In the *Topics* (101b4) Aristotle says that 'dialectic is a process of criticism wherein lies the path to the principles of all inquiries.' Evans has produced a book that deepens our understanding of this and other passages that hint at or briefly sketch an Aristotelian conception of dialectic and its relations to the sciences. His concern is not to deal with the specific content of Aristotle’s dialectical teachings, although he does this at some length especially on the topic of definition; but rather ‘to establish the position which dialectic occupies in Aristotle’s theory of the forms of intellectual activity’ (p.3).

Evans’ main tool in this enterprise is Aristotle’s own distinction of unqualified objects of a faculty as against the qualified objects of the faculty. According to Evans this point is best presented in *Nic. Ethics* H2, where Aristotle separates the object of wish without any qualification from the object of someone’s wish. The former we can say is the good, whereas the latter may be something not good at all. Aristotle is carefully avoiding here the trap Socrates laid for Polus in the *Gorgias* (467-8), where from the concession that the object of wish is the good we move to the paradoxical conclusion that the man who wishes for what is bad is not wishing at all, or at least not wishing for what he thinks he is. A qualified wish, i.e., someone’s wish, may be for something bad; it is only wish without any qualification which is only and always for the good. And then to make clear that he is not subscribing to a sceptical form of ethical relativism, Aristotle notes that the object of unqualified wish is just what the good man wishes, in other words, the good is what appears good to a good man. Aristotle assumes there is a valid distinction between virtuous people and vicious people and then defines the good or object of unqualified wish as what the former want.

In the case of the intellect, the assumed division is between the expert and the inexpert, and then what is intelligible *absolutely* is defined as what the expert finds intelligible. But other things may be intelligible *to us* or to some group of non-experts, and, of course, we must always start an inquiry with the latter and work up to the objective logical foundations of the subject. Only then do we arrive at what is intelligible absolutely, in other words, at science. Dialectic for Aristotle, Evans claims, and no doubt he is right, is the skilful activity or art of making this transition from pre-scientific endoxa, to scientific expertise.

With this understanding of the nature of dialectic, Evans cogently shows us why dialectic is not itself a science, why it can in a way discuss anything and everything, why it is quite neutral between competing theories within a subject, and why like Ethics, it is necessarily imprecise. In all of this Evans performs the valuable service of drawing together dispersed texts and extracting from them a
coherent doctrine about the place of dialectic in the general scheme of intellectual activities.

This aspect of Evans' book, and it is the heart of the work, I would fault in only two relatively minor ways. First, I do not find any clear statement of the relation of dialectic to what goes on in the *Analytics*. It seems to me this needs more attention if Evans is to exorcise entirely the temptation to think of the *Topics* as doing pre-scientifically what the *Analytics* does in a proper scientific fashion. Second, some themes Evans labours over beyond any necessity. For example, the long explanation on pp.41-9 of how First Philosophy is a universal science without being an all inclusive science. So far as I can see Evans just adopts in somewhat different terms the familiar view that while First Philosophy deals with very general properties shared by everything, it does not contain the first principles of all sciences, i.e., the other sciences are not parts of it. Nothing lengthy is required here.

If this were the whole of Evans' book, it would be valuable at the expense of not being very controversial. But it is clear that Evans has greater ambitions in mind for this unqualified/qualified distinction as applied to objects of our faculties. It is, he claims, a 'metaphysical theory' in the sense of a point 'concerned with the ultimate grounds of justification for various classes of proposition.' (p.59) It is moreover, Aristotle's answer to the basic dilemma that motivated Plato's development of the theory of forms, an answer equally as important a contribution as Plato's and one having 'the additional merit of being correct.' (p.103)

Here I think Evans is confusing a symptom of Aristotle's basic divergence from Plato with the basis of his alternative. As Evans notes, Plato in large measure introduced the Forms to save himself from relativism, i.e., the view that no man's opinion was any better than any other man's and therefore there were no genuine experts. This is one of Plato's great concerns in the *Theaetetus*, where he shows how relativism follows from the Heraclitean conception of reality. Now Aristotle's talk of unqualified and qualified objects of intellect and wish *assumes* this problem has been solved, for it takes for granted that there is a genuine distinction between expert and inexpert, virtuous and vicious. It itself makes no contribution toward solving the problem that worried Plato, and we must look elsewhere in the Aristotelian writings if we are to find Aristotle's solution.

It seems to me, that Evans' error here is in taking as more intelligible *absolutely* in Aristotelian exegesis what is merely more intelligible only to *us*, viz, the expert/inexpert distinction and the consequent separation of an unqualified object of the intellect from the qualified object. This latter provides a nice point of entry for coming to grips with dialectic and a lot of other matters, but I see no reason to think it is logically fundamental to Aristotle's thought or constitutes a major development in his philosophy.

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