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Perception in Aristotle's Ethics

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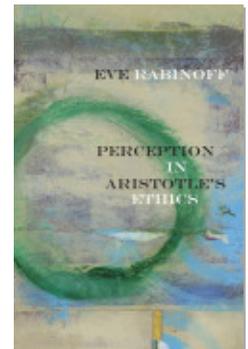
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CHAPTER 1

The Perceptual Part of the Soul

My project is to show that perception plays an essential role in ethical life, for Aristotle: that perceiving well is a condition that makes possible the reasoning necessary to produce good choices that make an act virtuous. The aim in this chapter is to lay the groundwork for such an argument by discussing Aristotle's account of the perceptual part of the soul given *De anima* and other psychological works. Ultimately, I will argue that the virtuous person, the *phronimos*, is she who is able to act virtuously because she perceives the present situation in which she must act correctly as bearing possibilities for virtuous acts. Insofar as perception is of the present, it conditions the thinking and acting through which one's character is manifest.¹ This chapter begins to establish that perception is a capacity that is robust enough to suit the task of apprehending the present, concrete reality in a way that is ethically relevant. Specifically, it will establish, first, that the power of perception is a part of the soul, in the sense that it is a first principle of animal life (section 1), and is fundamentally a power of awareness (section 3). Second, it will establish that incidental perceptibles are genuinely perceived, and therefore belong among the basic powers of perception (section 2). Third, it will establish that the secondary power of the perceptual part of the soul, the power of *phantasia*, expands the temporal horizons of current perceptions (section 4).

1. The Parts of the Soul

Before addressing the faculty of perception and its powers, it is necessary to address the parts of the soul. The soul, according to Aristotle, has two essential features that require that its configuration be a complex unity: on the one hand, the soul is responsible for the unity of the body (*De anima* 411a24–b14, 416a6–9), and, on the other hand, the soul is responsible for life (413a20–21). As even the most casual observation will show, life includes a variety of activities—walking, eating, sleeping, brushing teeth, talking, swimming, breathing, jumping, running, dancing, blinking, heart-beating, and so

on—of which soul is the source. Aristotle must provide an account of the structure of soul such that soul is responsible for this multiplicity of activities without rending the soul into many souls, one for each activity, which would then require something to unify *it*. A whole of parts is a complex unity of the sort that can sustain multiplicity without being divided, and it is this structure that Aristotle ought to, and seems to, attribute to the soul.

Although Aristotle is committed to the unity of the soul, questions about the nature of the parts and how to distinguish them are sustained throughout *De anima*, wherein Aristotle raises such questions as early as I.1 402b1–2 and as late as III.9 432a22–23. Identifying the nature of parts is a delicate business: it is necessary to maintain the unity of the whole while also maintaining meaningful distinctions between the parts. If, on the one hand, one divides too deeply, by positing parts that are simply independent of one another, one runs the risk of positing several souls rather than one single soul responsible for the life of a creature. This is an outcome Aristotle rejects in the discussion with which *De anima* I concludes: the soul must be one if the body is to be one, because the soul is that which holds together the body (411a24–b14). If, on the other hand, one divides too superficially, by identifying parts with the various powers of the soul, one runs the risk of coming up with an unending and arbitrary multitude of parts, which Aristotle rejects as absurd in the discussion at the opening of the account of locomotion (432a22–b7). The question of what a part is and how to distinguish parts of the soul is important if one wants to chart a middle path between this Charybdis and Scylla (which Aristotle surely does): one wants to understand the soul in a way that maintains the unity of the soul as a principle of life and at the same time provides an explanation for the multiplicity of life activities.

Several insightful and influential studies concerning the question of how Aristotle distinguishes the parts of the soul² put forward an interpretation of the important point that the parts of the soul are separable (*chōristos*) in *logos*, account, or definition, and not separable unqualifiedly. Although these studies differ in some important respects,³ they all agree that separability in *logos* means being independent in definition.⁴ Independence in definition means that the definition of the capacity in question does not include implicit or explicit reference to any other capacity. Thus, for example, the nutritive capacity is separable in *logos* because its definition is simply “a power [*dunamis*] such as to maintain its possessor as such, while food prepares it for activity” (*De anima* 416b17–19).⁵ Understanding what the nutritive capacity is does not require understanding what any other capacity is. By contrast, the capacity for memory is “a state induced by an image [*phantasma*], related as a likeness to that of which it is an image [*phantasma*]; and . . . it pertains to

the primary sense faculty [*prōton aisthētikon*]” (*De mem.* 451a14–17).⁶ The definition of memory includes explicit reference both to perception and to *phantasia*, and therefore it is not separable in *logos* from either of them. In what follows, I will briefly rehearse the general argument that Aristotle adopts the separability criterion for distinguishing parts of the soul.

Aristotle argues that the parts of the soul are not unqualifiedly separable from each other in *De anima* II.2. Here Aristotle raises the question “whether each of these [nutritive capacity, perceptive capacity, rational capacity, and motion] is a soul or a part of a soul, and if a part, whether it is such as to be separable in definition only or also in place” (413b13–15). The evidence he brings forward here is empirical: some plants and some insects continue to live and exhibit the full range of their capacities when severed in two. This means that the soul is “one in actuality in each plant, although potentially many” (413b18–19), and that the parts of the soul “are not separable as some people say; although that they are different [*hetera*] in definition [*logos*] is clear” (413b28–29).

This conclusion alone is not enough to secure the separability criterion—after all, Aristotle concludes merely that the parts of the soul are *different* in definition. As Whiting, Corcilius and Gregoric, and Johansen all point out, difference in definition does not imply separability; difference is a weaker condition than separability and covers a much wider range of cases. All that difference requires is that the definitions are not the same, but separability requires that the definitions be independent of one another. To illustrate difference in account, Corcilius and Gregoric offer the example of a doctor healing herself.⁷ The individual is both doctor and patient. “Doctor” and “patient” have different accounts, but to be a doctor is to produce health in a patient—the accounts are not separable.

Does Aristotle indeed adopt the stronger separability criterion for distinguishing parts of the soul? Corcilius and Gregoric argue that he does.⁸ They read the passage concerning the divided plant to stem from a disjunction—either the parts of the soul are separable in account or they are separable in place (*De anima* 413b13–15)—and the evidence of the divided plant rules out the latter. Although Aristotle does not explicitly affirm the first disjunct, they argue that the criterion is affirmed when Aristotle returns to the question of the separability of parts in III.9. In this chapter, he raises the question in terms identical to II.2, this time with regard to locomotion: “we must now inquire what it is in the soul that produces movement, whether it is one part of it separable either in place or in definition” (432a18–20), and he refutes the weak criterion of dividing the soul into parts merely according to its different powers (432a22–b7). By rejecting the difference criterion for parts

of the soul—the soul’s powers will all have differences in their accounts—Corcilius and Gregoric take Aristotle to affirm the first disjunct and thereby the separability criterion.

Johansen affirms the same conclusion, but his argument takes a different tack.⁹ After the “difference” conclusion, Aristotle continues to say that some creatures have all the capacities of soul mentioned (nutritive, perceptive, rational, locomotive), while others only have one (*De anima* 413b32–414a3). Johansen argues that if a capacity can exist separately from another in another kind of living being, as the nutritive can exist independently of the perceptive, it must *also* be separable in account. On this view, ontological separability implies definitional separability—if something can exist independently, its definition, that is, the statement of what it is, must also be independent. On this view, the capacities that serve to differentiate the kinds of soul are also its parts.

