

Aristotle on Use of Homonymy in the *Rhetoric*

Mikołaj Domaradzki

Readers of Aristotle are familiar with his frequent assertions that something is or is not said ‘homonymously’ (ὁμωνύμως), and homonymy has always been recognized as an important term in Aristotle’s technical vocabulary.¹ It is the subject of two recent books: Shields 1999 and Ward 2008. Yet neither of these excellent books contains any treatment of Aristotle’s view of homonymy in the *Rhetoric*. As a matter of fact, the preponderance of scholars investigating Aristotle’s account of homonymy either completely disregard the testimony of the *Rhetoric*² or only gesture to it sporadically.³ This lack of scholarly interest in the *Rhetoric*’s ὁμωνυμία could, at least to some extent, be connected to the fact that the term appears only four times in the treatise (1401a13, 1404b38, 1412b12, 1412b13), which suggests that the role of homonymy remains marginal within the work.⁴

I seek to fill the research gap on the homonymy in the *Rhetoric* by examining 1401a13-25, 1404b37-39, and 1412b4-33 with a view to establishing what kind of homonymy the Stagirite discusses in the treatise and how it is employed there. I argue that the *Rhetoric*’s ὁμωνυμία poses various classification problems, since the variety of its instantiations makes it very hard to ascertain what single view underlies the concept of homonymy in the treatise. To reconstruct the way the *Rhetoric* suggests that homonymy is utilized in the context of rhetoric, the study will also investigate whether the treatise values homonymy negatively or positively.

I. The *Categories*’ definition of homonymy and its relevance for the *Rhetoric*

It may seem natural to begin with *Categories* 1a1-2, where homonyms are famously defined as having ‘only the name in common’ (ὄνομα μόνον κοινόν) but a ‘different account of being corresponding to the name’ (κατὰ τοῦνομα λόγος τῆς οὐσίας ἕτερος).⁵ Yet such an approach must allow for quite different

¹ See, e.g., Bonitz 1870 or, more recently, Höffe 2005. The significance of this term should be noted in any discussion of Aristotle’s thought (see, e.g., Berti 1979, 73 and 2006, 61).

² See, e.g., Owen 1960 and 1965; Anton 1968; Fortenbaugh 1975; Hamlyn 1977/1978; Ferejohn 1980; Irwin 1981; MacDonald 1989; Rapp 1992; Butler 1997; Berti 2001; Lewis 2004; Brakas 2011.

³ Thus, Barnes 1971, 79; Hintikka 1973, 9 (when discussing synonymy), 15; Tarán 1978, 87-89, 95.

⁴ One should be careful, however, with such quantitatively based assumptions given that the only occurrence of the term in *Categories* 1a1 provides us with the very definition of homonymy.

⁵ Where no English reference is provided, the translation is my own.

contexts of discussion. The *Rhetoric* does not speak of ὁμωνυμία to prepare for science generally, but the context is rhetoric, and all uses of the term homonymy in the treatise come from passages that either deal with linguistic fallacies or with *lexis* (i.e., diction).

The *Categories*' view of homonymy builds on Aristotle's reinterpretation of Plato's use of the term and his criticism of Plato's failure to recognize the homonymy of various philosophical terms. Aristotle picks up the term that Plato employs (see especially *Ti.* 52a1-7, *Phd.* 78d10-e2, and *Parm.* 133d2-3) to indicate that sensible particulars and intelligible Forms have the same name but different nature.⁶ And Aristotle critiques Plato for his failure to appreciate the homonymy of numerous crucial notions. A prime example thereof is the Good, which *Topics* 107a11-12 characterizes as 'homonymous' (ὁμώνυμον) and *Nicomachean Ethics* 1096a23-24—as 'said in as many ways as Being' (ἰσαχῶς λέγεται τῷ ὄντι) precisely to signal the inadequacy of Plato's account.⁷ In both works, Aristotle argues that if the Good is predicated in different categories, then it must refer to distinct things. Thus, for example, when the Good is said with reference to medicine it denotes 'what produces health', but when it is said with reference to the soul it denotes 'being courageous'. This shows that the Good is not a single universal that is common to all good things. The Good is homonymous in the sense that it designates different things and is therefore spoken of in many ways (as is Being).

The *Rhetoric*, however, assumes a completely different perspective. In ii 24, Aristotle discusses various apparent enthymemes. Among these, the Stagirite cites (1401a13-15) the fallacy 'due to homonymy' (παρὰ τὴν ὁμωνυμίαν), which he first illustrates by the argument that presents a 'mouse' (μῦς) as a worthy creature on the grounds that the 'mysteries' (μυστήρια), i.e., the most honored of all religious festivals, is derived from it. The argument exploits the linguistic fact that the word μῦς sounds the same as the μυσ- in μυστήρια,⁸ and all the examples that Aristotle offers here are linguistic fallacies, which reveals a perspective quite distinct from that of the *Categories*. When the Stagirite considers homonymy at *Rhetoric* 1401a13-25 his aim is to expose its frequent abuse by the sophists for the purpose of deception and manipulation rather than to examine the various manners of predication. In connection with this we should also note that one may legitimately wonder whether (and, if so, to what extent) fallacies such as the

⁶ Although the undeniable lexical similarities in nomenclature point immediately to Speusippus' influence on Aristotle's tripartite account, Ward 2008, 31-42, 201-205 has made a very strong case for Plato's primary impact (cf. also Anton 1968, 318n6; Shields 1999, 69n73; Höffe 2005, 259). For discussions of Speusippus' influence on Aristotle, see, e.g., Anton 1968, 319-320; Barnes 1971, 65-80; Tarán 1978, 73-99; Ward 2008, 18-26.

