [perceptions] standing firm," in Biondi's translation) admit of no less than three possible interpretations, depending on how one understands the referent of the genitive *τῶν ἀδιαφόρων*: it 'could mean either: 1) the memories composing an experience that are logically indistinct or similar, or maybe even the specific concept predicable of them; 2) a generic image that is sensibly indistinct or similar; or 3) an intellectually confusing sensible whole.'<sup>461</sup> What is significant about this dilemma is that, in order to determine which of these interpretations is correct, Biondi is to an extent guided by the image itself as a hermeneutic key to the explanation that is meant to clarify it. In other words, on Biondi's reading, the military simile in fact clarifies its subsequent reformulation just as much as the opposite can be said to be true. Significantly, this indicates that a simile (and therefore on Aristotle's own account, a metaphor) plays a positive role in determining the meaning of the passage as a whole.<sup>462</sup>

The importance of the military simile in Biondi's interpretation is that it allows the intellect's active role in organizing sense-perception to be imagined, by comparing this organization to the (re-)formation of order after a military rout. In order to see what

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<sup>460</sup> Biondi, *Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 51.

<sup>461</sup> Biondi, *Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 53.

<sup>462</sup> At the same time, the meaning of the simile itself is also determined in relation to what comes before it, and in particular by Biondi's decision to translate *γίνεσθαι λόγον* at 100a 2 as meaning that 'an order is generated' in experience by the persistence of memories relating to the same kinds of thing. It is ultimately the *ordered* nature of experience that requires the intellect (*νοῦς*) to take an active role in both organizing the contents, and guiding the activities of the soul in relation to sense perception. Indeed, for Biondi, it is only insofar as the intellect can be seen to co-operate with sense perception to regulate and order experience that Aristotle's account of induction, considered as the process by which the mind comes to recognize a sensible individual as an instance of a determinate kind of thing, can be seen to make sense at all. (*Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 17.)

the simile contributes to the discussion, Biondi argues that it is first necessary to take the word ἄρχῆν at 100a 13 in a primarily military sense. He notes that, in reference to military matters, ἄρχῆ and its cognates can have either a transitive or intransitive sense: the former sense refers to ‘a ruler or commander over others,’ while the latter refers to ‘self-rule or a command of oneself, applicable to each soldier.’<sup>463</sup> From here, the next step is ‘to recall that in Aristotle’s time Greek warfare relied on the hoplite phalanx’, a tactic that ‘required a high degree of discipline on the part of the soldiers so that the wall formed by their shields remained impenetrable.’<sup>464</sup> With this basic understanding of the context of Aristotle’s military simile, Biondi then returns to the cognitive context, and reasons that ‘the battle metaphor would seem to suggest mainly the intransitive meaning of self-rule: the soul is able to resist the onslaught of the sensory stimuli and return to an unperturbed state;’ but it also involves the transitive meaning, to the lesser extent that it symbolizes the soul’s ability ‘to reach some degree of command over those perceptions

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<sup>463</sup> Biondi, *Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 48. Biondi also points out the implicit connection between this military image as an account of induction and the Platonic account of knowledge as *reminiscence*, according to which (i.e., at *Republic* 529d) ‘the illusory world of the sensible can, at best, only offer a model (παράδειγμα) of the true reality of ideas [...]; consequently, the soul must do battle with the sensible particulars it perceives in its efforts to turn its gaze away from them and toward the ideal reality.’ (Ibid) Furthermore, elaborating on the transitive and intransitive senses of ἄρχῆ introduced above, Biondi goes on to argue that ‘[t]hey express the idea of being in control and, consequently, the idea of order that having control can bring, whether it be the leader of the army having control over his troops so that they march into battle in an orderly fashion “as one man” [...], or an individual soldier having control of his emotions, specially fear and panic, so that he can maintain his position in the formation and face the approaching enemy army.’ (p. 48/9) It is interesting to note that when this military image reappears in Book XII of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle introduces it to raise the general question of how the good, as a principle of order, exists in the world; he thus queries whether the good exists ‘as something separate and independent, or as the orderly arrangement of its parts. Aristotle then suggests that *both* of these are likely true, ‘for the efficiency of an army consists partly in the order and partly in the general (καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῇ τάξει τὸ εὖ καὶ ὁ στρατηγός)’. Cf. *Metaphysics* 1075a 11-7.

<sup>464</sup> Biondi, *Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 49. The full discussion of this military formation is worth quoting at length: ‘The phalanx had to respond to the orders of the leader as one man while it attacked in an attempt to shatter the enemy line in one blow. When two opposing hoplite phalanxes met, it was the side that, once their formation was broken, let panic overtake them and turned to run and flee the enemy that exposed themselves since they would have to drop their large, heavy shields; and it was not uncommon for the side that did this to suffer a great number of casualties while the other side marched on to victory virtually unscathed. Thus, it was vitally important for the hoplite to regain command of his panic-stricken self and reestablish the original formation despite the chaos of battle.’ (p. 49)

now retained in itself, putting them into order in its attempt to acquire universal knowledge.<sup>465</sup>

Concretely, this means that induction, as the cognitive movement that connects sense experience to thought, properly begins with the soul's recognition of the things it encounters in sense-perception 'in their essential universality, not their sensible particularity'.<sup>466</sup> As mentioned, the mind's recognition of a thing's essential universality is figured in the simile by the point at which 'some degree of (self-)control is reached' in the hoplite phalanx. More than the conclusion of this argument itself, what interests us here is the *positive* role played in it by Aristotle's military simile. As mentioned, although Aristotle offers a series of remarks by which to clarify the simile itself – seemingly, by way of apology – these remarks themselves no less demand an understanding of the simile for their comprehension.

In fact, it is perhaps more to the point to say that these remarks rely on a network of interconnected metaphors for their comprehension, to the extent that the simile in question ultimately underscores the active role played by the intellect ( $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ) in its organization of the data of sense-experience. If it is true that this process begins in sense experience with the intellect's grasp of a 'first universal,' it is no less true that it culminates according to Aristotle with an infallible intuition of the ultimate principles of science. Aristotle concludes his discussion of induction in the closing chapter of the *Posterior Analytics* by reasoning 'that there can be no scientific [i.e., demonstrative] knowledge of the first principles; *and since nothing can be more infallible than scientific knowledge except intuition* ( $\eta\ \nu\omicron\upsilon\nu$ ) *it must be intuition that apprehends the first*

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<sup>465</sup> Biondi, *Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 49.

<sup>466</sup> Biondi, *Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 55.

*principles.*<sup>467</sup> As mentioned already, this account of νοῦς dovetails with Aristotle’s discussion in *De Anima* III, which as we saw above also claims that the mind’s intuitive grasp of the universal essence is always true. In the *De Anima*, the notion that the intellect’s knowledge of a thing’s essential nature is infallible is one of several points of comparison established by Aristotle between νοῦς and sensation (αἴσθησις). In *De Anima* II.6, for example, Aristotle argues that ‘each sense has its proper sphere,’ and ‘cannot be deceived (οὐκ ἀπατάται) concerning the sensible object that is proper to it.’<sup>468</sup>

Another important (and problematic) point of comparison between sensation and thought is the way in which both seem to require an already existing agent to be brought into activity. To begin with, Aristotle makes this point in *De Anima* II.5 by stating that ‘the faculty of sensation has no actual but only potential existence’; he compares the act of sensation in this regard to ‘the case of fuel, which does not burn by itself without something else to set fire to it’.<sup>469</sup> This comparison supports the subsequent conclusion that ‘everything is acted upon and moved by something which produces an effect and actually exists (ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητικοῦ καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ ὄντος). Therefore, [...] a thing is acted on in one sense by like, in another sense by unlike; for while it is being acted upon it is unlike, but when the action is complete, it is like.’<sup>470</sup> This means that, according to

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<sup>467</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 100b 11-13 (emphasis added): ‘τῶν ἀρχῶν ἐπιστήμη μὲν οὐκ ἂν εἴη, ἐπεὶ δ’ οὐδὲν ἀληθέστερον ἐνδέχεται εἶναι ἐπιστήμης ἢ νοῦν, νοῦς ἂν εἴη τῶν ἀρχῶν’.

<sup>468</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 418a 15.

<sup>469</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 417a 7-9: ‘τὸ αἴσθητικὸν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐνεργεία, ἀλλὰ δυνάμει μόνον. διὸ καθάπερ τὸ καυστὸν οὐ καίεται αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτὸ ἄνευ τοῦ καυστικοῦ’.

<sup>470</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 417a 17-8: ‘πάντα δὲ πάσχει καὶ κινεῖται ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητικοῦ καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ ὄντος. διὸ ἔστι μὲν ὡς ὑπὸ τοῦ ὁμοίου πάσχει, ἔστι δὲ ὡς ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀνομοίου, καθάπερ εἵπομεν· πάσχει μὲν γὰρ τὸ ἀνομοίου, πεπονηθὸς δ’ ὁμοίου ἔστιν.’ As explained by Polansky, ‘[i]f sense perception can be either actual or potential, the sensitive capacity (αἴσθητικόν) as such is a potentiality put into actuality by an external agent in actuality, as fuel is ignited by fire.’ (*Aristotle’s De Anima*, p. 228)

Aristotle's general account of sensation, the sensitive act is dependent on an external object as its proximate cause. In perceiving a proper sensible object, a given sense is (actually) initially unlike its object, while remaining like it in potency; through the act of sensing it becomes actually likened to it. In *De Anima* II.12, Aristotle pursues this idea further by arguing that every one of the soul's sensitive powers is such as to receive 'the form of sensible objects without the matter, just as wax receives the impression of the signet-ring without the iron or gold, and receives the impression of the gold or bronze, but not as gold or bronze'.<sup>471</sup>

The consideration that the sensitive act consists in the soul's reception of the forms of sensible objects without their matter is ultimately what allows Aristotle to assert both that (a) each faculty of sense, which is potentially like its object before sensing it, becomes actually likened to it in the act of sensing; and (b) that this transition in the soul from a state of potentiality to a state of activity is not, properly speaking, an alteration (ἀλλοιώσις).<sup>472</sup> In receiving the immaterial forms of sensible objects, the soul is only 'altered' in a sense, since this change really only counts as a change if it constitutes a transition to another state, and therefore a privation of its initial one. The fact that what it

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Concerning the notions of 'like' and 'unlike', Polansky moreover asserts that '[i]n the case of [i.e., perceptive] alteration, the mover, what is active and in actuality, causes what is acted upon and moved to take on the sort of being of the mover. What is moved or passive to the action of its mover is initially potentially like its mover, but actually unlike it, and will in the course of the motion become actually likened to it. What is just like something else cannot change it in the respect that it is just like it, so what causes alteration must initially be unlike. Since the sense is like itself, something else must move it.' (p. 229)

<sup>471</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 424a 17-23: 'Καθόλου δὲ περὶ πάσης αἰσθήσεως δεῖ λαβεῖν ὅτι ἡ μὲν αἰσθησίς ἐστι τὸ δεκτικὸν τῶν αἰσθητῶν εἰδῶν ἄνευ τῆς ὕλης, οἷον ὁ κηρὸς τοῦ δακτυλίου καὶ τοῦ χρυσοῦ δέχεται τὸ σημεῖον, ἀλλ' οὐχ ἡ χρυσὸς ἢ χαλκός'.

<sup>472</sup> I discussed Aristotle's qualified use of the language of change and alteration in relation to the soul in the previous chapter. In Polansky's terms, Aristotle understands the soul's acts as belonging to a class of what Polansky dubs 'non-standard alteration' (*Aristotle's De Anima*, p. 16), which is consistent with Aristotle's fundamental claim that the soul is not moved, and that its acts are complete activities (ἐνεργεῖαι) rather than incomplete motions. Ultimately, this general account of sensation raises questions about the relationship between each physiological organ (αἰσθητήριον) and the psychic faculty to which it corresponds, but a full elaboration of these questions is outside the scope of this discussion.

receives in becoming like its object is an immaterial form, which is akin to the soul's nature as the immaterial form of a natural body, means that perception is in fact 'a change to a positive state, that is, a realization of its nature (ἐπὶ τὰς ἕξεις καὶ τὴν φύσιν).'<sup>473</sup>

The foregoing considerations provide a basis for both comparing and contrasting the activities of sensation and thought. They must be contrasted insofar as each individual sense has a limited range of sensible qualities that it can receive in immaterial form (hot, cold, wet, dry, sweet, sharp, white, red, etc.), whereas the mind is unlimited in the objects it can think. Furthermore, although each sense corresponds to a physiological organ that has its basis in the body (the eyes for sight, ears for hearing, etc.), Aristotle suggests early in the *De Anima* that the intellect is not the actuality of any bodily organ, and confirms this in Book III.<sup>474</sup> Insofar as the intellect is not associated with a bodily organ, and therefore cannot be brought into activity by an already existing, *external* object, Aristotle must account for how the intellective act comes about in a slightly different way, while at the same time maintaining a basic, analogical rapport between sensation and thought.<sup>475</sup> He does this by postulating a crucial distinction between two kinds of intellect: on the one hand, a material or passive intellect that 'is such because it

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<sup>473</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 417b 16.

<sup>474</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 413a 7. Cf. *De Anima* 429b 2-6, as well as Polansky, *Aristotle's De Anima*, pp. 163-70.

<sup>475</sup> Aristotle thus argues that, 'if [i.e., thinking] is analogous to perceiving (εἰ δὴ ἐστὶ τὸ νοεῖν ὡς περ τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι), it must be a process in which the soul is acted upon by what is thinkable, or something else of a similar kind. This part, then, must (although impassive) be receptive of the form of an object, i.e., must be potentially the same as its object, although not identical with it: as the sensitive is to the sensible, so must the mind be to the thinkable (ὡς περ τὸ αἰσθητικὸν πρὸς τὸ τὰ αἰσθητά, οὕτω τὸν νοῦν πρὸς τὰ νοητά).' Several lines below, Aristotle mentions that what differentiates sensation and thinking, despite the aforementioned analogy, is the fact that 'sense loses sensation under the stimulus of a too violent sensible object; [...] but when mind thinks the highly intelligible, it is not less able to think of slighter things, but even more able; for the faculty of sense is not apart from the body, whereas the mind is separate (τὸ μὲν γὰρ αἰσθητικὸν οὐκ ἄνευ σώματος, ὁ δὲ χωριστός).' (*De Anima* 429a 13 – 429b 6 passim)

becomes all things’; and on the other, an active or productive intellect ‘that is such because it makes all things’.<sup>476</sup> Quite significantly, Aristotle illustrates the difference between these two kinds of intellect with two similes: firstly he claims that the material intellect contains its objects in potential ‘in the same sense as letters are on a tablet which bears no actual writing’<sup>477</sup>, and secondly he asserts in the following chapter that the active intellect ‘is a kind of positive state like light; for in a sense light makes potential into actual colors.’<sup>478</sup>

Thus Aristotle’s discussion of the active intellect in *De Anima* III.4-6, much like his discussion of induction in *Posterior Analytics* II.19, places a heavy emphasis on the mind’s natural capacity to intuit the essence of sensible individuals in their specific universality, in a way that is analogous to the way in which the five senses recognize their proper objects. Perhaps more importantly, much as in the *Posterior Analytics*, here also Aristotle resorts to metaphors, in the form of similes and analogies, to illustrate this natural capacity, and to explain the crucial distinction he draws between its two forms.

## 5.5 Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, it will be helpful to point out two basic facts that were ascertained above: (1) the first is that Aristotle prohibits the use of metaphors in formulating definitions, and that this prohibition is consistent with his understanding of

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<sup>476</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 430a 14-5: ‘καὶ ἔστιν ὁ μὲν τοιοῦτος νοῦς τῷ πάντα γίνεσθαι, ὁ δὲ τῷ πάντα ποιεῖν’.

<sup>477</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 430a 1-2: ‘δεῖ δ’ οὕτως ὥσπερ ἐν γραμματείῳ ᾧ μηθὲν ὑπάρχει ἐντελεχέα γεγραμμένον.’ Significantly, after stating this, Aristotle declares at 429a 27-30 that ‘[i]t has been well said that the soul is the place of forms, except that this does not apply to the soul as a whole, but only the thinking capacity, and the forms occupy it not actually but only potentially (καὶ εὖ δὴ οἱ λέγοντες τὴν ψυχὴν εἶναι τόπον εἰδῶν, πλὴν ὅτι οὔτε ὅλη ἀλλ’ ἢ νοητικὴ, οὔτε ἐντελεχέα ἀλλὰ δυνάμει τὰ εἶδη).’

<sup>478</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 430a 15-7: ‘ὡς ἕξις τις, οἷον τὸ φῶς· τρόπον γὰρ τινα καὶ τὸ φῶς ποιεῖ τὰ δυνάμει ὄντα χρώματα ἐνεργεῖα χρώματα.’

what a definition is, and why it is important to scientific demonstration; (2) the second is that Aristotle's theory of scientific knowledge is comprised of two poles, demonstration and induction, the latter of which Aristotle characterizes by means of metaphors in *Posterior Analytics* II.19, and also in *De Anima* III.4-5 where he discusses the faculty of intuition that makes induction possible.

(1) Beginning with the first fact, it is important to recognize that the prohibition against the use of metaphors in the formulation of definitions has a conceptual and linguistic dimension, both of which are intimately related. The conceptual dimension of the prohibition is that, although metaphors reveal similarities, the similarities they reveal are purported by definition to be similarities between essentially unrelated things. In other words, they are precisely those similarities that do not tell us anything direct about the essence of a thing, because they only reveal how a thing resembles something else that is necessarily of a different species or kind. This is ultimately why, from a logical and scientific standpoint, metaphors and homonymies are equally vacuous. Although metaphor can be distinguished from homonymy (on a certain account of the latter, at any rate) by the consideration that metaphors are based on similarities, whereas homonymies are based purely in chance, to the extent that these similarities are nevertheless non-essential ones, they do not contribute positively to the formulation of definitions or scientific demonstrations.<sup>479</sup> Above all, this is because these latter two procedures depend

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<sup>479</sup> Indeed, the relevance of this argument is not simply limited to ancient science, and the metaphysical logic of natural kinds that it presupposes. C. Elgin raises a similar point with respect to modern science, arguing that metaphors 'pick out extensions that are semantically unmarked [...]. Because we have no enduring interest in such extensions, we have never introduced predicates to designate them. But since they are semantically unmarked, their extensions are not likely to exhibit the sort of regularities science seeks. The truths they express are not suitable for incorporation in rigorous deductive systems suitable for science.' "Construction and Cognition," *Theoria* 65 (2009), p. 141. This does not prevent Elgin from upholding the inherently cognitive and untranslatable character of (at least some) metaphorical expressions.

on the possibility of grouping things into their natural kinds, and defining what belongs to each kind in itself. At best, if metaphors could be seen to have any kind of scientific relevance from this perspective, it would be an entirely negative one: the knowledge of metaphors could contribute to the communication of scientific knowledge, but only by pointing out the kinds of connections that are ultimately to be avoided in defining the essences of things, and in demonstrating the entailments that follow necessarily from these definitions.

The linguistic dimension of the prohibition against the use of metaphors assumes that, as a kind of false predication, metaphors undermine the terminological precision of definitions. Aristotle's concern with the procedure of definitions, which he inherits from Plato, must be understood within the context of his theory of scientific demonstration. Scientific demonstration depends on the possibility of defining a genus in terms of what it is in itself, and this definition must be formulated using univocal linguistic terms. Consequently, metaphors can only lead this process astray, by presenting things under names that belong to other, essentially unrelated things. In situations where the terminological precision of a definition or a demonstration is at stake, Aristotle can thus be said to hold in general that metaphors are to be avoided, because in such contexts metaphorical words are no less deceptive than homonymous ones. When formulating definitions, these accidental similarities between things, which in *On Sophistical Refutations* Aristotle attributes primarily to language, often deceive the mind and lead it away from the real essences of things.

Accordingly, it follows from the above considerations that metaphors have no proper place in the actual communication of scientific reasoning, and at best can make

what I have called a negative contribution to the latter. At the same time, it is possible from a slightly different perspective to see that metaphors can indeed make a positive contribution, if not to the actual communication of scientific reasoning, then at least its preparatory stages. As we saw above, Aristotle associates the birth of science in the human soul with the discovery of a first (or proximate) universal, which is concomitant with the passage from memory to experience. Even though, once science has begun with the discovery of causes and principles relating to a determinate group of phenomena, metaphors are seen as an obstacle to its precise communication, this is not to say that metaphors do not play a role in bringing the mind to the threshold of scientific discovery.

Above, we saw Cassirer claim that the process of comparing things and grouping them into primitive classes, which science brings to its completion (if done correctly), ‘is expressed first of all in language’. This point is elaborated by Biondi, who also draws a connection between language and what he calls ‘[t]he rational movement appropriate to experience’, which ‘takes the form of collating or gathering together a multiplicity to compare them in one act.’<sup>480</sup> Precisely because experience takes this form, language acquisition becomes an important facet of human experience, and it is in the growth of historical languages that the mind’s inchoate perceptions about the similarities between things are initially recorded. In other words, according to Biondi, ‘[b]y perceiving, naming, and describing these similarities, language gradually comes to express the essential and reflects a knowledge approaching the knowledge of a universal [...]’.<sup>481</sup>

The association made above by Cassirer and Biondi between linguistic experience and the preparatory stages of science is also pointed out by Gadamer, who speaks in

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<sup>480</sup> Biondi, *Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 181.

<sup>481</sup> Biondi, *Aristotle Posterior Analytics II.19*, p. 186.