These two lines of argument are complementary, and they quite persuasively show that Aristotle adopts the criterion of separability in *logos* to distinguish parts of the soul. The result of both Corcilius and Gregoric’s position and of Johansen’s position is the same: the parts of the soul, according to Aristotle, are three: namely, the nutritive, perceptual, and intellectual parts. On Corcilius and Gregoric’s accounts, these are the powers that are defined without reference to anything but their objects, and are therefore independent. On Johansen’s account, these are the parts that differentiate plants from animals, and animals from human beings.¹⁰

The criterion of separability in *logos* cuts just deep enough in dividing the soul’s parts, answering to Aristotle’s commitment to the unity of soul and to the multiplicity of activities of which the soul is the source. It is easy to see how separability in account does not threaten the unity of the soul, if we are considering the unity of the soul of an individual organism. Individuals are subject to many descriptions and fulfill many different roles while always being the selfsame individual. Whiting offers the example of the sweetness and whiteness of a sugar cube.¹¹ Sweet and white have separable accounts, but a sugar cube is both sweet and white throughout—the separability in account does not rend the sugar cube in two. In a similar vein, Johansen notes that although mathematical entities are separable in account from their material, they are not separable in reality.¹² So too the soul has parts which are separable in account, but in an individual soul these parts are unified. Nonetheless, the things that are separable in account are meaningfully different aspects of the whole of which they are parts. Separability in account is just the sort of criterion Aristotle needs to distinguish meaningfully between parts of the soul while still maintaining the unity of the soul.

If Aristotle wants to chart the middle course between the Charybdis of dividing the soul too deeply and the Scylla of dividing the soul too superficially, he ought to take separability in account as the criterion by which to distinguish the parts of soul. Separability in account will limit the number of parts of the soul so that we don't have an indefinite proliferation of parts—many capacities will depend upon the basic powers that define the parts of the soul—and it is a kind of separability that will not rupture the soul because it is an abstract distinction in the sense that all the accounts describe one and the same subject, an individual soul. It is not *simply* abstract, though, because the individual *really is* a nutritive, perceptual, and intellectual individual (if the individual is a human being), and it is all of these all at once.

The result of taking separability into account as the criterion for distinguishing the parts of the soul is, first, that the parts of the soul turn out to be the canonical three: the nutritive, perceptual, and intellectual. The nutritive part is defined as “a power [*dunamis*] such as to maintain its possessor as such, while food prepares it for activity” (*De anima* 416b17–19); the perceptual part is defined as that which “receives perceptible forms without the matter” (424a17–19); and the intellectual part of the soul is defined as that which receives the intelligible forms (429a15–18). These three powers are basic powers that make different modes of living possible and define different kinds of life. Second, because the parts do not include reference to other capacities or powers of the soul but only to their objects, these parts will be the basic elements of soul, the fundamental capacities, in the sense that they are the ultimate explanatory principles of their activities.

Furthermore, this criterion of separability provides structure to the soul in the form of an ordered hierarchy: those capacities whose definitions include reference to a part of the soul will be the activities *of* that part of the soul. We might think of the relationship between parts of the soul and derivative capacities (capacities that refer to the parts in their definitions) by analogy with language: knowing a language gives one a basic power to speak, communicate, and express oneself. But it also makes possible the acquisition of more sophisticated abilities, such as writing poetry. It is by virtue of having language that one can be a poet, but poetry is not basic to the power of language. Similarly, the perceptual part of the soul will have some basic powers that make possible further, derivative powers. The parts, then, will be responsible for not only the soul's primary activities but also some range of activities associated with those.

Identifying separability in account as the criterion for being a part of the soul is a criterion by which to identify which life activities are basic first principles. The soul is the first principle of life, as Aristotle establishes in

II.1, but life is only ever lived in the exercise of particular capacities. Not all the capacities of soul, though, are basic sources of activity (no one would consider the ability to snap one's fingers as basic), and the criterion of separability in account provides a measure by which to distinguish the capacities in which the first principle of life consists, and which capacities are derivative of those capacities. The nutritive capacity, the perceptual capacity, and the intellectual capacities are all parts of the soul, which means that they are basic powers, first principles of certain modes of living, and definitive of certain kinds of life.

2. Perceptual Powers

Perception, then, is a part of soul in the sense of being a fundamental capacity, a basic mode of life. Perception is one of the powers invoked to explain other powers, but it itself is not explained by anything prior to it. But what exactly *is* perception? The perceptual part of the soul houses a number of powers, including the five senses receptive of the special perceptibles (color, sound, odor, the tangibles, flavor), a central sense power that unites the five senses (*De anima* 425a30–b2),¹³ and perception is receptive of incidental perceptibles (such as the son of Diares) (II.6) and of the common perceptibles (shape, number, motion, rest, magnitude) (425a27). The special and common perceptibles are perceived in themselves (*kath' hauta*), whereas the incidental perceptibles are perceived, of course, incidentally (*kata sumbebēkos*). Moreover, perception also discerns (*krinein*) differences between the proper perceptibles (426b12–15) and is apperceptive—we perceive *that* we see and hear (425b12–17). Finally, *phantasia* is a movement that results from perception (429a1–2) and is an affection of common sense power (*De mem.* 450a13), memory belongs to the primary perceptive power (*prōton aisthētikon*) (*De mem.* 450a14), sleeping and waking are affections of the primary perceptive power (*prōton aisthētikon*) (*De somno* 454a22–24), and dreaming is an activity of the perceptive power (*aisthētikon*) but belongs to it *as* imaginative (*De insom.* 459a21–22).

What is the configuration of the perceptual *part* of the soul? Which of these activities are properly called *perception*, rather than, say, quasisperception? The capacity for *phantasia*, memory, and dreaming can be designated quasisperception: *phantasia* depends upon perception (*De anima* 429a1–2), and so is a derivative power; and memory and dreaming both require *phantasmata*—these are quasisperceptual phenomena in the sense that they are activities of the perceptual part of the soul but depend upon more basic perceptual activities. Genuine perception, by contrast, is to be understood as

a fundamental, nonderivative operation of the perceptual part of the soul. Which activities qualify?

Understanding the perceptual part of the soul as a first principle of a certain kind of life bears on this question by providing an orientation to the phenomenon under consideration. The kind of life and activity that the perceptual part of the soul provides and explains is animal life, and the essential characteristic of animal life is that it is sensate. Just as soul in general is a first principle that explains the difference between living and nonliving things, so the perceptual part of the soul is a first principle that differentiates sensate living things from nonsensate living things. And what makes the animal's perceptual sensitivity different from, say, the sunflower's sensitivity to the sun is that the animal is made aware of the objects to which it is sensitive. An animal *feels* the heat of the sun, rather than simply reacting to it (*De anima* II.12 424a32–b2). That is, the animal is perceptually *aware* of the heat. This perceptual awareness, I take it, is broadly speaking the phenomenon under discussion in *De anima* II.5–III.2. The question, then, is: *of what* are animals perceptually aware? To what are animals perceptually sensitive?

Aristotle identifies three types of perceptual object in *De anima* II.6: special, common, and incidental perceptibles. That he introduces all three types as *aisthēta* suggests, at least superficially, that all three are genuinely perceived. However, his characterizations of these perceptual objects, and in particular their relation to the senses, differ in such a way that doubt has been cast on the incidental perceptibles. In the first place, Aristotle affords a sort of primacy to the special perceptibles, calling the perception of these objects *kuriōs* perception, articulating an essential relationship between these special objects and their respective senses whereby the sense is affected by its object so as to become like it, and devoting the bulk of his discussion of perception to a detailed analysis of the mechanisms of each sense and sensory object. This contrasts sharply with Aristotle's minimal discussion of the incidental perceptibles, and with his claim that the incidental object of perception does not affect the perceiver as such (*De anima* 418a20–24). The common objects occupy a middle ground between these: like the special objects they are perceived in themselves, but, unlike the special objects, they do not have a dedicated sense.

What are we to make of this? On the one hand, it would be unnecessarily misleading on Aristotle's part to say that the incidentals are perceptual objects if he didn't mean that they are genuinely perceived; on the other hand, they are perceived *incidentally*, and if they are genuinely perceived, it is by a different (and unnamed) mechanism than the perception of the special objects. What does it mean to be perceived incidentally?