⁷ For discussions, see Kosman 1968, 171-174; Irwin 1981, 539-540; MacDonald 1989, 150-174; Shields 1999, 194-216. Smith 1997, 97 and Ward 2008, 66 stress the similarity between the argument at *Top.* i 15 and the one presented in *EN* i 6.

⁸ Most recently, Gastaldi 2014, 532 has appropriately stressed this: 'La seconda sottospecie di fallacia che deriva dall'uso dell'espressione linguistica è costituita dall'omonimia, cioè dall'ambiguità verbale, e dunque dal fatto che oggetti differenti siano designati con lo stesso termine.'

μῦς/μυστήρια equivocation qualify as instances of ‘genuine’ homonymy. After all, *Categories* 1a1 stipulates that one and the same name be ‘common’ (κοινόν), whereas the mouse/mysteries fallacy builds in fact on two distinct names (μυστήρια supposedly being derived from μῦς). Thus, the μῦς/μυστήρια equivocation suggests that homonymy is a heterogeneous and fluctuating concept in Aristotle, which does not always tally with the definition of homonymy given in the *Categories*. The same applies to all the examples given in *Rhetoric* iii 11, which are treated as part of the *lexis*.

The different use of homonymy in rhetoric can be seen in 1412b4-33, where Aristotle considers the various homonymous expressions that instantiate τὰ ἄστεϊα, i.e., ‘witticisms’ or, as Kennedy 2007 renders it, ‘urbanities’. Among these, Aristotle cites (1412b13) the witty saying that declares a person named ‘Bearable’ (Ἀνάσχετος) to be ‘not bearable’ (οὐκ ἀνασχετός). This shows, again, that the *Rhetoric* is not concerned with the various manners of predication. Furthermore, we should note that here too one may ask about the extent to which equivocations such as the Ἀνάσχετος/ἀνασχετός pun qualify as instances of homonymy consistent with *Categories* 1a1, since similarly to the μῦς/μυστήρια fallacy the Ἀνάσχετος/ἀνασχετός pun also appears to involve two distinct words.

We see that the idiosyncrasy and complexity of the *Rhetoric*’s ὁμωνυμία does not obviously accord with the definition of homonymy given in the *Categories*. Let us, therefore, try to establish what kind of homonymy appears in the *Rhetoric*.

II. What type of homonymy does Aristotle discuss in the *Rhetoric*?

In different treatises, Aristotle distinguishes between various types of homonymy.⁹ Thus, for example, *Sophistical Refutations* 182b13-27 differentiates between ‘the silliest’ (εὐηθέστατος) form of homonymy, which manifests itself in such humorous fallacies as, for instance, ‘a man carried δίφρον (seat/chariot) down the stairs’ and a form of homonymy that has eluded even ‘the most experienced’ (ἐμπειροτάτους) thinkers, as is testified by the fact that only some of them acknowledge that ‘One and Being are said in many ways’ (πολλαχῶς...τὸ ἐν λέγεσθαι καὶ τὸ ὄν). In a similar vein, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1129a26-33, opposes the homonymy that easily ‘escapes [our] notice’ (λανθάνει) and the homonymy that is more ‘conspicuous’ (δῆλη): the more elusive homonymy is illustrated by

⁹ This has given rise to the famous controversy over the development of Aristotle’s thought on homonymy. The dispute goes back to the classic works of Jaeger 1912, 1923 and Cherniss 1935, 1944. More recently, Owen 1960 (esp. 170-179) and 1965 (e.g., 70, 95) argued that the notion of core-dependent homonymy (which he termed ‘focal meaning’) should be seen as a much later development that is ‘beyond the *Organon*’ (e.g., Owen 1960, 173) and that, consequently, has little to do with the definition of homonymy presented in the *Categories* (cf. also Aubenque 1962, 181). This position has been convincingly challenged by Irwin 1981, 531-533; Shields 1999, 20-28, 67-70, 220-224; and Ward 2008, 17-18, 62-64, 73-76. I take it that ‘multivocality’ (i.e., πολλαχῶς or πλεοναχῶς λέγεται) is a special case of (systematically related) homonymy that is perfectly reconcilable with the account of homonymy that is to be found in the *Organon*. See also n21 below.

the adjective ἄδικος, which has several meanings that are quite ‘close’ (σύνεγγυς) to one another (i.e., ‘lawless’, ‘rapacious’, ‘unfair’), whereas the more evident homonymy is illustrated by the noun κλείς, which has meanings that are ‘far away from’ (πόρρω) each other (i.e., ‘collarbone’ *versus* ‘key’).

