

COLLOQUIUM 3

ARISTOTLE ON ΦΑΝΤΑΣΙΑ

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I. *The Problem of Φαντασία*

The topic of this essay is Aristotle's discussion and use of φαντασία. The first task incumbent on me is to explain why I am going to leave φαντασία and φάντασμα untranslated. The fact is that these terms are only occasionally and very roughly equivalent respectively to 'imagination' and 'image.' For example, when Aristotle sets out the program of the *De anima* explaining he is going to investigate the functions and affections of the soul κατὰ τὴν φαντασίαν (I 1, 402b23), the last thing he has on his mind is to make imagination the guiding tool for his inquiry. Here the phrase means the soul's properties "as presented to us," or "according to the phenomena," not "according to the imagination." Likewise, the association of φάντασμα with mental image does not seem to fit the bill. While it is mostly right in its occurrences in *On Memory (De memoria et reminiscencia)* and *On Dreams (Insomniis)*—with the reservation that a mental image may be convenient as a loose umbrella term but is not anyway thoroughly identical with an after-image or a memory image or a dream-image—, it simply cannot make sense in other cases, for example in *De motu animalium* and the *Rhetoric*, where the pictorial or visual connotation typically associated with mental images is virtually absent. Here φάντασμα means prefiguration, anticipation, or recollection of the pleasant and the painful, mostly in terms of an end to pursue, which has nothing of the pictorial character some of us associate with mental images.

The problem is not only the translation, though. There is an undeniable plurivocity to the concepts imagination and image which, if unattended to, jeopardizes our understanding and makes us confuse different phenomena under a misleadingly uniform name. The neglect of the rich implications inherent in a sorely ambiguous and limited vocabulary one is bound to use indifferently is the source of misunderstandings when we conflate, for example, real and mental images, say, a photo of my brother, my memory of when I last saw him or my imaging his look of surprise when I present him with a gift for his upcoming birthday. All these images are identified differently and satisfy different criteria, such as spatio-temporal individuation, modality of existence or ontological status, our interpretation or read-

ing of them (codes of decipherment that are presupposed, our varying awareness of detail), relation to the space outside them, context and material medium in which they appear and the constraints thereby put on them, separation between viewer and image, what it means for us to perceive them, our psychological and affective involvement, etc.

The same is true of imagination and its functions. Integrating the discontinuities of perception into a unitary picture, anticipating the possible development of a plot, or of a shape partly hidden from view, deciphering a sketchy image and interpreting it as the two-dimensional abbreviation or snapshot of an event, giving rise to a world alternative to the perceptual one, dreaming, phantasizing and having reveries, recognizing someone in a portrait, not to mention constructing a plot, envisaging or picturing one, drawing a figure, writing a poem—all seem to be very different, yet not unrelated functions of the same imagination. The several modes at work are not only disparate, often they are conflicting, too, as when we oppose an escape from reality to an effort at better understanding it.

However, this cautionary tale may be applied to all philosophers, and especially to the freedom of the mind from preconceived meanings that the reader, interpreter and scholar are expected to bring to a text or work from the outset. What makes the situation markedly different, and significantly more complicated, in Aristotle is that the effort to liberate our minds from later conceptions must go deeper. If, say, we are interested in an account of the historical genesis of concepts pertaining to imagination in Descartes or Kant or Husserl, we must behave like archeologists, digging under sedimented notions in search of an original ground and documenting its later transformations across layers of meaning that are intertwined and can serve as useful directions to keep in mind. For Aristotle, by contrast, the task is the paradoxical one of freeing our mind from preconceptions and constantly watching the unwarranted inferences we read into the text, while at the same time keeping all lines of flight together in view of the subsequent exploitation of sketchy, diverse threads. In order to understand the sketchy, diverse threads that constitute the first attempt at a broad treatment of *φαντασία* we have (Aristotle's) the layers of meaning turn out to be by and large modern presuppositions best left out altogether.

It is not even clear that *φαντασία* has a unity and is not a scattered set of several notions, quite vague and hard to identify to begin with. True, *φαντασία* has to do with memory, dreams, visualization, traces of perception. Yet, many of the traits that most often define for us what is proper to imagination—from the integration of what is absent in perception to the function of synthesis, from exhibition in a sensible medium to an implicit form of judgment, from the translation of thought into a symbolic system

of representations to the various forms of spontaneity and creativity—are virtually alien to Aristotle’s φαντασία and mostly the result of Stoic, Neoplatonic, Cartesian, Humean and Kantian transformations of and departures from it.

In fact for us, who come after Hume and Kant, the idea seems to go without saying that imagination helps integrate perception, fills in all or some of the gaps that other faculties leave open, puts forth tentative, more or less reliable conjectures on what the senses cannot provide, and synthesizes the manifold into a unitary synopsis. From this point of view, Aristotle’s φαντασία, where none of that seems to happen, is a remarkably narrow notion bound to puzzle the reader. What is especially baffling is the vagueness and lack of precision of its description. The first impression is that it is not, to recall Heidegger’s phrase on Kant’s imagination, homeless (*heimatlos*); it seems positively messy. Here genetic conjectures do not seem to help much, because the inconsistencies and difficulties that emerge at a closer scrutiny do not span across different works (for example, between the *De anima* and the later *De Sensu*), but appear within the same text, as if Aristotle often took back what he had just established in the turn of two continuous sentences.

This is obvious from a cursory analysis of *De anima* III 3, the putatively central text for any examination of φαντασία. It reads very much like a work in progress, where the main effort is directed towards demarcating φαντασία from perception and thinking, except the criteria for differentiation get modified along the way, or are strikingly and suddenly revoked. Just to name some examples: Aristotle writes that perception differs from φαντασία in that it is always true, while φαντασία is by and large false. This cannot be correct, since perception of incidental and common sensibles may err, while φαντασία of proper sensibles is correct. Also, Aristotle claims that φαντασία is up to us while opinion is not; and yet in dreams φαντασία is clearly not up to us. This contrast admits of tapering off, though, for “up to us” may mean that we give rise to it at will or that we can disregard its reference to facts, which are the touchstone of truth. But other contrasts seem more resilient: for example, φαντασία differs from opinion because if we fear something and have reason to believe the object is threatening, the fear is greater, while we are not emotionally affected in imagination because we are “like spectators looking at something frightening in a picture”;¹ in the second book of the *Rhetoric*, by contrast, imagination may generate the greatest fear, and in general φαντασία is the

¹ *An.* III 3, 427b 22-4. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

source of the most powerful emotions. Also, Aristotle's frequent and considered statement that φαντασία is the same as perception albeit not in actuality or essence (e. g., *Insomn.* 459a16 ff.) is contradicted at 427b28, where he writes that φαντασία belongs to thinking. But the most blatant tension is between 428a3-4, where φαντασία judges true and false, and 428b4 a few lines below, where φαντασία differs from opinion because the discrimination between true and false is proper to the latter only, which judges also φαντασία's tentative claim to truth.

