

## SOME PUNS IN ARISTOTLE

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The written *oeuvre* of Aristotle, as it has come down to us, has nearly always been thought to be blissfully free from literary pretension and unnecessary decoration, and to have sacrificed the seductive beauty of Plato's dialogues for the clarity of deliberate scientific discourse. Though we often meet obscure passages, at least—it seems—the passages were not obscure by design, *artis gratia*, and all we need to do is fill in the argument of which we have only an outline. Indeed the only horrific obstacle for the sanguine and hardminded interpreter of Aristotle is the possibility that the lecture notes we have were taken by a dull student. I should like to apply a minor corrective to this generally correct prejudice that the corpus lacks unnecessary cleverness. Beyond the famous cases of rhetorical flourish (e.g., *PA* 1.5, of which Jaeger made so much)—passages that seem highly inspired even if they employ commonplace rhetorical tropes—there is to be seen a slight but consistent and habitual penchant in the corpus for humorous verbal play.<sup>1</sup>

The penchant is slight, for there seems to be only about one pun per score of Bekker pages; but it is habitual, for there is no class or area of study in which Aristotle totally avoids punning. Finally, it is consistent, in the sense that the fifty or sixty *double-entendres* I have in mind can be subsumed under three main headings: puns that exploit a *double-entendre* merely for the sake of humor and liveliness, puns that embellish criticism of predecessors with parody of their language or methods, and puns that expedite in one way or another the presentation or proof of Aristotle's own views. Since the first class of puns is the most self-evident type, let us begin with them.

### A. MERELY HUMOROUS PUNS

No one will deny or fail to see that *Phys.* 4.8, 216a26–27, is an intentional joke: καὶ καθ' αὐτὸ δὲ σκοποῦσι φανείη ἂν τὸ λεγόμενον κενὸν ὥς

<sup>1</sup> I should explain that I have here chosen to call even unconscious and unhumorous *double-entendres* "puns," believing as I do that some deeper, Huizingan sense of play, which I do not fully understand, lies behind them all. Other terms might have been prematurely definitive.

ἀληθῶς κενόν. It reminds us of *Timaeus* 55d, where Plato says that only an inexperienced man (ἄπειρος) will claim that there are infinitely many worlds (ἄπειροι κόσμοι). Just as κενός and ἄπειρος can either be derogatory adjectives or, as nouns, be technical terms of physics, so too the noun τόπος affords to the punster its cognate adjective, ἀτοπος. Thus, Aristotle can say that the κενόν, *qua* qualityless τόπος, is ἀτοπον (*Phys.* 216b11); or (205b1 ff.) that Anaxagoras' theory that the infinite rests *in place* is argued ἀτόπως. Better still, he can say that the theory that there is a τόπος for mathematical entities is ἀτοπον, for mathematical entities are nowhere (*Met.* N.5, 1092a17–21).

Equally idle is the word play on αἰτία at *Met.* A.3, 984b18–20. In the course of narrating his predecessors' groping attempts to articulate his four causes, he says that though Anaxagoras is well-known to have been in touch with arguments based on a notion of νοῦς as the efficient cause, αἰτίαν δ' ἔχει πρότερον Ἐρμότιμος ὁ Κλαζομένιος εἰπεῖν.<sup>2</sup>

There are cases where Aristotle uses puns to enliven the rather arid business of a programmatic passage by exploiting a fortuitous homonymy. Given that he very commonly desiderates a dialectical and aporetic review of current opinions on a topic as a preface to his positive treatment,<sup>3</sup> when the topic in question is music, he seizes the opportunity to call this preliminary material an ἐνδόσιμον (*Pol.* 8.5, 1339a11–14). Likewise, in the physical treatises he commonly prefaces positive treatment with a collection of the phenomena connected with the subject of study, both the ones observed and acknowledged by all and the less apparent or less recognized ones; but it is only in the *Meteorology* that he refers to the well-known and "fixed" phenomena of *this* field of study as τὰ μὴ πλανῶντα (347b35). Even though the metaphor of the πλάνη is very common for mental confusion and wonder in Plato,<sup>4</sup> and not unexampled in Aristotle,<sup>5</sup> the verb is never so used by Aristotle except here (*Rhet.* 1415a14 is not parallel). Conversely, almost all instances of the verb occur among these pages of the *Meteorology*, and in the *de Caelo*, to refer to planetary motion.

The puns of this type seem not to serve a very serious purpose, but exhibit a sort of virtuosity that already is very common in Plato. If

<sup>2</sup> On the expression, αἰτίαν ἔχειν (= *laudari*), cf. Stallbaum *ad* Plato, *Apol.* 38c.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *An. Po.* 90a38 ff., 99b17–19; *Phys.* 210b32–1a11, 213a19–22, 217b29 ff.; *de Caelo* 279b6–12, 294b6–13, 308a4–7; *GC* 321b10–16; *de An.* 403b20; *de Long. et Brev. Vit.* 464b19–22; *de Spir.* 470b10–12; *Met.* 995a27–b4, 1076a12 ff.; *EN* 1098b9 ff., 1129a5–7, 1145b2–7; 1181b12–23, and our 1339a11–14.

<sup>4</sup> It is a "favorite" metaphor in Plato, according to Hicks (*ad* Arist. *de An.* 402a21), who cites *Rep.* 444b, 505b; *Phaedo* 81a; *Parm.* 135e. Cf. also I. Loewenclau, "Die Wortgruppe πλάνη in der pl. Schr.," in *Synusia* (Festschr. Schadewalt), edd. H. Flashar and K. Gaiser (Heidelberg 1965) 111–22.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *de An.* 402a20–21; *EN* 1094b16, 17.

anything, these puns lighten the serious tone of the lecture for a brief moment.

