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ARISTOTLE ON *PHANTASIA*

by

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*This thesis is dedicated to P and to A.C (who is to blame):
with thanks always.*

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As willing lid o'er willing eye
The Evening of the Day leans
Till of all our nature's House
Remains but Balcony

Emily Dickinson

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ABSTRACT

This text will argue that Aristotelian *phantasia* does not form a full capacity in the psyche and, instead, by drawing on its causal origins in perception, acts as an activity serving in the role of helpmate to capacities and other activities. Despite its seemingly simple role in providing representations in the psyche, *phantasia* proves a rich concept which Aristotle uses to explore many phenomena, such as dreaming, movement and action, and memory. Its position between perception and thought and its role in allowing universals to begin gaining entry into the psyche not only allows it to participate in various psychic activities but also proves of importance in Aristotle's philosophy in a larger sense. Indeed, this text will suggest that *phantasia* plays an important role in linking the perceivable and the thinkable in the Aristotelian psyche.

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I

INTRODUCTION

Aristotle's conception of *phantasia* is significantly broader than our conception of 'imagination', the term which is often used to translate it. This becomes readily apparent once one realizes the range of work *phantasia* is put to in Aristotle's accounts of dreaming, movement, and memory, among others things. This thesis will seek to examine Aristotle's account of *phantasia* in the different activities where it manifests itself, but it will also look at *phantasia* as it is positioned with respect to Aristotle's broader psychology and philosophy. In *de Anima*, Aristotle locates his discussion of *phantasia* between his accounts of perception and thought, and it is in this role of bridging the perceptible and the thinkable that the larger importance of *phantasia* within Aristotle's overall philosophy becomes visible. In addition to serving a pivotal role in accounts of a number of phenomena displayed by living beings, Aristotelian *phantasia* presents a response and critique of Plato's earlier conception. Driven by the gap between the sensible world and the intelligible that Plato's philosophy seems to produce, Aristotle uses *phantasia* to help satisfy this missing element in his predecessor's philosophy.

Given that the Aristotle's account of *phantasia* draws noticeably on Plato, it would be appropriate to begin with a modest introduction to the latter's account. It should be noted from the outset that this thesis will not, and does not pretend to, provide an adequate examination of Plato's conception of *phantasia*, rather it will speak to Plato solely in terms of certain passages that are of particular relevance in its examination of Aristotle's treatment. As we shall see, there are many points at which their respective concerns intersect. The introduction of the term *phantasia* can, in fact, be attributed to Plato, and it is in his dialogues, particularly in the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, where the first, though in comparison with Aristotle more narrowly focussed, examinations of *phantasia* are to be found. It is in the latter dialogue that Plato defines *phantasia* as a type of opinion (*doxa*), specifically as one that arises from our perceptions.¹

ΞΕ. Τί δ' ὅταν μὴ καθ' αὐτὸ ἀλλὰ δι' αἰσθήσεως παρῆ τιμι τὸ τοιοῦτον
 αὐτὸ πάθος, ἄρ' οἷόν τε ὀρθῶς εἰπεῖν ἕτερόν τι πλὴν φαντασίαν;
 ΘΕΑΙ. Οὐδέεν.

Stranger: But what if on occasions such a condition [an opinion] occurs in someone not through itself but on account of perception, would we rightly call it anything other than *phantasia*?
Theaetetus: No.

Sophist 264a-b

Plato's examinations of *phantasia* take place within the context of investigations into knowledge and truth, and represent only a part of larger epistemological and ontological preoccupations. Plato seeks to establish truth as objectively based and is keen to argue that any subjectively based conception of truth cannot be valid, thus, in the *Theaetetus*, we find Plato arguing strongly against the proposition that perception (*aesthēsis*) and the opinions

1. All translations are the work of the author.

based on perceptions (*phantasiai*), which he locates within the subjective individual, are knowledge.² This placement, Plato argues, means that perception and the opinions springing from it, namely *phantasiai*, cannot be true in any full or meaningful sense of the word. If one relies on *phantasia* for knowledge, the wind, to use Plato's example in the dialogue, may end up being both cold and not-cold depending on whomever one asks. *Phantasia* is, ultimately, a mere appearance. In the *Sophist*, Plato uses his definition of *phantasia* as a type of opinion to implicate it in the cognitive activities of the soul, and indeed he indicates that the formation of these perceptually-based opinions stems from a silent dialogue found within the psyche. This 'dialogue' means that the opinions that are *phantasiai* are at a fundamental level related to speech. Once he has made this linkage, Plato is quick to point out that given the falsity that comes with *phantasia*, the Sophist must admit that speech can, contrary to the latter's protests to the contrary, be false.

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν ἐπεὶ περ λόγος ἀληθὴς ἦν καὶ ψευδής, τούτων δ' ἐφάνη διάνοια μὲν αὐτῆς πρὸς ἑαυτὴν ψυχῆς διάλογος, δόξα δὲ διανοίας ἀποτελεύτησις, "φαίνεται" δὲ ὃ λέγομεν σύμμιξις αἰσθήσεως καὶ δόξης, ἀνάγκη δὴ καὶ τούτων τῷ λόγῳ συγγενῶν ὄντων ψευδῆ τε αὐτῶν ἔνια καὶ ἐνίστε εἶναι.

Stranger: And so seeing that speech is true and false, and that thought appeared after this to be a dialogue of our psyche with itself, and opinion an outcome of thought, and that the [phrase] which we use "it appears" [φαίνεται] is a blending of perception and opinion, then it is indeed necessary that as these things are connected with speech that some of them are sometimes false.

Sophist 264a-b

Looking at these references to *phantasia*, it becomes fairly clear that for Plato *phantasia* plays a rather modest role in his larger project of examining knowledge and of determining what is genuinely knowable. Indeed, part of Plato's epistemological and ontological project

2. The passage at *Theaetetus* 152b-c is a particularly clear example of this.

necessarily involves determining the opposite of these very things, namely, those things which cannot be known in themselves, and in understanding the lapses from knowledge that occur during moments of error. *Phantasiai* figure prominently (and notoriously) in the latter. Given their clear connection to the epistemologically unreliable world of perception, Plato concludes in the *Protagoras* that *phantasiai*, given their nature as (predominantly) illusory appearances, almost inevitably lead the psyche astray.³ But in addition to pointing to their roots in perception, Plato takes pains to link *phantasia* to speech, which like *phantasia* can be false, and this argument allows him to tackle the other philosophical project in which *phantasia* figures: the repudiation of Sophism and sophistic subjectivity. The preceding outline points at the basic character of Platonic *phantasia*; it is a concept which is raised with epistemological and ontological concerns firmly in mind. Thus we find that although *phantasiai* would appear to be regular and not unnatural elements in the activity of the Platonic psyche, they do not, for example, play a role in the tri-partite psychology. *Phantasiai* are used by Plato to give us insight into what is *not* as opposed to what *is*, specifically and significantly, into what is not real and what is not true.

The account of *phantasia* that we find in Aristotle presents us with is a radical and wholesale reworking of the concept, but one that is nevertheless written with Plato's account firmly in mind. Indeed, one of the readily noticeable aspects of Aristotle's treatment (particularly in *de Anima* III.3) are the references, both direct and indirect, to Plato, and how it quite deliberately sets itself the task of countering key aspects of the latter's account while at the same time speaking to many of the same considerations. An immediate and striking difference between their respective accounts is the often constructive role Aristotle allows

3. *Protagoras* 356d

phantasia, and the range of psychic work it performs. The conception of *phantasia* that we find in *de Anima* and other of Aristotle's texts is a much broader and more ambitious undertaking than Plato's, one which speaks to a whole host of philosophical ideas, and, although Aristotle's most focussed discussion of *phantasia* takes place in III.3 of *de Anima*, the concept is revisited and further expanded on in a number of other texts, most notably *de Memoria*, *de Motu Animalium*, and *de Insomniis*. The range of topics in which *phantasia* is implicated is wide and varied: in 'altered' states of consciousness such as sleeping and madness, in memory and the acquisition of experience (*empeira*), movement and action, and error, even in the workings of thought.

It is perhaps the very expansiveness and the sheer range of tasks attributed to Aristotelian *phantasia* that cause immediate and often-noted problems for the aspiring reader. The first and most immediate issue to be confronted revolves around definition. In contrast to Plato's frustratingly spare definition of *phantasia* as a special type of opinion growing out our sensory experiences, Aristotle's defining is more generous, if not altogether more direct. In *De Anima* III.3, considerable time is devoted to elaborating on the various things that *phantasia* is not. But having said that, we are also given two defining statements which are indicative not only of the rather new direction in which Aristotle would like to move *phantasia*, but also of the difficulty and subtlety of what he is after in his conceptualization.

εἰ οὖν μηθὲν μὲν ἄλλο ἔχει τὰ εἰρημένα ἢ φαντασία, τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ τὸ
λεχθέν, ἢ φαντασία ἂν εἴη κίνησις ὑπὸ τῆς αἰσθήσεως τῆς κατ'
ἐνέργειαν γιγνομένη.

And so if *phantasia* is in no way different from the things having been mentioned, and is that which we have said, then *phantasia* is a movement occurring on account of an activity of *aesthēsis*.

εἰ δὴ ἐστὶν ἡ φαντασία καθ' ἣν λέγομεν φάντασμα τι ἡμῖν γίγνεσθαι καὶ μὴ εἶ τι κατὰ μεταφορὰν λέγομεν, {ἄρα} μία τις ἔστι τούτων δύναμις ἢ ἔξις καθ' ἧς κρίνομεν καὶ ἀληθεύομεν ἢ ψευδόμεθα;

If *phantasia* is that by virtue of which we say that a *phantasma* occurs to us and if it is not that which we speak of metaphorically, then is it a single capacity (*dunamis*) for these things or a 'having' (*hexis*) with respect to these things [i.e. *phantasmata*] in virtue of which we discriminate and are right or are mistaken?

In the defining statements, we see *phantasia* characterized as a movement resulting from the activity of *aesthēsis* and find Aristotle raising the question of whether *phantasia* is a capacity or a *hexis* ('having'). By speaking to *phantasia* in these particular ways, two fundamental and striking differences between Plato's and Aristotle's respective accounts become immediately apparent. With Aristotle we have shifted from Plato's account of *phantasia* as something very much like an entity (an 'appearance') to a depiction of *phantasia* as an active principle (something 'by virtue of which' a *phantasma* (or representation) exists in the psyche). Like Plato, Aristotle identifies the original impetus for *phantasia* as lying in acts of perception but sees it as an activity (or more precisely, a movement) that occurs as a direct result of the activities of the perceptual system of the psyche. Where Plato's *phantasia* sounds rather like a noun, Aristotle's has begun to sound more like a verb, an ability to 'be appeared to' or 'to create representations'. These last phrases, although capturing the distinctly active quality of Aristotelian *phantasia*, speak to the definitional difficulties alluded to earlier. Despite the common use of terms such as 'imagination' and 'appearing' to denote *phantasia*, they are not without their problems, inasmuch as these translations, although helpful when dealing with some facets of his account, ultimately fail to cover the full extent of psychic terrain which

phantasia inhabits. The creative connotations of ‘imagination’, while working happily in the context of dreaming, fit less comfortably when addressing the less exotic phenomena addressed by Aristotle’s account, such as the movement of animals. In the other instance, ‘appearing’ (with the connotation of ‘mere’ appearing) undercuts the very real potential of *phantasia* to be true and to work constructively within the psyche, something which Aristotle, in his broadly-based and often positive account, surely seems to have tried to argue. Because of these considerations, *phantasia* will be referred to in the original Greek for the most part, while on a number of occasions, the products of *phantasia*, *phantasmata*, will be referred to as ‘representations’. This term is intended to express the ability of *phantasia* to render perceptual experiences from across the whole range of senses (not only the visual, as terms like ‘image’ might suggest) and to lessen the taint of falsity, which becomes somewhat less of a factor with Aristotle than it was with Plato. The misleading appearances that are *phantasiai* in the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Protagoras* shift to a conception of *phantasia* as an activity that, while useful in explaining how the feverish might ‘see’ serpents on the wall, is no less useful in helping to explaining how we conduct intellectual exploration of the geometry of triangles.

A second difference in the accounts of Plato and Aristotle is found in the observation that Aristotle, in a sense, locates *phantasia* both inside and outside the psyche. *Phantasia* (and the capacity of sensation) requires what is outside the psyche, namely the sensual world, at the same time as requiring a soul-possessing body to house it.⁴ But from the outset, Aristotle frames his examination of *phantasia* in terms of its existence as one of a set of abilities that can be present within living beings and as an entity that possesses a regular and established function within the psyche, either in the form of an actual capacity, or at least as a ‘having’

4. *de Anima* 416b34 and 415b24

(*hexis*) present within the psyche. The narrower quality of Platonic *phantasia* as a type of opinion generated by perceptions coming from outside the soul, as essentially a by-product of the outer world impinging on the psyche, and thus an entity which is essentially alien to it, is absent.

The difficulties that come with studying *phantasia* are not limited to issues of definition and translation. Aristotle has on numerous occasions been accused of generating an account of *phantasia* which teeters on the incoherent or is burdened with outright and irresolvable inconsistencies.⁵ The reason for these difficulties lies mainly (though not exclusively) in trying to understand how the many different manifestations and tasks assigned to *phantasia* can be brought together under a single intelligible and workable concept. Where Platonic *phantasiai* serve as irritants and obstacles to true knowledge and being, Aristotle not only attempts to demarcate an identifiable activity that will speak to a variety of psychic experiences but also tries to account for experiences and capacities across the full range of different psyches, both human and otherwise. Thus, animals, as well as humans have the ability for *phantasia*. Despite the complexities of Aristotle's various accounts of *phantasia*, this text takes the view that they result in a fundamentally workable and consistent concept. Part of the challenge in establishing this consistency lies in addressing the question of what sort of thing *phantasia* actually is; the very question Aristotle himself raises at the beginning

5. Malcolm Schofield provides a useful and emphatic example of the bewilderment and criticism occasioned by examinations of Aristotle's account of *phantasia*: "I shall suggest (and have already hinted) that Aristotle can be fairly interpreted as adopting different but complementary vantage-points on a more or less coherent family of psychological phenomena. But it would be a triumph of generosity over justice to pretend that he manages to combine his different approaches to *phantasia* with an absolutely clear head." Schofield, M. "Aristotle on the Imagination" In *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, eds. M.C. Nussbaum and A.O. Rorty. 253 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

of his account in *de Anima* III.3. Is it a capacity in its own right, like *aesthēsis* for example, or rather a *bēsis*? And how can we know that *phantasia* actually *is* something in its own right and not merely an aspect of some other capacity, such as perception or opinion, as Plato had maintained? Given the sheer number and range of activities into which *phantasia* is drawn, activities which are both sensual and cognitive, determining what *phantasia* is and what sort of structure it occupies within the soul becomes of critical importance.

This text will argue that Aristotle takes care to tease out *phantasia* as a distinct and differentiated entity, which although inextricably bound to *aesthēsis* and the perceptual capacity of the psyche, still retains a conceptual independence. This independence does not, however, extend to bestowing the status of full capacity on *phantasia*. What we find instead is that *phantasia* accompanies and serves the role of helpmate to a range of other established capacities and activities. It is the very absence of the status of capacity and the lack of an object proper to itself that allows *phantasia*, with its more modest status, the flexibility to participate in such a range of roles in the psyche and to prove useful in the accounts of so many phenomena. As the 'simple' ability to produce representations, its activities can be called on in a range of tasks where sensible objects need to be rendered. The other question that will be spoken to revolves around what might be called the 'transgressive' aspects of *phantasia*. Indeed, this text will make the suggestion that *phantasia* plays an important role in linking the perceivable and the thinkable in the Aristotelian psyche.

II

PHANTASIA & THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE PSYCHE

We reach Aristotle's main account of *phantasia* in Book III.3 of *de Anima*, appropriately enough, between his examination of perception, which ends with a discussion of the common sensibles and the awareness of perception in the psyche, and the yet to come examinations of thought and movement. The discussion begins by outlining the ways in which thinking might be seen to be similar to perceiving, an association which Aristotle attributes to philosophical predecessors. Aristotle does not, however, use III.3 to expand on the relations between thought and *phantasia*. It is only after a little while that *phantasia* is brought, almost unexpectedly, into play and described as seemingly occupying a position somewhere between the two.

φαντασία γὰρ ἕτερον καὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ διανοίας, αὕτη τε οὐ γίγνεται ἄνευ αἰσθήσεως, καὶ ἄνευ ταύτης οὐκ ἔστιν ὑπόληψις.

For *phantasia* is different from both perception and *dianoia*, and it does not occur without perception and without it there is no judgement.

de Anima 427b14-16

By locating *phantasia* in a place apart from both perception and thought, Aristotle becomes obliged to explain how *phantasia* is in fact different from both capacities. On the other hand, by placing it into necessary relationships with perception as well as thought, he gives

phantasia a role in the psyche that is both more significant and potentially more useful than the one granted it by Plato. This task of situating *phantasia* in relation to perception, thought, and judgement, and of establishing his own conception of *phantasia* occurs alongside a significant portion of the chapter which serves as a response to the Platonic definition of *phantasia* as opinion arising out of perception. In this response, he systematically critiques Plato's definition by denying that *phantasia* can be either perception, or opinion, or any combination of the two. This critique speaks to many recurring elements in Aristotle's treatment, and an examination of its main points would be helpful before proceeding into a discussion of other aspects of his account of *phantasia*.

Phantasia Cannot be Perception

Aristotle begins III.3 by referring to a similarity between perception and thought, namely, that both perception and thought are discriminative and that both allow the psyche to come to know things which genuinely exist.⁶ It was a similarity which his philosophical predecessors observed and which led them to go so far as to identify the two. Intent as he is to establish the independence of perception and thinking, Aristotle cannot allow the identification to stand, possible similarities notwithstanding. Having made the observation that though all animals are capable of perception only a small number are possessed of the capacity for practical thought (*to phronein*), *phantasia* is brought into the argument.⁷ Two important points are made concerning its nature. Firstly, Aristotle describes *phantasia* as

6. *de Anima* 427a20.

7. *de Anima* 427b7-8.

being both dependent on perception and a requirement for judgement; secondly, he characterizes thought as a combination of judgement and *phantasia*. Given these descriptions, *phantasia* might be seen as serving a bridging role between *aesthēsis* and cognitive elements in the psyche: *phantasia* resembles a form of perception, something “by virtue of which... a *phantasma* [or representation] occurs in us”, as at 428a1-2, but it is also something ‘in virtue of which we discriminate and are either right or are mistaken’ (428a1-4), or even more radically, as Aristotle will say at 433a10, something that might be considered a sort of thinking. Despite his suggestions of similarities between perception and thought, I believe that Aristotle’s interests at this point lie first and foremost in distinguishing the two, and in that respect, *phantasia*, although it might be seen to serve as a bridge, could just as readily be seen to serve as a sort of fence. As suggested earlier, Aristotle’s definition of *phantasia* leans heavily on the establishment of what *phantasia* is not, and what it is not, he will argue, is either perception or thought (or, it might added, opinion, as Plato maintains). By working to tease *phantasia* out in this way, Aristotle not only begins the task of establishing *phantasia* as a basic element in the soul, but he also simultaneously clarifies and strengthens the distinctions between *aesthēsis* and thought by identifying a legitimate and genuine psychic activity that is located between them.

After an important passage in which *phantasia* is compared with thought and judgement (*doxazein*) (a passage to which we shall be returning), Aristotle takes a substantial step in the process of distinguishing *phantasia* as a full-fledged psychic activity by providing an argument for why it cannot be synonymous with the capacity for *aesthēsis*.

ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἔστιν αἴσθησις, δῆλον ἐκ τῶνδε. αἴσθησις μὲν γὰρ ἦτοι
δύναμις ἢ ἐνέργεια, οἷον ὄψις καὶ ὄρασις, φαίνεται δέ τι καὶ μηδετέρου

ὑπάρχοντος τούτων, οἷον τὰ ἐν τοῖς ὕπνοις. εἶτα αἰσθησις μὲν ἀεὶ πάρεστι, φαντασία δ' οὐ. εἰ δὲ τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ τὸ αὐτό, πᾶσιν ἂν ἐνδέχοιτο τοῖς θηρίοις φαντασίαν ὑπάρχειν· δοκεῖ δ' οὐ, οἷον μύρμηκι ἢ μελίττῃ, καὶ σκώληκι. εἶτα αἱ μὲν ἀληθεῖς ἀεὶ, αἱ δὲ φαντασίαι γίνονται αἱ πλείους ψευδεῖς, ἔπειτ' οὐδὲ λέγομεν, ὅταν ἐνεργῶμεν ἀκριβῶς περὶ τὸ αἰσθητόν, ὅτι φαίνεται τοῦτο ἡμῖν ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ὅταν μὴ ἐναργῶς αἰσθανώμεθα πότερον ἀληθῆς ἢ ψευδῆς. καὶ ὅπερ δὴ ἐλέγομεν πρότερον, φαίνεται καὶ μύουσι ὄραματα.