This chapter has represented a sort of challenge for Aristotle scholars, so that in recent years we have seen several intelligent and helpful contributions to its understanding that are well worth reading; the common attempt is at salvaging the unity of the notion from the verdict of inconsistency that has been repeatedly leveled against it, not entirely without ground, from the time of Freudenthal up to Hamlyn and Rees.² I personally profited greatly from these essays; but the problem I have referred to, of imposing or taking for granted modern presuppositions in our interpretation, limits the import and the results of many of them. Let me mention the following, having to do first with the misunderstood systematic function of the *De anima* and then with the misconstrued import of perception.

Almost invariably φαντασία is understood as a faculty, in an overall philosophy of mind that the *De anima* is purportedly meant to articulate. This may be an exaggerated scruple on my part, but I would like to stress that the talk of faculties goes in tandem with the notion of an ego or a subject that, reflectively or spontaneously, ascribes to itself cognitions, volitions and such. The subject is in turn understood as a single inner space in which all contents are equally and uniformly mental, as opposed to an external realm in which objects are in a relation to it through the medium of the body. This picture seriously downplays Aristotle's *hylomorphism* and forgets that the *De anima* is not a rudimentary philosophy of mind—there is not even a word for mind in Aristotle—but a chapter of his philosophy of nature, therefore integral to the study of λόγοι ἔνυλοι (enmattered forms), with the notable exception of the chapters on the intellect, which is wholly unnatural and constitutes the object of first philosophy. More importantly, because faculties are demarcated and by their nature mutually

² See the bibliography at the end of this paper. Modrak's work seems to me to deserve special mention among those essays, and I share most of her conclusions. The only qualms I have are with her definition of φαντασία as a "mechanism for handling internal representations" (*Aristotle's Theory of Language and Meaning*, Cambridge and New York 2001, 223). I am not sure I would emphasize the internality of representation; but I am sure φαντασία is neither a mechanism nor can it "handle" its contents.

separate and distinct, this language is tantamount to the presupposition of what has not yet been established: that φαντασία is an independent faculty, and not a phenomenon whose limits Aristotle is trying to test and circumscribe from all sides. The unfortunate consequence is that we end up driving a wedge between perception and φαντασία, instead of underlining the continuity stretching between them.

If φαντασία in *De anima* III 3 cannot be described in terms of a faculty, it is not a power either, but the result of a movement, κίνησις. Aristotle is striving to find independent room for it between either end of the segment along which he locates it, perception and thinking. *These* are described as independent powers; Aristotle describes φαντασία as a process, at least genetically derived from and subsequent to sensation, not an activity, let alone an activity referring to an ego. And the process is fundamentally reproductive: the φάντασμα is at best a copy, not a standard or model but a derivative proxy drawing its meaning from the thing which it is meant to reproduce, the norm with respect to which it is at best commensurate, and mostly inadequate.

But the more significant superimposition of un-Aristotelian concepts, going along with the separation of faculties, is the promotion of φαντασία to center stage at the cost of a demotion of the work of perception. Φαντασία is taken by most readers as an interpretation of the sensation, which by itself is not in a position to give an informative and grounded account of itself: φαντασία lends its own voice to a dumb sensation.³ Φαντασία, which is, as we shall see in the next section, intrinsically connected to appearance, φαίνεσθαι, especially when appearance is unclear, is then taken as the generalization and synthesis of impressions of present situations and sequences of events (Frede);⁴ the interpretation of sensory content and even resolution of Gestalt shifts (Nussbaum); a “loose-knit family concept” explaining the capacity for having “non-paradigmatic sensory experience,” with regard to which we remain non-committal, skeptical and cautious,⁵ and the like. The problem is that this relevance of φαντασία is achieved at a cost: the impossibility to tell when an interpreta-

³ Cf. Ross, *Aristotle*, 5th ed., London 1949, 141 ff.; M. C. Nussbaum, *Aristotle's De Motu Animalium*, Princeton 1978, esp. 255-69 and her use of the Wittgensteinian notion of seeing-as to describe *phantasia*; D. Frede, “The Cognitive Role of *Phantasia* in Aristotle,” in M. C. Nussbaum and A. O. Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's De anima*, Oxford 1992. For a judgment calling in question the idea of φαντασία as interpretation, see A. O. Rorty, “Structuring Rhetoric,” in Id., *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, Berkeley—Los Angeles 1996, p. 19.

⁴ D. Frede, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

⁵ M. Schofield, “Aristotle on the Imagination,” in G. E. R. Lloyd and G. E. L. Owen, eds., *Aristotle on Mind and the Senses*, Cambridge 1978, quotes from pp. 101 and 117.

tion is needed and φαντασία is called in as a discriminating and judging power (κριτικόν), and when it is not because the senses can judge by themselves (and see-something-as what it is). More generally, the price paid by these readings is that of muting the senses, making the percipient a mere passive recipient of sensible *qualia*, and the sensible material an indistinct manifold waiting for the mind to compare, unify, collect and shed light on what is *per se* obscure and indistinct.⁶

⁶ A good example of modern, when not Kantian, assumptions at play in the reading of Aristotle is Frede, who can ascribe to φαντασία the power of retention and synthesis into an overall impression because she attributes to Aristotle an atomistic theory of perception, according to which sensation is of particulars only (how admittedly arbitrary her interpolation of φαντασία is can be seen in her reading of *An. Post.* II 19 in n. 43 at p. 292). That sensation is of particulars only is a well-known Aristotelian thesis; but Aristotle adds that sense retains or receives (λαβεῖν) sensible forms without matter (*An.* II 12, 424a24; *An. Post.* I 31, 87b28-30; II 19, 100a17, 100b4-5). An additional “faculty” is not required to synthesize the particulars of sense and generalize the single sense-data into the type of the tokens that sensible particulars are. (Among some of the differences between Aristotle and Kant on imagination, see my “Kant’s Productive Imagination and Its Alleged Antecedents,” in *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 18: 1, 1995, 65-92, and my *Hegel and Aristotle*, Cambridge—New York 2001, 287-325.) Since Frede believes that Aristotle needs an abiding self in which φαντασία are synthesized, she gives in to the recurrent temptation among Aristotle readers to find the solution in a common or inner sense (p. 283) which tradition has long tried to read back into Aristotle, but which is not a genuinely Aristotelian notion (the manipulation of Aristotle’s notion of a central organ allowing us to perceive common sensibles and incidental sensibles simultaneously in the unity of a thing—*Sens.* 449a5-20, *Som.* 455a16-8, *An.*, III 2, 425b12-426b29—into a supposed theory of a common sense begins as early as Alexander of Aphrodisias (*De anima liber cum mantissa*, 63, 6-28) and runs through the medieval *sensus communis* up to the 18th century “common sense” and Kant’s “inner sense”). Like all good chapters of Aristotelianism, even this doctrine is rooted in tensions and ambiguities left standing by Aristotle: in *De anima* he writes that all senses are self-conscious and there is nothing beyond the five senses in which we can locate awareness, for the awareness of the sensible and the awareness of my sensation of it are one and the same (III 1-2). Here something unitary (ἐνί τι, 426b18) is required in order to postulate that the perceiver who asserts a difference among sensibles be one (426b20-1); but something like a common sense over and above the senses is denied. Later in *De sensu* he reiterates that the power of perception must be one numerically, albeit divided in its functions (and calls this τὸ αἰσθητικὸν πάντων at 449a17-8). But in *De somno et vigilia* he writes that there is a common power (κοινή δύναμις, 455a16) whereby one is conscious that one sees, hears, etc. This, as well as the cursory definition of the φάντασμα as an affection of the common sense in *On memory* (τὸ φάντασμα τῆς κοινῆς αἰσθήσεως πάθος ἐστίν, 450a10-1), openly contrast with *An.* III 1-2, and are as close as Aristotle ever comes to a common sense; this however is never developed and remains in all its other occurrences the correlate of a special class of sensibles (common to more than one sense, such as size, shape, number, etc.) and not an original mode or seat of sensible consciousness.