Both these testimonies show that Aristotle distinguishes between the more hidden and the more obvious homonymy. In the more hidden, the particular senses are frequently ‘related’ in one way or another (see, e.g., *Phys.* 249a24: ἐγγύς and the above cited *EN* 1129a27: σύνεγγυς), which is why their definitions overlap to some extent.¹⁰ In the case of the more obvious homonymy, the various things involved are ‘homonyms by chance’ (*EN* 1096b26-27: ἀπὸ τύχης ὁμωνύμοις), which is why the particular senses are ‘far removed’ from one another (see, e.g., *Phys.* 249a23-24: πολὺ ἀπέχουσαι and the above cited *EN* 1129a28: πόρρω) so that their definitions have nothing in common.¹¹ While the obvious and accidental homonymy is exemplified by such trivially ambiguous cases as the aforementioned δίφρος or κλείς, these chance homonyms are elsewhere characterized as ‘said wholly homonymously’ (*EE* 1236a17: πάνπαν λέγεσθαι ὁμωνύμως). This homonymy ‘from chance’ comprises items that arise from bizarre accidents of language¹² and remains the very opposite of the πρὸς ἕν homonymy, whose items are systematically associated around a core.¹³

At first look it may seem obvious that the homonyms that Aristotle discusses in the *Rhetoric* belong to the category of trivial and unrelated homonymy. In Shields’ 1999, 39-40 terminology, they could be, then, classified as ‘non-seductive discrete homonyms’. Evidently, ‘mouse’ and ‘mysteries’ are discretely homonymous, as they have nothing definitional in common and their accounts do not overlap in any way. However, the problem is how all these fallacious enthymemes that Aristotle discusses in the *Rhetoric* can be produced if the homonyms involved have nothing at all in common? Clearly, the homonyms must be somehow (made) ‘seductive’ if the apparent enthymemes that exploit them are to deceive (‘seduce’) people. The same applies to the urbanities: if they are to surprise and educate the listeners, then the homonyms involved must be somehow (made) ‘seductive’.

Among the ‘seductive’ homonyms, Shields 1999, 41 differentiates between the following two types: ‘associated’ and ‘discrete’. Seductive associated homonymy comprises items whose accounts overlap, which is precisely why they can be seductive (e.g., the aforementioned ἄδικος). Seductive discrete homonymy, on the other hand, comprises items that are genuine at one time and

¹⁰ Scholars have variously termed this homonymy as, among others, ‘connected’ (e.g., Irwin 1981), ‘associated’ (e.g., Shields 1999) or ‘systematic’ (e.g., Ward 2008).

¹¹ Shields 1999, 11 (and *passim*) characterizes such homonymy as ‘discrete’.

¹² Rapp 1992, 534 aptly points out that the accidental homonymy results solely from ‘eine Besonderheit der sprachlichen Konvention’.

¹³ The πρὸς ἕν association has also been termed differently as, among others, ‘focal meaning’ (e.g., Owen 1960), ‘focal connection’ (e.g., Irwin 1981), ‘Pros-Hen-Relation’ (e.g., Rapp 1992), ‘core-dependence’ (e.g., Shields 1999 and Ward 2008) or ‘πρὸς ἕν signification’ (Brakas 2011).

spurious at some other: an axe that for some reason has lost its ability to chop will now be an ‘axe’ only homonymously (*De an.* 412b10-15), an eye that cannot see is not really an eye except homonymously (412b18-22), etc.¹⁴ I argue below that while some instantiations of the *Rhetoric*’s ὁμωνυμία can easily be subsumed under Shields’ typology, others prove more recalcitrant. This is due to the fact that the *Rhetoric*’s ὁμωνυμία forms a cline: from truly associated homonyms through more discrete ones to cases that seem to defy all classifications. Let us begin with the easier cases and then move on to the more peculiar ones.

Three instantiations of the *Rhetoric*’s ὁμωνυμία are relatively uncontroversial, since they are associated in a way that is very similar to the aforementioned ἄδικος (their accounts overlap significantly, but not completely). These are κοινός, ξένος, and ἄξιος.

καὶ τὸ κοινωνικὸν φάναι τὸν Ἑρμῆν εἶναι μάλιστα τῶν θεῶν· μόνος γὰρ καλεῖται κοινὸς Ἑρμῆς (1401a21-22): hailing Hermes as the most sociable of the gods. Aristotle suggests that the two relevant meanings of κοινός (i.e., ‘sociable’ and ‘sharing’) are connected. He shows that the fallacious argument may be supported by a reference to the popular expression ‘common Hermes’ (κοινὸς Ἑρμῆς), which was used when someone had a stroke of luck and found something precious. As Hermes was the god of luck, the finder was expected to share their ‘gift of Hermes’ (τὸ ἔρμαιον) and go halves. Thus, the accompanying person would exclaim ‘common Hermes’ to indicate that the finder should ‘share’ the luck and, thus, be ‘sociable’. The homonymy that allows one to hail the ‘sharing’ Hermes as the ‘most sociable’ (κοινωνικός) of the gods is grounded in the then custom and its underlying system of beliefs. What makes these seductive homonyms associated is the fact that their accounts overlap considerably: if a sociable person is fond of the company of others, then they will enjoy sharing things with them.

