

ON THE REALITY OF PROPER SENSIBLES IN ARISTOTLE  
AND SOME OF HIS MODERN COMMENTATORS

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in partial fulfilment of the require-  
ments for the Degree of Master of Arts.

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To Mr. and Mrs. Roy M. Moran, my parents

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## PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is twofold. First, I want to discover what Aristotle's position is with respect to the reality of proper sensibles. That is to say, I want to show whether or not Aristotle regards the proper sensibles as being qualities existing in objects in the way our senses report them to us. I shall fulfill this purpose by presenting an analysis of appropriate texts from Aristotle's De Anima and De Sensu et Sensibili. The scope of my treatment of Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles is, then, confined to the material presented in the De Anima and the De Sensu et Sensibili. For these are the two works in which Aristotle gives a detailed account of his theory of sensation.

The second purpose in writing this thesis is as follows. I want to take certain works by three modern Aristotelian commentators in which they speak about Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles as presented in the De Anima and the De Sensu et Sensibili and do two things with them. (1) I shall show that their presentation of Aristotle's position on this topic misinterprets that position. (2) Then I shall show just exactly why it is that each of these three commentators has misinterpreted Aristotle's position. The three commentators and their respective works that I shall examine here are, Aristotle by John Herman

Randall (Jr.), Aristotle by W. D. Ross, and Abstraction from Matter by Charles De Koninck.

I would also like to point out here that any italicized (underscored) material or material inside square brackets found in any quotations appearing within this thesis have not been added by me unless explicitly stated to be so in the corresponding footnotes, but are found in the sources from which the quotations were taken.

Before closing this short section I would like to thank the Department of Philosophy at Saint Mary's University for providing me with their generous financial, moral, and academic support without which this work could not have been completed. In particular I would like to extend my grateful thanks to Doctor Arthur P. Monahan of that department. It was his course of lectures that I attended in 1965-66 that first introduced me to philosophy and especially to Greek and Mediaeval philosophy. It was thanks to Doctor Monahan's teaching ability that my interest was aroused in pursuing further studies in philosophy, studies which have culminated in this present work.

I would especially like to acknowledge my indebtedness and gratitude to Doctor Lawrence Dewan of the Saint Mary's University Philosophy Department. Both as my teacher and as my advisor on this thesis he has given freely of his time and knowledge. His insights have always been both enlightening and helpful. Doctor Dewan's grasp of Aristotlian Philosophy, in particular, has made this present work, not only interesting,

but also possible. For without his assistance this work would not have been attempted. To Doctor Dewan I owe much.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Roy M. Moran, my parents. For they have suffered much inconvenience and financial cost in order that I might pursue my studies and prepare this thesis. Without their unqualified support this thesis would have been impossible. To them I owe more than I can ever repay.

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PART I: ARISTOTLE ON THE REALITY OF PROPER SENSIBLES



## CHAPTER I

### A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE TREATMENT OF THE TOPIC

#### BY MODERN COMMENTATORS

#### I. How Much Is Available on the Topic

In this chapter we want to survey, by way of introduction to this thesis, what has been written by modern English language writers on what Aristotle says in the De Anima and the De Sensu et Sensibili about the reality of proper sensibles. As this chapter will show, there has been very little said about Aristotle's position with reference to the reality of proper sensibles among these writers. This can be illustrated by pointing out that our research has uncovered a total of only seventeen books and articles in which anything at all is said on this topic. The books and articles being referred to are the following:

- (1) Takatura Ando, Aristotle's Theory of Practical Cognition<sup>1</sup>
- (2) John I. Beare, Greek Theories of Elementary Cognition from Alcmaeon to Aristotle<sup>2</sup>
- (3) Étienne Gilson, Painting and Reality<sup>3</sup>
- (4) D. W. Hamlyn, Sensation and Perception<sup>4</sup>
- (5) William Alexander Hammond (trans.), Aristotle's Psychology<sup>5</sup>
- (6) George Klubertanz, "De Potentia, 5.8: A Note on the Thomist Theory of Sensation"<sup>6</sup>
- (7) Charles De Koninck, Abstraction from Matter<sup>7</sup>

- (8) G.E.R. Lloyd, Aristotle: The Growth and Structure<sup>8</sup>  
of His Thought<sup>9</sup>
- (9) G.R.G. Mure, Aristotle<sup>10</sup>
- (10) John Herman Randall (Jr.), Aristotle<sup>11</sup>
- (11) David Ross, Aristotle<sup>12</sup>
- (12) David Ross (ed.), De Anima<sup>13</sup>
- (13) David Ross (ed.), Parva Naturalia<sup>14</sup>
- (14) G.R.T. Ross (trans.), De Sensu and De Memoria<sup>15</sup>
- (15) Clarence Shute, The Psychology of Aristotle<sup>16</sup>
- (16) Yves R. Simon, "An Essay on Sensation"<sup>17</sup>
- (17) A. E. Taylor, Aristotle

The available material by the above modern commentators on Aristotle's notion of the reality of proper sensibles is much less than might first appear from even this short list of publications. For each of these works is interested in doing much more than giving a discussion of Aristotle's position with regard to the reality of proper sensibles. In fact, the works in the above list that were written by Lloyd, Mure, Randall, David Ross (that is, at least in Ross' book entitled Aristotle), and Taylor are intended much more as general introductions to the whole of Aristotle's thought than as detailed expositions on any one restricted area of his philosophy like his position on the reality of proper sensibles. To illustrate this point, here is how Taylor expresses the purpose of his book:

An Englishman who speaks of the "golden mean" or of "liberal education", or contrasts the "matter" of a work of literature with its "form", or the "essential" features of a situation or a scheme of policy with its "accidents", or "theory" with "practice", is using words which derive their significance from the part they play in the vocabulary of Aristotle. The unambitious object of this little book is, then, to help the English reader to a better understanding of such familiar language and a fuller comprehension of much that he will find in Dante and Shakespeare and Bacon and Milton. 18

As another illustration, take David Ross' book, Aristotle. He expresses the purpose of this book when he says that, in writing it, he has "... tried simply to give an account of the main features of his philosophy as it stands before us in his works. I have written little by way of criticism". 19

It is not, then, surprising that, in the case of the works we have cited by Lloyd, Mure, Randall, Ross (that is, his book, Aristotle), and Taylor, none of them is able to provide an extensive account of, say, ten or twenty pages on the topic of Aristotle's notion of the reality of proper sensibles, given the purpose that these authors had in writing their respective books. We can see this, for example, in the following text taken from the book, Aristotle, by A. E. Taylor. For this is all that he has to say concerning Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles:

In sense-perception the soul "Takes into itself the form of the thing perceived without its matter, as sealing-wax receives the shape of an iron seal-ring without the iron." To understand this, we must remember that for Aristotle the sensible qualities of the external world, colours, tones, tastes, and the rest, are not effects of the mechanical stimulation of our sense-organs, but real qualities of

bodies. The hardness of the iron, the redness of a piece of red wax are all primarily "in" the iron or the wax. They are "forms" or determinations by definite law, of the "matter" of the iron or the wax.<sup>20</sup>

We can see from the above passage taken from Taylor's book that he actually gives us no detailed discussion of Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles. Taylor had no space to devote to such a discussion. Thus, as can be seen from the quotation, he simply comes straight out and says, without giving any reasons or references to Aristotelian texts to substantiate it, that, for Aristotle, proper sensibles exist in the objects of the world when those objects are considered in themselves and that they are not just the result of the "mechanical stimulation of our sense-organs". On the other hand, consider David Ross' book, Aristotle. Although David Ross gives, in that book, only one paragraph to stating what Aristotle says on the reality of proper sensibles, he does try to give us as much information as possible about what he is saying there by presenting reasons for what he states about Aristotle, including a reference to an Aristotelian text to substantiate his remarks. Here is the text from David Ross' book, Aristotle, in which he presents what he considers to be Aristotle's position in the De Anima concerning the reality of proper sensibles:

The actualisation of perception is at the same time the actualisation of the object. Actual sound and actual hearing are merely distinguishable aspects of a single event. Apart from actual hearing there is not actual but only potential sound. At the same time, Aristotle opposes the earlier view that 'without seeing there is neither white nor black' [425b25-426a27]. His meaning must be that over and above their primary

qualities objects have in the absence of percipients a definite qualification in virtue of which they produce sensations when percipients are present. But into the difficulties presented by these 'permanent possibilities of sensation' he does not enter.<sup>21</sup>

As for nine of the remaining writers we originally listed, namely, Ando, Beare, De Koninck, Gilson, Hamlyn, ~~Hammond~~, Klubertanz, Shute, and Simon, we can say the following about how much they have to say on Aristotle's notion of the reality of proper sensibles in the De Anima and the De Sensu et Sensibili. In the case of the works by two of them, namely, Beare's Greek Theories of Elementary Cognition from Alcmaeon to Aristotle and Hamlyn's Sensation and Perception, they are confining themselves to giving historical accounts of sensation and perception. However, while, as is evident from the title of his work, Beare's historical treatment of these topics extends only up to the time of Aristotle, Hamlyn's treatment of them extends up to contemporary times. Thus, while in Hamlyn's book we have only one reference to Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles<sup>22</sup>, we have several such references in Beare's book<sup>23</sup> which is much larger in size and more restricted in scope than Hamlyn's book is. In the case of Shute's book, The Psychology of Aristotle, while it is restricted to the one subject of presenting "...the way in which Aristotle himself develops his treatment of behaviour as one aspect - and that the most essential one - of living things in general,"<sup>24</sup> we still have only one reference there to Aristotle's notion of the reality of proper sensibles.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, De Koninck's discussion of this topic extends over several pages.<sup>26</sup> However,

in the instance of the works cited at the beginning of this chapter by Ando and Klubertanz we find only a brief footnote<sup>27</sup> mention of Aristotle's notion of the reality of proper sensibles in the latter and a slightly longer reference to it in a more extensive footnote in the former<sup>28</sup>. Similarly, in the case of Hammond's Aristotle's Psychology (which is simply a translation of the De Anima and the Parva Naturalia made by Hammond along with some explanatory footnotes which he has added to the text and an introductory chapter) we find only one brief mention of Aristotle's<sup>29</sup> notion of the reality of proper sensibles in a footnote. Now, in Simon's article, intended to present his "...mature reflections upon, and long familiarity with the role of the senses in the acquisition of knowledge,"<sup>30</sup> there is some limited discussion of this topic extending over several pages.<sup>31</sup> Finally, in the case of Gilson's Painting and Reality we again find only the briefest of references to Aristotle's position with regard to the reality of proper sensibles as the following text shows:

What Descartes exploded once and for all is the illusion, common to so many people, that colors, for instance, such as red or yellow, are found in material objects under the form of unperceived perceptions. Aristotle never made this mistake. According to him, sense perception was the common act of the perceiving subject and of the perceived object. Both subject and object are necessary for a perception.<sup>32</sup>

Even in the commentaries on the De Anima and the De Sensu et Sensibili that we listed at the beginning of this chapter there is very little said concerning Aristotle's position with regard to the reality of proper sensibles in those two works. In G.R.T. Ross' commentary on the De Sensu et Sensibili

In his book, De Sensu and De Memoria, there are only five places<sup>33</sup> where he even mentions Aristotle's position on this topic. On the other hand, David Ross' commentary on the De Anima contains only one reference to the reality of proper sensibles according to Aristotle.<sup>34</sup> Also, David Ross' commentary on the De Sensu et Sensibili in his book, Parva Naturalia, contains only two references to Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles in the De Sensu et Sensibili.<sup>35</sup> Thus, even in commentaries on the De Anima and the De Sensu et Sensibili written by contemporary commentators, there are no lengthy discussions of Aristotle's notion of the reality of proper sensibles as presented in those works.

## II. The Positions Taken by Modern Commentators on the Topic

Having now completed a look at just how much is available by contemporary commentators on Aristotle's position with regard to the reality of proper sensibles in the De Anima and the De Sensu et Sensibili, let us now survey the positions taken by these commentators with respect to this topic. That is, let's now see where each of the different commentators listed at the beginning of this chapter stands on the subject of Aristotle's notion of the reality of proper sensibles.

Briefly, the fifteen commentators with whom we are dealing in this chapter are almost evenly divided among themselves in the positions they take on this topic. Eight of these commentators claim that Aristotle asserts that proper sensibles are qualities inhering in the objects of the world independently of our perception of them. On the other hand, the remaining seven

commentators say that Aristotle maintains the position that proper sensibles do not exist in the objects of the world in exactly the way in which our senses report them to us as existing.

We shall begin by considering those seven commentators who say that Aristotle does not take the position that the proper sensibles are qualities inhering in the objects of the world in the same way in which our senses report them to us as existing.

The seven commentators being referred to here are De Koninck<sup>36</sup>,  
 Gilson<sup>37</sup>, Hamlyn<sup>38</sup>, Hammond<sup>39</sup>, Randall<sup>40</sup>, David Ross<sup>41</sup>, and  
 Skute<sup>42</sup>. With the exception of De Koninck and Hamlyn, the reason given for saying that Aristotle denies the objective reality of proper sensibles is Aristotle's application to sensation of a principle that he developed in the Physica. In Book III, chapter 3 of the Physica Aristotle develops the doctrine that in any motion or change the locus of the actualization of both the agent and the patient is in the latter. Furthermore, the act of the agent and the act of the patient are the same, that is, they are just distinguishable aspects of a single event.<sup>43</sup> Now, in the Anima, Aristotle says the following in applying this principle or doctrine to sensation:

The activity of the sensible object and that of the percipient sense is one and the same activity, and yet the distinction between their being remains. Take as illustration actual sound and actual hearing: a man may have hearing and yet not be hearing, and that which has a sound is not always sounding. But when that which can hear is actively hearing and that which can sound is sounding, then the actual hearing and the actual sound are merged in one (these one might call respectively hearkening and sounding).<sup>44</sup>



It is to these statements made by Aristotle that appeal is made by Gilson, Hamlyn, Randall, David Ross (that is, in his book, Aristotle, and in his commentary on the De Anima), and Shute in saying that Aristotle denies that proper sensibles are properties inhering in objects independently of our perception of them. For example, here once again is how David Ross, in Aristotle, states what he considers to be Aristotle's position on this point:

The actualisation of perception is at the same time the actualisation of the object. Actual sound and actual hearing are merely distinguishable aspects of a single event. Apart from actual hearing there is not actual but only potential sound. At the same time, Aristotle opposes the earlier view that 'without seeing there is neither white nor black' [425b25-426a27]. His meaning must be that over and above their primary qualities objects have in the absence of percipients a definite qualification in virtue of which they produce sensations when percipients are present. But into the difficulties presented by these 'permanent possibilities of sensation' he does not enter.<sup>45</sup>

We can see that, in the above quoted passage, Ross is clearly referring to the text from Aristotle's De Anima that we quoted in part earlier. Looking especially at the first two sentences of this passage from Ross it can be seen that they are simply a paraphrase of what we quoted earlier from 425b26-426a1 of Aristotle's De Anima. Similarly, references are made to this text of Aristotle's De Anima in the statements made by Gilson, Hamlyn, Randall, David Ross (in his commentary on the De Anima), and by Shute in which they say that Aristotle holds the position that proper sensibles are not qualities inhering in objects independently of our perception of them. To illus-

trate again, Gilson says that Aristotle doesn't think that proper sensibles exist in objects in the way our senses report them to us because, "...sense perception is the common act of the perceiving subject and of the perceived object. Both subject and object are necessary for a perception"<sup>47</sup>.

Thus, we can say that the reason that Gilson, Hamlyn, Sandall, David Ross (in his book, Aristotle, and in his commentary on the De Anima), and Shute claim that Aristotle denies the independent reality of proper sensibles is because he says at 425b26ff. that the activity of the sensible object - for our purposes, the proper sensibles - and of the perceiving sense are one and the same (i.e. are merely distinguishable aspects of a single event) and have their locus in the latter.

On the other hand, Charles De Koninck, who also denies the objective reality of proper sensibles according to Aristotle, does so for reasons both the same and different from that of the commentators whom we have just examined. De Koninck makes this denial for the following reasons. In the De Anima Aristotle says that, while a given sense can discern its corresponding proper sensible object without error, it can err about what it is that is, say, coloured or where it is, or what it is that is, say, sounding or where it is.<sup>48</sup> De Koninck claims that the qualification in the foregoing statement means that Aristotle is saying that, while a given sense doesn't err in reporting how it is affected, error can arise if we judge that the quality (i.e. proper sensible) reported by that sense is in the object perceived in the way in which our sense has reported to us. For

the quality (i.e. proper sensible) we experience, says De Koninck, is the complex result of the union of the organ of sense with the object affecting it.<sup>49</sup> However, the other reason he gives for making this denial is the same as that given by the commentators we have already examined. For, De Koninck points out that, according to Aristotle, the sense quality we perceive is the common act of both the sense in act and the object in act, while the object, on its own, can never be more than sensible in potency.<sup>50</sup>

In Hammond's translation of the De Anima, which is contained in his book entitled Aristotle's Psychology, he says that Aristotle denies the objective reality of proper sensibles and he says this in a footnote that he adds to the Aristotelian text at 426b4. In this footnote Hammond says that, in an act of sensation, the sense involved converts what it receives from the object sensed into a subjective quality.<sup>51</sup> Finally, in the case of the two relevant instances in David Ross' commentary on the De Sensu et Sensibili, in his book entitled Parva Naturalia, he denies the objective reality of proper sensibles according to Aristotle there. His reason for taking this position in his interpretation of 439a13-18 as saying that, "...there is one single event that can be properly described as a certain animal's seeing of a certain colour, the existence of the colour and the existence of the sensing of it being inseparable"<sup>52</sup>. However, we must add that the reason for this denial reduces to the same one as that given by the first group of commentators that we examined. For, Ross also refers back to Aristotle's statements in

the De Anima, that, in the sensing of a sensible object, there is only the one event having two intelligible aspects, in justification of the interpretation he gives of the present text in the De Sensu et Sensibili.

The remaining eight commentators, namely, Ando, Beare, Klubertanz, Lloyd, Mure, G.R.T. Ross, Simon, and Taylor, all assert that, according to Aristotle, proper sensibles are qualities inhering in objects independently of our perception of them. Let us now, then, examine these eight modern Aristotelian commentators individually. In the case of Ando's book, Aristotle's Theory of Practical Cognition, and Klubertanz's article, "Potentia, 5.8: A Note on the Thomist Theory of Sensation", very little is said at all about the reality of proper sensibles according to Aristotle. What we find in Ando's book<sup>53</sup> and in the article by Klubertanz<sup>54</sup> is that they each affirm, in a footnote, the objective reality of the proper sensible, colour, according to Aristotle.

In the case of A. E. Taylor we can say the following. In explaining what Aristotle means in saying that we receive the form of the object, in sensation, but we receive it without its matter in the way in which a piece of wax receives the shape of an iron signet ring without the iron, Taylor simply says the following. "For Aristotle the sensible qualities of the external world, colour, tones, tastes, and the rest are not effects of the mechanical stimulation of our sense-organs, but real qualities of bodies. The hardness of the iron, the redness of a piece of wax are all primarily 'in' the iron or the wax."<sup>55</sup> Thus, we can see

that in Taylor's case, he simply affirms the objective reality of proper sensibles according to Aristotle without giving us any reason to justify his attribution of this position to Aristotle.

Like Taylor's mention of the topic of the reality of proper sensibles in Aristotle's philosophy, Lloyd's mention of it is also short, but it is more indirect. Lloyd simply says that, according to Aristotle, in sensation the sense-organ receives the perceptible form, without the matter, of the object being perceived, and he continues, the perceptible forms are primarily colours, sounds, smells, and the other proper sensibles.<sup>56</sup>

In Mure's book, Aristotle, he affirms the objective reality of the proper sensible, colour, according to Aristotle, in giving an explanation of Aristotle's remark that, in a sense, light makes potential colours into actual colours.<sup>57</sup> Mure says that, according to Aristotle, colour as actualized by light, but not seen, is real in the same way that, for example, a man may be said to be healthy even when, in sleep, the animal function is in temporary abeyance.<sup>58</sup> However, Mure later affirms the objective reality of proper sensibles in general, according to Aristotle, more weakly, and he gives a reference to 426a20ff. in Aristotle's De Anima when he says of Aristotle that, "Against his predecessors' contention that without seeing and tasting there is no colour and no flavour, he asserts the potential existence of the substrate of perceptible characters (ibid. 426a20ff.)."<sup>59</sup>

In the case of Beare we find several places in which he says that, according to Aristotle, the proper sensibles exist

in objects independently of our perception of them. Here is one of those places in which he affirms this. Beare is speaking of the object that causes the change in the percipient:

The object which causes the change has its own actual existence in the world, apart from the relation of sense. It would exist even if no one perceived it. It actually exists, and is potentially perceptible. So, conceived in relation to an absent object, the sensory organ is perceptive, or capable of perceiving it. The object has its own actual qualities - its form, which sense finds in it at the moment of perception. Thus, for Aristotle, the object is what Kant would call a Ding an sich.<sup>60</sup>

We can see in the above quotation that Beare is saying that, according to Aristotle, the qualities or proper sensibles we perceive of objects do exist in those objects independently of our perception of them. According to what Beare is saying in this passage, for Aristotle, we perceive objects as they are in themselves. We can express this in another way with the following quotation from Beare, namely, "...Aristotle holds with the unquestioning fidelity of a 'natural Realist' that the 'common fact' is one in which the object is revealed in its true, i.e., independent, qualities."<sup>61</sup>

G.R.T. Ross, in his commentary on the De Sensu et Sensibili, asserts the objective reality of proper sensibles according to Aristotle in more than one place. He always tries to substantiate what he is attributing to Aristotle on this topic by giving references to texts in the De Sensu et Sensibili or to the De Anima or to both. To illustrate, in commenting on 46b12 of the De Sensu et Sensibili he affirms the objective

reality of the proper sensible, sound, according to Aristotle. For G.R.T. Ross says there that sound is caused by a movement which is fast enough to strike the air and make it continuous, and that, "...this movement is sound, for Aristotle does not, like modern physicists, think of sound as being merely a movement outside the ear; its peculiar quality seems to exist objectively though entirely relative to the act of hearing (cf....<sup>62</sup> An. III, ch. 2, 425b26 sqq.)."