For Aristotle the perceiver, potentially the contraries it can sense, retains in memory different sensations because it is a disposition which becomes determinate when actualized (*An.* III 2, 427a6-7). Aristotle compares the perceiver's awareness, numerically one but divided in its functions, to a geometric point which is both indivisible (the point unites two segments: the perceiver perceives simultaneously different sensibles) and divisible (the point separates two segments which originate from it: here the perceiver operates as a limit discriminating two sensible things, *An.* III 2, 427a10 ff.). If the perceiver can compare, relate and refer—in Aristotelian parlance, judge the truth of—sensory contents, and ascribe sensation of red to this thing, it seems that the senses must have for Aristotle a much broader range of meaning than we would be inclined to attribute to them. Indeed, they are not directed simply at their proper objects, but give us a very rich content, for they discriminate and judge common sensibles in and through movement, and they even give us a sensible awareness of relations, pluralities, and connections in incidental perception (the white we perceive and recognize as *the white of Diare's son*; in another example, we simultaneously perceive the yellow *and* the bitter in the bile). Perception is highly complex in that it involves awareness of sensory content in its distinctness and the ability to identify and recognize not just *qualia*, but complex states of affairs.

The senses are not fallible and deceptive as they are for modernity, they are not the recalcitrant, passive material and instrument of a mistrustful reason setting up experiments and testing sensible instances in light of them. They give us an active and intelligent perception, not supposedly raw sense-data or the material blind manifold for intellectual unification; and they are self-conscious, in that we are aware of our sensation through the sensible things we discriminate (*An.* III 2, 426b10-1, 425b12 ff.).

We are the abiding continuity of a disposition, making possible the formation of habits, attitudes, first actualities by repeated actualizations; our sensory potency becomes a second nature, a formed ἕξις, so that once it is formed, once—in the words of *An. Post.* II 19—the universal has come to rest in our soul, we can recognize a thing as the token of a type, a form in matter. That is, I submit, what Aristotle means with his distinction between a purely passive alteration and the actualization of the senses as “a progress into one's entelechy” and a “change to a positive disposition realizing the subject's nature” (*An.* II 5, 417b6-7 and 16).

This should be sufficient to show that the understanding of φαντασία crucially depends on the proper assessment of its intermediate position between sensation and thinking. It should not be taken to show that we must advocate a form of nominalism and forsake all attempts at giving one

definition of φαντασία given that all such definitions avowedly cannot take into account all the different aspects of the notion. True, what holds for one aspect or function of φαντασία does not always for others; but one-sidedness is not an inevitable result. If a systematic notion is to be ruled out, a unitary comprehensive reading of the different meanings and occurrences of φαντασία may not be. It seems to me that if φαντασία has an identity at all, it is not a definite one, but the more open-ended, unfinished, shifting yet not entirely equivocal identity of a construction site, in which Aristotle provides building materials, scanty instructions and bare contours, but leaves it to us to fill in the details. Seeing in such a site a finished building is our inference, for naturally our imagination tends to complete what seems incomplete and only sketched, and attributes a definite meaning to the structure; but we must watch this spontaneous and unwitting stepping over boundaries in our interpretation. Compared to his notion of φαντασία, the issue of the intellect is always going to admit of several conflicting interpretations because of its mysteries and ἀπορία, but is not a structurally incomplete and indefinite theory.

In the following sections I propose not to rely on *De anima* III 3 alone, but to bring in the entirety of Aristotle's texts on φαντασία, especially the *Parva Naturalia*, in order to look for the possible unity of this notion. While it would be impossible to analyze them all, they provide a much needed context for the question of the cognitive role of φαντασία in *An.* III 3. After discussing the relation between thinking and images, I want finally to contrast the results with what at first blush appears as a new element that forces us to revise the whole context, deliberative φαντασία and the explanation of teleological conduct leading to action, especially ethical conduct. I am interested here in discussing select passages from the *Rhetoric* and the *Nicomachean Ethics* in order to evaluate the freedom of φαντασία.

II. Φαντασία and Perception (*De Anima III 3 and Related Texts*)

When Aristotle introduces φαντασία in *An.* III 3, he immediately mentions that φαντασία is causally derived from perception. (Hobbes, translating the αἴσθησις ἀσθηνέζ from the *Rhetoric*, famously expressed this as “decaying sense” in *Leviathan*.) Aristotle then proceeds to demarcate its function from ὑπόληψις (“supposal,” including different forms of thought like science, opinion, practical wisdom) and perception. First, φαντασία differs from opinion. Aristotle argues that while it is not in our power to form opinions as we will, φαντασία is “an affection which lies in our power

whenever we choose” (427b19-20). He means by this an arbitrary, deliberate ability to visualize (πρὸ ὀμμάτων . . . ποιήσασθαι), to bring before our eyes. The obvious implicit assumption here is that images, even if caused by sensation, become independent of it: we have them in our soul, and can use them whenever and however we please, unlike perception, which needs a sensible to be actualized. This does not mean we have here a spontaneous productive imagination. We can visualize at will absent things, in their residual images, and recalling them is subject to a deliberate intention. But there is no discussion of the power of combination of different images into new ones. Φαντασία is certainly not a *creatio ex nihilo*, or even a shaping power. And the closest it will explicitly get to that is in recollection, which is no more than the capacity for playing with and arranging at will given images in accordance with a design.