*Truth and Method* of ‘the genius of verbal consciousness’.<sup>482</sup> To the extent that this genius expresses itself for Gadamer in the ‘the free universality of language and its principle of word formation’<sup>483</sup>, it is inherently connected to the metaphorical activity of transposing the names of things so as to compare them; indeed, Gadamer goes so far as to identify the genius of verbal consciousness, the very principle of language itself, with metaphor.<sup>484</sup> Insofar as Gadamer identifies language itself with the metaphorical activity of freely comparing things, he can say that ‘at the beginning of generic logic stands the advance work of language itself.’<sup>485</sup> Thus if linguistic experience, which is animated by metaphor, brings the mind to the threshold of science, then it is true both that (a) metaphors do not permit the actual expression of scientific reasoning, but also that (b) they nevertheless clear the way for it, so to speak.

In other words, in the more primitive stages of human experience, metaphor’s capacity for pointing out all forms of similarities between things effectively helps science get off the ground, by providing it with a storehouse of clues to assist it in grouping things tentatively into classes according to a principle of phenomenal. To the extent that this primitive stage is a necessary preliminary in the long process of habituation that leads to the more accurate scientific procedures of definition and demonstration, the ‘genius of verbal consciousness,’ which is exemplified by metaphor, can be seen to contribute positively to science at least insofar as it forms a crucial dimension of the human experience out of which science develops in its later stages.

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<sup>482</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (second, revised edition), trans. J. Weinsheimer & D.G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2012), p. 428.

<sup>483</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 429.

<sup>484</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 428.

<sup>485</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 429.

Furthermore, it is also important to point out that, although Aristotle nowhere explicitly states this, scientific knowledge does not happen all at once; there is no absolute beginning for science as a general pursuit that would enable a firm line to be drawn between the scientific, in which metaphors have no place, and the pre-scientific that is their natural milieu. Speaking concretely, science must rather proceed gradually and piecemeal, with respect to different kinds of things at different times, since it must begin with sensible individuals and work its way towards the (proximate) universal kinds to which they belong, and then towards the still more general (ultimate) kinds to which these proximate universals belong in turn. If this is true, it follows that science is in some sense always in a state of ongoing development, at least to the extent that there are regions of being that one does not yet know scientifically. In other words, provided there is at least one domain of experience about which we are not yet scientifically informed, then even if we somehow have demonstrative knowledge of all the others, metaphors can still guide us towards the knowledge of what we do not yet know, even if they are inadequate to the purposes of communicating what we already know scientifically.

This means that, although it is possible in principle to say that metaphors have no place in the formulations of definitions or scientific demonstrations for the reasons we have examined, it is no less true that these two procedures represent the terminal state towards which scientific knowledge tends, and not the process through which the mind attains it. Scientific demonstrations presuppose definitions, and definitions are composed of genera and specific differences; this means that the procedures in which scientific knowledge is to be communicated only become possible once the ultimate universals, such as the generic concept *animal*, have been discovered. While it is therefore true that

metaphors have no place in the communication of scientific knowledge, this need not be taken to mean that they cannot guide the mind towards an understanding of those principles themselves, which it is the ultimate task of definition and demonstration to articulate.

One example of this kind of guidance by metaphor is Aristotle's discussion of the analogical similarities between wings and fins in *Progression of Animals*. In Chapter 18, Aristotle observes that '[b]irds in a way resemble fishes. For birds have their wings in the upper part of their bodies, fishes have two fins in their fore-part; birds have feet on their under-part, most fishes have fins in their under-part and near their front fins; also, birds have a tail, fishes a tail-fin.'<sup>486</sup> What is crucial to see here is that the structural analogy between a bird's wings and a fish's fins, which ultimately underscores the parallel functions performed by each, is already indicated metaphorically in the very words used to describe them. The word used by Aristotle in reference to fins, πτερύγια, is extremely close to the word for wing, πτέρυξ. According to Liddell & Scott, in fact, πτερύγιον can refer loosely to anything that is *wing-like*, such as '*the wing* of a building, *a turret* or *pinnacle*'.<sup>487</sup> In other words, the structural analogy Aristotle draws between wings and fins is already guided by the linguistic fact that the latter evidently derives its name from a kind of metaphorical transference implicitly comparing it to the former. Yet this is no *mere metaphor*, at least to the extent that Aristotle also discovers a deeper similarity of teleological functions underlying the formal and nominal similarities

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<sup>486</sup> Aristotle, *Progression of Animals*, trans. A.L. Peck (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 714b 2-8: 'ὁμοίως δ' ἔχουσιν οἱ ὄρνιθες τρόπον τινὰ τοῖς ἰχθύσιν. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ὄρνισιν ἄνω αἱ πτέρυγές εἰσι, τοῖς δὲ πτερύγια δύο ἐν τῷ πρᾶνεί· καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἐν τοῖς ὑπτιοῖς οἱ πόδες, τοῖς δὲ ἐν τε τοῖς ὑπτιοῖς καὶ ἐγγύς τῶν πρᾶνῶν πτερύγια τοῖς πλείστοις· καὶ οἱ μὲν οὐροπύγιον ἔχουσιν, οἱ δ' οὐράϊον.' Gadamer refers to this passage

<sup>487</sup> Liddell & Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 708.

between wings and fins.<sup>488</sup> Consequently, even if it is true to say that metaphors have no place in actual scientific reasoning, this cannot be taken to validate a programmatic exclusion of metaphorical expressions from all theoretical discussion as such. Indeed, in addition to the example we have just considered, all of the doxographical discussions found in Aristotle's extant works consistently demonstrate his willingness to be guided (not, however, uncritically) by views that are expressed metaphorically. We will return to this point in the following chapter.

(2) This brings us to the second fact mentioned at the beginning of this conclusion, which is that Aristotle himself employs metaphors in his accounts of both induction and intuition. For this reason, it seems pertinent to ask whether there is a contradiction in the fact that Aristotle employs metaphors in elaborating his theory of science, which in turn forms the backdrop to his injunction against the use of metaphors in the formulation of definitions and scientific demonstrations. Put more simply, does Aristotle fail to follow his own injunction against using metaphors in science, because he uses similes in his discussions of induction and human intuition? That there does seem to be a contradiction is recognized by Marcos (1997), who argues that there is 'an unavoidable three-way tension between [Aristotle's] methodological claims, rhetorical and literary theories and scientific practice' with respect to metaphor.<sup>489</sup> To put it succinctly, the three-way tension is that, as we have seen, Aristotle (i) extolls the use of metaphors in his rhetorical and poetic theories; (ii) prohibits their use in scientific

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<sup>488</sup> Citing this passage in particular, Gadamer accordingly argues that 'analogies [...] – correspondences such as "wings are to birds what fins are to fish" – thus serve the definition of concepts because at the same time these correspondences constitute the most important developmental principles in the formation of words.' (*Truth and Method*, p. 429)

<sup>489</sup> A. Marcos, "The Tension Between Aristotle's Theories and Uses of Metaphor," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 28, no. 1 (1997), p. 124.

reasoning; and (iii) uses metaphors in the elaboration of his own theories. Yet it is unclear whether, as Marcos suggests, Aristotle's own 'scientific practice,' at least as it is reflected in his extant writings, necessarily corresponds to the kind of scientific activity for which he considers metaphors to be inadequate. While a full-blooded answer to this question will have to wait until the end of the next chapter, it is crucial to recognize that (a) scientific reasoning, and (b) talking about scientific reasoning, are not necessarily the same thing. In other words, Aristotle's own use of metaphors to illustrate his theories of induction and human intuition contradicts his own injunction if, and only if, he can be seen to use them in the course of defining or scientifically demonstrating something. To the extent that Aristotle does not use metaphors in defining or demonstrating anything, there is no contradiction, but there is a complication.

The complication, which will be fully elaborated in the next chapter, can be expressed by noting that most, if not all of Aristotle's discussions are to be classified as dialectical, rather than scientific. To the extent that, as we have already seen, Aristotle holds demonstration to depend on the possibility of definition, and he holds that definitions are formulated by stating a thing's genus and specific difference(s), it follows clearly that scientific demonstration and the precise form of definition on which it is based are only possible with respect to definite genera of being, capable of being distinguished from others insofar as they are determinate *kinds of things*. Yet the discussions we encounter in the majority of Aristotle's extant works are outside the generality of these determinate kinds, and this is precisely what makes them philosophical rather than scientific works. In the words of Sachs, Aristotle's discussion of dialectic in the *Topics* reveals it to be 'strict and rigorous reasoning that is not

demonstrative because it does not proceed from self-evident starting-points [i.e., definitions]. [...] Aristotle's own theoretical works, such as the *Metaphysics*, the *Physics*, and *On the Soul*, are works of dialectic, ascending in stages from commonly held popular and philosophic opinions to secure an understanding of the way things are.<sup>490</sup>

In this sense, there is no contradiction in Aristotle's own use of metaphors to illustrate his scientific and psychological discussions, because these discussions themselves do not correspond to what Aristotle means by scientific reasoning. In addition to the discussions we have examined in this chapter, the theoretical discussions mentioned by Sachs above are all dialectical, and as such they are not subject to the same strict injunction against using metaphors. As we shall see when we examine the text of the *Metaphysics* in the next chapter, it is true that Aristotle does take issue with the use of *certain* metaphors in dialectical discussions, but this does not commit him to the view that all metaphorical expressions are to be avoided as such.

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<sup>490</sup> Sachs, *Plato Gorgias and Aristotle Rhetoric*, p. 17.

## 6. Chapter 5: Metaphor and Metaphysics

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter argues that, although Aristotle seems to take issue with his philosophical predecessors' use of metaphors in *Metaphysics* I, his criticisms are directed at the specific character of the statements he examines in that text, and not at the use of metaphor as such. Having explained this fact by pointing to the dialectical character of Aristotle's philosophical discussions, which implicitly differentiates these discussions from properly scientific or demonstrative ones without detracting from their precision, the chapter then proceeds to examine Aristotle's own use of the simile in a central passage of *Metaphysics* XII. Precisely because Aristotle's philosophical deployment of metaphors, in the form of similes and analogies, does not occur in the course of a definition or demonstration, it cannot be seen to contradict his prohibition against the use of metaphors, which I argued in the previous chapter is indeed limited to those contexts in which the terminological precision of a definition or a scientific demonstration is at stake.

In arguing this, the chapter aims to elaborate Aristotle's views with respect to the use of metaphors in discussions that are, to use a term Aristotle himself does not employ, metaphysical in nature. Here, as in the previous chapter, textual evidence is not in abundance. Yet there are a few isolated, but important passages in the *Metaphysics* where Aristotle either explicitly takes issue with a philosopher's use of metaphor, or criticizes others for their obscure manner of expression in a way that suggests, if only implicitly, that the obscurity in question is ultimately the result of metaphorical language. Furthermore, Aristotle's discussion of the law of non-contradiction in *Metaphysics* IV, which does not mention metaphors explicitly, nevertheless demands the avoidance of all

equivocal language, and therefore implies the same general prohibition against the use of metaphorical terms that we encountered in the previous chapter. In examining these passages and evaluating the arguments they present, we will draw together the results of the previous four chapters with a view to determining whether, and to what extent, Aristotle's theory of metaphor is consistent in the final analysis.

As in the previous chapter, we will also be examining certain claims made by Aristotle that appear, according to his own broad definition in *Poetics* 22, to be metaphorical. It is crucial to point out this fact at the outset, because it clearly highlights the implicit problem that needs to be addressed in what follows. The problem, as we began to see in the conclusion of the previous chapter, is that there appears to be a discrepancy between (a) Aristotle's claim, which seems to re-emerge in the discussion of the law of non-contradiction in particular, that metaphors are universally to be avoided; and (b) his own use of metaphors, in the form of similes and analogies, in all of his theoretical discussions. I concluded the last chapter by arguing that there is no contradiction involved (at least with respect to the texts that we considered there), because the majority of Aristotle's own philosophical discussions are not the kind for which either definition by genus and differentia, or scientific demonstration, are appropriate in the first place.

Supported by the reading of Sachs, I accordingly argued above that these properly philosophical discussions, which we find in most of Aristotle's extant works, are best characterized as dialectical rather than scientific. The distinction between dialectical and scientific discussions goes a long way towards resolving the discrepancy mentioned above, because it requires us to recognize that the latter kind of discussion is perhaps

more tolerant towards the use of metaphor, or at any rate *a certain kind* of metaphor, than the former. Nevertheless, as we shall see in what follows, Aristotle also singles out the use of metaphor in his famous criticism of Plato's doctrine of participation in *Metaphysics* I, and many of his criticisms of the Presocratics in the same book seem to take issue with their obscure manner of expression. These criticisms are consistent with the law of non-contradiction elaborated by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* IV, which implies a prohibition against metaphorical words. Yet if the *Metaphysics* is considered to be a dialectical work, and dialectical discussions are, as I argued in the last chapter, more tolerant towards the use of metaphors, why does Aristotle place such importance on the law of non-contradiction, and criticize Plato in particular for using metaphors in *Metaphysics* I?

In and of itself, the resolution to the problem for which I argued in the last chapter, which is the distinction between dialectical and properly scientific discussions, is insufficient to answer this question. It is necessary to supplement it by returning to the distinction I drew in the last chapter between two kinds of metaphor that follow from Aristotle's vertical definition in *Poetics* 22, which I have named Metaphor-A (the transposed word) and Metaphor-B (the simile). With this distinction now in mind, it can be seen that although the discussion of the law of non-contradiction in Book IV clearly implies a prohibition against the use of metaphorical words in dialectical as well as scientific discussions, this does not necessitate the exclusion of all metaphors as such. On Aristotle's own, vertical understanding of what a metaphor is, the law of non-contradiction only necessitates a prohibition against the use of Metaphor-A, but permits the use of Metaphor-B.

This is significant because all of Aristotle's metaphors that we will encounter in what follows, much like those we examined in the last chapter, are in the form of similes and analogical comparisons. The distinction between Metaphor-A and Metaphor-B, together with that between scientific and dialectical discussions introduced in the previous chapter, thus supports my contention that Aristotle's theory of metaphor and his own use of metaphors are ultimately consistent, despite the complications they raise. Together, these distinctions allow us to see both that (a) Aristotle makes prolific use in his own works of *a certain kind* of metaphor, which is the simile; and also that (b) he systematically avoids using metaphorical terms in his own dialectical discussions, in accordance with the law of non-contradiction that, as we shall see, follows as a necessary consequence from his own assumptions about the object of First Philosophy.

In the second place, we must examine Aristotle's criticisms of his philosophical predecessors in detail, in order to determine as precisely as possible the reasoning on which they are based. On my reading, as mentioned, it is not the case that, as O'Rourke (2005) contends, Aristotle '[praises] metaphor in poetry but [scorns] its use in philosophy.'<sup>491</sup> It is rather that Aristotle scorns his predecessors' use of *certain kinds* of metaphors – specifically, those that Aristotle refers to as being 'poetic' – because they are ineffective at disclosing what they are meant to disclose. On this reading, Aristotle objects to Plato's use of a specific kind of metaphor and not to the use of metaphor as such, and this leaves open the possibility that other metaphors could still be adequate to the purposes of metaphysical argumentation. This last point is something that Aristotle

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<sup>491</sup> F. O'Rourke, "Aristotle and the Metaphysics of Metaphor," p. 170. I will return to O'Rourke's argument in the final section of this chapter.

nowhere affirms explicitly, but which derives clear support from his own use of metaphors.

The plan for the current chapter is therefore as follows: (1) I will first outline Aristotle's characterization of wisdom (σοφία) in *Nicomachean Ethics* VI and *Metaphysics* I, and then both connect it to the study of what he calls First Philosophy and explain its relation to determinate, scientific knowledge; (2) second, I will present Aristotle's criticisms of Presocratic theories in *Metaphysics* I; (3) third, I will present Aristotle's critique of Plato's doctrine of participation in *Metaphysics* I.6-9, with particular emphasis on the passage in which he points to its metaphorical character; and (4) fourthly and finally, I will give a schematic overview of Aristotle's argument in *Metaphysics* VII-XII, focusing on those points at which Aristotle himself has recourse to metaphor, or something very much like it, in formulating his own arguments.

## **6.2 First Philosophy as the Most Accurate Domain of Knowledge**

I will begin this section by returning to Aristotle's discussion of induction in *Posterior Analytics* II.19. The passage that concerns us here is the one in which Aristotle argues that 'that there can be no scientific knowledge of the first principles [of scientific demonstrations]; and since nothing can be more infallible than scientific knowledge except intuition (ἡ νοῦν) it must be intuition that apprehends the first principles.'<sup>492</sup> The passage appears problematic at first glance, because it seems to say two contradictory things at once: on the one hand, that since 'all scientific knowledge is by means of reasoning (μετὰ λόγου), there would not be [...] scientific knowledge of the principles'; and on the other, that intuition (νοῦς), which grasps these principles, is both 'more

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<sup>492</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 100b 11-3.

accurate (ἀκριβέστερον) and ‘truer (ἀληθέστερον)’ than scientific knowledge. This implies somehow that the mind’s grasp of scientific principles is not, strictly speaking, *scientific*, and yet this basic consideration discredits neither the principles themselves, nor the mind that intuitively grasps them, as being untrue. In fact, as we saw in the previous chapter, Aristotle claims that these principles and their unscientific intuition by the human intellect are in fact *truer*, and *more accurate* than the knowledge furnished by science itself.

To most modern readers, this likely comes across as bunkum, insofar as what we normally understand by ‘knowledge of the truth’ seems simply to be the same thing as ‘scientific knowledge.’ ‘Intuition’ is nowadays avoided as a philosophical *Schimpfwort*; to the modern mind, the word *science* designates the only accurate and objective state that human knowledge of the truth regarding any facet of the world can ever attain. To the extent that science is seen in this way to be the exclusive means of access to what is objectively true about the world, whatever does not count as scientific does not count as true in the strict sense. We accordingly seem to lack even a basic vocabulary for describing a theoretical disposition that would somehow be true and accurate and yet not, for that matter, arrived at by means of either empirical evidence or discursive ratiocination. This is not the case for Aristotle, who in *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.6 lists four distinct intellectual dispositions or qualities, by which he says ‘we attain truth *and are never led into falsehood*’: these are ‘Scientific Knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), Prudence (φρόνησις), Wisdom (σοφία), and Intelligence (νοῦς)’.<sup>493</sup> Aristotle affirms wisdom

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<sup>493</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1141a 4-6 (emphasis added). Aristotle’s point is expressed here as the antecedent of a conditional statement, the consequent of which is that it must be νοῦς that intuits the first principles of science, because neither of the remaining three dispositions can do this: ‘εἰ δὲ οἷς ἀληθεύομεν καὶ μηδέποτε διαψευδόμεθα περὶ τὰ μὴ ἐνδεχόμενα ἢ καὶ ἐνδεχόμενα ἄλλως ἔχειν,

(σοφία) in particular to be the most accurate (ἀκριβεστάτη) of these qualities. He argues therefore that the wise man (τὸν σοφὸν) ‘must not only know the conclusions that follow from his first principles, but also have a true conception of those principles themselves. Hence Wisdom must be a combination of Intelligence and Scientific Knowledge: it must be a consummated knowledge of the most exalted objects.’<sup>494</sup>

It is interesting to observe that what Rackham translates into English as ‘a consummated knowledge’ is, in Greek, the expression ὡσπερ κεφαλὴν ἔχουσα ἐπιστήμη: literally, ‘just as knowledge having a head’. Rackham suggests in a footnote that these words are a reference to a scene in Plato’s *Gorgias* (505d),<sup>495</sup> where Callicles threatens to leave the discussion in anger, and Socrates encourages him to pursue the argument to its conclusion by saying that ‘one should set a head on the thing, that it may not go about headless.’<sup>496</sup> Whether or not this expression is a direct reference to Plato, it implies (again, by means of a simile) that wisdom (σοφία), as the combination of scientific knowledge and intelligence, is to the ‘body’ of knowledge what a head is to the physical body of an animal: its consummation or culmination.

These considerations agree with Aristotle’s comments in the *Metaphysics* regarding wisdom, which corresponds to the theoretical discipline elsewhere referred to as First Philosophy, ἡ πρώτη φιλοσοφία.<sup>497</sup> As we have already seen several times,

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ἐπιστήμη καὶ φρόνησις καὶ σοφία καὶ νοῦς, τούτων δὲ τριῶν μηθὲν ἐνδέχεται εἶναι (λέγω δὲ τριῶν φρόνησιν ἐπιστήμην σοφίαν) λείπεται νοῦν εἶναι τῶν ἀρχῶν.’

<sup>494</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1141a 16-20 (emphasis added): ‘ἡ ἀκριβεστάτη ἂν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν εἴη ἡ σοφία. δεῖ ἄρα τὸν σοφὸν μὴ μόνον τὰ ἐκ τῶν ἀρχῶν εἶδέναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς ἀληθεύειν. ὥστ’ εἶν ἂν ἡ σοφία νοῦς καὶ ἐπιστήμη, ὡσπερ κεφαλὴν ἔχουσα ἐπιστήμη τῶν τιμιωτάτων.’

<sup>495</sup> Rackham, in Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, p. 343 note c.

<sup>496</sup> Plato, *Gorgias* 505d 1: ‘ἀλλ’ ἐπιθέντας κεφαλὴν, ἵνα μὴ ἄνευ κεφαλῆς περιίη.’