In *De anima* III.1, Aristotle uses the notion of being perceived incidentally to address two perceptual phenomena: the perception of the common perceptibles by the senses, and the perception of one special object (say, sweet) by another sense (say, sight). Although we perceive the common perceptibles incidentally by each sense, Aristotle reasons that there cannot be a dedicated sense for the common perceptibles because, if there were, then the common perceptibles would be perceived in the same manner that sweet is perceived by sight, “and this we do because we in fact have a perception of both, as a result of which we recognize [*anagnōrizomen*] them at the same time when they fall together” (425a22–24). Neither, however, do we perceive the commons in the manner that we perceive the son of Cleon, which we perceive “not because/that [*hoti*] he is the son of Cleon but because/that [*hoti*] he is white, and the white object happens to be the son of Cleon” (425a25–27). Instead, there is a common sense for the common objects of perception, by which they are perceived in themselves. The terrain that Aristotle is marking out here shows four kinds of relationship a sense may bear to various objects. (1) The relationship of sense to its proper object, as sight is related to color: color is perceived in itself by the sense of sight. (2) The relationship of a sense to the proper object of a different sense, as sight is related to sweet: sweetness is recognized by sight, and perceived incidentally by sight, on the basis of having both seen and tasted a sweet white thing. (3) The relationship of a sense to an incidental object of perception, as sight is related to the son of Cleon: the colored thing that we see happens to be Cleon’s son. (4) The relationship of a sense to the common objects: relative to any particular sense, the common objects are perceived incidentally, but relative to a common sense, they are perceived in themselves. So what does it mean to be perceived incidentally?

Three things strike me as noteworthy about this passage. First, what is said to be perceived incidentally is perceived in this manner by a particular sense: sweetness is perceived incidentally by sight (but not by taste), the common objects are perceived incidentally by any one of the senses taken by itself (but not by the common sense), and the incidental perceptibles are incidental to sight. Second, in the case of the common objects, shifting the referent also shifts the status of the perception: although perceived incidentally by a sense, common objects are perceived in themselves by a common sense. Third, at least in the cases of the common objects and the special objects perceived by a different sense, there is no doubt that these objects enter into the perceptual experience of the perceiver, despite being perceived incidentally by the sense in question.¹⁴ These observations suggest that incidental perception refers to a mode of perceptual awareness that cannot be explained by appeal

to the senses alone—we certainly perceive squares by sight, even if such perception is incidental to sight.

However, in the case of incidental perceptibles such as Cleon's son, the case is different: unlike the special and common perceptibles, which are perceived incidentally in one respect but perceived in themselves in another, Cleon's son is not perceived in itself at all. In other words, the reason that we incidentally see sweetness is because we have *tasted* sweetness on prior occasions, and the reason that we incidentally see shape is because the common sense properly perceives shapes. But there is no sense or sense power that properly perceives the son of Cleon. Indeed, although Aristotle introduces incidental perception in *De anima* II.6, alongside the special and common perceptibles, he denies that the incidentals affect the perceiver: "An object of perception is spoken of as incidental, e.g., if the white thing were the son of Diares; for you perceive this incidentally, since this which you perceive is incidental to the white thing. Hence too you are not affected [*ouden paschein*] by the object of perception as such" (*De anima* 418a20–24). This description of incidental perceptibles is puzzling, for in the previous chapter, Aristotle declares, "perception consists in being moved [*kineisthai*] and affected [*paschein*] . . . for it is thought to be a kind of alteration" (416b33–34). Here in II.6 Aristotle seems to be saying at once that the son of Diares *is* an object of perception and that the son of Diares does *not* directly affect the perceiver. For this reason, one might deny that incidentals are genuinely perceived.

There are reasons to resist this line of interpretation. Most generally, Aristotle does not call incidental perceptibles anything *but* objects of perception (*aisthēta*). They cannot be objects of the nutritive faculty, obviously, and there is no textual basis for assigning them to the intellect.¹⁵ Moreover, there *is* a textual reason for thinking that the incidental perceptibles have an effect over and above that of the special and common perceptibles. In his discussion of *phantasia* in III.3, Aristotle remarks: "The movement which comes about as a result of the activity of perception will differ insofar as it comes from these three kinds of perception [proper, common, and incidental]" (*De anima* 428b25–27 with 428b17–25). Aristotle here identifies *three* kinds of movements originating in perception, not two. This suggests that incidental perceptibles cause a similar sort of effect that the in-itself perceptibles do, and that it should therefore be included among the basic powers of perception.

What are we to conclude from this? The problem raised by the initial description of incidental perceptibles still stands and is perhaps aggravated by the comment about *phantasia*: perception is a potential to be affected, and the son of Diares *qua* son of Diares does not produce an affection in the sense power. Said otherwise, Aristotle seems to be saying that we perceive

Diares's son despite having no sensation of *him* (we only have a sensation of his colors and shapes, for example). One way of explaining this oddity is by appeal to the distinction between perceiving x and perceiving *that* x : to say that the son of Diares is incidentally perceived is to say that it in fact is the son of Diares that produces the sensations of colors and shapes, so that when we perceive tall and pale we are perceiving Diares's son, but we are not thereby perceiving *that* tall and pale is Diares's son.¹⁶ On this interpretation, one perceives the son of Diares but the son of Diares does not enter into the content of the perception. In other words, insofar as the son of Diares is the incidental object of perception, the perceiver is not made aware of *the son of Diares*; instead, the perceiver is made aware of a pale, tall, moving shape that, as a matter of fact, is Diares's son.

This account is appealing in part because of how easily and often perceiving something and recognizing what it is come apart: without being acquainted with Diares's son (or with Diares), one will perceive him without recognizing *who* he is. However, it is a phenomenologically odd claim, for within experience the special and common perceptibles are always perceived as belonging to *something*; in other words, it is only through artificially induced conditions that one's perception consists only of colors and shapes.¹⁷ So, while it is common to see something and not recognize the *particular* thing it is, it is always a *something* that one sees. Of course, Aristotle was not a phenomenologist. Nevertheless, given that the part of the soul he is explaining is the source of perceptual awareness, it strikes me as odd in such a context to speak of perceptual objects that do not enter into the content of perception. Just as the sweetness one incidentally sees enters into the content of the perception, so too, it seems, some incidental perceptible or other enters into the content—I may not see the son of Diares, but I do see a man; my cat may not see human being, but she certainly seems to see caregiver.¹⁸ Aristotle suggests as much early in *De insomniis* in the course of distinguishing dreaming from opinion: “For we do not merely say that the thing approaching is a man or a horse but also that it is white or handsome; but on these points opinion could not pronounce, either truly or falsely, without perception. Yet the soul actually does this in sleep; for we seem to see that the approaching object is white no less than that it is a man” (458b10–14).¹⁹ That is, in sleep just as in waking perception, we see that what approaches is a man and that it is white, equally.

It may be urged that the incidental perceptibles still cannot be genuinely perceived, for the incidental perceptibles are not material objects—the incidental perceptibles do not produce an affect in the sense power. The difficulty with this inference is that Aristotle does not seem to restrict *even* the special

perceptibles to the material change in the sense organ. In his discussion of sound and hearing, Aristotle includes some comments on voice. Voice (*phōnē*) is a species of a special perceptible—it is “a particular sound made by something with a soul” (*De anima* 420b5–6). Voice will, of course, be a certain quality on the continuum of sound, having a certain pitch and tone (see 420a26–b4), but what is perceived in hearing a voice is *more* than the tone or the pitch. Voice is an expression (*hermēneia*) for the sake of well-being (420b19–20), and it is a “particular sound that has meaning [*sēmantikos*]” (420b32–33). If the special perceptibles are perceived in themselves because they produce a direct effect on the sense *organ*, voice could not be a special perceptible: the *meaning* of a sound, the *expression* that voice conveys, is not simply a quality on a continuum of high and low pitch that can be taken on by the material structure of the sense organ. If what is perceived in itself is so perceived by virtue of its effect on the sense organ, this effect already includes more than taking on the material quality of, say, B-flat, and if it already includes more than B-flat, the principle by which what is perceived incidentally is excluded from perception strictly speaking would also rule out a special perceptible. Put simply, the distinction between being receptive of the material quality of a perceptible and its nonmaterial aspect (or between perceiving and perceiving-that)—that is, meaning—does not seem to be a distinction Aristotle is policing to demarcate proper and incidental perception. Deborah Modrak notes, with regard to incidental perceptibles such as the son of Diares, that “the sensory basis for the perception of an incidental object does not fully determine the content of perception”;²⁰ the same point holds for the perception of voice.

