

PHILOSOPHY AND METAPHOR: THE PHILOSOPHER'S AMBIVALENCE

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THAT ARISTOTLE—'the philosopher' in medieval parlance—was ambivalent about metaphor is well known. In various places he is critical and dismissive of its use, yet in the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* he provides a positive account, on the lines that metaphors involve insight and convey learning and understanding. A simple comment might be that he is willing to allow that metaphor has its place, while holding that that place is not in philosophy. There is some truth in this, but it does not do justice to the complexity of the issues, including his willingness to see a kinship between metaphor-making and philosophical acuity around the common capacity to 'see resemblances even in things far apart'.

One aspect of the puzzle is that in his primary discussion of metaphor in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle makes considerable use of the very figure of speech that he dismisses at other points. This is a feature of his ambivalence about metaphor that G.E.R. Lloyd explores in his paper 'The metaphors of *metaphora*' (Lloyd, 1996). Given that Aristotle's 'explicit account of *metaphora*, in the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, relies very heavily on the very language-use that [his] official theory condemns', Lloyd asks 'Why is there so much metaphor, so much *metaphora*, indeed, in Aristotle's theory of *metaphora*?' (p.205). It won't do to say that in writing on drama and rhetoric Aristotle was not engaged in philosophy or not in a 'really serious' sense. For even if this were true it would not resolve the issue, since he also makes frequent use of metaphor in his writings on ethics, politics, science and metaphysics. This suggests that he recognised in some sense that there is a place for metaphor, not only in poetry and rhetoric, but in philosophy as well.

The sense in which metaphor might be at home in philosophy is a large question, going well beyond anything Aristotle might have

recognised in regard to his own philosophy. Writing of Plato's use of metaphor, Iris Murdoch says that 'of course he used metaphor; but philosophy needs metaphor and metaphor is basic; how basic is the most basic philosophical question' (1997, p.463). Her point, I think, is that metaphor is critical to a good deal of philosophy, notably in ethics, politics, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, and metaphysics. There is also the looming presence of Heidegger's analysis of western metaphysics as the source of overarching metaphors, especially the metaphors of the sun and the ground-foundation, expressed in his view that 'the metaphorical exists only within the metaphysical'. Again, there is the challenge set by Derrida's treatment of metaphor, not least in relation to Aristotelian philosophy, in 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy' (Derrida 1986). This turns on the idea that, in Paul Ricoeur's words, 'there is no discourse on metaphor that is not stated within a metaphorically engendered conceptual network' (Ricoeur 1997, p.287).

The idea that there is no escape from metaphor might indeed start with Aristotle's definition of *metaphora* in the *Poetics* as *epiphora*, 'carrying across' as 'carrying to', metaphor as a form of transport, moving something from one place to another. Metaphor—clearly Aristotle speaks in a more inclusive and general sense than the term now holds—consists in the transposition of a term to an unusual context. The play on words, obviously, is not picked up in the standard English translation: 'metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else'. (*Poetics*, 1457b8ff). In drawing attention to the pervasive web of metaphor, Derrida goes on to argue that philosophy as a whole is a 'process of metaphorization which gets carried away in and of itself'; and here his primary example is Aristotle's metaphysics, especially the idea of the analogy of being, taken as an extended albeit unacknowledged metaphor.

One thing that is completely clear is that an adequate treatment of philosophy and metaphor is not a project for a short paper. So having noted these large questions thrown up in the attempt to deconstruct Western metaphysics in the twentieth century, my intention is to place them offstage (for the most part) to await appearance on another occasion. For now, a direct consideration of Aristotle's account of metaphor and its place is an appropriate point to make a start. On this topic, as on many others, Aristotle is going where Plato had been before. As with Plato, his intervention is part of an ongoing

polemic between philosophy and rival spheres of influence in education and public life. But more fully than Plato, he took metaphor as a topic for formal reflection and sought to work out a compromise, albeit one in which philosophy would have the last word.