καὶ ‘οὐκ ἂν γένοιο μάλλον ἢ σε δεῖ ξένος’· ‘ξένος’ <γάρ> ‘οὐ μάλλον ἢ σε δεῖ’ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ‘οὐ δεῖ τὸν ξένον ξένον ἀεὶ εἶναι’· ἀλλότριον γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο (1412b14-16): stranger does not have to be strange. The two meanings that the ξένος pun opposes are also closely associated.¹⁵ Clearly, it is not an accident that a stranger and a strange person are homonymously called ξένος. When one is a ‘stranger’ in a land (whether as a ‘guest’, ‘visitor’, ‘wanderer’, or ‘refugee’), one may very easily strike the host as being ‘strange’ or ‘unusual’ due to some belief or custom that is specific to one’s culture and, thereby, ‘alien’ to the host. Given that there is a significant definitional overlap between these two homonyms, they cannot be labeled as discrete. The matter does not seem to require any elaborate consideration, since the homonymy of the two senses of the Greek ξένος is nicely

¹⁴ Shields 1999, 29-35 has persuasively argued that this non-accidental homonymy builds on the principle of functional determination. For a good discussion of Aristotle’s view that losing functionality is tantamount to no longer having the essence, see Polansky 2007, 163-170. Cf. also Mirus 2001, 357-373.

¹⁵ Hintikka 1973, 15, *ad loc.* quite rightly finds it ‘difficult to believe that Aristotle should not have recognized any connection between the different applications of ξένος’.

preserved in the English ‘strange-stranger’ pun.

τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ τὸ Ἀναξανδρίδου τὸ ἐπαινούμενον, ‘καλὸν γ’ ἀποθανεῖν πρὶν θανάτου δρᾶν ἄξιον.’ ταὐτὸ γάρ ἐστι τῷ εἰπεῖν ‘ἄξιόν γ’ ἀποθανεῖν μὴ ὄντα ἄξιον ἀποθανεῖν’, ἢ ‘ἄξιόν γ’ ἀποθανεῖν μὴ θανάτου ἄξιον ὄντα’, ἢ ‘μὴ ποιῶντα θανάτου ἄξια’. (1412b16-21): worthy death rather than worthy of death.

In all the examples that Aristotle gives, the play is on two closely related meanings.¹⁶ The idea conveyed by this pun is that an ‘estimable’ (ἄξιος) person prefers to perish before they commit something ‘deserving’ (ἄξιος) death. Thus, it is ‘worthy’ (ἄξιος) to die while one is not yet ‘worthy of’ (ἄξιος) death. One more time, the accounts of these associated homonyms overlap considerably: worthy means deserving (if someone is worthy of something, they simply deserve it) so both these definitions have something in common and the homonyms need to be perceived as related. Also this homonymy is nicely preserved in the English language.

Three other instantiations of the *Rhetoric*’s ὁμωνυμία refer to quite distinct things, but they can become seductive if a connection between their meanings is established. These are κύων, λόγος, and ἀρχή.

ἢ εἴ τις κύνα ἐγκωμιάζων τὸν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ συμπααραλαμβάνοι, ἢ τὸν Πᾶνα, ὅτι Πίνδαρος ἔφησεν ‘ὦ μάκαρ, ὃν τε μεγάλας θεοῦ κύνα παντοδαπὸν καλέουσιν Ὀλύμπιοι’, ἢ ὅτι τὸ μηδὲνα εἶναι κύν’ ἀτιμώτατόν ἐστιν, ὥστε τὸ κύνα δῆλον ὅτι τίμιον (1401a15-21): delivering an encomium of the dog. Aristotle clearly believes that some seductive homonymy is involved here, for he gives the argument as an illustration of a fallacious enthymeme. First of all (1401a15-16), then, one may praise the dog by making reference to ‘the one in heaven’ (τὸν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ). That is one may exploit the fact that κύων means not only ‘the animal’ but also ‘the star’ (Sirius). The connection between the two meanings of the word is grounded in the then mythical beliefs (cf., e.g., Hom. *Il.* xxii 29 or Sophocl. Fr. 803), and Aristotle himself frequently uses the term in this sense (see, e.g., *Met.* 361b35; *HA* 547a14, 600a4, 602a26). Subsequently, the Stagirite says (1401a16-19) that one may also praise the dog by making reference to the god Pan, whom Pindar (*Parth.* Fr. 96) calls ‘dog’. Finally, the last justification of the encomium that Aristotle provides (1401a20-21) is to say that the dog must be an honorable animal, since ‘it is most dishonorable for there to be no “dog”’ (Kennedy trans.). If Aristotle does make reference here to Diogenes the Cynic,¹⁷ then this meaning of κύων is also seductively connected (by a metaphorical extension) to the original sense: in light of their ‘dog-like’ life (shameless repudiation of all conventions, cult of indifference, living on the streets), the Cynics were commonly referred to as ‘dogs’ (cf., e.g., Diog. Laert. vi 19, 60) and Aristotle himself uses the word in this sense in *Rhetoric* 1411a24. Thus, all the homonyms that produce the encomium can be made seductive, even though they are in fact discrete: the

¹⁶ I agree with Rapp 2002b, 915 that all these examples can be characterized as ‘nur leicht varierten’, since they all ‘beruhen auf einer Ambiguität der Formulierung “des Todes würdig sein”’.