That it [i.e. *phantasia*] is not *aesthēsis* is clear from the [following points]. For *aesthēsis* is in truth either a capacity or an activity, which is sight or seeing, but something can appear even when neither of these is present, as do the things in sleep. Accordingly, *aesthēsis* is always present and *phantasia* is not. And if it were the same thing in its activity, it would allow *phantasia* to exist in all animals; but it does not seem to, as for example in ants or bees or grubs. Furthermore, these things [perceptions] are always true, but the *phantasiai* which occur, these are mostly false. In addition to this we do not say, whenever we act accurately with respect to our senses that it appears to us that this thing is a man, but rather whenever we perceive indistinctly whether something is true or false. And as we said earlier, visions appear even with our eyes shut.

de Anima 428a5-16

Although there are several points that can be made about this passage, we shall touch on only a few of them at this juncture. Firstly, dependent as *phantasia* is on *aesthēsis* (being a movement resulting from it), it does not seem to be entirely dependent. On the contrary, Aristotle indicates that it has some form of existence apart from it and draws our attention to this, both at the beginning of the passage and at the end, by specifying that the activities of *phantasia* can occur even when perception, in the conventional sense, does not. ‘Images’ can appear in our sleep, as well as, after we have shut our eyes to the sight of something.⁸ The typical prerequisite for perception, the employment of the sense organs, would not seem

8. As indicated in the introduction, the use of the word ‘image’ in translating *phantasma* presents problems because a *phantasma* (and an *aisthēma*, for that matter) potentially reflects the activities of any of the different sense organs, not only sight. Thus a *phantasma* could just as readily result from an experience of smell, for example. In the case of this particular passage, Aristotle is referring to what is clearly a visual representation, a dream, and speaks of ‘visions’.

to be necessary. In other words, a representation (or more properly, a *phantasma*) generated by *phantasia* has being apart from the objects of perception, and this is the case even when perception is not strictly speaking possible, either because we are unable to exercise the capacity for perception or simply aren't exercising it at a given time. *Aisthēsis*, which occurs when the capacity for, say, seeing is actualized through the eyes coming into direct contact with what is capable of being seen, simply cannot do this. Thus, *phantasia* cannot be the same as *aesthēsis*. Despite having an origin in perception, the movement that is *phantasia* generates an entity, a *phantasma*, which can loosen itself from its sensory roots and acquire a different sort of existence, one apart from its origins in perception.

This carries implications which further Aristotle's contention that *aesthēsis* and *phantasia* are essentially different activities. Because the type of relationship that *phantasia* has with objects of perception differs fundamentally from that of the perceptual capacity with objects of perception, their relative veridical powers need not be the same. This is particularly the case with perception of the special objects of sense by their respective sense organs, a perceptual activity which Aristotle describes as free from error, and which are presumably the perceptions being referred to at 428a12.⁹ Because a direct and binding tie to sensible and particular objects is not, strictly speaking, necessary for *phantasia*, *phantasmata* need not always, or even mostly, be true. Lastly, one of the fundamental ways in which *phantasia* differs from perception is that it does not necessarily accompany it as an endowment in the psyche: in other words, creatures who can perceive do not thereby automatically have the ability of *phantasia*. Given that the activities of the two are essentially different, there is no

9. Aristotle asserts their reliability at *de Anima* 427b13. This point is reiterated and the possibility of error in the two other kinds of perception is discussed at *de Anima* 428b18-25.

necessity for them to be concurrent in the soul. Thus, Aristotle suggests that there exist certain animals which can perceive but lack the ability to generate representations.¹⁰ The whole issue of distinguishing the relative abilities of animals and humans, with respect not only to *phantasia* but also other activities that might arguably be linked to it, such as opinion, plays an important role in how Aristotle frames his account of *phantasia*, as we shall see.

Phantasia Across the Psyche

One of the grounds on which Aristotle bases his critique of the Platonic definition of *phantasia* stems from a central feature of the *de Anima*. Aristotle's psychology seeks to provide a comprehensive account of the different constitutions of the psyche across living beings, and an important goal of the treatise is to show not only the differences in psychic endowments but also the continuities. The different abilities that are outlined in Aristotle's psychology are not, of course, evenly distributed. Plants are endowed with neither perception nor 'mind' (*nous*), animals are granted the former (but not the latter), while humans are permitted both. The ability for *phantasia* would not seem, on first blush, to be quite as clear-cut: it is denied to plants and reserved for most, if not all, animals and for humans.¹¹ These distinctions between various living beings become pivotal to Aristotle's discussion of *phantasia* and his critique of Plato, inasmuch as the latter's definition formulates

10. *de Anima* 434a4 and *Analytica Posteriora* 99b36-38.

11. There is some debate as to whether or not Aristotle attributed *phantasia* to all animals without exception and this seeming inconsistency has helped bolster accusations that his treatment of *phantasia* is problematic and confused. The question will be returned to in the sections on movement and experience.

phantasia in a manner which would necessitate psychic endowments being parcelled out in ways that Aristotle would find untenable.

λείπεται ἄρα ἰδεῖν εἰ δόξα· γίνεται γὰρ δόξα καὶ ἀληθῆς καὶ ψευδῆς.
ἀλλὰ δόξη μὲν ἔπεται πίστις (οὐκ ἐνδέχεται γὰρ δοξάζοντα οἷς δοκεῖ μὴ
πιστεύειν), τῶν δὲ θηρίων οὐθενὶ ὑπάρχει πίστις, φαντασία δὲ πολλοῖς.
[ἔτι πάση μὲν δόξη ἀκολουθεῖ πίστις, πιστεῖ δὲ τὸ πεπεισθαι, πειθοῖ δὲ
λόγος· τῶν δὲ θηρίων ἐνίοις φαντασία μὲν ὑπάρχει, λόγος δ' οὐ.]
φανερὸν τοίνυν ὅτι οὐδὲ δόξα μετ' αἰσθήσεως, οὐδὲ δι' αἰσθήσεως, οὐδὲ
συμπλοκὴ δόξης καὶ αἰσθήσεως φαντασία ἂν εἴη...

It remains to be seen whether [*phantasia*] is opinion, for opinion can be both true and false. But *pistis* [belief] accompanies opinion (for those things which we do not expect to believe cannot be matters of opinion), and of the beasts *pistis* exists in none, but *phantasia* in many. [Furthermore, *pistis* accompanies each opinion, conviction [accompanies] *pistis*, and reason [*logos*] [accompanies] conviction. *Phantasia* exists in some of the animals, but reason does not.] It is clear then that *phantasia* would be neither *doxa* with *aesthēsis*, nor *doxa* via *aesthēsis* or a weaving together of *aesthēsis* and *doxa*...

de Anima 428a18-26

Since one of the goals of his account in III.3 lies in establishing *phantasia* as a distinct entity in the psyche, Aristotle must demonstrate that its operations represent something more than a variation on the products of an already existing capacity. In this regard, the question of whether or not animals are capable of *phantasia* becomes a matter of some importance. While Aristotle readily attributes *aesthēsis* to both animals and humans, he is much less ready to do the same with the various cognitive capacities. Thus, he argues not only for the restriction of opinion, but also of conviction and reason, to the human realm. The use of the word 'conviction' in translating *pepeisthai* (although less awkward) obscures an important part of its meaning, specifically its reference to persuasion, and the ability to find oneself in a state of having been persuaded. This reference to persuasion invokes the very human practices of dialectic (and philosophy): activities which call on reasoning, the *logos* that accompanies

conviction. For a Platonic conception of *phantasia* to hold true, both the capacity for perception and the ability to hold opinions (the two ingredients of *phantasia*) would need to be attributable to animals. Given the ties to conviction and, ultimately, reason that opinion possesses, Aristotle maintains that this latter attribution simply cannot be the case. What he, in effect, concludes is that *phantasia* cannot be both a feature of animal psyches and a species of opinion. One of them must go, and since *phantasia* helps to explain not only human psyches but also animal ones (by accounting for movement, for example), Aristotle decides to reject the latter.

Phantasia is Not Opinion

The need to provide an account of *phantasia* that will both allow for and explain its presence in animals is cited by Aristotle as one blow against Plato's account of *phantasia* as a form of opinion. But, there is also a second major point of contention for Aristotle which revolves around what he sees as an implication of Plato's willingness to blend perception and opinion in his definition.¹²

ΣΩ. Πότερον οὖν τότε αὐτὸ ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ τὸ πνεῦμα ψυχρὸν ἢ οὐ ψυχρὸν φήσομεν; ἢ πεισόμεθα τῷ Πρωταγόρᾳ ὅτι τῷ μὲν ῥιγοῦντι ψυχρὸν, τῷ δὲ μὴ οὐ;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ὅμοιον.

ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ φαίνεται οὕτω ἑκατέρω;

ΘΕΑΙ. Ναί.

ΣΩ. Τὸ δὲ γε φαίνεται αἰσθάνεσθαί ἐστιν;

12. In the passage in question (*de Anima* 428a18-26), Aristotle refers to three somewhat different definitions of *phantasia* by Plato (though he is not mentioned by name). The only one in which the term is actually used is found in the *Sophist* (264a-b) and it is to this last definition that our discussions of Plato refer.

ΘΕΑΙ. Ἔστιν γάρ.

ΣΩ. Φαντασία ἄρα καὶ αἴσθησις ταύτων ἔν τε θερμοῖς καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς τοιούτοις. οἷα γὰρ αἰσθάνεται ἕκαστος, τοιαῦτα ἑκάστῳ καὶ κινδυνεύει εἶναι.

Socr.: Then will we say that the wind in itself is cold or that it is not cold? Or will we be persuaded by Protagoras that it is cold to the one who shivers and not so to one who does not?

Theae: So it seems.

Socr.: And so it also appears in such a way to each of them?

Theae: Yes.

Socr.: And for it to appear [a certain way] is for it to have been perceived [a certain way]?

Theae: That is so.

Socr.: Then *phantasia* and perception are the same with respect to warmth and all such things. For in the way that each man perceives things, in such a way do they seem to be.

Theaetetus 152b-c

In this passage, Plato's treatment of *phantasia* goes beyond blending and actually assimilates opinion to perception, so that they form a seamless whole. The *aesthēsis* (the shiver-inducing feeling of cold) leads seemingly inevitably to the *phantasia* (an opinion that the wind is cold), in effect, depicting a scenario in which a sensory event comes accompanied by a corresponding opinion which is then automatically and unreflectively adopted. In other words, the example suggests that if perceiving is in no essential way different from appearing, and if appearances necessarily lead to opinions, then whatever opinion would seem to be implied by one's perceptions will necessarily be espoused. One of the results of this is a dramatic loss of autonomy for both opinion and judgement as cognitive activities, something which Aristotle explicitly takes issue with.

φαίνεται δέ γε καὶ ψευδῆ, περὶ ὧν ἅμα ὑπόληψιν ἀληθῆ ἔχει, οἷον φαίνεται μὲν ὁ ἥλιος ποδιαῖος, πιστεύεται δ' εἶναι μείζων τῆς οἰκουμένης· συμβαίνει οὖν ἤτοι ἀποβεβληκέναι τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἀληθῆ δόξαν, ἣν εἶχε, σωζομένου τοῦ πράγματος, μὴ ἐπιλαθόμενον μηδὲ

μεταπεισθέντα, ἢ εἰ ἔτι ἔχει, ἀνάγκη τὴν αὐτὴν ἀληθῆ εἶναι καὶ ψευδῆ.
ἀλλὰ ψευδῆς ἐγένετο, ὅτε λάθοι μεταπεσὸν τὸ πρᾶγμα.

But what appears can also be false at the same time that there is a true judgement (*hypolepsis*) concerning it, such as when the sun appears one foot wide but it is believed to be larger than the inhabited world. And so one is [left] in a situation where either one has discarded the true opinion about it, which he had, with the circumstances remaining the same, [despite] having neither forgotten nor changed his mind, or, if he still holds to it [the opinion] then it is necessary that it be at once both true and false.

de Anima 428b2-8

Judgement, for Aristotle, is possessed of a certain independence from perception and need not move in lock-step with it. Thus, the opinions that are suggested by perceptions will not necessarily be adopted by us. The alternative to this, as Aristotle suggests, is absurd. One would, on account of one's perceptions, be possessed of the opinion (or more precisely, have a *phantasma*) that the sun was a foot wide, while at the same time having the firm conviction, and presumably the (second) opinion, that it was far larger. On the contrary, Aristotle maintains that we are both able and indeed compelled to evaluate and judge the opinions that our perception suggests. Thus, *phantasiai* simply cannot be perceptually based opinions that operate at the level of opinions that we unquestioningly hold to be true.

τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ τὸ πάθος ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἐστίν, ὅταν βουλώμεθα (πρὸ ὀμμάτων γὰρ ἔστι τι ποιήσασθαι, ὥσπερ οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημονικοῖς τιθέμενοι καὶ εἰδωλοποιούντες), δοξάζειν δ' οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν· ἀνάγκη γὰρ ἢ ψεύδεσθαι ἢ ἀληθεύειν.

For this condition is ours whenever we wish (for we can make something [an image] in front of our eyes, just as those making mental images and placing [them] in their memories), but to judge is not up to us; for it is necessary to determine whether something is false or true.

de Anima 427b17-21

Because we don't always believe the information conveyed to us by our senses, there is clearly some cognitive ability in the soul to withhold assent from the *phantasmata* that are received via perception. Indeed, in *de Insomniis*, Aristotle briefly comments on how it comes to be that if a fever is not too severe, the sufferer retains the ability to recognize that the animals which appear on the chamber walls are only illusions, before returning again to the sun example of *de Anima*.¹³

Αἴτιον δὲ τοῦ συμβαίνειν ταῦτα τὸ μὴ κατὰ τὴν αὐτὴν δύναμιν κρίνειν τό τε κύριον καὶ ὧ τὰ φαντάσματα γίνεται. Τούτου δὲ σημεῖον ὅτι φαίνεται μὲν ὁ ἥλιος ποδιαῖος, ἀντίφησι δὲ πολλάκις ἕτερόν τι πρὸς τὴν φαντασίαν.

The reason for these things occurring is that the authoritative [element] does not discriminate using the same capacity by which *phantasmata* occur. The proof of this is that the sun appears a foot wide but some other thing often contradicts the *phantasia*.

de Insomniis 460b16-19

The authoritative element (*to kurion*) mentioned by Aristotle, and which operates by means of its own *separate* discriminating activity, is not specified, but the point remains that *phantasia* simply does not in itself have the authority required to ensure that the opinions implied by it are taken up. Because of this, *phantasia* cannot be bound to opinion in the way that Plato suggests. It is important to note that it is not only the autonomy of opinion as a cognitive capacity that is undermined by Plato's treatment. The other capacity that is undermined, of course, is the capacity of *phantasia* itself which, on Plato's account, becomes an amalgam of more basic and primary psychic components, namely, perception, as triggered by the external world, and opinion, which comes out of the dialogue that takes place within the soul. *Phantasia*, as a consequence, is left with no independent existence as such. Its existence

13. *de Insomniis* 460b14-15.

becomes one that is mediated by other psychic capabilities, and its occurrence is limited to the instances when its psychic ingredients have been brought together and blended.

Aristotle's desire runs contrary to this, of course, inasmuch as he seeks to formulate *phantasia* in such a way as to have it serve as a specific definable activity within the soul. Although Plato clearly has no interest in establishing *phantasia* as separate from other elements in the psyche, Aristotle does. The degree of independence which *phantasia* ultimately has, and a key question that arises from *de Anima* III.3, is whether or not Aristotle's account saw fit to grant *phantasia* the autonomy of a full capacity or, rather, gave it in a somewhat more dependent role in the psyche.

Is Phantasia a Capacity?

A closer examination indicates that although Aristotle intends to grant a meaningful autonomy to *phantasia*, that autonomy does not extend all the way to granting *phantasia* the status of a full capacity such as *aesthēsis*. At *de Anima* 428a1-4, which was quoted earlier, Aristotle raises the question of whether one should consider *phantasia* a capacity (*dunamis*) or a 'having' (*hexis*). In that passage, he characterizes it as an entity by virtue of which we discriminate and, with that in mind, suggests that we look for an answer to our question by comparing *phantasia* to other identifiable discriminating capacities in the psyche, namely, perception (*aesthēsis*), opinion (*doxa*), science (*epistēmē*), and intelligence (*nous*). The discussion that follows concludes that *phantasia* is not perception, nor is it science, or intelligence, and not, contra Plato, opinion. It also does not, Aristotle declares, represent a combination of

them.¹⁴ Immediately thereafter, he defines *phantasia* without the use of either of the terms ‘capacity’ or *hexis* but as a movement (*kinēsis*), and one that cannot exist without perception. The way in which Aristotle goes about this discussion, by refusing to identify *phantasia* with other discriminating psychic entities which he describes as having the state of a full capacity (*dunamis*), and by instead ending the discussion with the deliberate (and repeated) use of the term movement (*kinēsis*), suggests a couple of things. Firstly, the structure of the argument hearkens back to a suggestion already made, namely, that *phantasia* is clearly meant to be seen as some sort of separate and distinct element of the psyche. By the end of the discussion, *phantasia* is not identified with any of the options Aristotle lists as possibilities, but by having gone through the exercise of comparison some of its attributes have been staked out, and we are plainly left with *some* sort of psychic entity. *Phantasia* exists, and an account of it is needed, but however we understand its activity as a movement in the psyche, it cannot be subsumed under the already established parts of the soul. The second point that should be considered speaks to the type of psychic part *phantasia* might be. Given Aristotle’s reticence and seeming deliberate avoidance of the term *dunamis* (or something similar), we might wonder whether *phantasia* represents the second possibility suggested in his original question, namely that of a ‘having’ (*hexis*).¹⁵ Aristotle never explicitly indicates this to be the case, nor does he eliminate it as a possibility. In the lexicon contained in book V of the *Metaphysica*, Aristotle defines the term in two senses, the first of which seems compatible with the account of *phantasia* in *de Anima* III.3.

14. *de Anima*, 428b8-9.

15. The term ‘having’ is admittedly an awkward translation though one used frequently in scholarship (along with ‘habit’). Since ‘having’ succeeds in providing a sense of the verbal quality that Aristotle is after it will be used here despite its clumsiness.

Ἐξίς δὲ λέγεται ἓνα μὲν τρόπον οἷον ἐνέργειά τις τοῦ ἔχοντος καὶ ἔχομένου, ὡσπερ πράξις τις ἢ κίνησις· ὅταν γὰρ τὸ μὲν ποιῆ τὸ δὲ ποιῆται, ἔστι ποίησις μεταξύ. οὕτω καὶ τοῦ ἔχοντος ἐσθῆτα καὶ τῆς ἔχομένης ἐσθῆτος ἔστι μεταξύ ἔξις. ταύτην μὲν οὖν φανερόν ὅτι οὐκ ἐνδέχεται ἔχειν ἔξιν· εἰς ἄπειρον γὰρ βαδιεῖται, εἰ τοῦ ἔχομένου ἔσται ἔχειν τὴν ἔξιν.

In one sense, a ‘having’ is said to be an activity of what has and what is had, as [in the case of] an action or a movement, for whenever a thing makes and a thing is made there is [an act of] making in between them. Thus between the clothing that is had and the one who has the clothing there is a ‘having’. And so it is clear that it is not possible to *have* a ‘having’, for the matter would proceed without end if one could have the ‘having’ of what one has. [italics mine]

Metaphysica 1022b4-10

A *hexis*, on Aristotle’s definition, would seem to be compatible definitionally with actions and movements (*kinēsis*), and it is, of course, this last term which he chooses to use in his defining of *phantasia* at *de Anima* 428b30-429a2 and elsewhere.¹⁶ Thus, the possibility that *phantasia* represents a *hexis* would seem to be a real one. But whether a case could be made for identifying *phantasia* as a *hexis* or not, we are nevertheless left with an account in which Aristotle conspicuously and repeatedly neglects the term capacity (*dunamis*), describing *phantasia* as a movement instead.¹⁷

I have already touched on the substantial portion of *de Anima* III.3 which sets itself the task of differentiating *phantasia* from perception and opinion, as well as any combination of the

16. The term ‘movement’ is also used in the discussions of *phantasia* in *de Insomniis*.

17. Particularly careful readers may have noticed that the recently cited passage from *de Insomniis* might be seen as suggesting that *phantasia* is in fact a capacity in its own right. “The reason for these things occurring is that the authoritative [element] does not discriminate using the same capacity by which phantasmata occur.” [italics added] (*de Insomniis* 460b16-18). But, as we shall argue, the capacity ‘by which’ *phantasmata* occur is ultimately the *aesthētikon*, or the capacity for perception, and it is this capacity which is being referred to. *Aesthēsis* possesses the power of discrimination according to Aristotle and thus also satisfies the requirements suggested by the passage (*de Anima* 428a4).

two. This process, motivated by Plato's definition, does, however, only constitute part of Aristotle's project of explaining *phantasia*. Having worked by means of negative definition, Aristotle also sets out to answer the question of what *phantasia* might be in positive terms, and how we should understand its workings. His explanation examines the origins and objects of both, while also drawing a causal relationship between *phantasia* and the capacity for perception.

ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ ἐστὶ κινήθεντος τουδὶ κινεῖσθαι ἕτερον ὑπὸ τούτου, ἢ δὲ φαντασία κίνησις τις δοκεῖ εἶναι καὶ οὐκ ἄνευ αἰσθήσεως γίνεσθαι ἀλλ' αἰσθανομένοις καὶ ὧν αἰσθησις ἔστιν, ἔστι δὲ γίνεσθαι κίνησιν ὑπὸ τῆς ἐνεργείας τῆς αἰσθήσεως, καὶ ταύτην ὁμοίαν ἀνάγκη εἶναι τῇ αἰσθήσει, εἴη ἂν αὕτη ἢ κίνησις οὔτε ἄνευ αἰσθήσεως ἐνδεχομένη οὔτε μὴ αἰσθανομένοις ὑπάρχειν, καὶ πολλὰ κατ' αὐτὴν καὶ ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν τὸ ἔχον, καὶ εἶναι καὶ ἀληθῆ καὶ ψευδῆ.

But since it is possible for a thing having been moved to move another thing by means of this [movement], and *phantasia* seems to be some form of movement which does not occur without perception but rather in those beings having perception and concerns those things which perception does. Also, [since] it is possible for movement to occur out of the activity of perception, and of necessity [the movement] is similar to the perception, the movement itself would occur neither without perception having taken place nor without perceptions being present, and those having this [capacity] both act and experience many things in accordance with it, and it may be both true and false.

de Anima 428b10-17

In *de Anima*'s account of perception, Aristotle indicates that *aesthēsis* constitutes a movement of the psyche and one which has its origins outside of the soul; in the passage above, he indicates that the movement that is *aesthēsis* is capable of generating further movement in the soul in the form of *phantasia*.¹⁸ The causal nature of this relationship has profound implications. For one thing, it means that *phantasia* finds its *ultimate* origins in the sensory

18. *de Anima* 416b33-34. Also note *de Anima* 410a25-26 and 415b24.

world, as a movement generated out of the sensual acts of perception. But Aristotle lists further specifications which serve to link *phantasia* to *aesthēsis*. *Phantasia* cannot occur ‘without it having admitted of perception’, and both require, at minimum, a psyche with the capacity for perception. Finally, he also indicates that the movement coming out of *aesthēsis* will bear a necessary resemblance to the original perceptual movement. All of these attributes bind *phantasia* quite strongly to *aesthēsis*, and given that the dependency runs solely in one direction, from *phantasia* to *aesthēsis*, it also lends support to the argument that *phantasia* does not have the autonomy of a full capacity like perception. On the other hand, as Everson suggests, by having different causal histories, and thus different causes, Aristotle can point to *phantasia* and *aesthēsis* as different at the level of definition.¹⁹ Sensible objects provide the cause for *aesthēsis*, while *aesthēsis* itself provides the cause for *phantasia*, and this bolsters Aristotle’s argument for the recognition of *phantasia* as a separate activity in the soul. There is one other aspect of the passage which is critical to understanding *phantasia*’s relative status in the psyche. At 428b12, Aristotle indicates that *phantasia* concerns the same things that *aesthēsis* does. Given the importance Aristotle’s psychological method places on the analysis of capacities by looking to their objects, this characterization is very significant.

In the early stages of book II of *de Anima*, Aristotle prepares to make a fresh start of exploring the psyche, and, as part of this task, lays out a method for how one should approach researches into the soul.

Ἄναγκαϊον δὲ τὸν μέλλοντα περὶ τούτων σκέψιν ποιῆσθαι λαβεῖν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν τί ἐστίν, εἴθ’ οὕτως περὶ τῶν ἔχομένων καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιζητεῖν. εἰ δὲ χρῆ λῆγειν τί ἕκαστον αὐτῶν, οἷον τί τὸ νοητικὸν ἢ τὸ αἰσθητικὸν ἢ τὸ θρεπτικὸν, πρότερον ἔτι λεκτέον τί τὸ νοεῖν καὶ τί

19. Everson, S. *Aristotle on Perception*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1997, 169.

τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι· πρότεροι γάρ εἰσι τῶν δυνάμεων αἱ ἐνεργεῖαι καὶ αἱ πράξεις κατὰ τὸν λόγον. εἰ δ' οὕτως, τούτων δ' ἔτι πρότερα τὰ ἀντικείμενα δεῖ τεθεωρηκέναι, περὶ ἐκείνων πρῶτον ἂν δεοί διορίσαι διὰ τὴν αὐτὴν αἰτίαν, οἷον περὶ τροφῆς καὶ αἰσθητοῦ καὶ νοητοῦ.

It is necessary for one who is preparing to examine these things [the parts of the soul] to determine what each of them is, then to inquire into its properties and then the other things. If it is necessary to speak to each of these things, to what sort of thing the **thinking** capacity is or the perceiving or the nutritive, it would instead be necessary to speak first to what **thinking** and perceiving are [in themselves]. For in a reasoned account activities and actions are prior to their [respective] capacities. If this is so, it is necessary to have considered, even before this, what lies even further back, and it would be necessary to first distinguish those things by virtue of their very causes [objects], as for example, what is edible, what is perceptible, and what is thinkable.

de Anima 415a14-22

With this passage, Aristotle outlines a methodology that requires us to fold back the layers of the psyche's workings. To attempt to explain the soul by enumerating its parts at a single level is simply not enough. Thus, to speak to the psyche fully the capacities must be spoken to, but in order to do this an account must be provided of their activities inasmuch as activities (*energeiai*) and actions (*praxeis*) are prior to capacities (*tōn dunameōn*). Furthermore, to provide this necessary and proper account of activities one must, Aristotle maintains, also go back to their very causes, namely, their objects.²⁰ In order for *phantasia* to be considered a faculty it would apparently need to satisfy this requirement of having an object proper to itself. Finding an object for *phantasia* does not, however, prove to be a straightforward task. In 428b10-17, where Aristotle distinguishes *phantasia* from perception, he quite clearly indicates that *aesthēsis* and *phantasia* concern the same things, a comment which would suggest that they share the same objects. On the one hand, this might be seen as suggesting that *phantasia* and perception may, after all, be the same capacity at least as far as satisfying

20. Aristotle makes the same point of looking to the objects of the soul's capacities at *de Anima* 402b13-23.

Aristotle's formulation of a capacity's requirements. On the other hand, the assertion that both *aesthēsis* and *phantasia* 'share' the same objects takes place within an enumeration of the reasons why *phantasia* is, at one and the same time, not perception but *is* an entity that lies in some sort of dependent relationship with it. How to understand these two seemingly conflicting points lies in returning to the main point of the passage which seeks to outline the relationship between *aesthēsis* and *phantasia*. The activity of *phantasia* is, as Aristotle makes clear, triggered by a *movement*, namely that of *aesthēsis*. Though they both 'concern' the same things, *phantasia* does not in the final analysis have objects proper to itself which would serve as catalysts as in the case of full capacities. *Phantasia* is 'concerned' with the same things as perception in the sense that given its dependence on *aesthēsis* to act as a trigger for its activities, it also, indirectly, looks to the same sensible objects which *aesthēsis* needs to prompt *its* workings. Thus, if we are to consider sensible particulars as 'objects' for *phantasia*, they should, at most, be regarded as some form of 'indirect' or incidental objects and not ones that comply with in the manner required by Aristotle's methodology.

To properly follow the methodology that Aristotle lays out for examining the capacities of the psyche, we should perhaps broaden our examination. The analysis at 415a14-22 presents us with a number of basic components to the workings of the psyche: capacities, activities, and objects. These components identify primary elements which can then be subjected to more thorough research into what sort of things they are and how they carry out their operations. Wedin, in his study of Aristotle's account of *phantasia* (which he decides to translate with the term 'imagination'), performs an interesting comparison in which he examines the terminology used by Aristotle in his different discussions of both *phantasia* and *aesthēsis*.

We may begin with a list of the terms of Aristotle's discussion of perception: (1) αἴσθησις (perception), (2) αἰσθητικόν (that by which perception occurs), (3) αἴσθημα (perceptual state), (4) αἰσθητόν (perceived thing), (5) αἰσθητήριον (perceptual organ), and (6) αἰσθάνεσθαι (perceiving).²¹

...

The thesis that there are no objects of imagination is displayed dramatically in the tally of [*phantasia*'s] ingredients. We may give these as follows: (1') φαντασία (imagination), (2') φαντιστικόν (that by which imagination occurs), (3') φάντασμα (image or [re]presentation), (4') ... , (5') ... , (6') φαντάζεσθαι (imagining or imaging).²²

One thing that this analysis reveals is that in Aristotle's discussions of *phantasia* there is no regularly used term that would correspond to the *aisthēton* (as Wedin indicates with the numbers 4 and 4' respectively). In other words, we do not find the workings of *phantasia* explained by references to a '*phantaston*'.²³ Normally an object that is apprehensible by a specific capacity would serve as the cause of its activity. Thus, what is see-able (say, colour) would spur on the capacity for sight. Aristotle, as Wedin notes, points to these objects that serve as catalysts to the soul's operations consistently in his psychological discussions.

Aristotle is not sparing with the form. Besides "αἰσθητόν" (object of perception), "νοητόν" (object of thought), and "ὄρεκτόν" (object of desire), "μνημονευτόν" (object of memory) occurs in *De Memoria* at 449b9 and 450a24 (and also in *Rhetorica* 1367a24 and 1370b1), and "ἐπιστητόν" (object of knowledge), a favored expression in *Categoriae* VII, occurs unproblematically in *De Anima* at 430a5, 431b23

21. Wedin, M. V. *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 30.

22. Wedin, 58.

23. There is one sole mention of '*phantasmata*' in the corpus and its validity is questionable on account of textual concerns. We will explore the passage in question during our discussion of *phantasia* and memory.

and b27. The φανταστόν, on the other hand, makes no uncontested appearance in the corpus.²⁴

Because there is no object specific to *phantasia* (no *phantaston*) which can account for its activity in the standard fashion, Aristotle must explain its workings in some other way. In accordance with Aristotle's methodology, the movement of *aesthēsis* occurs when the object of perception (the perceivable *aisthēton*) comes together with the organs of perception (*aisthēterion*). But it is this initial perceptive movement (not an object) that generates the movement of *phantasia*, clearly differing from Aristotle's methodology. Tracing the chain of causation of *phantasia* back to its beginnings, we do not find an object that is specific to it but instead another *movement*, that of *aesthēsis*, which has as *its* cause the *aisthēton*, or perceivable object. The need for an initial perceptual movement underlines the necessity of *aesthēsis* to *phantasia*, and, even more significantly in light of the discussion at hand, the absence of a *phantaston* points to *phantasia* as lacking of one of the necessary criteria of a full capacity.

Given what has been said above in terms of *phantasia*'s dependence on perception for its causation and its lack of an object, we might be surprised to find that in III.9 of *de Anima* Aristotle speaks of what would seem to be a capacity corresponding to the activities of *phantasia*, a *phantastikon*.

ἔτι δὲ τὸ φανταστικόν, ὃ τῷ μὲν εἶναι πάντων ἕτερον, τίνι δὲ τούτων ταύτων ἢ ἕτερον ἔχει πολλὴν ἀπορίαν, εἴ τις θήσῃ κεχωρισμένα μόρια τῆς ψυχῆς.

There is in addition the *phantastikon*, which is thus to be considered different from all the others in the manner of its being, to which of these [other capacities] it is to be considered the same or different is very much a problem, if one posits separate parts to the soul.

24. Wedin, 59.

The complications suggested by this passage are more apparent than real. Indeed, this manner of speaking to what is ostensibly a capacity immediately calls attention to itself by undercutting what would seem to be its principal assertion. While apparently trying to point to the *phantastikon* as distinct by adding it to a list of capacities in the soul, Aristotle, at one and the same time, limits this distinction to a difference “in the manner of its being”. He then raises the possibility that it may be the same as some other capacity of the psyche, echoing the manner of investigation used back in III.3. On that earlier occasion, it was suggested that Aristotle systematically denied the possibility that *phantasia* was identical to perception, opinion (*doxa*), science (*epistēmē*), or intelligence (*nous*), without explicitly disallowing that *phantasia* might be a capacity in its own right apart from the ones mentioned. With this passage, Aristotle allows for the possibility of *phantasia* being housed in some sort of capacity of its own while at the same time indicating that its uniqueness may be limited to “its being”, inasmuch as the capacity for *phantasia* may also be the same as some other capacity in the psyche. The capacity to which the *phantastikon* would most readily be assimilated would clearly be the *aesthētikon*, given the dependency of *phantasia* on perception. In *de Insomniis*, Aristotle returns yet again to the issue of whether *phantasia*, in the form of the *phantastikon*, is identical with some other capacity and formally links the two together.

ἐπεὶ δὲ περὶ φαντασίας ἐν τοῖς Περὶ ψυχῆς εἴρηται, καὶ ἔστι μὲν τὸ αὐτὸ τῷ αἰσθητικῷ τὸ φανταστικόν, τὸ δ' εἶναι φαντασικῷ καὶ αἰσθητικῷ ἕτερον, ἔστι δὲ φαντασία ἢ ὑπὸ τῆς κατ' ἐνέργειαν αἰσθήσεως γινομένη κίνησις, τὸ δ' ἐνύπνιον φάντασμα τι φαίνεται εἶναι (τὸ γὰρ ἐν ὕπνῳ φάντασμα ἐνύπνιον λέγομεν, εἴθ' ἀπλῶς εἶτε τρόπον τινα γινόμενον), φανερόν ὅτι τοῦ αἰσθητικοῦ μὲν ἔστι τὸ ἐνυπνιάζειν, τούτου δ' ἢ φανταστικόν.

But since *phantasia* has been spoken of in *de Anima*, and the *phantastikon* is the same as the *aesthētikon*, but the being of the *phantastikon* is different from the being of the *aesthētikon*, and *phantasia* is a movement occurring out of the activity of *aesthēsis*, and since the dream [appearing] in sleep seems to be some sort of *phantasma* (for we call the *phantasma* [occurring] in sleep a dream, whether it occurs simply or in some particular fashion), it is clear that dreaming is [a thing] of the *aesthētikon*, and [it is] of this [the *aesthētikon*] in so far as it is the *phantastikon*.

de Insomniis 459a14-22

The dependency of *phantasia* on perception to serve as a catalyst to its activity is underlined by its dependency at the level of its capacity, the *phantastikon*, which Aristotle declares to be the same as the *aesthētikon*. Although the activity of *phantasia* (providing the ‘representation-producing’ capability of the soul) is different from that of *aesthēsis*, the ingredients that go into its activities draw, in the furthest extreme, on the same perceptible resources that allow for the psyche’s capacity for perception. It is in this sense that a dream, which is a *phantasma* and thus a product of *phantasia* (and the *phantastikon*), ultimately becomes ‘of the *aesthētikon*’. Because of this, the soul’s capacity for *aesthēsis* can potentially house two different activities, perception and *phantasia*, at the same time, with the activity of the latter issuing from the work of the former. Aristotle’s psychological method lists three key elements: capacities (which house activities), activities (which are initiated by objects particular to them), and the objects themselves. *Phantasia* sits somewhat awkwardly with respect to them. As a movement in the soul that would seem to represent a distinct activity, it does not arise out of its own objects. But, activities in the Aristotelian psyche are regularly associated with capacities (thinking, perceiving, desiring, etc.), which allows for the possibility that *phantasia* represents something *rather like* a capacity. Thus, the *phantastikon* exists as a ‘capacity’ different ‘in being’ from that of the *aesthētikon*, insofar as it represents a unique activity in the psyche. At the same time, its lack of objects as a cause means that it fails to meet the full criteria of capacity-hood. With its dependence on *aesthēsis* not only for its causal origins but also for its physical

apparatus (the sense organs), it is housed in and, in this sense, remains the 'same' as the *aesthētikon*.

The Workings of Phantasia

Phantasia's status as a sort of sub-capacity that is dependent on perception raises the question of how we are to understand its operations. By having two different though related activities within the same capacity, Aristotle is faced with the need to explain how both come to be carried out. In his initial defining statements distinguishing *phantasia* and *aesthēsis*, Aristotle is already speaking to precisely this issue.

ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἔστιν αἴσθησις, δῆλον ἐκ τῶνδε. αἴσθησις μὲν γὰρ ἦτοι δύναμις ἢ ἐνέργεια, οἷον ὄψις καὶ ὄρασις, φαίνεται δέ τι καὶ μηδετέρου ὑπάρχοντος τούτων, οἷον τὰ ἐν τοῖς ὕπνοις. εἶτα αἴσθησις μὲν ἀεὶ πάρεστι, φαντασία δ' οὐ.

That [*phantasia*] is not *aesthēsis* is clear from the [following points]. For *aesthēsis* is in truth either a capacity or an activity, which is sight or seeing, but something can appear even when neither of these is present, as do the things in sleep. Accordingly, *aesthēsis* is always present and *phantasia* is not

de Anima 428a5-9

In both *phantasia* and *aesthēsis*, 'something can appear'. But the difference between them is that what appears (or is represented) through *phantasia*, in the event of a dream, for example, although like perception, occurs without perception's normal requirements. Thus, one seems to be engaged in seeing or hearing without seeing or hearing actually going on, at least in the way in which we would normally understand it.

ἀλλ' εἴτε δὴ ταῦτον εἶθ' ἕτερον τὸ φανταστικὸν τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τὸ αἰθητικόν, οὐδὲν ἦττον οὐ γίνεται ἄνευ τοῦ ὁρᾶν καὶ αἰσθάνεσθαι τι· τὸ γὰρ παρορᾶν καὶ παρακούειν ὁρῶντος ἀληθές τι καὶ ἀκούοντος, οὐ μέντοι τοῦτο ὁ οἶεται. ἐν δὲ ὕπνῳ ὑπόκειται μηδὲν ὁρᾶν μηδ' ἀκούειν μηδ' ὅλως αἰσθάνεσθαι. ἄρ' οὖν τὸ μὲν μηδὲν ὁρᾶν ἀληθές, τὸ δὲ μηδὲν πάσχειν τὴν αἰσθησιν οὐκ ἀληθές, ἀλλ' ἐνδέχεται καὶ τὴν ὄψιν πάσχειν τι καὶ τὰς ἄλλας αἰσθήσεις, ἕκαστον δὲ τούτων ὥσπερ ἐγρηγορότος· προσβάλλει μὲν πως τῇ αἰσθήσει, οὐχ οὕτω δὲ ὥσπερ ἐγρηγορότος.

Now whether the *phantastikon* and *aesthétikon* of the psyche are the same or different, none the less nothing takes place without seeing and perceiving something. For to overlook and to hear incorrectly, is to have seen and heard something real, though not the thing which one thinks. But in sleep it is assumed that one neither sees nor hears nor perceives at all. That one sees nothing is true, but that one experiences nothing with respect to perception is not; for it is possible that sight and the other senses experience something, each of them as when one is awake; in some way it sets the sense in motion though not in the same way as when one is awake.

de Insomniis 458b29-459a5

While having different causal histories, both *phantasia* and perception operate via the same fundamental mechanism: a stimulation, or affection, of the sense organs. In perception, the 'movement' of the eye by the colour 'red' begins the process of perceiving 'red', and this event could not occur were the eye to shut. And yet, Aristotle tells us, there is in a sense another way of perceiving, and that is *phantasia*. This is because the representations that issue from *phantasia* represent very real activations of the sense organs, albeit in a different manner. Perception results from the senses being set into motion by external perceptible objects, in contrast, *phantasia* also depends on the sense organs being stirred, but external 'triggering' objects need not be immediately present for its initiation. In other words, whether one sees a man in a green hat in a dream or crossing a street, there is a very real sense in which one is still engaged in an act of 'perceiving' a man, the colour 'green', and a hat, whether the event occurs with one's eyes open or when closed in sleep. The key difference between the two is that a *phantasma* has a life apart from perceptible objects.

Πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς σκέψιν ὑποκείσθω ἔν μὲν, ὅπερ ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων φανερόν, ὅτι καὶ ἀπελθόντος τοῦ θύραθεν αἰσθητοῦ ἐμμένει τὰ αἰσθήματα αἰσθητὰ ὄντα...

