

ARISTOTLE ON THE WAY SOMETHING APPEARS*

Aristóteles sobre el modo en que algo aparece

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I analyse Aristotle's inquiry into *phantasia* (especially in *De anima* III 3). First, I focus on Aristotle's preliminary distinction between perception, *phantasia* and thought; second, I reconstruct his polemical debate with Plato concerning the cognitive value of perception and the relation between perception, «appearance» and belief; third, I argue in favour of an involvement of *phantasia* into the processes underlying complex perception (perception of common sensibles and co-incidental perception); fourth, I briefly suggest a disjunctive interpretation of Aristotelian 'appearance' in order to partially avoid the apparent inconsistency between the sharp distinction between perception and *phantasia* on the one hand, and the view that *phantasia* is involved in complex perception on the other hand.

Keywords: Aristotle; Cognitive Psychology; Epistemology; Perception; *Phantasia*; Theory of Appearing; Ancient Philosophy of Mind; Belief-Theory.

RESUMEN

En este artículo analizo el examen aristotélico de la *phantasia* (especialmente en *De anima* III 3). En primer lugar, me centro en la distinción preliminar que Aristóteles establece entre percepción, *phantasia* y pensamiento;

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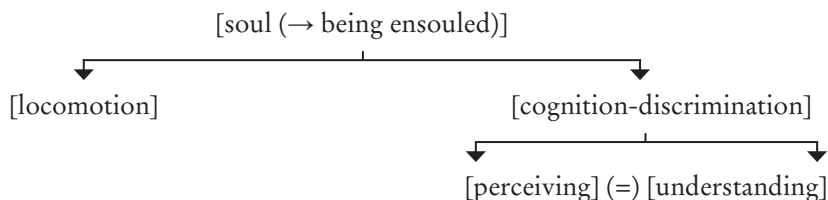
en segundo lugar, reconstruyo su debate polémico con Platón sobre el valor cognitivo de la percepción y la relación entre percepción, «apariencia» y creencia; en tercer lugar, defendiendo la implicación de la *phantasia* en los procesos subyacentes a la percepción compleja (la percepción de los sensibles comunes y la percepción por accidente); en cuarto lugar, sugiero brevemente una interpretación disyuntiva de la «apariencia» aristotélica con el fin de evitar parcialmente la aparente inconsistencia entre la marcada diferenciación de la percepción respecto a la *phantasia* y la concepción de que la *phantasia* está implicada en la percepción compleja.

Palabras clave: Aristóteles; Psicología cognitiva; Epistemología; Percepción; *Phantasia*; Teoría del aparecer; Filosofía antigua de la mente; Teoría de la creencia.

1. SOME PLATONIC ECHOES IN ARISTOTLE'S CRITICISM OF PRESOCRATIC COGNITION

Aristotle focuses on «appearance» in his *De anima*, after deeply inquiring into perception (II 5-III 2) and before treating intellect and thought (III 4-6). *De anima* III 3 is an extremely dense chapter, that exhibits a systematic methodology of inquiry: it is a theoretical bridge from what precedes and what follows, just as *phantasia* turns out to be a *trait d'union* between perceptual powers and intellectual capacities. Let us follow the fundamental steps through which Aristotle achieves his positive doctrine.

One widely recognised *differentia* of the soul –besides that of enabling locomotion– is the «cognitive» capacity (γνώριζειν) or *discriminatory* capacity (κρίνειν) which includes *understanding* (νοεῖν καὶ φρονεῖν) and *perceiving* (αἰσθάνεσθαι), wrongly identified by most predecessors¹:



1. Of course, not by Plato.

This simple tree represents a widespread view among predecessors but also in the pre-philosophical culture². As we will see, on the right side there are further specifications Aristotle will add with his positive theories, but first of all he stresses the ancient predecessors' fundamental mistake of leaving [perceiving] and [understanding] not distinguished, as if understanding *was* a kind of perceiving³.

Such an epistemological mistake is connected with another 'ontological' mistake, the idea that understanding is something *corporeal* as perceiving is (427a26-27), and is also accompanied with the idea that cognition as such is of *like by like* (427a28). The latter idea, Aristotle cryptically argues, leads to the view that *everything that appears is true*: our bodies somehow 'receive' (from the environment) items that are like them, so receiving a stimulus amounts to being confronted with an existing item, which means that our state is true. On this (a bit obscure) account, what appears to us is always similar to its cause: you could 'miss' –not receive– something, but not be mistaken *about* something you really take in.

What is interesting in such a critical description, is its similarity with –or probably its dependence on– Plato's presentation of Protagoras' view in the first part of the *Theaetetus*, as well as with Plato's pioneering distinction between rational soul and sensory perception in the second part of the same dialogue⁴. Without entering into the details, Protagoras⁵ holds that perception is always true and «of what is» (152c5-6); that perceiving and appearing are the same (152b12); that any form of appearance is perception-like; and that perception amounts to our sensory organs' being impacted on by external causal factors that *become* the way they appear to us (insofar as they make our senses become like themselves)⁶. As a consequence, appearance is infallible.

2. For example, Homer is referred to, at 427a25-26.

3. Both for Plato and for Aristotle Presocratic thinkers tend to consider all forms of cognition as perception-like bodily changes (see for example Aristotle, *De an.* III 3, 427a19-30; *Met.* IV 5, 1009b12-16). Of course, with relevant exceptions (Plato takes himself as a heir of Parmenides concerning his intellect/sensation opposition; Aristotle especially emphasizes Anaxagoras' discovery of intellect as having a special epistemic and ontological status, e.g. in *De an.* III 4).

4. See *Theaet.* 184-186, cf. *infra*.

5. Of course, Protagoras as a *dramatis persona* in Plato's *Theaetetus* may well not perfectly match with the historical Protagoras.

6. This is the so-called «Secret Doctrine» that Protagoras, Socrates says, secretly shared with his adepts: it is «flux ontology» for which everything becomes, in particular

Socrates in the *Theaetetus* refutes Protagoras' infallibilist view in many ways,⁷ but lately he advances an even more radical argument against the Protagoras' following theories –indeed the very theories Aristotle is critically reporting at the beginning of *De anima* III 3: since a) perception is (truth-evaluable and) always true, and b) perception and appearing are the same (thinking is like perceiving), therefore c) everything that appears is true. In short, Socrates argues that perception does not «touch» *being* so it does not touch *truth* either, therefore perception is neither true nor false, it is not truth-evaluable. In order to have truth-evaluable mental states, so *bona fide* cognitive states, something else must be operative in us beyond our sensory organs (which merely receive 'atomic' information concerning colours, smells, sounds and the like), something that actively compares, mediates and synthesise such a sensory manifold and grasps «thicker» properties common to all sensory qualities and beyond, like [being], [one], [identical-with], [different-from], and the like⁸. That genuine subject of any cognitive process –included perceptual *experience*⁹– is *our soul* and is to be distinguished from the sensory (bodily) organs «*through* which» we, «*with* our soul», perceive (184c5-9); the cognitive process the soul performs is called *δοξάζειν*, a term that denotes «believing» but involves our rational capacity in general, i.e. our conceptual, propositional and inferential abilities: as we will see, believing is conceived of as the outcome or «accomplishment» of discursive thinking¹⁰.