In II.12 Aristotle distinguishes the sense organ from the sense power in just these terms: “that which perceives must be a particular extended magnitude, while what it is to be able to perceive and the sense are surely not magnitudes, but rather a certain *logos* and potentiality of that thing” (424a26–28). The effect on the magnitudinal organ, while a necessary condition for perception, is actually perception by virtue of the nonmagnitudinal power to perceive. This suggests that the power of perception, while employing material organs, is not restricted to the materiality of the sense object. Ultimately, the perceptual faculty is receptive of more than the sense organs, strictly speaking, transmit.

Is there any reason, then, *not* to include the incidental perceptibles among the basic powers of the perceptual part of the soul? It may be objected that perceiving the son of Diares *qua* son of Diares cannot be a basic perceptual power because, at the very least, perceiving him requires that one be acquainted with him, and it may also require (as Kahn [1992] argues)

universal categories such as “son” and “man” which are intellectual, not perceptual, categories. On this account, what would distinguish what is perceived strictly speaking, that is, perceived in itself, from what is perceived incidentally is the nonperceptual input required. This is the problem raised if incidental perception takes the form of perceiving *that* the white is the son of Diaries, rather than perceiving the son of Diaries: the “*that*” indicates that the son of Diaries is not perceived but inferred, based on memories and categories.

There is indeed a distinction that may be drawn between the immediate and natural ability to perceive the common and proper perceptibles and the learning or experience that may be required to perceive incidental perceptibles. Aristotle makes clear that perception is an already developed power, not in need of being learned (*De anima* 417b16–19). However, this need not imply that incidental perception is the *application* of intellectual categories to the data provided by perception. A baby deer, for example, will learn how to walk, and this may require developing the ability to discern which rocks are too high to step over. This is to educate the perception of what is an in-itself perceptible—the perception of the common perceptible, magnitude—which does not involve the application of any category. Even in-itself perception may be developed and refined, without the input of intellect. Moreover, as Cashdollar points out, there is spontaneity *even in* the perception of learned incidental perceptibles that precludes the process of inference from a category (be it an intellectual category or not) to the content of perception.²¹ That the white thing is the son of Diaries is *perceived*, not inferred.

Aristotle does not preclude incidental perceptibles from the content of perception in his discussions of it, and there seems not to be a satisfactory principle to employ to preclude it on his behalf—neither the immediate effect on the sense organs, nor the unmediated (unlearned) operation of the in-itself perceptibles.²² We ought to conclude, then, that the basic powers of perception—those included in the definition of the perceptual part of the soul—are the powers to perceive special, common, and incidental perceptibles.

3. The Primary Perceptual Faculty

There is one other factor to consider in determining the structure of the perceptual part of the soul, namely, Aristotle’s claim that perceptual power is ultimately unified in one central primary power.²³ In general, the primary perceptual faculty is invoked to explain the possibility of perceiving different sense objects at once (*De anima* 425a30–b3, 426b17–23; *De sensu* 449a6–20;

De somno 455a17–22) and to explain how we perceive that we see, hear, and so on (*De somno* 455a15–17). There are two general ways of interpreting this primary perceptual faculty: as the joint activity of the five senses, or as a general power distinct from the power of the five senses.²⁴ What is at stake in the question of the nature of the primary perceptual faculty, with respect to the issue of the configuration of the perceptual *part* of the soul, is whether the powers to differentiate between special perceptibles and to perceive that we perceive are derived from the basic powers to perceive the special, common, and incidental perceptibles, or whether they are distinct powers that are to be included as basic perceptual powers. In fact, as we will see, the relationship between the reception of the perceptible objects, on the one hand, and the awareness of them (perceiving that we see and hear [*De anima* III.2 425b12–25]) and the ability to differentiate between them, on the other, are powers that are so intimately related that the relationship between the two can be described *neither* as the joint activity of the senses *nor* as a distinct power. It is more properly conceived as a relationship of part to whole.²⁵

To begin with, we may note that the question of perceiving that we perceive and the question of differentiating the special perceptibles are related questions. They are both questions of awareness, the former being a question of awareness of single objects, the latter being a question of comparative awareness, the awareness of the individual objects as different from one another or that the individual objects differ.²⁶ That these two questions are related is indicated by the parallel ways that Aristotle formulates the questions. For Aristotle, the question of awareness is a question of how it is that we *perceive* that we perceive (*De anima* 425b12–13), and the question of *comparative* awareness is a question of how we *perceive* that the perceptual objects differ (426b14). The first question can be glossed as “how is it that we are *aware* of our perceptions?” The second question, too, can be glossed in these terms: “how is it that we are *aware* that perceptual objects differ?” In both cases, the kind of perceiving in question is a way of being aware of the objects of perception. That these questions are related gains support from a passage in *De somno* (455a12–22), wherein Aristotle explicitly links these two notions (discussed below).

If it is true that both of these questions are questions of awareness, how we answer the first question will have implications for the second. The question of awareness may be put this way: is the awareness of the object of perception accomplished by the sense itself? That is to say, is sight itself aware of red? Or does awareness require something over and above the sight itself? The question of how one distinguishes the special perceptibles will be affected by the answer. If it is the former, that sight by itself is aware of color, then

the question about distinguishing the special perceptibles will be “how are these modes of awareness united?” In other words, the awareness of red will *already* be distinct from the awareness of B-flat, so the question of discerning their distinctness is a question of how the distinct awarenesses come to be unified. If, on the other hand, the awareness of an object of sight involves a general power of awareness, the question concerning the distinction between the special perceptibles will be “how does a single power of awareness distinguish difference?” In other words, if the power of awareness is one, how does it accommodate multiplicity?

De anima III.2, the chapter wherein Aristotle addresses the questions of awareness and discernment of differences, proceeds roughly as one would expect, given the connection between the two questions. He begins with a consideration of the question of awareness and proceeds from there, after an interval in which he discusses the unity of the special perceptible object and the perception itself in the act of perceiving (425b26–426b8), to discuss the question of comparative awareness. The chapter opens: “Since we perceive that we see and hear, it must either be by sight that one perceives that one sees or by another [sense]” (425b12–13). Difficulties follow each of these two possibilities. If it is by another sense that one sees that one sees, (1) one and the same sense would perceive both color and the vision,²⁷ and (2) there will be an infinite regress of senses that see that one sees that one sees, and so on. This regress, I take it, rests on the assumption that awareness takes the same form as perceiving objects: perception is *of* an object (say, red), and if awareness is also a perception, it will also be *of* an object, the seeing of red. But if the initial perception *of* an object does not include *awareness* of the object, neither will the second-order perception *of* the perception.²⁸ To avoid the regress, Aristotle must reject this assumption. Let us see if he does so when he considers the second possibility, namely that it is by one and the same sense that we both see and are aware that we see.

After dismissing the option that another sense perceives that we perceive because of the regress problem, Aristotle considers the possibility that the sense is aware of itself (*De anima* 425b15–17). If it is by sight that one sees that one sees, and what it is to see is to see *color*, then the sense itself will have to be colored in order to be seen in its action of seeing (425b17–20). Two problems arise from this. The first is that, if sight is aware of itself as seeing, then its function is split into two—receiving the perceptible object, on the one hand, and being aware of that reception, on the other. Second, for that which sees to be colored is a problem because, in order to be receptive of the perceptible object, the sense itself cannot actively *be* any of its objects (424a7–9). However, in the lines that follow, Aristotle removes both of these

obstacles and seems to affirm something like the sense being aware of itself. He says:

It is clear then that to perceive by sight is not a single thing; for even when we do not see, it is by sight that we discern [*krinein*] both darkness and light, though not in the same way. Moreover, even that which sees is in a way colored; for each sense organ [*aisthētērion*] is receptive of the object of perception without its matter. That is why perceptions [*aisthēseis*] and imaginings [*phantasiai*] remain in the sense organ even when the objects of perception are gone. (*De anima* 425b20–25)

Aristotle removes the obstacles to attributing awareness to the sense itself by pointing out that (a) it is not a problem for a single sense to have more than one power, because it *already* has more than one—sight, for example, both sees color and discerns darkness from light. Johansen (2005) nicely explicates the relevance of this point to the problem of explaining awareness:²⁹ discerning light and darkness is not *seeing*, for seeing is of color and light is the medium, not the object, of seeing (as Aristotle lays out in *De anima* II.7). Darkness, the absence of light, is the condition under which seeing (i.e., seeing color) does not happen. Thus, the distinction between perceiving color by sight and discerning darkness and light by sight “is also a way of showing, via the negative example, how the sense of sight may be involved in registering both its own activity and its own inactivity with respect to first-order perception.” Aristotle also points out that (b) in a way the sense *is* colored, because it takes on the perceptible form without the matter. In affirming that the sense has more than one function (a), Aristotle opens the possibility that the sense is self-aware, that is, that it includes awareness in the very reception of the object. In affirming that the sense is in a way colored (b), he allows that somehow the sense can have *itself* as its object; seeing is both *of* red and also *of* the red-being-perceived.