<sup>497</sup> Aristotle does not to my knowledge refer to First Philosophy as such in the *Metaphysics*. He uses this term, among other places, in chapter 6 of *De Partibus Animalium*, where he refers the reader to his works

Aristotle associates knowledge in general with an understanding of the causes (αἰτίαι, ἀρχαί) responsible for making a given thing what it is. First Philosophy derives its name from the fact that it is a contemplation (θεωρία) of the universal causes of all being as such, or what Aristotle in Book IV calls ‘being qua being,’ τὸ ὄν ᾗ ὄν.<sup>498</sup> As the contemplation of being qua being, First Philosophy can thus be said to be universal not because it actually investigates all beings that exist, but rather because it investigates the most fundamental principles on which everything that exists depends for its being. In other words, First Philosophy is the most universal knowledge because its object is the first principles of all reality. From the first chapter of Book I, wisdom or σοφία is therefore associated with the contemplative knowledge of the highest principles, and the principles which are ‘highest’ are those which are *first*. From the conclusion at the end of Chapter 1 that ‘[w]isdom is knowledge about certain causes and principles’<sup>499</sup>, Aristotle accordingly moves on in Chapter 2 to consider what these causes and principles are, by examining the common perceptions held regarding the wise person as the one who knows them. The first thing he notes is that ‘the wise man knows all things, so far as it is possible, without having knowledge of every one of them individually’.<sup>500</sup>

The universality of First Philosophy thus derives from the ontological primacy of the causes it investigates. In coming to know these causes, the wise person can also know

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on ‘First Philosophy’, ἐν τοῖς περὶ τῆς πρώτης φιλοσοφίας. Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals*, trans. A.L. Peck (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 700b 9. Most commentators assume that Aristotle refers here to the work currently entitled *Metaphysics*, and that First Philosophy therefore corresponds for the inquiry into first principles.

<sup>498</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1003a 21.

<sup>499</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982a 1: ‘ἡ σοφία περὶ τινὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ αἰτίας ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη’.

<sup>500</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982a 9-10: ‘πρώτον μὲν ἐπίστασθαι πάντα τὸν σοφὸν ὡς ἐνδέχεται, μὴ καθ’ ἕκαστον ἔχοντα ἐπιστήμην αὐτῶν.’

(albeit indirectly) all the other things falling under them as well.<sup>501</sup> Having drawn on the common perceptions of the wise person in order to characterize the object of First Philosophy as an object of knowledge, Aristotle adds another specification by considering it also as an object of desire. He asserts on the one hand that ‘knowledge and understanding which are desirable for their own sake are most attainable in the knowledge of that which is most knowable’<sup>502</sup>, and on the other that ‘the things which are most knowable are first principles and causes; for it is through these and from these that other things come to be known, and not these through the particulars which fall under them.’<sup>503</sup> In other words, what is truly desirable in and for itself is what is most knowable in and of itself, and the first principles that constitute the object of First Philosophy, as the highest causes of all being, possess both of these characteristics necessarily.

What is important to grasp here is the fact that Aristotle describes the object of first philosophy as being ‘the knowledge of that which is most knowable,’ τοῦ μάλιστα ἐπιστητοῦ ἐπιστήμη. This is crucial to grasp because, for reasons we have already mentioned (and for others that we will encounter in what follows), First Philosophy cannot avail itself of the method of demonstration (ἀποδείξις), which Aristotle above argues is characteristic of scientific knowledge. Ultimately, the reason that the knowledge of primary causes that characterizes First Philosophy cannot be presented in the form of a syllogistic demonstration is that, as Aristotle affirms in *Metaphysics* III (B),

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<sup>501</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982a 23.

<sup>502</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982a 27-8: ‘τὸ δ’ εἰδέναι καὶ τὸ ἐπίστασθαι αὐτῶν ἕνεκα μάλισθ’ ὑπάρχει τῆς τοῦ μάλιστα ἐπιστητοῦ ἐπιστήμης’.

<sup>503</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982b 1-3: ‘μάλιστα δ’ ἐπιστητὰ τὰ πρῶτα καὶ τὰ αἴτια (διὰ γὰρ ταῦτα καὶ ἐκ τούτων ἄλλα γνωρίζεται ἄλλ’ οὐ ταῦτα διὰ τῶν ὑποκειμένων)’.

‘it is not possible for either oneness or being to be a single genus of things.’<sup>504</sup> To the extent that, as I have argued, demonstration requires as its starting point an indemonstrable understanding of the essential attributes that define a determinate class of things,<sup>505</sup> and to the extent that the object of First Philosophy is outside the generality of determinations according to which one class or genus could be differentiated from another, First Philosophy must be seen as the indemonstrable, and yet the most accurate, knowledge of what is most knowable in itself.

### 6.3 Aristotle’s Dialectical Examination of Presocratic Theories in *Metaphysics I*

The dialectical, non-demonstrative character of Aristotle’s metaphysical discussions does not detract, in his view, from either their truth or their accuracy. Although it is true that Aristotle’s metaphysical arguments must be distinguished from properly scientific ones, it is no less true that Aristotle considers wisdom, which is what First Philosophy strives after, to be superior in both truth and accuracy to demonstrative science. This claim is ultimately based on the nature of the object that First Philosophy contemplates, and not on the method that legitimates or verifies the contemplation.

The notion that the *Metaphysics* contains a dialectical discussion rather than a scientific one now becomes particularly important, because we must presently examine

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<sup>504</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 998b 22 (trans. Sachs): ‘οὐχ οἶόν τε δὲ ὄντων ἓν εἶναι γένος οὔτε τὸ ἓν οὔτε τὸ ὄν.’ Sachs explains in a footnote to this passage why being cannot be a genus, using the example of a definition of doves: ‘[i]f we define doves as wild pigeons, the species is doves, the genus pigeons, and the differentia being wild. If this is a sound definition, it cannot be true that (all) wild things are doves, or, the more important point here, that (all) wild things are pigeons. The reason is that all characteristics by which a genus is differentiated into species are outside the genus. Hence there cannot be genus that includes all things, and being cannot be understood as the class of all beings.’ (Sachs, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, p. 43)

<sup>505</sup> Aristotle makes this clear in the *Posterior Analytics*, reasoning that ‘[s]ince in each genus it is the attributes that belong essentially to that particular genus that belong to it of necessity (ἐπεὶ δ’ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὑπάρχει περὶ ἕκαστον γένος ὅσα καθ’ αὐτὰ ὑπάρχει), it is evident that scientific demonstrations are concerned with essential attributes and proceed from them (φανερὸν ὅτι περὶ τῶν καθ’ αὐτὰ ὑπαρχόντων αἰ ἐπιστημονικαὶ ἀποδείξεις καὶ ἐκ τοιούτων εἰσίν).’ Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 75a 28-31.

Aristotle's critical reconstructions of his predecessors' metaphysical theories in detail.

This is important because, according to Sachs, one of the features characterizing a dialectical discussion is that it takes its starting points not from definitions that divide genera by means of specific differences, but rather from opinions held either by a large group of people or else by someone considered to be pre-eminent as a thinker.

*Metaphysics* I.3-9 is where Aristotle critically examines his predecessors' views and derives the starting points of his own metaphysical arguments from them.

The passages we will be examining in this section are important to my argument not because they prove definitively that Aristotle considers metaphors to be either appropriate or inappropriate to First Philosophy, but rather because they must be seen to leave this question open. This is because, although Aristotle frequently criticizes early Greek philosophers for their obscure manner of expression, he never once explicitly mentions the use of metaphors as his reason for doing so. Nevertheless, it is important to admit that, whether or not Aristotle says so in the *Metaphysics*, Presocratic theories are indeed almost universally formulated in metaphorical language. This latter point is supported by G.E.R. Lloyd (1987), who observes that

[f]rom the Eros of Parmenides' Way of Seeming, through the Love and Strife of Empedocles and Mind in Anaxagoras, to Mind, again, in Diogenes of Apollonia, the history of pre-Socratic cosmological speculation is a history of what we find it tempting to assume we can straightforwardly call images, metaphors, or analogies, although, strictly speaking, it would be better not to use terms that might suggest that their authors viewed them *as such* or, indeed, that *they* had some clear alternative.<sup>506</sup>

Lloyd's comments are helpful for two main reasons here: firstly because they support my contention that Presocratic philosophizing is, in general, inherently metaphorical; and

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<sup>506</sup> G.E.R. Lloyd, *The Revolutions of Wisdom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 179.

secondly because they indicate that no Presocratic philosopher would likely have recognized his theories as such. The reason for this is explicitly stated in another of Lloyd's works, where he affirms that, '[s]o far as we know it, it was Plato who first drew an explicit general distinction between an image and a demonstrative account, pointing out that the first falls short of the second, and [...] it is arguable that the Presocratics not only did not formulate this distinction, but tended in practice rather to ignore it.'<sup>507</sup> I will show in what follows that, at least implicitly, Aristotle recognizes this to be true in the *Metaphysics*.

Let's therefore take it for granted that Presocratic theories are in fact replete with metaphors, even if Aristotle does not state this explicitly anywhere in the *Metaphysics*. He does, however, affirm in the *Meteorologica* that at least one Presocratic theory is metaphorical. At 357a, he mentions Empedocles' attempt to explain why sea water is salty by calling it the 'sweat of the earth', and states that '[i]t is equally absurd for anyone to think, like Empedocles, that he has made an intelligible statement when he says that the sea is the sweat of the earth. Such a statement is perhaps satisfactory in poetry, for metaphor is a poetic device, but it does not advance our knowledge of nature.'<sup>508</sup> Indeed, it is quite tempting to take this statement as the implicit justification for many of Aristotle's criticisms of Presocratic theories in *Metaphysics* I; the problem is that, as already mentioned, Aristotle never once says anything explicit there about metaphors.

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<sup>507</sup> Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy*, p. 229.

<sup>508</sup> Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, trans. H.D.P. Lee (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), 357a 25-28: 'ὁμοίως δὲ γελοῖον κἂν εἰ τις εἰπὼν ἰδρῶτα τῆς γῆς εἶναι τὴν θάλατταν οἶεται σαφὲς εἰρηκέναι, καθάπερ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς· πρὸς ποίησιν μὲν γὰρ οὕτως εἰπὼν ἴσως εἴρηκεν ἰκανῶς [ἢ γὰρ μεταφορὰ ποιητικόν], πρὸς δὲ γινῶναι τὴν φύσιν οὐχ ἰκανῶς.'

The discussion of the law of non-contradiction, which Aristotle elaborates in Book IV, could also be taken as an implicit justification for his criticisms in Book I. As we saw in the previous chapter, the law states clearly that ‘not to mean one thing is to mean nothing.’ Yet this still does not necessitate the assumption that the obscurity to which Aristotle objects is exclusively the result of metaphors. Although Aristotle claims in the *Topics* that all metaphorical expressions are obscure, it does not follow from this that all obscure expressions are necessarily metaphorical.

Furthermore, Aristotle’s discussion of the law of non-contradiction raises a question in light of Lloyd’s comments above, to the effect that no Presocratic philosopher would likely have recognized his own theory as metaphorical, because there is no evidence that the distinction between the metaphorical and non-metaphorical was even conceived prior to the time of Plato. In *Metaphysics* IV, the law of non-contradiction emerges in light of the consideration that, although being is said in many ways, all of these many senses point to a primary meaning, which is thinghood or substance (οὐσίᾳ). In fact, it seems that both (a) the law of non-contradiction, and (b) the consideration that thinghood is the primary referent of the many senses of being, are mutually implicative, insofar as Aristotle states that denying the latter is the same as denying the former: those who do not obey the law therefore ‘do away with substance and essence.’<sup>509</sup>

In other words, to the extent that being is primarily spoken about as a thing’s substance, and substance is responsible for the essential nature that distinguishes a thing

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<sup>509</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1007a: Aristotle thus explains that ‘if there is to be any such thing as ‘being essentially a man’ this will not be ‘being a not-man’ or ‘not being a man’ (yet these are negations of it); for there was one thing which it meant, and this was the substance of something. And denoting the substance of a thing means that the essence of the thing is nothing else.’

from everything it is not, then the law of non-contradiction follows as a necessary consequence from assumption that substance is indeed the real and primary way in which being is spoken of. Obeying this law is nothing other than a recognition, *in speech*, of the primacy of οὐσία.

The importance of these considerations becomes apparent in light of Aristotle's remark, near the end of his critical doxography in *Metaphysics* I.9, that '[i]n general (ὄλως), to search for the elements of whatever *is* without distinguishing the many ways this is meant, is to seek what is impossible to find'.<sup>510</sup> On the basis of these remarks, one can argue three points: (a) that the law of non-contradiction follows as a necessary consequence of the recognition that οὐσία is the primary referent among the many senses in which being is said; (b) that the discovery of this primary referent is impossible without a prior distinction of these many senses; and (c) that, consequently, to the extent that previous philosophers did not make an exhaustive inquiry into the many senses in which being can be spoken of, it was impossible for them to discover the primacy of οὐσία, and to the extent that it was impossible for them to discover οὐσία, it seems reasonable to assume that Aristotle recognizes, at least implicitly, that it was impossible for them to discover the law of non-contradiction as well.

This is an important consideration because, as we shall presently see, Aristotle often points to the obscure or equivocal nature of his predecessors' views. Although it seems tempting to take his criticisms in Book I as simply objecting to the fact that earlier philosophers did not obey the law of non-contradiction in formulating their theories, it is also important to see that Aristotle does not simply reject his predecessors' views for this

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<sup>510</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 992b 19-20: 'τε τὸ τῶν ὄντων ζητεῖν μὴ διελόντας, πολλαχῶς λεγομένων, ἀδύνατον εὐρεῖν'

reason. While drawing attention to the vague nature of many Presocratic theories, Aristotle's doxography in *Metaphysics* I also highlights his effort to look beyond their obscure formulation in order to point to their legitimate theoretical discovery of the causes and principles he himself outlines in the *Physics*. In and of itself, this suggests that what he finds to be inadequate in these theories is not simply the fact that they are expressed in metaphorical language.

Let's consider what support there is for the opposite view. There are two factors that suggest, albeit vaguely, that Aristotle does indeed object to the metaphorical character of early Greek philosophy, even if he never says so explicitly: (1) first, he draws attention to the proximity in content between the former and Hesiodic myth<sup>511</sup>; and (2) second, he points, as I have already said, to the obscure language in which Presocratic philosophy is expressed (at one point he even goes so far as to compare early Greek

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<sup>511</sup> If Aristotle considers the utterances of Presocratic philosophy to be close in content to those of mythic poetry, it is also important (for us, at any rate) to bear in mind just what distinguishes the former from the latter. In general, Presocratic thought must also be characterized by its *rejection* of the anthropomorphized representation of divinity that characterizes mythic poetry. Xenophanes seems to have been the first Presocratic thinker explicitly to reject the depiction of god(s) as having human form: in Fragment 15, he accordingly reasons that '[i]f oxen and horses and lions had hands / or could draw with their hands and accomplish such works as men, / horses would draw the figures as similar to horses / and the oxen as similar to oxen, / and they would make the bodies of the sort which each of them had.' Xenophanes Fr. 15, trans. J.H. Lesher, in *Xenophanes of Colophon: Fragments* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2001), p. 89. This doubt about whether the gods really are anthropomorphic implies an accompanying distrust of the mythic poems in which they are so depicted. Moreover, it leads to precisely the kind of question that Presocratic theories seem to want to answer: that is, if the divine is not in fact like men or women, what is it *really*? One source of disagreement among scholars commenting on the above passage concerns the extent to which Xenophanes' skepticism towards anthropomorphic depictions of the gods should be construed as a dogmatic skepticism, in the sense of implying an outright rejection of the possibility that the gods could ever take human form. This is evidently the view of Fränkel, who suggests that Xenophanes' point is 'to render the anthropomorphic view wholly ridiculous'. Cf. *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, trans. M. Hadas & J. Willis (Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 330-1 (cited by Lesher on p. 91). But Lesher advances a more cautious reading, which stresses the fact that 'we are not told whether these considerations should *undermine* these beliefs, either by having proved them false or having subjected them to ridicule' (ibid). I agree with Lesher's point, since Xenophanes' remark does no more than raise the possibility that the anthropomorphic depiction of divinity is inaccurate. He nowhere makes the stronger claim that this depiction is incorrect. Lloyd also observes that 'a devastating attack on the anthropomorphic conception of the gods was made by Xenophanes. And thereafter we find Empedocles, for example, rejecting the attribution of human form to the "holy, unutterable Mind" which "darts with swift thoughts all over the world"' (*Polarity and Analogy*, p. 211, citing Empedocles, Fr. 134).

thought in general, and that of Empedocles in particular, to a lisping child). It will be better to deal with these two points in succession, as (2) raises an interpretive dilemma that will require a more lengthy discussion to resolve.

(1) At two specific points in *Metaphysics* I, Aristotle points out that a good deal of the content of early Greek metaphysical theories overlaps with the mythical stories handed down by Hesiod. In Chapter 3, for instance, Aristotle begins his critical appraisal of his predecessors' views by pointing out the similarities between the original theory of Thales, who claimed the source of all things 'is water (ὕδωρ φησὶν εἶναι)',<sup>512</sup> and certain ancient traditions of mythic poetry, which 'made Ocean and Tethys the parents of what comes into being, and made the oath of the gods be by water, called Styx by them.'<sup>513</sup> Although Aristotle acknowledges that Thales' theory indeed has some basis in observed fact – he notes that he probably derived his opinion 'from seeing that the nourishment of all things is fluid, and that heat itself comes about from it and lives by it' – he also points out that his theory is consistent with what was already suggested in the mythic cosmogonies of the early poets.<sup>514</sup>

A further parallelism between Presocratic metaphysics and what is transmitted in early Greek myth emerges again at the beginning of Chapter 4, where Aristotle investigates how the earliest thinkers had sought to articulate the cause of motion. In this case, it is not Thales but Parmenides who gets mentioned in connection with the generation of the gods in Hesiod's *Theogony*. Aristotle reports that Parmenides

says that first "of all the gods, [the all-governing divinity] devised love," while Hesiod says

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<sup>512</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983b 22.

<sup>513</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983b 31-5: 'Ὀκεανόν τε γὰρ καὶ Τηθύην ἐποίησαν τῆς γενέσεως πατέρας, καὶ τὸν ὄρκον τῶν θεῶν ὕδωρ, τὴν καλουμένην ὑπ' αὐτῶν Στύγα.'

<sup>514</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983b 26-8.

Chaos came into being as the very first of all things, but then  
Broad-breasted earth... and also  
Love, who shines out from among all the immortals,  
as though there needed to be present among beings some sort of cause that would  
move things and draw them together.<sup>515</sup>

These parallels traced by Aristotle between Presocratic theories and certain aspects of Hesiodic myth come very close to an explicit recognition of what Lloyd observes above: that the utterances of Presocratic philosophy are indistinguishable from poetic images and metaphors, even if these images and metaphors are at times different from those employed by poets such as Homer and Hesiod. The close proximity indicated by the above remarks between the theories of early Greek natural philosophers and the myths recounted by the ancient poets thus can be taken to indicate that, on the one hand, Aristotle considers his philosophical predecessors to have developed their metaphysical theories under the influence of mythic poetry; and furthermore that, on the other hand, he also sees the myths recounted by the earliest poets as having already been, to a certain extent, philosophic in aim and scope. Neither of these points provides any direct support for the explicit claim that Aristotle objects to the use of metaphors as such in his predecessors' theories.

(2) The above considerations implicitly highlight the interpretive dilemma, mentioned above, which now needs to be addressed. The dilemma consists in the fact that, at times, Aristotle seems to suggest (as in the examples we have just considered) that Presocratic philosophy is deficient in content, whereas, at others, he implies that it is

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<sup>515</sup> 984a 26-31; Sachs, p. 9: 'καὶ γὰρ οὗτος κατασκευάζων τὴν τοῦ παντὸς γένεσιν <πρώτιστον μὲν (φησιν) ἔρωτα θεῶν μητίσατο πάντων,> Ἡσίοδος δὲ <πάντων μὲν πρώτιστα χάος γένηται, αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα [ ] γὰρ εὐρύτερονος, -- [ ] ἡδ' ἔρος, ὃς πάντεσσι μεταπρέπει ἀθανάτοισιν,> ὡς δέον ἐν τοῖς οὖσις ὑπαρχειν τιν' αἰτίαν ἣτις κινήσει καὶ συναΐξει τὰ πράγματα.' According to Tredennick's explanatory notes to this passage, the citation of Parmenides here is from Fr. 13 (Diels), and that of Hesiod is from *Theogony* 116-120 (Tredennick, p. 27).

rather deficient in its form of expression. Is Aristotle's problem then with the form in which Presocratic theories are expressed, the content that is expressed in them, or perhaps both? The notion that Aristotle objects to the use of metaphor in Presocratic theories presupposes that he is concerned above all with their form of expression. If it can thus be shown that he is not concerned exclusively with the formal character of his predecessors' views, then it will follow that what he objects to is not simply the use of metaphors as such, insofar as this is an exclusively formal consideration.