## B. DOXOGRAPHIC PARODY

Of a different sort is a pun such as we find at *de An.* 1.4, 408a1–3, where Aristotle criticizes the doctrine that the soul is an *ἁρμονία*: *ἁρμόζει δὲ μᾶλλον καθ' ὑγείας λέγειν ἁρμονίαν . . . ἢ κατὰ ψυχῆς*. What is different here is that ambiguity is exploited in such a way as to parody a given school or its doctrines, by making a play on one of its favorite metaphors or technical terms. The parody is effected by criticizing the doctrine in question with a statement that pits the term against itself. Thus, in our present case, the doctrine that the soul is an *ἁρμονία* (fitting together) is not as fitting as another idea, namely, that health (do I dare translate it “fitness”?) is an *ἁρμονία*. As if this were not enough, Aristotle goes on to say that the *ἁρμονία*-theory cannot easily be harmonized with the facts (408a5). When the technical term Aristotle wishes to parody has a secondary meaning that relates to the probity of an argument—as is the case with *ἁρμονία*—the joke is ready-made.<sup>6</sup> In fact the joke about this *ἁρμονία*-theory was already used by Plato in his account and criticism of that doctrine (*Phaedo* 92 and 95); we can only imagine that the use of the pun had become as common in the debate about this theory as was the debate itself (cf. *de An.* 407b27–30).<sup>7</sup>

*Double-entendre* between logical consistency and musical concord is available in many languages, and no less so in Greek. Terms like *συμφωνεῖν* and *διαφωνεῖν*, for instance, are stock metaphors for logical consistency and inconsistency and are commonly so used by Aristotle without humorous intent.<sup>8</sup> Thus, when a theory about music or a theory that in itself uses musical metaphors or images is under review, the possibilities for felicitous jokes or critical parody abound. We already noticed the rather idle pun on *ἐνδόσιμον*, which meant both a musical and a logical prelude; but in his criticisms of the Pythagorean theory of celestial

<sup>6</sup> So were the puns on *τόπος*, *κενόν* and *ἄπειρον*. Perhaps it was due to its similarity, in Aristotle's opinion, to his own *ὑποκείμενον* that Anaximander's *ἄπειρον* never undergoes semantic ridicule of this sort.

<sup>7</sup> The question whether *οἱ ἐν κοινῷ γινόμενοι λόγοι* (*alia aliis*) are Plato's dialogues, common talk, or Aristotle's lost dialogues, is not affected by the presence of a pun here. For though a lively pun might be thought to be the mark of a looser or more literary or “exoteric” work, there are many puns elsewhere in Aristotle for which a vulgar provenance has not been alleged, and probably could not be established. Cf. now K. Schickert, *Die Form der Wilderlegung beim frühen Aristoteles* (= *Zetemata* 65, 1977) 64, note 39. Parody of the *ἁρμονία* theory reappears at 414b23.

<sup>8</sup> For *συμφωνεῖν* cf. *EN* 1098b9–18, 1119b15, 1179a16; for *διαφωνεῖν* cf. Bz. *Index* s.v., and *Met.* 1085b36, where I read *τρόπους* with Ross who followed Goebel. For more extended use of the musical metaphor, cf. *EN* 1181a20–21.

harmony, Aristotle seems to spare no opportunity to decorate his serious refutation with whatever ridicule such stock ambiguities as these can afford.

Thus, in *Met.* A.5, 986a3–8, Aristotle refers to the Pythagoreans as harmonizing their harmony to the physical facts of the heavens. Now this form of paronymy, where the act of theorizing is given a name on the basis of the contents of the theory, is common and natural in Aristotle: in place of λέγει οὕτω γενέσθαι (τὸ πᾶν), we often have οὕτω γεννᾷ (τὸ πᾶν) (cf. Bz. *Index* 150a7–13), or for τοῦτο αἰτίαν εἶναι λέγει we can have αἰτιᾶται (cf. Bz. *Index* 23a43–51). But, as always, the original literal meaning that under the habit of the idiom has become otiose can suddenly come back to life (as when one's leg is being pulled by a wrestler), so as to effect a humorous *double-entendre*. In *de Caelo* 2.13, 293b1–10, for instance, the Pythagoreans are said to have placed fire in the center of the universe in order to protect it; in the sequel Aristotle criticizes them for being afraid for the safety of the universe. And to return to our passage in the *Met.*, we get the impression that the harmony in question exists in the minds of the Pythagoreans, but not in the heavens. For exactly this same parody of the Pythagorean mentality occurs in another passage in *de Caelo* 2.13, at 293a25–27. There they are said not to have searched for a causal account of the phenomena, but instead to have dragged the phenomena into agreement with their own conceptions, in an attempt to συγκοσμεῖν. This very rare word conveys two meanings: first, it means that it is thus that the Pythagoreans put together their account of the cosmos; but at the same time it means that the primary goal of the Pythagoreans is to put together a pretty picture. The word is so rare that our account of its presence here needs to be exceptional.

Another such parody of the Pythagorean endeavor as mere fantasy is to be found in *de Caelo* 2.9, where Aristotle treats their theory of the Harmony of the Spheres. At first, this theory is introduced as κομψῶς and περιττῶς (290b14); after it is reviewed, and criticism begins, parody begins. Κομψῶς and περιττῶς are replaced with ἐμμελῶς and μουσικῶς (290b30–31). Perhaps even in the midst of the review Aristotle is pointing up the overly abstract and *a priori* quality of their hypothesis of a set of harmonic ratios (λόγοι) between the heavenly spheres (290b21–24) when he says that it is ἄλογον that we cannot hear the chord they produce (b24–25).

One final passage in which I believe the Pythagoreans are being ridiculed with verbal play is in the last chapter of the *Metaphysics* (N.6, 1092b26–30).<sup>9</sup> Here the joke is based, not on an ambiguity between music and logic, but on the strict and the loose meanings of ἄκρᾱτος (“unmixed” and “too

<sup>9</sup> That these arguments are directed against the Pythagoreans is shown by Ross, *ad loc.* (2.493).

strong,” respectively). Still, the joke parodies the same abstractness of Pythagorean thought that the previous jokes parodied. Aristotle begins the chapter by asking what, after all, is so good about having a mixture that is expressible in numerical ratios? He continues: *νυνὶ γὰρ οὐθὲν ὑγιεινότερον τρίς τρία ἂν ἢ τὸ μελίκρατον κεκραμένον, ἀλλὰ μάλλον ὠφελήσειεν ἂν ἐν οὐθενὶ λόγῳ ὃν ὕδαρες δὲ ἢ ἐν ἀριθμῷ ἄκρατον ὄν* (1092b28–30). The counter-example he adduces is taken from the field of medicine, where results matter more than nice theories. The diction of the sentence is a bit strained by *οὐθενί* and *ἄκρατον*: they are both over-statements at first glance (for *any* dilution involves *some* ratio, even if not a “rational” one; and conversely *no* dilution, whether done in accordance with a simple ratio of integers or not, would be strictly *ἄκρατος*). But then the second meaning of *ἄκρατος*, the meaning “too strong,” emerges. It had been suppressed by the context, which had made so much of getting the right ratio. But it is exactly this rationalistic prepossession that Aristotle is out to criticize.<sup>10</sup> The *double-entendre* implies that the mathematically exact but empirically ungrounded approach has no effect at all, but that after being mixed with zealous exactitude the honeywater remains from the practical point of view untouched (*ἄκρατος*), because it is in fact too strong (*ἄκρατος*).