¹⁷ As suggested by the medieval commentator Stephanus (see, e.g., Grimaldi 1988, 340; Krapinger 1999, 221n225; Rapp 2002b, 781; Kennedy 2007, 185n191).

accounts of (1) being an animal, (2) being a star, and (3) being a Cynic are distinct, but this fallacious enthymeme exploits the aforementioned mythological and/or metaphorical connection(s) to make the homonyms involved seductive. Hence, this deceptive praise of the dog establishes a definitional overlap between completely different entities.

καὶ τὸ τὸν λόγον εἶναι σπουδαιότατον, ὅτι οἱ ἀγαθοὶ ἄνδρες οὐ χρημάτων ἀλλὰ λόγου εἰσὶν ἄξιοι· τὸ γὰρ λόγον ἄξιον οὐχ ἀπλῶς λέγεται (1401a22-25): elevating λόγος to the rank of the best thing. Also in this case, Aristotle implies that a seductive homonymy underlies this fallacious enthymeme. The term λόγος belongs to the most notoriously ambiguous words of ancient Greek. Given the subject of the *Rhetoric*, one may rather safely assume that it is ‘speech’ that is meant to be praised here.¹⁸ What makes the equivocation work is the fact that the word also means ‘esteem’ and ‘consideration’. Consequently, it is the positive evaluation embedded in this sense of the word that makes it possible to elevate λόγος to the rank of the best thing. Thus, λόγος becomes the best thing on account of the fact that good men ‘are worthy of esteem/consideration’ (λόγου εἰσὶν ἄξιοι). Now, ‘esteem’ and ‘speech’ signify distinct things: esteem is a feeling (of respect and admiration), whereas speech is an ability, manner, or product (of speaking). Although the accounts of these homonyms are different, it is clear that ancient Greeks did perceive some (seductive) connection between the two senses of λόγος. After all, we speak about and praise those we esteem. This seems to be reflected in the word ἀξιόλογος, which means ‘worthy of mention’, ‘remarkable’, ‘distinguished’ (see, e.g., Thuc. ii 10). Hence, even though ‘esteem’ and ‘speech’ refer to distinct things, Aristotle suggests that one can easily make these homonyms seductive. The same applies to the ἀρχή pun.

οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὰ ἀστεία, οἷον τὸ φάναι Ἀθηναίους τὴν τῆς θαλάττης ἀρχὴν μὴ ἀρχὴν εἶναι τῶν κακῶν· ὄνασθαι γάρ. ἢ ὥσπερ Ἰσοκράτης τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆ πόλει ἀρχὴν εἶναι τῶν κακῶν. ἀμφοτέρως γὰρ ὁ οὐκ ἂν φήθη τις ἐρεῖν, τοῦτ' εἴρηται, καὶ ἐγνώσθη ὅτι ἀληθές· τὸ τε γὰρ τὴν ἀρχὴν φάναι ἀρχὴν εἶναι οὐθὲν σοφόν, ἀλλ' οὐχ οὕτω λέγει ἀλλ' ἄλλως, καὶ ἀρχὴν οὐχ ὃ εἶπεν ἀπόφησιν, ἀλλ' ἄλλως (1412b4-11): power as the beginning of misfortunes. Aristotle cites Isocrates (*Philippus* 61, *Paneg.* 119, *De pace* 101), who plays on the two meanings of the word: one can say that the ‘empire’ (ἀρχή) of the sea was or was not the ‘beginning’ (ἀρχή) of the doom for the Athenians. Again, ‘power’ and ‘origin’ signify distinct things that have different accounts. Notwithstanding this, the connection between the two senses of the word ἀρχή must have been quite appealing (seductive): what is at the beginning and in the beginning, i.e., what occupies the first place spatially and temporarily, was perceived as having power and sovereignty. That is precisely the idea that underlies the concept of the first ‘principle’ of all things that the Presocratic physicists develop (see, e.g., *Simpl. Phys.* 150.23). Importantly, one finds a highly comparable use of the homonymy under consid-

¹⁸ Thus, e.g., ‘discours’ in Dufour 1991, ‘Rede’ in Krapinger 1999 and Rapp 2002a, ‘discorso’ in Zanatta 2004 and Gastaldi 2014. Freese 1926 has ‘words’, while others (e.g., Ruelle 1882 or Kennedy 2007) leave the word in transliteration.

eration in the recently discovered Derveni papyrus (XV 7-8), where the ‘magistracy’ (ἀρχή) of Kronos marks the ‘beginning’ (ἀρχή) of a new era in the history of the universe.¹⁹ Thus, although ‘power’ and ‘beginning’ are distinct things, Aristotle shows that their homonymy can easily become seductive when employed in a witty saying.