With respect to the question from the beginning let us then suppose one thing, which is clear from the things having been said, that even when the external perceptible object has gone the perceptual states remain existing as perceptible objects [in their own right]...

de Insomniis 460a33-460b2

A similar point is made at *de Anima* 425b22-25. The stirring of the sense organs can result in ‘perception’ either in the narrower, formal sense of *aesthēsis* or in the broader and looser sense of *phantasia* acting, for example, in a dream. All of this harmonizes with an observation issuing from the analysis of Aristotle’s terminology by Wedin which was cited previously.²⁵ In it, *phantasia* lacks two terms that would correspond to the ingredients that Aristotle attributes to *aesthēsis*. One of them, the absence of a *phantaston*, or object for *phantasia* to parallel the *aisthēton*, has already been mentioned, but the second has yet to be discussed. The *aisthēterion*, or sense organ, also does not find a counterpart, a ‘*phantasterion*’, in Aristotle’s account of *phantasia*. There is, in other words, no mention of a dedicated organ for the representation-generating activity of the psyche. This omission makes sense in light of the just-mentioned passage from *de Insomniis*. To ‘see’ or ‘hear’, whether the particular ‘perception’ springs from *aesthēsis* or *phantasia*, is, in either case, the result of a sense organ having been set ‘in motion’, and these are none other, of course, than the organs normally involved in *aesthēsis*. This facet of *phantasia*’s workings helps to explain Aristotle’s assertion at *de Anima* 428b14 that ‘of necessity [the movement of *phantasia*] is similar to the perception’. Both activities produce items composed out of the impressions on the senses; the initial

25. Wedin, 30 and 58. The earlier discussion took place on page 28 above.

experience of *aesthēsis* brought on by direct contact with the sensible world, and the movement of *phantasia* representing a rippling-out of the sensual experience of perception by generating related representations which are able to exist loosened from sensible existing objects and that have the autonomy to become part of other activities in the psyche.²⁶ Inasmuch as both *phantasia* and *aesthēsis* are grounded in sensory impressions and both generate entities that reflect the experiences of sensible particular things, no special organs are needed for *phantasia*. On the other hand, because the activities and products of both come out of the same basic affection, the setting in motion of the senses, their movements are also ‘of necessity’ similar. Thus, the *phantastikon* can ultimately be the same as the *aesthētikon* while also possessed of a difference at the level of being via the different activities they represent.

Scholarly judgements concerning *phantasia*’s claim to the status of full capacity have come down on both sides of the question, and it would be useful at this stage to examine another way of interpreting Aristotle’s account. Stephen Everson, in his study of Aristotelian perception, takes a position distinctly different from the one being argued here. In it, he maintains that *phantasia* constitutes a full capacity in its own right, and, moreover, that perception’s relationship with *phantasia* consists in its operating as a ‘subclass’ of *phantasia*. As he says, “*Phantasia* can thus have a general sense— and when so employed, perceptions will form a subclass of *phantasiai*— and a more restrictive sense, where perceptions are distinct

26. The notion of *phantasia* as a ‘rippling out’ of perception is not used by Aristotle but he does convey a similar idea at *de Insomniis* 459a28-32 where uses the image of a projectile being able to move the air around it though no longer in contact with the original agent of its own motion.

from *phantasiai*”.²⁷ In line with this, Everson takes Aristotle’s contention that *phantasia* involves an affection of the sense organs, and that it can allow something ‘to appear’ even when the sense organs are not utilized in the manner typical to *aesthēsis*, to support his view that perceptions can represent a subtype of *phantasia*, “That Aristotle does allow that perceptions can be *phantasiai* is confirmed by the *De Insomniis*, where he claims, as we have seen, that things not only appear (*phainetai*) when there is a sense-object bringing about the change, but also when the sense is changed by itself (460b23-5)”.²⁸ This aspect of Everson’s interpretation rests on placing significant emphasis on the use of the verb *phainetai* and on the implied linguistic connections between it and the term *phantasia*.²⁹ Everson does not take *phantasia* to be involved in the production of representations in any broad sense, but chooses instead to focus his attention on the activities of *phantasia* that correspond to non-standard perceptual activities, such as dreaming and hallucinating. Aristotle’s use of the verb *phainetai* in the passage just cited is seemingly taken as evidence that *phantasia* represents what is, in essence, a more general and over-arching capacity (a genus), which can speak both to quasi-perceptual states (such as dreaming) and to more conventional and narrowly defined acts of perception, which represent a species of *phantasia*’s otherwise broader activities. The two capacities are linked by the observation that both of them involve an affection of the sense organs. All of this seems contrary to the dependency on *aesthēsis* which Aristotle repeatedly attributes to *phantasia* and particularly so given *phantasia*’s dependence on perception for its

27. Everson, 181.

28. Everson, 181.

29. It is worth noting in this regard that Aristotle does speak to the etymology of the term *phantasia* at 429a2-3 in his account. There he indicates that *phantasia* comes from *phaos*, the word for light, because light is a necessity for the workings of the most treasured of the senses, sight.

very causation. But Everson sees *phantasia*'s need for the movements of *aesthēsis* as solely indicative of different causal histories which then provides the basis for distinguishing the two as fundamentally different activities. The need for a movement, instead of a proper object, to serve as cause to *phantasia*'s activities seems to be overlooked by Everson, who instead argues that Aristotle's assertion at 428b12-13 that *phantasia* and *aesthēsis* concern the same things allows *phantasia* to lay claim to an object, downplaying the fact that this would result in *phantasia*'s objects not being specific to it in the way that Aristotle would normally demand of a capacity.³⁰ This aspect of Everson's account reflects his discomfort with the psychological methodology outlined by Aristotle in *de Anima* II.4. Although quite at ease with the insistence that a capacity cannot be understood without first understanding the nature of its activity, he seems troubled by Aristotle's insistence that the study of activities can only take place after a study of objects. Finding this problematic, he describes objects and activities as 'correlative' and at risk of moving in a definitional circle with respect to one another.³¹ Because objects may prove to be ultimately uninformative on Everson's interpretation, he sidesteps the methodological starting point identified by Aristotle (the object) and chooses instead to begin at the level of activity and then proceed to capacities.

The *aisthētikon* and the *phantastikon* are NOT the capacities of perception and *phantasia* but rather what possesses these capacities. Given that capacities are defined by reference to their corresponding activities, and the activities of perception and *phantasia* are different, the capacities must also be different.³²

30. Everson, 167 and 169 fn. 69.

31. Everson, 22.

32. Everson, 158.

It is difficult to know what one is to make of this assertion. If the *aisthētikon* and *phantastikon* do not refer to capacities, then we are left with the question of what Aristotle intends us to take them to be. To say that they are ‘what possesses these capacities’ is unhelpful and far too vague inasmuch as it can also be said that the soul ultimately possesses all these capacities, but this is presumably not what Everson means. Furthermore, if the *aisthētikon* and *phantastikon* do not refer to capacities, we are left with the question of why Aristotle would consistently use terms to name an activity and the entity that ‘possesses’ the capacity related to it but not the capacity itself, a question which Everson does not answer. Given Aristotle’s assertion that the *aisthētikon* and *phantastikon* are the same while different in being, Everson’s decision to define capacities solely with respect to activities leaves him with no choice but to argue that the *aisthētikon* and *phantastikon* cannot refer to capacities. As he himself says, “whilst it makes perfectly good sense to think of what possess(sic) the two capacities as numerically the same, whilst different ‘in being’, it will not make sense to think of two *capacities* as essentially distinct but somehow the same”.³³ A similar awkwardness occurs when Everson tries to make sense of Aristotle’s assertion at 428a8-9 that all animals have perception, but not all have *phantasia*. Instead of his earlier distinction between *phantasia* as a broad category capable of encompassing perception (and non-standard perception) within its workings, and *perception* as a capacity distinct from *phantasia*, he finds himself forced to differentiate between two *new* senses of *phantasia*, “one in which it is used to refer to all states in which there is a perceptual or quasi-perceptual appearance, and another more restricted sense when it is used *to pick out those states in which there is a quasi-perceptual appearance*” [my italics]. These new senses leave Everson having reversed the manner in which he originally distinguished perception from *phantasia*. Finally, given Everson’s penchant for

33. Everson, 158.

focussing on *phantasia* as involved in quasi-perceptual activities, it is difficult to know how to reconcile this aspect of his account with Aristotle's assertions that *phantasia* plays a necessary role in thought in passages like those at 431a14-15 and 449b31-450a1. Unfortunately, neither of these passages is commented on.

III

PHANTASIA IN ACTION

Aristotelian *phantasia* plays a role in a range of phenomena. As Aristotle puts it at 428b18, “in virtue of its possession many things are done and experienced in accordance with it”. One of the reasons why a range of phenomena can be linked to it is that *phantasia*, although being a ‘perception-like’ movement can, unlike perception, occur even when the sense organs are not actively engaged with their objects. Quasi-perceptual states such as dreaming or hallucinating, where sensory impressions occur without direct perceptions of material objects, can be explained with the help of precisely this sort of element. But quasi-perceptual activities do not, by any means, exhaust *phantasia*’s possibilities. Indeed, it is precisely in Aristotle’s accounts of seemingly more mundane activities like memory and movement and action that we find some of the more intriguing aspects of Aristotelian *phantasia*. In the latter instances, we get access to the much broader range of possibilities that *phantasia* possesses because these cases require *phantasia* to take part in activities which can often take on a more mental, or cognitive, quality.

Dreams

As has already been suggested, quasi-perceptual events in the psyche constitute a distinctive part of *phantasia*'s repertoire of activities, and we have already touched on a number of aspects of *phantasia* which pertain to dreams in the course of examining the status of *phantasia* within the psyche. The causal history of *phantasia* that was discussed earlier is central to understanding Aristotle's account of dreams. Dreams in themselves are defined as *phantasmata* occurring during sleep in *de Insomniis* at 459a19-22, and inasmuch as they are 'residual motions' of perception (or *hai huloipoi kinēseis*), a term Aristotle uses in chapter 3 of *de Insomniis*) they ultimately belong to the *aesthētikōn* indirectly as products generated by the *phantastikōn*. In the account of dreams, the perceptual nature of *phantasia* comes to the fore. Because hearing a violin in a dream and hearing one at a concert both involve an affection of the same sense organs, there is a sense in which both are representative of *aesthēsis*, a similarity that is reflected in Aristotle's characterization of the *phantastikōn* as the same as the *aesthētikōn* though different in being. But, the representations brought into the psyche through *aesthēsis* can become detached, via *phantasia*, from their original perceptual source and continue to operate in the psyche where their truth-value can no longer be counted on. In his example of the sun appearing one foot wide in *de Anima*, Aristotle suggests that we have at our disposal some sort of means by which can effectively opt out of believing what the *phantasma* of a foot-wide sun is suggesting and ensure that we continue to believe in its true (and larger) dimensions. In *de Insomniis*, Aristotle returns to this point, this time in a more explicit fashion.

Ὅλως γὰρ τὸ ἀφ' ἐκάστης αἰσθήσεως φησιν ἡ ἀρχή, εἰ μὴ ἕτερα κυριωτέρα ἀντιφῆ.

For, on the whole, the *apchē* affirms that which results from each perception, whenever another more authoritative thing does not contradict it.

de Insomniis 461b4-7

The problem with dreaming, however, is that it occurs during sleep when the protective effect of ‘more authoritative’ elements tends to weaken, and we are less able to filter out particular falsities.³⁴

Ἐκ δὴ τούτων φανερόν ὅτι οὐ μόνον ἐγρηγορότων αἱ κινήσεις αἱ ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθημάτων γινόμεναι τῶν τε θύραθεν καὶ τῶν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος ἐνυπαρχουσῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅταν γένηται τὸ πάθος τοῦτο ὃ καλεῖται ὕπνος, καὶ μᾶλλον τότε φαίνονται. Μεθ’ ἡμέραν μὲν γὰρ ἐκκρούονται ἐνεργουσῶν τῶν αἰσθήσεων καὶ τῆς διανοίας, καὶ ἀφανίζονται ὥσπερ παρὰ πολὺ πῦρ ἔλλαττον καὶ λύπαι καὶ ἡδοναὶ μικραὶ παρὰ μεγάλας, παυσαμένων δ’ ἐπιπολάζει καὶ τὰ μικρά·

From these [points] it is clear that the movements coming from *aesthēsis*, both those occurring from what is external and those arising from within the body, belong not only to those who are awake but even whenever the state which we call sleep occurs and appear even greater then. For during the day they are repulsed when perception and *dianoia* are working, and they are suppressed just as a smaller is by a larger fire or small pains and pleasures by great ones, but when they stop even the small ones come to the surface.

de Insomniis 460b27-461a3

While we are awake, thought is active and the sense organs operate fully, and we have the benefits of fully functioning powers of judgement, as well as the advantages that come from perception, most importantly of the special objects of sense, which are reliable. Sleep dampens this activity, allowing *phantasmata* to circulate through the psyche unexamined. In

34. There is another, broader and more general way in which dreams seem to be particularly deceptive: taking advantage of our relative helplessness while asleep, they are quite successful in fooling us into thinking that we are in the midst of actually perceiving.

cases of madness, one presumes that the ‘authoritative’ elements which retain the power to intervene in the case of dubious *phantasmata* are more permanently impaired. In these cases, the account Aristotle gives of dreams might also be useful in explaining phenomena such as hallucinations, for example.

Memory

Aristotle’s account of *phantasia* leaves it with a sort of semi-autonomy, linked to the workings of a more clearly defined and autonomous capacity, namely that of *aesthēsis*. How to understand this semi-autonomy presents its own difficulties. This depiction of *phantasia*, as an activity drawn out of the functioning of other capacities and activities, seems to be echoed in Aristotle’s explanation of another activity in the soul, memory. In a manner reminiscent of *de Anima* 3.III’s account of *phantasia*, Aristotle uses a negative definition of memory, whereby he lets us know which capacities memory is not.

Ἔστι μὲν οὖν ἡ μνήμη οὔτε αἰσθησις οὔτε ὑπόληψις, ἀλλὰ τούτων τινὸς ἕξις ἢ πάθος, ὅταν γένηται χρόνος.

And so memory is neither perception nor judgement, but a ‘having’ or affection of these, whenever time has passed.

de Memoria 449b24-5

Echoing III.3, where Aristotle questions whether *phantasia* should be considered a capacity or a *hexis*, we find him defining memory as either a *hexis* or an affection and, more

specifically, as one which is mediated by time.³⁵ While *phantasia*'s activities take place in relation to *aesthēsis* and discrimination (*has krinomen*), memory, in a similar fashion, operates in relation to *aesthēsis* and judgement (*hupolēpsis*). But the activity of the psyche that memory binds to most closely is *phantasia*, and Aristotle refers to their connection repeatedly in *de Memoria*.

Τίνοσ μὲν οὖν τῶν τῆσ ψυχῆσ ἐστὶν ἡ μνήμη, φανερόν, ὅτι οὐπὲρ καὶ ἡ φαντασία·

And so [concerning] of which of these [parts] of the psyche memory is, it is clear that it is of [the part] that *phantasia* is also.

de Memoria 450a22-3

Τί μὲν οὖν ἐστὶ μνήμη καὶ τὸ μνημονεύειν, εἰρηται, ὅτι φαντάσματος, ὡσ εἰκόνοσ οὐ φάντασμα, ἔξις...

And so [concerning] what memory and recollection are it has been said that it is a 'having' of a *phantasma*...

de Memoria 451a15-16

The part of the soul that *phantasia* ultimately belongs to is the capacity for *aesthēsis*, and it is to this relationship that Aristotle refers at 449b24-5 in describing memory as, in one sense, either a *bexis* or an affection (*pathos*) of perception.³⁶ By relating memory to *aesthēsis* via *phantasia*, the passages cited above are suggestive of Aristotle's account of dreaming as 'of the *aesthētikon*... in so far as it is the *phantastikon*' at *de Insomniis* 459a14-22. Despite memory's ultimately operating in relation to perception, its workings have more in common with the

35. *de Anima* 428a3

36. At 450a13-14 in *de Memoria*, Aristotle indicates that memory has what amounts to incidental relationship to thought (*to nooumenou*) and this may be useful with respect to understanding the other relationship that Aristotle bestows on memory, namely, its relationship with judgement.

particularities (and peculiarities) of *phantasia* than with perception. Like *phantasia*, memory's activities exist in direct and dependent relation to other elements of the psyche. This manifests itself in its relationships with *phantasia* and with perception, both of which are required for its operations.

Τί μὲν οὖν ἐστὶ μνήμη καὶ τὸ μνημονεύειν, εἰρηται, ὅτι φαντάσματος, ὡς εἰκόνοσ οὐ φάντασμα, ἕξις, καὶ τίνος μορίου τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι τοῦ πρώτου αἰσθητικοῦ, καὶ ᾧ χρόνου αἰσθανόμεθα.

And so [concerning] what memory and recollection are, it has been said that it is a 'having' of a *phantasma*, like a likeness of the thing of which a *phantasma* is, and as to which part of those in us [it belongs], [it has been said] that it is of the first perception, and that with which we perceive time.

de Memoria 451a15-19

The products of *phantasia*, as representations, are integral to what a memory is. Thus, when we remember a smell or colour, for example, we require the corresponding *phantasma* which has recorded the perceptual experience underlying it and which now remains in the psyche. But Aristotle further specifies the ways in which *phantasia* plays a role in memory, because by describing memory as an activity involving *phantasmata*, Aristotle finds himself potentially facing a serious question. If *phantasmata* remaining in the soul after a past impression are integral to memory, then how can we know we are remembering the original impression as opposed to just the *phantasmata*? Memory, like *phantasia*, exists at a step removed from the sensory. Everson makes a note along similar lines, "In memory, the affection is present, whilst the thing remembered is not".³⁷ Aristotle ultimately addresses this issue by distinguishing between representations which are considered with respect to something else, and representations treated as objects of contemplation in their own right. Thus, as he

37. Everson, 193.

indicates in his example, a portrait of Coriscus can be thought of in two fashions: firstly, as simply a portrait or picture, and, secondly, as a likeness of Coriscus. If our contemplation of the portrait is to be called memory, as 451a15-19 explains, we must be contemplating the *phantasma* in the latter sense, as an entity existing *in relation to* what it is a representation of. The interesting implication of all this is that there is nothing in particular about the *phantasma* itself to indicate that it functions at the behest of memory, as Wedin's account suggests.

... there is no intrinsic feature of an image or affection that indicates it is *about* another thing and so is occurring in an episode of remembering. ... It is obvious from this passage [450b24-26] that nothing about the image itself marks it as a memory image as opposed to an image in thought.³⁸

In other words, if we were to look at the portrait of Coriscus solely as a portrait and picture, we would presumably be contemplating a *phantasma*, and nothing more. Other passages in *de Memoria* would seem to confirm this. Aristotle indicates that we may have difficulty in knowing whether the perception that we are contemplating in the form of a *phantasma* is really a memory or not, and that in the case of people suffering from madness, individuals may mistake delusions for genuine memories.³⁹

There is another way in which *phantasmata* as they occur in memory are distinguished from their other manifestations, and this takes place through memory's specific associations to the common sense as found in *aesthēsis*. The reason why a remembered image is recognized to be a memory of a something that occurred in the past lies in the fact that memory's activities

38. Wedin, 53-4.

39. *de Memoria*, 451a3-6 and 451a9-11.

draw on the abilities of the common sense, particularly in its role in our perception of time.⁴⁰ Both *phantasia* and memory can provide access to perceptual experiences in the absence of their triggering objects, but memory differs from *phantasia* inasmuch as it also brings into play a coinciding perceptual experience of time having passed. As Aristotle indicates in *de Anima* III.3, *phantasia* can occur concurrently with all three kinds of perception, so time in particular does not play a central role in its account.⁴¹ Memory is an entity of a different sort, however, with time fundamental to it. As Aristotle indicates, memory ranges solely over the past while the present can only serve as the domain of perception. But while the present can only be accessed through perception, perception as a capacity is responsive to a range of perceptibles. The common sense, as described in *de Anima* III.1, allows for the perception of motion, rest, shape, size, number and unity. At *de Memoria* 450a12, Aristotle adds a further property: time.

Μέγεθος δ' ἀναγκαῖον γνωρίζειν καὶ κίνησιν ὧ καὶ χρόνον, καὶ τὸ φάντασμα τῆς κοινῆς αἰσθήσεως πάθος ἐστίν. Ὡστε φανερόν ὅτι τῷ πρώτῳ αἰσθητικῷ τούτων ἡ γνῶσις ἐστίν.

It is necessary to determine size and speed with that which one determines time, and the *phantasma* [associated with this] is an affection of the common sense. From this it is clear that knowledge of these things is due to the first thing that perceives.

de Memoria 450a10-12

40. We have already cited *de Memoria* 451a15-19 in this regard. At *de Memoria* 449b27-29, Aristotle makes the assertion again, this time in the context of the animal world, indicating that the same thing which allows (some) living beings to perceive time is the same thing utilized in remembering.

41. *de Anima* 428b28-30.

Phantasia is not associated with any particular organ of *aesthēsis*, nor does it have a specific organ proper to itself.⁴² Instead it reflects perceptual experiences by drawing on the full range of sensory apparatus available to *aesthēsis*. In the case of memory, which implicitly involves time, the *phantasmata* associated with it draw on the resources of the time perceiving aspects of the psyche as contained in the common sense. Thus, although memory is linked closely to the workings of *phantasia*, what determines if a living being possesses the power of memory is dependent not only on its access to *phantasia*, but also whether or not it is endowed with the ability to perceive time via the possession of a common sense.⁴³ Although all animals, by definition, are endowed with the capacity of *aesthēsis*, Aristotle indicates that not all of them possess the ability to perceive time, suggesting that possession of perception does not necessarily include possession of the common sense, or at least of its abilities with respect to time.