Another reason why φαντασία differs from opinion is that φαντασία, unlike opinion, does not involve conviction (πίστις; we are not afraid of an act of imagination unless we ascribe to it an actual danger, unless, that is, we see in it more than imagination). Conviction is amenable to persuasion, and therefore belongs to rational animals who can listen to reason, while φαντασία is common to most animals. As I said, this is problematic if we compare it to the *Rhetoric* and the idea that imagination is responsible for the strongest passions (e.g., fear at II 5); it is also unclear, because it seems as if φαντασία were here non-committal, not exactly alternative to reality but unbothered by its constraints. But that would not be a necessarily universal inference, because there seems to be a radical difference between human and animal φαντασία: animals need a reliable φαντασία to move about their world. For them, but not for us, φαντασία is coupled with a conviction of sorts. In and through φαντασία, most animals have a way to negotiate what is absent, e.g., by making it present, prefiguring it, as an end to pursue or an evil to avert. But rational animals can make negotiating with absence, in the form of persuading to desire or fear goals that are beyond the immediate realm of perception, an independent task, enterprise, object (even, as in the case of rhetoricians and sophists, the object of a profession). Possessing reason in this case does not make human beings closer to truth, on the contrary: we are prone to making up stories, to telling ourselves lies, subject as we are to delusions and self-imposed beliefs depending on the most diverse motivations. Regardless of what we think of the different directions in which this point leads us with regard to truth, the theme of veridicality has silently made its appearance. And it won't leave the stage from now on.

Φαντασία differs from sensation, too. Aristotle adduces five reasons why.

(i) We have dream-images even while sensation is not going on, which shows that φαντασία may be at work when the senses are not.⁷ In this sense φαντασία exceeds perception.

(ii) Conversely, perception exceeds φαντασία because it belongs to all animals (the grub is Aristotle's example of a limiting case), while φαντασία does not.

(iii) "All sensations are true, but most φαντασίαι are false" (428a12-3). Basically Aristotle means to say that because φαντασία exceeds perception, and does not take its bearings by the relation to the world, it is more likely to err. Here φαντασία is clearly seen in its freedom from the responsibility for veridicality. That all sensations are true does not square with what precedes in the text, but expresses the fact that sensation stands or falls with its relation to the things external to it: sensation is intentional, it refers to independent sensible things. Here it is obvious how essential it is to give up the idea, found time and again in the literature (and in Aristotle himself), that the only power capable of asserting truth and falsity is judgment as the combination of notions: if that were the case, we would miss the complex theory of book II of the *De anima* regarding the truth of perception, from the incorrigible one of proper sensibles to the discrimination of common and incidental sensibles, as well as the truth at play in the

⁷ Here Aristotle treats seeing images in a dream as essentially different from seeing proper (427b7-9). In *De somno et vigilia* instead he talks about the functioning of the five senses regardless of their reference, and separates the sense of touch, which is the seat of wakeful consciousness and guarantees contact with reality, from the other senses because he is interested in showing how sleep suspends the sense of touch while the other senses may go on working. This implies that in sleep we do not stop having sensory, especially visual images; we are however incapacitated, for we cannot test their solidity and depth, their integrity, their being more than surface. In other words, what is ruled out in sleep and dreams is the possibility that our senses operate jointly, establishing and verifying the truth and falsity of their sensible representations; therefore the ability to recognize an image as an image, i.e., to distinguish between an image and a likeness, is out of the question. Here touch is the requisite for wakeful consciousness in that it keeps the senses in check and allows me to step out of my situation and verify whether or not I must assent to its appearance. This is as good a description as it gets to the situation of the prisoners at the bottom of the cave (and the reason why Jacob Klein's interpretation of εἰκασία as double seeing is wrong). The Stoics, especially Zeno and Cleanthes, will exploit this distinction between being presented with images and assenting to them: φαντασία καταλεπτική is ruled out in dreams. The image in a dream cannot refer to a thing external to it, for it is the thing; I cannot contextualize it. This is a different way to arrive at the same situation as that plaguing the lunatic Antiphon of Oreus, who hallucinates, i.e., treats his images as if they were memories, and is thus unable to tell an image (φάντασμα), free from the constraints of reference, from a likeness (εἰκών), tied to the events that generated it in experience (*Mem.* 451a9-11).

intellecion of indivisibles at *An.* III 6 and *Metaph.* Q 10.⁸ As I said, (iii) is a problematic point, and strangely Aristotle does not add a single word here. He passes on to the next difference.

(iv) appears as a reflection on the consequences of a proper command of language and shows Aristotle's determination not to depart from ordinary experience: I do not say "I imagine it is a man" if the perception is clear, but only when it is not distinct (428a13-5). "I imagine" and "it appears to me" become equivalent. Φαντασία then is here brought in to express a non-committal interpretation of an indistinct sensory experience.

(v) Finally, we still see "even with our eyes shut" (428a16), which refers to the inertial force of images, which endure when perception is over. Elsewhere, Aristotle likens this movement to that of a projectile or a javelin, which moves on even if the physical force impressed to it is no longer in contact with the athlete's arm and the javelin (*Insomn.* 459a28 ff.).

Let me go back to (iv) for a moment. Whether this consideration arises as a reflection on linguistic practice or not, it definitely shifts our attention from our power to deal with images, residual or not, to appearance itself. If so far φαντασία comprehended aspects of what we call imagination, now it is decisively a way to respond to indistinct appearance: an impression we do not trust. But it is confusing that all distinction between my response and what appears vanishes, for the word may refer to either my impression or the thing that appears to me.

If φαντασία does not normally add to the discriminatory power of perception, which is by and large self-sufficient for Aristotle, yet, as I anticipated, in certain limiting cases it is a sort of interpretation of appearances that are intrinsically hard to read (owing to problems either with the perceiver, e.g., illness, emotions, or with the distinctness of the object, e.g., distance, conditions of light and visibility, etc.). In this case it is a κριτικόν, a discriminating power (ἢ ἔξις, καθ' ἣν κρίνομεν ἢ ἀληθεύομεν ἢ ψευδόμεθα, Aristotle writes at *An.* III 3, 428a3-4), but very likely to err or go astray; and here the senses are a more passive vehicle of impressions, precisely insofar as they don't take a stand on how perceived things actually are. In this case alone does Aristotle contravene Wittgenstein's dictum that you can't perceive and imagine the same thing at the same time—except the meaning of "imagine" must be properly understood as a form of conjecture. This new link between φαντασία and appearance (φαίνεσθαι) is what motivates Lycos' rendition of φαντασία as "being ap-

⁸ See my *Hegel and Aristotle*, 161-71.

peared to,” and justifies Schofield’s interpretation of φαντασία as a loose family concept judging non-veridical experience in a sceptical way.

