ARISTOTLE, RHETORIC III.
4. 1407a 15 and 11. 1413a 5

Three chapters (4, 10, and 11) in Book III of Aristotle’s Rhetoric contain discussion of *el’wv*, “comparison” or “image.” The main points of his evaluation of *el’wv* are clear enough. He says that it is a kind of metaphor, *metaphora*; that it is poetical and should be used in prose only rarely; that it is less instructive than metaphor and therefore gives less pleasure; that it is more extended than metaphor. The first two of these characteristics are stated at the beginning of chapter 4. The chapter goes on to give a series of examples of *el’wv*, then sums up the discussion of *el’wv* in a short concluding passage which comments on the examples and restates Aristotle’s basic view of *el’wv* as a kind of metaphor: ἥξεστι λέγειν, ὡστε δει αὐτὸν εὐθυμῶσιν ὡς μεταφοραὶ λεγθείσαι, δῆλον δτι αὐτὰ καὶ εἰκόνες ἔσονται, καὶ αἱ εἰκόνες μεταφορὰi λόγον δεόμεναι. (Rhet. III. 4. 1407a 11-15) The meaning of all but the last phrase is clear enough. Aristotle is saying that any of the examples of *el’wv* which he has given could also be expressed as metaphor, *mutatis mutandis*, and that any fine metaphor can be changed into an *el’wv*. The final phrase of the passage, however: καὶ αἱ εἰκόνες μεταφοραὶ λόγον δεόμεναι is puzzling, the difficulty lying specifically in the last two words.

The words have been interpreted in two quite different ways, as “explanation” or “development” and as “(single) word.” The first interpretation, adopted by most recent commentators, springs from Aristotle’s statement that *el’wv* is more extended than metaphor. Barbarus’ translation of the Rhetoric is an early illustration: nam collatio non alia re distat a translatione, quam quod pluribus verbis absolutur. Riccobonus, followed by

1) I have benefitted greatly from the advice of Professor Zeph Stewart in the preparation of this article. I am also most grateful for the suggestions and criticisms of Professor R. Kassel.

2) Rhet. III. 10. 1410b 18-19, διὸ ἦπτον ἠδύ, δτι μακροτέρος.

the Berlin edition of Aristotle, has a more literal Latin translation: *et imagines translationes rationis indigentes*\(^4\)). Among English commentators Jebb’s translation may illustrate: “and similes, with the explanation omitted, will appear as metaphors”\(^5\)). A recent German translation by Gohlke follows this interpretation: “... und diese wieder zu bildhaften Ausdrücken sich eignen, wenn man die Begründung wegläßt”\(^6\)).

The difficulty with this interpretation of the phrase lies in the complex meaning assigned to *λόγον*. *λόγος* carries the meaning “explanation” often enough, but in the sense of “pretext”, “reason”, “plea”. It also carries the meaning “argument”, but in the sense of “statement of thought”. There would not seem to be instances in which the term means “explanation”, “argument” in the sense of “details”, the meaning required by this first interpretation.

The second interpretation of *λόγον*, as “(single, introductory) word”, stems from the view that there was precisely the same distinction in Aristotle between *εἴκων* and *μεταφορά* as the modern distinction between simile and metaphor. Victorius provides an early illustration of this interpretation: *imagines enim nihil aliud sunt nisi translationes, quae egeant conformatione quadam orationis particulaque, quae si adiuncta fuerit, ilico sunt imagines*\(^7\)); Saint-Hilaire a later one: “et les comparaisons sont également des métaphores, auxquelles il ne manque qu’un mot”\(^8\)).


\(^7\) Petri Victorii Commentarii in tres libros Aristotelis de Arte Dicendi (Florence, 1548).

