

ing, weaving, piloting, and generalship confer will have deserted us. Knowledge of good does not just determine the good; there is no good unless there is knowledge that there is good. There is no unexamined good and therefore no happiness without knowledge of happiness. Perhaps, then, it is in this way that the good as the cause of the knowability of the beings can be understood to fall together with the good as the cause of the being of the beings. In any case, the disjoining and conjoining bond in the compound name *philosophia*, between the knowledge of the beings that is wisdom and the desire to have that knowledge as one's own good, is *sophrosyne*.

Critias wonders why the science of science could not rule the science of good while still being benefited by the science of good. The science of science cannot be subordinate to any science. It totals but does not complete. In order for it to complete the sciences, the science of science would have to rearticulate the sciences in a way different from that in which each science understands itself. It would have to look at the sciences in light of a whole unknown to any other science and hence transgress the self-imposed boundaries of each science. Critias is not criminal enough to undertake this enterprise; his science of science requires that everything be in place prior to his rule, for otherwise the science of science would have to know something besides rule. Rule, however, also turns out to be superfluous. Critias's interpretation of Socrates' teaching amounts to the replacement of the good with the beautiful as the highest principle. The faceless *eidos* of Charmides symbolized that principle; and the teaching of the Thracian doctor was Socrates' proleptic interpretation of it. Critias accordingly could not figure out whether that teaching was genuine or not, for Thracian medicine offered perfect order unaccompanied by any understanding of what perfect order is. That understanding is in the beautiful speech of Socrates, the *Charmides* itself. It is his alone and cannot be copied by the likes of Charmides and Critias. Socrates comes back to Athens and takes back his own.

Metaphysics for Lovers

José A. Benardete

I.

PLATO was right. There is an eternal war being waged between the philosopher and the poet, sometimes breaking out into open violence, more often perhaps pursued along the lines of covert operations. Direct aggression on the part of the poet is nowhere so evident as in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (Did the Socratic turn to the human things pose a special threat?), inviting the philosopher to retaliate along a broad front in the *Republic*. The principal issue turns on the question of wisdom, and here I fear (speaking now in my capacity as a professional philosopher) that if a questionnaire had been circulated in classical antiquity as to where wisdom was the more likely to be found, in the pages of an Aristotle or in those of a Sophocles, it is the poet and not the philosopher who would have prevailed in the tabulation of votes.

The contest I take to be enacted in the forum of an educated, fair-minded public that is warmly appreciative of philosophy as well as poetry, and if I have selected Aristotle rather than Plato to represent the philosophers it is because Plato, by being arguably a great poet in his own right, could only confuse the issue. We are free, however, to renew the controversy in terms of Plato himself, simply by asking if wisdom is the more likely to be found in such relatively dry vehicles of technical philosophy as the *Parmenides* and *Sophist* or in the ostentatiously florid *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. Here again our educated public taken now to extend from antiquity all the way to the present time, even while confessing its incompetence when it comes to the technical philosophy, will feel fairly confident that Plato the poet is wiser than Plato the philosopher. So much for the whole battery of arguments that Plato discharges against the poet!

Plato excepted, mainstream philosophy has always professed indifference to the challenge of the poet, and if the settled verdict of

the educated public in favor of poetry may be presumed to be an intermittent source of irritation, the philosopher could always reassure himself with the thought that the case against poetry was decisively put by Plato, no one over the intervening centuries having succeeded in refuting it. Granted that at intervals philosophers do emerge who are prepared to break ranks with their colleagues on the issue, as when a Heidegger heartens to a Hölderlin: that only goes to confirm my thesis, for in every instance the renegade philosopher runs a distinct risk of forfeiting his standing in mainline philosophy. No mere imputation of professional jealousy suffices to explain this closing of ranks. When it comes to the good, the true and the beautiful, philosopher and poet may quarrel over the good, but, with the poet in secure possession of the beautiful, the philosopher has no choice but to insist on the true as correspondingly his own. Which is not to deny that even in the case of so technical a philosopher as Descartes, who in an enigmatic early work entitled *Olympica* can be seen to "praise poetry at the expense of reason," offering what is "perhaps the highest praise bestowed on poetry by a philosopher,"¹ the evidence may be found on occasion to be highly ambiguous.