The content of a memory may reflect the sensual content of a *phantasma*, but it is by no means limited to the sensual and also relates to what is intelligible. This should not be considered surprising. Memory clearly plays a fundamental role in learning and intellectual activity, and Aristotle specifies the necessity of *phantasia* for thought in *de Anima* and reiterates this in his account of memory.⁴⁴ The connection of both *phantasia* and memory to the sensory world of *aesthēsis* might seem to exclude either of them from activities like the

42. Wedin's examination of Aristotelian terminology (which was cited on page 29) identifies the absence of an object and the lack of a sense organ specific to *phantasia* as the two missing entities which distinguish its treatment from that of *aesthēsis*.

43. *de Memoria*, 449b29-30. See also *Metaphysica* 980a28-980b22. In the latter passage Aristotle describes some animals as possessing memory by virtue of having *aesthēsis*.

44. *de Anima* 431a16, 432a8 and *de Memoria* 449b31

intellectual contemplation of abstracts, but Aristotle indicates that this is not the case. As he describes it in chapter one of *de Memoria*, when we contemplate a triangle as part of a geometric proof, whether in our minds or after having drawn it, the triangle in question comes with particular quantitative attributes even if our interest and contemplation is directed toward a universal triangle.⁴⁵ In a situation similar to that of *phantasia*, memory ‘belongs’ to perception but is clearly implicated in the activities of thought.

Ἡ δὲ μνήμη καὶ ἡ τῶν νοητῶν οὐκ ἄνευ φαντάσματος ἐστίν. Ὡστε τοῦ νοουμένου κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς ἂν εἴη, καθ’ αὐτὸ δὲ τοῦ πρώτου αἰσθητικοῦ.

Even the memory of intelligible things does not occur without a *phantasma*. According to this, it [memory] would incidentally belong to thinking but in its own right to the first thing that perceives.

de Memoria 450a13-14

καὶ ἔστι μνημονευτὰ καθ’ αὐτὰ μὲν [ὅσα ἐστὶ φανταστά]/[ὧν ἐστὶ φαντασία] κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς δὲ ὅσα μὴ ἄνευ φαντασίας.

And the things which are able to be remembered in their own right are those which are *phantasta*/ of *phantasia*, but the things which [are able to be remembered] incidentally are those which are not without *phantasia*.

de Memoria 450a24-5

Memory, via its dependence on *phantasia* for its operations, belongs first and foremost to *aesthēsis*, and more specifically to the common sense. There are, however, items which, although not sensually grounded, can still be remembered and these are the items ‘which can be remembered incidentally’. These are intelligibles; an ascription which Aristotle indicates in the first passage and which reflects the necessity of *phantasia* for thought maintained by him

45. *de Memoria* 450a1-14

in *de Anima*. Intelligibles are ‘not without *phantasia*’ for the simple reason that *phantasia*, as has already been indicated, always accompanies thought in reasoning beings.

Particularly attentive readers may have noticed the presence of *phantasta*, or objects of *phantasia*, in the last passage cited (*de Memoria* 450a24-5). As indicated earlier, there is no systematic mention of objects of *phantasia* in Aristotle’s different discussions of *phantasia*. This mention of a possible object is the only one in the corpus and occurs in a passage with significant textual problems: three different readings are given with two of them contradicting each other outright. I am inclined to adopt the reading indicated by the second set of parentheses, as indicated in the LSU manuscript.

καὶ ἔστι μνημονευτὰ καθ’ αὐτὰ μὲν ὧν ἔστι φαντασία κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς
δὲ ὅσα μὴ ἄνευ φαντασίας.

And the things which are able to be remembered in their own right are those which are of *phantasia*, but the things which [are able to be remembered] incidentally are those which are not without *phantasia*.

de Memoria 450a24-5

The other two readings which contain *phantasta* contradict each other explicitly; one declaring what is memorable to be *phantasta*, and the second indicating that ‘memorables’ are indeed *not phantasta*. Given that there are no other mentions of *phantasta* and that the passages citing it are so contradictory and inconclusive, I have adopted the reading given above.

Movement

Aristotle's accounts of movement in *de Anima* and *de Motu Animalium* both begin by identifying a host of factors implicated in its workings, factors which are subsequently sifted through with the aims of establishing movement's essential causes. In *de Motu Animalium*, Aristotle identifies a range of elements in the psyche which serve to initiate movement, a list which is then reduced to two: thought and desire. The same two elements are identified as the sources of movement in *de Anima* but are there further reduced to just one, desire, mirroring what would seem to be a subsequent similar identification of desire as the cause of movement in *de Motu Animalium*. This means of proceeding is entirely deliberate and proves highly productive, so we shall trace an outline of Aristotle's argument as he makes his way from a consideration of the larger number of factors implicated in movement to desire as the source of movement.

ὁρῶμεν δὲ τὰ κινούμενα τὸ ζῶον διάνοιαν καὶ φαντασίαν καὶ προαίρεσιν καὶ βούλησιν καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν. ταῦτα δὲ πάντα ἀνάγεται εἰς νοῦν καὶ ὄρεξιν. καὶ γὰρ ἡ φαντασία καὶ ἡ αἰσθησις τὴν αὐτὴν τῷ νῷ χώραν ἔχουσιν· κριτικᾶ γὰρ πάντα, διαφέρουσι δὲ κατὰ τὰς εἰρημένας ἐν ἄλλοις διαφοράς.

We see that the things moving the living being are deliberation and *phantasia* and choice and intention and appetite. But all these things refer back to thought and desire. For even *phantasia* and *aesthēsis* occupy the same position with respect to thought, for they are all discriminating but they differ in other ways as has been discussed.

de Motu Animalium 700b17-22

Φαίνεται δέ γε δύο ταῦτα κινούμενα, ἡ ὄρεξις ἡ νοῦς, εἴ τις τὴν φαντασίαν τιθεῖ ὡς νόησιν τινα· πολλοὶ γὰρ παρὰ τὴν ἐπιστήμην ἀκουλουθοῦσι ταῖς φαντασίαις, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλθοις ζώοις οὐ νόησις οὐδὲ λογισμὸς ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ φαντασία.

Indeed it appears that these two things are [sources of] movement, desire and mind, if someone were to consider *phantasia* as a type of thinking, for many follow their *phantasiai* as opposed to knowledge, and in the other animals there is neither thought nor reasoning but [there is] *phantasia*.

de Anima 433a9-12

In the course of this initial identification of desire and mind as the sources of movement, there is an interesting role attributed to *phantasia*. *Phantasia*, as it turns out, plays a significant role in Aristotle's account of motion, and it does so seemingly on account of implied similarities to thought. In order to understand what Aristotle is up to here, it is important to recognize that there are two important concerns underlying his account. Firstly, Aristotle obviously intends to describe movement in both animals and humans, but by movement he refers not only to locomotion in its barest sense but ultimately also to all motion and action that seems purposeful or intentional across living beings with different psychic make-ups. The second concern builds on the first. The accounts of motion and action, as contained in *de Motu Animalium* and *de Anima*, are meant by Aristotle to provide him not only with an explanation for movement, as such, but also with (at least partial) means of explaining ethical and unethical or *akratic* behaviour. The breadth that these concerns cover (everything from the physiological to the ethical) is substantial, and, as an ability with ties to both the sensible and the intelligible, *phantasia* proves very useful for Aristotle's purposes. In the same way that thought requires a *phantasma* which can represent the object of thought (as form *sans* matter), *phantasia* provides representations, which serve as object and impetus in the causal chain underlying motion.

τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὀργανικὰ μέρη παρασκευάζει ἐπιτηδείως τὰ πάθη, ἡ δ' ὄρεξις τὰ πάθη, τὴν δ' ὄρεξιν ἡ φαντασία· αὕτη δὲ γίνεται ἢ διὰ νοήσεως ἢ δι' αἰσθήσεως.

For the affections suitably prepare the instrumental parts, and the desire [prepares] the affections, and the *phantasia* the desire, while it [the *phantasia*] occurs on account of thought or perception.

de Motu Animalium 702a17-19

As has already been indicated, and as the above passage underlines, Aristotle ultimately defines desire (*orexis*) as that which originates movement.⁴⁶ But *phantasia*, as the above suggests, remains critical to the desire however it is generated. Thus, whether movement occurs because of an initial thought or sensory experience, the catalyst for the desire which ultimately leads to movement comes from the *phantasma* occurring within the psyche. The reason for this is that neither perception nor thought alone can account for the different kinds of movement and action that living beings perform. Movement to seek or avoid something that is immediately perceptible can be spoken to through the capacity of *aesthēsis*, but there are also instances of movement which do come arise out of direct contact with external objects of perception, instances in which movement is the result of thought. *Phantasia*, with its links to the activities of both *aesthēsis* and thought, provides a psychic principle which allows both capacities to play a role in movement, and also allows Aristotle to account for movement in both reasoning and non-reasoning souls. As Aristotle indicates in his discussion of why *phantasia* cannot be opinion (*doxa*), the constitution of animal and human psyches are fundamentally different with respect to cognitive capacities such as reason and conviction (*pistis*).⁴⁷ The significance of this clearly reaches beyond *phantasia* and opinion, and one of the arenas in which it has clear implications is in an account of movement. The actions and movements of beings such as humans cannot be accounted for

46. *de Anima*, 433a22-23, 433b10-12 and *de Motu Animalium*, 701a35-6.

47. *de Anima* 428a20-24

in exactly the same way as that of non-reasoning animals because human actions can be guided by reason and conviction while the actions of non-reasoning beings cannot. With this in mind, Aristotle differentiates between two sorts of *phantasia*. Specifically, he distinguishes between *phantasia* used in connection with perception (*phantasia aisthētikē*), which he declares to belong to all animals and man, and *phantasia* as used in calculation (*phantasia bouleutikē*), which belongs to reason-possessing beings alone.⁴⁸

ὅλως μὲν οὖν, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, ἡ ὀρεκτικὸν τὸ ζῶον, ταύτη αὐτοῦ
κινητικόν· ὀρεκτικὸν δὲ οὐκ ἄνευ φαντασίας· φαντασία δὲ πᾶσα ἢ
λογιστικὴ ἢ αἰσθητικὴ. ταύτης μὲν οὖν καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ζῶα μετέχει.

And so, in general, as it is said that the animal which possesses desire [possesses] self-motion. There is no desire without *phantasia* and all *phantasia* either pertains to calculation or to perception and all animals are in possession of this [latter one].

de Anima 433b27-30

ἡ μὲν οὖν αἰσθητικὴ φαντασία, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ζῴοις
ὑπάρχει, ἡ δὲ βουλευτικὴ ἐν τοῖς λογιστικοῖς...

And so the *phantasia* connected with perception, as it has been said, exists then in all the animals, but the *phantasia* connected with deliberation exists in the reasoning beings...

de Anima 434a5-7

In the case of animals, movement and action cannot be the result of thought, coming instead from perception of external sensibles, which via *phantasia* prepares the desire necessary for

48. Aristotle is often described as creating two different *sorts* of *phantasia* in this passage. In our estimation this would (unnecessarily) raise questions such as whether or not the two *phantasiai* were different in kind, location, etc. It is also dubious given that Aristotle doesn't seem to feel the need to be precise in his terminology regarding the 'two' *phantasiai*, using the term *logistikē* in one instance and *bouleutikē* in the other. The *phantasia* in question is the same activity whether it is used in the context of perception or calculation.

action.⁴⁹ Thus, a thirsty animal can be spurred to movement by the sight of water. This causal pattern can, of course, occur in humans as well, but humans have the additional possibility of producing movement apart from direct sensory contact with the objects of their desire, and in those instances the originating source for movement-producing desire is mind, specifically in its practical form.

ἄμφω ἄρα ταῦτα κινητικὰ κατὰ τόπον, νοῦς καὶ ὄρεξις, νοῦς δὲ ὁ ἔνεκα
του λογιζόμενος καὶ ὁ πρακτικός· διαφέρει δὲ τοῦ θεωρητικοῦ τῷ τέλει.

Both of these are productive of local movement, mind and desire: mind which calculates toward an end, which is to say, practical mind, and which differs from theoretical mind in its end.

de Anima 433a13-16

Creatures endowed with mind can form desires and generate movement or action directed at what is not immediately present and this can occur by means of sophisticated reasoning, which may take into account such things as consequences and considerations with respect to the future. Thus, a thirsty human may be spurred to move toward a glass of water by the sight of it, but he may also decide he'd like some water when none is around or to buy bottled water in the future because of health concerns. In either case, the desire for water is 'prepared' by the appropriate *phantasma*, and this is possible because *phantasia* not only registers the effects of *aesthēsis* but also acts as an accompaniment and helper to thought.

Before proceeding further, it would be useful to very briefly touch on how Aristotle's account of *phantasia* in movement relates to his discussions on ethics. That *phantasia* should

49. Wedin makes the comment that inasmuch as at least some animals are capable of memory that this too is a possible source of movement in them. Given the reliance of memory of *aesthēsis* this would seem not an entirely unreasonable proposition in those instances. Wedin, 144.

come to bear on his ethical discussions can no doubt be seen as a result of the influence of Plato. Plato's discussions of *phantasiai* consistently speak of their pernicious influence on the soul as is reflected in this passage from his account of *akrasia* in the *Protagoras*.

Εἰ οὖν ἐν τούτῳ ἡμῖν ἦν τὸ εὖ πράττειν, ἐν τῷ τὰ μὲν μεγάλα μήκη καὶ πράττειν καὶ λαμβάνειν, τὰ δὲ μικρὰ καὶ φεύγειν καὶ μὴ πράττειν, τίς ἄν ἡμῖν σωτηρία ἐφάνη τοῦ βίου; ἄρα ἡ μετρητικὴ τέχνη ἢ ἡ τοῦ φαινομένου δύναμις; ἢ αὕτη μὲν ἡμᾶς ἐπλάνα καὶ ἐποίει ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω πολλάκις μεταλαμβάνειν ταῦτα καὶ μεταμέλειν καὶ ἐν ταῖς πράξεσι καὶ ἐν ταῖς αἰρέσεσι τῶν μεγάλων τε καὶ μικρῶν...

If our doing well consisted in this, in doing and striving after great length, and to avoid and not do small ones, what would appear to be our salvation in life? Would it be the measuring art or the power of an appearance? Or is the latter the very thing that misleads us and often makes us take up for down and [causes us] to regret these things both in our deeds and in our choice of great and small...

Protagoras 356d

Phantasiai, although not playing a central role in the discussion of *akrasia* in the *Protagoras*, are clearly implicated in Plato's examination of why humans behave poorly and seemingly act in ways contrary to what they would appear to know. For both Aristotle and Plato actions can be directed toward either real or apparent goods, and to the degree that *phantasia* plays a role in causing humans to initiate actions for the sake of 'imaginary' goods, it becomes a matter for consideration in examinations of ethics.⁵⁰

νοῦς μὲν οὖν πᾶς ὀρθός ἐστιν· ὄρεξις δὲ καὶ φαντασία καὶ ὀρθὴ καὶ ὀρθή. διὸ ἀεὶ κινεῖ μὲν τὸ ὀρεκτόν, ἀλλὰ τοῦτ' ἐστὶν ἢ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἢ τὸ φαινόμενον ἀγαθόν.

50. Further mentions of people searching after what are only apparent goods can be found at *Ethica Eudemia* VII.1235b26-29 and *Ethica Nicomachea* 1114a33.

Mind is always correct, but desire and imagination can be both right and wrong, on account of which although the object of desire always moves [in itself] it is either a good or [only] an apparent good.

de Anima 433a26-28

Although thought may indeed play a role in movement and activity, that role is not a necessary or entirely authoritative one. Indeed, one of the reasons why mind cannot be the source of movement is precisely because it would run counter to the obvious instances of ethical weakness. As Aristotle explains, despite mind's instructions to act or move in certain ways those movements may not occur, and we may act in the manner of the *akratēs* and in accordance with desire (*orexis*).⁵¹ This observation plays a role in how to understand the earlier mentioned likening of *phantasia* to thinking.

Φαίνεται δέ γε δύο ταῦτα κινοῦντα, ἡ ὄρεξις ἢ νοῦς, εἴ τις τὴν φαντασίαν τιθεῖ ὡς νόησιν τινα· πολλοὶ γὰρ παρὰ τὴν ἐπιστήμην ἀκουλουθοῦσι ταῖς φαντασίαις, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ζώοις οὐ νόησις οὐδὲ λογισμὸς ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ φαντασία.

Indeed it appears that these two things are [sources of] movement, desire and mind, if someone were to consider *phantasia* as a type of thinking, for many follow their *phantasiai* as opposed to knowledge, and in the other animals there is neither thought nor reasoning but [there is] *phantasia*.

de Anima 433a9-12

Animals do not have the option of following reason and can only follow the *phantasia* resulting from *aesthēsis*.⁵² In humans there exists another possibility: that of being guided by mind. The commands of thought necessarily involve *phantasmata*, but the representations

51. *de Anima*, 433a1-3.

52. At *Ethica Nichomachea* 1147b5, Aristotle uses the lack of opinion and judgement in animals to explain why they cannot be considered incontinent.

which occur in this context operate in harmony with knowledge and reflect its essential trustworthiness. When knowledge is ignored for the sake of appetite (*epithumia*), we act on a desire which is grounded on an unreliable *phantasma* and engage in actions for the sake of what is no more than an apparent, and ultimately false, good. The trigger that ‘prepares’ the desire that initiates movement is, in the first scenario, knowledge as it is accompanied by thought and, by extension, a ‘correct’ *phantasmata* that reflects *epistēmē*. In the second instance, *phantasia* acts as a catalyst in the services of appetite, and given that it is participating in movement contrary to mind’s bidding, serves to provide a representation of what is no more than an apparent good, thus taking the place of the real good that mind would otherwise have furnished.

Phantasia and Veracity

In what would seem to be another echo of Plato’s account of *phantasia*, Aristotle uses the beginning portion of his account in *de Anima* III.3 to raise the issue of error. At 428a3-4, he comes to define *phantasia* as something in virtue of which we discriminate and as something in virtue of which we can be either correct or mistaken.

καὶ πολλὰ κατ’ αὐτὴν καὶ ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν τὸ ἔχον, καὶ εἶναι καὶ ἀληθῆ καὶ ψευδῆ.

... and those having this [i.e. *phantasia*] both act and experience many things in accordance with it, and it may be both true and false.

de Anima 428b16-17

Standing at a remove from the sensible and implicated in a host of activities as the products of *phantasia* are, they cannot have the same reliability that Aristotle attributes to *aesthēsis*, most specifically, in the case of perception of the special sensibles, which he characterizes as free from error.⁵³ The potential for *phantasia* to produce error in the psyche allows it to be associated with common phenomena such as hallucinations and dreams, but, on Aristotle's account, *phantasia* also acts in processes such as memory and thought, activities which can be accurate. The requirements of accounting for so broad a range of activities necessitates that *phantasia* cannot be either completely reliable or completely false; it also necessitates that Aristotle explain how error relates to *phantasia* and its activities.

To properly address veracity in Aristotle's account of *phantasia*, it would be useful to recall one of the main tasks undertaken in the account in *de Anima* III.3, namely, that of distinguishing *phantasia* from both *aesthēsis* and opinion (*doxa*). All three (perception, *phantasia*, and opinion) can be true or false, but the way in which error takes place in each of them is somewhat different. Some of the difficulty in understanding how reliable or unreliable *phantasia* might be arises out of the fact that Aristotle is interested not only in distinguishing between these three psychic elements but also in distinguishing the different ways in which each can be considered either true or to have gone astray. It is precisely this type of distinction that Aristotle points to in his argument against Plato's identification of *phantasia* with opinion. In III.3, Aristotle uses the example of the sun appearing to be a foot across to someone looking at it. Despite the fact that our perceptual experience of the sun leaves us with a *phantasma* of an object only a foot wide, we ultimately do not believe in the appearance and instead believe the sun to be much larger. Thus, Aristotle objects that *phantasia* can't be a

53. *de Anima*, 428b18.

form of opinion. One of the notable things to come from this example is the observation that the *phantasma* continues to have an existence in the psyche *despite* the fact that we deem it false: the *phantasma* does not leave us despite our having withheld assent. An opinion, on the other hand, could not survive our believing it to be a falsehood. In *de Insomniis*, Aristotle sharpens the difference between *phantasia* and the reasoning parts of the psyche by way of describing the increased power of *phantasia* in people suffering from delirium and strong emotion. During such times an ‘authoritative’ element in the psyche, one which can screen *phantasia* for veracity and which exists in a different part of the soul, becomes impaired.

Αἴτιον δὲ τοῦ συμβαίνειν ταῦτα τὸ μὴ κατὰ τὴν αὐτὴν δύναμιν κρίνειν τὸ τε κύριον καὶ ὧ τὰ φαντάσματα γίνεται. Τούτου δὲ σημεῖον ὅτι φαίνεται μὲν ὁ ἥλιος ποδιαῖος, ἀντίφῃσι δὲ πολλάκις ἕτερόν τι πρὸς τὴν φαντασίαν.