But if the sense is *of* both its object and itself in the same way, then we are thrown back into the problem that underlies the regress problem, which is a problem only on the assumption that awareness has the same structure as the original perception. If the act of perceiving an object does not include awareness in itself, then a second-order act of perceiving an object (in this case, the object is the original act of perception) will not accomplish this either, but will require a third-order perception, ad infinitum. But the same problem holds of the sense itself: if the act of perceiving an object (say, red) does not include awareness in itself, then a second aspect of perceiving an object

(the red-being-perceived, or the original act of perception) should not either. If the sense itself perceiving that it sees successfully avoids the problem of the regress problem, the sense must be *of* itself in a manner that differs (in a way that is yet to be determined) from the way it is *of* its special object.³⁰ Moreover, these must be two aspects of the same act of perception. Aristotle considers the act of perception to be a fully complete one (*Met.* 1048b23; *De sensu* 446b2–3), so that if perception is aware, this perceptual awareness must be included in the same act by which the object is perceived.

It is noteworthy that Aristotle does not here conclude that it is the sense as individual sense that is self-aware; he concludes instead with the puzzling comment about lingering perceptions and *phantasiai*. This suggests that the question of awareness has not yet been fully resolved, although some of the difficulties to resolving it have been addressed. The reference to *phantasia*, moreover, hints that awareness is accomplished by the primary perceptual faculty: at *De memoria* 450a10–12 Aristotle remarks that *phantasmata* are affections of the common sense (*koinē aisthēsis*), which he immediately identifies with the *prōton aisthētikon*.³¹ We will have to address later the questions of (a) how the sense is *of* itself, how this is different from being *of* a special object, and (b) how, given this difference, awareness is still *perceiving* that we perceive.

The question about discerning perceptible differences takes the form one would expect if perceptual awareness were accomplished by each sense itself, but the solution offered is the one that would be expected if awareness were accomplished by the central perceptual power. After an interim in which Aristotle argues that in the activity of perception the object of perception and the sense are the same (*De anima* 425b26–426b8), he articulates the question thus:

Each sense, therefore, is concerned with the subject perceived by it, being present in the sense-organ *qua* sense-organ, and it discerns [*krinein*] the varieties of the subject perceived by it, e.g. sight for white and black, and taste for sweet and bitter; and similarly for the other senses too. Since we discern [*krinein*] both white and sweet and each of the objects of perception by reference to each other, by what do we perceive also that they differ? (*De anima* 426b8–14)

If each sense is aware of its own objects, by what means are the differences between them perceived? It cannot be the senses taken individually—these are concerned only with their own objects: “Nor indeed is it possible to discern by separate means that sweet is different from white, but both must be

evident to one thing” (*De anima* 426b17–19). Neither can it be some other faculty that makes these distinctions: “This must indeed be by perception; for they are objects of perception” (426b14–15). Instead, some single perceptual power must make this distinction (426b20–23).

This by itself does not explain *how* individual senses become unified so as to be discerned as distinct, only *that* they do. For the remainder of the chapter, Aristotle considers the problem of how something that is one and undivided can be “moved simultaneously with opposite motions” (*De anima* 426b30), as it would have to be to perceive both sweet and white (426b31–427a1). His solution is familiar. One thing can be single and undivided in place and number, while divisible and divided in being (427a3–5). This single perceptual faculty is like the soul itself, which is single and undivided while also being divisible in *logos* or being (Aristotle uses these phrases interchangeably) according to its parts.

This is the solution we would expect if awareness were accomplished by the central perceptual power, rather than the individual senses—it is a solution that accommodates multiplicity in a single power, not a solution that unites many modes of awareness. If each sense were singularly aware of its object, then the faculty that discerns the differences between the sense objects (in the interim between the awareness question and the difference question, Aristotle argues that the active faculty and the object are the same, although different in being) would have to include a third instance of awareness—awareness *of* these singular awarenesses as compared to one another. But this is not what Aristotle describes here. Rather, he says that the single perceptual faculty is like a point, which is both one and two insofar as it is both the beginning and the end of a discrete line (*De anima* 427a9–16). This solution behaves as if the senses themselves are *not* individually aware, at least not *qua* individual senses.

There is a passage in *De somno* (mentioned earlier) wherein Aristotle directly connects the issue of awareness with the issue of discerning perceptibles, and so it has direct bearing on these issues.

Now every sense has both something special [*ti idion*] and something common [*ti koina*]. The special function, e.g., of the sight is seeing, that of the auditory, hearing, and similarly with all the rest; but there is also a common faculty [*koinē dunamis*] associated with them all, whereby one perceives that one sees and hears, for it is not by *sight* that one sees that one sees; and one discerns [*krinein*] and is capable of discerning [*dunatai krinein*] that sweet is different from white not by taste nor by sight, nor by a combination of the

two, but by some part [*morion*] which is common [*koinē*] to all the sense organs; for there is one sense faculty [*mia aisthēsis*], and one paramount sense organ [*to kurion aisthētērion hen*], but the being of its sensitivity varies with each class of sensible object, e.g., sound and color. (*De somno* 455a12–22)³²

Here Aristotle explicitly connects the issue of perceiving *that* we perceive with the issue of perceiving perceptible differences. He attributes perceptual awareness to a common power, *koinē dunamis*, and explicitly denies that it is the faculty of sight itself that is aware. Instead, there is one perceptual faculty (*mia aisthēsis*), presumably that which is the source of the *koinē dunamis*, that provides *both* the awareness of the perceptual object and the discernment of their differences. Although the way these questions were taken up in *De anima* III.2 is not entirely perspicuous, this is consistent with the account there, if we take the question of awareness to have concluded only that in *some* sense, sight is self-aware. We may now take it to mean that it is self-aware, not *qua* sight, but *qua* part of the central perceptual power. This is further confirmed by a passage in *De sensu*, in which Aristotle considers how it is possible to perceive different perceptual objects simultaneously.

If then it is true that the soul perceives sweet with one part [*meros*] and white with another part, then either the compound of these is one, or it is not. But it must be one; for the perceptual faculty is one part [*meros*]. What one object, then, does that one faculty perceive? For surely no object can be composed of these. There must then, as has been said before, be one part of the soul with which it perceives everything, although it senses different objects with different [parts]. (*De sensu* 449a5–10)³³

There is some one part of the soul that perceives all things, although it perceives different objects with different parts of itself. This suggests that the five senses perceive—in the sense of being affected by their objects such that they are *aware* of them—only by virtue of being parts of a perceptual *whole*.