Once we admit the existence of puns and other forms of word play in Aristotle—jokes that enliven the discourse or further the criticism of a predecessor by gilding the lily—a corollary ensues for the text-critic. If punning is a stylistic trait, then a variant that contains a pun may be preferable, *ceteris paribus*, to a variant that does not. We have such a set of variants in *Phys.* 1.8, 191a23 ff., where Aristotle is attempting to confirm his doctrine that an account of *γένεσις* requires three factors, and not just two. Only with his theory can the old aporia of his predecessors be resolved, he argues. Herewith he presents the circumstances that led certain ancients to deny the reality of *γένεσις*. These earliest investigators took a detour, as it were, and were borne off onto a certain other road of inquiry by *ἀπειρία* (*ut* FI), or *ἀπορία* (*ut* EJ). In particular, they allege that it is necessary that what *γίγνεται*, *γίγνεται* either from the *ὄν* or the *μὴ ὄν*; that neither of these generations or *γενέσεις* is possible, for neither what is *γίγνεται* (it already exists), nor could anything *γίγνεται* from nothing, since there needs be something underlying *γένεσις*. With these arguments as their basis, they developed as entailments the allegations

<sup>10</sup> Ross notes (*ad loc.*) that the terms *ἐν οὐθενὶ λόγῳ* and *ἄκρατον* are too strong, but by merely mitigating them he only explains them away. Further, he seems not to recognize the idiomatic use of *ἄκρατος* (cf. Xen. *Anab.* 4.5.27). We have a similar idiomatic use in a context about *κρᾶσις*, in Plato, *Phileb.* 64e: an asymmetric mixing is fatal both to the elements of mixture and to the mixture as a whole,

οὐδὲ γὰρ κρᾶσις, ἀλλὰ τις ἄκρατος συμπεφορμένη ἀληθῶς ἢ  
τοιαύτη γίγνεται ἐκάστοτε ὅτως τοῖς κεκτημένοις συμφορά.

that there is no plurality, but that all that exists is τὸ ὄν in and of itself (191a23–33).

After refuting these arguments with his own distinctions (191a33–b29), Aristotle returns at 191b30 to the programmatic format of the chapter and rehearses 191a23–33 in shorter compass: as we were saying, the problems that led them to abolish becoming are now solved. For it was indeed these problems that caused previous thinkers to turn off from the path that leads to γένεσις and φθορά, and to μεταβολή in general. And this (ὑποκειμένη) φύσις (that I have now introduced), if only they had seen it, would have relieved their ignorance in its entirety (191b30–34).

Now the variants ἀπειρία and ἀπορία in 191a26 both have strong support from the tradition. While it would be a patent though rather pointless word play to say that it was ἀπορία—lack of passage—that impelled them onto a new path of investigation, to blame their divergence from the facts of nature on inexperience (ἀπειρία) is a commonplace in Aristotle, and is given support by the final sentence of the chapter (esp. ὁφθεῖσα b33). In this case, then, the presence of a pun among the variants is not sufficient to promote the variant in question.

Besides presenting an interesting set of variants, this passage is especially striking in its use and repetition of the ὁδός metaphor. Not only do we have ἐξετράπησαν twice (a26, b32), but we have the extension of the metaphor in ἀπωσθέντες (a26), and the rather artificial phrase (ὁδός) ἐπὶ τὴν γένεσιν καὶ φθορὰν καὶ ὅλως μεταβολήν (b32–33). To remain within the confines of any metaphor so scrupulously is uncharacteristic of Aristotle, and seems to me to put beyond any doubt that he means herewith to refer to the poem of Parmenides. That it is only the Eleatics, and not the several Presocratics listed by Alexander, that are being criticized has already been argued by Cherniss, on the grounds that ὅλως μεταβολήν (b33) rules out all others;<sup>11</sup> I would argue further that the attack is focused on the founder of that school.

To recite the many passages where Parmenides uses ὁδός is hardly necessary; more interesting is the possible allusion of ἀπωσθέντες (a26) to the moving language with which Parmenides describes his mystical transport in B.1 (note especially ὠσάμεναι, line 10, and προὔπεμπε, line 26). That the ὁδός is τις ἄλλη seems to allude to B.1.26–27.

If Aristotle's choice of words does constitute an allusion to Parmenides' poem, to use Parmenides' ceremonious metaphor against him is in itself a parody. But the parody becomes all the more pointed when we notice that ἀπωσθέντες may allude not only to the mystical transport onto unwonted paths, but also to B.8.27–28, where Parmenides says,

<sup>11</sup> H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Presocratic Philosophy* (Baltimore 1935) 254, note 61; cf. F. Solmsen, *Phronesis* 22 (1977) 10–12.

ἐπεὶ γένεσις καὶ ὄλεθρος  
τῇλε μαλ' ἐπλάχθησαν, ἄπωσε δὲ πίστις ἀληθής

Finally, we must recall the paradoxical contrast in Parmenides between vision and blindness. The opinions of mortals are the divagations of blind and deaf men (B.6.6 ff.), but their blindness and deafness are due to the habit of looking and listening indiscriminately, and this very habituation to ἐμπειρία may debar them from the true path of the severe ἔλεγχος of which reason is the judge (B.7.3–6). Aristotle, on the other hand, alleges that Parmenides' aporiae would have been solved if only he had "seen" (ὀφθεῖσα, b33) the ὑποκειμένη φύσις.<sup>12</sup> All this then directs us back to the crux that drew our attention to the passage in the first place: in saying that Parmenides was blown off course from the road to γένεσις and φθορά by ἀπειρία, Aristotle would be turning the Parmenidean paradox about the πολύπειρον ἔθος "on its head." For Parmenides, ἐμπειρία is the source of δόξα and the cause of the wanderings of mortals; in Aristotle's parody, Parmenides' desiderated neglect of sense data becomes ἀπειρία, and causes Parmenides' wandering from the road to γένεσις and φθορά. Thus our new "law" of the *lectio jocosior* might be borne out after all.<sup>13</sup>

The line between an intended allusion and a locution that merely happens to remind us of some predecessor's words, is admittedly hard to draw. Our next passage is a borderline case. In *Met.* Z.11, Aristotle ponders on the difference between things whose definition must refer to the matter (e.g., man) and things whose definition does not need to refer to the matter (e.g., circle). In the course of laying out the problem he mentions the doctrine that the definition of man needs to include a reference to flesh no more than our definition of circle needs to refer to wood or bronze, even though it is hard for us to separate in thought what we always experience together (the man and his flesh, 1036a34–b7). This doctrine serves to introduce the still more abstractionist doctrine that even the mathematical matter (line) is not to be included in the definition of a figure; that ultimately the definition of a plane figure is merely a number (b7–17). This more extreme abstraction of essence from matter is then criticized with a *reductio* (b17–21), and the "moral lesson" is drawn: τὸ πάντα ἀνάγειν οὕτω καὶ ἀφαιρεῖν τὴν ὕλην περιέργον (b22–23: the terms

<sup>12</sup> Cf. GC 325a13–15 for a similar *mise au point*.