Aristotle's criticism of metaphor appears most pointedly in his writings on logic. The development of syllogistic argument depends not least on definition and clarity in the use of terms. There is no place for metaphorical expressions in this context since, as he says without more ado, 'a metaphorical expression is always obscure':

Another rule [in avoiding obscurity in definitions] is to see if a metaphorical expression has been used. For a metaphorical expression is always obscure [asaphes] (*Topics* 139b32ff.)

Obscurity, in a word, is the death of definition and formal argument. But comments critical of metaphor also occur commonly enough in the *Metaphysics* and other writings.

In particular, there is the stinging dismissal of Plato's theory of Forms:

But further all other things cannot come from the Forms in any of the usual senses of 'form'. And to say that the Forms are patterns [of things] and the other things share them is to use empty words and poetical metaphors. (*Metaphysics* 991a21-2; (cf. 1079b25-7))

The irony of criticising Plato in this way could hardly have been lost on Aristotle: in setting boundaries between philosophy and other genres, the guiding philosophical idea of his teacher is placed dismissively outside philosophy. That he says nothing more about this relegation must appear as one of the deep absences in philosophy. For what does it say about philosophy if Plato's deep thought, which certainly draws on metaphor, is not philosophy? The criticism of Empedocles' use of metaphor in the *Meteorology* is more straightforward:

It is equally absurd to suppose that anything has been explained by calling the sea 'the sweat of the earth', like Empedocles. Metaphors are poetical—the expression may satisfy the requirements of a poem, but as to knowledge of nature it is unsatisfactory (*Meteorology* 357a24-6).

This comment serves to bring out a more general contention, to the effect that metaphors are not reliable sources of knowledge—in this case knowledge of nature—even if they satisfy the requirements of poetry (though in criticising Empedocles' philosophy he also dis-

missed him as a poor poet). Consistently with this, he allows that a metaphor is acceptable where it reflects knowledge otherwise available: so the comic poets are said to make a good metaphor in jest in calling grey hair 'the mould of old age' and 'hoar-frost' because, as he holds, these descriptions resonate with the scientific explanation of the phenomenon (see *Generation of Animals* 784a25ff).

The extended treatment of metaphor in the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* is of an entirely different order, guided by the thesis that metaphor is of great value in poetry and prose of all kinds (though philosophy itself as we will see, whether spoken or written, falls largely beyond consideration). The analysis of metaphor in these texts turns on a model of language marked by a contrast between the strict, proper or ordinary use of terms and a variety of non-standard or deviant uses:

Whatever its structure, a term will always be either the ordinary [kurion] word for the thing, or a strange word, or a metaphor, or an ornamental word, or a coined word, or a word extended, or shortened, or altered in form (*Poetics* 1457b1ff).

This is linked with an emphasis on the importance of clarity:

to be good, language must be clear [*saphe*]. It must also be appropriate, avoiding both meanness and undue evaluation. Clearness is secured by using words that are current and ordinary [kurion] (*Rhetoric* 1404b2ff).

Behind this there is the logico-metaphysical ideal that for each word there would be a single sense:

It makes no difference to say that a word has several meanings, if only they are limited in number; for to each formula there might be assigned a different word. For instance we might say that 'man' has not one meaning but several, one of which would be defined as 'two-footed animal', while there might be several other formulae if only they are limited in number; for to each formula there might be assigned a different word....If, however, they were not limited but one were to say that the word has an infinite number of meanings, obviously reasoning would be impossible; for not to have one meaning is to have no meaning, and if words have no meaning, reasoning with other people and indeed with oneself has been annihilated; for it is impossible to think of anything if we do not think of one thing; but if this is possible, one name might be assigned to this thing. Let it be assumed

then...that the name has a meaning and has one meaning
(*Metaphysics* 1006a34ff.)