Finally, in the case of Simon's article, "An Essay on Sensation", we can say the following. He asserts the objective reality of proper sensibles in saying that, "Aristotlianism is philosophy which places ideas not only in the intellect, memory and the imagination, but also in the external senses"<sup>63</sup>. In explaining what he means here, Simon says that Aristotle held the position that ideas exist, not in the mind first, but in external reality. Now, continues Simon, it is,

True, "idea" designates preferably intellectual representations, and still preferably representations conceived as the patterns of things to be brought into existence. Yet, our vernaculars allow the extension of the word "idea" to the whole set of the entities whose primary function is not to be but to represent. As soon as the division of entities into things and ideas is understood, the expression "sensorial idea" is no longer paradoxical... Human knowledge purely and simply remains unexplained so long as there is no answer to the question, "How did sense impressions get there," The Aristotlian answer is that just as remembering is made possible by two-sided realities that are called memories, so sensation is made possible by another instance of those two-sided realities whose primary function is not to be but to represent, and which are, in one way, states of the psyche and in another way are the objects that they stand for.<sup>64</sup>

The two-sided reality that Simon is speaking of is precisely the sensible idea. Now, the sensorial idea is the form

of objects or things received in sensation, "...without the form-to-matter relationship which characterizes its way of existing in the thing."<sup>65</sup> "It is the sensory quality itself in another way of being."<sup>66</sup> Thus, what Simon is saying is that that through which we know sensible qualities of objects (namely, the sensorial ideas) are the very sensible qualities or sensible forms of those objects, themselves, existing in us in a different mode of being. The reason he gives for saying this is Aristotle's statement at 424a17 of the De Anima that, in sensation, the sense receives the sensible form of the object perceived without its matter.<sup>67</sup>

### III. Summary and Conclusion

In summary we can say the following. In this chapter we have seen that there is little available by modern English language commentators concerning what Aristotle says in the De Anima and the De Sensu et Sensibili on the reality of proper sensibles. We discovered a total of onky fifteen such commentators who had anything at all to say on this topic. However, as our survey of these commentators in this chapter has shown, they do not devote a great deal of space or attention in their respective writings to giving a discussion of what Aristotle says concerning the reality of proper sensibles. In the little that these commentators did have to say on this topic we found that they were almost evenly divided among themselves with eight of them affirming and seven of them denying that Aritotle held that proper sensibles are qualities inhering in the objects of the world in the way our senses report them to us as inhering.



In concluding this chapter we can say that none of the fifteen commentators surveyed here has attempted to give a detailed, sustained account of what Aristotle says in the De Anima and the De Sensu et Sensibili on the reality of proper sensibles. It is one of the main purposes of this thesis to fill this gap by providing such an account. This is the subject of Chapter II of our thesis.

## CHAPTER II

### ARISTOTLE ON THE REALITY OF PROPER SENSIBLES

#### I. The General Cognitive Realism

##### In His Theory of Sensation

In Book II of the De Anima Aristotle devotes chapter 6 to distinguishing between the three different kinds of sensible objects, namely, the incidental, the common, and the proper or special objects of sense. In concluding that short chapter Aristotle, referring to the proper or special sensibles and the common sensibles, says the following:

Of the two former kinds, both of which are in their own nature perceptible by sense, the first kind - that of special objects of the several senses - constitute the objects of sense in the strictest sense of the term and it is to them that in the nature of things the structure of each several sense is adapted.<sup>1</sup>

We can clearly see from this passage that, according to Aristotle, the structure of each sense is naturally adapted to its corresponding proper object. In this general way, then, there is definitely a cognitive realism in Aristotle's theory of sensation. In other words, Aristotle's position with regard to proper sensibles is that each sense is so structured by nature as to be able to grasp and present to us its corresponding proper sensible object in the way that it actually exists in objects. The question of the reality of proper sensibles is one of the general theory of sensation. That

is to say, Aristotle's treatment of the question about the reality of proper sensibles is developed within the context of his general cognitive realism as exemplified by his statement that the senses are naturally adapted to grasp their proper objects. It is, then, a question of the development of the more specific details of this general cognitive realism.

This general cognitive realism in Aristotle's position comes through again in his answer to the question of why the senses do not perceive themselves. Here Aristotle says:

Here arises a problem: why do we not perceive the senses themselves as well as the external objects of sense, or why without the stimulation of external objects do they not produce sensation, seeing that they contain in themselves fire, earth, and all the other elements, which are the direct or indirect objects of sense? It is clear that what is sensitive is so only potentially, not actually. The power of sense is parallel to what is combustible, for that never ignites itself spontaneously, but requires an agent which has the power of starting ignition; otherwise it could have set itself on fire, and would not have needed actual fire to set it ablaze.<sup>2</sup>

In the above text Aristotle asks, why do the senses not sense themselves inasmuch as they contain the four elements - earth, air, fire, and water - which comprise everything that is perceived by sensation? He replies that the senses are not actually like their objects, but are only potentially like them. In this the senses are analogous to anything that is combustible. An object which is combustible is not actually on fire, but requires an external agent to set it on fire. For, if an object having the capacity for combustion were actually on

fire, then, it would burn by itself without needing an external agent to ignite it. A combustible object is one that is potentially ablaze, and is reduced from this potentiality to being actually ablaze by a corresponding external agent which ignites it. Analogously, the senses are powers or potentialities which means that they are capacities to be affected by a specific (external) agent. Just as a combustible object is, in respect to burning, a capacity to be ignited by a specific external agent, so the senses are capacities to be affected by specific external agents (i.e. objects of sense). Now, it is paramountly the proper sensibles which "... constitute the objects of sense in the strictest sense of the term"<sup>3</sup>. Consequently, in saying that the senses are capacities to be affected by specific agents, we again see Aristotle's view that the senses are naturally structured to their corresponding proper sensible objects, and hence, Aristotle's cognitive realism discloses itself here too.

Aristotle's cognitive realism with regard to the reality of proper sensibles also shows itself in his often repeated statement that the, "...perception of the special objects of sense is always free from error,"<sup>4</sup> or, that, at least, "Perception (1) of the special objects of sense is never in error or admits the least possible amount of falsehood"<sup>5</sup>. Here, again, the senses are considered by Aristotle to be so naturally adapted to grasping their

corresponding proper objects in the way that they really exist in objects that they almost never err in perceiving them.

In this first short section we have merely tried to show that, in a general way, there is in Aristotle's theory of sensation a cognitive realism with regard to proper sensibles. For Aristotle regards the senses as naturally adapted to grasping their corresponding proper sensible objects. Aristotle conceives of the senses as capacities that are so structured as to be able to grasp their corresponding proper sensibles in the way that they, in fact, do exist in objects. We have also pointed out in this section that the answer to the question of the reality of proper sensibles is developed within the context of this general cognitive realism of Aristotle's theory of sensation. We shall see this development taking place in the remaining sections of this chapter.

## II. Two Senses of 'Alteration':

### Sensation as Alteration

According to Aristotle, "Sensation depends, as we have said, on a process of movement or affection from without, for it is held to be some sort of change of quality"<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, Aristotle also says,

In the case of sense clearly the sensitive faculty was potentially what the object makes it to be actually; the faculty is not affected or altered. This must therefore be a different kind from movement; for movement is, as we saw, an activity

of what is imperfect, activity in the unqualified sense, i.e., that of what has been perfected, is different from movement.<sup>7</sup>

Aristotle appears to be contradicting himself here. For, on the one hand, he is saying that sensation involves an alteration, while, on the other hand, he is saying that the senses are not altered or affected in sensation. How can sensation be said to involve alteration and not involve alteration? As we shall now see, this is not a real contradiction in Aristotle's theory of sensation, but only a seeming contradiction. However, in examining this matter we shall discover that it helps us to see once again the cognitive realism inherent in Aristotle's position on proper sensibles.

Aristotle is, in fact, not contradicting himself when he says that sensation involves alteration, affection, or being acted upon, and that it does not. For Aristotle distinguishes two senses of 'being acted upon' or 'being altered'. Let's now examine in detail what these two senses are. We shall begin with the following:

But we must now distinguish not only between what is potential and what is actual but also different senses in which things can be said to be potential or actual; up to now we have been speaking as if each of these phrases had only one sense. We can speak of something as 'a knower' either (a) as when we say that man is a knower, meaning that man falls within the class of beings that know or have knowledge, or (b) as when we are speaking of a man who possesses a knowledge of grammar; each of these is so called as having in him a certain potentiality, but there is a difference between their respective potentialities, the one (a) being a potential knower, because his kind or matter is such and such, the other (b), because he can in the absence of any external counteracting cause realize his

knowledge in actual knowing at will. This implies a third meaning of 'a knower' (c), one who is already realizing his knowledge - he is a knower in actuality and in the most proper sense is knowing, e.g., this A. Both the former are potential knowers who realize their respective potentialities, the one (a) by change of quality, i.e. repeated transitions from one state to its opposite under instruction, the other (b) by the transition from the inactive possession of sense or grammar to their active exercise. The two kinds of transition are distinct.<sup>8</sup>

In the passage we have just quoted Aristotle wants to distinguish and explain the different senses in which a thing can be said to be potential and actual. He does so by presenting an analysis of the different ways in which 'a knower' (of grammar) is used. The phrase 'a knower' (of grammar), says Aristotle, can be applied in three distinct senses:

- (a) A person is said to be a potential knower of grammar simply in virtue of his being a human being and even though he is presently completely ignorant on the subject of, say, grammar. For, simply in virtue of his being a rational animal, he ipso facto is the type of creature who has a capacity to learn grammar.
- (b) A person is said to be a potential knower of grammar, if he has a knowledge of grammar which he is not actually using at the moment.
- (c) A person is said to be an actual knower of grammar who both has a knowledge of this subject and is actually utilizing this knowledge at the

present time. This man, says Aristotle, is a knower of grammar in the fullest and most proper sense of the term. All three of these men, then, are called knowers (of grammar).

(A) and (b) are potential knowers of grammar, while (c) is an actual knower. Now, (a) can realize his potential knowledge of grammar by being instructed in that discipline, and thereby passing from his state of ignorance to the contrary state, namely, to the possession of knowledge about grammar. In doing so, (a) reaches the same state as (b). However, for his part, (b) too can realize his potential knowledge of grammar by simply exercising this knowledge which he already possesses. In so doing, (b) becomes like (c). Here, however, there is no passing from one state to its contrary, involving the destruction of the former state, but only the active use of something that is already possessed. The two transitions are thus quite distinct. The third man, the one who is actually utilizing his knowledge (i.e. the knower of grammar who is utilizing his knowledge by thinking about the fact that the first person singular of the future indicative active of the French verb parler ends in 'a', parlera) is the one who is most perfectly a knower.

Thomas Aquinas very neatly sums up the distinctions between the various senses of potential and actual that Aristotle is drawing here in his commentary on this Aristotelian text. Referring to Aristotle's example of the three senses in which someone can be called 'a knower', Aquinas says,



Of the three, then, the third is simply in act; the first is simply in potency; while the second is in act as compared with the first and in potency as compared with the third. Clearly, then, potentiality is taken in two senses (the first and second man); and actuality also in two senses (the second and third man).<sup>9</sup>

In the texts immediately following the one we have just finished examining Aristotle makes distinctions analogous to those we have just seen him draw. In those texts Aristotle points out different senses of the phrase 'to be altered'. He says the following:

Also the expression 'to be acted upon' has more than one meaning; it may mean either (a) the extinction of one of two contraries by the other, or (b) the maintenance of what is potential by the agency of what is actual and already like what is acted upon, with such likeness as is compatible with one's being actual and the other potential. For what possesses knowledge becomes an actual knower by a transition which is either not an alteration of it at all (being in reality a development into its true self or nature) or at least an alteration in a quite different sense from the usual meaning.

Hence it is wrong to speak of a wise man as being 'altered' when he uses his wisdom, just as it would be absurd to speak of a builder as being altered when he is using his skill in building a house.<sup>10</sup>

According to Aristotle, 'to be acted upon', 'to be altered', or 'alteration' has two different meanings. It may mean the destruction of one contrary by the other. This is the ordinary meaning of being altered, or being acted upon, or alteration. From our earlier analysis we can see that this is the sense of alteration that (a) undergoes in realizing his potentiality for knowing. In so doing, (a) passes from one state (ignorance) to the contrary state (the possession of knowledge), and becomes like (b). On the other hand,

says Aristotle, this expression can also mean that what exists in potency is brought to actuality by means of what is like it and differs from that potency only to the extent of our being able to say that, prior to this alteration, the patient involved was a potency, while the agent was an actuality. To illustrate this let's return to our earlier analysis of the three meanings of 'a knower'. Consider the man (b) who passes from the inactive possession of knowledge of grammar to the active use of it. There is really no alteration - in the ordinary sense of the term which we have explained above - occurring in this man. On the contrary, the most we can say is that the former state of that man (i.e. the inactive possession of knowledge) is in potentiality in relation to the latter state (i.e. the active use of the knowledge he possesses), and, similarly, the latter state is in actuality relative to the former state. In the same way, in the case of a wise man who uses his knowledge or a builder who exercises his skill, there is no alteration in any ordinary sense. On the contrary, the most we can say about it is that, in each case, relative to each other, the former state (i.e. the inactive possession of knowledge or skill in building) is a potentiality, while the latter state (i.e. the active use of this knowledge or skill in building) is an actuality. To summarize the distinctions Aristotle is making here we can simply quote his own words on the subject:

...we must recognize two senses of alteration, viz. (1) the substitution of one quality for another, the first being the contrary of the

second, or (ii) the development of an existent quality from potentiality in the direction of fixity or nature.<sup>11</sup>

We have been examining, in this section, the various senses of the terms, 'potentiality', 'actuality', and 'alteration' which Aristotle distinguishes. However, we have not as yet seen how this relates to Aristotle's theory of sensation, and, more importantly, what it tells us about Aristotle's conception of the reality of proper sensibles. This is to be our task in the remainder of this section. Aristotle relates the points which we have been examining to the issue of sensation in the following words:

In the case of what is to possess sense, the first transition is due to the action of the male parent and takes place before birth so that at birth the living thing is, in respect of sensation, at the stage which corresponds to the possession of knowledge. Actual sensation corresponds to the stage of the exercise of knowledge. But between the two cases compared there is a difference; the objects which excite the sensory powers to activity, the seen, the heard, etc., are outside. The ground of this difference is that what actual sensation apprehends is individuals, while what knowledge apprehends is universals, and these are in a sense within the soul. That is why a man can exercise his knowledge when he wishes, but his sensation does not depend upon himself - a sensible object must be there. A similar statement must be made about our knowledge of what is sensible - on the same ground, viz. that the sensible objects are individuals and external.<sup>12</sup>

Aristotle is here relating what he says about sensation to his earlier distinction between the three senses of 'a knower'. Concerning the power of sensation, Aristotle says that the transition analogous to that of (a) becoming like (b) occurs prior to birth. Now, at birth, with regard to being a sense perceiver, a person is in a state analogous

to that of (b). Consequently, he continues, performing an act of sensation is analogous to the transition involved in (b) utilizing his potentiality. This means that in sensing the faculty involved is altered only in the second sense of that term, that is, in the sense of a "...development of an existent quality from potentiality in the direction of fixity or nature"<sup>13</sup>. This means that in sensation the sense involved undergoes "...a development into its true self or actuality,"<sup>14</sup> that the sense involved is brought to complete fulfilment under the agency of what is so like it that the two differ prior to the act of sensation, only to the extent that - relative to each other - we can call the faculty of sensation a power and the object (i.e. the proper sensible or proper sensibles which "...constitute the objects of sense in the strictest sense of the term"<sup>15</sup>) an actuality.

Here we can see clearly Aristotle's cognitive realism exhibited, and, speaking now of proper sensibles, his position that the structure of each sense is naturally adapted to grasp and present to us those proper objects in the way that they actually do exist in external objects.<sup>16</sup> For Aristotle is saying that, in sensation, the sense faculty involved is not altered in the sense of being affected by something that is contrary to it. Quite the opposite, the sense faculty is altered only in the sense of being brought to its true self, that is, developed finally into the fulfilment of the nature that it has. Thus, we can see from this that there is a natural proportion existing, for Aristotle, between the sense

and its corresponding proper sensible object: the senses are meant to be able to grasp the proper sensibles as they, in fact, are. Consequently, we can see that, for Aristotle, proper sensibles do exist in objects in the way in which our senses report them to us.

It is not only in the similarity, which we have just examined, that Aristotle sees between knowing and sensing that we see his cognitive realism disclosed. For, it is also in the dissimilarity between the two which he notes that his cognitive realism comes out. Let's return to the text from 417b18-28 which we are examining to see what Aristotle says regarding this dissimilarity. Actual sensation, he says, differs from actual knowing inasmuch as that which actuates any given sense faculty is an external sensible object (e.g. colour, sound, etc.). This difference is caused by the fact that sensation is always of individuals, while scientific knowledge is of universals. Now, because the latter are in the soul (in an immaterial way), the intellect can contemplate them at will. On the other hand, sensation is always of external, particular, sensible objects, and hence, can occur only when such an object is presented to the senses. The same can be said about the sciences which deal with sensible objects. For, here too, the sense objects are singular and are external to the senses.

What we must note about all of the things we have said in the preceding paragraph is that Aristotle is pointing out here that the senses are so structured as to sense, not

~~themselves~~ - we have already seen that Aristotle denies  
~~that the senses~~ sense themselves in the first section of  
~~this chapter~~ <sup>18</sup> - but the external objects which are pre-  
~~sented~~ to them. Here again, then, Aristotle's cognitive  
~~realism~~ with regard to sensation comes through: the senses  
~~grasp~~, not themselves, but the objects which are presented  
~~to~~ them in external reality.

We began our discussion in this section with what  
~~seemed~~ to be paradoxical statements on Aristotle's part. For  
~~we~~ saw that Aristotle said that sensation both is and is not  
~~an~~ alteration. We shall now conclude this discussion with the  
~~statements~~ he makes in summarizing some of the distinctions we  
~~have~~ seen him disclose. After doing this we shall point out  
~~that~~ Aristotle was not contradicting himself in saying that  
~~sensation~~ both does and does not involve alteration of the  
~~senses~~. The text in question reads as follows:

A later more appropriate occasion may be found  
 thoroughly to clear up all this. At present it must  
 be enough to recognize the distinctions already drawn;  
 a thing may be said to be potential in either of two  
 senses, (a) in the sense in which we might say of a  
 boy that he may become a general or (b) in the sense  
 in which we might say the same of an adult, and there  
 are two corresponding senses of the term 'a potential  
 sentient'. There are no separate names for the two  
 stages of potentiality; we have pointed out that they  
 are different and how they are different. We cannot  
 help using the incorrect terms 'being acted upon or  
 altered' of the two transitions involved. As we have  
 said, what has the power of sensation is potentially  
 like what the perceived object already is; that is,  
 while at the beginning of the process of its being  
 acted upon the two interacting factors are dissimilar,  
 at the end the one acted upon is assimilated to the  
 other and is identical in quality with it. 19

The term 'potency', says Aristotle, can be used in two different ways, as we have seen. To illustrate, consider the case of saying that a boy is potentially a soldier and that a man is potentially a soldier. The term 'potency' is used here, in each case, in a different sense. For,

It is in one sense that we say that a boy can be a soldier, i.e. by a remote potentiality. But in another sense we say that a grown man can be a soldier, i.e. by proximate potentiality. 20

Similarly, there are two senses of the expression, 'a potential sentient'. This expression can refer to what is, by nature, due to have sense faculties, but has not got them yet. It acquires sense faculties by "the action of the male parent...before birth"<sup>21</sup>. The expression, 'a potential sentient', also refers to what possesses sense faculties, but is not actually using them at the present moment. Unfortunately, 'There are no separate names for the two stages of potentiality'<sup>22</sup>. We are, therefore, required to use the imprecise terms, 'to be acted upon' or 'being altered' to express the transitions in the reduction of each of these two types of potentiality to their respective actualities, even though the transition involved in the second case is not an alteration in the usual sense of the term.

We can now see that Aristotle was not contradicting himself in saying that sensation both does and does not involve an alteration of the senses. For in so saying he was using the term 'alteration' equivocally. When he says that

sensation is not an alteration, he means that it does not involve, "...the substitution of one quality for another, the first being the contrary of the second"<sup>23</sup>. This is alteration in the ordinary sense of the term. However, when he says that sensation is an alteration, he means that it involves, with regard to the senses, "...the maintenance of what is potential by the agency of what is actual and already like what is acted upon, with such likeness as is compatible with one's being actual and the other potential,"<sup>24</sup> or, "...the development of an existent quality to actuality in the direction of fixity or nature"<sup>25</sup>. This is alteration in the special sense of that term which Aristotle has discerned.