<sup>13</sup> These verbal allusions to Parmenides' poem lend support to Joachim's belief that GC 325a1–2 and a17 refer to Parm. DK B 8.1 and 8.51. On 325a1–2, Verdenius/Waszink (*Aristotle on Coming-to-be and Passing-away* [Leiden 1966] *ad loc.*) adduce *de Caelo* 298b12–14 and *Met.* 983b1–3 as places where Aristotle refers, with *περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας*, to philosophers other than Parmenides. But they fail to cite, in our passage, ἀλήθειαν in 191a25, which supports Joachim. In further support of Joachim, note the possibly allusive ὁδῶ at 324b35. Might ὑπερβάντες τὴν αἴσθησιν at 325a13 be in part a parody of Parmenides' transport beyond the world of sense? Note also the parody of Parmenidean speech at *de Caelo* 298b12: πότερον ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν.

ἀνάγειν and ἀφαιρεῖν have been used throughout the chapter to refer to (1) the reduction of a thing to its abstract essence, and (2) abstraction of the form from the matter).

Aristotle then returns (b24 ff.) to the milder abstractionist theory he had mentioned in order to introduce the extreme abstractionism that he had actually refuted (b17–21): this comparison of man and circle as equally abstracted from matter in their definitions οὐ καλῶς ἔχει ἀπάγει γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀληθοῦς (b24–25). The singular bluntness of this expression with ἀπάγει seems to suggest that Aristotle is searching for a secondary connotation. Besides “leading away,” ἀπάγει suggests the very method of reduction (ἀπαγωγή) being criticized. We may translate the ambiguity with, “This reductionism reduces us to nonsense.”<sup>14</sup>

I should like to finish this section on doxographic parody with a few passages that seem to play on Plato. For instance, when Aristotle sets to criticize the theory of ideas in *Met.* M, he decides first to examine the theory independent of its connection with ideal number theory (M.4, *ad init.*). His wording is, περὶ δὲ τῶν ἰδεῶν πρῶτον αὐτὴν τὴν κατὰ τὴν ἰδέαν δόξαν ἐπισκεπτέον (1078b9–10). The locution is unmistakably the Platonic expression for an Idea, but it is used against Plato to refer to δόξα rather than reality: “the δόξα itself, in accordance with its essential characteristic,” is an undermeaning that is hard to miss. This is a piece of *bathos* quite similar in method and tone to the undercutting of Parmenides’ lofty path imagery.

When we turn to the historical review of *Met.* A.3–7, we meet a passage lively both in diction and in tone. There are several obscure or coined terms,<sup>15</sup> and two rather striking metaphors (985a13 ff. and 987a2 ff.), as well as the dramatic daemon of Truth Herself operating behind the scenes (984a18–19, b8–11; 986b31), and a passage about the introduction of νοῦς that uses an hyperbaton (νοῦν δέ τις εἰπὼν ἐνεῖναι, 984b15) as dramatic in its own way as the Lucretian fanfares for Epicurus (cf. esp. 1.62–67 ff., 3.1–3 ff.). We have already found two puns in this passage (984b18–20, on αἰτία, and 986a6, on ἐφήρημοστρον). Given these isolated stylistic details, as well as the boldly speculative enterprise of the whole review, would it be special pleading to accord to the curiosities of language here a conscious design?

Two tentatively significant passages deserve at least to be mentioned, in Aristotle’s chapter on Plato (A.6). First, is there a trace of ridicule when Aristotle says that Plato introduced the ideas in order to account for the Heraclitean flux of phenomena (ἀεὶ γε μεταβαλλόντων, 987b7), and called the relation between these ideas and the changing phenomena

<sup>14</sup> For a pun on another technical term of logic (πρόβλημα) cf. Plato, *Soph.* 261a.

<sup>15</sup> προσεγλίσχοντο, 986a7; ἀπέρριψε, 986a34; ἐνίσας, 986b21; διασαφηνίζειν, 986b22; μορυχότερον, 987a10 (cf. Ross *ad loc.*).



“μέθεξις” by submitting the Pythagorean term, *μίμησις*, to a change (μετέβαλεν, b10–11 and b12–13)? Second, when Aristotle accounts for the fact that χωρισμός was possible only after the σκέψις ἐν τοῖς λόγοις was introduced, by saying οἱ γὰρ πρότεροι διαλεκτικῆς οὐ μετείχον (b32–33), is he searching for a pun on μέθεξις? The statement that previous thinkers did not practice dialectic, if taken as a flat assertion, is otherwise very hard to explain.<sup>16</sup> But the term μέθεξις has just been used several times, and we have examples of puns constructed by drawing a verbal form out of its cognate noun, in Plato.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, and perhaps most fantastic of all, is a certain locution used twice by Aristotle, only in the course of criticizing Plato’s theories. In *de An.* 1.3, 406a26 ff., where he is scrutinizing Plato’s definition of soul as τὸ ἐαυτὸ κινεῖν (cf. Ross *ad loc.*, 187) he asserts,

ποῖαι δὲ βίαιοι τῆς ψυχῆς κινήσεις ἔσονται καὶ ἡρεμίαι, οὐδὲ πλάττειν βουλομένοις ῥᾶδιον ἀποδοῦναι.

In *de Caelo* 3.1, 299b15–17, against Plato’s theory that the planes are elements, Aristotle asks, τό τε γὰρ ἐπὶ πόσων συμβήσεται τοῦτο (viz., that a weight could be composed of weightless parts) καὶ ἐπὶ ποίων, πῶς διοριῶσι μὴ βουλόμενοι πλάττειν; In both cases it is clear that Plato is being criticized; further it is well-known that Plato uses πλάττειν and its cognates in connection with his more tentative or mythical accounts,<sup>18</sup> and that Aristotle often expresses dissatisfaction with a merely poetical or metaphorical treatment.<sup>19</sup> But given the very common use of puns on persons’ names in Plato,<sup>20</sup> and the fact that Aristotle never uses this particular locution against other πλάττοντες, is it a mere coincidence here that ὁ πλάττων is ὁ Πλάτων?

