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Aristotle on Perception and Perception-like Appearance: *De Anima* 3.3, 428b10–29a9

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Abstract: It is now common to explain some of incidental perception's features by means of a different capacity, called *phantasia*. *Phantasia*, usually translated as 'imagination,' is thought to explain how incidental perception can be false and representational by being a constitutive part of perception. Through a close reading of *De Anima* 3.3, 428b10–29a9, I argue against this and for *perception first*: *phantasia* is always a product of perception, from which it initially inherits all its characteristics. No feature of perception is explained directly by *phantasia*, and *phantasia* is never a part of perception. *Phantasia* is not imagination or representation, as many have thought, but perception-like appearance. Aristotle thus recognizes alongside three different types of perception three different types of perception-like appearance.

1 Introduction

Like many contemporary philosophers but unlike Plato, Aristotle believes that perception is a kind of knowledge (*gnôsis*) – in fact, our most authoritative knowledge of particulars. In saying this, he has in mind partly perceptions of what he calls 'accidental' or 'incidental' objects, i. e., everyday objects like people, tables, and chairs.[1] Unlike basic perceptions of what Aristotle calls 'special' objects, incidental perceptions have predicational content of the sort, *x* is *F*. Incidental perceptions get us in touch with features of the world beyond things like colors and sounds. They also give us access to things like tables and chairs. What explains this?

In recent decades a consensus has emerged that some of the features of incidental perceptions, namely their abilities to be false and to represent the world, can only be explained by means of another psychic capacity: *phantasia*. *Phantasia*

1 For the claim that perception is authoritative of particulars, see *Metaphysics* 1.1, 981b11–13. Aristotle's example, "the fire is hot," is an incidental perception. See also *GA* 1.23, 731a31, 33; *Post. Anal.* 1.18, 81a38–b9; and *On Memory* 1, 449b13–14. He also holds that basic perceptions of special objects are always true or only rarely false.

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(usually translated as 'imagination'[2]) is discussed most prominently in *De Anima* 3.3, a chapter which comes between Aristotle's discussions of perception and of thought.[3] What does *phantasia* do, and why does Aristotle include a discussion of it in his work on the functions of the soul? One influential view, whose main proponent is Victor Caston, is that Aristotle brings in *phantasia* to explain false perception. Basic perception of a special object like a color, Caston believes, is a mere assimilation of the object to the sense. On this model, we are left with no explanation for false perception: the sense always assimilates the color that is in the world. 3.3's main aim, on this reading, is to fill this gap: false perceptions are explained by containing an element of *phantasia*. In this way, too, *phantasia* allows for higher forms of perception, especially incidental perception, which, it is claimed, is produced by including within it an element of *phantasia*.[4] Incidental perception's existence and its possible falsity are thus explained by means of *phantasia*.[5]

Nussbaum 1978 holds that *phantasia*, as a constitutive part of incidental perception, is responsible for representation, or 'seeing-as.' Her influential account is, roughly, this. Perception alone is a passive faculty which receives the sensible forms of the special objects of perception: colors, odors, etc. In order to account for incidental perception, which outstrips special-object perception, Aristotle posits another faculty, *phantasia.* On Nussbaum's reading, *phantasia* is what allows us

2 This translation has several problems. 'Representation' has recently won some converts, and is the choice of Bodéüs's 1993 French translation, but this prejudices one of the issues I want to discuss. 'Appearance' is better, but this might be taken to suggest that to the extent that perception is distinct from *phantasia*, perception is not a kind of appearance. Scholars inevitably begin their discussions of *phantasia* with some hand-wringing about the difficulties of translating the term and then usually opt to leave it untranslated. I shall do the same.

3 *De Anima* 3.2 ends with: "Concerning the principle by which we say that animals are able to perceive, then, let this much be determined" (427a15–16). 3.4 begins with: "Concerning the part of the soul by which the soul knows and thinks […]" (429a10–11). Translations of the *De Anima* are mine, unless noted otherwise.

4 Here and throughout the paper I have set up the contrast between special-object and incidental perception, mostly leaving aside the difficulties involved with perception of the common objects.

5 See Caston 1996 and Caston 1998, 272 as well as note 56. See also Everson 1997, 190–93; Scheiter 2012; and Johansen 2012, 180–85. Schofield's 1992 influential suggestion that *phantasia* is involved in 'non-paradigmatic sensory experiences' (Schofield 1992, 256), i. e. in false or questionable sensory contexts, belongs to the same camp. I am unsure how to classify Polansky's 2007 discussion. In most of his moods (e. g., 425–29) he seems to advocate the view I will be pushing: that *phantasia* is always caused by perception. But in some places he seems to think that *phantasia* mixes with perception and that misperception always involves *phantasia*: see esp. 415, 423 and 429. Still, Polansky's discussion is one of the best available and should be consulted. In some places Shields 2017, in his brief treatment, also suggests that *phantasia* is a 'perceptual afterbirth' (291) and so, presumably, not involved in false perception.

and other animals to apprehend an object of desire and, more generally, to represent our environment. She writes, "We are always passively receiving perceptual stimuli; but when we actively focus on some object in our environment, separating it out from its context and seeing it as a certain thing, the faculty of *phantasia*, or the *phantasia*-aspect of *aisthêsis*, is called into play" (Nussbaum 1978, 259). Thus, it is *phantasia* or perception's *phantasia*-aspect which allows for "the animal's awareness of some object or state of affairs" (Nussbaum 1978, 261), not perception itself.[6]

Both of these readings posit a basic perceptual capacity which gives rise to higher forms of perception only when combined with *phantasia*. Both assume that incidental perception contains *phantasia* as a constituent part. These are two prominent cases of what I will call *mixture theories*. This label is somewhat artificial, and mixture theorists differ on many points.[7] But it is useful for my purposes, since it gets at a wide consensus: that *phantasia*'s presence *within* perception explains some of perception's features. Some mixture theorists hold that *phantasia* explains (a) how perception can be false. Others hold that it explains (b) perception's representational character. Some hold both.[8] But I will argue against both (a) and (b). *Phantasia* is not what explains the representational capacities of perception or its fallibility. Aristotle nowhere provides us with a clear treatment of representation, but to the extent that higher perceptions are representational, this is because perceptions themselves are representational and not because they contain *phantasia*. As for falsity, Aristotle tells us explicitly that it is explained not by *phantasia* but by predication of one thing to another.

In addition to arguing against mixture theories, I will argue for a positive reading of the relationship between perception and *phantasia*, which I call *perception first*. Everyone agrees that some kinds of perception are temporally prior to some kinds of *phantasia*. *Perception first*, however, has it that perception is not only temporally but also explanatorily or casually prior to *phantasia.* Whenever perception causes *phantasia*, that *phantasia* begins its life with the same content as the perception which caused it. *Phantasia* inherits both its existence and its initial content from its parent perception. This is true for all three types of perception.

6 Other adherents to this family of reading include Ferrarin 2005, Frère 1996, Lorenz 2007, Osborne 2000, and Wedin 1988; though Wedin insists that *phantasia* is not a full-fledged faculty but a general representational capacity subserving other psychological states and functions.

7 Nussbaum and Caston both hold that incidental perception includes *phantasia* as a constituent part. Wedin's 1988 and Bolton's 2005 readings are importantly different, and I discuss them in Section 4 below.

8 E. g., Scheiter 2012.

Every perceptual act that creates *phantasia*[9] – whether the perception is of a special, common, or incidental object – produces a *phantasia* with the same content as the initial perception. It is also crucial to *perception first* that no feature of perception is ever caused or explained by *phantasia* in its basic form.[10] *Phantasia* never mixes with any kind of perception to form a single experience nor explains any of its characteristics. Perception explains all of *phantasia*'s initial features, but *phantasia* explains none of perception's. Anything *phantasia* can do, perception can do prior.