At several points, Aristotle explicitly states that certain early thinkers succeeded in discovering only a limited number of the four causes he enumerates in the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, which suggests that he criticizes these theories for their inadequate content. Thus in *Metaphysics* I.3 he gives a schematic overview of materialist theories (which he attributes to Thales, Anaximenes, Diogenes, Anaxagoras, Empedocles and others), and claims that '[f]rom these things [...] one might suppose that the only cause is the one accounted for in the species of material'.<sup>516</sup> The supposition that the earliest thinkers discovered only one (i.e., the material) cause seems consistent with subsequent remarks in *Metaphysics* I. Firstly, in Chapter 4 Aristotle likewise states that certain other philosophers after the materialists (among whom he includes Empedocles), discovered only 'two causes (δυσὼν αἰτίαι)' – namely, 'the material and that from which the motion is (τῆς τε ὕλης καὶ τοῦ ὄθεν ἢ κίνησις)'.<sup>517</sup> Secondly, in Chapter 5 Aristotle claims that 'the Pythagoreans have said in the same way that the sources are two'.<sup>518</sup> And

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<sup>516</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 984a 17-8: 'ἐκ μὲν οὖν τούτων μόνην τις αἰτίαν νομίσειεν ἂν τὴν ἐν ὕλης εἶδει λεγομένην'. In what follows, unless otherwise indicated all translations of the *Metaphysics* are from the version of Sachs (1999).

<sup>517</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 985a 13.

<sup>518</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 987a 14: 'οἱ δὲ Πυθαγόρειοι δύο μὲν τὰς ἀρχὰς κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν εἰρήκασιν τρόπον'.

thirdly, in Chapter 6 he says that Plato ‘used only two causes, the one that is responsible for the what-it-is and the one that results from the material’.<sup>519</sup>

The idea that previous metaphysical theories suffer from a dearth of content also seems consistent with the teleological trajectory that Aristotle maps onto the historical development of Greek philosophy leading up to him. Speaking of the materialists in Chapter 3, Aristotle thus states that although they only discovered one cause, ‘as people went forward in this way, their object of concern itself opened a road for them, and *contributed to forcing them to inquire along it.*’<sup>520</sup> The notion that the subject matter of metaphysical inquiry itself, αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα, led subsequent thinkers beyond the material cause thus posits a kind of incremental development in the search for first principles, indicating that this search inherently tended towards the four causes Aristotle himself unites explicitly in his own account. Not only that: it suggests on a strong reading that the history of Greek philosophy can be seen as a more or less linear progression from the discovery of one cause to the next. All of this is consistent with the notion that what Aristotle objects to above all is the deficient content of Presocratic metaphysical theories, and not their form.

As mentioned above, however, other comments made by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* I suggest a different way of understanding what he finds to be inadequate in the theories of Plato and the Presocratics. These other comments imply that what is deficient in Presocratic theories is indeed their obscure form of expression. Aristotle himself gently mocks this obscurity with an image: he claims that the earliest Greek thinkers

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<sup>519</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 988a 9-11: ‘δυσὶν αἰτίαν μόνον κέχρηται, τῇ τε τοῦ τί ἐστὶ καὶ τῇ κατὰ τὴν ὕλην’.

<sup>520</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 984a 17-9 (emphasis added): ‘προϊόντων δ’ οὕτως αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα ὥδοποίησεν αὐτοῖς καὶ συνανάγκασε ζητεῖν.’

philosophized *with a lisp*. Aristotle uses the image of a lisp twice in the course of *Metaphysics* I to illustrate the equivocal nature of all early Greek thought. Once, in Chapter 3, it is specifically in reference to Empedocles, where Aristotle observes that ‘[i]f one were to pursue and get ahold of Empedocles’ thinking, rather than what he said with a lisp,’ one would ascertain that in postulating Love and Strife as principles he effectively posited two causes of motion.<sup>521</sup> The second time we encounter the image of the lisp is in the closing lines of Chapter 10. There, Aristotle says more generally that ‘the earliest philosophy about everything is like someone who lisps, since it is young and just starting out.’<sup>522</sup>

Both in general and in particular, Aristotle thus uses the image of lisping to compare the obscurity of earlier philosophy as a whole to the faltering way in which a young child speaks.<sup>523</sup> Nevertheless, even if the image of lisping does suggest that Aristotle takes issue with the obscure manner in which Presocratic theories are formulated, we have not yet seen any strong textual evidence for arguing that this is *all*

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<sup>521</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 985a 4-7 (emphasis added; translation modified): ‘εἰ γὰρ τις ἀκολουθοίη καὶ λαμβάνοι πρὸς τὴν διάνοιαν καὶ μὴ πρὸς ἃ ψελλίζεται λέγων Ἐμπεδοκλῆς [...]’. The translations of both Sachs and Tredennick more or less paraphrase the expression μὴ πρὸς ἃ ψελλίζεται λέγων Ἐμπεδοκλῆς. Sachs translates it as ‘rather than what he said inarticulately’, and Tredennick as ‘not [i.e., with a view] to his obscure language’. But a more literal translation would be something along the lines of ‘not with respect to the things that Empedocles *lisps* [or ‘stutters’] in saying’ (emphasis added), since the primary meaning of the verb ψελλίζω according to Liddell & Scott is ‘to falter in speech; to speak inarticulately, like a child.’ H.G. Liddell & R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 900.

<sup>522</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 993a 15-7: ‘πελλιζομένη γὰρ ἔοικεν ἡ πρώτη φιλοσοφία περὶ πάντων, ἅτε νέα τε καὶ κατ’ ἀρχὰς οὖσα.’

<sup>523</sup> In light of the teleological trajectory that Aristotle maps onto the history of Greek philosophy before him, this simile suggests volumes: it suggests a kind of parallel between the gradual development of metaphysical theories and the development of a human being from infancy to maturity. Such a parallel indicates, in an extremely vague manner, that in growing up and attaining maturity, metaphysical speculation will have left behind these obscure means of expressing itself. If this means more concretely that, in discovering the principle of οὐσία and the law of non-contradiction that follows from it, Greek philosophy will have found a mode of exposition that is appropriate to the accuracy Aristotle attributes to First Philosophy, then it is more or less consistent with the other remarks we have examined thus far.

he objects to<sup>524</sup>, or that this obscure manner of expression has any necessary connection to the use of metaphors. Although the image of lisping does point to an inadequacy in the unclear form in which the earliest thinkers expressed themselves, it also suggests a kind of tolerance for this lack of clarity as well. To the extent that, as Aristotle explains, the image functions by comparing these early thinkers to faltering children, this can also be taken to suggest that the Presocratics *could not but* philosophize obscurely, in the same way that children who are learning to speak cannot but speak poorly at first.

The text of *Metaphysics* I therefore supports both the view that Aristotle takes issue with the content of Presocratic theories, and the view that he takes issue with their form. Is it possible, or for that matter necessary, to decide between these two alternatives?

In fact, a recent article by G. Betegh (2012) indicates that the correct answer to this question is that Aristotle's criticisms concern both content and form in equal

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<sup>524</sup> It is also true that, in three other passages of *Metaphysics* I, Aristotle states explicitly what the image of the lisp suggests indirectly: that the earliest Greek thinkers expressed themselves in an ambiguous, equivocal and/or obscure fashion. This consideration is closely connected to Aristotle's subsequent claim that his philosophical predecessors only discovered the four causes *in a certain way*. Speaking in Chapter 5 of the entire course of Greek philosophy prior to the Pythagoreans, Aristotle claims that the early thinkers 'spoke about these things [i.e., first principles] in a way that made them murkier (μορυχώτερον)' (987a 11). He points out the murkiness (or 'vagueness') of the Presocratics' metaphysical theories at several other points in *MP* I. In Chapter 4, he claims that the earliest thinkers distinguished their metaphysical principles 'dimly and with no clarity (ἀμυδρῶς μέντοι καὶ οὐθὲν σαφῶς)' (985a 12). The word ἀμυδρῶς in particular re-appears two more times in the course of Book I. The first is at the beginning of Chapter 7 where, ostensibly in reference to the whole of Greek philosophy before him, Aristotle claims 'that of those who have spoken about origin and cause, not one has said anything that went outside those that were distinguished by us in the writings on nature, but all of them, *though murkily* (ἀμυδρῶς), have obviously touched on them in some way.' (988a 21-5: 'τῶν λεγόντων περὶ ἀρχῆς καὶ αἰτίας οὐθείς ἔξω τῶν ἐν τοῖς περὶ φύσεως ἡμῖν διωρισμένων εἶρηκεν, ἀλλὰ πάντες ἀμυδρῶς μὲν ἐκείνων δὲ πῶς φαίνονται θιγγαίνοντες.')

The second time is at the end of Chapter 10, where Aristotle concludes his critical review of past theories with the recognition that his predecessors did manage to uncover all four of the causes, which he lays down in both the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*; but, he repeats, 'they inquired murkily into these (ἀλλ' ἀμυδρῶς ταύτας), and while in a certain way all the causes have been spoken of before, in another way they have not been spoken of at all.' (993a 13-5: 'καὶ τρόπον μὲν τινα πᾶσαι πρότερον εἶρηνται, τρόπον δὲ τινα οὐδαμῶς.')

As mentioned above, however, none of these remarks is sufficient to prove that Aristotle considers this obscurity to be inherently connected to the use of metaphor, or that he objects to the use of metaphor as such in criticizing his predecessors' views.

measure. On Betegh's interpretation, Aristotle's point in criticizing the theories of the Presocratics is neither to say that they explicitly recognized one or two kinds of causality only, and therefore that the problem is exclusively one of content, nor to say that they philosophized in an obscure or equivocal way, and that the problem is therefore purely formal. It is rather to say that they posited too few individual principles and, as a result, even if some of them implicitly recognized the necessity of the material, formal, efficient and final causes, they could not adequately explain how the principles they posited are able account for these different kinds of causation. Thales' principle of water, for instance, is for Betegh not simply a material principle; it is an explicitly material principle that implicitly performs the roles of other causes as well. In Betegh's words,

Aristotle's point is precisely that you cannot have any kind of theory, not even an Ionian monist theory, which operates with the material cause only [...]. The function of the principle (or principles) of such a theory might resemble most to [sic] the material cause, but, willy-nilly, it must necessarily take some of the roles of the efficient cause, and also that of the formal cause [...] Indeed, the imprecision and incoherence of these theories stems to a large extent from the fact that they have to attribute too many causal roles, without properly distinguishing them, to their insufficient number of principles.<sup>525</sup>

Betegh's comments suggest that the deficiencies in content and form, which Aristotle uncovers in his evaluation of Presocratic metaphysical theories, are mutually implicative. It is possible to view certain theories as being more obscure than others, depending on the extent to which they attribute more than one causal role to a single principle. This is ultimately what allows Aristotle to discern a kind of development from one theory to the next, which culminates in the postulation of a unique principle corresponding to each of the four kinds of causation upheld by Aristotle himself. This makes it extremely unlikely that Aristotle simply objects to the metaphorical nature of his predecessors' theories,

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<sup>525</sup> G. Betegh, "The Next Principle," in (ed.) C. Steele, *Aristotle Metaphysics Alpha* (Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 105-6.

insofar as he is clearly concerned with their content at least as much as he is with their form.<sup>526</sup>

The above considerations do not support the view that Aristotle's point in criticizing his philosophical predecessors is simply that metaphors do not advance our knowledge of metaphysical principles, much as he claims in the *Meteorologica* that they do not advance our knowledge of nature. It is important in this regard to recall that, in the passage just mentioned, Aristotle does not even stop to ask what Empedocles might have meant in declaring the sea to be the sweat of the earth; he simply rejects the claim as a metaphor, and states that this kind of speaking has its place in poetry but not in natural science. Although it is tempting to see a similar assumption at work in his criticisms of the Presocratics in *Metaphysics* I, this is not supported by any hard textual evidence. Indeed, the assumption that Aristotle criticizes his philosophical predecessors simply for using metaphors raises more questions about the *Metaphysics* than it ultimately answers.

#### **6.4 Aristotle's Criticism of Platonic Participation in *Metaphysics* I.6-9**

By far the most philosophically noteworthy instance in which Aristotle criticizes an earlier thinker for the use of metaphors is his rejection of Plato's doctrine of

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<sup>526</sup> Betegh's reading is also supported by other texts of *Metaphysics* I that we have not yet considered. Specifically, in Chapter 8, Aristotle says (ostensibly in reference to the Platonists) that 'they in a certain way both say and do not say that the good is a cause (λέγειν τε καὶ μὴ λέγειν πως συμβαίνει αὐτοῖς τὰγαθὸν αἴτιον)' (988b 15). Here, together with the material and formal causes Aristotle attributes to Plato several lines above, he observes that *in a certain way* (πως) Plato also posited the good as a cause, which means that he had at least a vague intimation of the final cause as well as the formal and material ones. Similarly, at the very end of Book I Aristotle states that, in fact, 'Empedocles said that bone *is* by means of a ratio, and this is what it is for it to be and the thinghood of the thing (Ἐμπεδοκλῆς ὅσπου τῶ λόγῳ φησὶν εἶναι, τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι καὶ ἡ οὐσία τοῦ πράγματος).' (993a 16-8) Much like the previous remark, this passage shows that Aristotle recognizes that Empedocles can be seen in a certain sense to have discovered the formal cause, or what Aristotle calls the 'what it is for it to be (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι)' or the 'thinghood of the thing (ἡ οὐσία τοῦ πράγματος).' What is important to grasp here is that, unlike in the comments we examined above, Aristotle does not mention this vague intimation of causes as an objection; he rather mentions it to commend the theories by noting that, in spite of their obscure character, they managed to arrive at an awareness, however vague, of the principles that Aristotle himself outlines in the *Physics*.

participation, μέθεξις, in *Metaphysics* I.9. Aristotle's critical analysis of Plato's views occupies the better part of four chapters (6-9) in that text, and the notion that 'participation' is merely what Aristotle calls a 'poetic metaphor' seems to form an important premise in his overall argument against Plato's position. Nevertheless, it is crucial to ask whether Aristotle's point in this passage is (a) that Plato's doctrine of participation is inadequate simply because it is a metaphor, or (b) that it is inadequate because the specific metaphor in which Plato expresses the doctrine is itself inadequate, i.e., *as a metaphor*. After summarizing Aristotle's reconstruction of Plato's teaching and the Pythagorean doctrine of imitation on which he claims it is based, I will demonstrate that (b) is the correct option.

In the interests of concision, it will be helpful to begin by postulating that Plato's doctrine of participation is an account of how particular, sensible things derive their essential properties by partaking in the being of eternal ideas or forms, which act as hypostasized versions of these properties. Within the notion of participation, we can accordingly distinguish two basic components: firstly there is a certain relation, and secondly there are the terms of this relation. This distinction is important because, as we will see shortly, Aristotle's rejection of Plato's teaching proceeds by pointing out how it ultimately fails to separate itself from the Pythagorean doctrine of 'imitation (μίμησις).' His justification for this claim is effectively twofold: on the one hand, he argues that Platonic participation and Pythagorean imitation are the same because what Plato means by 'Ideas' (τὰ εἶδη) is conceptually identical with what the Pythagoreans mean by 'numbers (οἱ ἀριθμοί)'; and on the other, he argues that the relationship established by participation between the Ideas and sensible individuals is identical to the relationship

established by Pythagorean imitation between sensible individuals and numbers.

Aristotle's twofold contention is therefore that Platonic participation and Pythagorean imitation are the same because (1) the terms that they bring into relation are essentially the same terms; and (2) the relationships themselves, by means of which these terms are connected to one another, are also fundamentally identical.

As will be shown, Aristotle's remark that Platonic participation is merely a poetic metaphor concerns the precise character of participation as a relationship of ontological derivation between eternal Ideas and finite, sensible individuals. It is thus to be understood in the context of (2) above. Yet since the argument advanced by Aristotle in support of (1) is the subject of still ongoing controversies, I will briefly summarize it before proceeding to examine the justification for (2).

(1) Aristotle claims repeatedly in *Metaphysics* I and elsewhere that for Plato, the Forms quite simply *are* numbers (τὰ εἶδη εἶναι τοὺς ἀριθμούς), or 'are composed as numbers'.<sup>527</sup> Without getting too immersed in details, a plausible account of Aristotle's

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<sup>527</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 987b 22. Tredennick simply opts not to translate the final clause of the sentence (τὰ εἶδη εἶναι τοὺς ἀριθμούς), indicating in a footnote that the words 'τὰ εἶδη' are a later MS addition omitted by Zeller [1889] (p. 44). Nevertheless, in so doing I think he obscures the overall meaning of the passage and makes the thrust of Aristotle's polemic more difficult to understand. Steel (2012) gives a full account of the MSS tradition for this passage, noting that 'τὰ εἶδη' is omitted by Zeller, Gillespie and Ross, whereas the other part of the clause, 'τοὺς ἀριθμούς', is instead omitted by Susemil, Christ, Jaeger and Primavesi. But he points out (rightly, I think) that 'it is difficult to eliminate either τὰ εἶδη or τοὺς ἀριθμούς [...], as the first is needed to ensure continuity with what is said in l. 19 ἐπεὶ δ' αἴτια τὰ εἶδη, the latter to make the transition to what will be said in l. 22 τοὺς ἀριθμούς αἰτίους εἶναι.' Steel accordingly lists three possible options: (1) '[k]eep the text as it stands'; (2) replace τοὺς with ὥς, so that the clause reads τὰ εἶδη εἶναι ὥς ἀριθμούς, and the whole sentence could then be translated as '[f]or out of them, through participation in the One, are the *Forms as numbers*'; and (3) insert an epexegetic καὶ between εἶναι and τοὺς ἀριθμούς. C. Steel, "Plato as Seen by Aristotle (*Metaphysics* A 6)", in (ed.) Idem, *Aristotle's Metaphysics Alpha: Symposium Aristotelicum* (Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 186-7. Sachs' translation seems to follow Steel's second suggestion, as he translates the clause as saying that the forms 'are composed as (ὥς) numbers'. This makes better sense of the Greek and follows the argumentative structure of Aristotle's polemic more precisely. Moreover, the general formulation 'forms are numbers' appears three times in *MP* I, and then another eight times in Books XIII-XIV, where Aristotle gives a more extended and detailed analysis of Plato's teaching concerning forms (although in these later books he treats this teaching more often than not in isolation from the Pythagorean conception of number).

justification for this claim can be given in the three following steps: (i) the Pythagoreans understood all numbers, οἱ ἀριθμοί, to be individually composed from the combination of the even and the odd, which are instances of the more general principles of ‘limit’ and ‘the unlimited.’<sup>528</sup> (ii) In several dialogues, Plato presents each Idea as a self-identical unity presiding over a multiplicity of sensible individuals that participate in it, or what Aristotle calls a ‘one-over-many (τὸ ἓν ἐπὶ πολλῶν)’.<sup>529</sup> Yet in what many (evidently including Aristotle himself) assume to be Plato’s unwritten teachings, traces of which appear in dialogues such as the *Sophist* and *Philebus*, each Idea is itself presented as being a manifold of internal elements generated from the imposition of a formal principle of unity (τὸ ἓν) on a material principle of duality (δύαξ), to which Aristotle at one point refers as ‘the great and the small (τὸ μέγα καὶ τὸ μικρὸν)’.<sup>530</sup> Consequently, according to Aristotle’s understanding of the doctrine of participation, the Ideas are generated by the imposition of a principle of limit, sometimes referred to as ‘one,’ on a principle of

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For a more detailed treatment of these texts, see the Introduction to (tr.) J. Annas, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Books M and N* (Oxford University Press, 1988 – 1st Edition 1976), pp. 65-73.

<sup>528</sup> Aristotle thus states at 986a that ‘they consider the elements of number to be the even and the odd (τὸ τε ἄρτιον καὶ τὸ περιττόν), of which the latter is limited but the former is unlimited (τούτων δὲ τὸ μὲν πεπερασμένον τὸ δὲ ἄπειρον),’ and furthermore that ‘they consider number to arise from the one (τὸ δ’ ἀριθμὸν ἐκ τοῦ ἑνός)’ (986a 17-21; Sachs, p. 11-2). Sachs (p. 12, note) explains exactly how both even and odd numbers were thought to be generated from the one in different ways, noting that ‘[t]he odd numbers arise from the unit when it is added to the evens, but the even numbers also arise from the unit, since it must be doubled to produce the first of them.’ This basic binary pair, limited and unlimited, was according to Aristotle’s subsequent discussion expanded by ‘[v]arious ones of these same people’ to include a total of ten pairs of ‘causes (ἀρχάς)’. In total, the list of ten is as follows: ‘limit/unlimited (πέρας ἄπειρον), odd/even (περιττόν ἄρτιον), one/many (ἓν πλῆθος), right/left (δεξιὸν ἀριστερόν), male/female (ἄρρεν θῆλυ), still/moving (ἡμεροῦν κινούμενον), straight/crooked (εὐθύ καμπύλον), light/dark (φῶς σκότος), good/bad (ἀγαθὸν κακόν), and square/oblong (τετράγωνον ἑτερόμηκες).’ (986a 24-27; Sachs, p. 12)

<sup>529</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 990b 14.