### C. PEDAGOGIC PUNS

The third type of pun or *double-entendre* I would like to treat may be called pedagogical. For here the purpose of the verbal play is not parody of someone’s views, nor, primarily, to enliven the discourse (though, as

<sup>16</sup> In the “parallel” passage of *Met.* M. 4, Aristotle says, διαλεκτικῇ γὰρ ἰσχύς οὕτω τότ’ ἦν (1078b25–26). Now just as the ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σκέψις of 987b31–32 seems to refer to *Phaedo* 99e–100a (cf. εἰς τοὺς λόγους καταφυγόντα ἐν ἐκείνοις σκοπεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν, and τὸν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σκοπούμενον), so perhaps ἰσχύς in 1078b25 refers to ἐρρωμενέστερον in *Phaedo* 100a, which itself echoes ἰσχύς in *Phaedo* 99c.

<sup>17</sup> E.g., *Phileb.* 64e, quoted in note 10, above.

<sup>18</sup> *Phaedrus* 246c; *Rep.* 420c, 377c, 588b; *Laws* 671e; *Tim.* 26e.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Bz. *Index* s.vv. πλᾶσμα, πλασματίας, πλασματώδης, πλάττειν, and cf. *Meteor.* 356b15–17, 357a26–28; *Met.* 991a22, 1079b24 ff., 1073a22; *Top.* 139b34–35.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. on Meletus *Apol.* 25c, on Agathon *Symp.* 174b, on Gorgias *Symp.* 198c, on Ariston *Rep.* 580b, on Alcinoos *Rep.* 614b, on Polus *Gorg.* 463e, on Hades *Phaedo* 80d. Cf. also Tarrant, *CQ* 40 (1946) 116.

we shall see, some pedagogical puns do make us laugh), but to promote in one way or another the movement of Aristotle's argumentation toward its didactic goal. In some cases the *double-entendre* in question is more an equivocation than a joke—an equivocation that Aristotle pretends or seems not to see. And in some of these cases of equivocation the equivocation, after it has served its special purpose in developing the course of the argument, is discovered and removed.<sup>21</sup> In other cases, however, it is allowed to stand, even at the peril of the whole argument that is based on it. In these last cases it is hard to decide whether Aristotle is simply in error, or whether the equivocation is allowed to stand since he means to be arguing only dialectically. Readers of Plato will find this difficulty familiar.

In *de Caelo* 1.5, 271b1–17, Aristotle takes up the question whether there exists an infinite body. By way of recommending this problem to the reader he digresses to argue that this question lies at the bottom of many disagreements among his predecessors (b4–9), and points to the adage that even small disagreements on a fundamental level lead to large disagreements later on. In order to put this idea “before our eyes” he draws an analogy from mathematical theory (b9–11):

οἷον εἴ τις ἐλάχιστον εἶναι τι φαίη μέγεθος· οὗτος γὰρ  
τοῦ ἐλάχιστου εἰσαγαγὼν τὰ μέγιστ' ἂν κινήσειε τῶν μαθη-  
ματικῶν.

In all strictness the size of the hypothetical minimum has nothing to do with the size of the large issues that are affected by introducing it. But the analogy is meant to be taken loosely, and once Aristotle can set our minds thinking this way he can move on to say that the problem of infinite body is a large problem, not only because fundamental, but also because infinite body would be quite a large thing (b12–15)! Of course, as a formal argument this is vitiated by a *metabasis eis allo genos*, but the argument is merely rhetorical and nothing of theoretical importance is here at stake.

This topic, *parvus error in principio*, appears often in Aristotle.<sup>22</sup> While our passage from *de Caelo* exploits the ambiguity of *parvus* (a small error vs. a small thing erroneously posited), there is a passage in *Pol.* 5.4 that (naturally) plays on the ambiguity of *principium* (ἀρχή). In the course of treating the causes of revolution, Aristotle notices (1303b17 ff.) that *στάσις*, although it ends up having a large effect, may begin from the most petty disagreements, especially if the petty disagreements should obtain

<sup>21</sup> On the pedagogical value of this technique cf. *Rhet.* 3.11 (1412a18–21).

<sup>22</sup> E.g., *SE* 183b22–23; *Mot. An.* 701b24–26; *GA* 716b3–5, 766a28 ff., 788a13; *EN* 1098b7; *Pol.* 1302a6; fr. 94 (Rose 1886). Cf. also Plato, *Crat.* 436d; *Rep.* 377a; *Laws* 753e, 765e; and *Paroim. Gr.* 3.13.

among those in power (*ἐν τοῖς κυρίοις*, b19). He gives an historical example (b20–26) and then draws up a rule, that disagreements between leaders must be carefully dealt with in their inception (*ἀρχομένων*, b27), because *ἐν ἀρχῇ τὸ ἁμάρτημα· ἢ δ' ἀρχὴ λέγεται ἡμῖν εἶναι παντός* (b28–29).

Indeed there are several passages in which Aristotle plays on the wide variety of meanings of this important word, *ἀρχή*. At the end of *Met.* Λ. (1075b37–6a4) he plays on the metaphysical and political senses of the term, when, to cap off his refutation of the Academic theory that there are many numerical *ἀρχαί* of reality, he says that reality does not wish to be *πολιτεύεσθαι κακῶς* and quotes Homer (*Il.* 2.204): *οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιρανίη· εἷς κοίρανος ἔστω*.<sup>23</sup>