### III. The Senses Are Potentially Like Their Objects

The above view of sensation as, not being alteration of the senses in the ordinary meaning of the term, but only in the special sense of the term, means that we must take Aristotle as saying that the cause of sensation, specifically the proper sensible object involved, gets through to the appropriate sense faculty in a way in which causes of alteration - in the ordinary sense of 'alteration' - do not get through to their patients.<sup>26</sup> This can be seen in the last statement of the text from 417b29-418a5 we were examining towards the end of Section II of this chapter. There Aristotle points out that the faculty of sense involved in any given act of sensation is potentially like what the object of that sensation



already is. That is to say, prior to the sensation occurring, the sense involved and the corresponding sensible object are dissimilar. However, even here, they are only dissimilar to the extent that we can say that, relative to each other, the sense is a potentiality - a potentiality in the sense in which the inactive possession of knowledge is said to be a potentiality - while the object is an actuality. On the other hand, once the sense has been altered - in the sense of developing into its true or full self or its full nature - then, we cannot even make this distinction between the sense and its object. For the sense is now, once the sensation occurs, identical in quality with the object sensed. This notion of the sense being potentially like its object before sensation and actually like it after the sensation is often repeated by Aristotle. For example, in comparing sensing with knowing, Aristotle says the following:

Knowledge and sensation are divided to correspond with the realities, potential knowledge and sensation answering to potentialities, actual knowledge and sensation to actualities. Within the soul the faculties of knowledge and sensation are potentially these objects, the one what is knowable, the other what is sensible.<sup>27</sup>

Here again Aristotle points out that the senses are, prior to sensation, potentially identical with their sensible objects, just as the knowing faculties are potentially identical with the intelligible, prior to knowing it. Or, consider this brief statement referring to the sensing of odours, "Smells come from what is dry as flavours from what is moist.<sup>28</sup> Consequently the organ of smell is potentially dry". Once again Aristotle is saying that the sense becomes like its

corresponding sensible object in sensation. Thus, we can see from all of this that Aristotle is asserting that proper sensibles are qualities inhering in objects in the way our senses report them to us. For, in sensation, the sense becomes identical in quality with what it is sensing.

In order to better understand what Aristotle is saying in stating that the sense becomes like its object in sensation, let's look at some of the things which Aristotle says about the proper sensible, flavour. In so doing we shall see that this is another instance of his conviction that proper sensibles are properties which inhere in objects in the way our senses present them to us. In his discussion of flavours Aristotle applies his principle that any given faculty of sensation is potentially like what its corresponding object already actually is, and that, when the object has been sensed, the sense faculty involved becomes identical in quality with that object.

According to Aristotle, "...the flavoured and tastable body is suspended in a liquid matter"<sup>29</sup>. Now, in applying the principle we stated above, Aristotle says the following:

Since what can be tasted is liquid, the organ for its perception cannot be either (a) actually liquid or (b) incapable of becoming liquid. Tasting means a being affected by what can be tasted as such; hence the organ of taste must be liquified, and so to start with must be non-liquid but capable of liquification without loss of its distinctive nature. This is confirmed by the fact that the tongue cannot taste either when it is too dry or when it is too moist; in the latter case what occurs is due to a contact with the pre-existent moisture in the tongue itself, when after a fore-taste of some strong flavour we try to taste another flavour; it is in this way that sick persons find everything they taste bitter, viz. because, when they taste, their tongues are overflowing with bitter moisture. <sup>30</sup>

For Aristotle, then, as what can be tasted is a flavourful liquid, the organ for tasting must be non-liquid to start with. However, it must have the power of becoming liquified in the act of tasting, that is, must be capable of becoming like or identical in quality with what its sensible object already actually is. But, in becoming liquified, it must not lose its nature of being an organ of taste; that is, in becoming liquified, it must retain its power to taste when it is no longer actually (as it now is), but only potentially, liquified. To prove that the tongue becomes like the tastable object qua tastable Aristotle cites the inability of the tongue to taste when it is too dry or too moist. In the latter instance what happens is that we end up tasting this excessive moisture which is coating the tongue. This explains why sick people find that everything tastes bitter. For their tongues are coated with an excessive bitter tasting moisture.

Thus, we can see from this analysis of what Aristotle is saying about flavours in general that he is stating that flavours inhere in objects in the way our sense of taste - when that sense is normally disposed and not abnormally disposed, as in illness - reports them to us. For he has said that what can be tasted is a flavourful liquid and that, in tasting, the organ of taste becomes liquified. Now, all of this is in accordance with his general principle that, in sensing, the sense involved becomes identical in quality with its corresponding sensible object. Consequently, for Aristotle, flavours (and each of the other proper sensibles) inhere in objects in the way our

normally disposed sense reports them to us.

Aristotle becomes even more specific in his assertion of the independent reality of flavours when he says the following:

The species of flavours are, as in the case of colours, (a) simple, i.e. the two contraries, the sweet and the bitter, (b) secondary, viz. (i) on the side of the sweet, the succulent, (ii) on the side of the bitter, the saline, (iii) between these comes the pungent, the harsh, the astringent, and the acid; these pretty well exhaust the varieties of flavours. It follows that what has the power of tasting is what is potentially of that kind, and what is tastable is what has the power of making it actually what it itself already is.<sup>31</sup>

In this passage Aristotle lists what he considers to be most of the different varieties of flavours. In so doing he also ascertains that each of these different species of flavours exists in objects in the way in which our sense of taste reports them to us. For he says that the sense of taste is potentially identical with what each of these species of flavour already actually is, while that which is called a flavour is what can reduce the sense of taste from this potentiality to a actuality.

In concluding this section we can say the following. We have been examining Aristotle's general principle that, prior to an act of sensation, each of the senses is potentially identical in quality with its corresponding sensible object. We wanted to see what this implied regarding Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles inasmuch

Inasmuch as the proper sensibles constitute the objects of sense in the strictest sense of the term. We saw that this principle implied that proper sensibles inhere in objects in the way our senses present them to us. In order to see this implication more clearly we examined specific applications of this principle occurring in Aristotle's treatment of some of the individual senses, and especially in the case of the sense of taste. In so doing we found that we were correct in our conclusion that, in this principle, Aristotle was again showing us that his position is that proper sensibles are independent qualities inhering in objects in the way our senses report them to us as inhering. Thus, we have in this principle that Aristotle enunciates yet another instance of his cognitive realism on the issue of the reality of proper sensibles.

#### IV. The Senses as Ratios, and Sensation As Involving a Communication of Likeness

Throughout all of this chapter up to this point we have been developing the cognitive realism inherent in Aristotle's theory of sensation and seeing, more specifically, the consequences that this realism has with regard to Aristotle's conception of the reality of proper sensibles. In this section we shall continue on with this line of thought. For we shall see here further details of Aristotle's doctrine that the senses are adapted by nature to be able to grasp and present to us their corresponding proper sensible objects. To be more specific, we shall examine here, in some detail, the

Following two points. First, we shall look at Aristotle's conception of sensation as involving a communication of form between the object and the sense. Secondly, we shall examine, with regard to Aristotle's doctrine that the senses are naturally adapted to grasping their proper objects, his conception of the senses as being ratios or proportions.

The last chapter of Book II of the De Anima is devoted to a general summary of characteristics of the five external senses. Aristotle says the following of these general conclusions and then states the first one in this manner:

The following results applying to each and every sense may now be formulated.

(A) By a 'sense' is meant what has the power of receiving into itself the sensible forms of things without the matter. This must be conceived of as taking place in the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet-ring without the iron or gold; we say that what produces the impression is a signet of bronze or gold, but its particular metallic constitution makes no difference; in a similar way the sense is affected by what is coloured or flavoured or sounding, but it is indifferent what in each case the substance is; what alone matters is what quality it has, i.e. in what ratio its constituents are combined.<sup>32</sup>

We can see here that Aristotle has developed his cognitive realism around a conception of the agency involved in sensation, on the part of the object sensed, as a communication to the sense involved from that object of form, and hence, of likeness or resemblance. This stands out clearly in Aristotle's treatment of sensation as analogous to the action of a signet-ring impressing a piece of wax with the

signet's likeness. Let's look at this analogy more closely. When the signet-ring impresses the piece of wax there is a communication from the former to the latter of a likeness of the design that is on the ring. It is a matter of indifference, insofar as the ring impressing the wax with its likeness is concerned, whether the signet is made of bronze or gold or some other metal. On the contrary, what alone is important here is the form that this metal takes as the design on the ring. For it is only this form, this likeness - not the bronze or gold or other material of which the signet is composed, and which is, thus, its matter, that is communicated by the ring to the wax. The wax, then, receives a likeness of the signet.

Now, according to Aristotle, we can give an account that is analogous to that of the signet-ring impressing the piece of wax in explaining what sensation involves. In sensation what affects the sense involved - as distinguished from the sense organ involved - is not the physical object qua physical object, that is, qua composed of form and matter. So, what affects the sense is only the form (minus the matter) of that physical object. Just as, insofar as impressing the wax with its likeness is concerned, it is a matter of indifference what the metallic constitution of the signet is, so insofar as affecting the appropriate sense is concerned, it is a matter of indifference what the physical object, qua composed of form and matter, is. For, in each instance, it is not the form and matter together of the signet-ring or the form and

matter together of the sensible object which affects the wax or the sense respectively. On the contrary, in each case, what affects and is communicated to the wax or to the sense is the appropriate form without the matter. Thus, in each case, in the case of the signet-ring impressing the wax and, for example, the coloured object affecting the sense of sight, we have a communication to the wax and to the sense of sight of a likeness: the wax then takes on the likeness, the colour, of the object sensed.

In the above comparison of sensation with a piece of wax impressed by a signet-ring, we see the cognitive realism in Aristotle's development of his theory of sensation. His theory of sensation emphasizes the reception by the sense of "the sensible forms of things without the matter"<sup>33</sup>. Aristotle's theory of sensation conceives of sensation as a communication of form, a communication of likeness, from the object sensed to the appropriate sense. In other words, in Aristotle's notion of sensation, we do perceive objects to be as they, in fact, really are. Moreover, this conception of sensation entails that, for Aristotle, proper sensibles are qualities inhering in objects independently of our perception of them, and that our senses present them to us as they, in fact, are.

We have taken as our point of departure in this thesis Aristotle's statement that proper sensibles "... constitute the objects of sense in the strictest sense of the term, and it is to them that in the nature of things the



structure of each several sense is adapted<sup>34</sup>. Now it has been with the development of the realism inherent in that statement and what it means for Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles that we have been concerned throughout this chapter. We shall now take a look at just what Aristotle considers the structure of the senses to be in general. In doing this we shall be examining the second point that we said we wanted to examine in this section. Aristotle presents us with his view of the structure of the senses in his second general conclusion "applying to any and every sense"<sup>35</sup>. In this second conclusion Aristotle says the following:

(B) By 'an organ of sense' is meant that in which ultimately such a power is seated. The sense and its organ are the same in fact, but their essence is not the same. What perceives is, of course, a spatial magnitude, but we must not admit that either the having the power to perceive or the sense itself is a magnitude. This enables us to explain why objects of sense which possess one of two opposite sensible qualities in a degree largely in excess of the other opposite destroy the organs of sense; if the movement set up by an object is too strong for the organ, the equipoise of contrary qualities in the organ, which just is its sensory power, is disturbed; it is precisely as concord and tone are destroyed by too violently twanging the strings of a lyre.<sup>36</sup>

In this discussion we find a more detailed presentation of how the senses are structured in order to grasp their proper sensible objects. We saw, in our analysis of the first of these two general conclusions, that sensation involves a communication of likeness, of form without matter, from the object sensed to the appropriate sense. In this, the second of his general conclusions about sensation, Aristotle begins by defining what he means by 'an organ of sense'. By 'an organ of sense' is meant that in which the capacity to receive sensible forms without their matter resides. However, this is not to say that the sense and its organ are two separate beings. No, it is, rather, to say that there is an intelligible distinction between the sense and its corresponding organ. This distinction is based on the fact that the organ is a spatial magnitude, while the corresponding sense is a proportion or ratio or power of that magnitude. This explains why excessive sensible qualities can destroy sense organs. For each sense consists of a certain ratio or proportion or power, and, if the sensible object perceived possesses qualities in excess of what the organ can endure, then, the ratio or proportion or power - which precisely is the sense - is destroyed and the organ along with it, since the sense and its organ are identical in being. This relation between the organ of sense and the sense itself, and how they can be destroyed is summarized very succinctly by Thomas Aquinas when he comments the following on Aristotle's statements here:

A sense-organ, e.g. the eye, shares the same being with the faculty itself, though it differs in essence or definition, the faculty being as it were the form of the organ, as was said above. So he goes on to say 'an extended magnitude', i.e., a bodily organ, is what receives sensation, i.e. is the subject of the sense-faculty, as matter is the subject of form; and yet the magnitude and the sensitivity or sense differ by definition, the sense being a certain ratio, i.e., proportion and form and power, of the magnitude....If sensation is to take place there must pre-exist in the organ of sense 'a certain ratio' or, as we have termed it, proportion. But if the impact of the sense-object is stronger than what the organ is naturally able to bear, the proportion is destroyed and the sense itself, which precisely consists, as has been said, in the formal proportion of the organ, is neutralized. It is just as though one were to twang cords too violently, destroying the tone and harmony of the instrument, which is a certain proportion.<sup>37</sup>

In this section we have been examining two points regarding Aristotle's theory of sensation. First, we examined his conception of sensation as involving a communication of form, and so, of likeness. We saw that this entails doctrinally for Aristotle the position that proper sensibles exist in objects in the way our senses report them to us as existing. For it is the sensible form, and so, the sensible likeness, that is communicated from the object to the corresponding sense in sensation. Secondly, we examined Aristotle's notion of what he considered a sense to be in its structure. We saw that he described it as a ratio or power capable of receiving forms without matter, and residing in its corresponding organ from which it differs only in concept and not in being. It is just this ratio or power of which he speaks in the statement we originally took as expressing the cognitive realism in his theory of sensation, namely, the statement in

which he says that the proper sensibles, "...constitute the subjects of sense in the strictest sense of the term, and it is to them that in the nature of things the structure of each several sense is adapted"<sup>38</sup>.

#### V. A Seeming Problem in His Theory of Sensation

We have seen that, for Aristotle, sensation involves an alteration of the sense faculty in the sense of "...the development of an existent quality from potentiality in the direction of fixity or nature"<sup>39</sup>. According to Aristotle, alteration is a species of motion. This point comes out in the following statements where Aristotle summarizes his position regarding motion:

What then Motion is, has been stated both generally and particularly. It is not difficult to see how each of its types will be defined - alteration is the fulfilment of the alterable qua alterable (or, more scientifically, the fulfilment of what can act and what can be acted on, as such) - generally and again in each particular case, building, healing, etc. A similar definition will apply to each of the other kinds of motion.<sup>40</sup>

From this text we can see that, for Aristotle, alteration is a species of motion. Aristotle says that, from his earlier definition of motion in general as, "...the fulfilment of the moveable qua moveable, the cause of the alteration being con-<sup>41</sup>stituted with what can move," we can see how each of its species is to be defined. Accordingly, with regard to alteration, Aristotle says that it is to be defined as the activity of the alterable precisely as alterable.

From the above we can see that, for Aristotle, sensation is an alteration, and alteration, in turn, is a type of motion. Now, the reason why we have introduced these points into the present section is as follows. We shall now see how, in applying a principle that Aristotle developed concerning motion to the specific instance of acts of sensation, he eliminates what seems to be an obstacle to his making such an application. In eliminating this seeming difficulty we shall see him putting forward the most explicit statement we have seen of his conviction of the independent reality of proper sensibles.

In order to see just what the above mentioned principle is that Aristotle developed concerning motion, consider the following passage:

The solution of the difficulty that is raised about the motion - whether it is in the movable - is plain. It is the fulfilment of this potentiality, and by the action of that which has the power of causing motion; and the actuality of that which has the power of causing motion is not other than the actuality of the movable, for it must be the fulfilment of both. A thing is capable of causing motion because it can do this; it is a mover because it actually does it. But it is on the movable that it is capable of acting. Hence there is a single actuality of both alike, just as one to two and two to one are the same interval, and the steep ascent and the steep descent are one - for these are one and the same, although they can be described in different ways. So it is with the mover and moved.<sup>42</sup>

Aristotle is here answering the question of whether, in any given motion, the motion is in the mover or in the mobile object. The answer to this question, he says, follows

from his earlier definition of motion as, "... the fulfilment of the movable qua movable, the cause of the attribute being in contact with what can move"<sup>43</sup>. The motion is, says Aristotle, located in the mobile object. For, by definition, motion is the act of the mobile object's capacity to be moved, which is thought about by the mover. This is not to say that the act of the mover is a different one from that of the mobile object. For the act of the mover and the act of the mobile object are related in so far as the motion located in the mobile object is the fulfilment of the potentiality of both the mover and the mobile object. In explaining this Aristotle says that it is not only the mobile object which has its potentiality actualized in motion. On the contrary, there is also a certain potentiality in the mover which is also realized in that motion. For a thing is said to be capable of causing motion because of its power to move. However, it is said to be a mover because it actually moves something. Thus, in motion there is a realization of potentiality, not only on the part of the mobile object, but also on the part of the mover. But, to quote the commentary of Thomas Aquinas on this text:

...what the mover causes by acting and what the moved receives by being acted upon are the same. He says that the mover acts upon the mobile object, i.e., it causes the act of the mobile object. Hence it is necessary that one act be the act of each, i.e., of the mover and the moved. For what is from the mover as from an agent cause and what is in the moved as in a patient are the same.<sup>44</sup>

In order to illustrate how it is that the act of the mover and that of the moved are in the latter, Aristotle presents us with two analogous examples. In the first example, he

asks us to consider the distance from one to two and that of from two to one. In each instance the distance is the same, but there is still an intelligible difference between the two. For, if we compare the one and the two starting at two and going to one, we call it double. However, if we reverse the comparison by starting at one and going to two, we call it a half. Similarly, in the case of the distance between the bottom of a hill and the top of it: it is the same distance no matter if we begin at the bottom and proceed to the top or begin at the top and proceed to the bottom. However, there is an intelligible distinction between the two. For, in the former case, we call the procedure the ascent of the hill, while, in the latter, we call it the descent of the hill. Analogously, in the case of motion, there is an intelligible distinction to be drawn. "For motion insofar as it proceeds from the mover to the mobile object is the act of the mover, but insofar as it is in the mobile object from the mover, it is the act of the mobile object."<sup>45</sup>

We have just seen Aristotle put forward the principle that, in any motion or alteration - the latter being a species of the former - the motion, the activity of the mover and the mobile object, has its locus in the mobile (or alterable) object. We shall now examine in detail what Aristotle says about what, at first glance, appears to be an obstacle, to the application of this principle to all cases of sensation. In seeing this we shall, as we pointed out at the

beginning of this section, see Aristotle give us the most explicit statement we have seen so far that proper sensibles are qualities inhering in objects independently of our perception of them and inhering there in the way in which our senses report them to us. Aristotle puts all of this forward in a long passage of the second chapter of Book III of the De Anima. That passage reads as follows:

The activity of the sensible object and that of the percipient sense is one and the same activity, and yet the distinction between their being remains. Take as illustration actual sound and actual hearing: a man may have hearing and yet not be hearing, and that which has a sound is not always sounding. But when that which can hear is actively hearing and that which can sound is sounding, then the actual hearing and the actual sound are merged in one (these one might call respectively hearkening and sounding).

If it is true that the movement, both the acting and the being acted upon, is to be found in that which is acted upon, both the sound and the hearing so far as it is actual must be found in that which has the faculty of hearing; for it is in the passive factor that the actuality of the active or motive factor is realized; that is why that which causes movement may be at rest. Now the actuality of that which can sound is just sound or sounding, and the actuality of that which can hear is hearing or hearkening; 'sound' and 'hearing' are both ambiguous. The same account applies to the other senses and their objects. For as the-acting-and-being-acted-upon is to be found in the passive, not in the active factor, so the actuality of the sensible object and that of the sensitive subject are both realized in the latter. But while in some cases each aspect of the total actuality has a distinct name, e.g., sounding and hearkening, in some one or other is nameless, e.g. the actuality of sight is called seeing, but the actuality of colour has no name: the actuality of the faculty of taste is called tasting, but the actuality of flavour has no name. Since the actualities of the sensible object and of the sensitive faculty are one actuality in spite of the difference between their modes of being, actual hearing and actual sounding appear and disappear from existence at one and the same moment, and so actual savour and actual tasting, etc., while as potentialities one of



them may exist without the other. The earlier students of nature were mistaken in their view that without sight there was no white or black, without taste no savour. This statement of theirs is partly true, partly false: 'sense' and 'the sensible object' are ambiguous terms, i.e. may denote either potentialities or actualities: the statement is true of the latter, false of the former. This ambiguity they wholly failed to notice.<sup>46</sup>

This very long passage consists of two paragraphs each of which we must now examine in detail. In the first paragraph<sup>47</sup>, Aristotle is applying the principle concerning motion which we saw him develop in the Physica. Applying this principle to the specific instance of the alteration involved in sensation, Aristotle says the following. The fulfilment of the potentiality of the sensible object and the fulfilment of the potentiality of the corresponding sense that occurs in any act of sensation constitutes one total actualization. However, this one actualization has two intelligibly distinguishable aspects. To help convey what he means, Aristotle presents us with this illustration. Take the case of someone hearing a sound, he says. When someone hears a sound there is only the one event, namely, the hearing of the sound. However, this single event has two intelligibly distinguishable aspects. For, if we consider it from the point of view of the fulfilment of the potentiality of the faculty of hearing, then, we have what is called hearkening. On the other hand, if we consider it from the point of view of the fulfilment of the potentiality of the sensible object to make a sound, then, we have what is called sounding.