'A word may have several meanings if only they are limited in number: *for to each formula there might be assigned a different word*'. This, as Derrida sees it, is the heart of philosophy: 'Univocity is the essence, or better, the *telos* of language. No philosophy, as such, has ever renounced this Aristotelian ideal. This ideal is philosophy' (Derrida 1986, p.247). That is an issue for debate. But, as Geoffrey Lloyd argues in *Aristotelian explorations*, there is good evidence that Aristotle himself, having enunciated the high ideal of univocity, was prepared to set it aside in many contexts and to allow for a more pluralistic, diverse play of meanings. So, in contrast with the dismissal of metaphor as 'always obscure' in the *Topics*, he insists in the *Rhetoric* (1405a4ff) that the appropriate use of non-standard terms is of fundamental importance for good style and that metaphor in particular gives 'clearness, charm and distinction' as nothing else can.

This endorsement of metaphor comes replete with liberal use of metaphorical expressions, beginning as already noted with the definition of metaphor in the *Poetics*:

Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else [*onamatos allotriou epiphora*]; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy (*Poetics* 1457b7ff).

A simple list of the terms Aristotle invokes in discussing metaphor, in the *Poetics* (*P*) and Book III of the *Rhetoric* (*R*), marks the metaphorical turn:

<i>Metaphors as:</i>		
unusual (terms)	<i>allotriou</i> —belonging to another, strange	(<i>P</i> .1457b8)
<i>In contrast with:</i>		
strict, proper (terms)	<i>kurios</i> —one in authority, head of family, word in common use	(<i>R</i> .1404b6)
ordinary (terms)	<i>oikeion</i> cf. 'of the household', familiar, one's own	
<i>Metaphors as conferring:</i>		
clearness	<i>to saphes</i>	(<i>R</i> .1405a8-9)
charm, pleasure	<i>to bedu</i>	

distinction	<i>to xenikon</i> — foreign, exotic	
<i>Metaphors as needing to be:</i>		
appropriate, seemly	<i>prepousa</i>	(R.1405a10)
fitting	<i>harmottei</i>	(R.1408a10ff)
ornamented	<i>kekosmemenos</i>	
within a mean	<i>to metrion</i>	(P.1458b12ff)
<i>Metaphors as needing to avoid:</i>		
frigidity (in language)	<i>to psuchron</i>	(R.1406b5ff)
<i>Metaphors as dynamic, graphic:</i>		
lively (sayings)	<i>ta asteia</i> —of the city, urbane, witty, vivid	(R.1410b7ff)
taking (sayings)	<i>ta eudokoumenta</i> — well-esteemed, popular, effective	
'setting something before the eyes'	<i>pro ommaton poiein</i>	(R.1411b25ff)
activity / active	<i>energeia / energounta</i>	(R.1411b27-12a9)
movement / moving	<i>kinesis/ kinoumena</i>	
alive / living; animate	<i>zonta; empsucha</i>	

The extensive use of metaphor in this context is remarkable, especially metaphors of life and movement to express what is characteristic of metaphor. There are manifestly tensions in the account, as in the primary idea that clearness is secured by using ordinary words; yet, language, he goes on to say, is enhanced by an element of the unfamiliar and metaphors are said to provide clearness as nothing else can (in contrast with the *Topics* where metaphors are roundly criticised as unclear). Again, metaphors lend distinction as having an exotic air, but what is foreign might also carry a sense of threat. The emphasis clearly falls, nonetheless, on the positive endorsement of metaphor in poetry and prose of all kinds.

In setting out conditions for the use of metaphor, Aristotle stresses in particular the need for them to be appropriate or fitting, which means that they 'must correspond to the thing signified' as a cloak needs to fit the person who wears it (*Rhetoric*, 1405a10ff). Now, a metaphor, in its structure, says 'this is that' (*Rhetoric* 1410b18), for example that old age is 'the evening' or 'sunset of life'. The basic condition for its use, therefore, is that this is like that in some significant respect—as between species or between species and genus, or more generally 'in keeping with an analogy'. Some kind of similarity at the

level of how things are thus grounds metaphors and gives them their truth. The relevant general principle, as in *Rhetoric* 1405 b11 is that 'one term may describe a thing more truly (more strictly) than another, be more appropriate (more at home), and set it more intimately before our eyes'. It is a matter of degree as to how well one thing fits another, though in some instances a metaphor may be entirely inappropriate and therefore, as I interpret it, false. Of course, Aristotle speaks of other conditions as needed for a good metaphor, that it is not too far-fetched or too obvious (hence that it fall within a mean), that it have a pleasing sound, and so on.