The mention of technical philosophy suggests the following hypothesis. The more philosophy and poetry overlap, and here one is to think of the more philosophical sorts of literature as well as the more literary sorts of philosophy, the further one is distanced from technical philosophy proper. Doubtless valid if only as a rule of thumb, the hypothesis may yet admit of exceptions which must inevitably elicit our keenest interest. How are those exceptions, assuming there to be such, to be identified? For it is they that must serve as our touchstone if the poets are to be subjected to a mode of hermeneutic that I dare to style, in a Teutonic idiom, as wisdom critique. Otherwise we may be forced to say that the putative wisdom of the poets is *toto caelo* incommensurable with that of the philosophers, but that is precisely what our educated public denies when, by a narrower or wider margin, it plumps for the former as against the latter.

Didactic poetry being all too easy to submit to wisdom critique, it is rather such a case as that of Henry James with a "mind so fine that no idea could violate it," in T.S. Eliot's phrase, that poses the sharpest challenge. For it is here, where pure poetry is most opposed to technical philosophy, that one may well despair of finding common ground between them. Rather than confront the

blinding light of pure poetry directly, the philosopher will cast about for some *tertium quid* that may help mediate his encounter with the text, and it is inevitably the literary critic who is equipped to serve that mediating function, though most of the critic's activity will address itself to matters more properly literary in character, as when Samuel Johnson remarks on "the adventurous image" in *Paradise Lost*. That I take to be literary criticism at its practical best, for it enables one to zoom in on the poetry from which one is liable to be distracted by the didacticism of the work. Elsewhere in the pages of literary criticism the philosopher must thus rummage if he is to be advanced on the road to wisdom critique. In fact one is entitled to doubt whether pure poetry does admit of being critiqued along the dimension of wisdom. Witness the case of Henry James. What might the exercise of wisdom critique so much as look like as applied to him? Well, here is a suggestion. Begin with H.G. Wells's brilliant parody of James which was precisely designed to convict him of pretentious mystification. The case of parody is more generally instructive in its own right. As literary criticism mediates between poetry and philosophy, so in its turn parody mediates between poetry and criticism proper; and lest one suppose, from the example of Wells, that wisdom critique can only be practiced in a vein of crude rationalism, one has only to recall the parodies of Aristophanes directed against the dark, oracular mutterings of Aeschylus. Here, then, is further mediation as the astringent intelligence of the comic poet in the *Frogs* undertakes to demystify poetry proper enshrined in tragedy.

Whether wisdom critique as applied to the poets need always yield a negative verdict, is a question one can scarcely avoid; and it cannot even be assumed that at least Plato's answer to the question is obvious. Take what is probably the greatest of all parodies, Plato's Aristophanic speech in the *Symposium*. Not only has it been applauded as entirely successful in capturing the essence of Aristophanes. More than that, it will probably be felt to manifest Aristophanic wisdom on a deeper level than any writing of the poet himself, and I dare conjecture that only under its inspired auspices as 'the twelfth play' might one undertake an authoritative reading of the others. If Plato is to be understood here as demonstrating to us *ad oculos* precisely how poetry can be expressive of wisdom, the evidence he provides remains like all pure poetry peculiarly inaccessible to the philosopher's expertise, seeing that he can hardly be expected to ask whether it is literally true that

prelapsarian man, being then round all over, with two faces looking in opposite directions, and whirling along with four arms and four legs like an acrobat, came to be sliced down the middle for his defiance of the gods. And as for metaphorical truth, well, the philosopher can only view it with a very jaundiced eye.