Going back to Aristotle: in my view, assessing Aristotle's critical reception of some fundamental views of Plato on perception, 'appearing' and belief is crucial to understand Aristotle's own theory of appearing; this is why his objections to Plato's view on appearing will be especially focused on in this paper. Aristotle agrees with Plato about the latter's pioneering, radical distinction between perception and belief (and thinking), but he contrasts

any object X becomes F as soon as a subject S come to perceive X as being F (see *Theaet.* 152d1-7; 153d8-154a5).

7. Among the arguments: beliefs like «X is *useful*» cannot be always true, because we often get things wrong and in pursuing the useful we end up obtaining a damage (178a-179c); b) if all opinions were true, also the opinion that some opinion is false would be equally true (169e 7-171d 7: the so-called 'Self-refutation Argument', on which see Zucca 2022).

8. The so-called *κοινὸν*, *Theaet.* 185a11-b4.

9. Experience as a global and structured presentation of a world including «discrete» objects with their properties and relations, goes much beyond the reception of simple qualities like colours and sounds: in the *Theaetetus*' argument under consideration, it seems that without reason there cannot be such an experience.

10. See *Theaet.* 189e6-7, 190a1-4; and *Soph.* 263e1-264b5.

him about the cognitive value of perception as well as about the nature of ‘appearing’, i.e. about *experience*: in sum, Aristotle treasures Plato’s advancements but proposes a totally different geography of cognition, that provides perception with much deeper cognitive powers and makes appearance perception-dependent so potentially *autonomous* from belief¹¹.

2. GETTING INTO THE MATTER: WHAT APPEARING IS NOT

First, Aristotle distinguishes perception from thought in a dialectical way, through pieces of *prima facie* evidence: perception of simple qualities is always true, but we often think falsely, and thought is a privilege of rational animals whilst also non-rational animals perceive (427b7-8). Note that concerning *simple* perception Aristotle is already on the side of Protagoras (infallibilism)¹² and against Plato’s view (at least in the *Theaetetus*) that perception as such is neither true nor false.

At this point Aristotle abruptly introduces «appearing» (*phantasia*)¹³, as if the very distinction between perceiving and thinking needed a *trait-d’union*, a connection point:

For appearing (φαντασία) is different from both perception and thought (διάνοια), and it does not come about without perception, and without this there is no taking-true¹⁴ (ὀρόληψις). (*De an.* III 3, 427b14-16) (transl. by Shields modified¹⁵)

11. As is well-known, in *Apo* II 19 (99b1-100b5) as well as in *Met.* I (980a28-b24) Aristotle presents an elaborated view on the cognitive progression from perception to science: perception → memory → experience (ἐμπειρία) → art and science. But Aristotle’s ‘ἐμπειρία’ in these *loci classici* follows memory and has to do with being *experienced* about a group of similar cases one has already...experienced. I will not deal with these well-known texts here.

12. Aristotle is qualifiedly on the side of Protagoras also about simple properties, since Aristotle’s truth of simple perception is not subject-indexed as Protagoras’ truth (of all appearances). For a reconstruction of Aristotles’ rejection of Protagoras’ view, see the recent Çetinkaya 2026.

13. I prefer to translate *phantasia* as «appearing» rather than as «imagination»: both translations have problems, but I think that «imagination» is too reductive and potentially misleading.

14. I translate ὀρόληψις as «taking true» because it covers both true and false belief as well as knowledge: it is *nomen actionis* of ὑπολαμβάνω, which, as Bonitz has it, in Aristotle means «*sumere ac statuere aliquid pro vero*».

15. All successive translations are modified by me, sometimes not slightly.

Phantasia has perception as a condition and is itself a condition for thinking: such a relation of «hypothetical necessity» also entails a distributive taxonomy such that all thinking animals have *phantasia* and all animals with *phantasia* are perceivers, but not the other way round (some animals with *phantasia* do not think, probably some perceivers do not have *phantasia*¹⁶). By «taking-true» (ὀπλῆψις) a genus is meant, whose species are (non-epistemic) belief¹⁷, knowledge and wisdom (a practical grasp of truth¹⁸, 25-27).

Some arguments follow, to rule out that *phantasia* is believing or taking-true:

- a) *Phantasia* is –at least *can be– up to us* concerning both its activation and its contents: I can imagine non-existent scenarios, so I can ‘make something appear’ to myself just at will. On the contrary, I cannot believe whatever I want, «since it is necessary it (belief) be true or false» (22): I do not choose what I believe just as I choose what to imagine, just because in believing that P when not-P is the case, I am inevitably wrong, whilst I am neither right nor wrong if I *merely* imagine that P when not-P is the case. I tend to believe what I have better evidence for, and this is not a free choice: for example, I cannot decide to believe that I am not in front of my laptop now. Of course, if I also believe that what I am imagining is true or real, then I am wrong, but I am such exactly because I am not just merely imagining that P but I am also believing it is the case. In short, belief is *committal* in a way *phantasia* is not: so, they must be something different, as they have different properties concerning their relation with our being mistaken or successful in getting things right or wrong. Truth-directedness is an essential feature of belief.
- b) *Phantasia* is –at least *can be– emotionally neutral*, as a consequence of its being non-committal: I can fantasize about there being an angry lion in front of me, without having any fear at all, but I could not stand there without fear in case I believed that an angry lion is facing me, unless I am totally insane. Taking-true cannot be emotio-

16. See *De an.* II 3, 415a11.

17. «Belief», as a species of taking-true, is meant to denote a cognitive state which is different from- and incompatible with knowledge.

18. Wisdom and its relation with truth is explored elsewhere (*Et. Nic.* VI) but it does not concern us here: it is listed by Aristotle for the sake of completeness.

nally neutral, unless the content you take to be true or exemplified is practically and existentially indifferent to you.

Then the cognitive taxonomy goes on:

Concerning understanding (*voeiv*), since it is something other than perceiving, and both *phantasia* and taking-true seem to belong to it, it is necessary for those who have characterised *phantasia* to speak of the other later (27-29).

Understanding as intellection will be treated later (III 4-5): it involves *phantasia* but also taking-true (e.g. knowledge is that form of understanding that is also a species of taking-true), but *phantasia* must be treated before (it has already been announced as a *condition* for taking-true). Now a rough and intuitive characterization of *phantasia* is provided, as

«...that in virtue of which we say that a particular appearance (*phantasma*) comes about for us...» (428a1-2)

This looks like a «nominal definition», i.e. a general characterization that captures the meaning of the word: it is a starting point of the inquiry into the real definition of the thing, i.e. to the nature or essence of *phantasia*¹⁹. A «real definition», instead, must exhibit an explanatory power, so it must manifest the causal structure of the *definiendum*: from it, the manifest features of the thing must be derivable or, at least, conjecturable²⁰. The rough material from which the inquiry starts, includes: a nominal definition, that expresses of *what* we are asking «what is it?»²¹; other information like empirical facts, facts about linguistic uses involving the *definiendum* and its cognates, widespread beliefs on the matter (*ἔνδοξα*) and, of course, the doctrines of the predecessors. The first part of the inquiry is dialectical and, so to speak,

19. I have argued elsewhere (Zucca 2018) that Aristotle's inquiry on *phantasia* neatly instantiates the structure of the so-called *Three-Stage-View* that Charles 2000 recognizes in Aristotle's theory of scientific inquiry in *Posterior Analytics* (see especially APo. II 8-10): the first stage posits a nominal definition of the inquired object (*λόγος ὀνοματώδης*), the second stage confirms the existence of the object, the third stage acquires a real definition (*ὁρισμὸς*) and so posits the real essence of the thing.