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In the second paragraph of that passage, Aristotle

begins by pointing out something else which we have already seen in the first part of this section. What he points out is that, in any movement or alteration, the actualization of both the mover and the mobile object has its locus in the latter. As we have seen, to return to our example, the activity of what has the power to sound is called sound or sounding, while the activity of what has the power to hear is hearing or hearkening. Now, in accordance with what we have just said, we must say that the fulfillment of both what can sound and what can hear has its locus in the latter. However, says Aristotle, we must note that the terms 'sound' and 'hearing' are both ambiguous terms, and, in a sense, so are the terms applied to all the other senses and their proper objects. It is with this remark that we begin to see just why Aristotle has introduced this discussion concerning the actualization of both the sensible object and the sensitive subject in sensation, and about the locus of that actualization as being in the latter.

Aristotle is here explaining his doctrine that the actuality of the sensible object and the actuality of the sensitive faculty are both realized in the latter in order to show that this is an adequate account of all cases of sensation. He does this because verbally this does not seem to be true in all such cases. Consequently, in order to prove that it is true in all such cases, he first gives us an example of where his conception of sensation is in accord with the common way of speaking. In the case of someone hearing a sound, his

doctrine meets the demands of language. For both intelligible aspects of the total actuality involved (which is realized in the sense faculty) have a name. 'Harkening' is the term used for the actuality of the faculty of hearing, and 'sounding' is the name for the actuality of the sensible object. Thus, in this case Aristotle is correct in saying that the actuality of both the sensitive faculty and the sensible object resides in the sensitive subject.

However, there are cases where his doctrine that both aspects of the actuality involved in sensation have their locus in the sense faculty seems to be incorrect. This is Aristotle's reason for pointing out that the terms 'sounding' and 'hearing' as well as those referring to the other senses and their proper objects have more than one meaning. This, too, is also his reason for pointing out that, while in some cases of sensation each of the two aspects of the total actuality involved has a distinct name - as in our example of someone hearing a sound - however, in some cases one or other of these aspects of the total actuality has no name. For example, in the case of someone seeing a colour, verbally Aristotle's doctrine seems to falter. For it is sensibly evident what we call by the term 'colour' is on the surface of object sensed and not in the eye. Here, then, we have an instance where the actuality of the sensible object would not seem to have its locus in the actuality of the sense faculty involved and be identical with it. Consequently, in order to dispel this misconception, Aristotle points out that 'colour'

is not the name for the appropriate actuality here, on the side of the sensible object. For that actuality has no name. Or, consider the case of someone tasting a flavoured object. Once again Aristotle's doctrine seems to falter.

It is sensibly evident that the flavour has its locus in the object sensed and not in the sense of taste. So, here too, the actuality of the sensible object does not seem to be identical with the actuality of the corresponding sense and have its locus in the latter. Consequently, says Aristotle, notice that, while the actuality of the faculty of sense involved here is called 'tasting', the term 'flavour' is not the name to be applied to the actuality of the object tasted. For the latter actuality is nameless. Consequently, Aristotle is not mistaken in saying that, in every case of sensation, the actuality of the sensible object and that of the corresponding sense has its locus in the latter and is identical with the latter, even though colours and flavours do not have their locus in the corresponding sense faculties of the one who sees or tastes but in the objects seen or tasted. For flavours and colours are not the corresponding actualities of the objects sensed.

From what we have seen so far we can say that, for Aristotle, terms such as 'colour' and 'flavour' are the names for qualities existing in objects which, when actualized in sensation, are nameless. Thus, terms like 'colour' and 'flavour' refer, not to actualities, but to potentialities. Now, this has important bearings on Aristotle's position as regards

the reality of proper sensibles, as we shall now show. After pointing out all that we have seen so far, the text we are examining proceeds as follows. <sup>49</sup> Since, as we have seen, the actuality of the sensible object and the actuality of the corresponding sensitive faculty are only two intelligibly distinguishable aspects of the one total actuality involved (i.e. the sensing of the object) in any act of sensation having its locus in the actuality of the appropriate sense faculty, we must say the following. The actuality of the sensible qualities of objects comes into existence and ceases to exist simultaneously with the coming into existence and ceasing to exist of the actuality of the corresponding sense faculties. However, says Aristotle, as potentialities the sensible qualities can exist without the actuality of the corresponding sense faculties. Now, as we have just seen, 'flavor' and 'colour' are the names of potentialities in sensible objects. Consequently, we have here the explicit statement on Aristotle's part that proper sensibles exist independently of our perception of them in the case of flavours and colours and, by implication from his statement that the terms referring to all the proper sensibles "may denote potentialities or actualities" <sup>50</sup>, in the case of all the other proper sensibles.

Aristotle concludes this discussion by applying <sup>51</sup> what he has said here to a critique of earlier philosophers. It was through failing to realize the double meaning that the terms referring to the sense faculties and the proper sensibles have - as referring to either actualities or potentialities -

that the earlier philosophers erred, says Aristotle.

These men denied that there could be any white or black or, in general, any colour in the absence of percipients, or that there could be any flavours in the absence of percipients. What they failed to notice is that the terms 'sense' and 'the sensible object' can be used to denote either potentialities or actualities. For example, a man can be said to have the sense of hearing no matter whether he is actually using it at the moment (sense as actuality) or not (sense as potentiality). We have already seen how 'the sensible object' can refer to potentialities or actualities, and so, further examples are not necessary here. These men were, then, wrong, as we have seen, to deny that, as potentialities, proper sensibles can exist in the absence of percipients, but, as referring to actualities, this denial was correct.<sup>52</sup>

In this section it has been our purpose to examine what implications Aristotle's principle that the activity of the mover and the mobile object are realized in the latter and are identical with one another, differing only in concept, as applied to sensation, has for his position on the reality of proper sensibles. We saw how Aristotle showed that this principle is an adequate account of all cases of sensation. In so doing we found that he said that the terms 'sense' and 'the sensible object' can refer to potentialities or to actualities, and hence, are ambiguous words. Furthermore, as referring to actualities, the denial of the existence of (proper) sensibles is correct. However, as referring to potentialities, such a

Denial is incorrect. In addition, we have Aristotle's explicit statement that terms, such as, 'colour', 'flavour', etc. are not the names of actualities, but of potentialities. Thus, colours, flavours, etc., being sensible potentialities, can all exist in the absence of percipients. Consequently, we can say that, in this section, we have discovered the most explicit statement we have seen of Aristotle's cognitive realism as regards proper sensibles. Proper sensibles are, for Aristotle, qualities inhering in objects independently of our perception of them, and inhering in the way our senses report them to us.

#### VI. The Proper Sensibles Are Not Reducible to Common Sensibles

In the last section we saw that Aristotle clearly regards proper sensibles as being qualities inhering in objects. Now, this same position also comes through quite clearly within the context of Aristotle's criticism of the attempt to account for flavours - a proper sensible - by means of common sensibles. This takes place in the De Sensu et Sensibili. Aristotle's remarks here can be divided into two parts. First, he criticizes the attempt to account for all the proper sensibles in terms of one of them. Secondly, he criticizes any attempt to reduce proper sensibles to common sensibles. With regard to the former, he says the following:

Democritus and most of the natural philosophers who treat of sense-perception proceed quite irrationally, for they represent all objects of sense as objects of Touch. Yet, if this is really so, it clearly follows that each of the other senses is a mode of Touch; but

one can see at a glance that this is impossible.

Again, for they treat percepts common to all the senses as proper to one. For [the qualities by which they explain taste, viz.] Magnitude and Figure, Roughness and Smoothness, and, moreover, the Sharpness and Bluntness found in solid bodies, are percepts common to all the senses, or if not to all, at least to Sight and Touch. This explains why it is that the senses are liable to err regarding them, while no such error arises respecting their proper sensibles; e.g. the sense of Seeing is not deceived as to Colour, nor is that of Hearing as to Sound. 53

To begin with, then, Aristotle argues against trying to account for all objects of sense in terms of the objects of touch. Aristotle gives two reasons for rejecting such an attempt. First, if what these philosophers claim is true, then, each of the other four senses must also be a mode of the sense of touch. However, it is obviously impossible that this should be the case. Secondly, the position Aristotle is rejecting treats the objects that are common to all the senses - or, at least, common to sight and touch<sup>54</sup> - as proper to one, namely, touch. For size, shape, roughness, smoothness, sharpness, and bluntness are qualities of bodies perceived by all five - or, at least, by two - of the senses. In fact, it is precisely because these qualities are common sensibles and not proper sensibles that explains why the senses sometime err in perceiving them, while no sense errs in reporting its proper object, which object is perceptible only by that sense.<sup>55</sup>

Aristotle now turns to giving a specific refutation of any attempt to reduce the proper sensibles to the common sensibles. Here he says the following:



On the other hand, they reduce the proper to common sensibles, as Democritus does with White and Black; for he asserts that the latter is [a mode of the] rough, and the former [a mode of the] smooth, while he reduces Savours to the atomic figures. Yet surely no one sense, or, if any, the sense of Sight rather than any other, can discern the common sensibles. But if we suppose that the sense of Taste is better able to do so, then - since to discern the smallest objects in each kind is what marks the acutest sense - Taste should have been the sense which best perceived the common sensibles generally and showed the most perfect power of discerning figures in general.

Again, all the sensibles involve contrariety; e.g. in Colour White is contrary to Black, and in Savours Bitter is contrary to Sweet; but no one figure is reckoned contrary to any other figure. Else, to which of the possible polygonal figures [to which Democritus reduces Bitter] is the spherical figure [to which he reduces Sweet] contrary?

Again, since figures are infinite in numbers, savours also should be infinite; [the possible rejoinder - 'that they are so, only that some are not perceived' - cannot be sustained] for why should one savour be perceived and another not? 56

Aristotle presents us with three arguments against trying to reduce the proper sensibles to common sensibles. First, the Greek atomists claim that colours, for instance, are forms of roughness and smoothness of the atoms of which everything is composed, while flavours are due to the shape of these atoms. However, retorts Aristotle, if shapes were not common sensibles - common sensibles being observed most distinctly by sight<sup>57</sup> - but were primarily objects of taste, then, taste should be the sense capable of perceiving the finest distinctions among all the common sensibles. For it is the ability to discern the finest differences among objects which defines the sharpest sense. However, this is not true of taste. For, as Aristotle says elsewhere, "...sight is the most highly developed sense,"<sup>58</sup> and, in speaking of sight

again he says, "...it is through this sense especially that we perceive the common sensibles, viz. figure, magnitude, motion, number"<sup>59</sup>. Secondly, while there is contrariety among the proper sensibles of each sense (e.g. in the case of colour, white is contrary to black), among the common sensibles (e.g. figures) there is none. Thirdly, while there are an infinite number of figures (a common sensible), there are a finite number of flavours (a proper sensible). Nor could it be argued that there are an infinite number of flavours, but we are only able to perceive some of them. For there is no reason why we should not be able to perceive every kind of flavour that exists.

What is the point of all this discussion for our thesis? The point of it is that it shows the cognitive realism in Aristotle's conception of the proper sensibles. Aristotle refuses to allow the possibility that the proper sensibles can be reduced to modes of the common sensibles in the manner of the Greek atomists or of, say, John Locke<sup>60</sup>. Aristotle argues here strongly against any such attempted reduction. Proper sensibles, are, for Aristotle, unique - unique in the sense of not being reducible to anything else - qualities inhering in objects. Thus, once again, we see that, for Aristotle, proper sensibles are qualities belonging to objects independently of our perception of them.

## VII. Summary and Conclusion

It has been our purpose in this chapter to set forth Aristotle's position regarding the reality of proper sensibles.

The question we have had to answer can be expressed as follows. Does Aristotle regard the proper sensibles as qualities inhering in external objects in the way our senses report them to us? In order to answer this question we examined, in detail, several points in Aristotle's theory of sensation. We began by pointing out (Section I) that there is a general cognitive realism in Aristotle's theory of sensation. For Aristotle regards the senses as naturally adapted to present to us their respective proper sensible objects as they really are. We took this as our point of departure, as being that around which the question of the reality of proper sensibles is developed by Aristotle. It is, then, a question of the detailed development of the cognitive realism of his theory of sensation. With this in mind, we saw (Section II) how Aristotle considered sensation to be an alteration only in the sense that, in perceiving its proper object, the sense is developed into its true or complete self. In this natural proportion that exists between the sense and its proper object we discovered that this implied doctrinally the view that the cause of sensation (the proper sensible object) gets through to the sense in a way that other agents don't get through to their patients. This is so true that, as we later found (Section V), the actuality relative to colour or to flavour goes nameless, implying that so much better known is the colour or the flavour (i.e. the potentiality). The view that the cause of sensation gets through to the sense in a way that ordinary agents don't get through to their patients also comes out in

Aristotle's claim (Section III) that, in sensation, the senses become identical in quality with their respective proper sensible objects. This notion of the identity between the senses and their proper objects was continued in our examination (Section IV) of the details concerning just exactly what happens in sensation. Here we saw that sensation involves a communication of form, and so, of likeness, from the object sensed to the appropriate sense. We saw that the sense, in sensing, takes on the form, the likeness, of the object sensed. Then, returning to the notion of sensation as alteration in only a special sense of the term, we saw (Section V) that Aristotle solved what seemed to be a problem regarding his doctrine that, in any alteration, the activity of the active element and of the passive element have their locus in the latter. In seeing Aristotle solve what appeared to be a problem in applying this principle to sensation, we found that his cognitive realism with regard to sensation came through again. For the seeming problem arose here because Aristotle saw that it was sensibly evident that, for example, colours and flavours exist in external objects and not in the corresponding actualized sense faculties that are experiencing those objects. Aristotle solves this difficulty by pointing out that 'flavours' and 'colours' are terms denoting potentialities, not actualities. Moreover, he said that proper sensibles, as potentialities, can exist in the absence of percipients. Finally, in examining Aristotle's refusal to allow the proper sensibles to be reduced to common sensibles (Section VI), we saw that he regards the proper sen-

sibles as unique qualities of objects.

What conclusion are we to draw from all of the above regarding Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles? We must conclude that Aristotle has, within his theory of sensation, a general cognitive realism. Furthermore, the question of the reality of proper sensibles is one that is bundled within the context of this general cognitive realism of his theory of sensation. That is to say, it is treated as part of the more detailed development of his theory of sensation. From what we have seen in this chapter of both his general theory of sensation and the more specific development of some of the details of that theory we must draw the following conclusion. According to Aristotle, the proper sensibles are qualities inhering in objects independently of our perception of them. Moreover, for Aristotle, proper sensibles inhere in objects in the same way that our senses report them to us as inhering.

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**PART II: CRITICAL STUDIES OF THREE MODERN ARISTOTLIAN COMMENTATORS**

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## CHAPTER III

### A CRITICAL STUDY OF JOHN HERMAN RANDALL (JR.)

#### I. He denies the Independent Reality of Proper Sensibles

According to Aristotle

In his book, Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> Randall says of Aristotle's<sup>2</sup> doctrine of "the power of sensing or perceiving" that,

This power exists "potentially" in the organism, until it is set in operation or "actualized" by some sensible object in the environment, some aisthēton. Then the "sense" (hē aisthēsis) conceived as the functioning of the sense organ, to aisthētērion - that is, the sense as the sensing of the sense organ - becomes "like" the sense object.<sup>3</sup>

It is in the context of explaining what he means in saying that, for Aristotle, the sense becomes like the sense object in an act of sensation that Randall introduces his discussion of the reality of proper sensibles according to Aristotle. He begins his explanation, then, as follows:

The sense quality which the object potentially possesses becomes actual in the sensing of the sense organ. For example, the wall is potentially white, it has the power of being seen as white. The power of vision (opsis) can, by means of the eyes, see "whiteness". For Aristotle, we do not see "in" our eyes, we see "with" our eyes.

In the process of sensing, there is a co-operation of these two powers, in which the power of the wall to be seen white and the power of vision to see whiteness receive a common fulfillment. The potential whiteness of the wall, and the potential whiteness of the power of vision, are actualized in a single process, "seeing the whiteness of

the wall." The "actual" color has its locus in the seeing of the eye, not in the wall; that is, in the co-operation of the two powers. But the color of the object, and the color in the seeing of the eye, are one and the same. Just so, the axe has the power of cutting, and the tree has the power of being cut. But the actual cutting takes place, in Aristotle's way of formulating it, in the tree. In general, the activity of the mover has its locus in the thing moved, not in the mover itself. "For the operation of the agent and the mover occurs in what is acted upon; that is why that which causes motion (to kinoun) need not itself be moved" [De Anima III, ch. 2: 426a4-6]. This is a functional, not a mechanical conception: it is what makes possible the notion of an "unmoved mover".<sup>4</sup>

According to Randall, then, Aristotle says that the sense becomes like the object sensed in an act of sensation in as much as the sense quality that the object sensed possesses (potentially) becomes actual in the sense that is sensing it. This is what Randall is saying in the first sentence of the passage quoted above. The rest of the material we have quoted presents us with an elaboration of what he is trying to say in that first sentence. Now, this elaboration is given by means of a specific example from the realm of vision. Randall presents us with the example of someone seeing a white wall. The wall, considered in itself, is potentially white. That is to say, states Randall, the wall has the power of being seen as white. For its part, the power of vision, by using the eyes, is able to see whiteness.

Now, all of the above doesn't take us very far. For it can still be made clearer, and Randall does this in the next paragraph. This is the second paragraph quoted above. Here, continuing on with his example, Randall says the fol-



Following. In an act of seeing the colour of the wall the two powers we pointed out in the preceding paragraph co-operate to receive a common actualization. In other words, the single process of seeing the whiteness of the wall is the actualization of the potential whiteness of the wall and the actualization of the potential whiteness of the visual sense. There is, then, the one process (seeing the whiteness of the wall) which has two distinguishable aspects (the actualization of the potential whiteness of the wall and the actualization of the potential whiteness of the power of vision).

Randall's next remark is that "the 'actual' color"<sup>5</sup> is located on the operation of the sense of vision. Randall explains what he means here by presenting us with a somewhat analogous example, and then subsuming that example and the one we have been discussing under a general principle. Take the case of an axe and a tree, says Randall. Now, the axe has the power of cutting and the tree has the power of being cut. However, when these two powers are being actualized (i.e. when the axe is cutting the tree), then, the actual cutting is located, not in the axe, but in the tree. Indeed, he continues, subsuming this example and the other example under a principle, "In general, the power of the mover has its locus in the thing moved, not in the mover itself"<sup>6</sup>. Randall refers us to two passages in Aristotle's writings by way of justifying this last remark. First of all, at the end of that statement, he gives a reference to footnote 2 on page 82 of his own book where he quotes the following words from Aristotle:

'For just as acting and being acted upon are in the thing acted upon so also the operation of the sensed object (to aisthēton) and of the power of sensing (to aisthētikon) are in the power of sensing (to aisthētikon)'. De Anima III, ch. 2: 426a9-11 7

Secondly, immediately following his statement that, "In general, the power of the mover has its locus in the thing moved, not in the mover itself," Randall quotes the following words from Aristotle: " 'For the operation of the agent and the mover occurs in what is acted upon; that is why that which causes motion (to kinoun) need not itself be moved' " <sup>8</sup>.

We must now examine more closely the things which we have seen so far only superficially in the preceding paragraph. Essentially, what we want to examine is Randall's claim that, to return to one of his examples, for Aristotle, "The 'actual' color has its locus in the seeing of the eye, not in the wall." <sup>9</sup> We shall do this by examining the two passages that we have seen were taken by Randall from Aristotle in justification for saying this.

The two passages Randall took from Aristotle, namely, 426a9-11 and 426a4-6, are only separated by a few lines. Now, these two short passages are part of a whole section which must be considered in its entirety if a correct understanding is to be had of any part of it. The section in question is as follows:

The activity of the sensible object and that of the percipient sense is one and the same activity, and yet the distinction between their being remains. Take as illustration actual sound and actual hearing: a man may have hearing and yet not be hearing, and that which has a sound is not always sounding. But when that which can hear is actively hearing and that which can sound is sounding then the actual hearing and the actual sound are merged in one (these one might call respectively hearkening and sounding).

If it is true that the movement, both the acting and the being acted upon, is to be found in that which is acted upon, both the sound and the hearing so far as it is actual must be found in that which has the faculty of hearing; for it is in the passive factor that the actuality of the active or motive factor is realized; that is why that which causes movement may be at rest. Now the actuality of that which can sound is just sound or sounding, and the actuality of that which can hear is hearing or hearkening; 'sound' and 'hearing' are both ambiguous. The same account applies to the other senses and their objects. For as the-acting-and-being-acted-upon is to be found in the passive, not in the active factor, so also the actuality of the sensible object and that of the sensitive subject are both realized in the latter. But while in some cases each aspect of the total actuality has a distinct name, e.g. sounding and hearkening, in some one or other is nameless, e.g. the actuality of sight is called seeing, but the actuality of colour has no name; the actuality of the faculty of taste is called tasting, but the actuality of flavour has no name. Since the actualities of the sensible object and of the sensitive subject are one actuality in spite of the difference between their modes of being, actual hearing and actual sounding appear and disappear from existence at one and the same moment, and so actual savour and actual tasting, etc. while as potentialities one of them may exist without the other. The earlier students of nature were mistaken in their view that without sight there was no white or black, without taste no savour. This statement of theirs is partly true, partly false: 'sense' and 'the sensible object' are ambiguous terms, i.e. may denote either potentialities or actualities: the statement is true of the latter, false of the former. This ambiguity they wholly failed to notice.<sup>10</sup>

Let us now take a close look at this entire passage to see if the two selections from it to which Randall refers can be given the interpretation he gives them. We shall begin with the first of the two paragraphs from Aristotle's text that we have quoted.<sup>11</sup> Aristotle begins this paragraph by saying that the activity of the sensible object and that of the perceiving sense constitute one event in which can be distinguished two aspects. He then gives us an example to help convey what he means. Take the case of someone hearing a sound. When someone hears a sound there is only the one event, namely, the hearing of

the sound. However, this event can be looked at from two different points of view. Looking at it from the viewpoint of the actualization of the faculty of hearing, we have what is called 'hearkening'. On the other hand, looking at this event from the viewpoint of the actualization of the sensible object, we have what is called 'sounding'.