How, assisted by the kind of sensitivity characteristic of the literary critic, literal truth may be recovered from Aristophanes' myth, can be brought out most vividly by considering an important objection Gregory Vlastos has made to Plato's philosophy of love. "The cardinal flaw in Plato's theory," writes Vlastos, is that "it does not provide for love of whole persons," warts and all, seeing that "we are to love the persons . . . only insofar as they are good and beautiful."² Strikingly, in Leo Strauss's seminar on the *Symposium* the tragic poet Agathon's emphasis on love of the beautiful was seen to be specifically opposed to the comic poet's insistence on love of one's own (one's other half) that could even be ugly. How these two aspects of love are to be integrated, Socrates explains in a fairly tricky fashion, according to Strauss's close reading of Diotima's speech. Although poet and philosopher are thus finally shown by Plato to be reconciled in a common cognitive undertaking, it must be confessed that it is only philosophy in its more humanistic and correspondingly less technical character that proves to be so accommodated. Love in any case would appear to be so much the proper preserve of the poets as to quite pre-empt any serious engagement with it on the part of technical philosophy, and though Part III of Spinoza's *Ethics* might be adduced as a counter-example, Spinoza unlike (say) Leibniz remains today perhaps too much off the beaten track of mainline philosophy to allow his name to qualify as more than a fairly exotic suggestion.

II.

According to Plato's Aristophanes, it is characteristic of lovers that (venery aside) "they cannot even say what they would have of one another," for "the soul of each is wishing for something that it cannot express, only divining and darkly hinting what it wishes" (192c-d, following the Loeb translation). It turns out, however, that with the help of the poet this inarticulate longing does allow of being expressed by way at any rate of a good approximation: the lovers wish "from being two to become one" (192e3). Admittedly a superb poetic conceit, Aristophanes' Hypothesis (as I venture to

style it) positively invites the accumulation of empirical evidence toward its confirmation or (it may be) its disconfirmation. Expressly with a view toward such empirical testing, the Hypothesis may be expanded into the following, more quantitative form. Given any arbitrary pair of lovers, the greater (deeper, more intense) their mutual love, so much more will they wish to become one. It is assumed of course that featured here are two factors (magnitudes) that can be measured independently of one another. First, there is the magnitude of love obtaining between the lovers. Second, there is the magnitude of their joint desire to become one. Complications may well be expected when it comes to precise experimental design. Thus why assume that the deeper sort of love will always coincide with the more intense? Suppose they diverge. More generally, one may feel that the whole phenomenon of love is much too subjective (too 'poetic' even) to admit of objective measurement. That a poetic conceit should turn out to be identical with a scientific hypothesis, might well excite some conceptual surprise, but any such case is surely to be treasured by anyone who feels, as I do, that it is at any rate one of the missions of philosophy to bridge the gap between 'the two cultures', literary and scientific. Despite—perhaps one should rather say, because—of the methodological difficulties of execution, the opportunity to test Aristophanes' Hypothesis is to be positively welcomed as a way of exploring the (degree of) amenability that the more poetic sorts of human experience may have as regards the quantitative, statistical procedures of empirical science. To the sociology of small groups the Hypothesis may be seen to be particularly relevant, and in a topical vein one may notice the current uneasy feeling at Harvard that its humanistic sociologists are somehow failing to sustain the scientific, i.e. quantitative, pretensions of the discipline. As a response to such institutional misgivings, the systematic testing of the Hypothesis perhaps by a team that includes poets as well as statisticians may be expected to proceed under the sponsorship of its own form of Aristophanic ribaldry.