Finally, the *perception first* reading also indicates what sort of thing *phantasia* is. Since every act of *phantasia* is caused by an act of perception, from which it inherits all its features, *phantasia* is perception-like. Perception is a kind of alteration (*alloiôsis*), and so is *phantasia*. Since *phantasia* begins life identical in character to perception, it has the same content, representational or otherwise, as its parent perception. Therefore, *phantasia* is an appearance that is caused by and is like perception.

Aristotle turns to his positive characterization of *phantasia* in the final third of *De Anima* 3.3, 428b10–29a9.[11] And it is here that we would most expect to find evidence for what *phantasia* is and what it does. The passage, I will argue, distinguishes three types of *phantasia* coming from three types of perception, with no mixing involved. Perception of a special object is not true because it is *phantasia*-free; nor is incidental perception possibly false or representational because it contains *phantasia*. Incidental perception can be true and false because of its predicational structure. However, this does not rule out the possibility that it includes some form of worked-up *phantasia*, something like memory. I shall return to this at the end.

2 What Precedes 428b10–29a9 in *De Anima* 3.3

De Anima 3.3 marks the transition between Aristotle's discussions of perception and thought. We can divide it into four parts. Our passage comes at the chapter's end, the first two-thirds of which have already told us a good deal about *phantasia*.[12] It opens with a discussion (427a17–b6) of the ancients' identification of per-

9 Aristotle sometimes says (e. g., at 428a8–11) that some animals do not have *phantasia* at all, though all have perception.

10 I explain this caveat in Section 6 below.

11 This passage is rarely discussed in detail. A notable exception is Polansky 2007, see esp. 415, 423 and 429.

12 Caston 1996 argues that the chapter is unified by the problem of error: perception (as an assimilation of sense-object to sense) is true, but not all cognition is true. *Phantasia* fills this gap. On this, Caston is followed by Scheiter 2012. Osborne 2000, following Schofield 1992, argues that the chapter

ception and thought, along with the accusation that they were unable to account for error. Part 2 then distinguishes perceiving from thinking, from both *to phronein* (427b6–8) and *to noein* (427b8–14). Here, at 427b14, Aristotle first mentions *phantasia*: it is distinguished from perceiving, discursive thought (*dianoia*), and belief (*hupolêpsis*) (427b14–26). The chapter's long part 3 (427b27–28b9) turns to what Aristotle calls the non-metaphorical sense of *phantasia*. This part covers some of the same ground already covered earlier in the chapter.[13] And Aristotle now adds arguments to show that *phantasia* is distinct from intellection (*nous*: 428a17), knowledge (*epistêmê*: 428a18), belief (*doxa*: 428a18–24), and a mixture of belief and perception (428a24–b9). Thus, up to 428b10 the chapter argues that *phantasia*, perception, and thought or belief are all distinct psychological processes.

In distinguishing it from other cognitive capacities or states, Aristotle makes several positive claims about *phantasia.* It:

(i) is up to us whenever we wish (427b17–18)
(ii) is involved when we are not perceiving, such as in mnemonics, dreams, and images (b18–20; 428a7–8, 15–16)
(iii) doesn't affect us in the same way that belief does (427b21–24)[14]
(iv) is a capacity or state by which we arrive at truth and falsehood (428a1–4)[15]
(v) is not possessed by all animals, unlike perception (a8–11; but cf. *De Anima* 3.9–11)

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is mainly concerned to distinguish perception from thought. *Phantasia* gets brought in as an apparent halfway house between the two because it has often been confused with them. More recently, Zucca 2018 has argued that the chapter should be read in scientific terms as understood by David Charles' Three Stage View, advancing from a nominal to a real definition of *phantasia.*

13 There are additional arguments that *phantasia* is distinct from *dianoia* (427b14–15), *hupolêpsis* (427b15–26), and perception (428a5–16). On this last point, Caston 1996, 43, believes that Aristotle's claim is that *phantasia* is distinct from perception *of the special objects*, since he says that perception is always true (428a11). Aristotle does seem to be thinking mainly of perception of the special objects in this line, but his other arguments show that he is not confining himself in the chapter to perception of the special objects. The passage I will analyze also supports the wider, more natural reading for 'perception' as including all three sorts. Osborne 2000 speculates that the chapter originally began here, at 427b27.

14 But cf. *De Motu Animalium* 7, 701b18–19, where we are told that *phantasia* and thinking (*noêsis*) have the power of objects, meaning that they affect us in a way similar to the way objects would if they were there. This is compatible with 427b21–24. *Phantasia* has the power of objects to the extent that the animal in question is taken in by the appearance – in the case of humans, to the extent that we believe the content in question. Cf. also *De Motu* 11, 703b18–20 and McCready-Flora 2014.

15 This claim is usually understood as a question, and Ross adds an *ara.* If we do interpret it as a question, a positive answer is given in our section of the chapter. Watson 1982, 107, takes it as a statement and adds *phantasia* to the list of discriminative faculties. Hicks 1907, 461, also takes it as a separate faculty.

(vi) is mostly false, unlike perception (a11–12)
(vii) is favored in our language when we do not perceive accurately (a12–15)[16]

These traits, taken together, do not seem to map easily onto any psychological notion we have. Some scholars have even despaired of finding a coherent characterization of a single capacity.[17] However, as I will indicate in what follows, our notion closest to Aristotle's conception of *phantasia* is perception-like appearance.

Turning now to what *phantasia* does, both sorts of mixture theory of perception and *phantasia*, typified by Nussbaum and Caston, have it that *phantasia* is a constituent part of higher perceptions and that for this reason those perceptions can be false or representational. Thus, both versions suggest hypotheses about what Aristotle ought to say about the relationship between *phantasia* and perception. As it happens, the final part of the chapter concerns *phantasia*'s characteristics and how these are related to perception. So, if Aristotle is a mixture theorist, we would expect him to do at least some of the following. We would expect him (1) to distinguish special-object perception from higher perception on the basis of the former's simplicity. He ought to say or imply that basic perception is infallible and/or not representational because it lacks *phantasia*. (2) Incidental perception, by contrast, should be described as a mixture of basic perception with *phantasia*, with the combination of these two elements resulting in a single experience. He ought not, therefore, to contrast perception and *phantasia* as different experiences. He should not, for instance, posit another type of experience alongside incidental perception, call it incidental *phantasia*. In short, Aristotle ought to give some indication that *phantasia* operates within perception and thereby lends perception some of its features. It would be too demanding of us to expect Aristotle to meet both these expectations explicitly. But as we will see, he defies both of them. Instead of suggesting that perception and *phantasia* combine, he instead takes them to be distinct, though sometimes simultaneous, experiences. He does not explain the infallibility of special-object perception in terms of its being unmixed with *phantasia.* He in fact distinguishes six types of experiences: three types of perception and three of *phantasia*, with the latter being results of the former. Perception is prior since it lends its features to *phantasia*, not vice-versa.

16 I discuss this passage in Section 6 below.
17 For example, Hamlyn 1993, 131, claims that "there is clearly little consistency here."

3 428b10–17: A Movement Brought About by Perception in Actuality

Aristotle has argued that *phantasia* is not thought, belief, knowledge, *nous*, perception, belief, or any combination of these latter two (428b9). Only now will Aristotle tell us what it is.