20. See *De an.* I 1, 402a23-403a3.

21. The nominal definition as a starting-point –together with experience and with the common and notable opinions (*ἔνδοξα*)– is an Aristotelian way out of Plato's *Meno*'s Paradox: we cannot inquire on what we do not know, even if we found it, we would not recognize it as what we were looking for (see *Meno* 80e1-5); on this paradox of inquiry and its reception in Aristotle and other philosophical schools, see Fine 2014.

bottom-up. The exploration conducted so far, is a distinction of *phantasia* from belief (and taking-true more generally) and from perception, but both distinctions are argued for in absence of a real definition of *phantasia*: we are establishing what *phantasia* is *not* before having come to know what *phantasia* is, therefore this step of the inquiry prepares the achievement of the essence/nature so it cannot depend on the previous possession of it.

The nominal definition is: generic and incomplete («the X in virtue of which....»), linguistic («that in virtue of which *we say*...»), partially circular («we say *a phantasma* comes about...»). Still, it is informative: *phantasia* has to do with us having appearances (*phantasmata*), with something appearing to us a way or another. Of course, we do not determinately know what a *phantasma* is, independently of a theory of *phantasia*: hence the circularity.

Aristotle goes back to perception and adds arguments *ad abundantiam* in favour of the distinction between perception and *phantasia*: perception is an activity of the sensory organ, but when perception is off –when we are asleep and we are dreaming– something appears to us anyway (the oneiric contents); perception belongs to all animals but *phantasia* does not (428a9-11); perceptions (at least those of simple qualities) are always true, appearances are often false (428a11-12)²²; the ordinary «appearance-» and «seeming-» and «looking-» jargon is typically employed when we are not sure about whether we are perceiving an X or not.

Given that appearance can be false, it cannot be a factive state either, like intellection or knowledge²³. Again, Aristotle reconsiders whether it can be belief, since belief can be false:

But conviction (πίστις) follows upon belief (since no one can believe something without being convinced of that which believes; yet no beast has conviction, though many of them have *phantasia*. Further, every case of belief implies conviction, while conviction implies being persuaded (τὸ πεπεισθαι), and persuasion implies reason; yet, among the beasts some have *phantasia*, but none has reason (λόγος). (428a19-24)

22. This does not contradict the previous remark that *phantasia*, unlike belief, is non-committal: 1) *phantasia* can be false concerning its content (not exemplified in the world) without *the subject* being wrong thereby. 2) the argument only requires that *phantasia* *sometimes* is not committal whilst belief is *always* committal.

23. If S knows that P, P is true: this is factivity. Intellection is a grasp of essences, so it is successful by definition (no knowledge without intellection).

We have a sequence:

[belief] → [conviction] → [persuasion] → [reason].

Conviction and persuasion only belong to rational minds, whilst *phantasia* is to be found also in beasts, i.e. in non-rational animals: Aristotle takes such a difference in extension as an empirical fact; animals' behavioural flexibility shows that the environment appears to be certain ways to them (and sometimes it appears different than it is); yet they have no reason, since there is no reason without language²⁴.

A belief is an attitude towards a certain content, the attitude of taking such a content as exemplified in the world: belief is a way of *taking-true* indeed. Now, if I am able to take P to be true, I am able to get *convinced* that P is the case. In turn, if I can get convinced that P is the case, I can be *persuaded* of/about P's truth; but being able to be persuaded is one thing with being sensitive to (good) reasons: therefore, belief implies *reasons-sensitivity*, i.e. *rationality*.

Locating belief within what we would call the «space of reasons» –the space of our conceptual, propositional and inferential abilities– is a move we have already encountered in Plato's *Theaetetus*, a move pioneered by Plato indeed (see *supra*). But Plato –as we will see– considers belief and rationality as a *condition* of «appearance» or *phantasia*, so even as a condition of a structured and unified perceptual experience. On the contrary, Aristotle takes for empirically granted that non-rational animals have *phantasia* (but they cannot have belief, given that belief is one thing with rationality), so they locate *phantasia* in two different places of the cognitive space.

3. THE ARGUMENT AGAINST PLATO'S TWO-FACTORS-VIEW OF APPEARANCE

Once many dialectical arguments have ruled out that appearance or *phantasia* is perception and that it is (that kind of taking-true that is) belief, there is another theoretical option to be critically discussed, the 'hybrid' option that *phantasia* is made out of two factors and actually consists of some form of combination of perception and belief:

Appearance = [perception] + [belief]

This is Plato's view, implicitly introduced in the *Theaetetus* and stated *apertis verbis* in the *Sophist*:

24. See *Politics* I 2, 1253a9-18.

What we mean when we say «it appears», is a mixture of perception and opinion (*Soph.* 264b2)

[...] «<φαίνεται>» δὲ ὃ λέγομεν σύμμειζις αἰσθήσεως καὶ δόξης.

This is a characterization of what «it appears» (φαίνεται) really means but it can well be taken as a definition of *phantasia*, as the latter is the *nomen actionis* of φαίνεσθαι, and both Plato and Aristotle associate *phantasia* with «appearing» (φαίνεσθαι) when used «not-metaphorically»²⁵: this is why we prefer to translate φαντασία with «appearing» or, even better, to leave it untranslated rather than translating it as «imagination»: the latter is only a species of the broader genus [*phantasia*]. Also «appearing» is a compromise, since φαίνεσθαι covers also semantic cognates of «appearing» like «seeming» and «looking», which are not interchangeable in every context.

Plato's view of *phantasia* is a two-factors-view, as it reduces it to two irreducible ingredients, perception and belief: the nature of such a «mixture» is not clarified though. Aristotle does not name Plato but he is clearly engaged in refuting the view of *phantasia* advocated by Plato and, probably, other representatives of Plato's Academy; indeed the view comes with variants in Aristotle's presentation of it:

It is evident, then, that *phantasia* could be neither belief *accompanied* by perception (δόξα μετ' αἰσθήσεως), nor belief acquired *through* perception (δι' αἰσθήσεως), nor an *interweaving* (συμπλοκή) of belief and perception, both because of these reasons and because belief will be of nothing other than the object of perception. I mean that *phantasia* will be the interweaving of a belief regarding, and of a perception of, the white; for it surely will not come from a belief regarding the good and a perception of something white. To be appeared to, then, will be to believe precisely the thing one perceives, not co-incidentally (*De an.* 428a24-b2)

Aristotle refutes the two-factors view as such, but it recognises three variants of it:

- a) belief *together with* perception
- b) belief *through* perception
- c) *interweaving* of belief and perception

25. See *De an.* III 3, 428a2: it is plausible that a non-metaphorical use is one which refers to perceptual or perception-like *experiences*: we use «appearing» (and «seeming» and «looking») also in other more abstract contexts that are not experience-involving. Plato agrees in taking *phantasia* – meant *stricto sensu* – to have to do with experience, this is why he makes perception a basic ingredient of *phantasia*.