To generate the aforementioned fallacies and urbanities the homonyms involved must be somehow (made) seductive. Aristotle shows that those who create the above equivocations have to exploit some sort of connection between the various meanings of the homonyms involved or concoct a fake one. The association is provided by what is viewed as some generally accepted belief (conviction, opinion, evaluation, etc.) that is buttressed by a quotation from poetry, illustrated by a common image, supported by a reference to a popular expression etc. While all these homonyms are, then, seductive, some of them are truly associated and others are only apparently connected (i.e., their accounts either overlap or have to be made so). Let us finally look at two examples that seem to defy all classifications: the μῦς/μυστήρια fallacy and the Ἀνάσχετος/ἀνασχετός pun. As will be seen, these instantiations of the *Rhetoric*’s ὁμωνυμία make it quite challenging to ascertain what single view underlies the concept of homonymy in the treatise.

Ἐν δὲ τὸ παρά τὴν ὁμωνυμίαν, τὸ φάναί σπουδαῖον εἶναι μῦν, ἀφ’ οὗ γ’ ἐστὶν ἡ τιμιωτάτη πασῶν τελετή: τὰ γὰρ μυστήρια πασῶν τιμιωτάτη τελετή (1401a13-15): mouse as a worthy creature. This fallacious enthymeme extols a ‘mouse’ (μῦς) as an estimable creature on the grounds that the ‘mysteries’ (μυστήρια), i.e., the most celebrated of all religious festivals, is derived from it. The argument creates, then, a false etymological connection that makes it possible to interpret ‘mysteries’ (μυστήρια) as rites that ‘guard’ (τηρεῖν) the ‘mouse’ (μῦς). Evidently, ‘mouse’ and ‘mysteries’ are discretely homonymous (they have nothing definitional in common and their accounts do not overlap in any way). However, as has already been observed, the real problem with this example is that one may legitimately question whether this qualifies as an instance of homonymy at all, given that *Categories* 1a1 insists that *one* name be common, and the mouse/mysteries equivocation employs *two* distinct words (μυστήρια allegedly being derived from μῦς). If ὁμωνυμία signifies a situation where different entities share one and the same name (ὅμῶν ὄνομα), then the mouse/mysteries fallacy hardly meets the criterion. Hence, one can clearly see that the etymological maneuver that makes it possible to establish a seductive connection between the two words (‘animal’ and ‘rites’) quite spectacularly illustrates the diverse nature of the *Rhetoric*’s ὁμωνυμία.

In connection with this, one might even argue that the mouse/mysteries equivocation falls into the category of paronymy rather than into that of homonymy. At *Categories* 1a12-13, paronyms are famously defined as ‘having their appellation, corresponding to the name, from something with a difference in ending’

¹⁹ The text along with translation is that of Kouremenos, Parássoglou, Tsantsanoglou 2006.

(ἀπό τινος διαφέροντα τῇ πτώσει τὴν κατὰ τοῦνομα προσηγορίαν ἔχει).²⁰ While paronyms are, thus, derivatives, Aristotle provides (1a14-15) two examples: ‘grammarian’ (γραμματικός) is from ‘grammar’ (γραμματική) and ‘courageous’ (ἀνδρείος) is from ‘courage’ (ἀνδρεία). Although paronyms receive their ‘appellation’ from certain primary words whose form has been altered, the derivativeness is not merely linguistic (i.e., resulting solely from modifying the case ending). Evidently, ‘a grammarian’ (ὁ γραμματικός) gets his name ‘from grammar’ (ἀπὸ τῆς γραμματικῆς) because he has knowledge of grammar. Similarly, ‘a courageous man’ (ὁ ἀνδρείος) gets his name ‘from courage’ (ἀπὸ τῆς ἀνδρείας) because he has courage. That is presumably why *Topics* 106b29-107a2 connects paronymy with homonymy. In the passage, Aristotle observes that ‘being said in multiple ways’ (πλεοναχῶς λέγεται) may result from various ‘endings’ (πτώσεων).²¹ Importantly, the Stagirate cites here (106b33-37) the paronymy of ‘healthy’ and ‘healthily’, which is strongly reminiscent of the core-dependent homonymy of ‘healthy’ and ‘health’ as discussed at *Metaphysics* 1003a34-b1 and 1061a5-7. The extent to which paronymy and homonymy coalesce is hard to determine.²² For the purpose of our considerations, however, the most important thing is that the mouse/mysteries equivocation can possibly be taken as instantiating such a coalescence: while μυστήρια is from μῦς, the derivativeness is not only due to the ending (-τήρια) but also to the ‘fact’ that ‘mysteries’ (μυστήρια) are rites that ‘guard’ (τηρεῖν) the ‘mouse’ (μῦς).²³ If that is so, then this case of homonymy could perhaps be classified as a variation of paronymy.

οἶον Ἐνάσχετος οὐκ ἀνασχετός· ὁμωνυμία ἀπέφησε, ἀλλὰ προσηκόντως, εἰ ἀηδής (1412b12-14): Mr. Bearable is not bearable. Similarly to the μῦς/μυστήρια fallacy, the Ἐνάσχετος/ἀνασχετός pun also seems to build on two distinct words. Nevertheless, it is only from our modern perspective that it does so. To understand why Aristotle can speak of homonymy here, one should look at his account of the fallacy ‘due to accent’ or ‘due to prosody’ (παρὰ τὴν προσωδίαν), which he presents in *Sophistical Refutations* 166b1-9 as exploiting the fact that various sequences of letters can be ambiguous.²⁴ When discussing the fallacy, the

²⁰ For discussions, see, e.g., Ackrill 1963, 72-73; Owens 1963, 111-112; Rapp 1992, 535-536; Höffe 2005, 425-426; Ward 2008, 14-16.