To be a master of metaphor—'to metaphorise well' according to the *Poetics*—is to have a capacity for seeing similarity in dissimilars (1458a6-8) The *Rhetoric* makes the same point in a passage that associates metaphor-making with philosophical acuity:

Metaphors must be drawn from things that are related to the original, and yet not so obviously — just as in philosophy also an acute mind will perceive resemblances even in things far apart (1412a10ff.)

The dialectical counterpart is addressed in the *Topics* in the need for the philosopher to study likeness and difference, especially to get practice in regard to terms that are far apart:

Likeness should be studied, first, in the case of things belonging to different genera, the formula being: as one is to one thing, so is another to another (e.g. as knowledge stands to an object of knowledge, so is perception related to the object of perception, or: as one is in one thing, so is another in another (e.g. as sight is in the eye, so is intellect in the soul, and as is calm in the sea, so is windlessness in the air). Practice is more especially needed in regard to terms that are far apart; for in the case of the rest, we shall be more easily able to see the points of likeness (*Topics* 108a6ff).

What does this association around the perception of similarity say about philosophy and metaphor? To go further one needs to consider what Aristotle says about the cognitive dimension of metaphor, especially its role in expressing new ideas or different ways of looking at things.

Recent views concerning metaphor divide on two main lines. For some, in keeping with the 'classical' view, metaphors—and related figures of speech—consist essentially in the substitution of a figurative term for a proper or literal term; as such, the metaphor is purely lex-

ical, a linguistic ornamentation that does not convey knowledge in its own right. The opposing view is that metaphors have the power to redescribe the world, to provide new ways of seeing things and hence to convey knowledge. Paul Ricoeur is perhaps the most eloquent recent proponent of this view; and in *The Rule of Metaphor* he argues that Aristotle can be interpreted as subscribing to, or at least pointing towards, an approach of this kind. Not everyone would agree, however, that Ricoeur is right in his reading of Aristotle. What does the text say?

Aristotle's remarks on the cognitive value of metaphor are to be found primarily in the *Rhetoric*, Book III, chs. 10 and 11. In providing advice on the way 'to devise lively and taking sayings', he speaks of the pleasure we feel in learning things, in getting hold of a new idea or new fact, and goes on to say that metaphors are particularly important in this connection:

We may now go on to say something about the way to devise lively and taking sayings. ... We will begin by remarking that we all naturally find it agreeable to get hold of new ideas easily: words express ideas, and therefore those words are the most agreeable that enable us to get hold of new ideas. Now strange words simply puzzle us; ordinary words convey only what we know already; it is from metaphor that we can get hold of something fresh. When the poet calls old age 'a withered stalk', he conveys a new idea [*mathesis*], a new fact [*gnosis*], to us by means of the general notion 'lost bloom', which is common to both things. The similes of the poets do the same ... We see then that speech and reasoning are lively in proportion as they make us seize a new idea promptly (*Rhetoric* 1410b7-20)

The association of learning and pleasure in this passage echoes the famous opening words of the *Metaphysics* (980b22ff): 'All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses'; and also the remark in the *Poetics* (1448b8ff) about human delight in mimesis as linked with pleasure in learning about things.

The claim, on the face of it, is that metaphors convey learning and knowledge, specifically in a way that is lively, pleasurable, and prompt. In this connection, he continues, metaphors by analogy—the proportional kind (B is to A as D is to C)—are the most effective:

Of the four kinds of metaphor the most taking is the proportional kind. Thus Pericles, for instance, said that the vanishing from the country of the young men who had

fallen in the war was 'as if the spring were taken out of the year' (*Rhetoric* 1411a1ff.)