We may now return to the questions put off above, namely, (a) what the difference is between the way that the sense is *of* an object and the way that it is *of* itself perceiving, (b) and how, despite this difference, awareness is nonetheless *perceiving* that we perceive. The distinction between a part and a whole is, in a sense, an artificial one—the parts are not separable in the sense of existing independently from the whole. As Kahn says, “The conception of the individual senses as independent faculties would be just as alien to

Aristotle as the conception of individual organs in abstraction from the body of which they form a part."³⁴ Any activity of a part of a whole is made possible by, and is ultimately the activity of, the whole. For example, while it is true to say that it is the hand that grasps, it is *also* true to say that the person grasps by means of her hand. So, similarly, it is true to say that sight is aware that it sees, but it is *also* true to say that the perceptual power is aware that it perceives by means of sight. The body as a whole is the source of the power to move, and this power is specified in the hand's power to grasp; so too it is the perceptual power as a whole that is the source of awareness, and this power is specified in vision's power to see. As Kosman put it, "To see then, as Aristotle says in our text (425b18) . . . is to be aware, we might say, sightfully."³⁵

So there is a distinction between sight seeing red and sight seeing itself seeing red: sight takes on the perceptible form of red *qua* individual sense, but it takes it on *as* aware of it *qua* part of a perceptual whole. In other words, the *way* that sight sees—in the sense of being aware of—its object is predicated upon the awareness of the whole perceptual system. Just as the hand grasps by drawing on the power of the whole motive body, without the body thereby being directed at the hand, so seeing is awareness of color by drawing on the power of the whole aware perceptual system, without that system being directed at vision. In the *De anima* III.2 passage, Aristotle affirms that sight is in a way colored, because it takes on the perceptible form without the matter, as a way of satisfying the condition for sight being visible to itself. Now we see that sight is in a way colored and is visible to itself, but not as an object for itself. Rather, it is visible to itself in the mode of being colored, that is, in being aware of its color. Sight *qua* vision is of red, and sight *qua* awareness is of the seeing accomplished by sight *qua* vision. This is not a second-order perception—the perceptual whole is not affected by the seeing in the way that sight is affected by red. It is, rather, a *way* that sight is of red, namely, with awareness. But it is a perception that we perceive in the sense that it is perception taken generally that is aware of the activity of any individual sense.³⁶

There is one passage in the *Metaphysics* that has been taken as evidence against the sort of interpretation I have been giving of the relationship between perceiving an object and being aware of that perception. I have been arguing that awareness is a primary perceptual capacity, as primary as the reception of perceptual objects. It may be objected that in *Metaphysics* XII.9, we find Aristotle saying, "evidently knowledge and perception and opinion and understanding have always something else as their object, and themselves only by the way" (1074b35–36).³⁷ This seems to distinguish between the act of perceiving (and knowing, and so on) and the awareness of such

acts, and to relegate the awareness to a secondary position—these processes have themselves as objects only “by the way.”³⁸ However, I have argued that, strictly speaking, it is not *sight* that is of itself, but the perceptual faculty as a whole that is of the activity of seeing (in the sense of providing the awareness to the activity of seeing). The *Metaphysics* passage fits this distinction quite well: sight *qua* sight is, first of all, of its object, but sight *qua* part of perception as a whole is of itself. The latter may be described as “only by the way” because it is not sight strictly speaking that is of itself, but perception as a whole that is of sight.

To sum up: in the *De anima* passage, Aristotle affirmed that a sense has more than one function and that it is in a way colored, which suggested that in some sense sight is self-aware, but not in the sense of being a perceptual object for itself (which would set us back in the regress problem). The passages from *De somno* and *De sensu* suggest that the way that sight is self-aware and has more than one function is by virtue of being a part of a unified perceptual system. What does this mean? How does this solve the problem of awareness? The introduction of the unified perceptual system provides a new orientation for the question of awareness by situating the individual senses in an integrated whole. If the individual senses are parts of a whole perceptual system, rather than independent entities, then what it is for them to be the senses that they are is conditioned by the whole of which they are a part—the whole is prior to the parts. If this is the case, then the question of awareness is better asked, not of the senses taken individually, but of the perceptual whole. However, one cannot strictly distinguish the parts from the whole—what is true of the whole will *also* be true of the parts. If awareness is achieved by the whole perceptual system, it will also be achieved by the individual senses *qua* parts of the whole. Thus it is in a way true to say that we see that we see, but it is better to say that we *perceive* that we see, where perception names the general faculty of awareness and sight names its particular use.

If the senses are parts of a unified perceptual power, this means that they are what they are in virtue of the whole. Given that the senses were, at first, seen to be the primary candidates for the powers of the perceptual part of the soul, the introduction of a central, unified sense power changes the picture of the perceptual part of the soul significantly. Now, it seems, the perceptual part of the soul is *first of all* the general power for perceptual awareness, and this power is actualized through the reception of the special, common, and incidental perceptibles.³⁹

It may still be asked *how* exactly this unified central perceptual power *has* the power of perceptual awareness. But, as Kosman concludes, this is just the

nature of perception: “Just as form, though not nothing, is not something in addition to the elements of an entity, and just as soul, though not nothing, is not something in addition to the alive body, so awareness, though not nothing, is not something in addition to the active, embodied perceptual faculty at work in a unified sensitive organism.”⁴⁰ In other words, the power of perception *just is* a power of awareness, and this power is a first principle of animal life; this is just what it means to be a part of the soul.

4. The Derivative Powers: *Phantasia*

The primary perceptual capacity, in addition to being the source of perceptual awareness, is also the seat of other perceptual powers—*phantasia* and memory, in particular. Aristotle summarizes his arguments concerning memory in *De memoria* 1 thus: “Now, it has been said what memory and remembering are, namely the having of an image [*phantasma*] regarded as a likeness of that of which it is an image, and to which part in us memory belongs, namely the primary perceptive part [*prōton aisthētikon*] and that with which we perceive time” (451a14–17). In this section, I will discuss what *phantasia* is and how it relates to the basic perceptual powers. I will argue first that *phantasia* is derived from and dependent upon the perception of the special, common, and incidental perceptibles, and second that its role in the perceptual life of an animal is to expand the temporal horizons of perceptual experience. It thus enriches perceptual experience, but is nonetheless conditioned by the original perceptions. This is important for the basic argument of this book, which is that virtue requires that one *perceive* well, not merely that one have the right *phantasmata*.⁴¹ I also argue that to perceive well requires that one bring the perceptual part of one’s soul into harmony with the intellectual part, and insofar as *phantasia* is a power of the perceptual *part* of the soul (albeit a derivative one), we may still take Aristotle’s claims about *phantasia* to be informative concerning the perceptual *part* of the soul.

In *De anima* III.3, Aristotle introduces *phantasia* as “that in virtue of which we say an image [*phantasma*] occurs to us” (428a1–2), and, after distinguishing it from a number of other capacities (including perception), he concludes that *phantasia* is “a movement [*kinēsis*] produced by [*gignesthai*] perception according to its activity [*kat’ energeian*]” (429a1–2). This alone is enough to establish that *phantasia* depends upon the basic perceptual powers, and as such is to be included as a secondary power of the perceptual part of the soul: the definition of *phantasia* includes *aisthēsis*, and as a result the *phantastikon* is not a separable part of the soul. Moreover, Aristotle does not list *phantasia* among powers that he holds as candidates for being parts of the

soul (413b11–13). That the *phantastikon* is not a distinct part of the soul is confirmed by a passage in *De insomniis*:

But since we have discussed *phantasia* in the treatise *On the Soul*, and the imaginative faculty [*to phantastikon*] is the same as the perceptual faculty [*to aisthēton*], although the imaginative faculty and the perceptual faculty are different [*heteron*] in being; and since *phantasia* is the movement produced by perception according to its activity, and a dream appears to be some sort of image (for an image which appears in sleep, whether simply or in a special sense, we call a dream); it is clear that dreaming belongs to the perceptual faculty, but belongs to it *qua* imaginative. (*De insom.* 459a14–23)

Here Aristotle explicitly addresses the faculty of *phantasia* with respect to the faculty of perception, and asserts that they are the same (*to auto*) but *different* (*heteron*) in being. If the faculty of *phantasia* were *separable* in being, it would be a candidate for a distinct part of the soul. But, as it is, this faculty is only different in being, as we would expect by its explicit reference to perception in its definition. Insofar as *phantasia* is produced by perceptual activity, it is a power *of* the perceptual part of the soul, and insofar as it is derived from the basic powers of perception, it is a secondary power, one that is made possible by the basic power.⁴² Aristotle says explicitly that *phantasia* is produced by the powers to perceive special, common, and incidental perceptibles at 428b17–30.