Something more elaborate is going on in *Met.* N. 4, where he introduces the religion of epic right alongside the theory of Speusippus about the *ἀρχή* of reality, effecting this strange juxtaposition by pretending that for the epic poets, too, *ἀρχή* meant “principle” rather than “rule.” To analyze the intricacies of transition and doxography in this chapter would take us far afield, and I hope to be allowed to summarize. On the relation of the *ἀρχαί* of reality to the so-called “good itself,” there arises a problem as to whether this “best” good is to be found among the *ἀρχαί* (either as a member of the set or a characteristic of the set: *ἐστὶ τι ἐκείνων*, 1091a32, is ambiguous), or whether on the contrary this best good is derivative, appearing subsequently in the *γένεσις* out of the *ἀρχαί* (1091a29–33). A history of opinion on the subject is introduced (a33–b16), in order to lend historical authenticity to the aporia (as *γάρ*, a34, indicates), but also—as becomes subsequently clear—to give a shape to the aporia that points to its solution. On the one side he aligns the theories of both “moderns” and ancient poets, on the basis of a tentative analogy between their accounts: both asserted that the good and beautiful is a later derivative of the *γένεσις* from the *ἀρχαί* (a33–b6). But this analogy, based on an equivocation between *ἀρχαί* *qua* principles and *ἀρχαί* *qua* principals, is allowed to dissolve: the poets, in asserting that the primordial elements of reality (Chaos, etc.) are not sovereign goods, are not thereby asserting that the *ἀρχαί* of reality (principles) were not good from the start, but that there were no *rulers* (*ἄρχοντες*) at the beginning, and that governance (*ἀρχή*) was not present until the time of Zeus, the embodiment of *δίκη*. It was their mythological way of thinking that led these early poets to miss the essential meaning of *ἀρχή*, for as we move on to the thinkers who sought to curb the mythological method (*μὴ μυθικῶς πάντα λέγειν*, b9), and who speculated on the *ἀρχή* *qua* *γεννήσαν* *πρωτόν*, we find unanimity in the opinion that this *ἀρχή* was from the beginning *ἄριστον* (b6–12). Finally, in the camp of the other moderns who posited immobile realities (on *μέν*,

<sup>23</sup> The “satiric” tone of this criticism is recently noted by John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (London 1977).

cf. Ross *ad loc.*), we find that their ἀρχή, the One, is not only good in their opinion but indeed identical with the good (b13–15).

Immediately after this review Aristotle presents a tentative, probabilistic solution to the aporia (b16–19), which leads directly into a criticism first of the view of the “other” moderns (b19–1092a11), and then of the view of the moderns introduced with the theological poets at the beginning of the review (1092a11–17).

What is at first curious about this passage (1091a29–2a17) is that the aporia is given a lengthy historical background (a33–b16) but a very perfunctory and casual solution (b16–19). In fact we soon learn that Aristotle is more interested in criticizing the theory of the moderns (Academics) than in solving the aporia itself. The aporia, then, is merely the vehicle of the criticism; and this leads us into an artful feature of Aristotle’s dialectical method of exposition. He finds ways to introduce an aporia whose solution is (1) obscure enough that he can set his predecessors’ ideas into a context that is philosophically engaging and apparently uncontrived, but (2) near enough at hand that he can solve it easily and therewith speak with authority about the inadequacy of his predecessors’ views.<sup>24</sup>

In our case it is in what purports to be an historical review of opinion on the aporia, that artful design is especially prominent. First, Aristotle associates Speusippus’ theory with the old “theology” of Hesiod and Homer by means of an equivocation on ἀρχή (this is the pedagogical pun that drew us to this passage in the first place). By so doing, Aristotle initiates an historical review leading from Hesiod and Homer through Pherecydes and the Magi, to Empedocles and Anaxagoras; but soon it becomes clear that the motivation of this review is hardly historical, (1) because of the very curious list of thinkers he has concocted, and (2) because of the arbitrary use of Empedocles’ doctrine of *φιλία*.<sup>25</sup> In fact the motive of this part of the review is to establish a configuration of the “history of ideas” according to which Aristotle’s chosen solution to the aporia is made to appear the natural result of increasingly scientific habits of thought. Pherecydes and the Magi are called in as the missing link between poetical theology and

<sup>24</sup> The extent to which this and related dialectical devices are implemented by Aristotle is the subject of my unpublished dissertation, “Programmatic ARCHAI in Aristotle: A Study of Aristotelian Expository Method” (DA 40.1,234A). Though some of his aporiae have already been seen to be merely transitional devices, few scholars have noted that this is the rule rather than the exception.

<sup>25</sup> On (1), much of the usual Presocratic personnel is neglected; but more striking is the presence of *rarae aves*. On (2), note that elsewhere Aristotle refers to *φιλία* as one of a pair of opposite ἀρχαί, the other being *νεῖκος*, in order to gain support for his contention that *γένεσις* is from opposites. *νεῖκος* is here suppressed, for on whatever grounds *φιλία* can be said to be, *qua φιλία*, good, *νεῖκος* would have accordingly to be called bad, and Empedocles’ ἀρχαί would be no more good than bad.

scientific philosophy. The “other” Academics are cited last because they are chronologically posterior, but they are not included in the speculative configuration: they are separated out by their exceptional hypothesis of *ἀκίνητοι οὐσίαι*.

When Aristotle then turns to solve the *aporia*, his choice for a primordially good *ἀρχή* both is confirmed by the developmental configuration of the review, and exonerates philosophers other than the Academics from criticism. The way is now clear for a lengthy attack on the vaguely Academic theory that *αὐτὸ τὸ ἔν, qua* numerical generative principle of reality, is good (1091b20–2a11). After this, he reverts briefly to the Speusippean theory and criticizes it only on the grounds that the didactic analogy Speusippus used, that reality develops as it were biologically from seed to fruit, is incorrect (a11–17).

The point of this rapid analysis of *Met. N. 4* (and part of 5) was to isolate the pedagogical use of a *double-entendre* on *ἀρχή*. We can now see that by postponing to distinguish the two meanings of this word, “principle” and “rule,” Aristotle enabled himself to present, in what purports to be an historical review, not only the Academic theories he wished to criticize, but also an “argument from history” for the truth of his own belief that the *ἀρχή* of reality is primordially good. For once he introduced the theologians in virtue of the similarity of their views to the theory of Speusippus, he exposes the fact that the similarity is specious and then moves forward in his review to the more scientific thinkers who dealt with the more scientific notion of *ἀρχή* as *γεννήσαν πρώτον*, and reaches what turns out to be a version of his own doctrine.

Another passage in which two meanings of *ἀρχή* work in such a way as to promote Aristotle’s own theory is *EN 1.2*, 1095a30–b4. Aristotle is laying the groundwork for his ethics, and turns to a problem about the *ἀρχαί*, namely that we must not overlook the difference between *λόγοι* that move forward from the *ἀρχαί* and those that move back toward the *ἀρχαί*. Indeed Plato was right continually to puzzle out the methodological problem of whether the path of investigation should move from the *ἀρχαί* or to them, just as the runner in the stadium may be running either away from the judges and toward the turning post, or back. Now while it is clear that we must begin (*ἀρκετέον*) from things known (*μὲν*, 1095b2, is concessive), things known are of two sorts: some are known to us, but others are known without qualification. It seems reasonable (*ἰσως*), given a choice between these two sorts of known things (*οἷν*), seeing that it is *we* who are composing the *λόγος* (*ἡμῶν γε*), that we must begin it from the type of knowns that are known to *us*.