This is a *climax* from an exterior juxtaposition, through the view that perception is the way or the means by which a belief is formed, to a more intimate intertwining between the two. Plato's σύμμειξις referred to in the *Sophist*'s definition above could be a genus of which we have three more determinate species here. Just before defining appearing or «it appears», the *Sophist*'s Elean Stranger says that *phantasia* is «a belief that is brought about in anyone not independently but *through perception* (δι' αἰσθήσεως, 264a4-6)» as in Aristotle's option (b)²⁶; but we find also occurrences of the option (a) –δόξα μετ' αἰσθήσεως– in Plato's *Timaeus* (28a2, 28c1, 52a7); and there is a *scholium* on *Theaetetus* 191b2 in the so-called *Scholía vetera*, that comments that «the *interweaving* of perception and belief (ἡ συμπλοκὴ τῆς αἰσθήσεως καὶ τῆς δόξης) solved the puzzle»: it is the puzzle of false belief –with which we're not directly concerned here– «solved» through identifying false belief with a false perceptual appearance or a failed perceptual recognition. So, at least in the Platonic tradition if not in Plato's dialogues, option (c) is testified.

In any case, Aristotle's refutation, to which we come back now, targets what the three options have in common, their being ways of a two-factors view.

The first move of the argument is a clarification of the targeted theory: if *phantasia* is a combination of perception and belief, the perception and the belief involved will be about the same thing: if something's appearing white to me can be reduced to a perception combined with a belief, the perception of the white thing would be combined with a belief about the white, such that:

$$X \text{ appears } F \text{ to me} = [(I \text{ perceive } X \text{ as } F) + (I \text{ believe that } X \text{ is } F)]$$

It is not the case that X appears F to me because I perceive X as F and I believe that X is G. No matter what [+] denotes, believing *with* perceiving (a), believing *through* perceiving (b), or belief *interwoven* with perception (c): they must have the very same content, their relation cannot be «co-incidental» indeed, otherwise they would be just a perception (of X as F) and a belief (of X as G) without being constituents of a unitary though composed state of mind, i.e. an instance of appearing or *phantasia*.

The equivalence between [X appears to me as F] and [I perceive X as F] was introduced by Socrates in Plato's *Theaetetus* as an assumption of Pro-

26. See also *Theaet.* 161d2-3: δι' αἰσθήσεως δοξάζειν; and *Theaet.* 179c3-4: αἱ αἰσθήσεις καὶ αἱ κατὰ ταύτας δόξαι.

tagoras' infallibilism (see *supra*²⁷). But Protagoras wrongly treated perception and belief as one thing, his cognitive taxonomy was too coarse-grained: as most of Presocratic thinkers he regarded belief and thought as perception.

Socrates refutes him, then later in the dialogue he distinguishes perception and belief as two processes radically different in nature, and reserves truth-evaluability exclusively to belief: this is why appearance, insofar as it can be true or false, *must* involve belief beyond perception. Hence the two-factors view, implicit in the *Theaetetus* and explicit in the *Sophist*.

Now, Aristotle makes his objection very straightforwardly:

Yet things do appear falsely even among those things concerning which one has at the same time a true belief (ὁπόληψις²⁸): for example, although the sun appears to be one foot across, one is *convinced* that it is larger than the inhabited world; this results, then, either in our having rejected the true belief which we have concerning that thing, even though the thing remains as it was and we have neither forgotten anything nor been *persuaded* of anything new, or, if true belief (δόξα) stands, then the same belief must be both true and false (otherwise, it could have become false, seeing that it might have escaped our notice that the thing had changed over. (428b2-9)

First, a perceptual fact is appealed for: sometimes things (falsely) appear to us to be a certain way but at the same time we (truly) believe they are another way than the way they appear. The example is a very famous one in Antiquity, that of the sun which could look/appear to be very small even though we truly take it –we even *know* it– to be much bigger than it look/appears to be. In such cases, we *do not endorse* our own appearances, even when they persist.

Interestingly enough, this objection, pioneered by Aristotle, is substantially the same as the one typically moved against the so-called *Belief-Theory* of perception –according to which perception is belief or inclination to believe– in much more recent times²⁹: consider the Müller-Lyer Illusion:

27. See *Theaet.* 152c1-3.

28. Here I translate ὁπόληψις as «belief» because translating as «a true taking-true» just sounds too bad; we could translate as «a successful taking-true», but we would lose the *false-vs.-true* opposition.

29. See, for example, Armstrong 1968, and Pitcher 1970.



It is an optical illusion: the horizontal lines look quite different in length, the upper one appears to be longer than the lower one. Yet once we measure them, we discover that they are exactly the same in length, so we come to form a true belief about their length. But our false appearance *does not go away* thereby; on the contrary it persists independently of our change in belief. Before and after measuring the lines, our perceptual appearance keeps stable.

This has been given some explanations but of course this is not our concern here: it generally depends on the *informational encapsulation* of our perceptual systems; at a certain extent, our visual system is *insensitive to collateral information*, our cognitive system is made out of perceptual subsystems that are *modular* and work in parallel with a relative representational autonomy³⁰. On the contrary, our belief-system is tendentially holistic, it is sensitive to collateral information: change just one belief of yours, and you will have to change many other beliefs that are incompatible with this change, and you will have to form many new beliefs, for example those which are logical consequences of the new belief or of the combination of the new belief with other pre-existing beliefs, and so on. Beliefs house our space of reasons, they belong in our rational life: they tend to a global consistency and shy away from contradiction, since the space of reasons is a normative space and is sensitive to consistency, incompatibility and many other logical relations. Our beliefs are connected one to another through a complex and multi-layered inferential net, in a way in which perceptions are not connected. As Aristotle has already argued –following Plato in this respect– belief has essentially to do with rationality. Our text exploits again the connection between belief, *conviction*, *persuasion* and therefore rationality.

30. On the modularity of visual system, see for example Pylyshyn 2003.

Now, given that in the case of the sun:

- 1) the thing has *not changed*;
- 2) we have not been *persuaded* of anything new and
- 3) we have not *forgotten* anything we know,

as soon as the sun appears one foot across, either:

- a) we have rejected our previous belief (the true one: the sun is much bigger than the Earth)
- b) the same belief will be true and false.

The horn (A) is clear enough: in order to come to believe that P, I must reject my previous belief that not-P. But the size of the sun has not changed, I have not been persuaded of any new fact, nor have I forgotten anything (points 1-3). The horn (A) is disproved by an empirical and a phenomenological fact: it is just not the case that I suddenly abandon my belief about the size of the sun each time that the sun appears to me as being much smaller than how I know it is.