> But since (a) it is possible that when one thing is moved, another is moved by it, and [since] (b) *phantasia* seems to be a movement of a sort and not to be brought about without perception, but rather (c) [to be brought about] in perceiving beings and to be of what perception is of, and since (d) it is possible for a movement to be brought about by the activity of perception, such that (e) this [movement] is necessarily similar to the perception, (f) this movement will not be possible without perception nor in beings that do not perceive. And (g) it will be possible for beings possessing it [the movement] to do and undergo many things because of it and (h) for it to be true and false. (428b10–17)

The 'but' (*alla*) which begins the passage indicates that Aristotle has now turned away from saying what *phantasia* is not to saying what it is. His answer is somewhat physiological: it is a "movement of a sort." This shows that Aristotle is trying (as he has done with perception)[18] to place *phantasia* within the ambit of physics. In accordance with a principle of physics such that when something is moved, this something can move another thing, *phantasia* is a secondary movement produced, proximately, by the movement that is the actualization of perception and, secondarily, by the sense-object.[19] Thus, the passage explains how *phantasia* comes to be. Aristotle's answer is that it comes to be from perception, from which it inherits its existence and its characteristics. He thus finds himself in a position to say that it is like perception, and of or about what perception is of or about.[20]

This is the passage's general message, but the details of Aristotle's line of thinking are not transparent. It seems to go something like this. First, (a) it is possible for a movement to bring about another movement. As we saw in *De Anima* 2.5, actualized perception is a movement of a sort. Given this, (d) it is possible for a movement to come to be from actualized perception. By this he must have in mind a second actuality. Now, Aristotle continues, (b) *phantasia* also seems to be a sort of movement (*kinêsis tis*), one which does not occur without perception. What is this movement, and what are its features? As it is a secondary movement, caused by the

18 See *De Anima* 2.5 and Burnyeat 2002.

19 See *Physics* 7.1 and 8.4.

20 Aristotle's procedure here is a bit more complex than I have suggested: he does not confirm the hypothesis that *phantasia* is the movement coming from perception in actuality until 429a1–2. See below.

primary one which is perception, (e) it will be similar to it.[21] *De Anima* 3.3 does not tell us explicitly what sort of movement it is, but given its close connections with perception, it is safe to assume that it, like perception, is a kind of alteration (*alloiôsis*).[22] Since perception is about certain things, it is natural to think that (c) the motion caused by perception and similar to it will be about those same things. And we can also plausibly infer that a motion produced by and similar to perception (g) will allow what possesses it to act and be affected by it. The assumption here is that perception allows what possesses it to act and be affected because of it.

In (c) and (f) Aristotle claims that the secondary movement that is *phantasia* only occurs in perceiving beings (*aisthanomenois*: 428b12, 15–6). This cannot rule out that *phantasia* can be active while we are not perceiving. The preceding discussion (esp. 428a5–8) and Aristotle's account of dreams presupposes that it can. The point must be that perceptual *phantasia* is only *produced* during perception.[23] *Phantasia* is the sort of thing it is (namely, an alteration) because perception is the sort of thing it is (an alteration); it is about the things it is about because of what perception is about; and it affects the organisms which possess it (they "do and undergo many things") because perception affects the organisms which possess it.

21 See *Physics* 3.1–3.

22 This is confirmed in a parallel passage from *On Dreams* 2: "The process by which the organs are affected is like what happens with bodies in motion. For they are in motion even though what moved them is no longer in contact with them; for the mover moved some air, and this, since it was moved, moved other air in turn; in this manner it produces movement either in air or in liquids, until the process comes to a halt. It must likewise be supposed that this also occurs in the case of alteration; for that which is heated by a hot object heats what is next to it, and this passes it on until it reaches the starting-point. Hence this must come about in perceiving, since actual perception is a sort of alteration. That is why the affection exists in the sense-organs not only when they are perceiving, but also when they have ceased to do so, both in the depths and on the surface" (459a28–b7). Translations of *On Dreams* are from Miller 2018, unless noted otherwise.

23 The same issue comes up in *On Dreams* 1, 458b30–1: here too he writes as if the *pathos* that is *phantasia* only occurs when we are perceiving, but then immediately goes on to say that it remains. Aristotle's claim is stronger, I believe, than that *phantasia* is only found in creatures *capable* of perception, though this would have the advantage of allowing for rational *phantasia* produced by thinking, which Aristotle recognizes later in the *De Anima* (e. g., at 433b29–30). However, I believe he is restricting himself in 3.3 to perceptual *phantasia*. This is suggested by his repeatedly claiming that *phantasia* is a movement brought about by actualized perception. Furthermore, only in this way can he conclude that *phantasia* is like perception and about the same things as it. See section 5 below.

4 428b17–30: Perception, *Phantasia*, Truth, and Falsity

It should already be clear that any reading on which features of *phantasia* are responsible for features of perception is unlikely. Aristotle has said instead that a parent perception lends its features to its *phantasia* offspring, but *phantasia* never explains any feature of perception. Again, I call this framework *perception first.* This framework continues to the chapter's end. This brings us to (h), that *phantasia* can be true and false, a claim made earlier in the chapter (428a12 and a18) but not yet supported. Aristotle supports it at b25–30. But because, as we will soon see in more detail, *phantasia* also inherits its truth-value from the perception which produced it, he first turns to discuss the truth and falsity of perception.

> This [that *phantasia* can be true and false] occurs because of the following: perception of the special objects is true or has falsity to the least extent. Second, there is perception of that of which these are accidents. And here already it is possible to fall into error. For that there is white there is no error, but that the white is this or something else, there can be error. Third, there is perception of the common objects, which follow upon the incidental objects in which the special objects inhere. I mean, for example, movement and size, (which come along with the objects of perception): concerning these it is already especially possible to be in perceptual error. (428b17–25)

This passage raises several issues of text and interpretation, and my translation can be questioned in many places, including in my choice of the Greek text.[24] But we need only pause here to notice that Aristotle distinguishes three sorts of perception and that, except for perception of special objects, which is almost always true, they can be either true or false. I will assume that these are the same sorts of perception Aristotle has distinguished before, most notably in *De Anima* 2.6: perception of special, incidental, and common objects. Otherwise, the numerous difficulties of this passage can be left aside.

We now turn to the question posed in (h): how can *phantasia* be true and false? Just as with *phantasia*'s other features, here too the answer is: because of perception.

> And the movement brought about by perception in actuality will differ as coming from these three [kinds of] perception. The first is true when the perception is present, whereas the

24 Very briefly, "Second, there is perception of that of which these are accidents" translates δεύτερον δὲ τοῦ ᾧ συμβεβηκε ταῦτα, which is a minority reading. There are also difficulties involving how to understand incidental and common perception in the passage. This passage is discussed in detail in Keeling 2022.

> others can be false when it is present or absent, and especially when the object of perception is far off.[25] (428b25–30)

Aristotle's answer to the question, *how can* phantasia *be true and false?* is first to point out that there are three sorts of *phantasia* corresponding to the three sorts of perception which give rise to them. These can differ in truth-value from one another and from the perception which generated them. During proper-object perception, which is generally true, the *phantasia* arising from it will also be true. Aristotle tells us at *On Dreams* 2, 459b11–13, that after the perception has gone, *phantasia* from proper-object perception can be false. The other two types of *phantasia* (those brought about by incidental and common perception) can be false, he says, even when perception is present. So, Aristotle's answer to the question of how *phantasia* can be true and false might at first glance seem to have to do only with the presence or absence of perception – presumably the very perception that gave rise to the *phantasia.* But it would be perverse to suppose that a *phantasia* produced by an occurrent *false* perception is true, especially given that (as we have seen at b10–17) *phantasia* inherits its characteristics from perception.[26] When he turns to explain how *phantasia* can be true and false, he first describes how perception is true and false. Therefore, although Aristotle does not spell it out for us, the reason a *phantasia* can be false even when its parent perception is present is that this perception is false.