Aristotle’s obvious reference is to Plato’s use of the term in the *Theaetetus*, *Philebus* and *Sophist* (and before that to Protagoras’ idea that perception is what seems to me, *Metaph.* Γ 5). And the conclusion of this effort at understanding φαντασία apart from opinion and perception is that it cannot be a blend of the two, as it was in Plato. Were φαντασία an opinion corresponding to and indistinguishable from the sensation of the same object it is an opinion of, we could not have a true belief with regard to something which has a false appearance. Even if the sun appears a foot across, we judge it to be bigger than the inhabited earth; and the judgment does not alter the way the sun appears to us. In other words, here Aristotle wants to avoid reducing φαντασία to its neighboring functions or saying that to imagine is to form an opinion exactly corresponding to a direct perception (428b2-3). Here the φαντασία of the sun is the misleading appearance we verify and confront with our pondered judgment. But φαντασία’s role is the admittedly misleading one of presenting us with a deceiving image; and it is itself a judgment, which has nothing to do with mental images, or with imagination (save insofar as it is a sort of conjecture, a guess). It is a judgment on appearance and includes an inference and estimation of quantity and distance, therefore an interpretation and a ὑπόληψις (I do not say that the sun appears small, I say it appears to be of this magnitude⁹). In the case of indistinct perception φαντασία is a κριτικόν and becomes interpretation; and when φαντασία judges, it is not in the form of an overlap between mental images, or pictures, and reality. Φαντασία does judge what appears (φαίνεται), but we preserve the freedom not to assent to this appearance—which means that we can bracket, put out of play and override φαντασία.

There is thus a discrepancy between appearance and opinion that makes it possible for us to draw back from appearance and set up a distance between it and us. It is as if a realist intentionalist theory of perception suddenly became in one of its applications phenomenalist and gave rise to an otherwise virtually absent gap between givenness in our subjective experience and in itself. Along with this discrepancy, there is a conflict between the claim to truth put forth by φαντασία and the resolution, the decision about it by opinion (δόξα). For in *On Dreams* Aristotle returns to the example of the sun, and argues that “the controlling sense (τὸ κύριον) does

⁹ I pass over the complications regarding the estimation of magnitude by the senses or by δῖανοτα at *Sens.* 448b 14 ff. and *Insom.* 460b16-20 and the conflicts between these texts and the *De anima*.

not judge these things by the same power as that by which images occur. This is proved by the fact that the sun appears to measure a foot across, but something else often contradicts this impression” (τὴν φαντασίαν, 460b16-20, transl. Hett). That the controlling power contradicts φαντασία is repeated at 462a6-7: in sleep I cannot contradict the impression in which my φαντασία consists because I cannot take the image *as image*, and thereby judge its claim to truth. What sleep suspends is my capacity to see images *as representational*. If φαντασία were left to itself, to its tendency to disconnectedness, its images would be all we have; because it is not, because it is kept in check and is validated as relational, it has a unique cognitive use precisely qua capacity to represent.

Now this ἀντιφάναι, this ability to contradict φαντασία, sends us back to another trait that is behind Aristotle’s theory of truth, which we could express as follows: the greater the contact (howsoever understood) with presence (τοῦ παρόντος), with the thing, the greater the truth. If contact is the guarantee of faithfulness, removal and distance are the main causes of falsehood, and φαντασία is all the more likely to err the more it is removed from the thing and connected with absence. At times what Aristotle says about falsehood is confusing, for it covers many shades along what is for us a heterogeneous spectrum ranging from arbitrary or spontaneous representations to inadequate appearances and misleading sensory impressions. In fact, we may find Aristotle’s rather sweeping claim that “φαντασίαι are for the most part false” (428a11-2) baffling; after all it seems reasonable to say that at least some images, e.g., in dreams and paintings, are neither false nor true. That for Aristotle they are instead mostly false is consistent with the first of the several meanings of “false” in the *Metaphysics* (Δ 29, 1024b23-5), where he calls false paintings and dreams because they are not taken in themselves, but as representing a reality that is not. Φαντασία is therefore always understood and evaluated in terms of its basic characteristic, its claim to truth and its goal of reproducing faithfully the thing for our consideration. The partial exception to this cognitive import of φαντασία is the treatise *On Memory*, where the contrast between image and likeness relieves φαντάσματα from the responsibility for reference and truth and leaves it to likenesses, as we will see in the next section.

In any event, this theory of truth as contact returns by the end of the chapter, where Aristotle distinguishes between the different images left over from the respective modes of perception. As we know, perception of proper sensibles is always true, while with common and incidental sensibles we may go wrong; likewise, a φαντασία deriving from proper sensibles “is true whenever the sensation is present, but the others may be false

both when it is present and when it is absent, and especially when the sensible object is at a distance” (428b28-30).

It is not clear what conclusions we should draw from *An.* III 3. There are relatively inconsistent accounts of φαντασία, but it seems clear that Aristotle’s preoccupation is mainly directed at a form of representation of things in their absence which is the result of a prior perception and which may be used by thinking and memory (or, as for animals, as a way to orient themselves in reality). His definition is very broad purposely, I suggest, as if to adjust to and accommodate the diverse understandings we have seen. He writes: “Φαντασία is the movement by which we say that an image occurs in us” (428a1-2). It is the process by which images are left over, presented, visualized, recalled, held fast as possibly true; and these images are the traces of prior perception.

The nominal definition of φαντασία expressed at the beginning of the chapter is repeated and confirmed at the end, where Aristotle writes that “imagination must be a movement produced by sensation actively operating. Since sight is the chief sense, the name φαντασία is derived from φάος (light), because without light it is impossible to see ... Imaginations persist in us and resemble sensations” (429a2-6, transl. Hett). This characterization has led interpreters to emphasize the visual connotation of images and the resemblance model for images. I would like to say just a few words to dispel what may be a myth. The visual paradigm is not as exclusive as in most of our philosophical tradition: the residual φάντασμα in us must be able to refer to all sensibles and their respective senses. It is not necessarily a visual trace, but can comprehend the memory image of everything the perception has left in us; and this ranges from proper sensibles (the φάντασμα of a string quartet is no oxymoron) to common and incidental sensibles, including the awareness of the relation of this white to Diares’ son, ascriptions, comparisons, etc. We saw that the alternative is to postulate the action of φαντασία in order to generalize, attune and smooth out singular perceptions. If instead the trace of perception includes the whole of what I have perceived (and I perceive the λόγος, the ratio or form of the sensible, not isolated bits of *qualia*), there is no need to postulate an additional faculty, because in the experience of a singular token I already have access to its type.

Another criterion that has been taken, I submit, too literally is the requirement that images resemble the percepts from which they derive. True, Aristotle does speak of ὁμοίωσις, and his theory of perception does need a likeness: the virtue of likeness is that it fastens my image to the thing, and thus secures reference as a natural relation, in a way that is not conventional, arbitrary, easily changeable. However, it is a caricature to

make Aristotle say that I must harbor in my soul a picture reproducing as if on exact scale the thing I saw. I think it is an exaggeration to attribute to Aristotle this illusion of immanence, in Sartre's words, or ghost in the machine if you prefer Ryle's, by which I relate to things through the medium of my fixed mental representations of them; it shows again that the visual paradigm has taken over as the exclusive model. Likeness is not visual, nor is it wholesale; it can be a matter of degree. For example, I can refer to a thing by way of an arbitrary truncated symbol, as in *mnemotechnique*, whereby I acquire a certain freedom towards the thing I experienced and want to recall to my mind. So we must carefully interpret the theory of reproduction of sensory experience in memory as if by substitution. The theory of images as pictures of prior experience has mainly been derived from the treatise *On memory*. To a fuller examination of it we can now turn.