Further, metaphors work by 'making our hearers see things', they present a picture with an interpretation that draws us to connect things and to think of them in a new or different way:

It has already been mentioned that liveliness is got by using the proportional type of metaphor and by making our hearers see things.... By 'making them see things' I mean using expressions that represent things as in a state of activity..... So with Homer's common practice of giving metaphorical life to lifeless things: all such passages are distinguished by the effect of the activity they convey. Thus,

'Downward at once to the valley rebounded the boulder remorseless'; and

'The arrow flew eagerly';

In [all] these examples the things have the effect of being active because they are made into living beings...the poet represents everything as moving and living; and activity is movement (*Rhetoric* 1411b24ff.).

The suggestion is that the art of the metaphor-maker is to represent things as moving, active, and living. But the characterisation of things on these lines must be the expression of some real resemblance. So the metaphor-maker and the philosopher are drawn together in their capacity 'to perceive resemblances even in things far apart'.

But what is Aristotle really saying here? In a recent paper, André Laks argues that it is a mistake to suppose that he credits metaphor with cognitive value in the *Rhetoric*, or at least with anything more than subordinate value. The source of knowledge lies elsewhere. The argument turns on two main considerations. The first is that, for Aristotle, metaphor has a purely substitutational structure, consisting in the substitution of an unusual word for an ordinary one. Secondly, metaphors presuppose resemblance between the related elements. The critical point in this regard is that the recognition of resemblances is a matter of intelligent perception or investigation: *that* is the ground on which metaphors, if appropriate, have their force. In this vein, as noted above, Aristotle dismisses Empedocles' metaphorical description of the sea as 'the sweat of the earth' as bad science; by contrast he praises the comic poet's metaphor that speaks of grey hair as the 'hoar-frost of old age' because it fits with a scientific

rationale. The point in either case is that one looks to physics for the knowledge, not the metaphor.

But doesn't Aristotle credit the metaphor-maker with a capacity for seeing resemblances? Yes, but to take up Laks' response, the relevant knowledge is embodied in the perception of similarity, and only in the metaphor at a remove. The moment of perception might be followed more or less immediately by the leap to metaphor. But the cognitive force of the chosen metaphor depends on the knowledge acquired in perception (or inquiry) which is originally designated by the proper term for which the metaphor is a substitute. More generally, the interpretation continues, the task of finding similarities lies properly with the philosopher or student of nature. As evidence of this, Aristotle makes the study of sameness and difference a fundamental theme in philosophical inquiry (as seen in the passage in the *Topics*, 108a6ff., quoted above; and he notes in the *Rhetoric*, 1393a4, that the power to think out analogies is developed by philosophy). The Aristotelian implication, so Laks suggests, is that the better one is as a philosopher, the better one will be, potentially at least, at thinking up good metaphors. This part of the argument is surely a flight of fancy, however, for when metaphors are in question Aristotle almost always takes his examples from poets and orators, not philosophers. Of course, a philosophical example is called for when, in the *Rhetoric* (1412a10ff), he credits the metaphor-maker with something comparable to philosophical acuity in seeing resemblances in things far apart. At this point one might suppose that he would turn to Plato or perhaps draw on one of his own uses of metaphor. What he offers in fact is a rather flat example from the Pythagorean Archytas who said 'that an arbitrator and an altar were the same since the injured fly to both for justice'. It seems clear that Aristotle does not suppose that a talent for metaphor can be found primarily in the philosophical domain even if the capacity for uncovering similarities across boundaries is a mark of both the philosopher and the poet and rhetorician.