So far, the following reading of the passage presents itself. Every instance of actual perception generates a corresponding *phantasia*, which begins its life with the characteristics of its parent perception, including its truth-value. But, as *phantasiai* can persist beyond the perception that caused them, a true content can become false if the world has changed. Alternatively, after the perception has gone, the content of a *phantasia* can change, even if the world has not, and in this way too it can become false. But this divergence of content from the parent perception does not occur while the perception which generated it is still present: the continued presence of the parent perception prevents the *phantasia* it creates from changing of its own accord. And if the perception is true, this guarantees that the world has not changed in such a way as to make the *phantasia* false. *Phantasia*'s being true or false, therefore, depends on two factors: the presence or absence of its parent

25 ἡ δὲ κίνησις ἡ ὑπὸ τῆς ἐνεργείας τῆς αἰσθήσεως γινομένη διοίσει, ἡ ἀπὸ τούτων τῶν τριῶν αἰσθήσεων, καὶ ἡ μὲν πρώτη παρούσης τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἀληθής, αἱ δ' ἕτεραι καὶ παρούσης καὶ ἀπούσης εἶεν ἂν ψευδεῖς, καὶ μάλιστα ὅταν πόρρω τὸ αἰσθητὸν ᾖ. Here there are no major textual problems.

26 See here Themistius' commentary (93,16–21).

perception and the truth or falsity of that perception.[27] *Phantasia* inherits its initial truth-value from the perception that gave rise to it.

In fact, the two are so similar that Aristotle does not always rigorously distinguish *phantasia* from perception but often runs them together. *On Sleep* says that some people while asleep move about and do things as if they were awake, "but not without some *phantasma* or perception; for the dream is a sort of sense-impression [*aisthêma tropon tina*]" (456a25–6, Miller slightly modified). The same work also twice (454a3–4 and 456a21) mentions external and internal perceptions, where 'internal perception' refers to *phantasia*. Aristotle also calls perception of an external object 'unqualified' (*haplôs*) perception, so that *phantasia* would be qualified perception.[28] Further, at *Rhetoric* 1320a28, *phantasia* is described as a sort of weak perception, and in the *Parva Naturalia*, Aristotle indicates that the motion that is *phantasia* is weaker than that of perception and so is typically overlooked when the person is awake and perception is active.[29] This shows that while both perception and *phantasia* can be experienced, the latter is typically not noticed while we are perceiving. Aristotle, therefore, holds that two psycho-physical events with the same content can occur in the same subject at the same time. But this is no cause for concern. For first, although *phantasia* is produced by and can occur simultaneously with all three sorts of perception, it will often be overlooked. Second, although they have the same content, the two are distinguishable at the physiological level because they have different causes. Perception's immediate cause is an external object, while *phantasia* is immediately caused by perception. Thus, since the weaker *phantasia* is overlooked during perception, having two simultaneous *experiences* with the same content will arguably never occur. The stronger perception will override the weaker *phantasia*, which – while present in the organism as a potential movement – is not experienced.[30]

But this is not how mixture theorists read b25–30. Though to my knowledge no mixture theorist has explained in detail what to make of it, their main move seems to be to see it as not describing three *phantasia* experiences but as describing sce-

27 See Engmann 1976, 262, who, though first saying that *phantasia*'s truth is not derived from that of perception, goes on to suggest a reading very similar to mine. Caston 1996, 53 n69, is puzzled by this aspect of the passage.

28 See *On Sleep* 455a9; *On Dreams* 459a10 and 460b2–3; and *De Anima* 3.1, 425b24–5.

29 See *On Dreams*, 460b32–461a8; *On Divination through Dreams*, 463a7–10 and 464a16–18; cf. Bolton 2005, 224–38.

30 In several places in *On Dreams* Aristotle distinguishes between actual and potential phantasmic movements. Since in both cases there is something occurring in the body, this distinction is best understood as actually or potentially experienced. See here Bolton 2005, 234 n18, and Lorenz 2007, 156.

narios in which *phantasia* combines with perception. Mixture theorists do not deny that some sorts of *phantasia* are caused by some sorts of perception. But they do deny perception's general explanatory priority and restrict perception-*phantasia* causation. So instead of taking it that every perception causes a distinct *phantasia*, as the passage seems to suggest, they find in it allusions to a role or roles certain sorts of *phantasia* play within perception that perception by itself cannot play.

Wedin 1988 finds three sorts of experience described in our passage: "there is *no* reason to find 428b17–30 distinguishing three kinds of imagination as opposed to three kinds of perception in which imagination occurs" (67, emphasis in original).[31] He does not take us through his reading of the passage, but he does argue at great length that *phantasia* is a general representational capacity, and that in this capacity it subserves perception. His discussion (cf. 39–99) in its essentials, is this. Wedin argues that: (a) the persisting of perceptual states (*aisthêmata*) over time produces *phantasmata*. *Phantasmata* are forms, "devices or structures in the soul […] that enable objects to be [re]presented to a subject […]" (44, '[re]presented' (sic) in original). So, he holds (cf. 42–3) that (b) *phantasia* and *phantasmata* are necessary for any sort of representation, including representational perception. Thus, Wedin restricts the causation of *phantasia* by perception by means of the idea that only repeated or prolonged perceptions cause *phantasia* (which he calls a representational form). He also insists that the movements described in 428b25–30 (which turn out to be *phantasiai* or *phantasmata*) are integral parts of perceptions and not separate experiences. In sum, he reads b17–30 as saying that only repeated or prolonged perceptions generate *phantasia*, which then filter back into perceptions, explaining their ability to represent the world.

But again, Aristotle says at the outset of b17–30 that what follows will explain how the movement that turns out to be *phantasia* can be true and false.[32] B17–25 discusses the truth and falsity of perception, and b25 turns to *phantasia*. Aristotle tells us how perception can be true and false to explain how *phantasia* can be. The truth-value of *phantasia* is explained by the truth-value and the presence or

31 I know of no other scholar who explicitly says how many experiences the passage describes. Caston 1996 seems to find four. He claims that common and incidental perception are fallible "due to the involvement of other fallible mental states, including *phantasia* itself" (42; cf. 52–54). I discuss Caston's reading below. Osborne's reading (cf. Osborne 2000, 279–82) is similar to Wedin's. She finds two roles for *phantasia* in the text not discussed earlier: the "passive reception of forms" (280), and "the retention of the forms over time" (282).

32 Τοῦτο δὲ συμβαίνει διὰ τάδε, "this occurs because of the following" (b17–18). Τοῦτο ('this') refers to what Aristotle has just said: that the movement that is *phantasia* can be true and false. Rapp 2001, 87 f., also correctly emphasizes that at b17–25, perceptual error is explained independently of *phantasia*. See also Polansky 2007, 429, and Twomey 2022 for a different approach.

absence of its parent perception. There is no attempt to explain any of perception's features by means of *phantasia*.

Wedin's basic mistake is to conflate representational perception, which apparently includes incidental perception, with memory or experience (*empeiria*) – he does not decide which (cf. Wedin 1988, 42–43; cf. also 88). It is true that memory is a product of *phantasia* and experience a product of memory. It is also true that incidental perception presupposes something like memory (see Section 6 below), but there is no reference in *De Anima* 3.3 to memory or experience; and perception, memory, and experience are distinguished at *Metaphysics* 1.1 and *Posterior Analytics* 2.19.[33]

Wedin's reading cannot, therefore, be shoehorned into our text. But there are two points in b25–30 that mixture theorists might latch onto. There is, first, the fact that *phantasia* can occur simultaneously with perception, which Aristotle describes as the presence of perception during *phantasia*. And second, there is the mention of an object of perception at the end of our passage, which could be taken to suggest that the discussion is really about perception and not about a separate experience of *phantasia*. Does this suggest mixture?