²¹ The terms ‘in many/multiple ways’ (πολλαχῶς/πλεοναχῶς) and ‘homonymously’ (ὁμωνύμως) are used interchangeably in the *Topics* (see, e.g., Owen 1960, 166n1; Barnes 1971, 76n3; Hintikka 1973, 19-21; Shields 1999, 10n2; Ward 2008, 75; Brakas 2011, 148-149). Thus, Irwin 1981, 529 aptly observes that ‘the chapter on homonymy (*Top.* 1. 15) might just as well be called a chapter on multivocality (cf. 106a2, 9, 14, 21, etc.)’. In other works, however, Aristotle clearly distinguishes between the terms. In *Meta.* 1003a33-34, e.g., being ‘is said in many ways’ (λέγεται πολλαχῶς), but ‘not homonymously’ (οὐχ ὁμωνύμως).

²² E.g., Owens 1963, 111 believes that paronyms ‘cut across’ homonyms and synonyms, whereas Ward 2008, 16 espouses the ‘view that finds related equivocality to be a species of homonymy, not of paronymy’.

²³ Of course, it is not μῦς but μυσῖν (‘initiate into the mysteries’) to which μυστήρια is etymologically related (see, e.g., Grimaldi 1988, 340; Kennedy 2007, 185n189; Gastaldi 2014, 532).

²⁴ For good discussions, see, e.g., Kirwan 1979, 42-43; Atherton 1993, 139, 205, 232-233, 506.

Stagirite observes (166b1-3) that ‘an argument due to accent is not easy to produce in unwritten discussions, but rather in written ones and in poems’ (παρὰ δὲ τὴν προσφθίαν ἐν μὲν τοῖς ἄνευ γραφῆς διαλεκτικοῖς οὐ ῥάδιον ποιῆσαι λόγον, ἐν δὲ τοῖς γεγραμμένοις καὶ ποιήμασι μᾶλλον). If we apply this diagnosis to the Ἄνασχετος/ἀνασχετός pun, then we can see that while for us the equivocation comprises two distinct words (clearly differentiated by accent), the difference could be more elusive in the times of Aristotle, as it was not until later that the prosodic signs were introduced into Greek. Thus, a given sequence of letters (i.e., sounds) was not ambiguous in speech because of the disambiguating pronunciation (accentuation), but the same sequence of letters (i.e., signs) could easily be ambiguous in writing.

Hence, what the testimonies of the *Rhetoric* and *Sophistical Refutations* reveal is that in some cases of homonymy the Stagirite vacillates between differently pronounced sequences of letters and distinct words differentiated by accent. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle gives the Ἄνασχετος/ἀνασχετός pun as an example of homonymy. In the *Sophistical Refutations*, however, he is unwilling to regard the accent fallacy as instantiating genuine homonymy, because he distinguishes (168a23-28) the fallacies of combination, division, and accent from the fallacies ‘due to double [meaning]’ (παρὰ τὸ διττόν) on the basis that the former result from ‘there not being the same phrase or the word’s being different’ (μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν εἶναι τὸν λόγον ἢ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ διαφέρον).

In conclusion, we need to reiterate, then, that the homonyms that produce such equivocations as the Ἄνασχετος/ἀνασχετός pun or the μῦς/μυστήρια fallacy must be classified as instantiating very peculiar cases of homonymy. As has been stressed, they show the variegated and at times rather remarkable nature of the *Rhetoric*’s ὁμωνυμία.

III. How does Aristotle value homonymy in the *Rhetoric*?

The testimony of the *Rhetoric* is very interesting because it shows that Aristotle can value homonymy either negatively or positively depending on the context of his discussion. When homonymy produces misleading equivocations that result in fallacious enthymemes, it is valued negatively. Yet, when homonymy generates innocuous equivocations that give rise to urbanities, it is valued more positively.

If one looks at *Rhetoric* 1401a13-25, one might be initially somewhat perplexed, for the testimony is slightly difficult to classify due to the often bemoaned obscurity of the whole chapter: (1) does Aristotle discuss this and other apparent enthymemes with a view to merely enabling the speaker to *expose* them when they are exploited by others? or (2) does he discuss these fallacies with a view to instructing a speaker how skillfully to *construct* them?²⁵ While I believe that the second option should be rejected, *Rhetoric* 1404b37-39 proves quite illuminating in this context: having characterized homonyms as words that

²⁵ See, e.g., Grimaldi 1972, 94 and 1988, 337; Rapp 2002b, 779; Kennedy 2007, 184; Gastaldi 2014, 531.

are ‘useful to the sophist’ (τῶ...σοφιστῆ...χρήσιμοι), Aristotle elucidates that it is ‘by means of these’ (παρὰ ταύτας) that the sophist κακουργεῖ. Irrespective of whether the verb is translated in such a way that the sophist ‘accomplis sa mau-
 vaise action’ (Ruelle 1882),²⁶ ‘employs captious arguments’ (Freese 1926),²⁷ or even ‘produce inganni’ (Gastaldi 2014),²⁸ it is clear that Aristotle disapproves of homonymy here.