The reason for these things occurring is that the authoritative [element] does not discriminate using the same capacity by which *phantasmata* occur. The proof of this is that the sun appears a foot wide but some other thing often contradicts the *phantasia*.

de Insomniis 460b16-19

Ὅλως γὰρ τὸ ἀφ’ ἐκάστης αἰσθήσεως φησιν ἡ ἀρχή, ἐὰν μὴ ἕτερα κυριωτέρα ἀντιφῆ.

For, on the whole, the *apchē* affirms that which results from each perception, whenever another more authoritative one does not contradict it.

de Insomniis 461b4-6

The passages suggest some interesting things concerning how we might understand error associated with *phantasia*. For one thing, *phantasia* would, in a sense, not seem to be the ultimate cause for our being led into error for the simple reason that there exists another element in the psyche which can override it and serves as a corrective to it. Thus, it could be

argued that the psyche errs not so much because a particular *phantasma* leaves us with a false impression but rather because another, more powerful element in the soul fails to disavow it.

Ἐκ δὴ τούτων φανερόν ὅτι οὐ μόνον ἐγρηγορότων αἱ κινήσεις αἱ ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθημάτων γινόμεναι τῶν τε θύραθεν καὶ τῶν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος ἐνυπαρχουσῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅταν γένηται τὸ πάθος τοῦτο ὃ καλεῖται ὕπνος, καὶ μᾶλλον τότε φαίνονται. Μεθ' ἡμέραν μὲν γὰρ ἐκκρούονται ἐνεργουσῶν τῶν αἰσθήσεων καὶ τῆς διανοίας, καὶ ἀφανίζονται ὡς περ παρὰ πολὺ πῦρ ἔλλαττον καὶ λῦπαι καὶ ἡδοναὶ μικραὶ παρὰ μεγάλας, παυσαμένων δ' ἐπιπολάζει καὶ τὰ μικρά·

From these [points] it is clear that the movements coming from *aesthēsis* both those occurring from what is external and those arising from within the body belong not only to those being awake but even whenever the state which we call sleep occurs and appear even greater then. For during the day they are repulsed when perception and thought are working, and they are suppressed just as a smaller is by a larger fire or small pains and pleasures by great ones, but when they stop even the small ones come to the surface.

de Insomniis 460b27-461a3

Anytime when thought and the senses are either inactive or prevented from acting to their full capacity, the chances of error occurring in the soul increase. The 'senses' Aristotle is referring to here are the special senses, as he indicates immediately thereafter (at 461a4). These are, of course, essentially reliable when acting on the objects particular to them and do not have the same potential for error as does *phantasia*. However, given that *aesthēsis* plays a pivotal role in the generation of a misleading *phantasma*, such as the appearance that the sun is a foot wide, perception would seem unlikely to be the superior element Aristotle has in mind at 460b16-19 and 461b4-6. In addition, Aristotle is quite specific that the 'authoritative' capacity is *not* the same as the capacity with which *phantasia* is associated. This latter capacity would be, of course, none other than *aesthēsis* and the *aesthētikon*. In my estimation, *nous*, which Aristotle declares to be both discriminative and unerring, is the most likely candidate

for the role of ‘authoritative’ element.⁵⁴ Thought can act as a brake to *phantasmata* that might mistakenly be given credence, as Aristotle suggests in his discussion of the sun example in *de Anima* III.3, when he explains that it is opinion (which works in conjunction with accompanying conviction and reason) that allows us to resist the *phantasma* that the sun is a foot wide and to retain the (accurate) opinion that its size is far greater.

There are, however, instances in which the defences against error available to us in waking and healthy states are let down, and they include sleep and times of illness and madness. During these states the power of thought, in particular, is eclipsed leaving us especially vulnerable. What all of this means is that the presence of the discriminating abilities of thought represents the ultimate barrier in cases where *phantasia* has the potential to cause error. If *nous* is the authoritative element that can override the activity of *phantasia*, as I am suggesting, the reverse should also be the case, with the power of *phantasia* growing or playing a more substantial role in proportion to the ‘absence’ of mind. Furthermore, this should occur not only in the case of man but also across the spectrum of psyches represented by living beings. Aristotle at the end of III.3 indicates as much.

καὶ διὰ τὸ ἐμμένειν καὶ ὁμοίας εἶναι ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι, πολλὰ κατ’ αὐτὰς πράττει τὰ ζῶα, τὰ μὲν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν νοῦν, οἷον τὰ θηρία, τὰ δὲ διὰ τὸ ἐπικαλύπτεσθαι τὸν νοῦν ἐνίοτε πάθει ἢ νόσοις ἢ ὕπνῳ, οἷον οἱ ἄνθρωποι.

On account of [*phantasia*] remaining and being similar to the senses, many living things act with respect to them [*phantasiai*], some on account of not having *nous*, such as the beasts, some, because *nous* has been covered over sometimes by emotions, at others by disease or by sleep, as [in the case of] men.

de Anima 429a4-8

54. *de Anima* 428a5 and 428a17-18 attribute these characteristics to *nous*.

The ability of mind (*nous*) to arrest *phantasia*'s potential to mislead again raises the question of the manner in which error should be attributed to *phantasia*. The issue is made more problematic by the fact that *phantasia* is, although not identical in being with *aesthēsis*, still identified as being identical with it in some other sense. *Aesthēsis*, in at least one important instance, does not carry with it the possibility for falsehood, and Aristotle clearly recognizes the potential for difficulty in explaining how error should attach to an activity as closely related to it as *phantasia*.

Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἀληθείας, ὡς οὐ πᾶν τὸ φαινόμενον ἀληθές, πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι οὐ δὴ ἡ αἴσθησις ψευδῆς τοῦ γε ἰδίου ἐστίν, ἀλλ' ἡ φαντασία οὐ ταῦτον τῇ αἰσθήσει.

With respect to the truth, [we shall say] that not everything which appears is true; firstly, perception of the object peculiar to a sense is indeed not false, but *phantasia* is not the same as perception.

Metaphysica 1010b1-4

Apprehension of the special objects of the senses by the sense organs particular to them represents but one of the three main types of perception that Aristotle describes, and it is by referring to all three that he explains the different odds of encountering error through the activity of *phantasia*. As the types of perception court error to differing degrees, so does the *phantasia* associated with them.

ἡ αἴσθησις τῶν μὲν ἰδίων ἀληθῆς ἐστίν ἢ ὅτι ὀλίγιστον ἔχουσα τὸ ψεῦδος. δεῦτερον δὲ τοῦ συμβεβηκέναι ταῦτα {ἃ συμβέβηκε τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς}: καὶ ἐνταῦθα ἤδη ἐνδέχεται διαψεῦδεσθαι· ὅτι μὲν γὰρ λευκόν, οὐ ψεύδεται, εἰ δὲ τοῦτο τὸ λευκόν ἢ ἄλλο τι, ψεύδεται. τρίτον δὲ τῶν κοινῶν καὶ ἐπομένων τοῖς συμβεβηκόσιν οἷς ὑπάρχει τὰ ἴδια (λέγω δ' οἷον κίνησις καὶ μέγεθος) {ἃ συμβέβηκε τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς}: περὶ ἃ μάλιστα ἤδη ἔστιν ἀπατηθῆναι κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν. ἡ δὲ κίνησις ἢ ὑπὸ τῆς ἐνεργείας τῆς αἰθήσεως γινομένη διοίσει, ἢ ἀπὸ τούτων τῶν τριῶν αἰσθήσεων. καὶ ἡ μὲν πρώτη παρουσίας τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἀληθῆς, αἱ δ'

ἕτεροι καὶ παρούσης καὶ ἀπούσης εἶεν ἂν ψευδεῖς, καὶ μάλιστα ὅταν
πόρρω τὸ αἰσθητὸν ᾗ.

Aesthēsis of the particular objects of sense (*idion*) is true, such that it possesses the least amount of falsehood. Next to that [in the amount of falsehood] follow those things which accompany the perceptions [i.e. incidentals], and there indeed it is possible to be deceived. That this thing is white is not misleading, but whether this thing or that is the white thing may be deceiving. Thirdly, are the common things accompanying the incidentals along with which the particular objects of sense (*idion*) exist (I am speaking of such things as movement and size) which accompany perceptions. It is indeed with respect to these things that it is most likely to be deceived in terms of *aesthēsis*. The movement occurring out of the activity of *aesthēsis* differs from the movement of these three [modes of] perception. The first is true when it accompanies the perception but the others may be false either when [the perception] is present or when it is absent, especially when they are far from the perceptible object.

de Anima 428b18-30

There are several important points that can be made about the above passage. One of these is that the error in *phantasia* is implicitly bound to the reliability of the perceptual movement at its origin. Thus, what the passage speaks to is three different likelihoods of error in *phantasia*, which exists as a single activity in itself. In other words, Aristotle does not use this passage to outline three different *types* of *phantasia*, as some have argued and found both troubling and confounding.⁵⁵ Indeed, the degrees of veracity of *phantasia* are broadly reflective of the accuracy Aristotle attributes to his three kinds of perception. Thus, *phantasia* drawn from perception of the special sensibles while they are present has no less veracity than the perception itself. *Aesthēsis* that involves incidentals and common sensibles carries a greater likelihood of error, and Aristotle reflects this increased risk by extending it to the *phantasia* linked to both.

55. Schofield, 264.

This systematic examination of error in *phantasia* as linked to perception is significant because it points to *phantasia* as a regular accompaniment to perception in all its different forms. *Phantasia*'s origin is not limited to specific types of either more or less veridical perception; instead it becomes a regular occurrence spilling over from the usual activities of *aesthēsis*, whether they involve special, incidental or common sensibles. It also allows for *phantasia*'s involvement in both 'regular' activities of perception and motion and the like, and in more 'irregular' activities, such as madness, where spectacular (and highly misleading) shifts in perception may occur. In the end result, *phantasia* can be tied to reliable and epistemologically respectable activities such as those associated with direct sensory experience as readily as it can be linked to hallucinations. By allowing *phantasia* such latitude in representational activity in psyche, Aristotle provides a theory that can account for representations in the soul that range from the mundane and reliable all the way to the extremes of sensory excess.

How Phantasia Appears...

How to understand Aristotelian *phantasia* is complicated by the need to reconcile the text in *de Anima* III.3 with the discussions contained in other texts, discussions where we usually find *phantasia* acting in the context of a specific phenomenon. There is also the issue of how to understand *phantasia*'s relations with *aesthēsis* and thought, and the (often complicating) role error plays in its interpretation. All of these considerations have produced, not

surprisingly, an array of interpretations, and we will examine one of those different standpoints now.

One established way of looking at Aristotle's account of *phantasia*, particularly if one chooses to limit one's focus to *de Anima* III.3, treats Aristotle's account as a much less original development than I have been suggesting. This interpretation treats *phantasia* as occupied more or less exclusively with irregular and inconclusive perceptual experiences and as essentially deceptive and illusory. One might expect that this treatment would be justified by contending that Aristotle is limiting himself in a strict way to terms laid out by Platonic *phantasia*, but in the case of Malcolm Schofield's examination of *de Anima* III.3, which we shall be looking at, it is generally argued for by appealing to language.

I shall argue that in the contexts which concern us Aristotle has his eye on the more everyday use of *phainesthai* to express scepticism, caution, or non-committal about the veridical character of sensory or quasi-sensory experiences, on those comparatively infrequent occasions when for one special reason or another it seems inappropriate in a remark about one's own or another's experience to claim that things are as they seem: 'it *looks* thus and so [--but is it really?].'⁵⁶

These 'non-paradigmatic sensory experiences', as Schofield names them, represent moments when *aesthēsis* fails to function (as in sleep and dreaming) or cannot function properly (as in the case of someone looking at a man far away in fog).⁵⁷ These instances are reflected in common language through people's use of phrases like 'it appears', and in Schofield's view, Aristotle reflects this usage by employing the verb *phainetai* "as a way of *identifying* instances

56. Schofield, 251.

57. Schofield, 252.

of imagination or *phantasia*".⁵⁸ Aristotle's defining statement at 428a1-2 is also seen through the prism of language.

For notice that *phantasia* is not stated to be the faculty in virtue of which *phantasmata* occur to us, but that in virtue of which *we say that a phantasma occurs to us*. I take Aristotle to be intending by this formula to distinguish cases of *phantasia* by the linguistic behaviour they prompt.⁵⁹

This way of looking at *phantasia* completely ignores the existence of a methodology at work in Aristotle's psychology and the systematic nature of the way in which he analyzes the soul's workings. Furthermore, we are not given any sort of explanation as to why Aristotle would choose to go about accounting for *phantasia* by appealing to people's common-language usage; instead, Schofield refers to the usage of *phantasia* in Plato and discusses examples of the use of *phantazdo* in pre-Hellenic literature and the tragedians. Schofield's omission of any substantial examination of discussions outside of *de Anima* III.3 is severely limiting, and that, combined with his insistence on *phantasia* as illusory, produces a strained and often frustrated reading, as was alluded to earlier.⁶⁰ It is precisely in the discussions outside of III.3 that we see examples of how *phantasia* operates, both in highly misleading and helpful ways. Recognizing that he is open to criticism on this front, Schofield does touch on some of these texts but with often perplexing results. Speaking to Aristotle's account of motion, he concludes that in that particular context *phantasia* should in fact be regarded as concerned with judgement, in contrast to Aristotle's account of thinking where "he is not concerned

58. Schofield, 269.

59. Schofield, 267-8.

60. See pages 8 and 64.

with *phantasia* as a faculty of judgement at all".⁶¹ Indeed, he seems to conclude that Aristotle alternates in describing *phantasia* as more like thinking than perception in some instances while implying the opposite in others.⁶² And in an attempt to reconcile dreams with other instances in which *phantasmata* seem to be very much related to *ordinary* experiences of *aesthēsis*, he is forced into arguing that Aristotle's imagination should be regarded as being of two kinds, normal and abnormal.⁶³ No such massaging of Aristotle's account is required. The difficulty with the 'sceptical' interpretation of *phantasia* (whether it is argued by means of common-language usage or not) is that Aristotle articulates clear instances of non-duplicious *phantasia*. A example of this is readily found by looking to the role of *phantasia* in animal imagination, which is perhaps most readily associated with Aristotle's account of movement. This is an activity which can hardly be associated with artistic 'imagination' or thought of as mendacious in any meaningful way. Schofield admits that all of this is true, and then proceeds, in spite of the lengthy discussions of animal imagination in both *de Motu Animalium* and *de Anima*, to dispose of it neatly as "an obscure corner of Aristotelian doctrine".⁶⁴ Another point at which a 'sceptical' interpretation falters badly is in relation to Aristotle's assertion at *de Anima* 428b25-29 that *phantasia* associated with the perception of special sensibles is reliable as long as the sensation is present. This statement, and the passage it is part of, cause Schofield no end of consternation. Firstly, in addition to suggesting that *phantasia* can be 'true', it also indicates that, at times, it can be very much like

61. Schofield, 255. At Schofield, 276, he cites judgement as representative of the 'inconsistencies' in Aristotle's account.

62. Schofield, 272.

63. Schofield, 270-271.

64. Schofield, 255, fn.20.

regular (non-sceptical) perception. There is also the important point that *phantasia* can occur *at the same time* as perception.

... the account of *phantasia* at 428b25-30... does present an embarrassment for my own interpretation. If *phantasia* is imagination or non-paradigmatic sensory experience, it is easy enough to see how it is possible to have *phantasia* of incidentals or common sensibles while one is still engaged in the relevant sort of perception. Aristotle's examples of an indistinctly perceived thing looking like a man and of the sun appearing a foot across are respectively cases in point— and cases which illustrate the fallibility of *phantasia*. But what of the notion that while someone is perceiving a special object, e.g. seeing something white, he may also enjoy an infallible kind of *phantasia* of the self same object? ...I have no answer to this puzzle.⁶⁵

Schofield's difficulties are compounded by his insistence that the passage identifies three different sorts of *phantasia*, as opposed to the error associated with them as they relate to the three kinds of Aristotelian perception.

All I can suggest is that Aristotle has here been overwhelmed by the scholasticism of this attempt to distinguish three sorts of *phantasia* corresponding to his three kinds of sense-perception, which strikes most readers as a baroque extravagance. That is, he is so intent on constructing parallel subdivisions that he fails to notice that the idea of an infallible type of *phantasia* cannot bear scrutiny.⁶⁶

In his conclusion, Schofield has difficulty finding consistency and coherence in Aristotle's account of *phantasia*, something which he sees as the result of Aristotle's attempt to use one psychic entity to speak to such a range of different phenomena. Having tried to press *phantasia* into the tight mould of misleading and defective perceptions, his interpretation seems to (inevitably) conclude that Aristotle's account, though of interest as a 'pioneering

65. Schofield, 263-4.

66. Schofield, 264.

treatment', results in no more than a 'familial concept' stranded somewhere between perception and thought.⁶⁷

67. Schofield, 277.

IV

PHANTASIA AND THOUGHT

Aristotle asserts the necessity of *phantasia* for thought on several occasions. Indeed, these passages, along with others suggesting similarities between perception (and *phantasia*) and thought, have for some time encouraged certain scholars to argue that *phantasia* is, in some way, a form of thought.⁶⁸ I will not be arguing anything of the sort here. The *phantasmata* which Aristotle indicates as necessary to thought point to the activity of *phantasia* as a necessary ingredient and aid to thought but should not, and need not, be taken as somehow being equivalent to them. It is in much the same way that *phantasia* plays a role in dreaming, movement and memory without being identical to either of these. Aristotle calls on *phantasia* to provide representations of the objects of different activities. In the case of the two basic sorts of movement (either with or without a sensory object at hand), *phantasia* serves to provide an object for the sake of which movement occurs, and, indeed, it is difficult to know how Aristotle would explain movement apart from a sensory object, say, as a result of deliberations concerning future consequences, without an activity like *phantasia*. The *phantasma*, or representation, ‘prepares’ the desire that leads to movement towards (or away from) its *actual* object, and it is important to note this, otherwise we would leave Aristotle to

68. Wedin, 72 and 73. Wedin cites Freudenthal, Beare, Brentano, and Engmann as examples.

make the ridiculous argument that the aim of movement is to somehow draw close to what is only a representation of its object. A similar situation occurs with regards to memory. What we are seeking is memory of something past, not merely the corresponding *phantasma*. Aristotle indicates that when we remember, our recollection does not limit itself to remembering a *phantasma*, and we have access to that which gave rise to it. In the case of thought, *phantasia*'s 'representational' role again provides a necessary aid, and we will turn to this after having explored the idea of *phantasia* as a representational activity in somewhat more detail.

Phantasia as Proposition?

The reason for underlining *phantasia*'s role in representing the objects of different activities is that *phantasia* is often characterized as having an asserting (or at least propositional) role, one which ostensibly serves as an exclusive alternative to representational possibilities. Bestowing the task of assertion on *phantasia* would be a relatively straightforward matter if it were a discriminating capacity, but, as has been indicated, Aristotle stops short of giving that status to *phantasia*, opting instead to characterize it as something *in virtue of which* we discriminate. This makes a direct ascription of assertive activity to *phantasia* somewhat more difficult, though it does not conflict with granting *phantasia* the role of assisting in the activities of full discriminating capacities. There also remains the problem of how to see *phantasia* as essentially assertive in its activity, given that this would bring *phantasia* within range of an area

of the psyche which Aristotle has explicitly sought to separate it from, namely, that of opinion.

One reason why it might be tempting to ascribe assertive activity to *phantasia* can be found by referring back to the example of the sun appearing a foot wide as Aristotle discusses it in III.3, an example which is, of course, specifically intended to *distinguish* opinion from *phantasia*. In it, Aristotle presents us with a situation in which an individual psyche confronts what might appear to be, in effect, two different and irreconcilable *opinions*: one, that the sun is a foot wide, and a second, that it is much larger. If we accept this reading, *phantasia* is able to produce some form of assertion or opinion or judgement ('the sun is one foot wide'), much like the Platonic *phantasia* that Aristotle is in the very process of critiquing. Schofield points to precisely this as an indication that *phantasia* potentially remains, despite Aristotle's efforts, a form of judgement and sees the whole example as indicating that Aristotle's account is "somewhat fragile".⁶⁹ There are however other reasons why one might see it necessary to attach assertive activity to *phantasia*. One is the ubiquitous presence of the word *phainetai* in discussions of *phantasia*, which with its meaning of 'it appears' is but a short step away from 'it appears to be' and, thus, becomes suggestive of assertive activity about the state of things.⁷⁰ A final factor is one which we have already discussed and which involves the issue of falsity. Aristotle clearly and on numerous occasions mentions the possibility of error being associated with *phantasia*, and to maintain that *phantasia*, and, more specifically, its products may be 'true' or 'false' is highly suggestive of it being implicated in assertions about the way things are.