The horn (B) is less immediate to understand. There are two possible interpretations of it.

On *Interpretation I*, the assumption is Plato's two factors view:

X appears F to me = [(I perceive X as F) + (I believe that X is F)]

So, if the sun appears to me one foot across, then I believe that the sun is one foot across *and* I keep believing that it is bigger than the Earth (I have not changed my mind), so my doxastic attitude toward the size of the sun is paradoxically right and wrong, true and false at the same time.

To make sense of this horn into the argument, we need to assume that my pre-existing background belief about the size of the sun is somehow part of my appearance together with the new belief that is *-ex hypothesi-* constitutive of the appearance. So I have a contradictory couple of beliefs about the size of the sun, such that my belief-state concerning this object is at the same time true and false. Of course the second horn (B) is impossible. Saying that my belief is both true and false would be a short way to say that I have two contradictory beliefs and I am conscious of having both at the same time, so I must consciously believe in a contradiction! This would make me irrational and would put my beliefs out of the space of reasons.

On *Interpretation II*³¹, my belief that the sun is bigger than the Earth would be true and false for me, i.e. *from the very point of view of the subject*: if I come to believe that the sun is one foot across as soon as the sun appears to be one foot across (this is Plato's view), then I regard my own belief that the sun is bigger than the Earth as both true (I have not changed or abandoned it, *ex hypothesi*) and false (because I believe the contrary, i.e. that the sun is one foot across). I would be irrational in taking the same belief –my own belief that the sun is bigger than the Earth– as being true and false at the same time.

Whichever interpretation of horn (B) is correct, the horn (B) is also impossible: I cannot be both right and wrong at the same time about the size of the sun. Consider that I am not *oscillating* from a belief to another (this would be implausible but theoretically possible); consider also that none of my two incompatible beliefs is *unconscious*: I would be consciously endorsing two incompatible contents, being aware of the fact that they are incompatible.

The global argument is an efficacious *reductio ad absurdum* of Plato's two-factors view of appearance. If it was true, we should accept at least one of two unacceptable consequences, (A) or (B).

Aristotle concludes his general exploration of what *phantasia* could be or not be: «Consequently, *phantasia* is neither any of *these* nor something *from* them» (428b8-9).

To recap the findings about what *phantasia* is not: it is not *perception*, it is not *taking-true*, it is not that non-factive kind of taking-true that is *belief* (intellect and knowledge have been ruled out since *phantasia* can be false), it is not a *combination* of perception and belief (one *with* the other, one *through* the other, an *interweaving* of them). So far so good for the *pars destruens*.

4. THE POSITION OF A HYPOTHETICAL ESSENCE

At this point of the inquiry, we have: a nominal definition, and many manifest features of the inquired object; the exclusion of perception, taking-true and a combination of them has shed light on other features of *phantasia* and also on other *desiderata* a good definition of it is supposed to satisfy. Now the refutation of Plato's view must be turned into a positive proposal. Aristotle makes a hypothesis, then he briefly assesses whether the hypothesis passes the 'derivation test'. As we pointed out, a good definition must allow

31. See Heil 2007.

us to derive or at least to conjecture the manifest features of the thing, it must exhibit explanatory power.

The hypothesis, that also appeals to more general principles of physics (of which psychology is a part, for Aristotle), sounds as follows (428b10-17):

(1) When something is moved, something else can be moved by it. (10-11) (transitivity of movement)

(2) *Phantasia* seems to be a type of motion, not to arise apart from perception, only in perceivers and concerning those things that are objects of perception. (11-13) (intimate relation with perception)

(3) Motion may be produced by the activity of perception, and this must resemble the activity of perception. (13-14) (similarity between cause and effect, mover and moved)

(4) This movement would be neither possible without perception nor could it belong to things that are not perceiving, and according to this motion it is possible for its possessor to do and suffer many things, and for it to be true or false (14-17) (necessary consequences of this hypothetical movement).

Phantasia seems to be a motion in us, so it could well be brought about by another motion: since it is to be found in perceivers and concerns objects and properties we typically perceive –Aristotle has clarified that he is exploring ‘appearing’ meant «in a *non-metaphorical way*» (428a2)– it is reasonable to take the originating movement to be perceptual activity itself: indeed this would explain the similarity of perceiving and appearing, provided that cause and effect are typically similar. A movement caused by perceptual activity would belong only to perceivers, and could bring about in such perceivers truth-evaluable mental states.

Now, Aristotle goes on with this hypothesis and tries to explain how it could account for *fallibility* of *phantasia*, a relevant manifest feature of the inquired object; indeed *phantasia* is truth-evaluable, and it can be false. The next step sounds strange at a first sight:

This point (=point 4 above) happens for the following reasons: (a) perception of proper sensibles is true or it is subject to falsity in the smallest degree; (b) next comes the perception of something’s being an attribute of something, and already here it is possible to be mistaken. For one is not mistaken that there is white, but it is mistaken as to whether the white object is this or that other thing; (c) thirdly, there is perception of the common sensibles, that is, the concomitance of the things to which the proper sensibles belong (I mean, for example, movement and magnitude, that belong to the sensibles: about these there is already, most of all, the possibility of error. (428b18-29).

Aristotle distinguishes the three kinds of sensibles previously introduced (*De an.* II 6, III 1): proper qualities, the perception of which is always true; accidental sensibles (like [the son of Diaries] perceptually recognised as Diaries' son because he is seen to be white: *De an.* II 6, 418a21-24); common sensibles like size, motions and the like (II 6, 418a18-21). Perception of accidental and common sensibles –call it *complex* perception– can be wrong. Under the considered hypothesis, *phantasia* can be a movement caused by each of the three perceptions, from which it could inherit –so account for– some features concerning its truth-evaluability and especially its fallibility.

The motion resulting from these three kinds of perception, the motion effected by the actuality of perception, will differ: the first, when the perception is present, is true; the others can also be false, whether the perception is present or absent, and most of all when the object of perception is far away (428b26-29)

We have six cases, three kinds of perception and three respective cases of 'appearing' as movements caused by a previous perception when perceived object is by then absent (i.e. when the object is not causally active on my sense anymore). When my «simple» perception is active, simple qualities, like an instance of white, cause me to see them (e.g. white), so my perception is true³². In case of complex perceptions, even when our perception is active so when its object is causing us to perceive it, they can be wrong or false. For example, I fail to recognise John because I mistake him for Jack, he is far away and their sensible profiles are quite similar from a distance³³; or –another case of co-incidental perception that does not involve conceptual capacities– I co-incidentally perceive by sight a piece of honey as being sweet, because I associate its peculiar yellow colour with a sweet taste out of past 'visual-plus-gustatory' experiences, but this time the honey is bitter (suppose it is strawberry tree honey), so my co-incidental perception is wrong (e.g. III

32. This is not a propositional true, but it is a successful reception of a quality: see *De an.* III 7, 431a8-10.

33. Plato anticipates – once again: in the *Theaetetus* – the Aristotelian idea of co-incidental perception, as a source of false appearances: with the 'Wax Block' model of the soul (*Theaet.* 191d4ff.), Socrates characterizes falsity as a misalignment between perception and thought, and makes the example of *seeing* Theaetetus and mistaking him for the known Theodorus. Aristotle's revisitation of recognitional *seeing-as* makes such appearances as potentially autonomous from belief: for example, I associate sweetness to a piece of honey because I see it and it is yellow as a piece of honey I had tasted in the past, in this case I *see-as* (and I can be wrong) without any doxastic content being involved.