Phantasia is also a power of the perceptual part of the soul in a second sense: it is an activity of the primary perceptual faculty. Aristotle makes this clear in *De memoria*, where he first argues that memory belongs to the same part of the soul to which *phantasia* belongs (450a22–25), and then identifies this with the primary perceptual faculty (451a15–18). Victor Caston persuasively argues that *phantasia* belongs to the primary perceptual faculty in the following sense: an original perception is received via the peripheral senses by the primary sense organ (the seat of the primary perceptual power [*De somno* 455a12–22]), causing a perceptual experience of that object. At the same time, the perception of the object causes a “side-effect” motion in the organ, and this is the *phantasia*.⁴³ This *phantasia* resides in the perceptual system, and may, through a variety of causes including choice (*De anima* 427b16–18) or another occurrent perception, cause a change in the primary sense organ, creating an experience that is like the original perceptual experience (although it may be distorted by, for example, being drunk or asleep [*De insomn.* 461a8–24]).⁴⁴

Some scholars have found that the account of *phantasia* given in *De anima* III.3 is inconsistent,⁴⁵ although current favor seems to tend in the direction of finding ways to overcome apparent inconsistencies.⁴⁶ *Phantasia* has been variously taken to perform quite discrete functions, such as being responsible for nonparadigmatic and doubtful perceptual experience,⁴⁷ or to supply a global function necessary to all cognition, such as representing objects such that one becomes aware of them,⁴⁸ or interpreting perceptions.⁴⁹ To give an exhaustive account of *phantasia* that addresses each of these positions in detail is a work too lengthy to take up here. However, the causal account of *phantasia* that Caston offers, and incarnations of which are given by Everson and Moss, provides a strong framework within which to consider such questions.⁵⁰ Although Caston takes the argument in III.3 to be aimed at explaining the possibility of error, his account of what *phantasia* is and how it works enables it to serve other functions as well. For example, Moss (2012) argues for a similar conception of the mechanism of *phantasia* to the one Caston defends, but she emphasizes the role that *phantasia* plays in animal motion by virtue of presenting the animal with an apparent good.⁵¹ All I intend to show is that *one* of the effects of *phantasia* is the temporal expansion of perceptual experience.⁵²

The causal account of *phantasia* that Caston offers is persuasive, and one of its strengths is that it makes sense both of the basic definition of *phantasia* as “a movement [*kinēsis*] produced by perception according to its activity [*kat’ energeian*]” (*De anima* 429a1–2) and of the variety of features Aristotle attributes to *phantasia* in III.3. In III.3 a number of features of *phantasia* emerge from the distinctions Aristotle draws between it and other capacities (427b16–428b9), and from his own account of what *phantasia* is (428b10–429a9). I organize these features into three groups:

- (1) *Phantasia* is derived from the activity of perception:
 - a. *Phantasia* is a kind of motion that is produced by perception, that is, the perception of special, common, and incidental perceptibles (*De anima* 428b11–12, 428b25–27, 429a1–2)
 - b. It is similar to perception (428b14)
 - c. It is of the objects of perception (428b12–13)

- (2) The activity of *phantasia* is independent of perception:
 - a. *Phantasia* is up to us, in the sense that it is within our power to form an image (427b17–20)
 - b. The way that it presents things is at one remove from reality, so that *phantasia* affects us the way that looking at a picture of, say, a

lion affects us as opposed to the way believing that we see a lion affects us (427b21–24)

- c. *Phantasia* can occur when perception is not occurring, as for example in dreams one has visual images although one's eyes are closed (428a5–8)

(3) *Phantasia* can be either true or false:

- a. It is not tied to truth and falsity the way that opinion is (427b20–21)
- b. *Phantasia* can be false (428a11–12, 428a16–17, 428b17–30)
- c. It does not include conviction (*pistis*) or *logos* (428a19–23, 428a23–24)

Caston's account makes perspicuous how *phantasia* can be both derived from perception and independent in its own activity. If the primary perceptual power in the primary sense organ stores the effects of perception with their causal power to produce an experience like the perceptual experience, it will not depend upon the *presence* of the object of sense, but will have been begotten by an original perception. It is, then, (1b) similar to perception and (1c) of the objects of perception in the sense that it has a similar power to cause an experience like the one caused by the original object of perception. It is nonetheless independent of perceptual activity because, once established, the *phantasia* has its own causal power; it can therefore (2a) be brought before one's mind at will (or as the conclusion of a process of recollection), and (2c) occur without a present perception.

Caston's aim is to show that *phantasia* is exactly that power that accounts for error insofar as its effect is divorced from any external cause to which it must correspond.⁵³ The matter is complex: Aristotle seems to have two different senses of falsity in mind in the three passages in which he makes that claim. The contrasts that generate this feature are informative here. First, supposition (*hupolēpsis*), as Aristotle tells us, includes belief, understanding, and knowledge; all of these are discursive forms of knowledge in the sense that all include *logos* (*De anima* 428a19–24). *Phantasia*, by contrast, presents an image, which is subject to different criteria of truth or falsity. In this context, it is appropriate to say that (3a, 3c) *phantasia* is neither true nor false (427b16–21). Similarly, a painting is neither true nor false by the standards of argument or scientific demonstration. Second, the contrast drawn with perception is between perception of special perceptibles and *phantasia*. The perception of the special perceptibles is always true because the activity of perceiving is one and the same with the activity of the object of

perception, and so there is no room for error—the object of sight and the seeing correspond exactly. *Phantasia*, then, is (3b) “mostly false” by contrast to this because, as Aristotle has just told us, it need not correspond to any currently present object (428a11–12; see also 428b17–18, 418a11–16).⁵⁴ Caston focuses on the second sense of falsity, but his account is suitable to both.

In addition to these three basic features of *phantasia*, Aristotle mentions two others. *Phantasia* can:

- (A) Fill out indistinct perceptions such that something indistinct “appears to us to be a man” (428a12–15), and
- (B) Make its possessor able to do and be affected by many things (428b15–17, 429a2–8).

These two features bring out the role of *phantasia* that I would like to emphasize: that it extends the temporal horizons of perceptual experience. I will begin with the general account I want to give, and then I will turn to the textual evidence for such a story. The primary perceptual power, on Caston’s account of *phantasia*, is a repository of images of previously perceived objects—special, common, and incidental perceptibles—that have causal power to produce new experiences of these former perceptions. In many cases, these *phantasiai* will produce experiences in the absence of perception, as they do in sleep. In other cases, these *phantasiai* will be evoked by a present perception of some other object of perception. For example, perceiving heat may trigger a *phantasia* of water, which serves as the basis for a desire for water. In yet other cases, a perceptual object will trigger a *phantasia* of a previous encounter with that object. For example, Thrasy machus has a conversation with Socrates one day, and he becomes embarrassed in the course of that conversation. The next day he sees Socrates in the marketplace and the *phantasia* of the previous day’s experience comes to his mind, causing him to see Socrates with embarrassment and anger. In these latter two cases, we see that an object is perceived *in relation to* either some not-yet-present object—the water—or some prior experience—the conversation with Socrates. Strictly speaking, perception is of the present—it depends for its activity on a present perceptible object (*De anima* 417b16–29; *De mem.* 449b10–15)—but the perception of it may ignite *phantasiai* of past and future (expected) perceptions. This will, in turn, alter the character of what is perceived: perception is no longer of the present in the sense of an isolated moment, it is now of the present as integrated in a continuous life.

Now let us see how Aristotle’s text supports this role that I am attributing to *phantasia*. Some of the elements required for such an account are already

in place. *Phantasia* is of the objects of perception; Aristotle makes it clear that what he means by this is that *phantasia* is a movement caused by the perception of special, common, and incidental perceptibles. He says: “The movement which comes about as a result of the activity of perception will differ insofar as it comes from these three kinds of perception [the perception of common, special, and incidental perceptibles]” (*De anima* 428b25–27, with 428b17–25 for the reference to common, special, and incidental perception). So it is reasonable to say that Thrasy Machus’s perception of Socrates (an incidental perceptible) may be accompanied by a *phantasia* of Socrates.