<sup>530</sup> Aristotle thus observes in Chapter 6 that ‘[a]s material, then [i.e., for Plato], the great and the small were the sources (ὡς μὲν οὖν ὕλην τὸ μέγα καὶ τὸ μικρὸν εἶναι ἀρχάς), and as thinghood, the one (ὡς δ’ οὐσίαν τὸ ἓν), for out of the former, by participation in the one, the forms are composed as numbers (ἐξ ἐκείνων γὰρ κατὰ μέθεξιν τοῦ ἑνός τὰ εἶδη εἶναι τοὺς ἀριθμούς)’ (987b 20-2). As Sachs explains in a note to this passage, on this account of participation ‘[t]he form is conceived not as a common element in things, but as itself an assemblage of intelligible elements, having the unity conferred by the one, as well as the internal diversity arising out of indefinite duality.’ (p. 15, note)

indeterminacy or limitlessness, which is sometimes referred to as ‘two.’ (iii) Therefore, on Aristotle’s reading, both Platonic Ideas and Pythagorean numbers are generated from two identical principles or elements: one consisting in a pair (or several corresponding pairs) of binary opposites conceived together as a ‘material’ principle of indeterminacy, and another consisting in a determinate or formal principle of unity, or ‘oneness.’<sup>531</sup>

Many subsequent commentators have attacked Aristotle’s assimilation of Platonic Ideas and Pythagorean numbers as either a misinterpretation or a deliberate distortion. Among those who contend that the assimilation is based on a misinterpretation of Plato’s teaching, some (e.g. Frede) argue that it is based on a misrepresentation of Plato’s doctrine of forms,<sup>532</sup> while others (e.g. Cherniss) attribute it to a misrepresentation of Plato’s doctrine of ‘ideal numbers.’<sup>533</sup> While it may be pertinent to question whether Plato ever explicitly identified Ideas and numbers, this is irrelevant to Aristotle’s

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<sup>531</sup> Although in this sense Aristotle recognizes that Plato indeed added his own innovations – specifically, he notes that Plato replaced the Pythagorean principle of the ‘infinite (τὸ ἀπείρουν)’ with a ‘dyad (δύαξ)’, and furthermore set the Forms apart from particular things, whereas the Pythagoreans simply identified these latter with numbers (987b 25-9) – he can ultimately claim that Platonic forms and Pythagorean numbers are the same, because they are composed of the same constituent elements.

<sup>532</sup> Frede (2012) accordingly holds that what Aristotle presents as one doctrine of Platonic forms is in fact an incoherent amalgam of two separate doctrines, corresponding to Plato’s middle and late dialogues. D. Frede, “The doctrine of Forms under critique”, in (ed.) C. Steele, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Alpha*, p. 265: ‘Aristotle addresses two significantly different theories of the Forms, without any explicit recognition of their difference. The chapter’s first part deals with the theory of Forms familiar from Plato’s middle dialogues. The second part reverts to the discussion of Forms as numbers that had been anticipated in Chapter 6, where Plato’s principles and causes seem to be little more than derivations from Pythagorean ‘number-theory.’ Frede’s analysis thus assumes that it is only with respect to the later dialogues that one can point to an identification of numbers and forms in Plato, but she does not give a detailed justification for this assumption.

<sup>533</sup> Cherniss claims that Aristotle’s assimilation of Plato’s forms/ideas and numbers is due to his failure to recognize the difference postulated by Plato between arithmetical and ‘ideal numbers’: ‘since [i.e., Aristotle] did not appreciate the significance of Plato’s ideal numbers, much of what he says concerning them may not be evidence of Plato’s opinions at all but only the result of his own misinterpretation.’ H. Cherniss, *The Riddle of the Early Academy* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962 – 1st edition 1945), p. 48. For Cherniss, the ‘ideas of numbers’ are ‘nonmathematical’ in the sense that they are not to be understood as aggregates of distinct units, but rather as indivisible unities in themselves: ‘[o]nce it is recognized [...] that the ideas of numbers are not aggregates of units at all but are the universals of number, each of which is a perfect and unique unit without parts, the phenomenal numbers which *are* aggregates of units can be related to them as images or imitations, their unity of aggregation being a derogation and dispersal of the real unity of the ideal numbers.’ (Ibid, p. 34)

argument in *Metaphysics* I.5-9. Regardless of what Plato taught or did not teach, the substance of Aristotle's criticism is that Plato's teaching *implies* their assimilation, because it ostensibly derives the Ideas out of the same constituent elements from which the Pythagoreans derived numbers. I therefore agree with both Annas (1976) and Steel (2012), who in similar ways argue that Aristotle extrapolates what is vaguely implied in a number of Platonic dialogues.<sup>534</sup> The question of whether this extrapolation accords with Plato's intentions is beyond the scope of the present discussion.

The notion that Platonic Ideas are fundamentally the same as Pythagorean numbers indicates only part of the justification according to which Aristotle argues that participation and imitation are distinct in name only (987b 13). The other part of the justification for this claim is to be found in the way that Aristotle assimilates participation and imitation as identical structures of ontological derivation. Above all, what allows Aristotle to argue that these two forms of ontological derivation are distinct in name only is the fact that they both express the causality of their respective principles through a logic of iconic similarity or resemblance between cause and effect. Yet

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<sup>534</sup> J. Annas, *Aristotle's Metaphysics Books M and N* (Oxford University Press, 1976). Annas notes on p. 73 that since, according to Aristotle, 'both numbers and Forms are produced from the one and the indefinite two, and are not explicitly differentiated as products of those principles, they must be the same sort of thing.' This analysis in some respects comes close to that of Cherniss, insofar as the former is prepared to recognize that Aristotle effectively assimilates the Platonic and Pythagorean teachings by drawing implications out of them which may never have been intended explicitly by either. Cherniss calls this interpretive method 'Aristotle's invariable procedure: to recast into the terms of his own philosophy the statements of other philosophers and then to treat as their "real meaning" the implications of the statements thus translated.' (Cherniss, p. 51) Annas admits that 'there is considerable force to Cherniss's claim [...] that the identification of Forms and numbers was never a theory of Plato's but is merely the conclusion of Aristotle's polemic' (Annas, p. 68). Nevertheless, Annas seems prepared to say that Aristotle's identification of forms and numbers is at least plausible, even if it was never expounded explicitly as such, because some of Plato's comments in the dialogues appear to support such a reading. This is also the position of Steel (2012), who agrees that 'Aristotle only makes explicit what was implied in some arguments on numbers in the dialogues [citing *Phaedo* 101b-d].' (Steel, p. 188) Cherniss, however, advances a much stronger claim according to which the implications drawn by Aristotle are plainly wrong, but in order to substantiate this he relies heavily on a good deal of historical speculation about a fully systematic and coherent Platonic philosophy that is simply, in my view, impossible to verify accurately from extant sources.

Aristotle rejects mere static similarity between two things as a sufficient indication of a causal relationship between them, and on the basis of this rejection he claims that both participation and imitation are inadequate as explanations of the forces and principles governing motion and change in the cosmos. Ultimately, it is precisely because ‘participation’ is merely a poetic metaphor that, for Aristotle, the static similarity between model and copy (i.e., in the *Timaeus*) is the closest Plato comes to explaining the causality of the Ideas, and that Plato’s doctrine is consequently just a recapitulation of Pythagorean imitation.

We must first of all grasp why, on Aristotle’s reading, Pythagorean imitation expresses the causality of numbers in and through a rapport of iconic similarity. For starters, Aristotle claims that the Pythagoreans ‘supposed that the sources of [i.e., numbers] were the sources of all things’.<sup>535</sup> The identity between ‘the sources of numbers’ and those ‘of all things,’ which is evidently meant to disclose a relationship of ontological derivation, is expressed in and through a language of similarities: we are accordingly told that the Pythagoreans ‘thought they saw many similarities’ between numbers and ‘the things that are and come to be.’ Since in other words ‘the entire nature of the other things seemed to be *after the likeness of numbers*,’ the Pythagoreans ‘assumed that the elements of numbers were the elements of all things, and that the whole of heaven was a harmony and a number.’<sup>536</sup>

Any resemblance, in which the attribute associated with a given number is also seen to constitute the defining characteristic of some one among ‘the things that are and

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<sup>535</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 985b 23-7.

<sup>536</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 985b 27 – 986a 4 (emphasis added): ‘ἐπεὶ δὴ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα τοῖς ἀριθμοῖς ἐφαίνοντο τὴν φύσιν ἀφωμοιωῶσθαι πᾶσαν, [...] τὰ τῶν ἀριθμῶν στοιχεῖα τῶν ὄντων στοιχεῖα πάντων ὑπέλαβον εἶναι, καὶ τὸν ὅλον οὐρανὸν ἀρμονίαν εἶναι καὶ ἀριθμόν.’

come to be,’ is therefore grounds for associating the former and the latter as cause and effect. Aristotle accordingly contends at the end of Book I, Chapter 5 that the Pythagoreans’ procedure for defining essential attributes is ‘too simple (λίαν δ’ ἀπλῶς ἐπραγματεύθησαν).’<sup>537</sup> He explains that ‘[t]hey defined superficially, and the primary thing to which the stated definition belonged, they considered to be the thinghood of the thing, just as if one were to suppose that the number two and double were the same thing, because doubleness belongs first of all to the number two.’<sup>538</sup>

Although Aristotle credits the Pythagoreans with being the first among the Presocratics to articulate and define ‘the what-it-is of things’,<sup>539</sup> he holds their method of definition to be superficial because it fails to account for the difference between what it means to be a thing that possesses a certain attribute pre-eminently, or primarily, and what it means to be that very attribute itself. In Chapter 6, Aristotle observes that Plato’s approach to definitions marks an advance from the ‘superficial’ method of the Pythagoreans. He claims that Plato’s ‘introduction of the forms came about because of his investigation in the realm of definitions’<sup>540</sup>, indicating that Plato’s Ideas are to be

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<sup>537</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 987a 22.

<sup>538</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 987a 23-6: ‘ὠρίζοντό τε γὰρ ἐπιπολαίως, καὶ ᾧ πρώτῳ ὑπάρξειεν ὁ λεχθεὶς ὅρος, τοῦτ’ εἶναι τὴν οὐσίαν τοῦ πράγματος, ὥσπερ εἴ τις οἴοιτο τοῦτὸν εἶναι διπλάσιον καὶ τὴν δυάδα διότι πρῶτον ὑπάρχει τοῖς δύσι τὸ διπλάσιον.’ Although the example given here is somewhat unclear, Aristotle’s point can be made less obscure by summarizing his account in an earlier passage of the importance of the number ten for the Pythagoreans. According to 986a 8-11, the Pythagoreans defined the number ten according to the attribute of ‘completeness,’ and then applied this definition to what they considered to possess this attribute pre-eminently, or ‘first of all (πρῶτον)’: the heavenly bodies. Aristotle’s argument therefore seems to be that, on the basis of this superficial definition, the Pythagoreans could say that the heavens *simply are* the number ten, in the same way that they could say that the number two, to which doubleness belongs pre-eminently, is the very being of those things in the sensible world that are also primarily characterized by doubleness. This is the apparent reasoning underlying Aristotle’s claim that, for the Pythagoreans, ‘number is the thinghood of all things (ἀριθμὸν εἶναι τὴν οὐσίαν πάντων).’ (987a 19)

<sup>539</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 987a 21.

<sup>540</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 987b 32-3: ‘ἡ τῶν εἰδῶν εἰσαγωγή διὰ τὴν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις ἐγένετο σκέψιν’.

seen as a response to and an improvement over the superficiality of the Pythagoreans' way of defining things. Two questions need to be answered here: (1) how exactly do Plato's Ideas improve on the superficial definitions put forward by the Pythagoreans? And (2) why is it that, despite the progress allegedly achieved by Plato in 'the realm of definitions', Aristotle can still ultimately suggest that the Platonic teaching of μέθεξις and the Pythagorean teaching of μίμησις are distinct in name only?

The answer to (1), I suggest, is connected to the fact that the Pythagorean identification of things and numbers depends on a more or less arbitrary procedure of coordinating, by means of perceived resemblances, the attributes that are considered to be essential to certain numbers and those that are considered to be essential to certain things. For Aristotle, Plato overcame this superficial approach to definition by positing a unique Idea for each substantive attribute, rather than associating each attribute with a number that it was merely perceived to resemble. Instead of identifying the number two, for example, with the attribute of doubleness (δύαξ), Plato in fact hypostatized the attribute of doubleness into an altogether separate Idea: that of 'absolute doubleness,' or 'duality itself,' which Socrates explicitly postulates in the *Phaedo* (101c). Rather than posit numbers, and then assign defining attributes to these numbers by superficial reference to qualities they are perceived to resemble, Plato raises up the attributes themselves into a separate and perfect realm of being, and says that all particular things have the defining attributes they have as a result of their direct participation in the

corresponding Ideas. Beautiful things, τὰ καλὰ, are therefore beautiful only insofar as they participate in what truly is beautiful: beauty itself, αὐτὸ τὸ κάλον.<sup>541</sup>

Nevertheless, although it is easier to understand on Plato's account how and why the Ideas are connected with the attributes or qualities they are meant to cause in sensible particulars, Aristotle ultimately concludes that participation leaves unexplained the other side of this relationship, which inheres between Ideas and sensible particulars. By hypostatizing each attribute into a separate, self-identical Idea, Plato clarified the relationship between the cause and that of which it is the cause in sensible individuals. But he made no more headway than the Pythagoreans in giving a theoretical explanation of why and how the ontological derivation takes place between each Idea and each individual thing, which is seen to participate in it. On Aristotle's reading of Plato, it is therefore the precise causal relationship between Ideas and sensible individuals that remains unexplained, or at any rate not adequately explained. Aristotle's main reason for rejecting participation as an adequate theoretical explanation of ontological derivation is the fact that Plato postulated a fundamental separation (χωρίσμος) between the forms and the things whose causes they are meant to be. As a result of this separation, the forms are fundamentally removed from the kinds of change to which sensible individuals are necessarily subject, and according to Aristotle Plato has no satisfactory answer to the question of how the Ideas, being themselves unmoved and unchanging, could be causes of coming into being and passing away in particular things.

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<sup>541</sup> This is an improvement over the Pythagoreans' procedure of definition, because it avoids the superficiality of defining each number according to an attribute it merely resembles. The form of beauty, or beauty itself, does not merely resemble beauty, but rather *is* what beauty truly is, in itself. Plato's teaching concerning Ideas is an improvement on the Pythagoreans' method of definition at least insofar as it does not leave unexplained why a given Idea is the cause of the attribute of which it is said to be the cause. There is no need to question why for Plato each Idea is associated with the attribute with which it is associated, because each Idea simply *is* the very being of that attribute in itself, or absolutely.

Aristotle's ultimate justification for why Platonic participation is inadequate as an account of ontological derivation from Ideas to sensible individuals involves two basic premises: (1) that Plato uses the word 'participate' metaphorically; and (2) that mere static similarity between two things is not a sufficient indication of a causal relationship between them. Both of these considerations come into play in a discussion that seems to refer to Plato's *Timaeus* without mentioning it by name.<sup>542</sup> It is crucial to see that, in the *Timaeus*, the ontological relationship between the intelligible realm of Ideas and the sensible realm of individuals is repeatedly likened to that between a model (παρδείγμα) and its 'image' or 'copy (μίμημα)'.<sup>543</sup> Plato uses the language of participation, μέθεξις, in reference to this derivation-by-resemblance. Yet to the extent that this goes beyond the accepted senses of the term 'participate,' Aristotle argues that 'to say that [i.e., the Ideas] are patterns and the other things participate in them is to speak without content and in poetic metaphors (κενολεγεῖν ἔστι καὶ μεταφορὰς λεγεῖν ποιητικός)'.<sup>544</sup>

<sup>542</sup> At 991a 23-4, Aristotle asks 'what is the thing that is at work, looking off toward the forms? (τί γὰρ ἔστι τὸ ἐργαζόμενον πρὸς τὰς ἰδέας ἀποβλέπον)'. In a footnote to this text, Tredennick suggests this is a reference to the Demiurge discussed in Plato's *Timaeus* at 28c – 29a (p. 68, note).

<sup>543</sup> Accordingly, at *Timeaus* 48e 4 – 49a 1 Timaeus distinguishes between 'a Model Form, intelligible and ever uniformly existent (ἐν μὲν ὡς παραδειγμάτος εἶδος ὑποτεθέν, νοητὸν καὶ αἰὲ κατὰ ταῦτ' ὄν), and [...] the model's Copy, subject to becoming and visible (μίμημα δὲ παραδείγματος δεύτερον, γένεσιν ἔχον καὶ ὄρατόν)'. Trans. W.R.M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925). Furthermore, the notion that the relation between eternal Ideas and their finite instantiations is one of imitation is also suggested by Socrates' remark in Book X of the *Republic* that human craftsmen create particular, sensible beds and tables by 'looking to a pattern of each type of furniture (πρὸς τὴν ἰδέαν βλέπων)' (596b 3). Nehamas downplays the mimetic nature of the relationship suggested in these two passages between forms and individuals, claiming with respect to *Republic* X that 'nothing in the text implies that the relationship between a work of art and its subject is the same as that between a physical object and its Form or Forms.' "Plato on Imitation and Poetry in *Republic* 10", in (eds.) J. Moravcsik & P. Temko, *Plato on Beauty, Wisdom, and the Arts* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1982), p. 60. Halliwell disagrees: '[t]hat Plato could, however, posit a mimetic correspondence between the material and the metaphysical is demonstrated [...] above all in the *Timaeus*.' Cf. *Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 115 note 14 – p. 117.

<sup>544</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 991a 19-20.

Precisely insofar as the language of participation is merely an empty, poetic metaphor, the causality of the Ideas vis-à-vis sensible particulars is revealed entirely through the perceived resemblance between the former and the latter. Consequently, Aristotle reasons, if Plato expresses the ontological derivation from Ideas to sensible individuals entirely in and through a logic of static similarity, then this is no different from the mimetic relationship between numbers and sensible individuals expounded by the Pythagoreans.

The fact that Platonic participation is simply a recapitulation of Pythagorean imitation means that it fails to explain how and why eternal ideas could be the ontological causes of perishable, sensible individuals. The reason cited by Aristotle for this conclusion is that ‘it is possible for anything whatever to be or become like something without being an image of it [...]’.<sup>545</sup> Ultimately, this can be understood just as much as a criticism of Plato as of the Pythagoreans, and this seems to support Aristotle’s conclusion that, in the final analysis, Plato ‘changed only the name participation, for the

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<sup>545</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 991a 24-5: ‘ἐνδέχεται τε καὶ εἶναι καὶ γίγνεσθαι ὅμοιον ὅτιοῦν καὶ μὴ εἰκάζομενον πρὸς ἐκεῖνο [...]’ In arguing that the mere resemblance between paradigm and image is not sufficient to prove a causal relation of ontological derivation between them, Aristotle seems to raise a point similar to the one made by Hillary Putnam in his seminal essay, “Brains in a Vat.” In the opening paragraph, Putnam describes a hypothetical scenario in which ‘[a]n ant is crawling on a patch of sand. As it crawls, it traces a line in the sand. By pure chance, the line that it traces curves and recrosses itself in such a way that it ends up looking like a recognizable caricature of Winston Churchill.’ See H. Putnam, “Brains in a Vat,” printed in (eds.) J.E. Adler & C.Z. Elgin, *Philosophical Inquiry: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2007), p. 433. Putnam then poses the question of whether or not the ant has traced a picture that *actually depicts* Churchill. (Ibid) While Putnam’s argument itself is too long to reconstruct, his conclusion nevertheless implies that the ant has not actually depicted Churchill, because it did not intend to do so. In other words, the mere likeness between Churchill and his ‘image’ traced in the sand by an ant is not in itself sufficient to demonstrate that the former is the cause of the latter. For the image to be an actual depiction of Churchill it would be necessary to show that the ant in fact intended to reproduce a likeness of him. Aristotle’s point in criticizing Plato’s doctrine of participation is very much in agreement with this line of reasoning. Ultimately, he rejects participation as an adequate explanation of the Ideas’ causality because the closest Plato comes to *showing* how sensible particulars derive their being from the Ideas is to say that they do so primarily by resembling them. Yet to the extent that this does not prove the resemblance between sensible particulars and Ideas to be the result of the former’s actual striving to approximate the latter, participation (like Pythagorean imitation) merely posits a causal relationship between them without explaining it.

Pythagoreans said that beings *are* by way of imitation (μίμησει) of the numbers, but Plato by way of participation (μέθεξι), having changed the name (τοῦνομα μεταβαλῶν).<sup>546</sup>

Now that we have an understanding of exactly what Aristotle finds to be inadequate in Plato's doctrine of participation, the question must be asked: does Aristotle simply reject the theory insofar as it is expressed in metaphorical language? In order to answer this question, we must understand precisely what Aristotle means by (a) speaking 'in poetic metaphors (μεταφορὰς λεγεῖν ποιητικός)', and (b) speaking 'without content (κενολεγεῖν)'. Beginning with (a), what is crucial to grasp here is that Aristotle's description of participation as merely speaking in 'poetic metaphors' has an important precursor in the dialogues of Plato himself. As noted by Sachs, Socrates twice criticizes an expression in the dialogues by saying that it has been stated τραγικῶς, 'in a tragic manner,' or by saying that the remark itself is 'tragic,' τραγικῆ. At *Meno* 76e, for instance, Socrates uses the latter word in reference to a definition of color that he quotes from Pindar, saying that it is 'in the high poetic style,' τραγικῆ γὰρ ἔστιν. Moreover, he uses the former at *Republic* 413b in reference to a series of verbose formulations that he himself has given, but that his interlocutor does not understand; Socrates thus suggests that he is perhaps speaking too much 'like a tragic poet,' τραγικῶς.<sup>547</sup>

In a footnote to the last-quoted passage, Lamb explains that speaking τραγικῶς must be understood in this instance to refer to speaking 'in a high-flown, obscure

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<sup>546</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 987b 10-3.