Aristotle begins the second paragraph<sup>12</sup> by saying that the actuality of both elements involved in any movement (i.e. the actuality of both the active and passive elements) is located in the passive element of the movement. Consequently, in the case of someone hearing a sound, the actuality of the hearing faculty and its corresponding object is located in the hearing faculty.<sup>13</sup> Now, given these remarks in the section of the De Anima we examined in the preceding paragraph<sup>14</sup>, it would seem that we ought to agree with Randall's claim that, "the 'actual' color has its locus in the seeing of the eye, not in the wall; that is, in the co-operation of the two powers. But the color of the object, and the color in the seeing of the eye, are one and the same color."<sup>15</sup> However, this is not true. For Aristotle makes some important points in the section immediately following those parts of 425b26-426a26 that we have so far examined. As we shall now see, that section has an important bearing on how Randall ought to have interpreted Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles.

Immediately after saying that the actuality of both elements in any type of movement is located in the passive element Aristotle says the following. First, continuing on with

the example he used at 425b26-426a1, he says that the terms 'sound' and 'hearing' are both ambiguous.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, he says that the terms used to refer to each of the other senses and their proper objects are also ambiguous.<sup>17</sup> Aristotle explains what he means here at 426a9-20. We have already seen that Aristotle says that the actuality of both the proper sensible object and the corresponding perceiving sense faculty is located in the latter, and he now reiterates that position. He gives the following as his reason for saying this. An act of sensation is just a specific instance following under the principle that, in any action, the actualization of both aspects of the action (namely, the active and passive elements), is located in the passive factor of that action.<sup>18</sup> Aristotle next points out that in some cases of sensation we have distinct terms which name each aspect of that total actuality. For instance, in the case of someone hearing a sound, we call the actuality of the sound 'sounding' and the actuality of the faculty of hearing 'hearkening'.

Continuing on with his explanation of why the terms used to refer to the various senses and the proper sensibles are ambiguous because they have more than one meaning, Aristotle proceeds as follows.<sup>19</sup> He gives some specific examples wherein each aspect of the total actuality involved in an act of sensation does not have a name.<sup>20</sup> For instance, take the case of someone perceiving a colour. Here the actuality of the faculty of sight has a name, 'seeing', but the actuality of colour, the active factor involved, has no name. Again, take the case of

someone tasting something. The actuality of the faculty of taste is called 'tasting', but the actuality of flavour, the active factor involved, has no name. Thus, for Aristotle, 'colour' and 'flavour' are not the names of actualities. For the actuality of the active factor involved in seeing a colour or tasting a flavour has no name. As they are not the names for actualities, we must take Aristotle as saying that they are the names for potentialities.

As a result of all of this we can say that Randall was right in saying, as we saw earlier, that Aristotle claims that, "In general, the activity of the mover has its locus in the thing moved, not in the mover itself"<sup>21</sup>. Furthermore, he was correct in quoting 426a9-11 and 426a4-6 in justification for saying it. However, Randall was quite mistaken in drawing from that principle the inference that, "The 'actual' color has its locus in the seeing of the eye, not in the wall; that is, in the co-operation of the two powers. But the color of the object, and the color in the seeing of the eye, are one and the same color."<sup>22</sup> The reason why we must reject this inference is as follows. Randall has failed to notice the remarks that Aristotle makes about the terms used to refer to each of the senses and their respective objects at 426a8-15. We have seen that it is indeed true that, for Aristotle, the actuality of the proper sensible has its locus in the actuality of the sense perceiving it, and, that it is identical with it, being just another aspect of it. However, we have also seen that, in the case of someone seeing a color, the actuality of the proper sensible involved,

the actuality which has its locus in the actuality of the faculty of sight and is just another aspect of the latter, is nameless. 'Colour' is the name, not for the actuality of the proper sensible relative to the faculty of sight, rather, it is the name of the potentiality on the side of the object sensed by sight. For, as Aristotle says, "...the actuality of colour has no name,"<sup>23</sup> that is, 'colour is the name for that which exists to be made actual - on the side of the object - in an act of seeing and what is so actualized, is, of course, a potentiality. Consequently, contrary to what Randall says, 'actual colour' is not the name for the actuality of the proper sensible having its locus in the actuality of the faculty of vision. For that actuality has no name.

Given our analysis of 426a8-15, we must interpret 426a15-26 in accordance with Aristotle's teaching that terms such as 'colour' and 'flavour' are the names of potentialities. So, when Aristotle says that, as the actualities of the sensible object and the sensitive faculty are just different aspects of the same actuality, actual hearing and actual sounding appear and disappear from existence simultaneously, as do actual savour and actual tasting, etc., while as potentialities sensible objects and sensitive subjects can exist independently of each other, we must take him to mean the following. As 'colour', 'flavour', etc. are all names for potentialities, colours, flavours, etc., can all exist independently of being perceived. Reiterating the doctrine he developed at 426a6-20, Aristotle then points out that earlier philosophers missed the ambiguity in-

involved in the terms 'sense' and 'the sensible object' when they denied that, in the absence of percipients perceiving them, there is, for instance, no black or no white (or no colour) or no flavour. Now, 'sense' and 'the sensible object' can refer to either potentialities or actualities. Consequently, as 'colour' and 'flavour', etc. are the names of potentialities, they were wrong to deny that colours, flavours, etc. could exist in the absence of percipients. Although, if we are lenient with them and take them as denying the actualities corresponding to these potencies, they were correct in what they said.

## II. Randall on Aristotle's Two Senses of "Alteration"

We shall return, in Section III, to the analysis we have just given of 426a15-26. For, as we shall see later, Randall gives a misinterpretation of this section by failing to consider it in the light of the statements made at 425b26-426a15. However, we must first consider the next thing Randall says in his analysis of Aristotle's position on the question of the reality of proper sensibles. The next comment he makes on this issue is contained in the paragraphs immediately following those we dealt with in Section I of this chapter. They read as follows:

Hence for Aristotle sensing is a being acted upon, a "passion". It is a kind of "alteration" (alloiōsis tis), or "qualitative change". But there are two kinds of "alteration". "Sometimes it means a sort of destruction by the contrary; sometimes it means rather a preservation of what exists as a power by what exists as an operation and is like it, so far as a power can be like an operation" Anima II, ch. 5: 417b2-5]. Sensing is an "alteration"



or qualitative change in this second sense: as the functioning of a power.

Thus sensing is a becoming like the object sensed. "In one sense what is acted upon is acted upon by what is like it, in another sense by what is unlike it.... While being acted upon it is unlike, after it is acted upon it is like the agent"

[De Anima II, ch. 5: 417a18-20].<sup>24</sup>

Here Randall points out that there are two senses of the term 'alteration' or 'qualitative change' for Aristotle. He quotes 417b2-5 where Aristotle spells this out. 'Alteration' sometimes refers to the destruction of something by its contrary. However, sometimes it means the actualization of what exists as a power through the agency of what exists as an operation and is like that power to the extent that a power can be like an actuality. Sensing is an alteration only in the latter sense of the term. Sensing entails that after the sense has been altered - in the second sense of that term - the sense is like what has altered it.

Now, from what we have already seen of Randall in Section I, we must not take him here as saying that proper sensibles inhere in objects in the way that our senses present them to us as inhering. For, to return to Randall's earlier example that we discussed in Section I, "The 'actual' colour has its locus in the seeing of the eye, not in the wall; that is, in the co-operation of the two powers. But the colour of the object, and the colour in the seeing of the eye, are one and the same colour."<sup>25</sup> For, Randall, then, colours, for example, don't exist in the objects seen; rather, the object just has "the power of being seen as white"<sup>26</sup>. However, we certainly

do not want to quarrel with the distinction Randall says that Aristotle draws between the two types of alteration. For we have already pointed out the same thing, earlier in Section II of Chapter II of this thesis. What we want to point out here is that, given Randall's earlier (mistaken) remarks about the reality of proper sensibles according to Aristotle, we must not take Randall as saying here that the proper sensibles inhere in objects in the way our senses present them to us as inhering. On the contrary, we must see him as emphasizing here the distinction between the way we perceive proper sensibles as existing and the way they do, in fact, exist. Thus, when Aristotle is quoted by Randall as saying, at 417a18-20, that, after an act of sensation the sense is like its (proper) sensible object, we are not to interpret Randall as taking this to mean that the proper sensibles are presented to us by our corresponding senses in the way that they really do inhere in the objects of the world. On the contrary, we must take Randall as thinking that this remark means that the sense and its corresponding object become somewhat alike, but only<sup>27</sup> '...so far as a power can be like an operation' ". Randall's intention here, then, is to point out that, for Aristotle, there is a difference between the way proper sensibles appear to us as inhering in objects and the way they really do inhere in objects. (It will be remembered that we pointed out, at the beginning of this chapter on Randall, that it was in the context of explaining what Aristotle means when he says that, in sensation, the sense becomes like the object sensed that Randall introduced the topic of the

reality of proper sensibles for Aristotle. We see that he has now finished that explanation).

However, although giving two quotations from Chapter 5 of the second book of the De Anima to back up his remarks, Randall has, in fact, misinterpreted what Aristotle is saying there as regards the reality of proper sensibles. In order to point out Randall's mistake we must now examine some of the passages from that chapter. We shall begin with the following one:

But we must now distinguish not only between what is potential and what is actual but also different senses in which things can be said to be potential or actual; up to now we have been speaking as if each of these phrases had only one sense. We can speak of something as 'a knower' either (a) as when we say that a man is a knower, meaning that man falls within the class of beings that know or have knowledge, or (b) as when we are speaking of a man who possesses a knowledge of grammar; each of these is so called as having in him a certain potentiality, but there is a difference between their respective potentialities, the one (a) being a potential knower because his kind or matter is such and such, the other (b) because he can in the absence of any external counteracting cause realize his knowledge in actual knowing at will. This implies a third meaning of 'knower' (c), one who is already realizing his knowledge - he is a knower in actuality and in the most proper sense is knowing, e.g. this A. Both the former are potential knowers, who realize their respective potentialities, the one (a) by change of quality, i.e. repeated transitions from one state to its opposite under instruction, the other (b) by the transition from the inactive possession of sense or grammar to their active exercise. The two kinds of transition are distinct.<sup>28</sup>

In this text Aristotle, having just finished distinguishing between what is potential and what is actual, now wants to explain different senses in which a thing can be said to be potential and actual. He does this by explaining the different ways in which the expression 'a knower' (of grammar) is used. Aristotle explains that there are three ways in which

it can be used. (a) A person is said to be a potential knower of grammar simply in virtue of his being a human being and even though he is presently completely ignorant on that subject. For, simply in virtue of being a human being, he automatically has the capacity to learn it. (b) A person is said to be a potential knower of grammar, if he has a knowledge of it which he is not actively using at the moment. (c) A person is said to be an actual knower of grammar who has such a knowledge and is actually utilizing it at the present time. This last man is a knower of grammar in the fullest and most proper sense of the term.

Now, (a) can realize his potential knowledge of grammar by being instructed in that subject, and so passing from his state of ignorance to the contrary state (i.e. possession of knowledge of grammar). In so doing, (a) becomes like (b). However, for his part, (b) too can realize his potential knowledge of grammar by simply exercising this knowledge which he already possesses. In so doing (b) becomes like (c). The transitions involved in actualizing their respective potentialities are, thus, each of a distinct kind.

On the other hand, the different senses of actual that Aristotle is distinguishing here can be stated as follows. The third man (c), who is utilizing his knowledge, is in act absolutely speaking. However, the second man (b), who is not presently utilizing his knowledge, is in act as compared with the first man (a), who as yet possesses no knowledge, and in potency as compared with the third man (c).

Immediately following the passage which we have just examined, Aristotle goes on to make some distinctions analagous to the above ones. Here he points out different senses of the phrase 'to be acted upon' or 'to be altered':

Also the expression 'to be acted upon' has more than one meaning; it may mean either (a) the extinction of one of two contraries by the other, or (b) the maintenance of what is potential by the agency of what is actual and already like what is acted upon, with such likeness as is compatible with one's being actual and the other passive. For what possesses knowledge becomes an actual knower by a transition which is either not an alteration at all (being in reality a development into its true self or actuality) or at least an alteration in a quite different sense from the usual meaning.

Hence it is wrong to speak of a wise man as being 'altered' when he uses his wisdom, just as it would be absurd to speak of a builder being altered when he is using his skill in building a house.<sup>29</sup>

The phrase 'to be acted upon' or 'to be altered' has two distinct meanings. It may mean the destruction of one contrary by the other. From our analysis of 417a21-417b1 we can see that this is the kind of alteration that (a) undergoes in actualizing his potentiality and thereby passing from one state (ignorance) to its contrary (the possession of knowledge) and becoming like what (b) is. On the other hand, it can also mean that what exists in potency is brought to actuality by means of what is like it and differs from it only to the extent that, prior to this alteration, we can say that the patient is a potency and the agent was an actuality. For instance, take the man (b) who passes from the inactive possession of knowledge of grammar to the active use of it. There is really no alteration occurring in this man in any usual sense of the term; rather, the most we can say is that the former state of that man is in

potentiality in relation to the latter state, and the latter state is an actuality relative to the former state. Similarly, in the case of a wise man using his knowledge or a builder using the skill he possesses, there is no alteration in any ordinary sense, the most we can say about it is that, in each case, relative to each other, the former state is a potentiality while the latter state is an actuality.

Aristotle relates what we have seen so far to the issue of sensation in the following passage:

In the case of what is to possess sense, the first transition is due to the action of the male parent and takes place before birth so that at birth the living thing is, in respect of sensation, at the stage which corresponds to the possession of knowledge. Actual sensation corresponds to the stage of the exercise of knowledge. But between the two cases compared there is a difference; the objects which excite the sensory powers to activity, the seen, the heard, etc., are outside. The ground of this difference is that what actual sensation apprehends is individuals, while what knowledge apprehends is universals, and these are in a sense within the soul.<sup>30</sup>

Aristotle relates what he is saying about sensation to his earlier distinction between the three senses of 'a knower'. With regard to the power of sensation, the transition analogous to that of (a) becoming like (b) occurs prior to birth. At birth, with regard to being a sense perceiver, a person is in a state analogous to that of (b). So, performing an act of sensation is analogous to (b) becoming like (c). This means that in sensing the faculty involved is altered only in the second sense of that term, namely, being brought to complete fulfillment under the agency of what is so like it that they differ, prior to the act of sensation, only to the extent of being able to say that,

relative to each other, the faculty of sensation is a power and the object (i.e. the proper sensible) is an actuality. (Of course, the case of sensation differs from that of the exercise of the knowledge that someone possesses in that the objects grasped in sensation are external to the one sensing them and are individuals, while knowledge is present in the knower's mind and concerns universals.)

Given this description of sensation as alteration only in the sense of the development of a power into its complete self under the agency of what is so like it that they differ, prior to the act of sensation, only to the extent that, relative to each other, we can call the sense faculty involved a power and the corresponding object (i.e. proper sensible) an actuality, we must give the passage at 417a18-20 that Randall quoted the following interpretation. Before the act of sensation, the sense power and its corresponding proper sensible differ only to the extent that we can say that the sense power is potentially like what the proper sensible actually is already. However, after the act is completed, then, we can no longer distinguish between it and its corresponding proper sensible, not even in the way that we did prior to the completion of the act.

Instead of quoting 417a18-20, Randall would have chosen a better passage that presents Aristotle's position more clearly, if he had quoted 418a3-5. For this latter passage is like the former except that it occurs after Aristotle has drawn the distinctions between the two senses of 'to be acted upon' or 'altered' and the different senses of 'potentiality'

and 'actuality'. It is after he has made these points that Aristotle says that, after an act of sensation is completed, the sense faculty and the proper sensible it has grasped are so alike that they can be said to be identical. Now, prior to the act, they do differ, but only in the way we have already seen, that is, only to the extent that the sense faculty can be said to be as yet only potentially such as the proper sensible already is. This, then, is what we must take him to mean when he says:

As we have said, what has the power of sensation is potentially like what the perceived object is actually; that is, while at the beginning of the process of its being acted upon the two interacting factors are dissimilar, at the end the one acted upon is assimilated to the other and is identical in quality with it. 31

Consequently, Randall was wrong to interpret 417b2-5 and 417a18-20 as in any way implying that the senses do not perceive proper sensibles as they really are, that there is a difference between the way that we experience proper sensibles as inhering in objects and the way they, in fact, do inhere. On the contrary, Aristotle is doing just the opposite here. He is trying to show that there is no difference between the way we experience proper sensibles as inhering in objects and the way they actually do inhere in objects. Randall has failed to interpret the two passages he quotes in the light of what is said in the neighboring passages we have been dealing with in this section, passages which condition how the passages he does quote are to be interpreted.

We can bring out Aristotle's intentions here even better when we combine what we have seen here of sensation as



an alteration only in a special sense of 'alteration' with the analysis we gave of the text at 425b26-426a26 in Section I of this chapter. For, in the latter analysis, we saw Aristotle say that, for example, "the actuality of colour has no name"<sup>32</sup>, and, "the actuality of flavour has no name"<sup>33</sup>. Now, as sensation is an alteration or being acted upon only in the special sense of the term we have been discussing, we must take Aristotle as saying that the cause of sensation gets through to the sense faculty in a way in which causes of alteration, in the ordinary sense of the term, do not get through to their patients. This is so true that, for example, the actuality relative to colour and the actuality relative to flavour each goes nameless, implying that so much better known is the potentiality in each case (i.e. the colour and the flavour) on account of it.

### III. Aristotle and Locke Are in "Fermal Agreement"

#### About the Reality of Proper Sensibles

The final point Randall puts forward regarding how, "...Aristotle tries to deal with the problem that has vexed modern philosophy since Galileo, the problem of the subjectivity of sense qualities,"<sup>34</sup> is to say of that problem that, "...it had been posed for him by Democritus,"<sup>35</sup> and to give the following quotation from the De Anima:

'Now, as the operation of the sense-object and the power of sensing are one and the same, although in their being the two powers are different, hearing and sound thus understood as operations must simultaneously cease to be or simultaneously continue in being, and so also with flavour and taste, and similarly

with the other senses and their objects. But when they are understood as powers, there is no such necessity. On this point the earlier natural philosophers spoke unwisely, when they supposed that without seeing there is neither white nor black, and without tasting no flavour. The statement is in one sense correct, in another incorrect. For sense and what is sensed are said in two ways, as a power and as an operation. In the latter sense, as operations, the statement holds too; in the former, as powers, it does not.  
 [De Anima III, ch. 2: 426a15-25].<sup>36</sup>

Randall offers no explanation of this passage he

notes except to say of it the following:

Aristotle's position here is clearly that sense qualities are in bodies as powers, not as operations. Hence Locke is in formal agreement with him in taking secondary qualities as powers of bodies. Where he differs is in the purely mechanical account of how those powers act.<sup>37</sup>

We have already given our analysis of 426a15-26 in the last paragraph of Section I of this chapter. There we pointed out that, as 426a15-26 is part of a long passage extending from 425b26 to 426a26, it must be interpreted in accordance with the section of that passage which precedes it, namely, 425b26-426a15. In accordance with that we took Aristotle as saying at 426a15-26 the following. Since the actuality of both the sensible object and the sensitive faculty are only different aspects of one actuality, hearing as actual and sound as actual, to take but one example, come into existence and pass out of existence simultaneously. However, as potentialities, they can exist independently of each other. Now, among the things our analysis of 425b26-426a15 showed was that terms such as 'colour' and 'flavour', etc. are each the name of a potentiality, not an actuality. Consequently, we must take Aristotle as saying

at 426a15-26 that the terms 'sense' and 'the sensible object' can each refer to potentialities or to actualities, and hence, are ambiguous words. Now, as referring to actualities, the denial of the existence of sensible objects when percipients are absent is correct. However, as referring to potentialities, namely, to colours, flavours, etc., this denial is incorrect. Thus, for Aristotle, colours, flavours, etc., being the names of potentialities, do exist independently of being perceived.