Aristotle is clearly envisioning scenarios in which perception and *phantasia* occur simultaneously, opposing these with scenarios in which *phantasia* occurs in the absence of perception. Recall that on Caston's view, basic perception of a special object combines with *phantasia* to produce incidental perception, which can therefore be false. Nussbaum similarly takes it that *phantasia* explains why incidental perceptions are representational. All of them – and this core of the mixture theory has been widely adopted – claim that incidental perception is the result of the mixture of perception with *phantasia*. On a mixture reading, Aristotle is claiming that *phantasia* is true when it combines with perception, perhaps perception of a special object. Presumably a mixture theorist would take this to mean that the one is to be perceptually confronted with white (and, so to be perceiving it) and the other is to call up a representation of white (and so to have a *phantasia* of it). But there is no reason to think that being perceptually confronted with a color ensures that one's representation of color is true. Why can I not be confronted with white in perception but call up a representation of green?[34] Alternatively, a

33 See also Scheiter 2012, who argues that Aristotle's *phantasia* is just the notion of memory found in the *Theaetetus*.

34 This seems to be the sort of case Caston 1996, 52 f., briefly discusses and accepts as possible. He argues that the case Aristotle has in mind at 428b18–19 of perception of a special object is a 'mixed case' of perception and *phantasia*. Not all perceptions of a special object are like this, however. Thus, he accepts a sort of perception of a special object that is *phantasia*-free and so infallible alongside a mixed case which can be false. This is why I said above that he reads the passage as describing four types of experience, though perhaps he also accepts a fifth: pure *phantasia* of a

mixture theorist could say that the *phantasia* of a special object is mixed with a perception of a common or incidental object. Here too, though, there is nothing to ensure that a representation of green is true as long as it is mixed with a perception of something's moving or of Socrates. One can represent Socrates as green even when perceiving him and when he actually has a pinkish hue. There is thus no way for a mixture theorist to explain how perception's simultaneous occurrence with *phantasia* ensures the truth of *phantasia* of a special object, since they interpret this to mean that they combine to form a single experience.[35]

By contrast, the *perception first* reading has a good explanation for why perception's simultaneous presence does ensure that *phantasia* is true. As perception is the stronger movement, its presence prevents *phantasia* from changing its character. Perception's simultaneous presence means, on my reading, that perception is continuously producing a *phantasia* with the same content. In this case, perception and *phantasia* are of the same object and, initially, have the same content, so a true *phantasia* will remain true while the stronger perception lasts. After the perception has ceased, however, nothing prevents the relatively weak *phantasia* from changing its character. The perceptible object's activity on the sense has ceased, so nothing prevents *phantasia* from changing its character and its content. But since *phantasia* is weaker than perception and so is often overlooked, when both are present the subject will not experience the *phantasia*.[36] The reference at the end of our passage to the object of perception can be explained in the same way. Aristotle is envisioning cases in which perception and *phantasia* occur simultaneously in order to contrast them with cases where perception is absent. All of this, again, is marshalled to explain when and why *phantasia* is true and false. There is nothing to suggest that *phantasia* filters back into perception, and *phantasia* is not brought in to explain anything about perception, about which Aristotle's official discussion has ended. *Perception first* makes good sense of the passage, and the mixture theories fail.[37]

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special object. At any rate, if we accept a *phantasia*-free type of perception of a special object separate from a version which contains *phantasia*, we ought to accept – on the same evidence – that this is the case for the other types of perception. For Caston's way of dealing with this troublesome passage, see below.

35 This is also a problem for Bolton's 2005 reading, which I discuss below.

36 See again the references in note 29 above.

37 At this point, the most sensible response for a motivated mixture theorist is denial. Caston 1996 claims that 428b25–30 is "not part of his [Aristotle's] account of how phantasia is capable of error in the first place, but only a discussion of the *specific conditions under which* a given phantasia will be true or false" (53–4, emphasis in original). So, on Caston's reading, the passage should not be used to establish any reading at all about why *phantasia* can be true or false. But this is unsustainable as, once again, Aristotle tells us that this is precisely what he means to explain.

Before moving on, I should address Bolton's 2005 reading. Like me, Bolton stresses that *phantasia* occurs during all three types of perception. On his view, however, *phantasia* is implicated not just in higher or false perception but in *all* perception, as its material cause (see esp. 233–36). Thus, although it would be misleading to call him a mixture theorist, he agrees with them that *phantasia* plays an indispensable role in the production of perception itself. I agree that perception requires a material cause, but there is no good evidence that Aristotle wishes to identify it specifically with *phantasmata*, as Bolton argues. Aristotle's discussion of the sun example at *On Dreams* 2, 460b18–25, serves as one of Bolton's main pieces of evidence. From it, he concludes not only that the change in the sense-organs can be the same in veridical and in non-veridical perception, which I agree with, but also that this internal change in both cases just is *phantasia*. However, while the passage does use *phainetai* language, this is best explained by the fact that Aristotle's focus throughout *On Dreams* is on non-veridical sensory experience, whether this is perception or *phantasia*. We need not interpret this example in terms of canonical *phantasia* as described at 428b10–30. Bolton's main piece of evidence is the highly polemical passage 461b21–9, where Aristotle writes that, "When, however, one was perceiving, the chief and discriminating faculty did not say that *this* was Coriscus but for this reason [*dia touto*] it said that *he* was the true Coriscus." Bolton argues that what is responsible for our saying that this was Coriscus is a *phantasma*, concluding that *phantasia* is always the cause of content that outstrips the efficient cause of the special and common sensibles. But Aristotle's point in the passage is that whatever says *that is Coriscus* is affected by movements in the sense-organs in the same way, whether one is perceiving or merely dreaming. He does not say that these movements are always *phantasmata*, and during perception the responsible party is an *aisthêma*, as Aristotle's back reference in the passage indicates (461b21 referring back to 460b2–3). *Phantasmata* will also be produced, but they will be dormant during perception, merely potential. Bolton objects that it would make no sense to say that a "sense experience is the thing responsible for the content of that very experience" (Bolton 2005, 236 n20). But the movements are not experienced until they reach what Aristotle calls at times the 'starting-point' (*archê* at, e. g., 461a31, b4). Thus, the explanatory factor Aristotle mentions here are movements in the sense-organs, whether *aisthêma* or *phantasmata*, that are perceived only when they reach the starting-point. Canonical *phantasia* need not be involved.

5 The Chapter's Ending

The chapter's final lines can be quoted *en bloc*.