It is by exploiting an equivocation on *ἀρχή* that Aristotle is able thus to answer the Platonic *aporia* whether our *λόγος* is from the *ἀρχαί* or to the *ἀρχαί*. His first step is to introduce, in a concessive clause, the blameless lemma that we must begin our *λόγος* from *γνώριμα*. The substance of the

Platonic dilemma is then recast in terms of an alternative between two types of γνώριμα, where a λόγος that begins ἀπὸ τῶν ἡμῖν γνωρίμων is equivalent to a Platonic λόγος ἐπὶ τὰς ἀρχάς, and one beginning from τὰ γνώριμα ἀπλῶς is equivalent to a Platonic λόγος ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρχῶν.<sup>26</sup> But at the same time, the terminology of the dilemma, where ἀρχή meant principle, is continued by the word ἀρκτέον, which has to do not with the principles of a true λόγος, but merely the hypotheses of a valid or logical one. Recast in this way, the dilemma can be solved: the only beginning available to us is that of the γνώριμα ἡμῖν. But in the translation of the Platonic dilemma into these terms, the substance of that dilemma has been artfully sidestepped. In its original form, that dilemma would have included the postulate that the λόγος ἐπὶ τὰς ἀρχάς, proceeding as it must from ἀρχαί that are merely hypothetical ὄρμαί, cannot of itself reach certain truth; that conversely absolute truth can only be reached if the ὄρμαί of the λόγος are identical with the ἀρχαί of reality, in which case these ὄρμαί are no longer merely hypothetical, but are ἀνυπόθετοι ἀρχαί. The transition from the Platonic dilemma about ἀρχή (principle) to the Aristotelian formulation of an ἀρχή (*initium*, ὁρμή, hypothesis) of an account, was suggested first by the metaphor of the stadium, in which ἀρχή refers to the *termini* and *initia* of the race track in such a way as to make the ἀρχή and the ὁρμή interchangeable (1095a33–b1).<sup>27</sup> The suggested transition was formally secured in the next line (b2) by the use of ἀρκτέον (= δεῖ ἀρχεσθαι), which is the pedagogical pun of the passage.

Likewise Aristotle seems to be punning on ἀρχή in *An. Po.* 2.19, 100a12–13), when in describing the psychological process by which disparate phenomenal experiences or impressions give rise to a cognition of the universal or principle that orders them, he adduces a military analogy.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Cf. H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy* (Baltimore 1944) 1.63, note 51.

<sup>27</sup> Commentators tend to attribute this stadium metaphor to Plato, despite the fact that we have no Platonic text in which it is used. And even if the imperfects ἡπότε and ἐξήτει refer to oral teaching, still the attribution is not secure.

<sup>28</sup> Ross, who had allowed this to be a word play (cf. comm. *ad Met.* 1076a3 [2.405]), in his (later) edition of the *Analytics* (*ad loc.*, 677) changed his mind and paraphrased, “until the process of rallying reaches the point at which the rout began.” But it seems impossible to exclude the *double-entendre* since the subject of the chapter is the ἀρχαί. Cf. Waitz *ad loc.* (2.431), and H. G. Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley 1967) 14. Gadamer (in conversation) also drew my attention to an implicit pun, not unlike the ones we are here considering, except that it is not represented on a strictly verbal level in the text. It is Aristotle's choice of τὸ σιμόν as the paradigm of enmattered quality (cf. esp. *Met. Z.* 5). The most famous snub nose in Athens belonged to the very man who might have, but did not, *separate* the εἶδη (*Met.* 1078b30–31).

οἶον ἐν μάχῃ τροπῆς γενομένης ἐνὸς στάντος ἕτερος ἔσται εἶθ' ἕτερος, ἕως ἐπ' ἀρχὴν ἦλθεν.

Of course punning will not be restricted to the word ἀρχή. In *EN* 2.9, 1109a30–35, after having argued that the practical virtues are means (μέσα) between extremes (ἄκρα), Aristotle remarks that τοῦ μέσου τυχεῖν ἄκρως χαλεπόν, so that in some cases at least we must be satisfied with a certain δεύτερος πλοῦς, namely to seek merely to avoid the greater evil. That striking the mean exactly is an extremely difficult task is here made to be an admonition to follow a more moderate course.<sup>29</sup> The argument owes whatever cogency it has to the pun on ἄκρα and ἄκρως: for the more specific rule that we must moderate between bad ξῆεις by finding the μέσον of the continuum of which they are the ἄκρα, is now treated as grounds for a more general rule, that we must be realistically patient and moderate in this very attempt to moderate between extremes, exactly because the latter is extremely hard to do. The mere fact that moderation is *highly* difficult (another possible translation of ἄκρως) would be no reason to abandon it; but if the degree of difficulty involved in pursuing moderation between extremes were such that only an *extremely* conscientious and scrupulous person could achieve it, we should be left with the apparent paradox that only extremists could be moderate.

We may style the implicit argument in the following way. Aristotle is arguing that the “spirit” of the law of moderation must serve as a corrective to the “statutory” or “procedural” guidelines for moderation that he has set up in this book (viz., the measurement of a mean between extremes): when a literal application of these guidelines becomes immoderately difficult, the “equitable” spirit of moderation must intervene and prescribe special measures (here a δεύτερος πλοῦς).

The same analysis of the law of moderation into its spirit and its letter is suggested by the pun. For heretofore, ἄκρα had been used in a narrow and special sense, in the speculative construction of virtue as the mean between extremes (ἄκρα); but in our passage, ἄκρως is no technical term, but constitutes an appeal to the norms of common sense and reasonability. This punning juxtaposition of a technical and practical or commonsensical meaning of a word is therefore exactly parallel to the pun on ἄκρατος that we analyzed above (pp. 182–83). But there the motive was

<sup>29</sup> I believe that ἄκρως goes with both τυχεῖν and χαλεπόν. Gauthier (comm. *ad loc.*) takes it with τυχεῖν only, but the word order tells against this. Burnet seems (comm. *ad loc.*) reluctant to allow it to be a pun: at first he calls it “almost an oxymoron,” and then he says, “but cf. 1107a23, τὸ μέσον ἐστὶ πως ἄκρον,” which is irrelevant since ἄκρον there has the technical meaning, “extreme” (of a continuum). As for the proverb, δεύτερος πλοῦς, there appear to be two meanings, either that it is a *pis aller* or that it is a safer though less ambitious course (cf. schol. *ad Phaedo* 99d; Plato, *Polit.* 300c, *Phileb.* 19c; Arist. *Pol.* 1284b19). The avoidance of danger seems to be involved here.

to parody the Pythagoreans' inordinate devotion to the project of coordinating the world of sense with the world of mathematical symmetry so that a merely symmetrically diluted (κεκραμένον) potion of honeywater may in practice prove too strong (ἄκρατον); here the motive is to teach, by reminding the student that since in the realm of ethics the desire for ἀκρίβεια must always be moderated, even the attempt to find and strike the mean between two extremes must be conducted in a moderate way.