As between experimental and conceptual issues, the philosopher remains addicted above all to the latter, and he will thus relish an antecedent perplexity when it comes to what it is precisely that the lovers are supposed to wish when they wish to be one. How about the following suggestion? In wishing to be one what they wish is to comprise or constitute a single entity. If the suggestion should perhaps be felt to be at once too abstract and too literal-minded, it

is at any rate couched in an idiom where the philosopher feels most at home, and the Pairing Axiom of set theory will at once come to mind, namely

$$(x)(y)x \neq y \supset (\exists z) x \in z \cdot y \in z \cdot ((q)q \in z \supset (q = x) \vee (q = y))$$

By constituting a doubleton set of which they are the only members, our lovers are implausibly found to fulfill their deepest desire quite apart from any effort on their part. Although grounds for selectively doubting the Pairing Axiom have been noticed, as when one considers the so-called proper classes of von Neumann (Guine's ultimate classes) which are 'too large' to be admitted as members of any set or class on pain of Russell's paradox, the success of our lovers in constituting a set is really only threatened by those who eschew sets altogether in their ontology, nominalists especially. The heavy physicality of the Aristophanic myth would suggest in any case that it will not satisfy our lovers merely to constitute some abstract, platonic entity. No mere platonic lovers, they. Looking, then, for a concrete alternative, the philosopher will consult at once the sum-individuals or so-called fusions of mereology which was expressly designed as a poor man's set theory by Polish logicians with nominalistic convictions.³

Strikingly, this notion of fusion appears to be operative in the poet's account as well, for it cannot be an accident that it is the god Hephaestus with his "instruments" who comes into play at 192d. At any rate, where the science of mereology postulates the 'fusion' of London and Paris which are taken to comprise a (scattered) whole, the Loeb translator is prepared to eke out the text when he has the god say to the lovers that he is "ready to fuse and weld you together in a single piece." The fusions of logician and poet alike being seen here to be only metaphorical, there is this difference between them. If the fusions of mereology characteristically fall short of literal fusion (as when two strips of metal are fused end to end), the literal fusing back to back or even front to front of our lovers—let them then be joined like Siamese twins—would itself very much fall short of their hearts' desire. What sort of ultra fusion could possibly satisfy them? Turning away now from one poet to another, Spenser's conceit in the Mutability Cantos regarding two Irish rivers, namely the nymph Molanna (=the Behanna) and her beloved, the Fanchin (=the Funsheon), can hardly fail to provide an instructive model.

So now her waves pass through a pleasant plain
Till with the Fanchin she herself do wed,
And (both combined) themselves in one fair river spread.
(*Faerie Queene*, VII. 6.53)

Accordingly, it may be supposed that if lover's were rivers only then would their prospects for truly uniting and becoming one be at all bright, but that subjunctive contrary-to-fact conditional can only suggest that the comic mode of the Aristophanic myth disguises a tragic vision that rules out any metaphysical consummation of the erotic.

The tragedy is of the essence. That human beings cannot possibly undergo the kind of total fusion that rivers readily enjoy, would appear to be true not merely when understood in a *de dicto* mode but, more important still, when construed in *de re* fashion, for it is not simply to be assumed that every human being is essentially a human being, and it may be suggested that these two kinds of modality are poetically conflated in the conceit of a possible, or impossible, world where a nymph is found to be identical with a river. In our School for Lovers, designed to raise their pillow talk to a level far beyond that of the mere sweet nothings with which they have hitherto been obliged to be content, modal logic and its attendant possible worlds semantics must not be omitted from the curriculum. More generally, if the yearnings of lovers are to be expressed in something more than inarticulate cries it is imperative that they be trained in metaphysics, for though their discourse has in fact been enriched by the poets, the poets in their turn will have to be sent back to school (literary critics will be left to shift for themselves).⁴ It is simply not true that Spenser has succeeded in showing how the erotic problem of two becoming one can be solved when it comes at any rate to rivers. Decisive here is the recent conceit of a philosopher, Bernard Williams, that has given rise to extended discussion regarding the diachronic identity of persons where the terms 'fusion' and especially 'fission' figure as routine jargon. Undertaking to envisage a case where in effect a human being undergoes fission like an amoeba, Williams imagines a man being sliced down the middle from head to toe (cf. *Symposium*, 190d5-8), and with each part regenerating, two persons are shortly to be seen each of whom in the absence of the other one would suppose to be (identical with) the original man.⁵ In fact, on one view, each of them is the original man in any possible world where

the other fails to survive, though that suggestion is widely felt to conflict with Saul Kripke's insistence on the principle that $(x)(y) x=y \supset x=y$.⁶