> (a) If, then, *phantasia* has only the characteristics mentioned, and this is what was said, then *phantasia* is the movement brought about by perception in actuality.[38]
> (b) Since sight is perception *par excellence* [*malista*], the term *phantasia* was derived from light [*phaos*], because without light it is not possible to see.
> (c) And because it [*phantasia*] persists and is similar to perceptions, animals do many things because of it, some, beasts, because they lack reason and others, humans, because their reason is sometimes shrouded by passion, illness, or sleep.
> (d) Concerning *phantasia*, what it is and why it is, let so much be said. (428b30–29a9)

(a) establishes that it is *phantasia* which is the movement we have been discussing since b10–17. The whole discussion thus far has, I have argued, focused on finding the origin of *phantasia*'s features in the actuality of the perception that caused it. Since *phantasia* has the features listed (it is a movement brought about by actualized perception, similar to it and about the same things as it, allows animals to do and undergo things, and can be true and false) and since, as it seems, *phantasia* has only these features, then it is shown what *phantasia* is. *Phantasia* has no other salient characteristics precisely because perception has no others.[39] Aristotle can

38 There are two ways to read the sentence, both consistent with the MSS: that *phantasia* has only these features; or that only *phantasia* has these features. I have, somewhat reluctantly, adopted the first, which is a minority reading adopted by Hicks 1917 and Wedin 1988, 28–9. A difficulty with both readings is to understand how this has already been established or said. The reading I favor seems to me superior on this count. Since perception's main features have already been established, and since *phantasia* is the immediate product of perception, we can plausibly establish all of *phantasia*'s main features. On the other reading, it is difficult to explain why Aristotle thinks it was already said that only *phantasia* has these features. Another question is how to square this with what Aristotle says in (d): that what *phantasia* is has been determined. On this count, the other, majority reading is arguably better. If Aristotle thinks it has been shown that only *phantasia* has the features in question, he can reasonably say that he has established the nature of *phantasia.* This would also be consistent with Aristotle's scientific methodology. It is misleading to say, as Wedin does, that the minority reading, which he 1988, 28–9 adopts, follows MS E. The entire manuscript tradition represents interpretations of what was originally H. Thanks to Marco Zingano for helpful discussion of these points.

39 Wedin 1988, argues that it is only here that *phantasia* is identified as the movement in question, but the identification was already made at 428b11–12. There Aristotle says that *phantasia* seems to be such a movement. Wedin is right, however, that it is only confirmed here at (a) that *phantasia* is what we are looking for. See also Zucca 2018, who argues that (a) gives Aristotle's real definition of *phantasia*.

now conclude that *phantasia* is the movement coming from perception. Up to now, this point apparently had the status of a hypothesis, which is now confirmed.

(b) is a curious etymology of '*phantasia*' as coming from '*phôs*' (light) coupled with the thought that the etymology is reasonable, since "without light it is not possible to see." This might seem to tell against the perception-first view. Bolton 2005 takes it as evidence that without *phantasia* it is not possible to perceive. Polansky objects: "This [...] is the reverse of what we want, for Aristotle is saying that the name *phantasia* derives from light as light plays a vital role in seeing. The name arises from something essential for actual seeing, and *phantasia* generally arises from actual sense-perceiving, and not just seeing" (Polansky 2007, 431). The analogy is curious and convoluted, but I tend to side with Polansky. Here is a brief reconstruction along *perception first* lines: *Phôs* (light) is a necessary condition for seeing; and sight is the chief sense. So, although *phantasia* did not get its name directly from 'perception' or even 'sight,' it did get it from a necessary condition for seeing, namely light. Thus, in a roundabout way, even *phantasia*'s name is derived from perception, along with its other features.

(c) makes explicit the persistence of *phantasia*, a feature which was alluded to in b25–30 but not yet explicitly endorsed till now. *Phantasia*, therefore, undoubtedly plays the role of *retaining* sensory contents, as many mixture theorists advocate. Here we find Aristotle explaining that *phantasia* plays a role in animal behavior because, again, it is like perception: here too, the former inherits its features from the latter. We can conclude from this that perception itself can play a role in animal behavior, although *phantasia*'s ability to retain contents will make it useful in many more contexts – in particular, for pursuing and avoiding things that are not immediately present to perception. So, if *phantasia* can present sensory contents, this is only because perception can. *Phantasia* is a secondary effect of perception.[40] Animals can be affected by *phantasia* in the way they are affected by perception.

Phantasia's ability to retain sensory contents is not explained here. (The mechanism for this is described in *On Dreams* 3.) But the fact of persistence is used to explain why animals and humans in certain circumstances do things because of it. Exploring this issue properly would require a deep dive into *De Anima* 3.9–11 and *De Motu*, especially chapters 6 and 7. And Jessica Moss has argued in detail against the view that *phantasia* is a general capacity for representation but that, instead, perception plays this role, focusing on this latter material.[41] Here I will be

40 Siwek 1965, 325, note on 428b17, and Caston 1996, 47 f., and 1998, 272–74, compare *phantasia* to an echo. If my reading is correct, this is misleading, since *phantasia* never mixes with the perception that caused it, whereas an echo can mix with the original sound.

41 Moss 2012, 51–66. For other good discussions see Johansen 2012, Lorenz 2007, and Nussbaum 1978. For an in-depth discussion of animal versus human *phantasia*, see Labarrière 1984.

content only to say briefly why I believe nothing said there shows that *phantasia* is a general representational capacity.

The final chapters of the *De Anima* return to the topic of animal locomotion. Aristotle's situation is roughly this. Perception defines what it is to be an animal. Now, some animals do not possess locomotion, but, as animals, they perceive. They have at least touch and taste (*De Sensu* 1, 436b12–14). Locomotion requires desire (*orexis*) or avoidance, Aristotle claims (*De Anima* 3.9, 432b16–27), and *orexis* implies *phantasia*. So, it might seem that *phantasia* is required for animal locomotion as opposed to perception.[42] But the evidence suggests rather that *phantasia* fills in for perception when the object of desire is not immediately available. When Aristotle says that *orexis* implies *phantasia*, he means that in the very common case in which the object of desire is not available to perception, *phantasia* is needed to *re*produce the forms of objects. Perception can play the same role as *phantasia* in producing desire. And *phantasia* is a product either of perception or, he adds here, thought.

De Motu Animalium 6, 700b17–21, repeats what was said in *De Anima* while adding a few details: the movers of the animal are thought and *phantasia* and choice and wish and appetite. This, he explains, is because *phantasia* and perception hold the same place as thought. All are discriminatory (*kritika*). *Phantasia* is again grouped together with thought and perception at 701a29–b1 and 701b16–23. So, *phantasia* can take the place of perception or thought in their role in animal movement. Also, at *De Motu* 11, 704a18–20, Aristotle confirms what he has said earlier (at 701b19–23): "For thought and *phantasia*, as we explained earlier, present that which produces the affections, in that they present the forms of the objects that produce them" (Nussbaum translation). This confirms what we saw already in the *De Anima*: that *phantasia* can produce the forms (*eidê*) of objects. And like the *De Anima*, the *De Motu* confirms that *phantasia* is a product of perception or thought. So here too, what Aristotle means is that *phantasia* can *re*produce the forms which were initially available to perception, and in the case of humans, to thought.[43] Here too there is no evidence that *phantasia* in particular and apart from perception is responsible for receiving or presenting the forms. Perception does this. In short, the final chapters of the *De Anima* and the *De Motu* confirm the *perception first* account provided in *De Anima* 3.3.[44]

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42 See Wedin 1988, 41 f., who argues that animals with the distal senses require *phantasia*, as these senses require representation of objects.

43 The ability to reproduce absent forms explains all the evidence given by Osborne 2000 to the effect that *phantasia* is responsible for presenting forms, whether in perception or thought.