\(^8\) Rhetorique d’Aristote, vol. II, ed. and trans. J.B. Saint-Hilaire (Paris, 1870). He adds: „Le texte n’est pas très-clair; je pense que ceci veut dire que la métaphore n’a pas le mot Comme, qui indique nettement la comparaison.” Other translations and commentaries which follow this second interpretation include: de Balmes’ translation of Avverroes’ commentary (1550–52), Maioragius (1591), Randolph (1759), Buhle (1793), Gillies (1823), Mynas (1837), Dübner (1848), Bonafoüs (1856), Buckley (1857), Tovar (1953).
The interpretation of λόγος as "(single) word" seems as difficult as the meaning "explanation", "development", for two reasons. First, λόγος means "word" extremely rarely, if ever, in classical Greek. ἔπος, λέξις, ὄνομα, and ἰδέα are the regular terms, ὄνομα indeed occurring in this sense in a passage early in Book III of the Rhetoric⁹). LSJ cites Rhet. III. 3. 1406a 36, a passage in close proximity to the present one, as a rare instance of λόγος meaning "(single) word". An examination of the passage, however, suggests that even here λόγος does not necessarily have this meaning. The passage reads: οἱ δ' ἄνθρωποι τοῖς δυσλογις χρώνται ἡταν ἀνώνυμον ἢ καὶ δ' λόγος εὐσύνθετος, οἷον τὸ χρονοτραβεῖν. It seems at least as natural to take λόγος in the sense of an "idea" which is easily expressed as a compound form. The case, then, for λόγος meaning simply "word" at 1406a 36 is not clear, and it would be hazardous to use it to support the meaning "word" for λόγος at 1407a 15.

A further argument against this interpretation of λόγος is the overly narrow meaning which must, as a result, be assigned to εἰκών. If the phrase is to mean "And εἰκώνες lacking a single word will be metaphors", then εἰκώνες must be translated by the limited term "similes", comparisons containing specific introductory words which, if removed, transform the similes into metaphors; e.g. Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud" becomes "I wandered lonely, a cloud". εἰκών appears not, however, to be used in quite this way in the rest of chapter 4, and indeed in the rest of the Rhetoric. The definition of εἰκών at the beginning of the chapter includes an illustration which is, in fact, a simile¹⁰), but the examples of εἰκών which follow, ten in all, taken from fifth and fourth century orators and prose writers, show that simile is only one type of comparison which Aristotle covers by his term εἰκών. The method of citation makes it impossible to reconstruct the exact wording of those original passages which are no longer extant. The latter is the famous illustration of the perils of democracy by means of the image of unruly sailors casting aside their pilot.

⁹) III. 2. 1404b 5, in the sense of "single words" as opposed to "phrases" ἰδέα; but see Aeschines 2. 122 for an instance of ἰδέα meaning "word".

¹⁰) ὡς δὲ λέων ἐπάφοσθαι, based probably on II. 20. 164, ὡςτο λέων ὡς. 


¹²) Rep. V. 469d 9-e 2; VI. 488a 7-b 3. The latter is the famous illustration of the perils of democracy by means of the image of unruly sailors casting aside their pilot.
here signifies to Aristotle various types of stylistic comparison. Simile is one of these types but is not the only one. Since, therefore, Aristotle seems to mean by εἰκών something broader than the English term “simile”, it is again hard to assign to λόγου the meaning of “(single) word” which would unduly restrict the range of εἰκών.

In sum, neither of the two interpretations traditionally put forward for the phrase λόγου δεόμεναι is satisfactory. It is interesting to note that one early commentary in a sense recognizes this and straddles the fence by presenting both interpretations, an impossible position. The anonymous Greek commentator on the Rhetoric stresses in most of his remarks on chapter 4 that the addition or subtraction of ὡς will create, respectively, an εἰκών or a μεταφορά. He has chosen, in other words, the interpretation of λόγου as “(single) word”. His actual comment on the whole phrase, however, reveals that he is trying to incorporate also the meaning “development”, “explanation”:

καὶ αἱ εἰκόνες αὖτα πάλιν τῇ ἀφαίρεσι τοῦ ὡς ἔσονται μεταφορά

λόγου δεόμεναι ἦτοι οἰκονομίας ἰδεῖ γὰρ ἀφελεῖν τὸ ὡς ἕξ αὐτῶν. ἦ τὸ λόγου δεόμεναι ἦτοι ἐρμηνείας αἱ γὰρ εἰκόνες ᾽ασαφέστερα εἰσι τῶν μεταφορῶν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο προσθήκη τῶν σαφεστέρας τάστας ποιήσομεν.