More fundamental than even the necessity of identity, which is a modal principle, is its simple, non-modal transitivity, namely $(x)(y)(z) x=y \cdot y=z \supset x=z$. Although doubt of this latter principle would seem to be impossible, it has in fact been seriously entertained by the logician Arthur Prior precisely on the grounds that while Williams's two men (after fission) must be allowed to be distinct from one another we may perhaps bite the bullet and suppose that each of them is identical with the original man.⁷ Extreme to the point of incoherence as Prior's suggestion doubtless is, the mere fact that a sober logician could toy with it suffices to prove that it cannot be so devoid of all rationality—love in any case has often been felt to be irrational—as to be quite without application to our Aristophanic lovers. Does it not in fact define exactly, albeit in reverse, the intentional object of their desire, namely to fuse into a single entity with which each will be identical? Leaving it open perhaps whether they will then be identical with one another. That pretty much seems to be Aristotle's view at *Politics*, II.1. 1262b12–15, when in making a somewhat different though closely related point he says that if *per impossibile* our lovers from being two are to become one "it is necessary that both perish or one of them anyway." Here it is the material rather than the intentional object of their desire, for they do not want to perish, which I take Aristotle to be defining, though in both versions the lovers are seen to be in effect teleologically headed toward the obtaining of a logically impossible state of affairs where two entities become (identical with) one entity. Maybe, then, the suicides of Romeo and Juliet at the end of the play are to be regarded as the poetic expression of a metaphysical necessity.

The only alternative account must presumably go somewhat as follows, reverting now to Spenser's rivers. Instead of ceasing to exist à la Aristotle beyond the point where they fuse, they persist but not as rivers, for it is not to be assumed that every river is necessarily a river in the *de re* sense. Suppose, rather, that on fusing the two currents continue to exist not as rivers but as discernibly different currents of water that jointly constitute a third river. Although that is probably one way in which the locution 'two becoming one' may be assigned a semantics, i.e. truth conditions, I cannot believe that the yearnings of lovers could be satisfied by any such mere

side-by-sideness as instantiated by the two currents of water. Let us then postulate that when the two rivers fuse, their waters lose their individuality in one another by totally intermingling. Although here the heart's desire is convincingly represented, I fear that again we are envisioning a logically impossible state of affairs. Taken *au pied de la lettre*, loss of one's individuality can only mean loss of one's haecceity (pressing into service a notion of Scotistic metaphysics whose recent vogue is largely owing to Alvin Plantinga), and that does entail ceasing to exist. Furthermore it is to be noticed that it is not the rivers themselves that are said to lose their individuality or to intermingle but their waters. Following Aristotle and his distinction between form and matter, one can indeed step twice into Heraclitus' river, though (in the typical case) one will be stepping into different water. Although the river is not identical with the (quantity of) water of which it is composed (at any instant), we may follow David Wiggins and say that the two can 'coincide'.⁸ We have thus left Spenser's two rivers far behind (they have in effect already ceased to exist) when their waters are found to intermingle.

Too long suppressed, a mutinous voice in the background must finally be allowed to interrupt with the protest, "How relentlessly literal-minded you philosophers are with your, yes, crude rationalism, as if 'loss of individuality' let alone 'two becoming one' could not be understood in a perfectly decent, non-literal fashion! Don't you know that the whole point of poetry lies in metaphor? What with your erotic pessimism, it can only be supposed that 'two hearts beating as one' would emerge from your literalistic deconstruction as a mere case of two hearts beating in time—perthump, perthump, perthump—all of which may make for uproarious Aristophanic comedy (I grant you that), but when it comes to the purest vein of lyric poetry. . . ."