44 One apparent exception, where *phantasia* seems to be necessary, is *De Anima* 3.10, 433b27–29. But see Lorenz 2007, esp. 144–47, for a cogent argument that here too *phantasia* presents absent objects. The argument's core is that the context of the discussion of desire in *De Anima* 10–11 cru-

6 Unfinished Business

We have seen that *phantasia* inherits all its features from perception, but perception inherits none from *phantasia*. *Phantasia* is a psycho-physical alteration that initially has the same content as perception, whether true or false. When perception is present, as the stronger movement it guarantees that the *phantasia* it causes does not change its content. But afterwards it can persist in the creature and can cause it to do many things as if it were perceiving. Perception is explanatorily prior to *phantasia* in that perception fully explains the features of *phantasia* but *phantasia* explains none of perception's. This implies that *phantasia* is not imagination or representation but perception-like appearance.[45] It is appearance, first, because perception itself is a kind of appearance (though usually a true kind), and, second, because 'appearance' might suggest falsity, and *phantasia* is false more often than perception. But despite these differences, perception and *phantasia* are both alterations with initially the same content. We thus have good reason to reject the idea that *phantasia* is representation in general. If any sort of *phantasia* is representational, it is because its parent perception is. The suggestion that it is imagination is less harmful, as long as we separate it from our creative imagination, which can be implicated but need not be. For we do not say "I imagine that this is a human being" except to mean "I *fancy* that this is a human being," and here appearance is involved, not creative imagination. Still, perception-like appearance captures Aristotle's notion better than imagination. *Phantasia*, recall, is implicated in mnemonic systems and dreams, both of which have perception-like character.[46]

To conclude, I will briefly address three outstanding issues: (1) Does incidental perception not include within it an element of worked-up *phantasia*? (2) Does Aristotle not associate false sensory experiences with *phantasia* and *phainesthai*? And (3) If not *phantasia*, what *is* responsible for representation and the possibility of false perception?

(1) One might object: does Aristotle not think that incidental perception, at least, includes a worked-up sort of *phantasia*, such as memory or experience? And if so, doesn't this invalidate the *perception first* perspective? Answers: yes and no. Nothing I have said rules out the possibility that some sorts of perception which

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cially involves the production of animal movement. Thus, Aristotle attributes indeterminate *phantasia* even to incomplete animals only inasmuch as they exhibit indeterminate locomotion.

45 Note again what I observed in note 30 above: Aristotle recognizes merely potential appearances alongside actualized ones.

46 Associating *phantasia* with appearance rather than with imagination or representation is out of favor, but it is not new. See Beare 1908 and esp. Lycos 1964. See also Bolton 2005, 230 f., and Polansky 2007, who at times (e. g., 215–16) seems to agree.

produce *phantasia* are themselves in part products of *phantasia* from earlier perceptions – a kind of worked-up *phantasia*. In the later chapters of book 3 Aristotle recognizes calculative or deliberative *phantasia* in addition to the perceptual *phantasia* he describes in our passage.[47] He also recognizes several products of *phantasia*, most notably memory and experience. And some scholars assume or suggest that one or the other of these must be involved in incidental perception. Now, seeing a certain color *as* Diares' son would seem to require that the perceiver has some perceptual notion of Diares' son which her perceptual apparatus brings to bear in perception. This notion is probably built up from previous perceptions of Diares or his son. But it cannot be due to memory. As Cashdollar points out, memory essentially involves awareness of the past, whereas all perception is of the present. Unfortunately, Aristotle does not say enough about experience for us to be sure, but as it is a product of memory, experience seems not to be involved here either.[48]

It would seem, then, that incidental perception generally requires a memory-like notion which, while usually built up from past perceptions, is not tied to the past and which is spontaneously brought to bear when perceiving something as something else. So incidental perception *does* include an element of worked-up *phantasia*.[49] But this is no help for mixture theorists. In 3.3 Aristotle is concerned with the origin and characteristics of a basic kind of *phantasia*, which is the immediate product and, initially, a reproduction of occurrent perception. This is what he later calls perceptual *phantasia.* Distinct products of *phantasia*: memory, recollection, and experience, for example, are discussed nowhere in the *De Anima* but only later, such as in the *Parva Naturalia*. But even there, the various sorts of worked-up *phantasia* never go by the name *phantasia.* This is important because it implies that Aristotle does not think of *phantasia* as a cognitive capacity specifically responsible for error or representation, nor is it, as Bolton thinks, necessary for perception as one of its causes. Perceptual *phantasia* is a necessary element of Aristotle's psychology and epistemology mainly because it *retains* perceptual content. Interpreters should not call upon perceptual *phantasia* to explain anything else.

47 See 433b29 and 434a7. See also 431a14–15, 432a7–14; *On Memory* 2, 453a6–14; *Post. An.* 2.19. For a recent discussion of different sorts of *phantasia*, see Papachristou 2013.

48 See Cashdollar 1972, 168 f. Experience is not mentioned in the *De Anima*. Memory comes up only once, at 427b18–20, where Aristotle mentions mnemonic devices involving image-making (*eidôlopoiountes*). For recent discussions of experience, see Gregorić/Grgić 2006 and Hasper/Yurdin 2014.

49 This does not undermine incidental perception's status as perception, as Cashdollar 1973, 158–60, 165, and 169 has shown. Another indication of this is that Aristotle categorically denies belief (*doxa*) to animals, whereas many animals have memory. Memory and the memory-like capacity I am positing here are therefore in some sense part of the perceptual capacity of some animals, with no higher cognition being required.

(2) As I said in Section 4 in addressing Bolton's reading, it is consistent with the *perception first* account that *phantasia* tends more towards falsity than perception and that Greek speakers tend towards '*phantasia*' and its cognates (i. e., perception-like appearance) when they describe questionable perception-like experiences, whether they are *phantasmata* or perceptions. Indeed, we saw this several times in 3.3, including at 428b25–30 where *phantasia* is said to be often false when its parent perception is not present. One might object, and it has often been thought,[50] that Aristotle invokes *phantasia* and *phainesthai* precisely in those contexts of misperception or questionable perception and that this indicates that *phantasia* is always implicated in false perception. In one such passage, from *On Dreams* 1, he seems to associate misperception with *phantasia.* In discussing which part of the soul is responsible for dreams, Aristotle tells us that that by which we fall into error while awake or ill is the same *pathos* which also causes this in sleep; and that even when people are well and know its size, the sun still seems to be a foot across (458b25–9). He continues:

> But whether the capacity of *phantasia* is in fact the same part of the soul as the capacity of perception or a different one, nonetheless it [the illusory experience] does not come to be unless one sees and perceives something. For to mis-see or to mis-hear happens to someone who sees or hears something true, though it is not what he takes it to be. (458b29–34, my translation)

This passage requires more attention than I can give it here. I will focus only on explaining why it is consistent with *perception first*. *On Dreams* 1 is concerned with determining which faculty explains dreams, the perceptual faculty or the faculty of thought and belief. Aristotle has already argued (458b10–25) that the faculty responsible for dreams cannot be the doxastic faculty. The only remaining option, then, is that dreams are a function of the perceptual faculty. The bit just quoted raises a worry for this conclusion. Even when we misperceive, we are still perceiving something real. But since in sleep we perceive nothing, it would seem that dreams cannot be due to the perceptual faculty. Aristotle goes on to solve the problem: even when we are perceiving nothing, the senses can be affected as if we were perceiving – and this explains dreams and, often, deception. He thereby concludes (458b21–2) that dreams are a function of the perceptual faculty, not *simpliciter* but qua the capacity of *phantasia*.

Caston has interpreted the passage as claiming that *phantasia* is responsible for all faulty sensory experiences. But Aristotle does not have false perception in his sights. The passage stands in the context of distinguishing the faculty respon-

50 For example, by Schofield 1992.

sible for perception and appearance from that of judgment and knowledge.[51] In it Aristotle does not yet distinguish between perception and *phantasia.* The distinction between the two is made only later, to resolve the difficulty described in the last paragraph. So, when he says that the same *pathos* is responsible for error in sleep or while awake, Aristotle is not claiming that this *pathos* is *phantasia*; it is perceptual illusion. Perceptual illusion comes about when something false seems to us to be the case, whether this is a perception or only an appearance.