III. Φαντασία and Reference (Memory and Thought)

As we have seen, the definition of φαντασία is general enough to accommodate visualization, memory, dreams, *teleologically* directed activity. Φαντασία's main but not exclusive effect is that of enabling us to visualize and make present to ourselves absent things. Φαντασία represents, in a broad sense stands for, the thing that generated the φάντασμα: this is implicit in the causal theory we have seen in *De anima* III 3. The image is the thing in its absence, the thing as a representation. Its advantage *vis-a-vis* the perception of the sensible thing is that the image is not bound or limited to the immediacy of givenness. If, as I said, presence is the necessary touchstone of truth we rely on, still presence is said in at least two ways: the presence of the sensible in perception differs from this now vicarious presence to our consideration it enjoys in φαντασία. The obvious consequence is that in φαντασία we are freer from givenness in that we can give ourselves, we can reproduce, presence out of deliberate intention.

Yet, while an image is always a form of presence, it is not always the vicarious presence of the thing, for it may be taken in different, non-representational senses: for example, as a simple image I entertain while phantasizing or dreaming. Even if the first origin of this image is in perception, here the presence of the image is not meant as a likeness. When it is so meant, we can have a memory image related to the experience from which it derives, or a likeness in more general terms, i.e., as a way to refer to a concept (the image of Coriscus may conjure up my friend for me or represent an illustration of "man" to my mind). The distinction the treatise

On Memory introduces is a distinction, following my point (iii) above from *An.* III 3, internal to the sense-derived φάντασμα, which becomes a representational image (an εἰκών) or a disconnected φάντασμα according to our consideration, depending on what we mean to make of it. But let me proceed with order.

In *On memory* Aristotle asks: if the image presents us with the thing without its physical presence, when I consider an image isn't it paradoxical to say that I am intuiting something absent? And in what more precise sense can an image come to be considered a likeness of the thing? When I remember, I have an image of the thing which I treat as a likeness (εἰκών) of that thing: Why?

Perception impresses a transcription (τύπος, *Mem.* 450a32) in memory. When one remembers, is one contemplating the present affection, or that from which it is derived (450b12-3)? If it is the present affection, then remembering and sensing would be the same, and we could not remember anything in its absence. If I failed to consider my present image of Coriscus an image of *Coriscus*, I would be presenting myself with a new image (*Insomn.* 461b23 ff.): if it were not a likeness, all images would be different objects of ever renewed contemplation. A world without a stable identity is a meaningless world. When I conjure up an image of Coriscus, my imagination must then work together with my memory, which is the disposition (ἔξις ἢ πάθος, *Mem.* 449b25) constituted by our repeated distinction between image (φάντασμα) and the image-as-a-likeness (εἰκών), and by the repeated consideration of an image as a copy of the thing to which it refers.

When I remember, I must be “seeing and hearing what is not present” (450b19-20). Differently stated, memory is a real “presencing of absence.” But unlike imagination, which only makes me visualize images, memory presences absence *qua absence*. Unlike in imagining, in remembering the images are always considered as deriving from an actual perception: we are aware of having experienced the thing before, hence also of the time elapsed, and the image we envision now is regarded as a likeness precisely because of our consciousness of its temporal connotation. As copies, images can function *in reference to* things. Whether we regard it as likeness or as image, the image is one; what changes is not its relation to the original, as it would be for Plato (*Soph.* 232a1-235c7), but our different thematization, our intentionality, our “mode of contemplating” or considering the image (τὸ πάθος τῆς θεωρίας, 450b31). If the sensory content pictured remains identical in the image and the likeness, still the theoretical import differs, because in the case of a memory the content is not perceived in

itself, but is visualized as a representation of the past experience of the thing: it has the value of a temporal, relational index.

This index value is less apparent and much less discussed by Aristotle, but becomes crucial when it is non-temporal and is used by thinking. For thinking, I suggest, uses images as particular examples and illustrations of intelligible forms. Which is to say it sees the universal in the image, but disregards precisely what makes the image an image, its particularity. Thinking ignores whatever is subjective and particular about the image and uses it as a representation of the form we think in it.

Memory, Aristotle argues, is always of images, even when we remember intelligibles (450a12-3). That we think in images is a very well-known thesis (*Mem.* 450a1; *An.* I 1, 403a8; III 7, 431a16-7; 431b2; 8, 432a10). It follows from the necessity that thinking have a present object of thought. Thinking needs an intuition filling its thematic consideration just as sensation needs a sensible thing to be activated; to the thinking soul “images (φαντάσματα) serve as sense-images (αἰσθήματα) do to perception” (*An.* III 7, 431a14-5; cf. 8, 432a4-11)¹⁰. I need to place the thing “before my eyes” (πρὸ ὀμμάτων, *Mem.* 450a4) and consider the absent thing in its image “as if I saw it” (ὡςπερ ὀρώων, *An.* III 7, 431b7).

However, the exact nature of the dependence of thinking on images is a matter of dispute. While I believe that Simplicius, among others, was too quickly dismissive when he said that Aristotle really meant that imagination is only required by the discursive soul, since the thinking soul is in identity with its object and not related to it through otherness or images,¹¹ I also think that to make thinking dependent on imagination would be an undue restriction of Aristotle's position, at odds with *An.* III 5 and the denial of the corporeal basis of thinking. Let me explain.

Obviously intelligibles are enmattered and immanent in sensibles, and therefore they are apprehended on the basis of the images left over from our sensation of them (*An.* III 8, 432a3 ff.). But, contrary to a widespread belief, Aristotle's point that we cannot think without images does not simply translate the content of images into thought. An image is both inevitable and prior for us, for our apprehension and memory; but it is not prior by nature. Thus Aristotle writes that we cannot learn or understand anything without images (“for images are like sense-images, except without matter,” 432a9-11), and that “concepts are not images but are not without images” (432a13-5). I take the last quote to indicate that even if we cannot

¹⁰ For the meaning of αἴσθημα see Sorabji, *Aristotle on Memory*, London 1972, pp. 82-3.

¹¹ In *Libros Aristotelis De Anima*, ed. by M. Hayduck, Berlin 1882, p. 267, ll. 30-32.

help picturing the pure intellect, or being, or the divine to ourselves, we need not rely in our thought of what is not intuitive on what is no more than an analogical representation, which may be of help to picture, memorize or communicate, but does not adequately capture any of the essence of our object of thought.

Images are inevitable because of the finitude of our thinking, which first must learn, and then knows. But thinking in itself is actual and free and does not need images, as we see in the case of the prime mover, thinking itself without the aid of images; only our thought needs images, because we need to recall, give our intelligible gaze, present ourselves with images to substantiate our thought, which for us always *begins* from (but does not necessarily end at) the sensible. When the intellect is embodied in us, thinking in images is what its use amounts to. But *per se* the active intellect is prior, and is independent of the representation of the sensible. It follows that our thinking, true to its impassive, separate and unmixed nature, must consider the sensible forms we learn in experience as no more than the illustrations of the intelligible essences enmattered in them.