<sup>547</sup> Cf. Plato, *Meno*, trans. W.R.M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 76e 4; *Republic* 413b 3.

manner.’<sup>548</sup> This is consistent with the interpretation of Sachs, who also argues that ‘[w]hat Socrates objects to is wording that impresses an audience with an elevated tone and an illusion of profundity, wording that attempts to use style to disguise a lack of content.’<sup>549</sup> Although Aristotle refers to ‘poetic metaphors’ rather than to ‘tragic sounding speech,’ the fact that he adds the qualification of κενολεγεῖν or ‘empty speech’ supports the suggestion that what he means in the *Metaphysics* by ‘poetic metaphors’ is the same as what Plato means by calling an expression ‘tragic-sounding’: a grandiose expression that appears on the surface to say something profound and impressive, but that actually is void of meaningful content. This is ultimately consistent with Aristotle’s understanding of the language appropriate to tragic poetry, such as we examined it in the first chapter,<sup>550</sup> and also with his criticism of Plato as we have examined it above, to the extent that he argues that participation merely posits a causal relation between the Ideas and sensible particulars, without actually *showing* how an eternal Idea, which does not change, could be the cause of a perishable thing’s becoming.

If this means that ‘poetic metaphors’ and ‘speaking without content’ say essentially the same thing in the passage of the *Metaphysics* under consideration, it does not necessarily mean that all metaphors are equally vacuous. This is because when

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<sup>548</sup> Lamb, in *Republic* p. 325 (note).

<sup>549</sup> Sachs, *Plato Gorgias and Aristotle Rhetoric*, p. 23.

<sup>550</sup> It is important to recall that, as I argued above, Aristotle understands tragedy to be the culmination of all poetic imitation as such; in other words, tragedy realizes the full potential that is inherent in all other forms of poetic imitation according to Aristotle. Furthermore, we must also recall that Aristotle associates the very essence of tragic poetry with the depiction of an action that is *elevated*, and that the elevated nature of tragic action necessitates in turn that (1) the main characters responsible for tragic action should be ethically superior to existing humans; and (2) that the language in which they express should reflect this superiority. As the pinnacle of all poetic imitation, tragedy demands an impressive and elevated way of speaking that is appropriate to the nobility of the characters depicted. It is also worth repeating that, in *Rhetoric* III, Aristotle also points out that this elevated sounding speech is often inappropriate in prose, and that orators should be cautious of employing words that are too poetic; it is for just this reason that the adroit use of metaphors is important in rhetoric, because its use is subject to more stringent rules.

Aristotle mentions the use of ‘poetic metaphors’, which he glosses in terms of ‘speaking without content,’ he means just what Plato means by saying that certain expressions are τραγικὴ: that is, that they are impressive on the surface but that this impressiveness merely disguises a fundamental lack of content.

This does not commit Aristotle to the view that all metaphors as such are inadequate to metaphysical argumentation. His point is not to say that metaphors have no place in philosophical discussions at all; it is rather to say that this particular metaphor is a bad one, because it obscures rather than reveals the nature of the relationship between Ideas and their particular instantiations. A good metaphor would be one that makes clear what participation is, by comparing it to something to which it bears some perceptible resemblance. But how can a thing be seen to bear any perceptible resemblance to anything before we actually know what it is? It is important to recall that, in his discussion of the connection between metaphors and enigmas in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle advises that the resemblance disclosed by metaphors must not be too remote to be grasped quickly. In light of this, it can be argued that the real reason why participation is merely a poetic metaphor is that it does not reveal any perceptible similarities, because one of the terms of the comparison is entirely obscure. Aristotle makes a similar objection in *On the Generation of Animals* to Empedocles’ metaphorical description of milk as ‘white pus’: he claims that ‘Empedocles either mistook the fact or made a bad metaphor when he composed the line,’ insofar as milk is generated by the process of concoction, whereas pus is produced by putrefaction.<sup>551</sup> In other words, Empedocles’ metaphor is a bad one precisely because there is in fact no similarity between milk and

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<sup>551</sup> Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals* 777a 7.

pus; likewise, participation is a bad metaphor because the similarity on which it is based is impossible to discern. In *Metaphysics* I.9, the emphasis in the expression ‘poetic metaphors’ is thus on *poetic* and not on *metaphors*: Aristotle does not object to participation simply because it is a metaphor, but rather because it is a bad one that does not perform a metaphor’s proper function of revealing similarities between things.

### **6.5 Metaphor in the Text of *Metaphysics* VII-XII**

Based on the foregoing considerations, we can see that the text of *Metaphysics* I does not provide sufficient evidence for arguing that Aristotle aims to exclude metaphors as such from philosophical argumentation, which as I argued above is dialectical rather than scientific. Although, as we have seen, he clearly takes issue with the obscurity of many of his predecessor’s formulations, this need not mean necessarily that he objects to their metaphorical character. Indeed, the only hard evidence supporting the view that Aristotle objects explicitly to the use of metaphors in metaphysical argumentation is the criticism of Plato we have just examined, and there too Aristotle’s point concerns the specific character of the metaphor in question, rather than all metaphors in general.

As mentioned above, if there is a passage in the *Metaphysics* that appears to commit Aristotle to an anti-metaphorical perspective, it would be the discussion of the law of non-contradiction in Book IV. It follows necessarily from Aristotle’s claim that ‘not to mean one thing is to mean nothing’ that all forms of equivocation, including the use of metaphorical terms, are to be avoided. If this is a standard to which Aristotle holds himself, it is not necessarily one to which he holds his predecessors. Although he frequently points out the obscure and/or equivocal nature of early Greek theories, he also takes great pains to show that, underneath their obscurity, they also contain crucial

intimations of his own causal principles. This shows that Aristotle is willing to look beyond obscure formulations provided that they express meaningful content, and underscores the way in which, as suggested above, dialectical discussions necessitate a more tolerant attitude with respect to the use of metaphors than do scientific discussions.

At the same time, as noted above by Sachs, dialectical arguments nevertheless have a rigor and a seriousness of their own, despite the fact they do not proceed from self-evident premises. Although the terminological precision demanded by the law of non-contradiction seems tailored to the demands of the syllogism in particular, and therefore appears to be more relevant to demonstrative science than to dialectic, the use of precise terminology is in fact necessary in both kinds of discussion. This fact ultimately explains Aristotle's preference for one kind of metaphor (the simile) over another (the metaphorical word): the former can be used in accordance with the law of non-contradiction, but the latter cannot. We shall see in what follows, as we saw in the previous chapter, that Aristotle's own use of similes offers the surest evidence that he does not aim to exclude metaphors as such from philosophical argumentation.

The first thing that needs to be pointed out with respect to the *Metaphysics* is that, despite the need for terminological precision that follows from the law of non-contradiction, First Philosophy is, as mentioned, a theoretical discipline that contemplates indemonstrable truths. Consequently, First Philosophy cannot avail itself of properly demonstrative syllogisms in order to prove its conclusions: although Aristotle claims that it is in fact more accurate than any demonstrative science, First Philosophy thus lacks an exact methodology corresponding to the precision and the nobility of its object. Instead of demonstration, it must rely on valid, non-demonstrative arguments,

most notably the indirect or ‘second-order’ proof by means of *reductio ad absurdum*, as well as a steady supply of images, similes, analogies, and examples.

The reason First Philosophy is not a demonstrative science is that, precisely because being qua being is beyond the universality of determinate genera, there is nothing higher or more general on the basis of which it could be explained or demonstrated. Indeed, In *Metaphysics* VI Aristotle recognizes that *no* science actually demonstrates what the οὐσίᾳ of its object is. Every determinate science rather begins by assuming an indemonstrable definition as the substance or thinghood of the phenomenon in question, and then proceeds to demonstrate other things on the basis of that assumption. If it is true that no science can demonstrate the substance of its primary object, this is *a fortiori* true of First Philosophy because it makes the notion of being in general, and substance in particular, an object of explicit thematic concern. As mentioned in the introduction, this does not mean that it is impossible to formulate most of Aristotle’s metaphysical arguments in a valid syllogistic form; it means rather that these syllogisms still would lack the material necessity that for Aristotle characterizes demonstration or ἀποδείξις as such, because they could not be based on any essential predication concerning all beings, as beings.

As also mentioned above, Aristotle identifies the different ways in which τὸ ὄν can be spoken of as *pros hen legomena*, and argues on the basis of this claim that being qua being, even if it is said in many ways and exceeds the determinate limits of generic unity, is nevertheless the object of a single, unified kind of knowledge because its many

senses point to a primary referent, which is οὐσίᾳ.<sup>552</sup> To the extent that any unity can be postulated among the manifold ways in which being is spoken of, it is my contention that this unity must be viewed as an *analogical* unity, in the sense in which Aristotle's discussion of the several meanings of 'one,' τὸ ἓν, allows this to be understood in *Metaphysics* V.<sup>553</sup> This is also the position of Ricoeur, who argues that '[b]eing means, in succession: substance, quality, quantity, relation, etc [...] – which realize the same community by analogy through a relation to a first meaning that serves as the type for the signification.'<sup>554</sup>

It is partly for this reason that, as Aristotle argues in *Metaphysics* VI, 'there can be no demonstration of the thinghood or the what-it-is of things, *but some other means of*

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<sup>552</sup> Accordingly, Aristotle compares the many meanings of being to those of 'health': '[j]ust as every healthful thing points toward health, one thing by protecting it, another by producing it, another by being a sign of health, and another because it is receptive of it, and also what is medical points toward the medical art, [...] so too is *being* meant in more than one way, but all of them pointing toward one source (οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὸ ὄν λέγεται πολλαχῶς μὲν, ἀλλ' ἅπαν πρὸς μίαν ἀρχήν).' Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (trans. Sachs), 1003a 35 – 1003b 6. The example of health, by which Aristotle illustrates what he means by a *pros hen legomenon*, seems closely connected to the examples of 'hero' and 'grammar,' which Aristotle offers in the *Categories* to illustrate what he calls 'derivative' or 'paronymous' naming (παρωνυμία). In tracing a connection between these two discussions I follow Ricoeur, who argues that "there is a continuous chain formed from the paronyms in paragraph 1 of the *Categories* to the reference *pros hen, ad unum* in *Metaphysics* G 2 and E 1." Cf. *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 272, as well as W.D. Ross, *Aristotle* *Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), p. 256.

<sup>553</sup> See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1016b 33, where the Stagirite observes that 'some things are one in number, others in species, others in genus, and others by analogy (τὰ δὲ κατ' ἀναλογίαν)'. Aristotle's subsequent comments in this chapter affirm that specific unity is broader than numeric unity, generic unity is broader than specific unity, and analogical unity, as the highest and most encompassing kind of unity, is broader than the generic (1017a 1-3). On Brentano's reading, 'this unity of analogy is differentiated from general unity and ranked above it,' and the many ways in which being can be spoken of in the *Metaphysics* are implicitly order according to the analogical 'connection to the same concept as a *terminus*, a relation to the same origin [*arche*] [...]' F. Brentano, *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*, tr. R. George (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 65 (citing Aristotle *Metaphysics* 1003b 6). For an opposing interpretation, cf. P. Aubenque, "Ambiguïté ou analogie de l'être?" in *Problèmes aristotéliens* (Paris: Vrin, 2009), p. 238; as well as "Sur les origines de la doctrine de l'analogie de l'être. Sur l'histoire d'un contresens," also in *Problèmes aristotéliens*, p. 253. Aubenque denies that the meanings of being could be united analogically since this suggests to him a proportional equality of relationships (e.g., A:B::C:D). Yet Brentano's discussion of what he calls 'analogy to the same terminus' shows that analogy can be established *disproportionately* between things that point to a single source or referent, and that this analogy of disproportion corresponds quite well with Aristotle's comments on being as a *pros hen referent*, even if Aristotle does not state explicitly that it is unified analogically in *Metaphysics* IV.

<sup>554</sup> P. Ricoeur, *Being, Essence and Substance in Plato and Aristotle*, ed. J.-L. Schlegel, trans. D. Pellauer & J. Starkey (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), p. 185.

*pointing to it* (τις ἄλλος τρόπος τῆς δηλώσεως).<sup>555</sup> Yet what exactly could Aristotle mean by ‘some other means of pointing to’ the object of First Philosophy? We find a partial answer to this question in the opening lines of Book VII, where Aristotle introduces a series of problematic questions that he says ‘must be examined by those *beginning to sketch out* (ὑποτυπωσαμένοις)’ what οὐσία is.<sup>556</sup> More than these questions themselves, what interests us here is the fact that Aristotle describes the investigation into οὐσία as proceeding by *hypotyposis* (rough outline, indirect presentation, or ‘sensible illustration’) rather than a precise definition or scientific demonstration.<sup>557</sup>

In fact, the notion of illustration takes us straight to the heart of Aristotle’s procedure in *Metaphysics* IX.6, where he characterizes what on my reading is the most important explanatory concept in the entire investigation into being qua being, which is ἐνέργεια (‘activity,’ or ‘being-at-work,’ the latter being the translation of Sachs).<sup>558</sup> As we saw in the third chapter of this dissertation, what is surprising about Aristotle’s

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<sup>555</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1025b 8-14 (emphasis added): ‘ἀλλὰ πάσαι αὐται περὶ ὄν τι καὶ γένος τι περιγραφάμεναι περὶ τούτου πραγματεύονται, ἀλλ’ οὐχὶ περὶ ὄντος ἀπλῶς οὐδὲ ἢ ὄν, οὐδὲ τοῦ τί ἐστὶν οὐθένα λόγον ποιοῦνται· ἀλλ’ ἐκ τούτου αἱ μὲν αἰσθήσει ποιήσασα αὐτὸ δῆλον, αἱ δ’ ὑπόθεσιν λαβοῦσαι τὸ τί ἐστὶν, οὕτω τὰ καθ’ αὐτὰ ὑπάρχοντα τῶ γένει περὶ ὃ εἰσιν ἀποδεινύουσιν ἢ ἀναγκαιότερον ἢ μαλακώτερον· διόπερ φανερόν ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἀποδείξις οὐσίας οὐδὲ τοῦ τί ἐστὶν ἐκ τῆς τοιαύτης ἐπαγωγῆς ἀλλὰ τις ἄλλος τρόπος τῆς δηλώσεως.’

<sup>556</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1028b 30-1: ‘σκεπτέον, ὑποτυπωσαμένοις τὴν οὐσίαν πρῶτον τί ἐστὶν.’

<sup>557</sup> The last formulation comes from Kant’s discussion of *hypotyposis* in the *Critique of Judgment*. There, Kant analyzes both the schema and the symbol as two different forms of what he calls ‘*hypotyposis* [...] or sensible illustration.’ See I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J.H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1951), §59, pp. 197-200.

<sup>558</sup> For a full elaboration and defense of the notion that activity is the most important explanatory concept in the investigation into being qua being, see M. Wood, “Aristotelian Ontology and its Contemporary Appropriation”, pp. 33-8. Sachs also supports this understanding of activity as ‘an ultimate explanatory term’ (*Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, p. 174, note). For a parallel account, see A. Kosman, *The Activity of Being: An Essay on Aristotle’s Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 239. Kosman supports my reading by identifying substance explicitly with the concept of activity, arguing that such a reading ‘shows how misleading are depictions of Aristotle’s ontology of substance as an ontology of things, of inert and static entities—depictions that often accompany a contrast, explicit or implicit, with theories thought to privilege a more active and dynamic view of being.’ (Ibid)

discussion of ἐνέργεια or activity in Book IX is that he neglects to define it, and asserts instead that it is unnecessary ‘to look for a definition of everything, but one can see it at a glance, by means of analogy’.<sup>559</sup> The comprehension of what Aristotle means by activity therefore requires the ability to see what is similar underlying a complex series of examples, which Aristotle argues are unrelated ‘other than by analogy,’ ἀλλ’ ἢ τῶ ἀνάλογον.<sup>560</sup> According to Sachs, ἐνέργεια can thus only be understood through a kind of synoptic, analogical way of ‘seeing,’ or ‘seeing-together (συνορᾶν),’ because ‘[i]ts meaning is at the limit of definition and explanation, and has nothing of greater defining or explanatory power to which it can be referred.’<sup>561</sup> Insofar as we have already examined the specific examples by which Aristotle analogically sketches out the concept of ἐνέργεια above (see Chapter 3), what concerns us here is simply the fact that Aristotle’s discussion of activity proceeds in this case by means of illustration and not by definition or demonstration.

This raises an interesting question about Aristotle’s procedure in this passage: does the complex analogy by which he illustrates the concept of activity count as a metaphor? To the extent that it involves comparing things in terms of likenesses other than the properly generic and specific ones by which they are substantially defined, it must be seen that, even if the concept of activity is anything but a metaphor, the means by which Aristotle discloses the concept comes close to the broad understanding of metaphor that he himself establishes in the *Poetics*. Yet we can also see in this comparative act that Aristotle’s own deployment of comparisons, similes and analogies

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<sup>559</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1048a 36-7 (trans. Sachs): ‘καὶ οὐ δεῖ παντὸς ὅρον ζητεῖν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἀνάλογον συνορᾶν’.

<sup>560</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1048b 7 (trans. Sachs).

<sup>561</sup> Sachs, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, p. xxxix (Introduction).

is characterized by an effort to mitigate confusion as much as possible, by making explicit the relevant similarity underlying the objects being compared. In the case of Aristotle's discussion in *Metaphysics* IX.6, as we also saw above, he does this by pointing out that all true instances of activity share the property of being complete, *τελεία*, at any moment.<sup>562</sup>

To determine with more precision whether this is indeed a metaphorical comparison, it is necessary to decide whether these diverse instances of activity are compared in light of a primary or secondary likeness. Clearly, Aristotle claims that all the aforementioned instances of activity are perfect instances, because they are all in their own respects complete, *τελεία*. Yet, although every instance of activity is complete in every moment, and therefore a perfect instance of the concept, it is also crucial to see that, without exception, the cases that Aristotle isolates as paradigms of this true, complete activity are inherently related to living being and the active powers by which it is defined. On my reading, if living being and activity are suggested to be coextensive here, then their connection has two major implications: (1) on the one hand, a hierarchy is implicitly posited among living beings, requiring that those whose characteristic activities are more complete, by virtue of being more permanently in possession of the ends, are more active, and therefore *more alive* than others. (2) On the other hand, at the pinnacle of this hierarchy, it becomes possible to imagine a being whose life is characterized by a perfect activity, eternally in possession of its end, which is for this

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<sup>562</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1048b 20-35.

reason the *most alive*. This being is precisely the divine self-thinking thought, whose life Aristotle identifies in *Metaphysics* XII.7 with the ‘activity of thinking’ itself.<sup>563</sup>

In other words, the similarities linking all instances of activity are perfect, primary similarities, yet these primary similarities between the instances of activity reveal a system of secondary or imperfect likenesses linking all forms of life in a continuous, analogical chain of being that extends from the most active to the least. This means that, although the likenesses with respect to which Aristotle illustrates activity are indeed primary likenesses, and therefore not metaphorical, they reveal indirectly that the entire cosmos is structured analogically according to secondary likenesses between the perfect activity of the divine and the imperfect activity of those beings whose lives are understood to be an imitation of the former in its utmost completeness. Activity itself is therefore not at all a metaphor, but it reveals something like a metaphoric or iconic relationship in the very ontological structure of the cosmos, because it shows that all forms of activity other than the divine, while complete in their own way, derive their completeness by imitation of *true* activity, which is the perfect life of self-thinking thought.

Consequently, even if Aristotle’s remarks concerning activity in *Metaphysics* IX and XII only allow us to envision this perfect life, it would be wrong to dismiss this as *mere metaphor*. In *Physics* VIII.1-6, Aristotle in fact offers serious logical arguments, proceeding by means of *reductio ad absurdum*, to prove both why an unmoved mover must necessarily exist, and why it must have the character it has as a perfectly complete

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<sup>563</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1072b 27 (my translation): ‘ἡ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωή, ἐκεῖνος δὲ ἡ ἐνέργεια’. In Chapter 9 Aristotle explicitly characterizes the divine as a ‘thinking of thinking (νόησις νοήσεως νόησις).’ (1074b 34)

and immaterial activity.<sup>564</sup> What is problematic about these arguments is that, even if they do indeed prove the need for an unmoved, immaterial cause of all motion, it is difficult to explain precisely *how* such a cause could be responsible for moving the material cosmos. In *Metaphysics* XII.7, Aristotle attempts to answer this question by means of another simile: he claims that the unmoved mover ‘causes motion in the manner of something loved,’ or more literally *as an object of desire, ὡς ἐρώμενον*.<sup>565</sup> To some commentators (such as Berti), this answer is inadequate because it seems to substitute a mere metaphor for a precise, causal explanation.<sup>566</sup> Berti’s point is thus that Aristotle surely cannot mean that the cosmos *literally* desires the unmoved mover, but is this correct? Just a few lines above in the same chapter, Aristotle argues that ‘the Good, and that which is in itself desirable, are also in the same series; and that which is first in a class is always best *or analogous to the best*.’<sup>567</sup> To the extent that he provides a

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<sup>564</sup> To explain the argument succinctly, the unmoved mover is necessary because both time and motion are eternal. Motion is considered to be eternal because all motion requires an external mover as its proximate cause; if therefore an absolute beginning of movement is posited, the initiation of this movement nevertheless requires a mover, and this initiation itself requires an initiation, which leads to an infinite regress. Similarly, a beginning of time leads to the absurd notion of a time before time existed, at which point time could begin. Therefore time cannot have had a beginning, and both motion and time are eternal. Yet, in order for motion and time to be eternal, there must be a cause permanently existing in activity, which is responsible for keeping them going, since without such a cause it is highly unlikely that the world would have continued to exist uninterruptedly. The permanent existence of an active cause demands immateriality, for any material admixture involves potentiality, which a completely active being must lack. Therefore the eternity of motion necessitates the existence of a permanently active and immaterial cause. See Aristotle, *Physics* VIII.1-6 *passim*, as well as *De Motu Animalium* Chapters 8-10, where the notion that all motion requires an external mover is squared with the self-motion of animals, by showing that even this latter kind of motion depends on a part of the animal body remaining unmoved.