1, 425a23). Or I wrongly estimate the size (or the movement) of an object far from me because the perceptual context is not favourable: interestingly enough, the case of wrongly experiencing the size of the sun seems to be one of these cases –wrong perception of common sensibles– even though within the argument against Plato’s view it is exemplified as a case of *phantasia* rather than a case of perception. Anyway, experiences of movements or of sizes or of other common sensibles³⁴ can occur also when the respective perceptions have ceased, namely, when the object is not causing any perception anymore: in these cases, we have cases of *phantasia* as a movement brought about from a complex perception.

simple perception: always true	<i>phantasia</i> from simple perception: true or false
complex perception: true or false	<i>phantasia</i> from complex perception: true or false

A *phantasia* can be true or false, no matter if it comes from a simple or from a complex perception; this means that a true perception *can* bring about a false *phantasia* and a false perception *does* bring about a false *phantasia*. *Phantasia* is an appearance generated by the permanence of a perceptual stimulus in our perceptual soul³⁵: whether it is true or false, depends on whether the environment remained the same from the time t^1 of the perception (movement 1) to the time t^2 of *phantasia* (movement 2). Of course, if the original perception (movement 1) was already false, *a fortiori* such a truth-value will be inherited by the respective *phantasia* (movement 2). In sum, only true perceptions can generate true «appearances», but they can generate also false appearances, whereas false perception can generate only false «appearances». This *would be* the case if *phantasia* was a movement generated by a perceptual movement, as hypothesized so far: now Aristotle confirms the hypothesis, as it shows itself to be successful concerning its explanatory and «derivational» properties:

If nothing other than *phantasia* has the features mentioned (and this is what was claimed), then *phantasia* will be a motion effected by actual perception (428a30-429a2)

34. Unity, number, magnitude, shape, rest and movement (*De an.* II 6, 418a16-18).

35. It is located in the heart, as we know from the *Parva naturalia*.

I think that the «features mentioned» are those forementioned properties that a movement generated from actual perception would have and would be expected to have: in fact, nothing other than *phantasia* has these features, so it is the best candidate to *be* such a kind of movement.

Instead, «what was claimed» is what *phantasia* had previously been said to be: «what was claimed» includes the nominal definition as well as the manifest features explored through the dialectical distinction of *phantasia* from perception and thought, i.e. through the discussion of the relevant ἐνδοξα. The inquiry of *De anima* III 3 is quite systematic and methodologically rigorous³⁶.

The real definition may look poor and disappointing at a first sight: but it simply and clearly states *what phantasia* is and *why* it comes about, as Aristotle himself comments (429a8-9); in revealing its deep causal structure, it is a scientific starting point to understand how such a capacity –of retaining a perceptual stimulus beyond its causal origin– can explain or contribute to explain many mental phenomena it is involved into, such as thinking, deliberation, animal learning, memory, dreaming, false appearances and perceptual illusions, locomotion, and beyond: this is what Aristotle does, later in the *De anima* and especially in the *Parva Naturalia*. A definition may look poor, but what matters is the richness of all that you can potentially derive from it: think of human beings as [animals with *logos*] and of how many psychological, ethical, political, and anthropological theories can be derived from such an apparently «poor» nature-essence!

5. APPEARANCE AND PERCEPTION

For obvious reasons, it is not possible here to explore Aristotle's account of *phantasia* in its high complexity: as is well-known, there are many «applications» of the general theory –to all *phantasia*-involving phenomena mentioned above– whose respective interpretations are quite controversial. I will limit myself to some remarks about the controversial relation between perception and *phantasia*.

36. The chapter has been often (and unfairly, in my view) considered a rhapsodic one: see for example Freudenthal 1863, and Schofield 1978. For Hamlyn (1968, 129), the chapter «has a disjointed look, its principle of unity being a loose one». Nussbaum (1982) also considers it a messy chapter; Osborne (2000: 266) attributes to it an «odd construction» and suggests that it «appears to be constructed from two versions not worded identically».

Aristotle had ruled out that *phantasia* is perception, but at the end his positive doctrine regards it as a thoroughly *perceptual* phenomenon (even if it can be involved in non-perceptual cognitive processes such as thought and deliberation): the refutation of Plato's two-factors view has established that belief cannot be a necessary condition for *phantasia*, so not even one of two (or more) ingredients of it. But the real definition locates it into our perceptual life and assigns this capacity to our perceptual soul. Perception *stricto sensu* (receiving sensible forms without the matter: II 12, 424a17-24) is the basic and fundamental capacity/activity of the perceptual soul, but it is not the only one; almost all the other perceptual capacities involve *phantasia*, that in virtue of which something appears to us and can appear to us also when it is absent. What about complex perception? The relations between complex perception and *phantasia* are problematic.

When Aristotle has ruled out that *phantasia* is perception, he has argued that perception of *simple qualities* is always true while *phantasia* is often false (427b13-15)³⁷: in this dialectical exploration complex perception was absent³⁸, so the argument did not rule out that *phantasia* can be, or at least can be involved into, complex perception. It is true that *phantasia* is defined as a movement brought about by perception, so complex perceptions are movements *causing* occurrences of *phantasia* and of course the causes are not their effects. But this does not rule out that complex perception on its own has *phantasia* as an internal ingredient. Let us remember how complex perception depends on simple perception, starting from perception of common sensibles:

For all these –motion, rest, shape, magnitude, number, and unity– we perceive *by motion*: for example, we perceive magnitude by motion (and consequently, shape, since shape is a sort of magnitude); something at rest in virtue of its not being moved; number in virtue of the lack of continuity as well as by the proper objects of perception (since each sense perceives one thing) (425a16-19).

Complex perception depends on simple perception. Perception of common sensibles depends on seeing colours, hearing sounds and the like: I can perceive that something is moving by seeing it, or by hearing it, in certain

37. *De an.* III 3, 427b13-15.