One obvious problem for the substitutional analysis is that some metaphors occur in the absence of any existing 'proper' term for which they could serve as a substitute. Aristotle notes this, without any apparent concern, in the *Poetics* (and in passing in the *Rhetoric*):

It may be that some of the terms thus related [in a proportional metaphor] have no special name of their own, but for all that they will be described in just the same way. Thus to cast forth seed-corn is called 'sowing'; but to cast

forth its flame, as said of the sun, has no special name. This nameless act, however, stands in just the same relation to its object, sunlight, as sowing to the seed-corn. Hence the expression in the poet 'sowing around a god-created flame' (*Poetics* 1457b25ff; cf. *Rhetoric* 1405a35-6).

In Aristotle's analysis of the metaphor 'sowing around a god-created flame', the action of sowing (B) stands to what is cast forth, seed-corn (A) as the 'casting-forth flame' action of the sun (D) stands to sunlight (C). In Greek, however, there was no specific term for (D), the relevant action of the sun (as in English with the transitive verb 'to beam'). This lacuna, filled by the metaphor, does not concern Aristotle in principle for he notes elsewhere that 'names are finite ... while things are infinite' (*Sophistical Refutations*, 165a10). More precisely, the analogy, on which the metaphor rests, is not affected by the absence of a specific (ordinary) term. Given this, Laks presses his argument that, as with the other cases, the application of the metaphor to the 'nameless act', while enriching the language, depends on prior knowledge. The poet can speak of 'sowing around a god-created flame' in terms of having discerned a likeness between the sower casting corn seed and the sun casting its light.

According to this deflationary account, then, Aristotle treats metaphors as essentially figures of speech, not as forms of knowledge except that they might be accorded a subordinate cognitive function. The suggestion is that their particular role is to communicate an idea in an arresting and readily digested form, to serve, for example, as a dramatic device, or a teaching aid, in getting one's audience to grasp connections with ease and to feel pleasure in the experience. But here the deflationary view holds that the pleasure that accompanies learning by metaphor arises, not in knowledge as such, but in the mode of its acquisition, specifically that the learning is effortless or easy. A good metaphor conveys the pleasure of surprise, is readily grasped, and effects learning without toil or tears. Metaphors in short enhance language, poetry or prose, and are useful in conveying ideas in that they provide maximum effect for minimum effort. Hence their value in poetry or drama and their appeal to the rhetorician.

Can this be the right account of what Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* might have to tell us about metaphor? Laks' argument, as I noted earlier, is directed specifically against Ricoeur's reading of Aristotle as contributing to a larger, and only recently recaptured, understanding of metaphor in its power, especially in certain fictions, to redescribe reality.

As a step towards developing his own extended account of metaphor, Ricoeur's first concern is to criticise the view that the substitutional analysis represents Aristotle's ultimate thinking about metaphor. This begins with a focus on the dynamism of the 'epiphora' of 'metaphora' and the idea that the process of movement is not simply that of replacing one word for another (or occasionally filling a semantic lacuna in the absence of an ordinary term). A metaphor associates different networks of meaning and, while it deviates from the ordinary in moving across categories, the transgression leads to something new and meaningful. Aristotle's succinct definition admittedly focuses on metaphor as a part of speech, the noun or name (*onomatos allotriou epiphora*). But it is clear from his larger treatment of the topic that a metaphor, structurally, has the form of a statement, saying in a word that 'this' is 'that'. This emerges explicitly in connection with Aristotle's assimilation of simile (*eikon*) and metaphor: 'the simile is a metaphor, differing from it only in the way it is put' (*Rhetoric* 1410b16; and see 1406b20). Most pertinently among the slight differences to which he adverts, the simile, unlike the metaphor, 'does not say outright that "this" is "that" (making it, in his view, less effective in getting attention). In either case, the assertion rests on the ground of resemblance, allowing, as Ricoeur says, that 'the metaphorical "is" at once signifies both "is not" and "is like"' (Ricoeur, p.7). This leads to the conclusion that, in making connections across categories, metaphors have the power to redescribe the world and effect enlarged understanding. In particular 'metaphor is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality ... [and to do so] in the manner of scientific models' (p.7, 305) This, Ricoeur argues, is the force of Aristotle's discovery in the *Poetics* that 'the *poiesis* of language arises out of the connection between *muthos* and *mimesis*' (pp.7, 37-43).