As the sophist’s abuse of homonymy results in fraudulent equivocations, the *Rhetoric*’s assessment sits well with the negative evaluations of homonymy that appear in the *Sophistical Refutations*, where homonymy is first (165b24-26) counted among the six tools for ‘producing the illusion [of argument]’ (ἐμποιοῦντα τὴν φαντασίαν), upon which (169a22-25) it is straightforwardly identified with ‘deception’ (ἀπάτη).²⁹ This criticism of homonymy is understandable: in a disputation homonymy can cause a lot of damage, for a failure to differentiate between the various meanings of a homonymous term is bound to result in misapprehension and this, when skillfully exploited, guarantees the sophist a treacherous victory in the debate.

Given that homonymy in dialectical discussions can be a source of fallacious reasoning, one might expect it to be a stylistic defect in rhetoric. However, *Rhetoric* 1412b4-33 suggests that homonymy can be valued somewhat more positively when it produces τὰ ἀστεῖα. Thus, for example, the ἀρχή pun is diagnosed (1412b7-8) to be saying something that ‘is not expected’ (οὐκ ἂν ᾤηθη) and, at the same time, ‘recognized as true’ (ἐγνώσθη ὅτι ἀληθές). Similarly, the Ἄνασχετος/ἀνασχετός pun is given (1412b12-14) as an example where the homonymy is employed ‘well’ (εὖ). As Aristotle characterizes them, homonymous expressions help to defamiliarize language and, thus, play with the audience’s expectations. By deceiving (cf. 1412a20: προσεξαπατᾶν), they make the listeners see something differently and are, therefore, instructive: τὸ μὲν οὖν εἶδος τὸ αὐτὸ τῆς λέξεως τούτων· ἀλλ’ ὅσῳ ἂν <έν> ἐλάττονι καὶ ἀντικειμένως λεχθῆ, τοσοῦτῳ εὐδοκιμεῖ μάλλον. τὸ δ’ αἴτιον ὅτι ἡ μάθησις διὰ μὲν τὸ ἀντικεῖσθαι μάλλον, διὰ δὲ τὸ ἐν ὀλίγῳ θᾶπτον γίνεται. (‘The species of the *lexis* in these examples is the same, but insofar as they are spoken concisely and with a contrast they are better liked. The cause is that knowledge results more from contrast but is quicker in brief form’ [1412b21-25, Kennedy trans.]).

The passage explains why homonymy can be valued positively in rhetoric: by using a given word homonymously (i.e., by simultaneously employing it in its different senses), the speaker is able to present something in a surprisingly suc-

²⁶ This rendition is followed by many translators. Thus, e.g.: ‘betreibt...sein böses Werk’ (Krapinger 1999); ‘opera male’ (Zanatta 2004) and ‘does his dirty work’ (Kennedy 2007).

²⁷ Rapp 2002a suggests similarly: ‘begeht...Fehlschlüsse’, but with reference to ‘die Sophistik’.

²⁸ Dufour and Wartelle 1989 also has ‘deceptions’, but here it is homonyms that ‘permettent...supercheries’.

²⁹ Obviously, there are other relevant passages in the *Organon*. E.g., *Analytics* 97b36-37 recommends ‘careful avoidance’ (εὐλαβοῦμενον) of homonymy, *Topics* 139b19-20 equates homonymy with ‘obscurity’ (ἀσαφῆς, also 139b22: ἄδηλον), and so on.

cinct and illuminating way. Consequently, his witty saying makes the unexpected listener realize and learn something. That is why Aristotle says in the passage cited above that urbanities produce 'knowledge' (μάθησις). Thus, rather than being an obstacle to understanding, this homonymy turns out to be a vehicle for expressing something brilliantly for the audience and conveying new insights for them.

IV. Conclusions

To do justice to the idiosyncrasy and complexity of the *Rhetoric's* ὁμωνυμία, we should refrain from hastily interpreting it through the lens of the definition of homonymy given in the *Categories*. The homonyms discussed by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* must be (made) seductive if they are to generate fallacies and urbanities. From our modern perspective, the seductiveness may at times seem rather dubious (perhaps even preposterous), but it remains necessary for the given equivocation to work. The seductive homonyms that make the fallacious enthymemes and witty puns work are either truly associated or only apparently connected (i.e., their accounts either overlap or have to be made so). Moreover, one finds in the treatise two instantiations of ὁμωνυμία that seem to defy all classifications. Thus, this brief survey shows that Aristotle did not operate with a single, homogeneous concept of homonymy. The Stagirite's multifarious view of homonymy is also reflected in the fact that he values homonymy positively when it is employed for constructing innocuous equivocations that underlie urbanities, but negatively when it is exploited for creating misleading equivocations that underlie apparent enthymemes. It should be emphasized, then, that given the heterogeneous and fluctuating nature of Aristotle's homonymy, every single occurrence of the term ὁμωνυμία in the *Corpus Aristotelicum* must be considered individually and contextually to accord with the Stagirite's rich understanding of homonymy.

Institute of Philosophy
Adam Mickiewicz University
Szamarzewskiego 89
60-569 Poznan, Poland

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