Because the distinction between literal and metaphorical can hardly fail to correspond to the difference between philosophy and poetry, it is all too easy to overlook the fact that the poet always has up his sleeve the card of literal truth which he is prepared to play at unexpected moments. A memorable occasion in Horace Gregory's poetry writing class presses the point sharply home. What was he to say to the girl whose poem contained the line, "Freedom spelled backwards means power"? "Ah, my dear," said Gregory. "The trouble, you see, is that it doesn't." Gregory's Rebuke, in one form or another, everyone fortunate enough to have been exposed to serious literary training has ruefully experienced at least once,

perhaps in connection with a mixed metaphor, though one is later surprised to learn that "to take arms against a sea of troubles" is exempt from the charge and precisely because (the absurdity of Hamlet's battling the ocean with sword and shield like Canute is to be taken at face value, which is (almost) to say, literally. It is here, above all, in the fastidious attention to surface diction, which literary studies never cease promoting, that poet and philosopher come to find common ground, in their respect for literal truth. Metaphor can only gain, as when on the strength of our literal-mindedness elsewhere, the suicide of the lovers in *Romeo and Juliet* is seen to acquire metaphorical import. Or when Spenser's verses are found to harbor a metaphysical subtext to the effect that only if people were rivers might they expect to find erotic fulfillment, with (as a bonus) the further irony that even if there should be some very remote possible world where lovers are metamorphosed into rivers (as caterpillar into butterfly) they are still doomed to remain logically distinct. Although Milton's angels "embrace" in a fashion "easier than air with air" when "total they mix," one can only share Adam's puzzlement as to how exactly, in their love life, they "mix irradiance", seeing that this "union of pure with pure desiring" must somehow eschew the "obstacle[s]" that arise not only if "flesh" is to "mix with flesh" but even "soul with soul" (*Paradise Lost*, VIII. 614-629).

A. J. Ayer having chastised Jean Paul Sartre for cherishing a metaphysical sort of *angst* over the fact that unlike God he was merely a contingent entity, some one of my philosophical colleagues is bound to protest that, however productive my erotic conceit may be when it comes to poetic rewards, I am liable to the same fatal objection. How can one (reasonably) grieve over what is logically necessary? Very easily, I reply, adducing Hilbert's disappointment when Gödel refuted his ambitious program. In general, however, I can only welcome efforts undertaken to refute my erotic pessimism, perhaps by enlisting those empirical researches, which I recommended earlier, toward showing that it is simply not true that in longing to be one (whatever that might come to) lovers characteristically entertain metaphysical yearnings of any sort. Why not simply credit the comic poet with the trope of hyperbole, if precise recourse must be had to the jargon of poetics? But that may well suffice as a concession, seeing that love may be greater or less, that the logical limit of the erotic is to be defined by an impossible state of affairs. How philosophy at its most technical can deeply connect with

poetics at its most technical, I take to be now established, with specific reference to the erotic imperative that in demanding the surrender of one's haecceity promises all felicity in return; and it ought to come as no surprise that analytical philosophy in particular, being positively cathected to considerations of language, should finally come to enjoy a rendezvous with its finest flower, namely poetry. Any lingering Romantic misconceptions that take poetry and logic to be antithetical, ought to have been decisively refuted by that triumph of late Romanticism, the Alice books of Lewis Carroll, and if the reconciliation of the two merely occurs therein on an almost pastoral level of comedy, we have already seen that it is not through the greater, tragic Muse that philosophy acquires access to poetry but through the lesser, comic one. Mediated by the comic Muse, however, a tragic vision of the erotic proves finally to emerge that in its logic readily applies to the mystic's longing to become one with God or the universe.