Language, according to Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*, needs to be appropriate, avoiding meanness on the one hand and excess on the other. In terms of this framework, I would suggest that if Ricoeur tends to go too far in what he finds in the Aristotelian treatment of metaphor, Laks tends in the direction of meanness. Ricoeur arguably reads beyond the text in moving towards his enlarged account of metaphor, but in the process he draws out Aristotelian themes that richly merit development. Laks, on the other hand, provides a reading that works closely with the text, yet one that draws too little from Aristotle's rapprochement with metaphor. A detailed assessment of

Ricoeur's Aristotelian insights and Laks' critical response lies beyond the scope of this paper. But in the terms set out above, I think that Ricoeur is on firm ground in finding ideas in Aristotle's own writings that put in question a purely substitutional analysis of metaphor.

A further consideration arises in relation to Laks' critical contention that the knowledge associated with metaphor belongs to the intelligent perception of the relevant similarity, and not properly its expression. This argument seems to rely on an artificial, strained separation between thought and language. By parity of reasoning one would be drawn equally to the completely implausible view that the intelligent perception of similarities could function apart from ordinary (non-metaphorical) terms or, indeed, apart from language at all. Does one who is a 'master of metaphor' (*Poetics* 1459a6) always proceed by perceiving a likeness then finding the appropriate metaphor to capture it? But on what grounds could one rule out that, in the matter of finding resemblances, a rich command of language and insight go hand in hand and that in some cases the capacity to find the metaphor is the very discovery and expression of the insight? That would be a basis for attributing a form of knowledge to the poet or the rhetorician precisely as a maker of metaphors. A third consideration, which I will take up a little more fully, relates to the earlier topic of Aristotle's own use of metaphor in treating of metaphor. My argument will follow G.E.R. Lloyd's exploration of the topic in major respects (Lloyd 1996).

The significance of the metaphorical presence turns in part on the genre of the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*. No one would suppose that in writing on poetry Aristotle was assuming the mantle of poet. A treatise on rhetoric, however, especially in the broad terms in which he conceived it, could well display in practice what it recommends. If the *Rhetoric* is an example of rhetoric, it would not be in the least surprising, as Lloyd observes, that metaphors are invoked to lend 'clearness, charm, and distinction' to the argument (and to convey relevant knowledge with ease).

Against this, however, the text does not fit into any of the three main forms of rhetoric—deliberative, forensic and epideictic—to which Aristotle refers in classifying the subject. Furthermore, he used metaphor commonly enough in his major philosophical writings. So its appearance in the *Rhetoric* would not in itself be a reason for thinking that this text is not a piece of philosophical writing. But if the *Rhetoric* is a form of philosophy, should it be classified as an exer-

cise in dialectic—argument from generally accepted opinions—or as a branch of practical philosophy along with ethics and politics? While the art of persuasion is concerned with arguments ‘from signs and likelihoods’, the case for treating rhetoric as a branch of political science, and hence as practical philosophy, seems more persuasive. In this light, in seeking to clarify an important domain of argument, the treatise has the practical aim of making people better at engaging in argument in the public sphere, better able to assess the arguments of others, and in these respects better members of the body politic.

In treating of Aristotle’s use and endorsement of metaphor in these sources, Lloyd argues persuasively that here, as in many other areas of his thought, there is a divergence between the official theory and his actual practice. The official theory characteristically appears as a strict philosophical ideal. In practice, however, his approach is considerably more flexible, open, and adapted to context. In this case, in the major writings in metaphysics, ethics and politics, and on nature, where argument with other philosophers is prominent, he draws on the power of metaphor at various points while continuing to hold to the official line of disapproval. In the treatises on poetry and rhetoric, while there is clearly a sub-text of argument with Plato, he is not engaged so directly in criticising philosophical opponents or in projecting an image of the pure philosopher. In this situation, he sets aside some of the constraints imposed by theory and draws extensively, and happily, on the resources of metaphor (Lloyd, pp.219-22).