It follows from the principles of Aristotle's *noetics* that the image only has an exemplary function, and that imagining and remembering are the subjective acts of the presentification of things whose content is distinct from and irreducible to their image. Even if this thesis is not discussed in a manner and to an extent comparable to the distinction between φάντασμα and likeness, it is nevertheless stated in no uncertain terms by Aristotle when he distinguishes between objects of memory properly so called from incidental objects of memory (κατὰ συμβεβηκός, *Mem.* 450a27); and when he argues, in a passage which has rarely attracted the attention of commentators in this context (*An. Post.* I 10, 77a1-3), that when a geometrician draws a triangle the figure only has an illustrative function. The geometrician contemplates or sees, as it were, the essence of the triangle *in light of* the image (we have seen the connection between sight, φάος and φάντασμα at *An.* III 3, 429a3); but the relation between the two is not direct or necessary, let alone causal. The image is irremediably particular and determinate because through it my imagination reproduces what appeared to me in perception. The image can help me understand or remember aspects of the thing; but for Aristotle I do not simply translate into concepts what is present in an image, for there is nothing universal about an image as image. It is only when I regard it as the particular occurrence of an abstract form that it acquires for my intellect the value of an index and reference to an intelligible essence. And that is because, once again, an image is not an unchangeable content, but can vary according to the mode of consideration, so that the same content, say the visual image of

my brother, may represent a fleeting image of him I entertain now, my memory of him, or give a concrete exhibition to my abstract consideration of “man.” In the last case, the image is a vehicle and an index.

Here is a central passage showing what I mean:

We cannot think without an image. For the same thing occurs in thinking as in the drawing of a figure. There, although we do not make use of the triangle’s determinateness of quantity, yet we draw it with a determinate quantity. Similarly in thinking, although we do not think of the quantity, yet we place a quantity before our eyes, but do not think of it as of a quantity (*Mem.* 449b 24-450a 6).

Differently stated, thinking works against the particularity of images. It often resists misleading appearances and thus “contradicts the imagination,” as we saw; likewise, it goes beyond the subjective appearance of φαντάσματα because it “contradicts” the subjective particularization of forms in experience.

What is not stated by Aristotle is a further, crucial point, that makes the transmission model (φάντασμα – νόημα, from image to concept), towards which Aristotle entertains more than a simple gesture, fail: a sensible form and an intellectual essence simply cannot be identical. True, the sensible form is a ratio or λόγος; but the logos of the essence, expressed by the definition, is intrinsically non-sensible and can hardly be arrived at by a conceptualization of the sensible form left over in the image. By treating image, sign and name as continuous and homogeneous, as he often does,¹² Aristotle cannot satisfactorily take into account the gap between image and concept, between intuitive and abstract, which is deeper than he thought.

IV. *Deliberative Φαντασία and the Freedom of Practical Imagination*

In the passages devoted putatively to φαντασία the picture we get is of a process causally generated by perception, a process which has a derivative status. It seems that in their use for thinking images have basically an instrumental function, because of their irremediable particularity, but also, more generally, because of the fact that an image reproduces to our mind whatever state of affairs generated it, and is thus removed from the “original” from which we must take our bearings when understanding and truth are our goal. Unlike modern mind, the Aristotelian intellect does not legis-

¹² See for example the theory of meaning as an affection of the soul in *Int.* 1, 16a3-8, or the theory of recollection in the second part of *On Memory*.

late over nature, which it only purports to understand and attest. If the $\nu\omicron\delta\varsigma$ becomes the form it thinks, it cannot have a form of its own (laws, categories, principles), but must adapt itself in a plastic way to its several objects, which invariably constitute the point of departure and the guide for it, including the criterion by which we distinguish the functions of the intellect itself: for example, it is the different modal status of the object at play (the necessity of the immutable vs. the contingency of what can be otherwise) that allows us to differentiate between scientific and calculative intellect and their respective criteria for truth. In other words, the $\nu\omicron\delta\varsigma$ tries to follow the nature of the thing; at best images are good bearers or reminders of them, but have no value in themselves.

However, when we come to other texts (*Rhetoric*, *De motu animalium*, *Nicomachean Ethics*), the large picture again needs refocusing.

In *De motu*, in the course of his explanation of the principles of animal movement, Aristotle argues that the object represented as the goal is the unmoved mover of the action (701b33-4; cf. *An.* III 10). This representation is formed as the thought or image of the object to pursue or avoid; and what counts here is how the object appears to me. We are sent back to the meaning of $\varphi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ as impression, except that it is now the distinct impression of the end that is at once the starting point for action, and therefore does not derive from a prior perception, but originates a movement. “For the affections suitably prepare the organic parts, desire the affections, and $\varphi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ the desire” (*MA* 702a18 ff., transl. Nussbaum). Very strikingly, in light of what we have seen and the derivation of $\varphi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ from perception, Aristotle continues: “and $\varphi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ comes about either through thought or through sense-perception” (ibid.). This move was actually adumbrated in chapter 10 of *De anima* III, where Aristotle spoke of a deliberative or rational $\varphi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ ($\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\eta}$). This deliberative $\varphi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ follows upon reasoning and only belongs to calculative animals, human beings. Here $\varphi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$, based on the evaluation of the relative merits of different choices, combines the diverse images into one representation (*this* is the only occurrence of a synthesis, at 434a10), and thus helps the internal weighing of options leading to a deliberation. In this sense $\varphi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ is the ability to see the particular in light of a goal, in view of possible choices.

We have here a definitely new element: while so far $\varphi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ was investigated in the traits that all animals possessing it shared, now we have a specifically human power to represent ends, which evaluates a particular state of affairs (of which it can have no science but at best a correct opinion) and is aimed at a deliberation. Here the images are clearly not visual, but rather forms of expectation, hope, fear, in which I prefigure to myself

a future good. The φαντασῖαι of a revenge appeasing my rage and giving me pleasure (*EN* IV 11, 1126a20-3), of being reunited with my beloved, of being hurt in an accident, of having been abandoned by a friend, are phantasies, memories or anticipations I may savor, in which I may indulge, linger or even brood, feel frightened, bitter or sad; they are as such the source of an often greater pleasure (or pain) than the actual happening itself. These representations are not the pictures of remnants of sense, but psychological conditions which represent states of affairs that are not given and are mostly projected onto the future (or past). And, more importantly, they are not derived from sense but generate passions of their own accord.