In another passage, earlier in *De Anima* 3.3, Aristotle says that "whenever we are actually exercising our senses precisely about a perceptual object, we do not say that this appears [*phainetai*] to us to be a human being, but instead [we say this] whenever we do not perceive it clearly" (428a12–15, the translation follows Miller 2018). Here too Aristotle has been thought to be implying that every time we perceive something hazily, *phantasia* is implicated.[52] But the point here is mainly about how Greek speakers speak. Aristotle does not say or imply that we have here a case of mixed perception and *phantasia*, much less that all cases of hazy or false perception involve *phantasia.* Here again, Aristotle is not trying to explain misperception but rather to show that since perception is generally true and *phantasia* is mostly false, the two are different. His example duly shows that the Greeks tended towards *phantasia* language in questionable contexts, and thus common Greek usage supports the idea that *phantasia* tends towards falsity more than perception.[53] These passages, therefore, do not show that *phantasia* is implicated in misperception. They rather suggest that since, like us, the Greeks tended towards appearance language in questionable contexts, whether one is misperceiving or, say, dreaming, *phantasia* is the faultier capacity. Perception and *phantasia*, being simultaneous psycho-physical processes that are about the same sorts of things, are very hard to distinguish. When we take ourselves to be having a faulty perceptual experience, we naturally associate this with the faultier process: *phantasia*.

(3) Finally, if *phantasia* does not explain the possibility of false perception, what does? Aristotle answers this question in *De Anima* 3.6, when he compares the

51 The sun example also appears at *De Anima* 3.3, 428b3–4 and *On Dreams* 2, 460b18–19. In all three cases it is used to distinguish perceptual appearance, though not specifically *phantasia*, from belief.

52 See Osborne, 2000, 278 f.

53 That Aristotle describes the person in the example as *perceiving*, only not precisely, can be explained in the same way as his uses of the sun example (see note 51 above). Although Aristotle draws conclusions about *phantasia* – that it is more often false and so is not the same as perception – this does not imply that this is an instance of mere appearance rather than one of misperception. The use of *phainetai* need not imply the presence of a *phantasma*, as Hicks 1907, 465 f., note on 428b2, Themistius, Ps.-Simplicius, and Ps.-Philoponus rightly saw.

perception of a special object to the intellect's operating on an indivisible object. In general, both falsity and truth become possible because of a predicative structure, with something's being said of something. So, the possibility of falsity, and truth, of higher perceptions is explained by their predicational structure, not by *phantasia*. But in the cases of special-object perception and intellection, there is no predication: "Grasping (*nous*) of what a thing is in virtue of its essence is true and is not [of the form] something of something. But just as seeing a special object is true, while seeing that the white is a human being or not is not always true, the same holds for thinking of what is without matter" (430b28–30, the translation follows Miller 2018). Here too, the passage presents difficulties. But its main message is clear: perception of a special object, like the intellect's basic grasp of an essence, is true because it is a simple grasp of a simple object, involving no predication. Still, there is a sort of falsity possible in these cases: in thinking (*noein*) about an incomposite, one cannot err properly speaking, but one can miss the target completely and be ignorant.[54] Similarly, in perception, one can have a non-predicational false appearance of, say, white.[55] Leaving aside this wrinkle, the possibility of falsity arises not because of *phantasia* but because of predication. And this is the key distinction for Aristotle: that between predicative and non-predicative perception, not that between representational and non-representational perception.

The idea that incidental perception is predicational raises several questions, which I can only briefly touch upon here.[56] I take it that the predication involved in incidental perception is similar to the standard predication of a statement, and these are true or false.[57] I also take it that for Aristotle, predicational sentences all have propositional content.[58] That incidental perception has propositional content is also suggested by the idea that the appearance that the sun is a foot across can be *contradicted* by one's belief that it is much larger. The two cognitions must have a similar sort of content if they are to be in conflict with one another. And beliefs undeniably have propositional content. The evidence is sparse, but it is likely that

54 See *Metaphysics* 9.10, 1051b17–1052a4.

55 See *De Anima* 3.3, 428b27–28; *On Dreams* 2, 459b11–18; *Metaphysics* 4.5, 1010b3–6.

56 A full treatment would also require a discussion of how perception of common objects can be true and false. I will say here only that Aristotle suggests at 428b22–3 that it is a second kind of predicational perception and that common objects are often predicated of incidental ones. For good discussions of error in perception of the common objects, see Gregorić 2007, 193–99, and Johnstone 2015.

57 See *De Anima* 3.6, 430b28–30; *Categories* 2a4–10; *De Interpretatione* 16a9–18; *Metaphysics* 6.4, 1027b17–29.

58 Aristotle implies that all true or false sentences are assertoric (*apophantikos*) at, e. g., *De Interpretatione* 4, 16b33–17a7. I use assertoric content and propositional content to mean the same thing.

incidental perceptions have propositional content.[59] So to claim, as Aristotle does, that perceiving white can be true but *not* propositional implies that perceptions of a special object have a different kind of content, perhaps depictional rather than assertoric, and thus a different kind of truth. Here the evidence is sparser still. Only in *Metaphysics* 9.10 does Aristotle say much about non-propositional truth and falsity. His focus there, as it is in *De Anima* 3.6, is on belief (*doxa*) and thought (*noein*). In the case of thinking about an incomposite, "contact and assertion [*thigein kai phanai*] are truth (assertion not being the same as affirmation [*kataphasis*]), and ignorance is non-contact" (1051b24–5, Revised Oxford Translation). Perception is not mentioned here, but it seems reasonable to assume that truth and falsity in non-predicational perception is like truth and falsity in non-predicational thought: truth is contact and falsity is ignorance. Aristotle's explanations for the possibility of truth and falsity are thus complex, but *phantasia* is not among them.

Now, if it is predication and not *phantasia* that explains why incidental perceptions can be false, what perceptual apparatus does the predicating? Predication is not always due to the reasoning capacity, since Aristotle attributes common and incidental perception to non-rational animals. He does not explicitly address this question, but Aristotle does address a related one: how we perceive complex objects as unities. The interpretation of his answer is controversial, even if we limit ourselves to the *De Anima*, where the issue arises mainly in 3.1 and 3.2. But the evidence, such as it is, points to the common sense. In *De Anima* 3.1, Aristotle argues that we have no sense-organ to perceive the common perceptibles like movement and shape but that such objects can be perceived non-incidentally by the common sense. His example is perceiving that bile is bitter and yellow, "for it is not for either sense, at least, to say that both are one" (425b1–3, Miller translation). So, neither taste nor sight alone says that the bitter and yellow are one thing, but they can do so "inasmuch as they are one" (425a31). To say that the yellow and the bitter are the same thing is just to combine or predicate yellow and bitter of one thing, say bile. The upshot is that the senses working together, not taste or sight alone, tell us that the bitter and yellow belong to one object. And Aristotle seems to understand the common sense as involving the senses working together.[60] It thus seems that the common sense is responsible for perceptual predication.

We can conclude that the abilities to be true and false and to represent the world belong in the first place to perception, not *phantasia*. Higher perceptions can represent the world because they have a predicational structure. And this same feature is what explains its ability to be true and false in Aristotle's canonical sense,

59 A common view among contemporary philosophers. For a contrasting view see Crane 2009.
60 For a detailed discussion, see Gregorić 2007.

which involves combination. Perception of a special object can be false only in the different way of completely missing the target. *Phantasia* can take all the forms perception can, because it is a product of perception and inherits its features from it. Scholars of Aristotle's epistemology and those who wish to understand the foundations of this classical version of empiricism would do well to look first to perception.

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