One consideration is that in analysing metaphor, Aristotle would have found it difficult, if not impossible, to avoid metaphorical expressions. With his remarkable ability for coining technical terms, he might perhaps have sought to devise non-metaphorical substitutes at this point. But it is highly unlikely that any such ‘strange’ terms would have been clearer or more appropriate than the galaxy of metaphorical expressions he actually invokes in throwing light on metaphor and its uses. The metaphors on which he draws in this context are not mere figures of speech or teaching aids to make learning easy, but integral elements in what he knows and understands in this field of inquiry. The use of these standard metaphorical terms could be seen, indeed, as throwing into question the starting point of his inquiry, namely, the idea that there is a sharp division between proper and ordinary words, so-called, and metaphors (and other strange or unusual terms). This is not to say, however, that Aristotle himself was drawn in that direction.

Part of his confidence in using metaphor in discussing rhetoric is that the philosopher places himself and his writing outside the scope of the subject. There is reference to prose of all kinds, spoken or written, but the focus is on speeches in political assemblies, law-courts, and the like. That—along with poetry—is the overt context in which the use of metaphor is commended. But this points to a tension that affects practice as well as theory. Aristotle supposes that everyone has some interest in rhetoric and dialectic 'to the extent that everyone attempts to discuss statements and to maintain them, to defend their views and attack the views of others' (*Rhetoric* 1354b5-7). He also notes that rhetorical skills are important in teaching (cf. *Rhetoric* 1404a8ff). But the question of how these considerations relate to teaching and writing in philosophy, including his own practice, is left unexamined.

In reflecting on poetry and rhetoric, Aristotle was happy to acknowledge that metaphorical invention involves genuine insight and conveys learning and pleasure. Nevertheless, for all his appreciation of poets and metaphors at this point, he did not suppose that they might play an important heuristic role in such fields as physics or metaphysics, psychology, ethics or political inquiry. The critical consideration here is not, as Laks supposes, that there is a gap between the intelligent perception of a resemblance and its expression in a telling metaphor. What Aristotle might say is that metaphors reveal insight and convey learning and knowledge, but in an isolated or incomplete way, not so as to form a body of knowledge in a given field of inquiry. In the conditions he sets elsewhere for knowledge, the insight achieved in metaphor would need to be referred to a properly organised field of inquiry. Again, metaphor as a redescription of the world in this way or that presupposes, or looks to, a more general account of the relevant domain. Finally, even if the poets and other metaphor-makers have a kinship with philosophy, judgment concerning knowledge is referred back to the philosopher, the keeper of the sciences. What is more, the views of philosophers too, even if they are one's friends, must come before the same tribunal. In this competitive framework, the philosopher's formal disapproval of metaphor stands with full force. So the sentence 'guilty of poetical metaphor' serves to dismiss Plato's metaphysics.

Aristotle assumed naturally that his own metaphysics escaped any such charge. The test case, had he considered it, relates especially to what he says about the analogy of being, for this idea runs across his

metaphysics, including the versatile concepts of actuality and potentiality, and matter and form, and it is critical to his account of the causes, principles or elements of things. Analogy abounds also in other parts of his scientific thought, especially in biology; and when he talks of metaphor in the *Rhetoric*, analogical metaphor is to the fore and may be seen as subsuming the other forms. In noting this as a topic for inquiry, I do not suppose that all talk of analogy on Aristotle's part is metaphorical or that his metaphysics, or the philosophy of Plato either, has to be thought of as at bottom a peculiar form of poetic discourse. It is merely to recognise, at the end of the paper as at the beginning, that there is an ongoing debate, set off especially by Derrida, about the extent to which philosophy draws its life from metaphor or is held captive within the metaphorical.

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