69. Schofield, 276.

70. Both Nussbaum and Schofield appeal to these considerations.

Those who would argue that the activity of *phantasia* is assertive in its nature face a number of serious obstacles, however. It has already been mentioned that one of the main tasks Aristotle sets himself in III.3 is that of separating *phantasia* from opinion (*doxa*). On the basis of this alone, it would be reasonable to conclude that he has no interest in making *phantasia* any sort of opining element in the psyche. But Aristotle seems to go further in trying to eliminate the possibility that *phantasia* might directly produce anything like assertion through his contention that *phantasia* also cannot be judgement (*hupolēpsis*). Aristotle argues this in two different ways. In the first instance, at *de Anima* 427b17-21, Aristotle differentiates *phantasia* from judgement by asserting that in the latter, *unlike* the former, ‘it is necessary to determine whether something is true or false’. This passage would seem to strongly imply that *phantasia* can’t be properly assertive in that it doesn’t possess the sort of relationship to truth and falsity as that necessary for judgement. It might also be taken further and construed as suggesting that *phantasia* is removed from the sphere of truth and falsity altogether. The second way this distinction is made occurs in short order when Aristotle defines thought, declaring it to be part judgement and part *phantasia*.⁷¹ The formulation of thought as part judgement and part *phantasia* both emphasizes and requires that there be a difference between them. To declare thought a combination of two elements that both have a similar explicitly assertive role would make its definition confusing at best and unworkable at worst.⁷² If this were not enough, in *de Anima* III.8 at 432a10-111 as part of a summary

71. *de Anima*, 427b27-28.

72. Wedin, 105-6. Wedin makes this issue by way of example, “it is now clear that... thinking involves on the one hand taking something to be the case [*hupolēpsis*] and, on the other hand, imagination. Because the former extends to singular propositions such as ‘Socrates is melancholic’ and ‘That is light meat,’ thesis 1 [refers to Wedin’s formulation of

concerning the psyche, Aristotle again refers back to *phantasia* indicating that *phantasia* is ‘different from assertion and denial’. The significance of these statements lies, of course, in their denying *phantasia* the opportunity to do what is essential to giving it a clear assertion-producing status, namely, to judge or opine that something is the case.

Thus, we are left either to assume, as Schofield suggests, that Aristotle does not entirely succeed in his account of *phantasia* or to find some other way of resolving the issue of *phantasia* and assertion. One way would be to deny any assertive attributes at all to *phantasia*; another way would be to see if there is some way in which weaker ‘propositional’ qualities are incidental to *phantasia*’s content. Wedin, as has been suggested, adopts the first approach. In his account, he asserts that *phantasia* “is essentially a [re]presentational capability that in its own right asserts nothing about the way things are”.⁷³ This is, strictly speaking, true. There is certainly nothing about *phantasia* as an *activity* that would justify granting it the ability to act in an assertive manner. Its dependence on the activities of *aesthēsis* would leave open the question of the means by which *phantasia*, in its own right, could be expected to go about generating assertions. But to accept Wedin’s solution as it stands does not address the concerns raised earlier, and it would also leave unaccounted for instances in which Aristotle *does* seem to suggest something rather like assertive activity or content to *phantasia*.

ποτέον μοι, ἢ ἐπιθυμία λέγει· τοδὶ δὲ ποτόν, ἢ αἴσθησις εἶπεν ἢ ἡ
φαντασία ἢ ὁ νοῦς· εὐθύς πίνει. οὕτως μὲν οὖν ἐπὶ τὸ κινεῖσθαι καὶ
πράττειν τὰ ζῶα ὀρμῶσι, τῆς μὲν ἐσχάτης αἰτίας τῆς κινήσεως ὀρέξεως

427b11-12] can hardly award imagination a propositional role and, hence, cannot construe it as a kind of thought”.

73. Wedin, 75-6.

οὔσης, ταύτης δὲ γινομένης ἢ δι' αἰσθήσεως ἢ διὰ φαντασίας καὶ νοήσεως.

I need to drink, says appetite, and, this is a drink says, *aesthēsis* or *phantasia* or thought; he drinks immediately. Thus living things are urged to move or act, [with] desire being the ultimate reason for the movement, and it [i.e. desire] occurring on account of *aesthēsis* or *phantasia* or thought.

de Motu Animalium 701a32-36

To indicate, as Aristotle does, in the latter half of the passage that desire occurs on account of *aesthēsis* or *phantasia* or thought can be understood without any need to attribute anything like assertive activity or content to *phantasia*. In the context of movement, *phantasia* simply serves to represent that for the sake of which a movement or action occurs, by preparing *orexis*. But how are we to understand the first half? How, in other words, can *phantasia* on its own say, 'this is a drink'?⁷⁴

As has been suggested, there also exists the possible explanation that propositional qualities are incidental to *phantasia*⁷⁵. What is meant by propositional here is no more than a basic recognition of a state of affairs without any indication of conviction or judgement. The reasons for suggesting this are based on the observation that perception itself, as Aristotle describes it, can readily be argued to possess propositional qualities, and, secondly, that *phantasia*'s movement resembles that of perception. As a first step in this direction, I will

74. Everson, 181 fn.97. Everson poses the same question but comes to a very different conclusion that reflects his argument that perceptions form a sub-class of *phantasiai*.

75. Sorabji, R. "Intentionality and Physiological Processes: Aristotle's Theory of Sense-Perception" In *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, edited by M.C. Nussbaum and A.O. Rorty, 196-8. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992. Sorabji also maintains that both perception and *phantasia* are in some sense propositional. His treatment is, however, of a very different type than the arguments being presented here.

suggest that it would be misleading to characterize Aristotelian perception as no more than passive reception of raw sensory data. Perception must have some propositional content if Aristotle's account is to be intelligible. It would be very difficult, for example, to understand what Aristotle means at 425a25-27 when he says that we incidentally perceive that an object is, in fact, Cleon's son as opposed to merely a pale object, if we were to deny *aesthēsis* some sort of propositional nature. But we might also look to *de Insomniis*, where the suggestion of perception serving a propositional role is made.

Ὅλως γὰρ τὸ ἀφ' ἐκάστης αἰσθήσεως φησιν ἡ ἀρχή, ἐὰν μὴ ἕτερα κυριώτερα ἀντιφῆ.

For, on the whole, the starting [point/element] affirms that which results from each perception, whenever another more authoritative one does not contradict it.

de Insomniis 461b3-5

The authoritative element of the soul being referred to would presumably be *nous* (or some other reasoning element in the psyche) but what of the starting point or element? To think of *phantasia* as a 'starting' point with respect to instances of perception would be odd given its causal dependency; *aesthēsis* would seem to be the most likely candidate, a contention supported by its designation as a discriminative element in the psyche. Beings capable of action act on the basis of faulty *phantasmata* whenever a more authoritative element does not intervene, and there is the further point that a faulty *phantasma* may become an opinion, but neither of these either implies or necessitates that the faulty proposition is generated by the activity of *phantasia*. Fortunately, in addition to the above, we also find that the propositional role of *aesthēsis* is mentioned quite explicitly by Aristotle.

τὸ μὲν οὖν αἰσθάνεσθαι ὁμοιον τῷ φάναι μόνον καὶ νοεῖν· ὅταν δὲ ἡδὺ ἢ λυπηρόν, οἷον καταφᾶσα ἢ ἀποφᾶσα, διώκει ἢ φεύγει

And so to perceive is similar to a simple assertion and to thought, for whenever it affirms or denies something as pleasant or painful, it pursues it or flees.

de Anima 431a8-11

Perception, as described here, clearly has propositional content in its own right. Given that *phantasia* is a movement which is ‘of necessity, like the perception’ that gives rise to it, we may reasonably expect it to possess, albeit incidentally, the propositional content of perception.⁷⁶ In essence, while *phantasia* acts as a representation which is not like *doxa* or *hypolēpsis*, and not a full discriminating capacity like thought or *aesthēsis*, it does carry along with it the propositional content invested in the perception that gives rise to it.⁷⁷ This content is reflected by its presence in the products of *phantasia*, the *phantasmata*, which can then be combined with other elements in the soul like conviction and, perhaps more importantly, with the judging activities of *hypolēpsis* as it joins with *phantasia* in the activities of deliberation and thought.

ἡ μὲν οὖν αἰσθητικὴ φαντασία, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ζῴοις ὑπάρχει, ἡ δὲ βουλευτικὴ ἐν τοῖς λογιστικοῖς (πότερον γὰρ πράξει τόδε ἢ τόδε, λογισμοῦ ἤδη ἐστὶν ἔργον· καὶ ἀνάγκη ἐνὶ μετρεῖν· τὸ μείζον γὰρ διώκει· ὥστε δύναται ἐν ἐκ πλειόνων φαντασμάτων ποιεῖν).

And so the *phantasia* connected with perception, as it has been said, exists then in all the animals, but the *phantasia* connected with deliberation exists in the reasoning beings (for whether one would do this or that, is already the job of reason and it is necessary to measure with one standard. For one pursues the good, such that it is necessary to form a unity out of many *phantasmata*).

76. *de Anima* III.3, 428b14.

77. Providing further support to this interpretation is that we *already* have a similar ‘incidental’ parallel at work in Aristotle’s account of *de Anima*, specifically in his discussion at 428b18-30, where the error attributable to *phantasia*, and that it in effect carries with it, looks back to the error of the type of perception which has provided its origin.

As was suggested earlier, it is both unnecessary and highly dubious that Aristotle intended this passage to represent the creation of two different *sorts* of *phantasia*. The number of questions that could potentially arise out of this (whether or not the two *phantasiai* were different in kind, location, etc.) would be substantial, and there is no reason to think that Aristotle was pointing us toward that sort of project. Thus, what we have is a single *phantasia* conducting its activities in the context of perception and calculation. In the latter half, we see calculation occurring out of the work of judgement and *phantasia*. It should be noted that this passage has presented many problems to scholars, not least of which, to those who reduce the idea of representation to crude sorts of mental pictures. The depiction of calculation as a judging or unifying of many different mental pictures is very difficult to square with this passage.⁷⁸ Calculation can, however, be thought of as the judgement or evaluation of representations which carry with them differing propositions. It might be suggested that this only applies to *phantasia* as used in calculation and not in sensation, but that would be to misunderstand Aristotle's account of animal movement. Animals are not endowed with reason, but their movement still represents quasi-intentional and focussed behaviour. *Aesthēsis* spurs the *phantasia* which spurs the desire and, ultimately, the movement toward a clearly identifiable object. The *phantasmata* implicated in this process serve to propositionally represent the object either as something which is desirable or something to be avoided.

78. Nussbaum, M.C. *Aristotle's de Motu Animalium*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978, 263. Nussbaum refers to Ross' rather strained sounding "collage view of deliberation" in which "the deliberating man combines elements from the different pictures in his head, ending up with a single picture".

One of the reasons given for attributing some form of relationship between *phantasia* and propositionality was because of its potential implications in understanding how Aristotle attributes error to *phantasia*. There is no doubt that Aristotle relates falsity to *phantasia*: as an example, one might note that within the space of a couple dozen lines in III.3 he informs us of this possibility no less than three times.⁷⁹ We also have a rather detailed discussion at 428b18-30 of how to understand the error in *phantasia* as a reflection of the type of perception underlying it, but within the discussions of III.3. In other texts, Aristotle's discussions suggest while falsity applies to *phantasia*, it does so in some different and particular fashion.

ἔστι δ' ἡ φαντασία ἕτερον φάσεως καὶ ἀποφάσεως· συμπλοκὴ γὰρ νοημάτων ἐστὶ τὸ ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος.

Phantasia is different from assertion and denial, for what is true and false is a combining of thoughts.

de Anima 432a10-12

This passage seemingly echoes the already mentioned passage from III.3 in which Aristotle denies that *phantasia* can be judgement.

τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ τὸ πάθος ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἐστίν, ὅταν βουλώμεθα (πρὸ ὀμμάτων γὰρ ἔστι τι ποιήσασθαι, ὡσπερ οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημονικοῖς τιθέμενοι καὶ εἰδωλοποιοῦντες), δοξάζειν δ' οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν· ἀνάγκη γὰρ ἢ ψεῦδεσθαι ἢ ἀληθεύειν.

For this condition is ours whenever we wish (for we can make something [an image] in front of our eyes, just as those making mental images and placing [them] in their memories), but to judge is not up to us; for it is necessary to determine whether something is false or true.

79. *de Anima* 428a4, 428a13, and 428a18.

At minimum, both of these passages would seem to indicate that the way of looking at truth and falsehood in *phantasia* cannot be the same as the manner used in cases of judgement. At most, they would suggest the more serious implication that *phantasia* might not lie in the domain of truth or falsity after all.⁸⁰ As compared to the activity of judgement, *phantasia* could potentially be seen to be acting apart from tests of veracity, while at the same time leaving Aristotle in the position of seemingly contradicting himself in describing *phantasiai* as both true and false. As has already been indicated, Aristotle speaks to the possibility of *phantasia* being erroneous on numerous occasions, and I will not be suggesting that there is any reason to question either Aristotle's intent or his consistency on this score. What is at stake in these various passages is not *phantasia's* potential to mislead, but, rather, the way in which falsity attaches to it. But if falsity is in some way different in the case of *phantasia*, how are we to understand it then?

In book V of the *Metaphysica*, Aristotle provides an outline of how we are to understand falsity. In addition to explaining what a false statement is and in what sense a man can be said to be false, he describes two ways in which we should understand falsity as it pertains to things. The second of these ways mentions *phantasia* explicitly.

80. This passage has also generated criticism of Aristotle's account by those who read it as indicating that *phantasia* is something that is always done at our will. Dreaming is then cited as a clear case of an instance where *phantasia* is not up to us. I don't believe the passage need be read in the way just suggested. All Aristotle is indicating is that we are able to engage in at least some types of *phantasia* whenever we wish, as in the example he gives, the generating of mnemonics. As a representation producing activity it has a self-containment not found in judgement which must assert or deny according to objective standards. Also see Wedin, 99, where he cites *Ethica Nichomachea* 1114a31-b1 as indicative of an instance in which Aristotle maintains that *phantasia* is *not* up to us when it comes to how the good appears.

Πράγματα μὲν οὖν ψευδῆ οὕτω λέγεται, ἢ τῷ μὴ εἶναι αὐτὰ, ἢ τῷ τῆν ἄπ' αὐτῶν φαντασίαν μὴ ὄντος εἶναι.

Thus it is said that things are false: either in the sense that they themselves are not, or in the sense that the *phantasia* of them [emphasis mine] is of something that does not exist.

Metaphysica 1024b25-27

The implications of this passage are significant. Firstly, the concerns that Aristotle expresses here with respect to falsity relate to 'things', and the truth-value of the object in question represents the key to whether or not it will satisfy the requirements of being true. *Phantasia* as an *activity*, in other words, would not be subject to examinations of falsity and consequently could not, in itself, be termed false. But the meaning of Aristotle's definition goes further, because not only is he not bringing truth and falsity to bear on *phantasia* (the activity), he is also, and more significantly, not bringing it to bear on its product, the *phantasma*. The falsity that Aristotle attributes to *phantasia* relates to the veridical nature of the objects that *phantasia* represents through its activities. This result, though perhaps striking at first, is consistent with Aristotle's discussions of *phantasia*. The account of dreaming, a phenomenon where falsity is clearly of central importance, is an important case in point.

ἀλλ' εἴτε δὴ ταῦτον εἶθ' ἕτερον τὸ φανταστικὸν τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τὸ αἰθητικόν, οὐδὲν ἦττον οὐ γίνεται ἄνευ τοῦ ὁρᾶν καὶ αἰσθάνεσθαι τι· τὸ γὰρ παραορᾶν καὶ παρακούειν ὁρῶντος ἀληθές τι καὶ ἀκούοντος, οὐ μέντοι τοῦτο ὁ οἶεται.

Now whether the *phantastikon* and *aesthētikon* of the psyche are the same or different, none the less nothing occurs without seeing and perceiving something. For to see and to hear incorrectly, is to have seen and heard something real, though not the thing which one thinks.

de Insomniis 458b29-459a5

As we recall, a dream is a *phantasma* and is ‘of the *aesthētikōn* in so far as it is the *phantastikōn*’. The activity of *phantasia* is clearly at work and functioning and not ‘false’ in any sense which Aristotle considers relevant. On the contrary, he is quite emphatic that a genuine act of perception (in the broader sense) has occurred and, furthermore, that something ‘real’ has been produced. In other words, there is, strictly speaking, nothing false about the *phantasma* that has come out of the affection of the sense organs. It really exists and as a genuine entity. The sense in which *phantasia* may be taken as false rests on those instances when *that which* is being represented doesn’t actually exist. A somewhat different point is being made in the reference to times when we ‘see or hear or incorrectly’. This passage takes place within the context of Aristotle’s account of dreaming, and we shall limit our discussions to that phenomenon, though it could also be discussed with respect to *aesthēsis*. What Aristotle does here is to bring in the propositional aspects incidental to *phantasia* by pointing out that the falsity we experience when we mistakenly think we see something in a dream may be understood at precisely the level of proposition. In such cases, the *phantasma* entails a proposition (what we think we have seen) but without anything real corresponding to it.

Although the *phantasma*, as a representation, is not false in itself, the proposition that comes with it can be, and in a dream would be expected to be. As has already been mentioned, an account of the falsity of statements is also included among the three sorts of falsity outlined in *Metaphysica* V. It is with these two different sorts of falsity in mind that we can now return to the original passages comparing judgement to *phantasia*. Judgement serves to “determine whether something is false or true” and presumably involves a judgement of different propositions or statements, as in the case of dialectic. In contrast to this, *phantasia* serves to generate representations which although they may contain propositional content incidentally

are not indicative of any propositional activity on the part of *phantasia* itself and certainly not of any activity of judgement. It is precisely because *phantasia* is not, in itself, asserting or judging that it 'is different from assertion and denial'. Wedin also comes to the conclusion that *phantasia* is true or false in the sense of being "true *of* or false *of* something". As he puts it, "No one believes known falsehoods. It is in just this sense that belief is not something that is entirely up to us. There simply is no analogous condition for imagination..."⁸¹ This explanation comes out of Wedin's unwillingness to attribute any form of either assertion or propositionality to *phantasia* (incidental or otherwise). In an incidental sense there is, in fact, something 'analogous' to judgement that accompanies (but does not constitute) *phantasia*'s activity, namely, propositionality. That this is so, is precisely what Aristotle conveys through his invoking the scenario of the dreamer who, with his judgement impaired by the effects of sleep, sees something but not what he 'thinks' he sees. It is hard to see how this type of scenario would be accounted for by limiting the falsity of *phantasia* to the 'false of' sense.

Phantasia and Thought

Aristotle's treatment of the relations between *phantasia* and thought rests on two main ideas: that *phantasia* is not **thinking** in any form (and by extension that *phantasmata* are not thoughts) and that *phantasia* and its products form a necessary aid to thought. The disassociation of *phantasia* from various rational elements of the psyche is carried out in the early portions of the account of *phantasia* in *de Anima* III.3: *phantasia* is not *to phronein*, *dianoia*, *epistème*, or *nous*

81. Wedin, 76.

nor is it *hupolēpsis* or *doxa*. But if *phantasia* is not thought in any form, Aristotle is equally emphatic that it is required in its operations, both in its practical and theoretical aspects.

Aristotle's account of movement serves as an illustration of *phantasia's* relations to practical thought. Action, as Aristotle indicates, requires that the psyche be able to envisage something as either a thing to be desired or a thing to be avoided and, in the case of thought-mediated action, calls on the activities of judgment and the ability to think of the future and potential consequences. When humans act for the sake of things which are outside of our sensory range or with a mind to the future, it is *nous* in its practical form that serves as the impetus for the movement towards an established end.⁸² *Phantasia*, with its ability to linger in the psyche apart from immediately present sensory objects, provides thought with the representations it requires to form judgments about whether an item is desirable or to be avoided. In the following passages, Aristotle expands on how this is so.

τῇ δὲ διανοητικῇ ψυχῇ τὰ φαντάσματα οἷον αἰσθήματα ὑπάρχει. ὅταν δὲ ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακὸν φήσῃ ἢ ἀποφήσῃ, φεύγει ἢ διώκει. διὸ οὐδέποτε νοεῖ ἄνευ φαντάσματος ἢ ψυχῆ.

To the thinking psyche, perceptions exist as *phantasmata*. Whenever it affirms them as either good or bad, it either flees or pursues them. For this reason the psyche never thinks without a *phantasma*.

de Anima 431a14-18

τὰ μὲν οὖν εἶδη τὸ νοητικὸν ἐν τοῖς φαντάσμασι νοεῖ, καὶ ὡς ἐν ἐκείνοις ὄρισται αὐτῷ τὸ διωκτὸν καὶ φευκτὸν, καὶ ἐκτὸς τῆς αἰσθήσεως, ὅταν ἐπὶ τῶν φαντασμάτων ἢ, κινεῖται· οἷον αἰσθανόμενος τὸν φρυκτὸν ὅτι πῦρ, τῇ κοινῇ γνωρίζει, ὁρῶν κινούμενον, ὅτι πολέμιος· ὅτε δὲ τοῖς ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ φαντάσμασιν ἢ νοήμασιν, ὡσπερ ὁρῶν, λογίζεται καὶ βουλεύεται τὰ

82. Aristotle specifies the involvement of practical mind in cases of movement at 433a14-16 and foreshadows it at 432b27-29.

μέλλοντα πρὸς τὰ παρόντα· καὶ ὅταν εἴπη ὡς ἐκεῖ τὸ ἡδὺ ἢ λυπηρόν,
ἐνταῦθα φεύγει ἢ διώκει--καὶ ὅλως ἐν πράξει.