This attempt to combine the two separate interpretations of λόγου δεόμεναι serves only to confirm that the whole phrase καὶ αἱ εἰκόνες μεταφορά λόγου δεόμεναι cannot be explained satisfactorily as it stands. No significant variant is given by the manuscripts (μεταφοράς for μεταφορά in Parisinus 1741 is clearly a scribal mistake), and any effort at emendation, therefore, must be based on sense alone. The simplest course would be to strike out λόγου δεόμεναι. The sentence can certainly stand

13) Aristotle uses a simile in his opening definition of εἰκών perhaps because it is a more convenient and concise way of exemplifying a comparison vs. a metaphor than would be a long illustrative comparison.
15) My emphasis.
16) My emphasis.
18) It is interesting to see, however, that another passage in the Rhetoric containing the words λόγος and δεόμενος (I. 2. 13.56b 37, ἐκ τῶν λόγου δεόμενον) has been questioned for quite different reasons by H. Maier, Die Syllogistik des Aristoteles (Tübingen, 1896), vol. II, part 1, p. 476, note 2.
without the phrase, but its origin then remains unaccounted for. More difficult, but potentially more satisfactory, is conjecture. Although the meanings “development” and “(single) word” seem unlikely for λόγον, there is another meaning of λόγος which Aristotle has used already in connection with εἰκών and which would seem wholly fitting in these closing remarks of his first discussion of εἰκών. That meaning is “prose”, as opposed to “poetry”. In the opening paragraph of the chapter, Aristotle states that an εἰκών is poetical and should be used only rarely in prose: χρήσιμον δὲ ἡ εἰκών καὶ ἐν λόγῳ, διλυγάμενος δὲ: ποιητικόν γάρ. (Rhet. III. 4. 1406b 24–25) This is not the only instance in Book III of λόγος in the meaning of “prose”. In chapter 1, Aristotle remarks that people consider Gorgias’ poetic prose very beautiful but that this is not as it should be: ἀλλ’ ἐπέδρα λόγον καὶ ποιητικος λέξεως ἔστιν. (Rhet. III. 1. 1404a 28–29) A similar thought occurs near the beginning of chapter 2: ἡ γάρ ποιητική [sc. λέξις] ἵνας οὐ ταπεινή, ἀλλ’ οὐ πρέπουσα λόγῳ. (Rhet. III. 2. 1404b 4–5) λόγος in this sense, then, is common in the early chapters of Book III and is connected specifically with εἰκών at the beginning of chapter 4. Since our phrase is part of the summing up of Aristotle’s comments on εἰκών thus far, it would be natural for the meaning of λόγος to stress again the idea that εἰκών is to be used only infrequently in prose.

In this case, the corruption lies less in λόγον than in δεόμεναι, and I suggest that the original phrase read something like: καὶ αἱ εἰκόνες μεταφοραὶ, λόγῳ δὲ οὐ πρέπουσαι („And comparisons will be metaphors, but in prose not fitting“). οὐ πρέπουσαι is suggested only exempli gratia; there is no immediately obvious emendation. Another possibility, perhaps better palaeographically but not as attractive as a participial form and somewhat harsh with a dative, is λόγῳ δὲ σπάναι, or σπάνοι (Aristotle uses the word as both two- and three-termination). A third possibility, which preserves the genitive, is λόγου δὲ οὖν οικεῖαι. Any of these readings would give an easy sense to the passage; none is palaeographically desperate.

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19) The term does not appear elsewhere in the Rhetoric, but H. Bonitz, Index Aristotelicus (Berlin, 1870) lists more than a dozen instances from other works.