Overcoming my erotic pessimism can probably succeed only on the basis of a more or less radical rejection of my metaphysical realism where I simply assume that reality consists of crisp, discrete objects that engage the realist philosopher in a threefold manner. For it is the object to which he refers, of which he predicates and over which he quantifies. Suppose now that as an anti-realist one rejects any such determinate domain of objects except as pragmatic posits enabling us to cope with the world. One may even have a vision of "reality as an amorphous lump not yet articulated into discrete objects."⁹ Less radically, for one reason or another (perhaps owing to some form of Eliminative Materialism), one may simply decline in one's ontology to quantify over persons as such. In either case, whether as an anti-realist *tout court* or merely as an anti-realist regarding persons, the so-called 'yearning of lovers to become one' will be subjected to a rational reconstruction that if it does not quite dissolve the problem at the outset may be expected to allow a happy resolution of it. If our lovers were never really two in the first place, nothing can stand in the way of their fusion. Realist and anti-realist can thus agree that in threatening to undermine one's (putative) identity love is charged with the deepest metaphysical import. How that might be expressed in a cycle of poems, remains the task of some future poet. The poet is not the only one who stands to gain. The philosopher stands to gain still more from this association (I dare not say fusion) of philosophy and poetry, particularly at a time when it has come to be felt that the

philosopher is no longer "entitled . . . to take credit for being wise as well as clever."¹⁰ In fact any suggestion that wisdom might be predicated of his researches leaves the analytical philosopher feeling distinctively uneasy, though he has come to feel altogether at home with metaphysics, and it is not to be doubted (sticking to surface diction) that the words 'metaphysics' and "wisdom" gravitate to one another.

The source of the unease can be traced back to Aristotle who at the very point where he even defines metaphysics by identifying it with wisdom finds himself obliged to qualify his identity thesis. There is practical as well as theoretical wisdom, and metaphysics can only be identified with the latter. It is thus to be suspected that wisdom *sans phrase* can only be predicated where at least some practical guidance as to the conduct of life is forthcoming. Thanks to my having shown how and why it is that metaphysicians make the best lovers, even the most technical studies in abstract ontology can now be recognized as never ceasing to hover in the neighborhood of wisdom.

NOTES

1. Richard Kennington, "Descartes' Olympica", *Social Research* (Summer 1961), p. 189.
2. Gregory Vlastos, *Platonic Studies* (Princeton, 1973), p. 31.
3. For "the calculus of individuals" see Nelson Goodman, *The Structure of Appearance* (New York, 1966), Ch. 2, Sec. 4.
4. Suitable perhaps as a text is Graeme Forbes's *The Metaphysics of Modality* (Oxford, 1985).
5. Bernard Williams, *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge, 1973).
6. See however Sydney Shoemaker and Richard Swinburne, *Personal Identity* (Oxford, 1984), p. 118.
7. Arthur Prior, "Opposite Number," *Review of Metaphysics* (1957-58).
8. See Helen Cartwright, "Quantities," *Philosophical Review* (1969).
9. Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 577.
10. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis, 1982), p. 221.

Aristotle's Reflections on Revolution

Michael Davis

It is not at first clear why one should return to Aristotle to understand the phenomenon we call revolution. Indeed, there would seem to be many reasons to turn away from him. Revolution as we know it seems to have to be understood in terms of the revolution. Not even our own home-grown war of independence has the intellectual power for us of the French Revolution of 1789. There does not seem to be a major intellectual figure of the nineteenth century who was not forced in some way to come to terms with it. And the foundations of our century were in some sense laid in the nineteenth century. Aristotle, of course, has nothing to say about the French Revolution. It is hard to imagine how to think about modern revolution without thinking about the modern nation state, progress, ideology, history and mass movements. It is hard to understand Aristotle without avoiding those terms. Aristotle was not only a Greek; he seems to have been a particularly stodgy Greek. He was a third generation Socratic, and seems to have shared the apparent Socratic and Platonic preference for Spartan oligarchy over Athenian democracy. Plato at least was radical in his criticism of democracy. Aristotle was a conservative of a different sort. He seems always to be telling us to look both ways before crossing the street—good advice, but hardly revolutionary.

Aristotle was, however, a profound political thinker, and revolution is a profoundly political phenomenon. If politics is always concerned with what to preserve and what to change, and if that concern requires some thought of what is better under the circumstances, and if that, in turn, implies certain presuppositions about what would be best, then politics is always potentially revolutionary. In the very first sentence of the *Politics*, Aristotle