We can say, then, that Randall has failed to interpret 426a15-26 in the light of the material contained in 425b26-426a15 which conditions the meaning of the former text. For he draws out the conclusion from 426a15-26 that Aristotle is in formal agreement with John Locke on the issue of the subjectivity of proper sensibles. This raises the question of just what exactly is John Locke's position with regard to the subjectivity of proper sensibles, or, as Locke calls them, "secondary qualities"<sup>38</sup>? Locke's position with regard to the subjectivity of secondary qualities can be seen from the following quotation:

...the ideas of primary qualities of bodies are resemblances of them, and their patterns do really exist in the bodies themselves, but the ideas produced in us by these secondary qualities have no resemblance of them at all. There is nothing like our ideas, existing in the bodies themselves. They are, in the bodies we denominate from them, only a power to produce those sensations in us: and what is sweet, blue, or warm in idea, is but the certain bulk, figure, and motion of the insensible parts, in the bodies themselves, which we call so.<sup>39</sup>

For Locke, then, only our ideas of primary qualities resemble the object as it is in itself. Our ideas of secondary

qualities, on the other hand, bear no resemblance to the object as it is in itself. All that exists in the object when considered in itself, besides the primary qualities, is the power to produce in us the ideas of secondary qualities through the operation of the bulk, shape, and motion of the object's minute particles on our senses. Consequently, we must say that Locke and Aristotle have different conceptions of power with regard to the reality of proper sensibles (or secondary qualities). For Locke, all that really exists in objects, considered in themselves, are the primary qualities - Aristotle calls them 'common sensibles'<sup>40</sup> - and the power these primary qualities have to produce the ideas of colours, flavours, etc. in us, ideas having no resemblance to anything in objects considered in themselves. On the other hand, as we have seen, for Aristotle, 'colours', 'flavours', etc. are precisely the names for the powers possessed by objects. This difference can be seen even more clearly from the following text:

The particular bulk, number, figure, and motion of the parts of fire or snow are really in them, - whether any one's senses perceive them or no: and therefore may be called real qualities, because they really exist in those bodies. But light, heat, whiteness, or coldness, are no more really in them than sickness or pain is in manna. Take away the sensation of them; let not the eyes see light or colours, nor the ears hear sounds; let the palate not taste, nor the nose smell, and all colours, tastes, odours, and sounds, as they are such particular ideas, vanish and cease, and are reduced to their causes, i.e., bulk, figure, and motion of parts. <sup>41</sup>

Here we see Locke saying that, in the absence of perceptions, all that exists in bodies are their primary qualities which have the power of producing the ideas of secondary quali-

ties in the presence of a percipient). Thus, in the absence of percipients, for Locke, colours, flavours, etc. do not exist. Now, this position should be compared with what we have been saying about the meaning of the Aristotelian text at 426a15-26. For Aristotle says there that 'colours', 'flavours', etc., being the names of powers in objects, do exist in those objects in the absence of percipients. Consequently, Randall was wrong to conclude that Aristotle and Locke are in formal agreement over the question of the reality of proper sensibles.

This attempted identification of Aristotle with Locke on the question of the reality of proper sensibles is more amazing yet when one considers Aristotle's notion of sensation - a notion of which Randall is clearly aware<sup>42</sup> - as involving a communication of form, and so, of likeness. According to Aristotle,

(A) By a 'sense' is meant what has the power of receiving into itself the sensible forms of things without the matter. This must be conceived of as taking place in the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet-ring without the iron or gold; we say that what produces the impression is a signet of bronze or gold, but its particular metallic constitution makes no difference: in a similar way the sense is affected by what is coloured or flavoured or sounding, but it is indifferent what in each case the substance is; what alone matters is what quality it has, i.e. in what ratio its constituents are combined.<sup>43</sup>

Aristotle treats sensation here on an analogy with a signet-ring impressing a piece of wax with its likeness. When the wax is impressed by the ring there is a communication from the latter to the former of a likeness of the signet. As far as impressing the wax is concerned, then, all that affects and is communicated to the wax is the form or likeness of the signet. Hence, it makes no difference what the matter of the ring is.

Analogously, we can say the same of sensation. In sensation, what affects the sense involved is not the physical object as such, that is, as composed of form and matter. On the contrary, what alone affects and is communicated to the appropriate sense is the form, and so, the likeness of that object. Aristotle, then, conceives of sensation - not as a mechanical movement, but - as a communication of form, a communication of likeness, from the object to the sense. Now, this means that, for Aristotle, we do perceive objects as they really are, and that, consequently, proper sensibles do exist in objects in the way our senses report them to us. However, this, as we have seen above, is quite different from Locke's conception of proper sensibles as not resembling anything that is, in fact, in objects. The reason why Randall still identified Aristotle with Locke on the subject of proper sensibles, even though he knew of Aristotle's conception of sensation as involving a communication of sensible forms to the senses from the objects sensed is as follows. The arguments he brought forth from Aristotle's writings - which we have been examining in this chapter - which he thought proved Aristotle's rejection of the independent reality of proper sensibles prevented Randall from using this conception of sensation as involving a communication of form as a proof that Aristotle held that proper sensibles do exist in the way our senses report them to us.

## IV. Summary and Conclusion

In concluding our treatment of Randall's analysis of Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles we can say the following. We can summarize what Randall considers Aristotle's position on this topic to be by quoting this short passage from Randall, himself:

Aristotle's position here is clearly that sense qualities are in bodies as powers, not as operations. Hence Locke is in formal agreement with him in taking secondary qualities as powers of bodies. <sup>44</sup>

By saying that Aristotle and Locke are in formal agreement over the question of the reality of proper sensibles Randall shows us that he has missed the whole point of what Aristotle is saying. For Aristotle, terms such as 'colour', 'flavour', etc. are the names for powers existing in objects. On the other hand, for Locke, those terms are the names for ideas which bear no resemblance to anything in the objects which operate on our senses to produce them in us. The basic source of Randall's misinterpretation of Aristotle's position is the following. While Randall does give references to and quotations from passages in the De Anima to support his interpretation of Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles, he fails to interpret those passages in the light of neighbouring passages which help to determine, in important ways, how those former passages must be interpreted.

## CHAPTER IV

### A CRITICAL STUDY OF W. D. ROSS

#### I. He Denies the Independent Reality of Proper Sensibles According to Aristotle

The text from Ross' book entitled Aristotle which discusses the reality of proper sensibles according to Aristotle is as follows:

The actualisation of perception is at the same time the actualisation of the object. Actual sound and actual hearing are merely distinguishable aspects of a single event. Apart from actual hearing there is not actual but only potential sound. At the same time, Aristotle opposes the earlier view that 'without seeing there is neither white nor black' [425b25-426a27]. His meaning must be that over and above their primary qualities objects have in the absence of percipients a definite qualification in virtue of which they produce sensations when percipients are present.<sup>1</sup>

In the above passage that we have quoted from Ross' book he is saying that, according to what Aristotle states in the De Anima, the proper sensibles are not qualities inhering in the objects of the world independently of our perception of them and in the way that our senses present them to us as inhering. For the actualization of a sense faculty and the actualization of its corresponding proper object are not two separate events. On the contrary, they are simply one single event which our minds are able to look at from two different points of view.

To illustrate what he is saying Ross presents us with



the example of someone hearing a sound. In this case, says Ross, there aren't two different events of which one is called 'actual Sound', while the other is called 'actual hearing'. Just the opposite, there is only one event, the hearing of the sound. The terms 'actual sound' and 'actual hearing' are, says Ross, just terms applied by us to the two different intelligible aspects that we can find in that single event, the hearing of the sound. Consequently, Ross concludes that, for Aristotle, when no one is performing an act of hearing, "...there is not actual but only potential sound". That is, apart from someone actually performing an act of hearing, there are no sounds, but only the potentiality for sounds.

However, Ross next points out that Aristotle does oppose the view that there is no white or no black when no one is performing an act of seeing a colour. In view of the explanation he has given of Aristotle's position in his remarks which we have examined so far, Ross must give the following interpretation of Aristotle's words here. Ross, then, using contemporary terminology, says that, when Aristotle criticizes this view that was held by earlier philosophers, he is saying that objects, not only have primary qualities - Aristotle, himself, calls them " 'common sensibles' "<sup>2</sup> -, but there is in objects, independently of anyone perceiving them, a definite determination which causes them to produce what we experience as the various proper sensibles of these objects when we are perceiving them.

From what we have seen of Aristotle's position, as

Interpreted by Ross, we can say that Ross is definitely saying that, for Aristotle, proper sensibles inhere in objects in the way that our senses report them to us as inhering. For, in addition to their primary qualities (or, as Aristotle calls them, common sensibles), objects have only what Ross terms "a definite qualification" which causes them to produce our sensations of proper sensibles. It is implied here that this "definite qualification" is something quite different from the proper sensibles as experienced by us in sensation. That is, Ross does not consider it to be Aristotle's position that these permanent possibilities of sensation exist in objects in the way that our senses present them to us as existing.

## II. The Error Made by Ross in His Exposition

In support of what he is saying about Aristotle's position in the passage from his book we quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Ross gives a reference to De Anima 425b25-26a27.<sup>3</sup> Now, the first two sentences from the text in Ross' book with which we are dealing are as follows: "The actualization of perception is at the same time the actualisation of the object. Actual sound and actual hearing are merely distinguishable aspects of a single event."<sup>4</sup> These two sentences are merely a summary of what Aristotle says in the first short paragraph of the two-paragraph passage running from 425b26-426a26 to which Ross gives reference, namely, 425b26-426a1.

As we pointed out in our analysis of 425b26-426a1 in the preceding chapter of this thesis,<sup>5</sup> Aristotle is indeed say-

ing here that actual sound and actual hearing are merely the same event as seen from two different viewpoints. For the actuality of the object sensed and the actuality of the perceiving sense are one and the same activity. Thus, as this is what Ross claims that Aristotle is stating in those first two sentences from Ross' book we quoted above, we cannot argue with him on this point. However, the conclusion that Ross draws from this is that, "Apart from actual hearing there is not actual but only potential sound". Now, it is with this conclusion that we must disagree. For, in this conclusion, as we have already seen in Section I, Ross is saying that, according to Aristotle, the proper sensibles - he speaks specifically of sound, but he is just giving this as one example to illustrate the general point about all the proper sensibles - are not qualities which inhere in objects in the way that our senses present them to us as inhering.

It is true that Aristotle says, as we have seen, that "the actual hearing and the actual sound"<sup>6</sup> are merely distinguishable aspects of a single event in 425b26-426a1. Furthermore, it is also true that, immediately following that passage, Aristotle goes on to say the following. In so far as the sound is actual it exists in the hearer. For both aspects of any<sup>7</sup> action are realized in the passive element of that action. Now one could, as Ross has, easily draw from this the conclusion that, as sound as actual exists in the hearer and as it is only an aspect of the single event of the hearing of the sound, therefore, all that exists in the objects of the world, considered in

themselves (i.e., considered independently of being perceived), is some kind of qualification which is quite different from what we experience (as the various proper sensibles) in the act of, in this case, hearing. In what follows we shall see why it is wrong to draw this conclusion.

In drawing any conclusion from 425b26-426a26 on what Aristotle's position is in regard to the reality of proper sensibles, we must consider, not only what is said at 425b26-426a1 and at 426a2-6, as we have just been doing, but also what is said at 426a6-20. For these three texts are all closely related to each other.

In the last of the above mentioned texts<sup>8</sup> Aristotle makes some extremely important statements concerning his position on the issue of the reality of proper sensibles. In that passage from Ross' book with which we are dealing in this chapter, Ross shows no evidence of having taken into account what Aristotle says here at 426a6-20, even though this is part of the text in the De Anima to which Ross gives reference.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, let us now examine some of the pertinent things that Aristotle is saying here.

The first thing to note in the passage at 426a6-20 is that Aristotle says that the terms 'sound' and 'hearing' are ambiguous.<sup>10</sup> The second thing to note here is that he says that the terms referring to all the other senses and their proper objects are also ambiguous words.<sup>11</sup> Exactly what does Aristotle mean when he says these things? Aristotle goes on to explain his meaning as follows<sup>12</sup>. First of all, he reiterates his posi-

tion that, as we saw earlier in examining 426a2-6, the activity has its locus in the perceiving subject. For an act of sensation is just a specific instance falling under the general rule that, in any action, both aspects of the action (i.e. the acting and the-being-acted-upon) are located in the passive element involved in that action.<sup>13</sup> Aristotle then points out that in some cases of sensation we have distinct terms which we can apply to each of these two aspects (i.e. the active and the passive aspects) of the total acting-and-being-acted-upon actuality. For example, in the activity of someone hearing a sound, says Aristotle, we call the active aspect by the name 'sounding' and the passive aspect by the name 'hearkening'.<sup>14</sup>

Now, it is true that it is to the example of someone hearing a sound that Aristotle gives most space at 425b26-426a20 and that this includes most of the section in the De Anima to which Ross refers in justification for what he says of Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles. However, Ross would have not drawn the conclusion that Aristotle denies the independent reality of proper sensibles, if he had paid more attention to the other examples that Aristotle points out at 426a13-15. For, after pointing out, as we saw, that each aspect of the total actuality involved in someone hearing a sound has a separate name, Aristotle, at 426a13-15, points out examples where this is not the case. Thus, in the case of someone seeing a colour, the actuality of sight has a name, 'seeing', but the actuality of colour, the active element involved, has no name. In other words, 'colour' is the name

for a potentiality. Similarly, in the case of someone tasting a flavour, the actuality of the passive element is called 'tasting', but the actuality of flavour, the active element involved, has no name. In other words, 'flavour' is the name for a potentiality.

As a consequence of what we have just seen, 426a15-20 must be interpreted in view of Aristotle's remark that terms, such as, 'colour' and 'flavour' are the names of potentialities. When Aristotle says that, as the actuality of the sensible object and the actuality of the sensitive faculty are just different aspects of one actuality, "...actual hearing and actual sounding appear and disappear from existence at one and the same moment, and so actual savour and actual tasting, etc., while as potentialities one of them may exist without the other," we must take him to mean the following. As 'colour' and 'flavour' are the names of potentialities, colours and flavours can exist in the absence of percipients. Ross shows no evidence of having noted this. In fact, the conclusion that we have seen him draw shows that he has missed this important point completely.

Now, given, as we pointed out, that Ross draws the incorrect conclusion that Aristotle denies that our senses present the proper sensibles to us as they, in fact, exist in objects, we must now examine how Ross carries this mistaken conclusion over into his interpretation of 426a20-26. In that passage Aristotle says the following:

The earlier students of nature were mistaken in their view that without sight there was no white or black, without taste no savour. This statement of theirs is partly true, partly

false: 'sense' and 'the sensible object' are ambiguous terms, i.e. may denote either potentialities or actualities: the statement is true of the latter, false of the former. This ambiguity they wholly failed to notice.

After concluding that Aristotle denies the independent reality of proper sensibles, Ross quite consistently takes Aristotle as saying here that, "...over and above their primary qualities objects have in the absence of percipients a definite qualification in virtue of which they produce sensations when percipients are present."<sup>18</sup> Now, given Ross' denial of the independent reality of proper sensibles according to Aristotle, we can say that these definite qualifications, as Ross calls them, are, in fact, quite different from how they appear to the senses as being; or, at any rate, that we cannot say that these definite qualifications are like what our senses report them to us as being like. While this is consistent with Ross' earlier conclusion, it, like that conclusion, is incorrect. For Aristotle is here, in fact, merely reiterating the doctrine he developed at 426a6-20. Aristotle is pointing out that earlier philosophers missed the ambiguity involved in the terms 'sense' and 'the sensible object' (which may each refer to potentialities or to actualities) when they denied that, in the absence of someone seeing or tasting, say, there was no black or white (or, more generally, no colour) or no flavour. As 'colour' and 'flavour' are the names of potentialities, not actualities, they were wrong to deny that colour and flavours could exist in the absence of percipients.

### III. Summary and Conclusion

In summarizing our examination of W. D. Ross' interpretation of Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles, we can say the following. Ross does grasp Aristotle's doctrine that the actualization of the proper sensible is, at the same time, the actualization of the perceiving subject's sense faculty, and that it has its locus in the latter. For the two are merely distinguishable aspects of a single event. However, Ross, like Randall<sup>19</sup>, fails to grasp the doctrine developed by Aristotle at 426a6-20, although this passage is part of the Aristotelian text to which he refers as the source for the views of Aristotle which he claims to be presenting. That is, he fails to grasp Aristotle's position that terms, such as, 'colour' and 'flavour' refer to potentialities. Consequently, Ross mistakenly concludes that Aristotle says, for example, that, in the absence of someone performing an act of hearing, only the potentiality for sound exists. For only sensible potentialities exist in the absence of percipients. We, on the contrary, found that what exists in such a case is the same as what our senses had reported to us as existing when we were sensing the object. The incorrect conclusion drawn by Ross leads him to misinterpret 426a20-26 as saying that all that exists in the absence of percipients, besides primary qualities (or common sensibles)<sup>20</sup> is 'a definite qualification'<sup>21</sup> in objects which, in the presence of percipients, appear to the senses as the proper sensibles. We, on the contrary, showed that Aristotle was here saying that



such things as colours and flavours do exist in objects in the way in which our senses present them to us as existing, even when percipients are no longer present.

## CHAPTER V

### A CRITICAL STUDY OF CHARLES DE KONINCK

#### I. He Denies the Independent Reality of Proper Sensibles According to Aristotle

On page 169 of his work, Abstraction from Matter<sup>1</sup>, Charles DeKoninck quotes, in its entirety, chapter 6 of Book II of Aristotle's De Anima. It is to part of this quoted text that DeKoninck refers when he later says:

After remarking that "each particular sense can discern these proper objects without deception; thus sight errs not as to colour, nor hearing as to sound," Aristotle qualifies this statement by adding: "though it might err about what is coloured, or where it is, or what it is that is sounding or where it is." What is meant by this qualification St. Thomas explains when he distinguishes Q.D. de Veritate, q.1, a.11 between the sense as a thing reporting to the mind how it itself is affected, and that same sense as one thing indicating another thing; as 'I have a bitter taste in my mouth while eating this apple', as opposed to 'the apple has a bitter taste'. As a thing reporting on itself, the sense does not err; but when indicating something else it may be responsible for a mistaken judgment. One might object that the apple is actually sweet, but tastes bitter when the tongue is coated by illness. However, even when this difference in taste is accounted for by the unusual disposition of the organ - which gave rise to an incidental error concerning what the apple normally tastes like - we still deceive ourselves if we attribute the quality perceived as belonging to the other thing (the apple) in the way in which the sense reports it, even when normally disposed. Spontaneously we do believe that the taste of an apple is wholly in the apple; yet in believing this we go beyond what the sense reports as its own affection. In other words, if my judgment goes like this: 'I sense things as if the quality which I perceive were present in the thing itself as my sense refers to it,' then my judgment is unassailably true.

And there is surely some quite determinate reason why the sense reports the other thing in that way. How the apple and my sense of taste contrive to produce this kind of sensation is not revealed in sensation. The knowledge which allows me to verify the word 'taste' throws no light on this.<sup>2</sup>

In the above passage De Koninck is giving an interpretation of Aristotle's statement that, "Each sense has one kind of object which it discerns, and never errs in reporting that what is before it is colour or sound (though it may err as to what it is that is coloured or where that is, or what it is that is sounding or where that is)"<sup>3</sup>. According to De Koninck, what Aristotle means by the bracketed part of that statement is - as De Koninck says Aquinas correctly discerns - the following. When considered as reporting to the intellect how it is affected, the sense never errs about its corresponding proper sensible. Considered in this way, there is no error involved when the sense reports that, for example, 'I have a bitter taste while eating this apple', even though the sense be in an abnormal condition at the time due to illness. For the sense is merely reporting to the intellect how it is itself affected, and whether the organ of sense involved here is in a normal or abnormal condition makes no difference.

On the other hand, when considered as indicating something else, the sense can cause an erroneous judgment about its corresponding proper sensible object. To illustrate this, let's return to De Koninck's example of the taste of the apple. Even if the sense is normally disposed, says De Koninck, we would be wrong to think that the taste of the apple we experience belongs

to that apple in the same way in which our sense reports it to us. We do tend, when not really thinking about it, to believe that a given proper sensible (e.g. the sweet taste of the apple) is in an object (the apple) in the same way as our sense - when normally disposed - reports it to us. However, we are wrong to believe this. For, while there is no doubt that there is some reason why the sense reports the object to us in a given way (e.g. reports the apple to us as being sweet), the content of our sensation is the complex result of the interaction of both the sense involved and the object involved, and the resulting sensation we experience does not let us know just what it is in the object that interacted with the sense faculty to produce this sensation.

It is clear from the above that, for De Koninck, Aristotle is not saying that the proper sensibles exist in objects in exactly the same way in which our senses report them to us. De Koninck continues his exposition as follows:

Hence it would be idle to suppose that the senses could be detached from things sensed to the point where they would be as faithful in reporting on these things as they are in reporting their own affections. To put such a demand on them would destroy their very nature as senses inasmuch as some kind of physical union of the organ with the object, occurring in a way which sensation does not convey, is a prerequisite of sense knowledge. What and how the things which sense refers to are out there simply cannot be known by the senses themselves when, by their very nature, they are organic faculties, operating by, and inseparable from, instruments essentially part of material reality. Even the organ of our most detached external sense, sight, is being physically affected when we see. Not that the mere physical affection is the act of knowing, but the sensation cannot take place without it.<sup>4</sup>

This passage gives some expansion to De Koninck's earlier remark that, "...there is surely some quite determinate reason why the sense reports the other thing in that way. How

the apple and my sense of taste contrive to produce this kind of sensation is not revealed in sensation."<sup>5</sup> In the paragraph we have quoted above De Koninck points out that the senses are organic faculties which, as such, must operate through the agency of their respective physical, material organs, namely, the eyes, the ears, the nose, etc. When a given sense experiences an object this occurs, then, through the intermediacy of the object's physical operation upon the organ of sense. However, of course, while this physical affecting of the organ by the object is a necessary condition for having sense perception, it is not a sufficient condition for it. For De Koninck is clearly aware that, for Aristotle, sensation involves a special qualitative alteration of the sense concerned:

Let it be repeated that sensation cannot, of course, consist in this mere entitative involvement. The material change by itself is no more than a prerequisite, during which the sense power is still only in potency to true sensation. Sensation as knowledge is a change of a radically different kind. This is a subject for rational psychology, taken up by Aristotle in the De Anima, Book II, chapter 5 and 12 (St. Thomas's Commentary, lect. 11, 12 and 2<sup>4</sup>); Book III, chap. 7 (lect. 12).<sup>6</sup>

De Koninck is fully aware that the physical union of the organ of sense with its object is only a necessary prerequisite in order for sensation to occur. His references to the De Anima clearly show that he realized that, for Aristotle, sensation involves an alteration of the sense in the special sense of 'alteration'.<sup>7</sup> However, this is not to say that he has accurately or correctly grasped what this implies as regards Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles, as we shall see.