That *phantasiai* may be concurrent with perception is evident by the feature, noted above, that *phantasiai* may supply details to imprecise perceptions. The comment comes when Aristotle is distinguishing *phantasia* from perception: “Further, it is not when we are exercising [our senses] accurately with regard to objects of perception that we say that this appears [*phainesthai*] to us to be a man, but rather when we do not perceive it distinctly” (*De anima* 428a12–15). The idea seems to be this: when one sees a figure from a distance, one does not *perceive* that it is the son of Diareas, but it *appears* to one that it is. A *phantasia* is called in to help the perceiver make sense of his perception by filling in the gaps.⁵⁵ (That the point being made here is that *phantasiai* may be either true or false does not alter the fact that it shows that *phantasia* and perception may be concurrent.)⁵⁶

Furthermore, in *De memoria*, Aristotle draws a close connection between the faculty of *phantasia* and the perception of time. Aristotle first argues that memory is “not a perception or a supposition [*hupolēpsis*], but a state [*hexis*] or affection [*pathos*] of one of these, when time has elapsed . . . and this is why all memory involves time. So only animals which perceive time remember, and they do so by means of that with which they perceive time” (449b24–30). Memory involves time, Aristotle argues, and animals remember by means of that by which they perceive time. Immediately after this argument, Aristotle discusses *phantasia* and concludes that “it is apparent, then, to which part of the soul memory belongs, namely, the same part as that to which *phantasia* belongs. And it is the objects of *phantasia* that are remembered in their own right” (*De mem.* 450a22–24). Thus, Aristotle identifies that which perceives time with the part of the soul to which *phantasia* belongs. He concludes his consideration of memory saying, “Now, it has been said what memory and remembering are, namely the having of a *phantasma* regarded as a likeness of that of which it is a *phantasma*, and to which part in us memory belongs, namely the primary perceptual part and that with which we perceive time” (451a15–18). Not all animals have a perception of time (450a15–19), which implies that the perception of time belongs to the primary perceptual part

qua phantastikon (a locution Aristotle uses at *De insomniis* 459a22–23). Not all animals have a perception of time, but those that do have it, have it by virtue of having this secondary perceptual power, the power of *phantasia*. This supports the notion that *phantasia* extends the temporal horizons of the presently perceived objects by situating them within a temporally extended life, at least with respect to the past. The *phantastikon* houses images that are memories, and these images may be brought to bear on the current perception.

The second feature that did not fall neatly into the basic features of *phantasia* supports the notion that *phantasia* also enables a futural temporal horizon of the perceptual object. *Phantasia* makes “it possible for its possessor to do and be affected by many things” (*De anima* 428b15–17). Aristotle reiterates this sentiment at the conclusion of his account of *phantasia*, saying, “And since sight is perception par excellence, the name for *phantasia* is taken from light [*phaos*], because without light it is not possible to see. And because *phantasiai* persist and are similar to perceptions, animals do many things in accordance with them” (429a2–6). As Moss (2012) argues, one sense in which it is possible to act in accordance with *phantasia* is insofar as *phantasia* can make one aware of objects of desire, which are not currently present, as goals.⁵⁷ So, for example, the heat of the day evokes a *phantasia* of cool water as refreshing and pleasant, and this serves as motivation for the perceiver to seek such water. And in seeking water, the animal acts in accordance with *phantasia*.

In sum, *phantasia* is a secondary perceptual capacity, a power of the perceptual part of the soul, insofar as it is an effect of an actual perception. But it is also a power independent of perception, residing in the primary perceptual organ, and this enables it to feed back into and alter the nature of current perceptions. The *phantastikon* is that whereby animals perceive time, and insofar as they perceive time, the present to which *aisthēsis* is beholden is a moment in a temporally extended life. By contrast, those animals without the perception of time, without *phantasia*, will perceive only in isolated bits—each time the grub perceives its food, it is as if it were the first time it perceived food.

Conclusion

This chapter has established the following points: (1) that perception is a part of the soul, and that this means that it is a foundational power that makes possible animal life; (2) that the perceptual part of the soul is a general power of awareness with three objects of awareness—the special, common, and

incidental perceptibles; (3) that *phantasia* is a secondary or derivative power belonging to this part of the soul; and (4) that it is a power that expands the temporal horizons of perceptual experience.

A consequence of the complexity of the perceptual part of the soul is that the term *aisthēsis* gains many meanings. As with many words, *aisthēsis* may be used metaphorically or literally. The metaphorical use is one that refers not (or not only) to any perceptual activity of power at all, such as when we say “I see your point” and mean “I understand.” The literal use will refer to some perceptual power or activity. It may refer (i) narrowly to perception of the special perceptibles (mere sensation), or (ii) more broadly to the perception of special, common, and incidental perceptible objects. *Aisthēsis* may also refer (iii) to the activity or power of the perceptual part of the soul without picking out any specific power. The basic meaning of *aisthēsis*, it seems to me, (iv) refers to awareness in general. Awareness is the defining mark of perception—it is what differentiates the perceptual effects of physical objects from the nonperceptual effects. When heat affects a perceiving creature, this means that the creature becomes *aware* of heat, not merely that it becomes hot. These four meanings are asymmetrically nested within one another: the unspecified activity of the perceptual part of the soul includes sensation, perception of the common and incidental perceptibles, and awareness. Awareness in general includes awareness of special, common, and incidental perceptibles, and perception of the common and incidental perceptibles includes the perception of special perceptibles.

That *aisthēsis* has a broad sense does not render my thesis that perception plays an essential role in ethical reasoning moot: even though it is not mere sensation at work in the sophisticated apprehension of particulars as objects of certain kinds, it is still the activity of the perceptual, not intellectual, powers. Of the narrow and broad meanings, only the first is infallible—perception in the broad sense may be erroneous (*De anima* 418a11–16, 425b3, 428a11–15, 428b22–25). One cannot be deceived about yellow, but one may be deceived that the yellow has this certain magnitude, or that the yellow is a sunflower. In other words, the simple perception of seeing yellow cannot be wrong, but the various complex perceptions such as seeing that the yellow is a sunflower (425b3) or that the yellow is over there (418a16) may contain error. Furthermore, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle points out that one’s attention will be swayed by the pleasure one takes in one’s activities: “when we take intense delight in anything whatever, we hardly do anything else; and when the satisfaction we receive from some things is mild, we turn to other things—for example, those who eat sweets in the theaters do so especially when the actors are poor” (1175b10–13). Feeling pleasure and pain are

perceptual activities (*De anima* 431a11–12), to which Aristotle here links attention (*prosecheia*) (*Nic. Eth.* 1175b4), which suggests that not only may one be in error about where or what a thing is, but also one may simply not be aware of something in the first place. The possibility of perceptual error makes it important that the perceptual part of the soul be in a good condition if one is to act well.

In the chapters that follow, I will argue that bringing the perceptual part of the soul into harmony with the intellectual part is a condition of living a virtuous life. What this means, I will argue, is that the perceptual part of the soul must become subordinate to the intellectual part, such that one perceives in accordance with what one thinks and knows. Concretely, this means that one must come to be able to perceive the present particulars of one's circumstances as calling for action, and as calling for action in light of one's conception of the good life. It will become clear how the points established here are important for this argument in the course of it. Generally speaking, however, the account I will go on to give concerning the role of perception in ethical life requires that perception be a robust and complex faculty, a faculty not limited to the reception of shapes and colors (etc.), but one that is able to perceive particulars with respect to ethical concerns. For example, for Neoptolemus to act virtuously with respect to Philoctetes, he must perceive Philoctetes as one suffering injustice, and that this injustice ought to be remedied to whatever degree possible. The points established here help establish that perception is just such a robust capacity. Including the perception of incidental perceptibles as genuine objects of perception already goes a long way to establishing that this sort of ethical perception is possible—Neoptolemus can certainly perceive Philoctetes. Moreover, that *phantasia* extends the temporal horizons of perception makes it possible to say that Neoptolemus perceives Philoctetes as a particular calling for action. Just as the heat may invoke the *phantasia* of refreshing water that serves as the aim of action, so too, seeing Philoctetes in distress may invoke a *phantasia* of a happy person that serves as the aim of action. As I will show in what follows, this will not be a perception divorced from intellect, but one that is informed by it, making human perception properly developed an intellectually informed perception.