<sup>565</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1072b 3-4 (my translation): ‘κινεῖ δὲ ὡς ἐρώμενον, κινούμενα δὲ τὰλλα κινεῖ’.

<sup>566</sup> Cf. “Unmoved Mover(s) as Efficient Cause(s) in *Metaphysics* Λ 6”, in (eds.) M. Frede, M. & D. Charles, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Lambda: Symposium Aristotelicum* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 202.

<sup>567</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1072a 34 – 1072b 1 (trans. Tredennick; emphasis added): ‘ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ δι’ αὐτὸ αἰρετὸν ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ συστοιχίᾳ· καὶ ἔστιν ἄριστον αἰεὶ ἢ ἀνάλογον τὸ πρῶτον.’

justification in the *Metaphysics* for the notion that the unmoved mover acts as a cause of motion through being desired, this would seem to be it. Does it count as a justification?

The answer to this question depends on whether ‘that which is first’ and that which is ‘best’ are (a) actually the same, or only (b) analogically the same. If we choose (a) then the unmoved mover, as the primary kind of substance, can be identified as a final cause or ‘Good’, towards which all finite being actively strives in its existence; if we choose (b), then the unmoved mover will rather be something analogous to a final cause, which weakens the explanation considerably. In *De Anima* II.4, Aristotle seems to answer this question, by asserting that the phenomenon of animal reproduction (γεννησῶσι) in particular highlights the actual desire that living beings have for the eternal life of the divine. He accordingly argues that the purpose of reproduction in both animals and plants is to ensure ‘that they may have a share in the immortal and divine in the only way they can: *for every creature strives for this* (πάντα γὰρ ἐκείνου ὀρέγεται), *and for the sake of this performs all its natural functions.*’<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>568</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 415a 35 – 415b 2 (emphasis added): ‘τὸ ποιῆσαι ἕτερον οἶον αὐτὸ, ζῶον μὲν ζῶον, φυτὸν δὲ φυτόν, ἵνα τοῦ ἀεὶ καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ μετέχωσιν ἢ δύνανται· πάντα γὰρ ἐκείνου ὀρέγεται, κακείνου ἕνεκα πράττει ὅσα πράττει κατὰ φύσιν.’ Aristotle explains further that ‘[s]ince [i.e., plants and animals] cannot share in the immortal and divine by continuity of existence, because no perishable thing can remain numerically one and the same, they share in these in the only way they can, some to a greater and some to a lesser extent [...]’ (415b 4-8) There are two other well-known texts in which Aristotle suggests, either implicitly or explicitly, a connection between final causality and the notion of imitation. The first is *De Caelo* I.9, where Aristotle argues that the life and duration of all finite beings are ‘derived’ from the immortal and divine duration of the heavens, which in turn depend for their existence on the unmoved mover: ‘[f]rom it [i.e., ‘duration immortal and divine’] derive the being and life which other things, some more or less articulately but others feebly, enjoy’ (279a 29-32; trans. J.L. Stocks, in ed. R. McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, p. 419). The second is *De Generatione et Corruptione* II.10, where Aristotle more explicitly links the circular motion of the heavens to their imitation of perfect being, and the perpetual nature of physical (i.e., ‘rectilinear’) genesis to the imitation of the heavens’ circular rotation: ‘in all things, as we affirm, Nature always strives after “the better”. Now “being” [...] is better than “not-being”; but not all things can possess “being”, since they are too far removed from the “originative source”. God therefore adopted the remaining alternative, and fulfilled the perfection of the universe by making coming-to-be uninterrupted: for the greatest possible coherence would thus be secured to existence, because that “coming-to-be should itself come-to-be perpetually” is the closest approximation to eternal being. The cause of this perpetuity of coming-to-be [...] is circular motion: for that is the only motion that is continuous. [...] Hence it is by imitating circular motion that rectilinear motion too is

To make Aristotle's point a little more concrete, we might begin by asking what the final cause of natural beings is in general. To the extent that Aristotle argues in the *Physics* that the final cause is not limited strictly to artificial products, but applies to natural bodies as well, the question becomes: what is this final cause towards which natural bodies strive? In the case of artificial products, the final cause is fairly easy to determine, but it is much less so in the case of natural, living bodies. The answer is ultimately that living beings are the causes of themselves. This is why all living being is characterized as ἐν-ἔργεια and ἐν-τελέχεια, meaning that which has its end and function within itself.

All of a living being's functions, from the nutritive capacity of plants to the intellective capacity of human beings, have for their ultimate end the maximal salvation or preservation (σωζέειν) of the organism itself.<sup>569</sup> This ultimately underscores the importance of procreation, which allows an animal to preserve itself in form (or species) because it is unable to preserve itself numerically, as the self-same individual, for an indefinite period of time. Unlike in Plato, in Aristotle it is crucial to see that the mortal animal does indeed attain its specific form, but it can ultimately sustain this form only through a kind of second-order permanence, by means of reproduction. In this imperfect permanence of the species, consisting in the endless succession of individual life-cycles through which mortal animals preserve themselves eternally in time, Aristotle evidently sees a deeper striving to participate in, or imitate the eternal αἰών of the divine. To borrow Freud's terminology, Aristotle seems to mean that the desire felt by living things for the unmoved mover is *unconscious*: in striving after food and sex animals are in fact

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continuous' (336b 25 – 337a; trans. H.H. Joachim, in ed. R. McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, p. 527).

<sup>569</sup> See also the discussion of nutrition at *De Anima* 416b 14-7.

striving for union with the absolute, without really knowing it. So does this mean that living things *actually* desire the unmoved mover?

The best answer that can be given to this question is a characteristically Aristotelian one: yes and no. The actual object and end of an animal's striving is its own form; it is a striving to attain and preserve the complete totality of what that animal is, in itself. Yet no individual animal whose life is rooted in the potential of a natural body, conceived as a composite of matter and form, ever achieves this perfectly, insofar as its life and activities are conditioned by the palpitations of matter, motion and time. On the one hand, the answer to the above question is therefore a negative one, insofar as what the animal truly desires is *its own* salvation and preservation. On the other hand, however, Aristotle clearly sees in this desire for self-preservation a deeper imitation, as it were, of the eternal self-preservation of divine substance, which exists alone in complete activity. In light of this view, it becomes possible to say that the animal's desire for self-preservation indicates to Aristotle a deeper, more fundamental desire to approximate or imitate the perfect activity of the divine insofar as this is possible.<sup>570</sup> In the final analysis, the notion that the unmoved mover causes motion as an object of desire is indeed a

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<sup>570</sup> Ricoeur supports this notion of an *imitative* cosmic structure following necessarily, if only implicitly, from Aristotle's teaching about activity: '[t]his bond of imitation and dependence in relation to a *terminus ad quem* is never treated systematically by Aristotle, even though it is there that the unity of ontology and theology plays out [...]' Elaborating on what a properly Aristotelian doctrine of imitation involves, Ricoeur notes furthermore that '[w]hat is imitated is not so much an intelligible universal as a singular intelligence. The act that perpetuates life, the act that perpetuates the cycle of the physical elements, the act above all by which the wise person becomes established in the contemplative life [...] are different approximations of this analogical unity of being; [...] in order to elaborate them rigorously it would be necessary to draw closer together the fundamental difference between Platonic participation which goes from intelligible to sensible and Aristotelian imitation which goes from the pure to the mixed act, from the real form to the unreal form, from the divine intelligence to human contemplation [...]' (*Being, Essence and Substance in Plato and Aristotle*, pp. 246/7 ff.)

metaphor according to Aristotle's own definition, but it is no *mere metaphor*.<sup>571</sup> It is no less deserving of serious consideration than is Freud's notion of the unconscious.

As mentioned, the notion that all living being actually desires the unmoved mover suggests that all forms of life, and the activities in which these forms express themselves, are *performative imitations*, or *dynamic images*, that strive to the extent that they are able to approximate the complete life and activity of the divine. This ultimately underscores the proximity between Aristotle's own metaphysical theory and those of Plato and the Pythagoreans, which he criticizes in Book I. Yet there is an important difference between them, which we could call a difference between *dynamic* and *static* imitation. The difference can be made apparent by recalling that Aristotle ultimately finds Platonic participation to be inadequate because Plato failed to show, other than by the empty language of participation and a logic of static resemblance, precisely how and why eternal and unchanging Ideas can be the causes of perishable things that move and change. It is exactly this causal explanation that Aristotle aims to provide with his image of divine causality as desire: he shows that the unmoved mover, which is pure activity, is desired by perishable things in their essential movements and alterations, and is ultimately the final cause toward which all finite beings strive in a way that is appropriate

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<sup>571</sup> It would be interesting to compare this and other Aristotelian images to what Hans Blumenberg means by 'absolute metaphor'. Cf. H. Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, trans. R. Savage (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010) p. 5. For Blumenberg, absolute metaphors are those that prove impervious to literal paraphrase, or what he calls 'terminological claims': '[t]hat these metaphors are called "absolute" means only that they prove resistant to terminological claims and cannot be dissolved into conceptuality, not that one metaphor could not be replaced or represented by another [...]' (Ibid) In other words, as he explains, these absolute 'metaphors [...] do not admit of verification [...]' (p. 13) One obstacle to this comparison, which would nonetheless be fascinating to investigate, concerns whether or not the indirect or second-order proof of *reductio ad absurdum* qualifies as what Blumenberg means by 'verification'. To the extent that Aristotle does buttress his metaphysical account of the unmoved mover with the rigorous, but indirect proof he offers in *Physics* VIII, he clearly verifies his metaphorical comparison of the unmoved mover to an object of desire. Precisely because it is unclear whether proof by *reductio* counts as legitimate verification, an answer to this question cannot be given definitively here.

to them. The beings that do this best are the heavenly bodies, whose unending circular motion constitutes the closest possible approximation of godly activity. But every living being, to the extent that it is alive, is defined by activities that to varying degrees are dynamic copies, or moving images, of complete activity.

Consequently, if Aristotle's *Metaphysics* culminates in the consideration that the unmoved mover causes motion as an object of desire, which moves the cosmos without itself being moved, then *mimesis* belongs to the very metaphysical structure of the cosmos (much as it does in Plato's *Timaeus*), insofar as such desire manifests itself in the extent to which each living being is able to approximate its own activity imperfectly to that of the divine Mind.<sup>572</sup> Yet Aristotelian *mimesis* is dynamic, or performative *mimesis*, and this is what distinguishes it from Platonic participation and Pythagorean imitation. In itself, this suggests that Aristotle's criticisms of Plato in particular are aimed less at what Plato was evidently trying to show, than at the way in which he tried (unsuccessfully, according to Aristotle) to show it.

In the context of such a metaphysics, which is as much a metaphysics of life as it is one of act (and *not* a metaphysics of static presence), it should therefore come as no surprise that Aristotle retains an important place for a certain kind of metaphor, conceived broadly as comparative predication, in his philosophical method. The proliferation of comparisons, similes and analogies throughout Aristotle's works reveals its importance in the fact that the physical universe itself is a moving image, which seeks

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<sup>572</sup> Blumenberg's comments on this are worth quoting at length: 'in Aristotle, the absolute uniformity of the ultimate circular movement is deduced from an analysis of the concept of time, which requires an eternally homogenous movement as its substrate, such that the intransient pure actuality of the unmoved mover is the norm grasped by the eros of the first sphere. [...] The Aristotelian prime mover is unmoved under the criterion of *physical* movement, whose final principle it is meant to be; as thought thinking itself, however, [...] it is at the same time pure ἐνέργεια in *theoretical* activity. Circular movement, as an imitation of the νοῦς, refers to a relationship that Mind has to itself [...].' (*Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, p. 120/1)

imperfectly to compare itself in its becoming to the eternal model of what truly is. In other words, if Aristotle's *Metaphysics* ultimately gives us to understand that the cosmos itself is structured as a dynamic image of eternity, then it must be recognized that comparisons, similes, images and analogies are perhaps better suited to revealing this image-structure than are the logical 'tools' that Aristotle invents in the *Organon*.

The foregoing considerations substantiate my (and O'Rourke's) contention that, as mentioned in the third chapter of this dissertation, ἐνέργεια or activity is the principle of *both* the perfect resemblances that unite all beings as beings in the *Metaphysics*, as well as the imperfect ones that ground the production and comprehension of metaphors in the *Rhetoric*. The fact that Aristotle employs this concept in both metaphysical and metaphorical contexts underscores his intention to bind the study of poetic and rhetorical style to the scientific and philosophical comprehension of the world in general, and thereby to suggest implicitly that the latter is indeed a sufficient condition of the former. But Aristotle's argument in *Metaphysics* IX-XII also indicates that the study of rhetorical and poetic style, while not a sufficient condition of the philosophical comprehension of the world, can nonetheless contribute to it in crucial ways.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

To tie all this together and make it as concrete as possible, we might consider the question of metaphor in its relation to a genealogy of concepts, in the Aristotelian sense. As we saw in the previous chapter, the ultimate concepts of science are arrived at through a process that begins for Aristotle in sense perception. Beginning with the perception of sensible particulars, the mind gradually moves to these concepts by first proceeding through what later commentators called a 'first,' or 'proximate' universal. From these

first universals, the mind then intuits more ultimate universals by means another level of induction, arriving at the concept ‘animal,’ for instance, by intuiting what is common to ‘human being’ and ‘dog.’ In this genealogy of the concept, what is crucial to grasp is that each successive stage of conceptuality is marked by a higher level of generality; the ‘higher’ or more generic a concept is, the less content it will have in terms of marks by which it can be differentiated from other concepts. The fewer marks a concept possesses, the greater its extension must be, and vice versa.

Induction therefore moves from sensible particularity to the first universal, and from the first universal to the ultimate universal, either by an immediate intuition of the essence of the subject in question or by apprehending what is common among a group of its particular instances. Yet because there is a progressive reduction in conceptual content established by the inductive movement to higher levels of generality, sensible particulars in their phenomenal integrity present the mind with many more qualities, more marks, and more information to sort through in its search for the underlying essence.

Consequently, the mind has less content to sort through in its passage from first universals to ultimate universals than it does in the passage from sensible particulars to first universals. Indeed, one could even go so far as to say that sensible particulars are characterized by an excess of marks: the cup on the table in front of me is similar in shape to other cups; but it is also similar to my cat in that both are next to the book shelf; and it is similar to the window in that both are transparent, and so on, *ad infinitum*. The point is that the primary stage of induction presents more possibility for error than the later stage(s), because the mind has to sort through an endless array of accidental resemblances in order to find those that indicate an essential connection between things

of the same class. It is really only the continual repetition of similar instances over time that makes the process feasible at all.<sup>573</sup>

In the conclusion of the previous chapter, I argued that metaphors have their natural milieu in the domain of human experience, which constitutes the most primitive stage of scientific rationality. At this inchoate level, the free activity of grouping things into classes, which is characteristic of metaphorical language, makes a positive contribution to science by providing the mind with a storehouse of clues that are capable of bringing it to the threshold of scientific discovery. As I argued there, metaphor can be seen to have its proper place in these early stages of the development of science, and it is in these early stages that its positive contribution to science, which Gadamer describes as ‘advance work in logic done by language itself’, is easiest to discern.

Aristotle’s claim in *Metaphysics* I that the earliest Greek philosophers are ‘like one who lisps’ is significant in this regard. As mentioned already, it implies vaguely and inconclusively that these thinkers expressed themselves in a way that is appropriate to the early beginnings of First Philosophy. Furthermore, the simile also implies that Aristotle takes himself to be bringing science to its completion, by furnishing its ultimate

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<sup>573</sup> Still, it is highly questionable whether, after Darwin, the repetition of similar instances over time could be taken to ensure that induction leads in a repeatable way from sensible particulars to the universals of science. To the extent that Aristotelian induction seems to require for its intelligibility something very close to what later gets elaborated as the doctrine of substantial forms, the Darwinian idea that natural species themselves change and evolve over time, and therefore are potentially infinite in number, calls the viability of induction into question. Furthermore, even aside from the challenges presented by Darwinian research in biology, contemporary science is concerned with laws whose verification requires complex mathematical operations, rather than linguistic definitions and categorical syllogisms. In light of important scientific developments in the late 19th and early 20th century (Cantor’s set theory in mathematics, and Einsteinian relativity in physics, to name two), most contemporary philosophers have abandoned the notion of induction because the concepts most important to today’s science, and the mathematical operations by which these concepts are verified, bear no connection to the human experience of the world as sensible. Even if induction can be said to work on Aristotle’s account, and the mind can make its way from sensible particularity to the universals of qualitative science, it is unclear what a contemporary doctrine of induction, articulated with a view to explaining the intuition of properly *quantitative* scientific principles, would even look like.

principles and by articulating the law of non-contradiction that follows from these principles. Yet what exactly are these ultimate principles? Exactly how far can the passage from particulars to universals go? It must be recognized that, even if properly demonstrative science ends with the discovery of ultimate genera such as *animal*, the search for principles does not stop there. Beyond the generality of these ultimate universals there exist *still more* universal concepts, which scholastic interpreters called *transcendentals*, and among which *being* is primary.

As we have already seen, Aristotle considers wisdom to be the active possession of the ultimate, causal knowledge that is sought after in First Philosophy. In claiming wisdom to be like a head with respect to the body of knowledge in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle also implies that it is a consummation of all knowledge as such; he confirms this in the *Metaphysics* when he notes that First Philosophy is the most accurate knowledge of what is most knowable (and hence most desirable) in itself. The upshot is that, in the context of the genealogy of concepts that I have so far outlined, the development of the concept in Aristotle does not stop with the ‘ultimate’ universals, which furnish the starting points of scientific demonstration. Rather, there are even more ultimate universals than these properly scientific concepts, yet due to their extreme generality they can be neither defined nor demonstrated.

I have shown that, in his attempts to reveal and explain these *ultimate* concepts, which are truly ultimate precisely because they stand at the limits of all conceptuality as such, Aristotle makes productive use of metaphors, in the form of similes and analogies. This is not a contradiction of Aristotle’s injunction against the use of metaphors in the *Organon*, insofar as he does not use them in the context of defining or demonstrating

anything; it also does not contradict the law of non-contradiction, because he uniformly prefers similes to metaphorical words. He uses these metaphors not to define or demonstrate, but rather as a means of ‘making clear’ or ‘indicating’ (δηλώσις) principles that, on his own account, are maximally remote from the senses. If this is so, then it means that metaphor has its natural place not only at the beginning of the genealogy of the Aristotelian concept, in experience, but also *at the end*, in the culmination of knowledge that is called First Philosophy.

It is also crucial to recognize that, if metaphor finds its natural milieu both at the beginning and at the end of this conceptual genealogy, it appears in a slightly different form at the end from that in which it initially emerges. Aristotle’s own way of using similes and analogies itself testifies to this difference, insofar as he uniformly displays a concern to harness metaphor’s capacity for revealing similarities and at the same time to reduce its capacity to puzzle and confuse. In so doing, on my reading, Aristotle ostensibly strives to place metaphor fully in the service of the philosophical pursuit of truth. In other words, Aristotle’s use of similes and analogies reflects the philosopher’s effort to transform (and thereby *reform*) metaphor from a tool used by sophists to conceal falsehood, into a tool used by philosophers to reveal truth. In my view, he accomplishes this transformation both by (a) preferring similes and analogies over metaphorical words in his theoretical discussions; and by (b) appending explanations to these similes and analogies, to clarify just what is similar and what is different between the things being compared. In the final analysis, the fact that Aristotle is able to explain why the things he compares are both similar and different indicates that he already possesses a properly scientific knowledge about them and the classes to which they

belong, but also that this scientific knowledge alone is not adequate to reveal the kinds of truths with which First Philosophy is concerned.

The philosophical effort on Aristotle's part to reform metaphor must be seen as the necessary corollary of his effort to reform the arts of rhetoric and poetry more globally, as we examined this in the first chapter. Ultimately, insofar as Aristotle associates the ability to make and understand metaphors with the innate capacity to perceive resemblances between things, it follows that whoever is best at the latter will also be best at the former. If it is truly the philosopher who must have the keenest eye for similarities, since philosophy is the knowledge of what is most general and therefore must take account of what everything that exists shares in common, then the philosopher is the one who is best qualified to make metaphors. That this is so is implied discretely by a remark Aristotle makes in the *Rhetoric*, when he discusses the production of fictional stories as material for exhortative speeches. In this passage Aristotle argues that the perception of resemblances (τὸ ὅμοιον ὁρᾶν) 'is easy, if one studies philosophy (ῥᾶόν ἐστιν ἐκ φιλοσοφίας).'<sup>574</sup> If this means that seeing similarities is something that the philosopher has a pre-eminent ability for, it also means that the philosopher is the best at making metaphors as well.

Once we recall that metaphor is for Aristotle the most important element of *both* rhetorical and poetic style, it becomes clear that his rhetorical and poetic theories implicitly single out the philosopher as both the ideal orator and the ideal poet. In other words, Aristotle's theory of metaphor underscores, from a unique perspective, his effort

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<sup>574</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1394 7-8.

to reform the rhetorical and poetic arts in accordance with the Platonic critiques that we examined in the first chapter.