De Koninck summarizes what he has been saying here when he says the following:

To put it briefly, error with regard to proper sensibles is incidental to them in two ways: (a) the typical examples are the colour-blind who believe that the way they see colours is the way in which all or most people see them; or the sick, who attribute the bad taste to the food. Such errors consist in deciding what is normal by means of sense equipment that is abnormal, so that a difference which is only incidental is ascribed to the things the sense refers to. (b) When any quality is judged to belong to the thing indicated by the sense, as an absolute property of that thing in exactly the way the sense is affected by it. <sup>8</sup>

There are, then, two possible ways in which we can err with regard to perceiving proper sensibles. One of these ways of so erring occurs when a person possessing an abnormally disposed sense organ judges what he perceives through the corresponding sense to be the normal state of an object so perceived. An additional example of this type of error occurring which is not cited by De Koninck is found in the case of a person who judges ammonia to have no odour when his nose is abnormally disposed due to a cold. We do not wish to argue with De Koninck on this point. For Aristotle would undoubtedly agree with him. See, for example, De Anima, 422b1-9 where Aristotle notes how everything tastes bitter to sick people. The point at which we must take issue with De Koninck as a commentator on Aristotle is in what he says about a second way of erring about proper sensibles. The second way of erring about them, says De Koninck, occurs whenever anyone believes that a given proper sensible exists in an object perceived in exactly the same way as the sense reports it to us. In the following paragraphs we

shall show why De Koninck is wrong in ascribing this position to Aristotle.

As we pointed out at the beginning of this section, on page 169 of his essay De Koninck quotes, in full, Book II, chapter 6 of the De Anima. We have been presenting, up to this point, De Koninck's interpretation of a part of that text, namely, Aristotle's remark that, "Each sense has one kind of object which it discerns, and never errs in reporting that what is before it is colour or sound (though it may err as to what it is that is coloured or where that is, or what it is that is sounding or where that is)."<sup>9</sup> It is with the adequacy and correctness of the interpretation that De Koninck gives of this statement of Aristotle's, insofar as it relates to Aristotle's position on the question of the reality of proper sensibles, that we must now deal. The first thing we should point out is the following. In the last sentence of Book II, chapter 6 of the De Anima Aristotle, referring to proper sensibles and common sensibles respectively, says the following:

Of the two former kinds, both of which are in their own nature perceptible by sense, the first kind - that of special objects of the several senses - constitute the objects of sense in the strictest sense of the term and it is to them that in the nature of things the structure of each several sense is adapted.<sup>10</sup>

From this short passage we can see that, for Aristotle, the structure of each several sense is naturally adapted to its corresponding proper sensible object. In this general way, then, there is certainly a cognitive realism in Aristotle's philosophy. This passage is interesting also when we consider

that it is part of the text quoted by De Koninck on page 169 of his essay and upon which he is commenting. De Koninck has completely neglected this important passage at 418a24-25, and in so doing has missed the basic cognitive realism in Aristotle's theory of sensation. In other words, he has missed Aristotle's position that each sense is naturally structured so as to grasp and present to us its corresponding proper sensible object in the way that it actually exists in objects.

De Koninck, on the other hand, has definite doubts about the realistic structure of the sense organs. This comes out quite clearly in the following:

For instance, this water may seem warm to my right hand but cold to my left. What is the water, then, warm or cold? The trouble is, of course, that my two hands were at very different temperatures when I plunged them into the water. But no such problem arises when a thermometer is used to measure the temperature. Even sight, a more detached sense, does not entirely escape such relativity: I have the impression that this surface is red, while another may see it as a shade of grey; and the surface which, to the naked eye, appears white becomes a shade of green when I wear green glasses. The first difference is explained, to some extent, when it is learned that the man who sees only a shade of grey is colour-blind; but the second example shows that any colour we spontaneously attribute to a thing may also have something to do with the structure of the normal organ of sight in such a way that we always misjudge when in an absolute way we attribute the colour as we see it, to the thing to which our sight refers. This relativity of sensation is something from which there is no escape.<sup>11</sup>

From the example presented by De Koninck here we can see that he is saying the following. The physical or pre-cognitive conditions of sensation are such as to make it impossible to regard what is sensed - even when the sense is normally disposed - as belonging to this body rather than to that body. In other words,



what we sense is a complex result of the interaction of the form of the sense with the sensible form of the object being sensed. We and other objects are too tied in together for the sense-knower to locate the quality experienced as belonging completely to the object sensed. Thus, for example, says De Koninck, any colour we experience is the complex result of the interaction of the form of the sense of sight with the sensible form of the object. Consequently, we are always mistaken to attribute absolutely the colour, as we experience it, to the object which we are seeing. Nevertheless, as we have already seen, De Koninck is not saying that there is nothing in the objects sensed which contribute to the percepts we experience, even though we don't experience what is in them exactly as it is in itself.

The point we want to draw from the above analysis is that De Koninck is certainly not presenting Aristotle's theory of sensation correctly here. For, on the one hand, we have seen that there is a definite cognitive realism in Aristotle's notion of the senses as being naturally structured to grasp their proper objects as, in fact, they do exist in objects. However, De Koninck, on the other hand, views the physical preconditions of sensation, as we have just seen, in a very different way than this, and so, says De Koninck, we cannot say that we experience or perceive proper sensibles exactly as they are in themselves. For what we perceive is the complex result of the interaction of the forms of both the sense and its corresponding object. This difference between Aristotle's position and De Koninck's presen-

tation of it can also be seen from the following. The cognitive realism in Aristotle's position comes through again in this answer he gives as to why the senses don't sense themselves:

Here arises a problem: why do we not perceive the senses themselves as well as the external objects of sense, or why without the stimulation of external objects do they not produce sensations, seeing that they contain in themselves fire, earth, and all the other elements, which are the direct or indirect objects of sense? It is clear that what is sensitive is so only potentially, not actually. The power of sense is parallel to what is combustible, for that never ignites itself spontaneously, but requires an agent which has the power of starting ignition; otherwise it could have set itself on fire, and would not have needed actual fire to set it ablaze.<sup>12</sup>

Aristotle's approach can be seen to be unlike De Koninck's in this passage. Aristotle asks why it is that the senses don't sense themselves. To this question he replies that the senses are analogous to combustible material. That is to say, just as combustible material has a capacity or potency to be affected by a specific external agent, so analogously the senses are powers or capacities to be affected by specific external agents. Thus, says Aristotle, we don't sense the senses. Now, this is a different position from the one De Koninck has been presenting. For we have seen that De Koninck says that what we sense is the complex result of the interaction of the sense with its object, and consequently, we cannot say that we don't sense the senses.

Moreover, instead of grasping the basic cognitive realism in Aristotle's position with regard to proper sensibles, De Koninck has, as we have seen, taken hold of a text<sup>13</sup> which deals with truth and error in sensation from Aristotle's De Anima and developed this into a presentation of what he considers

to be Aristotle's position on the issue of the reality of proper sensibles. In doing so De Koninck has again missed the whole approach in Aristotle's doctrine of sensation. For the question about the reality of proper sensibles is not a question of truth or error of sensation; rather, it is a question of the general theory of sensation. That is to say, Aristotle's treatment of the question of the reality of proper sensibles is developed within the context of his general cognitive realism, as exemplified by his statement that the senses are naturally adapted to grasp their proper objects. It is, then, a question of a development of the more specific details of this general cognitive realism. This development can be seen in, among others, the following texts:

The sense and its organ are the same in fact, but their essence is not the same. What perceives is, of course, a spatial magnitude, but we must not admit that either the having the power to perceive or the sense itself is a magnitude; what they are is a certain ratio or power in a magnitude. This enables us to explain why objects of sense which possess one of two opposite sensible qualities in a degree largely in excess of the other opposite destroy the organs of sense; if the movement set up by an object is too strong for an organ, the equipoise of contrary qualities in the organ, which just is its sensory power, is disturbed; it is precisely as concord and tone are destroyed by too violently twanging the strings of a lyre.<sup>14</sup>

In this passage we can see Aristotle giving a more detailed development of his general doctrine that the, "...special objects of the several senses - constitute the objects of sense in the strictest sense of the term and it is to them that in the nature of things the structure of each several sense is adapted"<sup>15</sup>. There is, says Aristotle, an intelligible distinction between the

sense and its corresponding organ. The organ is a spatial magnitude, while the sense is a power of that magnitude. This power is a ratio or proportion such that it can become identical in quality with its corresponding proper sensible object in sensation; and this is what he means when he said a little earlier that, "...what has the power of sensation is potentially like what the perceived object is actually; that is, while at the beginning of the process of its being acted upon the two interacting factors are dissimilar, at the end the one acted upon is assimilated to the other and is identical in quality with it." <sup>16</sup>

In sensation a sense which is potentially like its corresponding proper sensible object becomes actually like, or identical with, it.

From the above we can see that Aristotle concentrates his emphasis on the ability of the sense to grasp its proper object as it, in fact, exists in objects, and this is quite different from the way we have seen De Koninck present Aristotle's position. That is to say, Aristotle develops his cognitive theory here around an emphasis on a view of the agency involved in sensation, on the part of the object sensed, as a communication to the appropriate sense of form, and so, of likeness or resemblance. This can be even better seen in Aristotle's treatment of sensation as analogous to the action of a signet-ring impressing a piece of wax with its likeness. Here Aristotle says:

The following results applying to any and every sense may now be formulated.

(A) By a 'sense' is meant what has the power of receiving into itself the sensible forms of things without the matter. This must be conceived of as taking place in the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet-ring without the iron or gold; we say that what produces the impression is a

signet of bronze or gold, but its particular metallic constitution makes no difference: in a similar way the sense is affected by what is coloured or flavoured or sounding, but it is indifferent what in each case the substance is; what alone matters is what quality it has, i.e. in what ratio its constituents are combined. 17

According to Aristotle, then, an act of sensation can be considered to be analogous to a piece of wax being impressed by a signet-ring. When the signet-ring impresses the piece of wax there is a communication from the former to the latter of a likeness of the signet on the ring. It makes no difference, as far as the ring impressing the wax is concerned, whether the signet is made of bronze or gold or some other metal. What alone is important is the form that this metal takes as the signet on the ring. For it is this form, this likeness - not the bronze or gold or other matter of the signet-ring - that is communicated by the ring onto the wax. The wax, then, receives a likeness of the signet. 'In an analogous fashion, the same thing can be said of an act of sensation. In sensation what affects the relevant sense - as distinguished from the sense organ - is not the physical object qua physical object, that is, precisely as composed of form and matter. No, what alone affects the sense is the form of that object. Just as, insofar as impressing the wax with its likeness is concerned, it is a matter of indifference what the metallic composition of the signet is, similarly, as far as affecting the sense is concerned, it is a matter of indifference what the physical object involved, as composed of form and matter, is. For, in each case, it is not the form and matter of the signet-ring or of the sensed

object which affects the wax or the sense respectively. On the contrary, what affects and is communicated to the wax or to the sense is the appropriate form without the matter. Thus, in each case, in the signet-ring impressing the wax and, for example, the coloured object affecting the sense of sight, we have a communication to the wax and to the sense of sight of a likeness: the wax takes on the likeness of the signet-ring and the sense of sight takes on the likeness, the colour, of its object.

Here again, in this comparison of sensation to a piece of wax being impressed by a signet-ring, we see that De Koninck has missed the whole approach in Aristotle's development of his theory of sensation. De Koninck emphasizes an interaction of forms from both the sense and its object, and says that what we experience is the complex result of this interaction. It is this emphasis that leads him to make the statement that, "...we still deceive ourselves if we attribute the quality perceived as belonging to the other thing (the apple) in the way in which the sense reports it, even when normally disposed"<sup>18</sup>. Or, to state it differently, "What and how the things which sense refers to are out there simply cannot be known by the senses themselves when, by their very nature, they are organic faculties, operating by, and inseparable from, instruments entitatively part of material reality."<sup>19</sup> It is, then, this stress that leads De Koninck to say that we are deluding ourselves in believing that proper sensibles we experience are in objects sensed in the same way in which our senses report them

to us. Aristotle's approach in his theory of sensation is much different from this, as the likening of sensation to a piece of wax being impressed by the resemblance of a signet on a ring shows. His theory of sensation emphasizes more the reception by the sense of "the sensible forms of things without the matter"<sup>20</sup>. Aristotle's theory of sensation emphasizes a communication of form, a communication of likeness, from the object sensed to the appropriate sense, and does not talk of any interference with this communication by the form of the (normally disposed) sense involved. His theory of sensation, then, emphasizes that we do perceive objects to be as they, in fact, really are. Moreover, this entails that, contrary to what De Koninck says, for Aristotle, the proper sensibles do exist in objects in the same way as our senses referring to them report them to us as inhering.

From all the above we can conclude that De Koninck has not given a correct account of Aristotle's position with regard to the reality of proper sensibles. De Koninck develops what he considers to be Aristotle's position on this topic within the context of explaining a remark made by Aristotle concerning truth and error in sensation.<sup>21</sup> We on the contrary, have tried to show that the question of the reality of proper sensibles, as treated by Aristotle, is not a matter of truth or error of sensation, but of the general theory of sensation. What we mean here is that, for Aristotle, the proper sensibles, "...constitute the objects of sense in the strictest sense of the term and it is to them that in the nature of things the structure of each

several sense is adapted" . From this statement it is apparent that Aristotle conceives of each sense as being so constituted as to be able to grasp their proper sensible object as it, in fact, is. Thus, in this broad way, we see that there is a cognitive realism in Aristotle's theory of sensation. Now, it is within the context of this cognitive realism that he handles the question of the reality of proper sensibles: the question of the reality of proper sensibles is part of his development of the more detailed specifications of his cognitive realism in his theory of sensation.

As we have seen, according to De Koninck, Aristotle's remark at 418a24-25 means that, while the senses never err in reporting how they are themselves affected with regard to their proper sensible objects, they can make us err with regard to the proper sensibles, "When any quality is judged to belong to the thing indicated by the sense, as an absolute property of that thing in exactly the way the sense is affected by it"<sup>23</sup> . For what it is in the object which combines with our senses to produce a given sensation of a proper sensible is not revealed in sensation, and so cannot be known by us. We, on the other hand, have shown that Aristotle's treatment of the reality of proper sensibles centers around the notion that each sense "...has the power of receiving into itself the sensible forms of things without the matter;"<sup>24</sup> that is, that Aristotle talks about a communication of likeness from the object to the sense, which sense is naturally adapted to grasp forms (i.e. sensible forms) as they, in fact, exist in objects. In a word, Aris-



total holds the position that proper sensibles do exist in objects in the way that our senses report them to us. Thus, we must conclude that De Koninck's interpretation of 418a15-17 is incorrect.

The above still leaves us with the problem of what the correct interpretation of 418a15-17 is. When Aristotle says, "Each sense has one kind of object which it discerns, and never errs in reporting that what is before it is colour or sound (though it may err as to what it is that is coloured or where that is, or what it is that is sounding or where that is),"<sup>25</sup> he means the following. Whenever any sense encounters its proper sensible object - conditions of normalcy in both the sense and the medium being presupposed here - then, that sense always reports that proper sensible to us as it truly exists in the object sensed. Thus, for example, the sense of sight never errs in reporting to us that the object it is sensing is, in fact,<sup>26</sup> of a given colour. Similarly, the sense of hearing is always correct when it informs us that the object being sensed is making a given sound. However, the sense of sight can be said to be responsible for a mistaken judgment on our part about what it is that has that colour it has sensed: as, for example, when the sense of sight is said to cause us to judge that the white object in the distance is a man when, in fact, it is a pillar of marble. This is an error in the realm of the incidental object of sense. Or, again, sight is commonly said to be responsible for an error when it causes us to make a mistaken judgement about where that coloured object is:

as, for example, when the sense of sight is said to be responsible for our mistaken judgment that the white object is at a distance of fifty feet from us when, in fact, it is at a distance of one hundred feet from us. This is a mistake in the area of common sensibles.<sup>27</sup> In an analogous way hearing or the other senses can be said to be erroneous.

It would seem that we have now completed our discussion of Charles De Koninck's handling of Aristotle's position on the question of the reality of proper sensibles. For we have examined the Aristotelian text which he is commenting on. We showed that it was an improper selection to make as a point of departure from which to discuss Aristotle's position on this question. We then showed how De Koninck should have handled this topic if he was to give a correct picture of Aristotle's position. Finally, having eliminated De Koninck's interpretation as being incorrect, we gave the correct interpretation of that text of Aristotle's with which De Koninck had begun his discussion. However, we have not finished dealing with De Koninck yet. For there is one important point which is to be found in De Koninck's discussion of Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles which we have not, as yet, looked at. The point we are referring to is as follows. On the one hand, we have seen that De Koninck denies that Aristotle holds the position that the proper sensibles exist in objects sensed in the way that our senses report them to us. On the other hand, as we shall see, De Koninck also says that the proper sensibles we experience in sensation are, in fact, real

and that they are outside the knower. It, thus, seems that we are faced with a contradiction in De Koninck's discussion of proper sensibles. For it appears that he is both asserting and denying the objective reality of proper sensibles according to Aristotle. In order to understand, and so, eliminate this apparent contradiction we must now discuss what De Koninck means when he says these things. This is the topic of the following section.

## II. A Seeming Contradiction in De Koninck's Exposition

In his discussion of Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles, De Koninck says, among other things, the following:

No matter what the conditions of sensation may be, I cannot doubt, when I see a surface as green, that I truly see green, nor doubt that I see it as being in that surface. But whether it is there in the way which my sight reports it is another matter. In fact, the more we learn about sensation the better we realize that qualities are not simply there as we sense them. But this does not change the really relevant fact that we do perceive qualities, that the perception of them is real, and that the term 'reality' refers first of all to the kind of being attained in actual and external sensation.<sup>28</sup>

According to De Koninck, no matter whether the organ of sense is normally or abnormally disposed, there can be no doubt that, for example, when I see some object as green, I do, in fact, see green and see it as being in that object. For, in so doing, the sense is merely reporting how it is itself being

affected, and in reporting this it never errs. However, this is not to say, continues De Koninck, that this quality (green) is, in fact, out there on the surface of that object in the same way that my sense reports it to me. For, "...the more we learn about sensation the better we realize that qualities are not simply there as we sense them"<sup>30</sup>. However, adds De Koninck, this is not to say that we don't have a real perception of qualities. For the term 'reality' designates primarily what is attained by us in our acts of external sensation, and proper sensibles are, of course, among what is so attained.

From what De Koninck is saying here we can see, to the extent that the question of the reality of proper sensibles is concerned, the following. For De Koninck, to call the proper sensibles 'real' is not to assert their being spatially outside the knower in the same way as our senses report them to us. No, it is rather to assert that they are outside - in a non-spatial sense of that term - the cognition considered precisely as a cognition. That is, it is to say of them that they are outside the knower inasmuch as they are representative of some kind of qualities - which we are never able to know in themselves - which exist in objects. This is made clearer later on when De Koninck resumes the discussion of this point as follows:

When asked to convey what 'warmth' stands for, as the name of a proper sense-object, we define the word by referring to an experience that another must be able to share, e.g., by approaching the fire, or by putting his hand in this water that feels warm to me - provided his hand has approximately the temperature of my own. In doing this we are not 'pointing out' the

warmth as we would a number or a figure. The warmth I point out is not 'there' in exactly the way the figure of the billiard-ball is 'there'. It is because tangible qualities and tastes cannot be pointed out as common sensibles are pointed out, that they are sometimes held to be less real. Yet it is not possible to doubt the reality of this sensation of warmth, not only as a sensation, but precisely as a sensation of warmth; for the sensation is not received as the sensation of a sensation, but as the sensation of a warmth as real as anything that I am aware of; nor can I doubt that this water that I now feel to be warm really has something to do with this sensation of mine. However, this does not imply that I believe the warmth to be in the water in the way I feel it; the sensible warmth in act is the sense in act, and not the water, which is never more than sensible in potency.<sup>31</sup>

Unlike common sensibles, proper sensibles cannot be pointed out as being out there in the world in the way that, say, the figure of a billiard-ball is out there. In the case of common sensibles they are 'out there' in the sense of being spatially outside the knower. On the other hand, proper sensibles cannot be said to be outside the knower in the same sense. To quote De Koninck further on this point:

In connection with common sensibles, 'out there' takes on a special meaning, and so does the expression 'outside the knower'. What is said to be 'out there' can be verified by a process of measurement: while 'outside the knower' now conveys a spatial meaning, that is, the known is outside the knower as this billiard-ball is outside that one. It is often assumed that 'outside the knower' must always convey this kind of outsideness; but the assumption is unwarranted, for the independent reality of what is known in sensation of proper objects is not diminished by the fact that I cannot point it out as I can the figure of the billiard-ball.<sup>32</sup>

This latter short passage helps us to better understand the longer text from pages 179-180 that we are examining. The phrase, 'outside the knower', with reference to proper sensibles,

does not mean that the proper sensibles exist spatially outside the knower in the way that one billiard-ball exists spatially outside another billiard-ball. However, to return to the text from pages 179-180 that we are examining, this is not to say that proper sensibles are any less real than common sensibles. However, if proper sensibles do not exist spatially outside the knower (in the way that we sense them as existing), how can De Koninck make the claim that they are just as real as common sensibles and have "independent reality"<sup>33</sup>? We can answer this question by examining the example of the water feeling warm to the sense of touch that De Koninck presents. Proper sensibles can be said to be real and have independent reality inasmuch as, when one has a sensation of warmth (for example), what one experiences is a real external sensation of something. What is this something that one experiences here? It is not a sensation of a sensation. No, it is precisely a sensation of warmth. That is to say, in any sensation of a proper sensible we can distinguish between the fact of experiencing a sensation as the experience of having a sensation and what the content of that sensation experienced is. It is with the latter that De Koninck is dealing here. As far as the content of that sensation of the proper sensible involved is concerned, it is not another sensation, or, to return to De Koninck's example, the content of our sensation of warmth is not another sensation whose content is warmth. On the contrary, as far as the content of a real or actual sensation of a proper sensible is concerned, it (i.e. the content of that sensation)

is precisely that proper sensible, or, to return to De Koninck's example, the content of our real or actual sensation of warmth is the warmth so perceived.