The thinking capacity then, thinks the forms in the *phantasmata*, and just as in the case [of perceptible things] [where] the thing to be pursued and the thing to be fled is determined for it, [the same is the case] outside of perception; whenever it is in the presence of *phantasmata*, it acts/ moves. ... by means of the *phantasmata* and the thoughts in the psyche, just as if one were seeing, one calculates and determines the things to come in reference to the present, and whenever one says that there [is present something] pleasant or painful, immediately one flees or pursues, and this is so in [cases of] action.

de Anima 431b2-10

The first passage would seem to imply that *phantasmata* act by providing the thinking capacity with some sort of representations of sensible particular things, while the second passage suggests that *phantasmata* are thinkable in virtue of forms ‘in’ them. The two do not conflict.

Aesthēsis’ operations are limited to sensible particular objects, and its activities allow their forms to come ‘into’ the soul. But the objects of thought’s operations are the intelligible and universal forms, which do not permit the intellect direct access to sensible particulars. Thus, we can understand *phantasmata* as providing representations of the forms of sensible particulars in such a way as to make them available to thought. Since perception already produces forms of particular sensibles, we might wonder why the link provided by *phantasia* is necessary. Why can’t thought access its objects by going directly to *aesthēsis*? The reason for this is two-fold. First, there is the obvious consideration that perception can only operate on what is immediately at hand in a given moment, and any proper account of thought and deliberation would have to permit for contemplation of objects which are not at hand, as well as for deliberation pertaining to the future. *Phantasia*, in virtue of its looser ties to the sensual world, can allow for these considerations. The second reason is that perception is necessarily bound to particular objects while thought relates to universals; with its looser ties

to sensible particulars, *phantasia* can access the universal forms within sensible particulars objects (what ‘the thinking capacity... thinks’, as Aristotle puts it). Furthermore, *phantasmata* may be repeated and gathered together as part of the development of *empeira*, or experience. In this way, *phantasia* allows the intellect to contact the objects of thought, which are located in sensible objects, something which Aristotle indicates is necessary for learning and understanding.

ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐδὲ πρᾶγμα οὐθὲν ἔστι παρὰ τὰ μεγέθη, ὡς δοκεῖ, τὰ αἰσθητὰ κεχωρισμένον, ἐν τοῖς εἶδεσι τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς τὰ νοητὰ ἔστι, τὰ τε ἐν ἀφαιρέσει λεγόμενα καὶ ὅσα τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἕξεις καὶ πάθη. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὔτε μὴ αἰσθανόμενος μηθὲν οὐθὲν ἂν μάθοι οὐδὲ ξυνείη, ὅταν τε θεωρῆ, ἀνάγκη ἅμα φάντασμα τι θεωρεῖν· τὰ γὰρ φαντάσματα ὡσερ αἰσθημάτα ἔστι, πλὴν ἄνευ ὕλης. ἔστι δ’ ἡ φαντασία ἕτερον φάσεως καὶ ἀποφάσεως· συμπλοκὴ γὰρ νοημάτων ἔστι τὸ ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος. τὰ δὲ πρῶτα νοήματα τί διοίσει τοῦ μὴ φαντάσματα εἶναι; ἢ οὐδὲ τᾶλλα φαντάσματα, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἄνευ φαντασμάτων.

But since nothing is anything apart from magnitudes, from the perceptible objects, as it were, the objects of thought are in the forms in the perceptible objects, both the ones being discussed in abstraction and those which are *hexeis* and affections of the perceptible objects. And on account of this one would neither learn nor understand anything without having perceived, and whenever one would contemplate it is necessary that some *phantasma* accompany the contemplating, for *phantasmata* are just like *aesthēmata*, excepting that they are without matter.

de Anima 432a3-11

There is much that can be said with respect to this passage, but we will focus our attention, for the time being, on the latter portions where *phantasia* is dealt with explicitly. Here, Aristotle tells us that *phantasmata* are ‘like’ *aesthēmata* but without matter. The activity of *aesthēsis* involves bringing the forms of sensible particular objects into the soul, hence *phantasmata* cannot simply be considered forms of sensible particulars or else Aristotle would be left with no distinction between the products of perception, *aesthēmata*, and *phantasmata*. The difference between the two lies in the fact that while *phantasia*, like *aesthēsis*, draws on

what is perceptible, *phantasia* is not bound to what is immediately available to perception, and, more importantly, is not bound to the particular in the same way as is the case with *aesthēsis*. While *phantasia* serves to provide representations of specific perceptible objects, there does not necessarily need to be an existing specific perceptible object that corresponds to a given *phantasma*. It is in this sense that *phantasmata* are 'like' *aisthēmata* but without matter, operating at the level of representations of the forms of sensible particulars provided by perception. By, in effect, serving as the form of a form, *phantasmata* have taken a step away from sensible particulars toward what is more universal and thinkable. Because of this, *phantasia* can aid in bringing the universal attributes of sensible particulars into the psyche, as we shall see in Aristotle's account of *empeira*. It is precisely because of this access to the universal that *phantasia*'s role in thought is not limited to practical aspects, and it can also play a part in abstract thought.

Ἐπεὶ δὲ περὶ φαντασίας εἴρεται πρότερον ἐν τοῖς περὶ ψυχῆς καὶ νοεῖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἄνευ φαντάσματος· συμβαίνει γὰρ τὸ αὐτὸ πάθος ἐν τῷ νοεῖν ὅπερ καὶ ἐν τῷ διαγράφειν· ἐκεῖ τε γὰρ οὐθεν προσχρώμενοι τῷ τὸ ποσὸν ὠρισμένον εἶναι τὸ τριγώνου, ὅμως γράφομεν ὠρισμένον κατὰ τὸ ποσόν· καὶ ὁ νοῶν ὡσαύτως κἂν μὴ ποσόν, νοῆ τίθεται πρὸ ὀμμάτων ποσόν, νοεῖ δ' οὐχ ἢ ποσόν.

As has been said earlier in *de Anima*, it is not possible to think without a *phantasma*, for the same condition accompanies thinking that accompanies drawing. For in the latter, although we in no way use the determinate magnitude that belongs to the triangle, nevertheless we draw it a determinate size. Similarly, the one who thinks, although he thinks about [something] without a size, places [something] with a size before his eyes and thinks it to not to have a size.

de Memoria 449b30-450a7

Here again, the representational activity of *phantasia* serves as an aid to thought, paralleling the drawing of a triangle by a geometer. The sensible attributes of the *phantasma* are not of use to the geometer in his abstract contemplation but are nevertheless present, and it is in

this sense that we might understand Aristotle's assertion that "one would neither learn nor understand anything without having perceived."⁸³ In the case of contemplating 'triangle' as such, the *phantasma* represents a universal although in itself still being possessed of a sensible magnitude. Given this assertion that the objects of thought reside in perceptibles, the necessity of *phantasia*, with its ties to perception, acting as accompaniment to thought becomes apparent. Perception's range limits itself to perceptibles, to sensible, particular objects, while thought restricts itself to the thinkable via universal forms. *Phantasia* by providing a representation of the forms of sensible particulars both makes perceptions available to thought and allows thought access to the source of learning and understanding, the forms contained within sensible objects.

Empeira

Phantasia's ability to bridge the realms of perception and thought is reflected in Aristotle's account of *empeira*, or experience. *Empeira* would seem to be limited to reasoning beings, but, as in the case of *phantasia*, it is not entirely clear how often Aristotle believed it to occur in animals. As Aristotle suggests, humans come possessed of capabilities that go beyond that of perception, in the form of thought, calculation (*logismos*), science (*epistēme*) and art or *tekne*. The latter two occur as an outgrowth of experience (*empeira*) wherein a universal becomes

83. *de Anima* 432a7-8.

established, in some sense, in the psyche.⁸⁴ Experience in turn relies on memory and, by extension, on the activities of *phantasia* and perception.

ἔχει γὰρ δύναμιν σύμφυτον κριτικὴν, ἣν καλοῦσιν αἴσθησιν· ἐνούσης δ' αἰσθήσεως τοῖς μὲν τῶν ζῶων ἐγγίγνεται μονὴ τοῦ αἰσθήματος, τοῖς δ' οὐκ ἐγγίγεται. ὅσοις μὲν οὖν μὴ ἐγγίγνεται, ἢ ὅλως ἢ περὶ ἃ μὴ ἐγγίγνεται, οὐκ ἔστι τούτοις γνώσις ἔξω τοῦ αἰσθάνεσθαι· ἐν οἷς δ' ἔνεστιν αἰσθομένοις ἔχειν ἔτι ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ. πολλῶν δὲ τοιούτων γιγνομένων ἤδη διαφορὰ τις γίγνεται, ὥστε τοῖς μὲν γίγνεσθαι λόγον ἐκ τῆς τῶν τοιούτων μονῆς, τοῖς δὲ μὴ.

Ἐκ μὲν οὖν αἰσθήσεως γίγνεται μνήμη, ὥσπερ λέγομεν, ἐκ δὲ μνήμης πολλάκις τοῦ αὐτοῦ γιγνομένης ἐμπειρία· αἱ γὰρ πολλάι μνήμαι τῷ ἀριθμῷ ἐμπειρία μία ἐστίν. ἐκ δ' ἐμπειρίας ἢ ἐκ παντὸς ἡρεμήσαντος τοῦ καθόλου ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, τοῦ ἐνὸς παρὰ τὰ πολλά, ὃ ἂν ἐν ἅπασιν ἐν ἐνῇ ἐκείνοις τὸ αὐτὸ, τέχνης ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐπιστήμης, ἐὰν μὲν περὶ γένεσιν, τέχνης, ἐὰν δὲ περὶ τὸ ὄν, ἐπιστήμης.

For there is an inborn discriminating capacity which they call perception and while there is perception, in some animals there occurs a persistence of the perceptual state but in others it does not occur. In those animals [in which] it does not occur, it does not occur either in general or with respect to things; there is no knowledge in these [animals] outside of perception. In those in which it does occur, perceptions continue to exist in the psyche. When many of these [persisting perceptual states] occur a difference now presents itself, such that in some a *logos* occurs out of the persistence of these things, but not in the others.

And so, memory arises from perception, as we have said, and out of repeated memories of the same thing, experience. For memories that are many in number constitute one experience. When out of experience or in its entirety the universal has settled in the psyche, the one as opposed to the many, which is identical to itself in all of them, [it is] the source of *technē* (art) and *epistēmē* (science), *technē*, with respect to coming into being, and *epistēmē* with respect to what is.

Analytica Posteriora 99b35-100a9

Though *phantasia* is not referred to by name, the 'persistence of the perceptual state' that is referred in the passage clearly corresponds to Aristotle's accounts of *phantasia*, or more

84. *Metaphysica* 981a5-7

specifically, to *phantasmata* as they play a role in memory.⁸⁵ In those beings in which perceptions (or *aesthēmata*) do ‘persist’, there is the possibility of knowledge. Perceptions (by means of *phantasia*) allow for memory, and once a sufficient number of memories of the same thing have occurred, experience can be attained and the psyche in question can have access to universals. As is indicated at the outset of the passage, the ‘persistence’ of perception does not occur in many animals, and Aristotle returns to the issue of the occurrence of *empeira* and *phantasia* in different sorts of beings in *Metaphysica* and *de Anima*.

τὰ μὲν οὖν ἄλλα ταῖς φαντασίαις ζῆ καὶ ταῖς μνήμαις, ἐμπειρίας δὲ μετέχει μικρόν· τὸ δὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος καὶ τέχνη καὶ λογισμοῖς.

The other creatures [animals] live by *phantasiai* and by memory but have little of *empeira* (experience), but to the race of men there is both art (*tekne*) and calculations.

Metaphysica 980b25-27

τελευταῖον δὲ καὶ ἐλάχιστα λογισμὸν καὶ διάνοιαν· οἷς μὲν γὰρ ὑπάρχει λογισμὸς τῶν φθαρτῶν, τούτοις καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ πάντα, οἷς δ' ἐκείνων ἕκαστον, οὐ πᾶσι λογισμὸς, ἀλλὰ τοῖς μὲν οὐδὲ φαντασία, τὰ δὲ ταύτη μόνη ζῶσιν.

And finally the smallest number [of creatures] [have] calculation and thought, for to those among mortals to whom belongs calculation, to these belong all the others [i.e. nutrition, perception, and locomotion], and to those who have each of the others but not calculation to [some of] these there is not even *phantasia* but others live by this alone.

de Anima 415a7-11

85. Some scholars equate the ‘persistences’ with *phantasmata* outright, but given that memory is pivotal to *empeira*, it would appear that it is *phantasmata* in its specific role as vehicle for memory that is being referred to. Thus, ‘persistence’ would require both *phantasia* and memory. This may explain why Aristotle chose the less restrictive terminology that he did.

Aristotle indicates at 433b29-31 that all animals possess *phantasia*, at least with respect to *aesthēsis*, but immediately thereafter speaks to the issue of ‘imperfect animals’ concluding (somewhat reluctantly it would seem) that they may have *phantasia* but only in some indefinite or indeterminate manner. These ‘imperfect animals’ would seem to be the same as the animals in whom perceptions cannot persist (in *Analytica Posteriora*) and the beings that ‘don’t even’ have *phantasia* (in the *Metaphysica*). In those animals which are possessed of *phantasia*, there is the potential for memory. Given that *phantasia* is not an uncommon occurrence in animals, we might be surprised to find Aristotle asserting that, “animals live by *phantasiai* and by memory but have little of *empeira*.” At *Analytica Posteriora* 100a1-3, Aristotle indicates that even in animals in which ‘persistences’ occur repeatedly only some of them will end up acquiring a *logos*. The implication of this would seem to be that though Aristotle might be willing to grant memory to certain animals, this memory will not provide access to universals. This possibility would seem to be confirmed by another description of the capabilities of animals found in the *Ethica Nichomachea*.

ὥστε καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὰ θηρία, οὐκ ἀκρατῆ, ὅτι οὐκ ἔχει τῶν καθόλου ὑπόληψιν, ἀλλὰ τῶν καθ’ ἕκαστα φαντασίαν καὶ μνήμην.

So also on account of this [we say that] animals are not akratic, because they do not possess judgement of universals but [only] *phantasia* and memory of particulars.

Ethica Nichomachea, 1147b4-5

Animals (or at least the majority of them) have little of *empeira*, because, on Aristotle’s account, the content of their memory never transcends sensible particular objects in themselves. Because they do not seem to have access to the thinkable forms contained within perceptible objects, they can only ‘live by *phantasia* and by memory’ and exist without the benefits of the knowledge, art, and experience which are available to humans.

The process by which humans acquire *empeira* ultimately comes out of their capacity for *aesthēsis*, which forms the pre-requisite ability without which neither knowledge nor art (nor the apprehension of first principles) can occur.⁸⁶ Although perception takes as its object what is sensible and particular, the thinkable universal is at the same time found within the perceptible object, as Aristotle asserts in *Analytica Posteriora* at 100a17-100b, “one perceives the particular but perception is of the universal”.⁸⁷ But despite the necessity of sensible things to both thought and perception, they are still defined by distinct objects proper to each (namely, what is thinkable and what is perceptible), and in a bid to prevent the schism between the perceptible and the thinkable which Aristotle saw occurring in the philosophy of Plato, we find *phantasia* playing a critical role in bridging what might otherwise be unconnected worlds.

αἴτιον δ' ὅτι τῶν καθ' ἕκαστον ἢ κατ' ἐνεργειαν αἴσθησις ἢ δ' ἐπιστήμη τῶν καθόλου· ταῦτα δ' ἐν αὐτῇ πῶς ἐστι τῇ ψυχῇ.

... the reason for this is that perception is according to its activity concerned with particulars but knowledge is of universals, and these things [universals] are somehow in the soul itself.

de Anima, 417b22-4.

What is thinkable can be found in the forms of sensible particulars but perception of sensible particulars produces forms which are still intimately bound to their objects' particularity. By providing representations of the forms of sensible particulars, *phantasia*

86. *Analytica Posteriora*, 99b33-36.

87. καὶ γὰρ αἰσθάνεται μὲν τὸ καθ' ἕκαστον ἢ δ' αἴσθησις τοῦ καθόλου ἐστίν...

allows the universal a toe-hold in the psyche, as Aristotle maintains at *Analytica Posteriora* 100a15-100b3. But its importance goes further, as he indicates, because by being free of the requirement of immediately available perceptibles, *phantasmata* can remain and be repeated and gathered in the psyche allowing the universal in its fullest and stabilized form, *empeira*, to establish itself. It is the presence of the universal in the psyche which can then allow for *tekne* (art) and *episteme* (science). As Frede puts it, “the scientist... has to have not just a view of this or that leopard in front of him, spotted in this or that way; he has to form a picture of ‘leopards’ and, among other things, this specific spottedness before he can go into the more abstract business of his science”.⁸⁸ Intellectual activities, such as science, entail the contemplation of universals and require their presence in the psyche. It is this latter task which *empeira*, with the aid of *phantasia*, is meant to accomplish. Repeated exposure via perception to sensible particulars of the same kind can allow, eventually, for the discernment of the universals contained within them. It can also, perhaps more importantly, allow the universal to persist, in some fashion, in the psyche and permit knowledge to occur.

88. Frede, D. “The Cognitive Role of *Phantasia* in Aristotle” In *Essays on Aristotle’s De Anima*, edited by M.C. Nussbaum and A.O. Rorty, 291. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

V

CONCLUSION: THE LIMINAL ASPECTS OF PHANTASIA

Phantasia's activities may, in a narrow sense, be seen to occur at two levels: on the first, to provide representations for the psyche, and on the second, to provide those representations in a subservient role as 'helper' to other activities and capacities in the psyche. But in a larger sense, *phantasia* can also be seen to have a 'bridging' role, and it is with its operations in *empeira* and thought, that its liminal qualities become most apparent. Indeed, although helping to explain a host of different phenomena in the psyche through the number of activities which it subserves, *phantasia's* most important role may be in providing Aristotle with a means for trying to bring together the perceptible world with the intelligible one.

The attention which Aristotle pays to this issue of bridging the intelligible and sensible stems from his belief that Plato was unable to bridge the gulf between the particulars of perception and the universals of thought. Thus, while seeking to establish thought and perception as meaningfully distinct, Aristotle wishes to do this in a way which does not leave them permanently estranged and isolated from each other. In *de Anima* III.4, the domains of thought and perception are staked out by what is thinkable and perceptible respectively, thus differentiating the two. An important step toward linking the two is taken in III.8, where Aristotle locates the objects of thought in the universal forms within sensible objects. What

is required at this point is a psychic element that can provide thought with access to these universal forms which because of their location within sensible particulars are not available to thought directly, and his conception of *phantasia* is clearly intended to help fulfil this task. The necessary positioning of *phantasia* somewhere between perception and thought occurs from the outset of *de Anima* III.3, where Aristotle places noticeable importance on separating *phantasia* from both perception and elements such as thought and judgement. By the end of the chapter, *phantasia* is established as a distinct activity, but one which ultimately does not represent a full capacity, serving instead as both a direct outcome of perception and a necessary aid to thought.⁸⁹ But even this is not sufficient in itself, and we find instead that the linking of the perceptible and the thinkable is ultimately done in stages, in contrast to Plato, who tries to make a much more direct leap from the world of sensible particulars to that of the Forms.

The progression from perceptibles to thinkables can be seen in Aristotle's account of *phantasia* as a linking element, but it begins even earlier in his treatment of *aesthēsis* itself, where Aristotle distinguishes between perception of the special sensibles, and common and incidental perception. By doing so, Aristotle allows the form of sensible objects to be separated out from the matter of sensible particulars things through the individual workings of sense organs committed to objects specific to them. But, importantly, he also allows form to then be brought together through the overarching sensibility of the common sense which allows for perception of common sensibles and incidentals and which operates without the requirement of a dedicated physical sense-organ. The results of these perceptual workings

89. Indeed, the atypical status of *phantasia* would seem to reflect a certain reticence on Aristotle's part with respect to dividing the soul into portions. Passages such as *de Anima* 432a31-432b3 may be seen as indicative of this.

are then reflected in the operations of *phantasia* which represents form independent of the presence of sensible particulars altogether. Even at the level of incidental perception, Aristotle is already allowing perception to begin to be 'of the universal', and when, as he says, we see Callias, we see not only him as a sensible particular individual, but also as 'man'.⁹⁰ Thus, with *phantasia* we see a further stage in the separation of form from its existence in sensible particulars, as it provides thought with a representation of its object. *Phantasia's* activity of creating representations of the forms of sensible particulars allows the universal contained in the sensible object to come, in some sense, into the psyche either as individual occurrences or in a more lasting sense, after repeated exposure has allowed experience to develop and provided the possibility for knowledge. In either case, the universals required by thought become accessible. Through *phantasia*, Aristotle not only finds a means to explain how thought can come into contact with the sensible world but also provides a way by which knowledge and the apprehension of universals, as contained in the form of sensible particulars, can be attained.

90. *Analytica Posteriora*, 100b1.

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