If this means that Aristotle brings poetry and rhetoric closer to philosophy by means of his theory of metaphor, the reverse is also true: his conception of philosophy depends quite heavily on the capacity of what Gadamer above calls ‘the genius of verbal consciousness’ to stimulate the mind’s natural capacity for intuition, which is not strictly speaking a repeatable, scientific method. As I have argued throughout, the procedures of demonstration and definition cannot replace the ability to perceive resemblances, which Aristotle roots in a natural disposition he calls εὐφυΐα. In this regard, Aristotle’s remark that wisdom is the combination of scientific knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and intelligence (νοῦς) shows that his conception of philosophy can never be reduced to an iterable procedure, which one could master by memorizing a set of rules and perform mechanically, without insight. Philosophy as practiced by Aristotle requires and presupposes a detailed knowledge of determinate concepts, as well as of the methods that disclose their connections, but it is clear that these are not in and of themselves sufficient to arrive at the truly ultimate principles with which First Philosophy is concerned. For this, one needs insight, and this fact indicates the reason why philosophical thought is not strictly separable, for Aristotle, from a kind of inspiration that ultimately highlights the proximity between philosophical thought and poetic invention as Aristotle conceives them. Aristotelian philosophy thus positions itself between (or perhaps above) the scientific and the poetic, in the effort to bind them together in a unique theoretical discipline. In the final analysis, Aristotle’s theory of metaphor provides a unique perspective from which to elaborate this effort and what is at stake in it.

## 7. Closing Remarks

By way of a general conclusion, it will be helpful to recall the three objectives that I assigned to this dissertation in the introduction. These were: (1) to highlight the continuity of presuppositions linking Aristotle's general theories of rhetoric and poetry to those of Plato; (2) to resolve an apparent discrepancy between the different statements made by Aristotle in different texts regarding the theoretical value of metaphorical expressions, as well as another discrepancy between certain of these statements and Aristotle's own use of similes; and (3) to work out an account of how Aristotle's views fit into the contemporary landscape of philosophical debate concerning metaphors and their relevance to human thought.

The first two objectives, which I indicated in the introduction were short-term ones to be fulfilled by the end of the dissertation, have indeed been achieved. The consideration that Aristotle's theory of metaphor is a vertical rather than a horizontal one has moreover played an important role in the achievement of each goal.

(1) Concerning the first objective, the notion that Aristotle's theory of metaphor is a vertical theory underscores the fact that the ability to make and understand metaphors, for Aristotle, is a properly contemplative, or theoretical ability, which concerns things and their similarities rather than words and their figurative meanings. In other words, if metaphors essentially reveal secondary or imperfect similarities, and if similarity is according to the *Categories* a relation ( $\pi\rho\delta\varsigma$  τι) between two things, then the mastery of the arts of rhetoric and poetry, which both demand the mastery of metaphor, demands an orientation towards a philosophical comprehension of what things are in themselves. To see how this underscores the continuity between Plato and

Aristotle's general views concerning the status of rhetoric and poetry, we need only recall that, in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates explains to Phaedrus that 'unless he pay proper attention to philosophy he will never be able to speak properly about anything' (261a 4-5); and that, in the *Republic*, Socrates also banishes poetry from the ideal city until such time as it can demonstrate its value as a form of civic education, which aims for more than mere gratification of its audience and is based on a stable understanding of the things it imitates (608a 2-3).

This means, as I argued in the first chapter, that for Plato the condition of possibility for establishing rhetoric and poetry as genuine arts or τέχναι is their (re-)orientation towards the philosophical pursuit of goodness and truth. On the one hand, as we saw, Aristotle fulfills this condition by giving rhetoric the function of discovering all possible means of persuasion in regard to any subject whatsoever, and by giving tragic poetry the function of imitating human action in such a way as to purge the emotions of pity and fear from the souls of the audience. Each of these functions responds implicitly to the Platonic critiques examined in the first chapter, to the extent that neither function can be performed without some orientation towards the pursuit of goodness and truth: the definition of rhetoric as the discovery of all possible means of persuasion requires that orators take account not only of what merely appears true, but also what is actually true; and the definition of tragic poetry as the imitation of an inherently 'elevated' action requires the poet to be concerned more with general patterns of human action, and with the kinds of things that certain kinds of people normally do, than with historical particulars.

Each of these functions subtly suggests that a philosophical orientation towards the world is indeed the ideal, sufficient condition for mastering rhetoric and poetry as genuine τέχνη, and Aristotle's vertical theory of metaphor simply reinforces the need for such a philosophical orientation from within his discussions of rhetorical and poetic style in particular. In other words, in the same way that the essential functions assigned by Aristotle to rhetoric and poetry implicitly Platonize the fields of argumentation and imitation by binding them in subtle ways to philosophical thought, Aristotle's discussions of metaphor in both the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* do so by giving metaphor the function of revealing similarities between things, and by connecting the ability to make and understand metaphors to the essential function of each art. Consequently, whoever wishes to master rhetoric and/or poetry must master metaphor, and whoever must master metaphor must master (the properly unmasterable) comprehension of the similarities between things. This means, as mentioned several times above, that in order to master rhetoric and poetry as Aristotle understands them, one ought either to be, or to become, a philosopher.

The inherently philosophical character of Aristotle's discussion of metaphor, which underscores the inherently philosophical character of his rhetoric and poetry, is also evident in the privileged place he reserves for analogical metaphors in particular. These analogical metaphors are implicitly valorized by the fact that all metaphors by definition reveal secondary similarities, which are most abundant among things that are connected by analogy rather than by genus or species. In Aristotle's discussions in both the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*, the majority of examples he offers to illustrate the most effective uses of metaphor are accordingly analogical metaphors comparing abstract

qualities or events to sensible things in general, and to sensible things that move in particular. As we have seen, the principle Aristotle recommends as the basis for the ideal metaphorical resemblance is the principle of Aristotle's entire metaphysical system: ἐνέργεια or activity. Even if Aristotle discusses this concept in the *Rhetoric* by associating with its common meaning of motion, rather than its theoretical meaning, the fact that this concept operates as the principle of both the perfect metaphysical likenesses that First Philosophy aims to discover, as well as the imperfect metaphorical likenesses that poets and orators must master, once again suggests subtly that the understanding of the former is implicitly singled out by Aristotle, in accordance with Plato's views, as the ideal condition for the latter as well. It is in this sense that Aristotle's theory of metaphor, and specifically its vertical character, highlights the Platonic heritage of his rhetorical and poetic theories, as demonstrated in the first three chapters above.

(2) Concerning the second short-term goal I assigned to this dissertation, the vertical character of Aristotle's theory has also been instrumental in showing that there is no contradiction in Aristotle's views concerning the theoretical value of metaphorical expressions in different contexts, even if these views are genuinely complicated. The two contradictions considered at the outset have been shown to be merely apparent ones, insofar as Aristotle's prohibition against the use of metaphors in the *Posterior Analytics* is implicitly limited to those contexts in which the terminological precision of a definition or a scientific demonstration is at stake. In other words, Aristotle extolls the use of metaphors in discussions that are presumed not to be properly scientific ones, and prohibits it in specifically scientific discussions aimed at formulating definitions by

means of genera and specific differences. There is no contradiction here, nor is there one in Aristotle's use of similes in his own, properly dialectical discussions.

Although, according to Aristotle's remarks in the *Rhetoric*, the simile is also a metaphor, it is a metaphor that allows him to obey the law of non-contradiction formulated in *Metaphysics* IV, because it does not generate equivocation by presenting something under a name that does not belong to it. The vertical character of Aristotle's theory of metaphor indicates above all that, more than an exchange of names, what is essential to the metaphoric attribution is the fundamentally predicative operation of comparing two or more things in view of a secondary, or imperfect likeness they are perceived to share. Aristotle's own use of metaphors, in the form of similes and analogical comparisons, therefore does not contradict his own qualified prohibition against the use of metaphors because (a) he does not use metaphors in the course of defining or demonstrating anything; and (b) he routinely prefers similes over the metaphorical word, and thereby brings his metaphorical comparisons into line with the law of non-contradiction, which he evidently aims to follow in both scientific and dialectical discussions.

(3) Concerning the third, long-term objective I assigned to this dissertation, it will be helpful to recall that, as mentioned in the introduction, several recent interpreters have mischaracterized Aristotle's position as being fundamentally identical with classical rhetorical theories of metaphor, which were elaborated by figures such as Cicero and Quintilian. I also claimed that some of the same interpreters have sought to argue, partly on the basis of this erroneous premise, that Aristotle's theory of metaphor has no valuable insight to offer contemporary philosophical discussions about metaphors and

their relation to human thought. In fact, this conclusion rests on a number of implicit premises, which we can formulate along the following lines:

P1. The cognitive interaction theory of metaphor is a factually accurate theory capable of explaining the production of metaphorical meaning in all its most important aspects.

P2. The Traditional View is incompatible with the interaction theory of metaphor.

P3/IC. The Traditional view is incapable of explaining the production of metaphorical meaning in all its most important aspects (P1, P2).

P4. Aristotle is the originator of the Traditional View.

P5. Aristotle's theory is incompatible with the cognitive interaction theory (P2, P4).

C. Aristotle's theory is incapable of explaining the production of metaphorical meaning in all its most important aspects (P5).

This conclusion adequately expresses the position elaborated by proponents of the cognitive view of metaphor, whose reconstructions of Aristotle's theory we examined in the second chapter of this dissertation. Yet as we saw thanks to the distinction between vertical and horizontal theories of metaphor, Aristotle's theory is not in fact identical to the Traditional View, which discredits P4 above.

Nevertheless, even if we posit a distinction between Aristotle's theory of metaphor and those properly horizontal theories of the Traditional View, and thereby discredit one of the premises on which the above conclusion rests, the conclusion that Aristotle's theory is incapable of explaining the production of metaphorical meaning can be supported in other ways. Even at the point where we draw a distinction between Aristotle's theory and those of the Traditional View, on the basis of the fact that Aristotle's is a vertical theory, whereas those of Tryphon, Cicero, Quintilian etc. are horizontal theories, the one thing that horizontal and vertical theories of metaphor still share in common is the presupposition that all metaphors are made in view of certain perceived similarities. What distinguishes the two is that, on a vertical theory, the relevant similarities are between *things*, whereas on a horizontal theory the relevant

similarities are between the meanings of individual words. To use Max Black's distinction, we can therefore differentiate Aristotle's vertical theory of metaphor from the horizontal theories of the Traditional View by saying that Aristotle's is an Object-comparison theory, while the theories that characterize the Traditional View are Substitution theories.

At the same time, it is also crucial to recall that Black distinguishes the interaction theory of metaphor from both the substitution and object-comparison theories by the consideration that the latter two assume that all metaphors are made in light of certain similarities, whereas the interaction theory holds rather that metaphorical meaning is in many of the most important instances a result of differences and disparities, rather than of resemblances. The aforementioned argument can therefore be reformulated, without the erroneous premise discredited above, as follows:

P1. The cognitive interaction theory of metaphor is a factually accurate theory capable of explaining the production of metaphorical meaning in all its most important aspects.

P2. The cognitive interaction theory of metaphor does not hold similarity to be an important principle in the production of metaphorical meaning.

P3. Both substitution theories and object-comparison theories hold similarity to be an important principle in the production of metaphorical meaning.

P4. Aristotle's theory of metaphor is an object-comparison theory.

P5. Aristotle's theory of metaphor holds similarity to be an important principle in the production of cognitive metaphorical meaning (P3, P4).

P6. Aristotle's theory of meaning is incompatible with the cognitive interaction theory of metaphor (P2)

C. Aristotle's theory is incapable of explaining the production of metaphorical meaning in all its most important aspects (P1, P5, P6).

As mentioned in the introduction, determining whether Aristotle's theory of metaphor has any real purchase in contemporary debates requires ultimately that we assess the different versions of the interaction theory of metaphor in detail, and decide whether it truly accounts for the production of metaphorical meaning as exhaustively as its

proponents assert. If the interaction theory in general, and Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive theory in particular, is indeed capable of explaining the production of metaphorical meaning in a way that shows both substitution theories and object-comparison theories to be inadequate, then the above conclusion must be confirmed.

If, on the other hand, there is any substance to the critiques that have been issued against the interaction theory of metaphor by the thinkers mentioned in the introduction (Derrida, Blumenberg, Ricoeur, Peters and Davidson), and specifically if the interaction theory of metaphor is seen in the end to require some reference to a principle of iconic resemblance to account for the way in which metaphoric meaning is generated, then Aristotle's theory of metaphor and its basic assumptions will not be as far from contemporary views as interpreters like Lakoff and Johnson have subsequently claimed.

In fact, it is crucial to point out that, although Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive theory of metaphor clearly presupposes the conceptual framework of Black's interaction theory of metaphor, neither author has responded to the philosophical criticisms outlined above, all of which were in print for at least two years prior to the publication of *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980. Rather than addressing these objections, the authors have instead sought to legitimate their views by pointing to empirical data from a number of recent neuro-imaging studies, which they assume provides incontrovertible evidence of the correctness of their cognitive, interaction theory of metaphor.<sup>575</sup> Indeed, Lakoff and

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<sup>575</sup> As an example of one such datum, consider the paper published by Randall Stilla, Simon Lacey and K. Sathian, which presents the findings of a recent neuroimaging study and argues that these findings 'are consistent with the conceptual metaphor theory of grounded cognition (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003)' ('Metaphorically feeling: Comprehending textural metaphors activates somatosensory cortex', *Brain and Language* 120 (2012), p. 418/9). Using 'functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)', the brain activity of subjects was monitored as they were read a variety of sentences containing metaphors originating from the specific sensory domain of touch, as well as their literal equivalents. According to the authors, '[p]articipants lay supine in the scanner, with foam blocks positioned around the head to minimize movement. A mirror angled over the head coil enabled participants to see a centrally placed fixation cross

Johnson place such confidence in this data that they claim, on the basis of it, to have brought ‘[m]ore than two millennia of a priori philosophical speculation’ to its end. ‘Because of these discoveries,’ the authors assert dramatically, ‘philosophy can never be the same again.’<sup>576</sup>

Nevertheless, the dogmatic finality with which Lakoff and Johnson dismiss over 2 millennia of serious philosophical speculation seems out of line with much of the actual data on which they base their theory in some of its most important aspects. In addition to an abundance of pseudo-reasoning and weaslers throughout their arguments (one of the most prevalent is the claim that thought is *mostly* metaphoric), there is a vast discrepancy between the revolutionary status they attribute to their own research and the actual data they provide to support it. In just one of many instances of this discrepancy, after characterizing a series of ‘Existence Proofs’ for the notion of phenomenological embodiment, which is the lynchpin of their entire theory of the embodied mind as well as the theory of metaphor that it supports, Lakoff and Johnson initially claim that ‘[e]ach of these neural modeling studies constitutes an existence proof.’<sup>577</sup> Yet just a few lines below, the authors concede that ‘[n]one of this proves that people actually use those parts of the brain involved in perception and motor control to do such reasoning [i.e., concerning ‘spatial-relations’], but it is in principle possible.’<sup>578</sup> Essentially, this means

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projected on a screen placed in the rear magnet aperture. Participants were instructed to keep their eyes open and fix their gaze on the cross. They were instructed to listen to the sentences and press a response button with the left index finger as soon as they understood the sentence, using a fiberoptic response box. The sentences were presented through headphones that attenuated external sounds by 20 dB to muffle scanner noise.’ (p. 419) The resultant neuroimaging demonstrated brain activity in response to the sentences containing textural metaphors, but not to those containing their literal equivalents, leading the authors to conclude that they had found ‘a preliminary proof of concept for conceptual [i.e., cognitive] metaphor theory.’ (Ibid)

<sup>576</sup> Lakoff & Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, p. 3.

<sup>577</sup> Lakoff & Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, p. 42.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid.

that at least some of the evidence cited by Lakoff and Johnson does no more to support their theory than to say that it isn't impossible.

If this is the case, it seems reasonable to question whether such data really supports Lakoff and Johnson's claims to have brought the whole history of philosophical speculation about the mind-body problem, and about the language-thought problem, et cetera, to its final, irrevocable completion. And if it is possible to question whether the data really supports these claims, it also seems reasonable to question whether the revolutionary character they attribute to their theory of metaphor, and their subsequent rejection of Aristotle's theory, are ultimately to be taken seriously.

On my view, Lakoff and Johnson have grossly overstated the conclusions that can be drawn in good faith from their data, many of which are genuinely fascinating. Consequently, to the extent that their rejection of Aristotle's theory of metaphor as simply being 'wrong' rests on the strength of these conclusions, it too is suspect in my view. At the same time, I do not simply want to argue the opposite, by insisting that Aristotle was 'right', and that he miraculously anticipated every crucial insight of the 20th and 21st centuries by over two millennia. Certainly, it would be satisfying to score one for the Stagirite, whose ideas are often mistreated in scientific discussions. But the real goal of the history of philosophy should be to aid the future progress of ideas, by offering the strongest possible models with which to compare current theories.

This way of understanding the function of the history of ideas comes very close to what Paul Feyerabend calls 'counter-induction'.<sup>579</sup> In order to understand what is meant by this term, it is necessary to see how it dovetails with the conclusions of Thomas

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<sup>579</sup> P. Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London: New Left Books, 1975), p. 29.

Kuhn's influential work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). Significantly, Kuhn defines scientific revolutions as 'non-cumulative developmental episodes'<sup>580</sup>, which effectively calls into question the naive presupposition that scientific progress occurs in linear fashion from one paradigm to the next. Kuhn replaces this notion of linear progress with a softer one of 'evolution'<sup>581</sup>, which is not based on the assumption that scientific development necessarily tends towards a single, fixed point or terminus, conceived as the objective state of the world.<sup>582</sup> Rather, for Kuhn, scientific development is an evolution in precisely the way that Darwin conceived it: 'a process of evolution *from* primitive beginnings – a process whose successive stages are characterized by an increasingly detailed and refined understanding of nature', but not necessarily 'a process *toward* anything.'<sup>583</sup>

Picking up from where Kuhn's book leaves off, Feyerabend's notion of counter-induction derives its importance from the consideration that

[k]nowledge so conceived is not a series of self-consistent theories that converges towards an ideal view; it is not a gradual approach to the truth. It is rather an ever increasing *ocean of mutually incompatible (and perhaps even incommensurable) alternatives*, each single theory, each fairy tale, each myth that is part of the collection forcing others into greater articulation and all of them contributing, via this process of competition, to the development of our consciousness.<sup>584</sup>

Yet because empirical adequacy forms a major criterion for scientific knowledge (as it evidently does for Lakoff and Johnson), the acceptance of a scientific theory carries with it the assumption that the accepted theory is 'right', since it corresponds to the world of

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<sup>580</sup> T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 92

<sup>581</sup> Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 170.

<sup>582</sup> Accordingly, Kuhn argues on p. 126 that '[w]e may [...] have to relinquish the notion, explicit or implicit, that changes of paradigm carry scientists and those who learn from them closer and closer to the truth.'

<sup>583</sup> Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 170/1.

<sup>584</sup> Feyerabend, *Against Method*, p. 30.

fact. As Feyerabend and Kuhn both point out, however, the correspondence between any given theory and the facts is never complete. Consequently, every theory has at best a limited factual basis, because (as Kuhn argues explicitly) certain facts are only accessible from within the presuppositions of certain theories.<sup>585</sup> Thus counter-induction, which for Feyerabend involves the rehabilitation of all kinds of defunct and disproven theories from the history of ideas, is integral to maintaining the empirical adequacy of contemporary scientific theories, since the new facts that may disprove an accepted theory can sometimes only emerge in the course of investigating a rival theory. Feyerabend therefore states that ‘[a] scientist who is interested in maximal empirical content [...] will accordingly adopt a pluralistic methodology, [...] and he will try to improve rather than discard the views that appear to lose in the competition.’<sup>586</sup>

It seems safe to say that Lakoff and Johnson do not see the value in the pluralistic methodology of counter-induction recommended by Feyerabend. Rather than trying to rehabilitate contrary views, and thereby ensure that the ‘winning theory’ is indeed the strongest one, they seem instead to have assumed from the start that their theory is the right one, and on the basis of this assumption, which is in many cases not adequately supported by the data they cite, they have dogmatically asserted that every theory disagreeing with their own is simply wrong.<sup>587</sup> It is of course possible that their theory is

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<sup>585</sup> See Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 52, which describes ‘distinction between discovery and invention or between fact and theory’ as ‘exceedingly artificial’.

<sup>586</sup> Feyerabend, *Against Method*, p. 47.

<sup>587</sup> This is in my view very close to what Susan Haack calls *pseudo-inquiry*: ‘[a] pseudo-inquirer seeks to make a case for the truth of some proposition(s) determined in advance.’ See “Science, Scientism and Anti-Science in the Age of Preposterism,” *Skeptical Inquiry* 21/6 (November/December 1996). Haack ties this notion of pseudo-inquiry to the sad predicament that, according to her, scientific research currently faces: ‘[t]his is the very debacle taking place before our eyes: genuine inquiry is so complex and difficult, and advocacy “research” and politically-motivated “scholarship” have become so commonplace, that our grip on the concepts of truth, evidence, objectivity, inquiry has been loosened.’ (Ibid) In my view, the aforementioned discrepancy between the inconclusive nature of Lakoff and Johnson’s data, on the one

indeed the right one, but so far not much of what they have offered in support of it merits the revolutionary status they claim for it. In my view, and in agreement with Feyerabend and Kuhn, it seems that the key to progress in this and any other field of scientific research is the development of alternative perspectives, which can be compared to current theories in order to make sure that the latter do indeed account for all relevant facts. It is partly to this end that I offer the present study of Aristotle's theory of metaphor.

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hand, and the dogmatic nature of their claims to have ended the entire history of philosophical speculation, on the other, is a perfect indication of this 'loosening' of our grip on the concepts of 'truth, evidence, objectivity, inquiry [...]'.

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