38. However, the example of being uncertain about whether an object seen from a distance is a man or not (*De an.* III 3, 428a12-14), is an example of co-incidental perception. The same example, interestingly, is to be found in Plato's *Philebus* (*Phil.* 38c-d.) in a theoretical context concerning false mental states.

cases by touching it (this is why motion is a *common* sensible). But here Aristotle says that we perceive common sensibles «by motion»: since motion is one of the common sensibles and the explanation cannot be trivially circular, it is very likely that the motion by which we perceive the common sensibles is not the motion of the objects themselves but *our motion* or the motion of *our senses*. We can hypothesize that I perceive movement because my sight *is moved over time*, that I perceive magnitude and shape because I move my eyes and ‘scroll through’ an object, that I perceive the borders and so the unity-number of *one* object through perceiving an interruption of a chromatic stimulus, indeed a «lack of continuity». If this is the case, perception of common sensibles, strictly speaking is not instantaneous but it needs a *diachronical synthesis of incoming stimuli*; let us consider the perceptual appreciation of an object’s size, for example:

<i>black</i>	red	red	red	red	red	red	red	red	red	<i>black</i>
t ¹	t ²	t ³	t ⁴	t ⁵	t ⁶	t ⁷	t ⁸	t ⁹	t ¹⁰	t ¹¹

Suppose I «scroll through» a red object O by moving my eyes (and/or my head): this must happen over time, no matter if the time is really short or even phenomenologically not appreciable. I appreciate the size of O by appreciating first the sudden change of colour («interruption») from the black of the background to the red of the object, then from the red of the object to the black of the background (on the other «border» of the object). Of course the temporal steps in the variation or permanence of the stimuli must be related with correspondent spatial bits, since the perceptual target is a size or a distance (for a *shape* the process is much more complex but analogous in nature). What matters, is that perception of proper sensibles is instantaneous –and you see just one colour at a time– but perception of a common sensible like a magnitude is *not* instantaneous: you need a «journey» from t¹ to t¹¹, and at t¹¹ the previous variation [t¹-to-t¹⁰] must be somehow *virtually present*. How can a perceptual stimulus received in the past –however near this past is– be still available in the present? The permanence of a perceptual stimulus beyond the respective perceptual activity (its environmental causation) has been already given a name: it is *phantasia*, our original *definiendum* according to the real definition provided above! So *phantasia*, as defined in III 3, seems to be involved in complex perception as an ingredient or condition of it, beyond being a movement potentially *caused* by it.

So, *phantasia* as «a movement generated by actual perception» of a simple quality (say: colour) is involved into complex perception (say: of a size), which could on its own generate a *phantasia*, this time a movement generated by a (right or wrong) complex perception indeed. There is no inconsistency in assigning to *phantasia* a constitutive role into complex perception, and taking it that a *phantasia* can be generated by a complex perception: the constitutive one is generated by those simple perceptions which are in turn constitutive of the complex perception³⁹.

As for co-incidental perception –the other kind of complex perception beyond perception of common sensibles– the «virtual» presence of a past perceptual stimulus is quite evident, provided that such a kind of complex perception is *recognitional* in nature, so such as to involve a previous encounter, an association of two properties (previously encountered together) triggered by an actual situation in which only one of them is perceptually presented in a direct way. How could there be a co-incidental perception without *phantasia* as defined above?

The puzzle we have to solve, is that *phantasia* is distinguished from perception as such (be it simple or complex) and it is said to be a movement generated *by* it, rather than being an ingredient *of* it. Doesn't our interpretation attribute to Aristotle's doctrine a patent inconsistency? Doesn't it make the difference between perception and *phantasia* extremely blurry? I think that there is an internal tension in the view, but it can be partially accommodated.

Perception is defined by the basic function on which all superior perceptual functions are construed: complex perception (common and co-incidental), intermodal and intramodal perception of the difference between two sensibles⁴⁰, perception *that* we perceive⁴¹, memory, and so on. In the same vein, *phantasia* is defined by its basic mechanism: the capacity of our sensory systems (integrated with the heart as a cognitive centre) to *retain* perceptual stimuli, to generate secondary movements (which can persist and be reactivated later) having the primary perceptual movements as causes. Such a basic core or essence of *phantasia* can well figure as an ingredient of many other cognitive performances, both perceptual (complex perception, memory, and

39. In this paper I have not treated at all Aristotle commonsense, which is mainly focused on in the *Parva naturalia* rather than in the *De anima*. Commonsense is involved in complex perception, so the idea that *phantasia* is involved in complex perception fits quite well with Aristotle's remark that «φαντασία is a πάθος of commonsense» (*De Mem.* 450a10–11). On complex perception and commonsense, see Gregoric 2007 and Marmodoro 2014, 156–211.

40. See *De an.* 426b8–ff.

41. See *De an.* III 2, 425b10–24 10–24. See also *De somn. et. vig.* 2, 455a12–26.

so on) and extra-perceptual (intellection, discursive thought and belief-formation, deliberation, and so on). Now, if *phantasia* is that in virtue of which something *appears* to us and we have appearances, such appearances can have two different natures: either they are perceptions, in which the world becomes manifest to us as being a certain way, or they are «just» appearances (φαντάσματα), mediately caused by perceptions or by perceptual appearances but in absence of the perceptual objects they come from.

So, a cognitive phenomenon in which a subject enjoys a perception-like experience, could be: 1) a genuine perception, so a present causal relation with something which appears to us as being such-and-such 2) a «mere» appearance, that subjectively «looks» like a perception but it is an internal permanence of perceptual material *previously* received (which sometimes corresponds with what is «out there»). Now, in complex perceptions there is also a synthesis of the present stimulus with perceptual material previously received (consider the diachronical series t^1 - t^{11} above, or the mnemonic dimension of recognitional *seeing-as*), but this process involved in perceiving does not automatically make the perception a case of *phantasia*. Instead, we can talk of a proper case of *phantasia* as a «mere» appearance when the appearing content is not a present property causing itself to become manifest to us, but some internal *phantasma* that either comes up from inside without actual relations with the environment (dreaming, imagination, hallucinations, *rêverie*), or that comes to be falsely superimposed on an incoming perceptual stimulus. Such a framework would be a sort of disjunctive account of appearance, so that two subjectively indiscriminable experiences can have quite a different nature (a perception or a *phantasia*), according to their causal structure and their relation with the environment as well as with our senses.

It must be admitted that the example of the sun appearing one foot across remains puzzling. Perhaps the reason why it is taken as a case of *phantasia* rather than a case of (false) complex perception of a size, depends on a surreptitiously *comparative* aspect involved in this appearance: the sun looks as small as round things seen from near typically look; perhaps the vision of the sun in the middle of the sky, without any contextual relation to other things around, «wakes up» into us past *phantasmata* of small round objects, which somehow come to be superimposed on the actual percept. But this is nothing more than a speculative suggestion.

Let us briefly assess whether there are some textual supports for attributing a disjunctive account of appearance to Aristotle: some passages on illusion in the *De insomniis* seem to offer some foothold.

6. A DISJUNCTIVIST ACCOUNT OF APPEARANCE?

As already stated in *De anima* III 3, when we are dreaming our perceptual capacity is shut down (428a7-8): but in the *De somno* Aristotle adds that when we sleep perception is impossible only «in the proper and unqualified sense» (κυρίως καὶ ἀπλῶς, 454b13); yet, perception in a looser or qualified sense is involved in dreams, which are appearances (φαντάσματα), i.e. perception-like experiences: indeed in dreams «it seems to us to see that something is white and is a man» (*De ins.* 1, 458b14-15), for example. In the *De insomniis* perceptual illusions are accounted for according the same aetiology of dreams: they depend on the part of the perceptual soul that is called φανταστικόν, so they depend on *phantasia* (459a15-22) meant as in our real definition (literally restated at *De ins.* 459a17-18).