20) Professor H. Lloyd-Jones has suggested this possibility.
In chapter II of Book III, Aristotle again discusses *eixwv* in connection with metaphor. His particular concern is the *metaphorà kai' analogían*, the proportional metaphor, which he considers the finest kind. An example21), which Aristotle probably takes from Timotheus, is "The shield is the bowl of Ares"22). This is a proportional metaphor because it is composed of two parts which contain reciprocal terms. In other words, the example can be reversed and expressed as "The bowl is the shield of Dionysus"23). Aristotle describes the proportional metaphor as *on x ápiolòv*, the nonproportional as *ápiolòv*24), and fine comparisons, *eudoumoðsai eixónes*, are said to be closely related to proportional metaphors, although *eixónes* in general can also be constructed from simple (*ápiolòv*), nonproportional metaphors. Two examples are given of *eixónes* which, if they were to be expressed as metaphors, would be simple ones: *kal eixá̂sos ontos, onon piðhēs aöλητην, ló̂nω ψακαζομένω μύστα*.(Rhet. III. 11. 1413a 3–4) Aristotle then seems to repeat for emphasis that fine comparisons are those constructed in an equivalent fashion to proportional metaphors, and he appends three examples of these. His language, however, is so abrupt and incomplete that once again a corruption may be suspected: to de e Ṿ̂ ἕστιν ὅταν μεταφορὰ ἤ ἕστιν γάρ εἰκᾶσαι... [and the examples follow]. (Rhet. III. 11. 1413a 5–6) *eixá̂sos* is easily understood with to de e Ṿ̂, and there is thus an implied contrast between "to make *eixónes* in a fine way" and the previous, simpler "to make *eixónes*". The words which follow, however, ὅταν μεταφορὰ ἤ, have been explained in two different ways by editors and translators.

The usual interpretation has been a literal one. Barbarus' translation25) is an early representative: *Speciosissima vero similitudo est, in qua translationis quoque permixta est gratia*. Cope translates: "Excellence is attained in them when they contain (involve) metaphor"26). There are two difficulties in this inter-

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22) ἢ ἄστις ἐστὶν τετίμη "Ἀρεως, cf. Timotheus, frag. 21 (Page).
23) Aristotle explains this basic feature of the proportional metaphor at the very end of chapter 4, at 1407a 15–18.
24) What he means by nonproportional is some such metaphor as "They showed boiling anger."
25) Barbarus, op. cit. (see note 3).
26) Cope, Rhetoric, vol. III, p. 139. Others who have followed this interpretation include: the anonymous commentator, Trapezuntius, Vic-
interpretation. The first is that Aristotle's statement would be absurd if he means no more than that fine (εὖ) comparisons are those which contain metaphor, since the immediately preceding sentence has stated that comparisons in general can be formed which contain metaphor. Second, the first of the three examples of τὸ δὲ εὖ [εἰκὼν] is formed from the proportional metaphor which has been used already, "The shield is the bowl of Ares".

It would seem that "proportional" must be understood with μεταφορά in the phrase ὅταν μεταφορὰ ἡ. Maioragius' early translation realized this: Landantur (inguit) imagines, quoties in eis apparent translatio, praeertim eius generis, quod a proportione ducitur\(^{27}\), as also did Jebb's translation: "But the happy simile\(^ {28}\) is when there is a 'proportional' metaphor"\(^ {29}\). The text, however, should be corrected to say what Aristotle means, and I suggest that the phrase ἡ κατ' ἀναλογίαν has been dropped. There is no manuscript difficulty which might point toward this particular omission, but a plausible sequence can be proposed. If the original phrase was ὅταν μεταφορὰ ἡ κατ' ἀναλογίαν ἡ, a copyist may have moved his eye from μεταφορὰ not to the first but to the second eta. Alternately, if the original phrase was ὅταν ἡ κατ' ἀναλογίαν ἡ, a copyist may have skipped from ὅταν to ἡ because of the similar -av ending of ἀναλογίαν, with μεταφορά introduced later as a gloss. Either sequence reflects a common mistake among ancient and medieval copyists and enables the text to say what it means.

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\(^{27}\) Maioragius, op. cit. (see note 8).

\(^{28}\) "Simile," I repeat, is misleading as a translation of εἰκόν.

\(^{29}\) Jebb, op. cit., p. 175 (see note 5). Riccobonus, Goulston, Battie, and Freese have also followed this interpretation.