A special sub-class of pedagogical puns is formed by various types of etymological word play. This sort of play in a philosophical context is already familiar in the works of Plato, and especially in the *Cratylus*. In Aristotle, etymologies are often used to provide μαρτυρία to some theory of his own.<sup>30</sup> In many of these cases it is difficult to believe that the etymologies were taken seriously even by Aristotle: to whatever extent he is proposing them fancifully, to that extent they can be likened to pedagogical puns.

A rather flat and quiet instance of etymological play appears in Aristotle's famous treatment of the generation of bees, at GA 3.10. Aristotle admits that he can reach only tentative conclusions on this obscure and complex topic (cf. esp. 760b27–33), and after reaching the surest possible conclusions through an *eliminatio* (759a8–60a4), he begins a section of confirmatory considerations with the statement,

ὄντος δὲ περιττοῦ τοῦ γένους καὶ ἰδίου τοῦ τῶν μελιττῶν, καὶ ἡ  
γένεσις αὐτῶν ἴδιος εἶναι φαίνεται. (760a4–6)

The force of this confirmatory analogy depends on the fact that γένος and γένεσις are cognate.

Finally, let us turn to an etymological pun that is both instructive and entertaining, at EN 1.6, 1097b22 ff. Here Aristotle proposes to reach a definition of the good for man by way of a lemma (ληφθείη, b24) on the proper ἔργον of man, which he means to deduce through an *eliminatio* (cf. λείπεται, 1098a3). The crucial premise, on which the validity of the *eliminatio* depends, is that man does have a proper ἔργον, and Aristotle argues for it by noting that various types of men have an ἔργον (e.g., cobblers); could it be, then, he asks, that ἀνθρώπου δ' οὐδέν ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ἄργον πέφυκεν (1097b29–30)? The alternative to Aristotle's assertion that man has a particular function *qua* man, is that man having no function (οὐδέν, sc. ἔργον) is therefore meant by nature to be *lazy*! This horrific but jocular alternative is meant to encourage us to be good sports and accept the premise so that the *eliminatio* can proceed. Once the *eliminatio* arrives at a proper function for man, the good for man can be defined.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *de Caelo* 270b16, 279a22; *Meteor.* 339b19 ff., 347a6–8; *HA* 493a22–23; *PA* 662b19 ff., 672b30 ff.; *GA* 736a18 ff.; *EN* 1103a17–18, 1132a30–31, 1133a30, 1152b7.



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I have sought herewith to present some new and rather novel insights into the text of Aristotle. If one checks the commentaries he finds silence usually, and awkward confusion from time to time, in the exegesis of playfully ambiguous passages. I should like to be allowed to leave my results in a preliminary and sketchy form, to say broadly that some puns are merely nugatory, that others exhibit Aristotle's infamous willingness at times to ridicule his predecessors, and that a third type has a positive, pedagogical function; and further, to avoid drawing lines between puns that are conscious and intended and puns that only a psychoanalyst could find significant, and puns that only an overly subtle philologist could laugh at.

Truly, we should be pressing the text too far to argue that when Aristotle announces in *Phys.* 1.8 that his theory of the *ὑποκείμενον* is the sole (*μοναχῶς*, 191a23–24) solution to the Parmenidean aporia about *γένεσις*, that he is also ridiculing the paralyzing monism that led to it.<sup>31</sup> But in a similar situation, at *GC* 1.7, 323b1–12, it does not seem to me overly subtle to sense a conscious parody when Aristotle says that among his predecessors the belief that like is not affected by like, but only by unlike (*τὸ ὅμοιον ὑπὸ τοῦ ὁμοίου πᾶν ἀπαθές ἐστι . . .*) was held likemindedly (*ὁμονοητικῶς*), especially since his own solution will constitute a compromise between the extremes (323b29–33). Furthermore, there will be a whole class of unconscious puns, like Polonius' pun on "declension" in *Hamlet*, that are really metonymies whose intrusion should be attributed to the instantly senile garrulity of the short term memory, and its propensity to re-use words that are still echoing there, as for instance Simplicius in *de Caelo* 201.25–26: (Aristotle) *ἔχει πεπερασμένον ὅτι πᾶς ὁ κόσμος πεπερασμένος τῷ μεγέθει ἐστίν*. Perhaps Aristotle's use of *αἰτία* at *Met.* 984b18–20 was due to this. And in all candour I feel rather timid about proposing that *ὁ πλάττων* is *ὁ Πλάτων*.

These disclaimers notwithstanding, there remains a recalcitrant residuum of carefully and consciously constructed *double-entendres* in the text of Aristotle as we have received it, whose presence must now be acknowledged. Their presence suggests Aristotle's own handiwork, rather than merely the tachygraphic scribbling of a Tiro. If one should wish to compare these phenomena with Aristotle's explicit doctrine on the dynamics and utility of word play, he should consult *Rhet.* 3.10–11; he will find Aristotle talking about the kinds of things that we have seen him do in the treatises. That puns and word play have some real pedagogical value for Aristotle will seem less strange if one reads *de Mem.* 451b22 ff.,

<sup>31</sup> A similar parody does seem to be intended by Plato, at *Theaet.* 183e: cf. Tarrant *CQ* N.S. 8 (1958) 160.

on the mnemonic value of solecisms. Finally, though we may now find it easier to imagine Aristotle having a sense of humor, we have not yet found him funny enough to solve that old problem that embarrassed Maslow into arbitrary emendation, at Demetrius, *de Eloc.* 128, where Aristotle (ἸΑριστοτέλους Ω ἸΑριστοφάνους *scr.* Maslovius)<sup>32</sup> is chosen, along with Lysias and Sophron and without further comment, as an exemplary exponent of lower comic χάρις.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *app. crit.* of Radermacher (Teubner 1901) *ad loc.*