Some examples of visual illusions are provided: «when we have looked steadily for a long while at one colour, e.g. at white or green, that to which we next transfer our gaze appears to be of the same colour» (459b11-13): this is an example of an appearance coming from a simple perception, that is false because the perceived quality is not there anymore but the appearance caused by it remains (this is *phantasia*: permanence of a φάντασμα) and its superimposition on another perceived object makes the perceptual appearance false; «when persons turn away from looking at objects in motion, e.g. rivers, and especially those which flow very rapidly, things really at rest appear to them as being in motion» (18-20): analogous example of permanence of a φάντασμα «projected» onto another perceived object, but here the projected sensible is motion, a common sensible; one who is coward and afraid, falsely «sees» the enemy in other far people, a lover falsely «sees» the beloved in someone else (460b4-5); to one with fever animals appear (φαίνεται) on the shadowed walls (12-13); these are examples of complex co-incidental perception, that work in the same way: a strong emotion or illness, together with a perceived object «wakes up» an internal appearance (φάντασμα) coming from previous perceptions (in these cases, stored in memory as a recognitional disposition).

Aristotle explains these visual illusions as follows:

The cause of these occurrences is that the controlling principle (τό κύριον) and that in virtue of which appearances (φαντάσματα) are generated, do not discriminate according to the same capacity. A proof of this is, that the sun appears only a foot across, though often something else *contradicts* the *phantasia*. (460b16-20)

Our example of the sun is repeated: there is an appearance, due to *phantasia*, and a directing- or controlling principle in us as cognitive subjects, that contradicts *phantasia*. We already know that such a cognitive principle in this case is *belief*. We can have a belief opposed to the way things are appearing to us. There is a cognitive hierarchy, with a more authoritative principle than another: sometimes, due to available collateral information, we as rational beings *do not endorse* our appearances. Some lines below the explanation goes on:

For, in general, the principle affirms the report of each particular sense, unless something more authoritative does not contradict it. In every case something appears (φαίνεται) but not always that what appears (τὸ φαινόμενον) seems to be the case (δοκεῖ), unless the deciding power (τὸ ἐπικρῖνον) is inhibited or does not move with the appropriate motion (461b3-7).

The content of appearance is something that can be *contradicted* by another superior cognitive principle. It is interesting that here «seeming» (δοκεῖν) is a *committal* cognitive attitude, but it is not necessarily a synonymous of believing (δοξάζειν). Anyway, in the case of the sun the committal attitude that contradicts the appearance is belief. In fact, Aristotle's criticism of Plato –appearance is not doxastic in nature– is compatible with the fact that: 1) the content of an appearance is such that it can be doxastically endorsed as such (it is truth-evaluable even though it is not doxastic in nature) 2) an appearance involves an *inclination to believe* or to a (committal) 'seeming', which can be inhibited by a superior cognitive principle in a given context: this is the reason why, when the superior principle is inhibited or weakened –fever, illness, tiredness, madness, love, fear, drunkenness, being asleep and dreaming– we tend to take all our appearances as real, we immediately trust them. Now it has become clear that *phantasia* can be non-committal but often it is «not definitively» committal, it involves a *prima facie* assent to the presented contents: a *suppressible* assent or inclination to believe, though.

Aristotle explains that each appearance is

...the remnant (ὑπόλειμμα) of a sensory impression (αἴσθημα) in actuality; and when the true impression has departed, the remnant is still there, and it is true to say that it is like Koriskos even though it is not Koriskos. For when the person was actually perceiving, his controlling and deciding part (τὸ κύριον καὶ τὸ ἐπικρῖνον⁴²) did not say that it was Koriskos, but through it called Koriskos the real one (461b21-26).

42. 'τὸ κύριον' is the most authoritative part, so the (cognitively) controlling one; τὸ ἐπικρῖνον is 'that which determines' or decides or (ultimately) discriminates.

The basic assumption Aristotle has made before, was that «when the external object of perception has departed, the impressions (αἰσθήματα) it made persist, and *are themselves objects of perception*» (αἰσθητὰ, 460b2-3): this is a very important point. An αἴσθημα is the mental counterpart of a sensible object, its effect on us –just as a νόημα (notion, concept) is a mental counterpart of the objective intelligible (νοητόν); after the object has gone, the αἴσθημα remains, so it becomes a φάντασμα and it is a sensible object on its own, we can *perceive* it.

When we perceive, we are presented with the object, objects with their properties become manifest to us: perception is a real relation; in such a relation, the sensory impressions (αἰσθήματα) are not the objects that become manifest to us, they are rather *that in virtue of which* we perceive the respective objects. Perception is a real relation of manifestation, which *involves* the causation from an external object of a sensory impression.

Conversely, a *phantasia* is an appearance in which what appears to us is a φάντασμα: the φάντασμα itself is what is perceived, it not just *that in virtue of which* something becomes manifest to us. The φάντασμα is an αἴσθημα with a longer causal story: the αἴσθημα becomes a φάντασμα when it is not anymore caused by a present sensible, when it has become a permanence or a remnant, by now causally detached from its causal origin (the object).

Two subjectively indiscriminable experiences can have a very different metaphysical nature: one (perception) is a real relation in which an object with its properties becomes manifest to us *through* bringing about an αἴσθημα into us; another (*phantasia*) is a «mere» appearance of a φάντασμα (whose generating object has gone), which *looks like a perception* because the φάντασμα we are perceiving looks like an external object. In the example above, the φάντασμα of Koriskos looks like Koriskos so we mistake the appearance of it for the manifestation of Koriskos *and* we mistake our *phantasia* for a perception.

In my opinion, it is very important to consider that we mistake the φάντασμα of Koriskos not for the αἴσθημα of Koriskos, but for Koriskos himself: when perceiving Koriskos we perceive *him* and his properties rather than perceiving his very αἴσθημα: as said, the latter is only *that in virtue of which* we can become perceptually aware of Koriskos himself.

What about the previous hypothesis that *phantasia* is involved in (both right and wrong) complex perception? Is it not incompatible with the disjunctive interpretation just proposed?

My –admittedly very speculative– proposal would be as follows: the lifespan of an αἴσθημα is more than an instant; an αἴσθημα does not become a φάντασμα until it is not *totally* detached from its external cause, so a sequence

of αἰσθήματα (like t^1 - t^{11} above) over a very short time can be constitutive of a unitary ongoing perception, the object is still there and it is «gradually causing» the sequence. The αἴσθημα arrived at t^1 , does not make perception at t^2 into a *phantasia*, because it is contributing to providing present information to *this* perception: once the process is accomplished, then the sequence of αἰσθήματα can persist and become a φάντασμα or a sequence of φαντάσματα which could be re-activated in the future in a *phantasia*.

Thus, there is a sense in which a *phantasia* is not a perception –the latter involves a present and causally active object, the second does not– but there is a sense in which *phantasia*, as a basic power of *retaining* a sensory impression generated by a perception (real definition), could be somehow operative in complex perception, as the mechanism which enables our perceptual system to construct complex perceptions out of simple perceptions.

This suggestion deserves to be better assessed in the texts, but it could be an interpretive way toward a consistent picture of the relation between perception and *phantasia* in Aristotle's theory.

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