The practical imagination then has a very different function from the residual derivation of a trace left from perception in our memory; it orients our desires, and moves us to pursue an end. In other words, instead of being a process caused by perception, it is now the cause of movement. This can be best seen in the *Rhetoric*, where passions are described in their mental nature, as expectation of the pleasant and painful—i.e., as representations—, which means in their complexity, involving hope and fear, evaluations and judgments on relevant states of affairs. Like perceptions, passions are discriminating; they are not blind and irrational impulses but are based on opinions and beliefs, and can change according to how beliefs change. For example, my fear depends on the danger I am convinced I perceive in something. When my conviction regarding the reality of the danger changes, so does my fear, which either vanishes or is addressed to other objects. In the new conviction, the light in which things appear to me changes; I will see things differently from now on, I will shift my perspective and the global image in a way that will alter its borders, its color. Like imagination, passions are in this sense more or less rational, to the extent to which they are permeable, or impervious, to rational arguments and persuasion.

Aristotle, who does not make this trait of φαντασῖα central at all, resists the move tempting later philosophers, from Zeno and Chrysippus to Plotinus (and Kant and Hegel), of splitting φαντασῖα into a sensible and an intellectual mode, eventually making all human φαντασῖα tendentially rational (λογιστική)¹³. As Hegel would say, because thought is implicit in everything human beings feel, dream, imagine or do, we must recognize even in human beings' lower functions diverse forms of rationality at work. Human imagination would then be unqualifiedly rational. Aristotle

¹³ For Zeno and Chrysippus, see Aetius in *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* II 83 and Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* VII 51; for Plotinus, see *Ennead* IV 3, 30.

resists this, because he is more interested in the continuity between humans and animals than in the gap and demarcation of their functions and affections. But, if his entire theory of φαντασία is relatively unprecedented, it is undeniable that he introduces in deliberative φαντασία a groundbreaking aspect that others will exploit more exclusively.

As I said, what matters in animal movement is not how things stand, but how they appear to me; it is how I see something that explains why I am afraid of it. Opinion is an integral part of the passion; because passions change according to my opinions, they can be at least in part constituted rhetorically. The rhetorician exploits the fact that what pleases in its presence does also in its absence, in memory and expectation (*Rhet.* I 11, 1370b10-2). This is why it is pleasant to evoke the loved one in his or her absence. Likewise, to continue with Aristotle's examples, winning generates an image (φαντασία) of superiority that gives me pleasure (1370b34-6); the image of revenge taken, if only in thought or in dreams, for a slight suffered generates pleasure (II 2, 1378b8-10). Fame generates the impression (φαντασία) of possessing the qualities of an excellent person (1371a8-10); being loved is pleasant because it sends me back an image of myself as good (1371a18-9). Fear is a pain deriving from the image of a forthcoming evil (ἐκ φαντασίας μέλλοντος κακοῦ φθαρτικοῦ ἢ λυπηροῦ, II 5, 1382a22-3); hope is the image of an imminent good (1383a17-8); and shame is the imagination of haunting disgrace (II 6, 1384a21-2). These images (the one word for images, imagination and impression in the previous examples is always φαντασία) are internal representations whose contours are not definite, and which therefore leave room for the rhetorician's influence. In the end it is not only the contours of the images, but my very passions, that can change, and with them the actions for which I will be responsible. And I don't need an outside persuader: a dialogue of the soul with itself will do just as fine.

If this combination of three basic elements: image or representation, fear of evil and hope for good, giving rise in its permutations, additions and subtractions to different "passions of the mind," reminds you of Chapter 6 of *Leviathan*, I think you are right. Hobbes drew his inspiration for that chapter from his study of the *Rhetoric* by the philosopher he much maligned and hated. This reference to Hobbes only helps me introduce one last point. In the controversy with Bishop Bramhall, Hobbes retorts to his opponent that man may well be free "to do what he hath a fancy to do, though," continues Hobbes, "it be not in his *will* or *power* to *choose* his

fancy, or choose his *election* or *will*.”¹⁴ I am free to do whatever I please (provided I have the power), except I am not free to please whatever I want. My imagination determines my wants and desires, and is itself determined, out of my control.

Aristotle does consider this problem in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. We have seen the link between appearance and representation. This becomes the heart of a pressing question in ethics: if all we do in action is look to the appearing good, that is, to our representation of the good, and this is the only available deciding factor, we might be inclined towards the view that appearing does not depend on us, and therefore a certain choice is not imputable to us but to an inevitably partial judgment on what could have appeared differently had I had a different perspective or vantage point. In that case the judgment would be contingent, and the ensuing action, if blamable, pardonable. I am, after all, innocent with respect to what I perceive. Interestingly, Aristotle argues to the contrary, again because perception is understood as a disposition shaping my identity and is thus more active, more educational and involves more responsibility than for many modern philosophers. He writes:

But someone might argue as follows: “All men seek what appears good to them, but they have no control over how things appear to them; the end appears different to different men.” If, we reply, the individual is somehow responsible for his own characteristics, he is similarly responsible for what appears to him (*EN* III 7, 1114a31—b3, trans. Ostwald).

Even appearance is part of my ethical responsibility. The images that move me to action have moral connotation and significance; they show the kind of person I am. Images thus have more than a causal function. They can also persuade me to feel a certain passion and stabilize a certain disposition of tendencies in me. If my desire is stimulated by the representation of the end I have, my desire is not atomistic and disconnected from other desires or from me. Both my desires and my images are combined in a thoroughgoing unity defining my individuality, my mental disposition. Because what I perceive as morally salient for my choices depends on my desires and representations, I must pay the keenest attention not only to the right education of my passions, but also to the cultivation of the good

¹⁴ *Of Liberty and Necessity*, in *T. Hobbes, The English Works*, ed. Molesworth, London 1839–45, vol. IV, p. 247. On imagination in Hobbes, see my *Artificio, desiderio, considerazione di sé. Hobbes e i fondamenti antropologici della politica* (Pisa 2001, chapter 6), and “Imagination and Hobbes: Distance, Possibility, and Desire,” in *The Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 24: 2, 2003, 5–27.

dispositions of my imaginative life. To be more precise, there is no real distinction between these two forms of education.

Think of books I and II of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the circle between exercise and disposition: the activity derives from a disposition, yet may also establish one, through intentional repetition. There is an analogous circle between character and imagination. The disposition here is the abiding *habitus* thanks to which I relate to my images. So my images may be quite ephemeral, but they may also leave an abiding trace in me, a sedimented attitude and habit of imagining (and conversely may derive from such habits). And that is a habit which I contribute to establishing, and for which I am ultimately responsible.

If I imagine something that gives me pleasure, and this pleasure in the absence of its object moves me to act, then I am not only the initiator of a desire and its subsequent behavior; I am also, and tend to remain, the person who has so imagined, desired and decided. I have in part generated a disposition and an attitude to represent ends and objects to myself. This is another way in which desire, far from being an irrational and formless drive indifferent to individuality, depends in part on my imagination's representations and on my character.

V. *Conclusions*

Is there a unity to these different activities, functions and meanings of φαντασία? They do not seem to be connected by a thorough, let alone systematic, unity. But nor are they a bundle of heterogeneous or disparate elements, for they find their leading thread and common denominator in the power of representing and the presenting of absence.