The above helps to give us some understanding of the distinction that De Koninck is drawing between proper sensibles as not being outside the knower as entities which exist spatially in objects in the way our senses report them to us and proper sensibles as being outside the knower's cognition precisely as a cognition. According to him, proper sensibles are not outside the knower in the sense that they are entities existing spatially outside of that knower in the way his senses report them as existing. However, they are outside the knower in the cognitive sense of that phrase: they are outside the knower inasmuch as they are the content of real external sensations, which sensations are, as such, representative of reality. For, as we have seen, the term 'reality' means primarily that which is attained in external sensation.<sup>34</sup>

The reason that DeKoninck gives here for denying that the proper sensibles are spatially external to the mind, existing in objects in the way our senses report them to us, is very interesting. For it shows that he has misinterpreted Aristotle's position on another important point in the Aristotelian theory of sensation relating to the reality of proper sensibles. Continuing on with the example of the water feeling warm, De Koninck says the following. He cannot doubt that the water which he is feeling as warm has something to do with the sensation of warmth that he is experiencing. However, he adds, this must not be

taken to mean that he believes the warmth to be spatially located in the water in the way his sense of touch reports it to him. For, says DeKoninck, "...the sensible warmth in act is the sense in act, and not the water, which is never more than sensible in potency"<sup>35</sup>. The reason he has given for denying that proper sensibles are entitatively located in objects in the way the senses report them to us is that the proper sensibles, as actualized, are identical with the corresponding senses, as actualized, while all that ever exists in objects, as far as proper sensibles are concerned, are the potentialities for producing the various proper sensibles in percipients.

It is quite true that Aristotle explicitly says that, "The activity of the sensible object and that of the percipient sense is one and the same activity,"<sup>36</sup> and that he also says,

If it is true that the movement, both the acting and the being acted upon, is to be found in that which is acted upon, both the sound and the hearing so far as it is actual must be found in that which has the faculty of hearing: for it is in the passive factor that the actuality of the active or motive factor is realized.<sup>37</sup>

From these two passages it would appear that De Koninck was just reporting what Aristotle, himself, said in the reason he (De Koninck) gives here for denying that proper sensibles exist in objects in the way our senses report them to us. For, to quote Aristotle again, "...as the-acting-and-being-acted-upon is to be found in the passive, not in the active factor, so also the actuality of the sensible object and that of the sensitive subject are both realized in the latter"<sup>38</sup>. Consequently, we must



admit that DeKoninck was right in saying that, for Aristotle, the warmth in act is identical with the sense in act and that the water can only be sensible in potency. However, we do not think that this can be used, as De Koninck has tried to use it, as a reason for saying that proper sensibles do not exist in objects in the way that our senses report them to us. For, immediately after making the remarks we have just quoted at 426a9-11, Aristotle goes on to say this:

But while in some cases each aspect of the total actuality has a distinct name, e.g. sounding and hearing, in some one or other is nameless, e.g. the actuality of sight is called seeing, but the actuality of colour has no name: the actuality of the faculty of taste is called tasting, but the actuality of flavour has no name. Since the actualities of the sensible object and of the sensitive faculty are one actuality in spite of the difference between their modes of being, actual hearing and actual sounding appear and disappear from existence at one and the same moment, and so actual savour and actual tasting, etc., while as potentialities one of them may exist without the other. The earlier students of nature were mistaken in their view that without sight there was no white or black, without taste no savour. This statement of theirs is partly true, partly false: 'sense' and 'the sensible object' are ambiguous terms, i.e. may denote either potentialities or actualities: the statement is true of the latter, false of the former. This ambiguity they wholly failed to notice.

In this long passage we find Aristotle explaining further his doctrine that the actuality of the sensible object and the actuality of the sensitive subject are both realized in the latter by showing that this is an adequate account of all cases of sensation. He does this because verbally it would appear not to be true in all such cases. He first gives us an example where his doctrine agrees with the common uses of

language. In the case of someone hearing a sound, both aspects of the total actuality that are realized in the sense faculty have a name: 'hearkening' for the actuality of the sense involved and 'sounding' for the actuality of the object heard. Thus, here he is correct in saying that the actuality of both the sensitive subject and the sensible object are realized in the former. However, Aristotle then points out some examples where, at first glance, his doctrine doesn't work. In the case of someone seeing a colour, verbally his doctrine appears to falter. For it is sensibly evident that what we call by the name 'colour' is not in the eye, but on the surface of the object sensed. Thus, here the actuality of the sensible object would not seem to be one with the actuality of the sense faculty involved. Consequently, Aristotle points out that 'colour' is not the name for the appropriate actuality - on the side of the object - here. For that actuality has no name. Similarly, in the case of someone tasting a flavoured object, Aristotle's doctrine seems to fail. For again it is sensibly evident that the flavour is not in the sense of taste, but in the object tasted. Thus, here too the actuality of the sensible object would not appear to be one with the actuality of the sense faculty involved. Consequently, says Aristotle, notice that 'flavour' is not the name of the actuality of the sense object here. For the appropriate actuality here is nameless. Thus, though what we call 'colour' or 'flavour' is not in the one who sees or tastes, nevertheless, it can still be said that the actuality of the

sensible object is one with the actuality of the corresponding sense and has its locus in the latter.

We have just seen that, for Aristotle, 'colour' and 'flavour' are the names for properties existing in objects which, when actualized in sensation, are nameless. Consequently, we must conclude that, for Aristotle, 'colour' and 'flavour' are each the name of a potentiality. Thus, when Aristotle says, at 426a15-25, that because the terms 'sense' and 'the sensible object' can refer to potentialities or to actualities, they are ambiguous we must interpret all of this as follows. As referring to actualities, the denial of the existence of sensible objects in the absence of percipients is correct, For they are here identical with the actuality of the appropriate sense faculties, and so, exist only so long as those faculties are actualized. However, as referring to potentialities, namely, to colours, flavours, and the other proper sensibles<sup>40</sup>, this denial is incorrect. Thus, for Aristotle, colours, flavours, etc., as they denote potentialities, do exist (spatially) in objects in the way that our senses report them to us.

From the above analysis we can conclude that De Koninck was wrong to interpret Aristotle's doctrine that the sensible object in act is identical with the sensitive subject in act and that the object can only be, in itself, sensible in potency as a denial of the objective entitative existence of proper sensibles, as a denial that proper sensibles exist in the object in the way that our senses report them to us. For, as we have seen, Aristotle's point is that what our senses re-

port to us is the object's sensible potency; or, to state it another way, Aristotle is saying that the names for the various proper sensibles are the names of the sensible potencies in objects. From this we can see that De Koninck has made here the same misinterpretation of this Aristotlian passage that we saw<sup>41</sup> Randall and David Ross make earlier in this thesis.

It has been our purpose in this section to dispel an apparent contradiction in De Koninck's exposition. For we saw, in Section I, that De Koninck stated that Aristotle denied that proper sensibles exist in objects in the way that our senses report them to us; nevertheless, we also saw that De Koninck said that these proper sensibles are 'outside the knower' and are 'real'. In this section, then, we have examined in some detail just what De Koninck meant when he said the latter. We have seen here that what De Koninck was saying here didn't, in fact, contradict his other statements about proper sensibles. For we found that he was not claiming here that proper sensibles exist spatially outside the knower. On the contrary, what he had done was to draw a distinction between different senses of 'outside the knower'. This expression could mean that something exists entitatively outside the knower in a spatial way. In this sense of the term, De Koninck continued to deny that proper sensibles exist outside the knower according to Aristotle. (However, as we have seen, this is precisely the sense in which Aristotle asserts that proper sensibles exist outside the knower.) On the other hand, 'outside the knower' could also mean that something was the content of a given real external sensation on the

knower's part. It was in this way that De Koninck said that proper sensibles exist outside the knower, and that, as such, they were real. For, "...the term 'reality' refers first of all to the kind of being attained in actual and external sensation"<sup>42</sup>. In discovering this we saw that there was no real contradiction involved in saying that proper sensibles do not exist (spatially) in objects in the way our senses report them to us and saying that proper sensibles are real and are (in a non-spatial sense) outside the knower.

### III. Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined Charles De Koninck's exposition of what he considers to be Aristotle's position on the question of the reality of proper sensibles. We saw that De Koninck used, as his point of departure for developing this position, Aristotle's remark that, "Each sense has one kind of object which it discerns, and never errs in reporting that what is before it is colour or sound (though it may err as to what it is that is coloured or where that is, or what it is that is sounding or where that is)."<sup>43</sup> We noted that De Koninck took this to mean that, while the senses never err in reporting how they, themselves, are affected, they can cause us to err if they lead us to judge that the proper sensibles exist in objects in the way that these senses present them to us as existing. Thus, we saw that De Koninck thought that Aristotle did not hold the position that proper sensibles exist in objects in the way we sense them as existing. Our sensation of any given proper sensible is the complex result of the interaction of the form or

structure of the sense involved with the sensible form of the object being sensed. Thus, aside from being able to say that proper sensibles don't exist in objects in the way our senses report them to us, we can't know what it is that is in objects that interacts with our senses to produce our sensations of proper sensibles.

In criticizing De Koninck's interpretation of Aristotle's position we first pointed out that the issue of the reality of proper sensibles, as treated by Aristotle, is not a question of truth or error of sensation, but of his general theory of sensation. That is to say, we showed how Aristotle held the view that each sense is naturally adapted to present to us its corresponding proper sensible object, and how this entailed that, in this general way, Aristotle held a position of cognitive realism. We then showed that it was within the context of this cognitive realism - not, as De Koninck had presented it, within the context of truth and error in sensation - that Aristotle developed his position on the question of the reality of proper sensibles. In doing so we presented several specific arguments aimed at showing this development. Finally, having ruled out De Koninck's interpretation of Aristotle's statement at 418a15-17 as incorrect, we gave our interpretation of this passage.

In the second section of this chapter we dealt with the apparent contradiction that arose when we saw that, while De Koninck said that Aristotle denied that proper sensibles exist in objects in the way our senses report them to us, he

nonetheless said that they were outside the knower and were real. This apparent contradiction vanished when we saw that by 'outside the knower', as used in reference to proper sensibles, he meant that the proper sensibles existed as the content of actual external sensations and, as such, that they could be said to be real inasmuch as the term 'reality' refers primarily to what is attained in such sensations. Thus, De Koninck affirms the extracognitive or pre-cognitive reality of proper sensibles, but not in the way Aristotle does. For Aristotle holds the position that proper sensibles exist spatially in external objects in the way that our senses report them to us as existing.

## CONCLUSION

The objective of this thesis has been twofold. First, to present, in detail, Aristotle's position on the question of the reality of proper sensibles as presented in the De Anima and the De Sensu et Sensibili. Secondly, to critically examine what three modern Aristotlian commentators say is Aristotle's position on this topic. In order to facilitate the handling of these two items, we divided this essay into two parts. Part I dealt with Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles, while Part II examined what three of his modern commentators say of his position on this topic.

We began our handling of Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles as presented in the De Anima and the De Sensu et Sensibili by briefly surveying the treatment that has been given to this topic by modern English language Aristotlian commentators. This was the subject of Chapter I, and we found that there was very little available on this subject by such commentators. We discovered only fifteen commentators who had anything at all to say on the issue. These commentators were almost evenly divided among themselves with eight affirming and seven denying that Aristotle held that proper sensibles are qualities inhering in objects in the way our senses report them to us.

In Chapter II we accomplished our first objective by examining in detail what Aristotle, himself, says in the De



Anima and the De Sensu et Sensibili - the two works containing the detailed presentation of his theory of sensation - about the question of the reality of proper sensibles. We found that there is a general cognitive realism in his theory of sensation. This was seen, first of all, in his remark that the senses are naturally adapted to present their corresponding proper sensible objects to us as they, in fact, exist in objects. We then went on to show that the question of the reality of proper sensibles, as treated by Aristotle, is developed within the context of this general cognitive realism in his theory of sensation: it is handled as part of the more detailed development of that theory of sensation. In examining this development we saw that Aristotle's cognitive realism with regard to proper sensibles continued to show itself. From all that we saw, then, of Aristotle's treatment of the reality of proper sensibles we reached the following conclusion. For Aristotle the proper sensibles are qualities inhering in objects in the way our senses report them to us.

Having accomplished our first objective, we then proceeded, in Part II, to our second objective. Here we examined what John Herman Randall (Jr.), in his book entitled Aristotle (see Chapter III of this thesis), W. D. Ross, in his book entitled Aristotle (see Chapter IV of this thesis), and Charles De Koninck, in his work entitled Abstraction from Matter (see Chapter V of this thesis), had to say about Aristotle's position, in the De Anima and the De Sensu et Sensibili, on the reality of proper sensibles. These three commentators had two

things in common, in their treatment of this topic. First, they each claimed that Aristotle denied that the proper sensibles exist in objects in the way our senses report them to us. Secondly, they each used Aristotle's doctrine that the sensible object in act and the sensitive subject in act have their locus in the latter and are, in fact, merely different aspects of one single event as justification for attributing this denial to Aristotle. That is to say, in the cases of Randall and Ross, at least, this was the reason given for attributing the denial of the independent reality of proper sensibles to Aristotle. For De Koninck this was the second of the two points he put forward in justification for what he said of Aristotle. De Koninck had earlier interpreted Aristotle's remark at 418a15-17 as meaning that Aristotle did not consider the proper sensibles to be qualities existing in objects in the way our senses report them to us. In each case, after seeing this, we showed in detail how the commentator being examined had misinterpreted Aristotle's position on the question of the reality of proper sensibles.

NOTES - CHAPTER ONE

- 1 Takatura Ando, Aristotle's Theory of Practical Cognition (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965). Second edition.
- 2 John I. Beare, Greek Theories of Elementary Cognition from Alcmaeon to Aristotle (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1906).
- 3 Étienne Gilson, Painting and Reality (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1957).
- 4 D. W. Hamlyn, Sensation and Perception (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1961).
- 5 William Alexander Hammond (trans.), Aristotle's Psychology (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1902). This work contains a translation of the De Anima and the Parva Naturalia along with an introduction and notes.
- 6 George Klubertanz, "De Potentia, 5.8: A Note on the Thomist Theory of Sensation", appearing in The Modern Schoolman, Vol. XXVI (Nov. 1948 - May 1949), pp. 323-331.
- 7 Charles De Koninck, Abstraction from Matter (Québec: Les Presses Universitaires Laval). This is a two-pamphlet reprint of an unfinished article appearing in the following issues of the Laval Théologique et Philosophique, XIII No. 2 (1957), and XVI No. 1 and 2 (1960). All page references to this work of De Koninck's appearing in this thesis are to those of pamphlet I of the two pamphlets.
- 8 G. E. R. Lloyd, Aristotle: The Growth and Structure of His Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).
- 9 G. R. G. Mure, Aristotle (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). Originally published in 1932 and republished with corrections in 1964 as a Galaxy Book.
- 10 John Herman Randall (Jr.), Aristotle (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960). Paperback edition, 1962.
- 11 David Ross, Aristotle (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1964). Fifth edition, revised 1949.
- 12 David Ross (ed.), De Anima (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1961). Contains the Greek text along with an introduction and commentary.

- 13 David Ross (ed.), Parva Naturalia (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1955). Contains the Greek text along with an introduction and commentary.
- 14 G. R. T. Ross (trans.), De Sensu et De Memoria (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1906). Contains the Greek text along with an English translation and a commentary.
- 15 Clarence Shute, The Psychology of Aristotle (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1964). Originally published in 1941.
- 16 Yves R. Simon, "An Essay on Sensation", this article was written especially for, Philosophy of Knowledge: Selected Readings (Chicago: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1960), pp. 55-95. Edited by Roland Houde and Joseph P. Mullally.
- 17 A. E. Taylor, Aristotle (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955). This is a reprint of the 1919 revised edition.
- 18 Ibid., p. 6.
- 19 Ross, Aristotle, from the Preface page. See also Lloyd, op. cit., pp. ix-x; Mure, op. cit., p.v.; and Randall, op. cit., pp. iii-iv, for the purpose that each of these authors had in writing their respective books.
- 20 Taylor, op. cit., p. 79. See also, Lloyd, op. cit., p. 192 and 195-196; Mure, op. cit., p. 115; Randall, op. cit., pp. 82-83; and David Ross, Aristotle, p. 138.
- 21 David Ross, loc. cit., the reference in square brackets is given by Ross at the foot of page 138, and we have placed it inside the text for convenience. It should be noted that no attempt is being made at this point to give a detailed analysis of these authors' texts. Here we are only concerned with showing how much material is available on what Aristotle says in the De Anima and the De Sensu et Sensibili on the reality of proper sensibles. In the next section of this chapter we shall point out where each of these authors stands on this topic. In the final three chapters of this thesis a detailed analysis and critique will be given of the text by David Ross quoted here and of the appropriate texts of De Koninck and Randall.
- 22 Hamlyn, op. cit., p. 22.
- 23 Beare, op. cit., pp. 63-64, 229, 234, and 238.
- 24 Shute, op. cit., p. vii.

- 25 Ibid., p. 95.
- 26 De Koninck, op. cit., p. 175ff.
- 27 Klubertanz, op. cit., p. 330, footnote 32.
- 28 Ando, op. cit., p. 34, footnote 2.
- 29 Hammond, op. cit., p. 87, footnote 1.
- 30 Simon, op. cit., p. 55.
- 31 Ibid., pp. 74-78. However, these pages are not devoted exclusively to Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles. For Simon also discusses other philosophers' views on certain aspects of sensation here.
- 32 Gilson, op. cit., p. 272.
- 33 G. R. T. Ross, op. cit., pp. 7-8, 149-150, 208, 210, and 233.
- 34 David Ross (ed.), De Anima, pp. 275-277.
- 35 David Ross (ed.), Parva Naturalia, pp. 21-22 and 196-197.
- 36 De Koninck, loc. cit.
- 37 Gilson, loc. cit.
- 38 Hamlyn, loc. cit.
- 39 Hammond, loc. cit.
- 40 Randall, op. cit., pp. 82-83.
- 41 David Ross, Aristotle, p. 138; De Anima, pp. 275-277; and Parva Naturalia, pp. 21-22 and 196-197.
- 42 Shute, op. cit., p. 95.
- 43 Cf. Physica, 202a11-202b23.
- 44 De Anima, 425b26-426a1.
- 45 David Ross, Aristotle, p. 138, the reference given in square brackets is given by Ross at the foot of p. 138, and we have placed it inside the text for the sake of convenience. A detailed discussion and evaluation of this text will be found in Chapter IV of this thesis.
- 46 Cf. footnotes, 32, 22, 40, 34, and 42 supra. respectively.
- 47 Gilson, op. cit., p. 272.

- 48 De Anima, 418a15-16.
- 49 De Koninck, loc. cit. A detailed analysis and critique of De Koninck's remarks will be found in Chapter V of this thesis.
- 50 Cf. ibid., especially, pp. 179-180.
- 51 Hammond, loc. cit.
- 52 David Ross (ed.), Parva Naturalia, pp. 21-22 and cf. also, pp. 196-197. Cf. also the cross-reference to the De Anima given on this page.
- 53 Ando, loc. cit.
- 54 Klubertanz, loc. cit.
- 55 Taylor, op. cit., p. 79.
- 56 Lloyd, loc. cit.
- 57 Cf. De Anima, 430a16.
- 58 Mure, op. cit., p. 105, footnote 1 and pp. 103-104. See also the discussion on p. 115.
- 59 Ibid., p. 115.
- 60 Beare, op. cit., p. 229. See also pp. 234 and 238 where he again affirms the objective reality of proper sensibles according to Aristotle and pp. 63-64 where he affirms the objective reality of colour according to Aristotle.
- 61 Ibid., p. 234.
- 62 G. R. T. Ross (trans.), De Sensu et De Memoria, p. 208. Cf. also pp. 7-8, 149-150, 210, and 233.
- 63 Simon, op. cit., p. 74; the emphasis is Simon's.
- 64 Ibid., pp. 75-76.
- 65 Ibid., p. 75, footnote 27.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Cf. ibid., p. 74, footnote 27.

NOTES - CHAPTER TWO

- 1 De Anima, 418a24-25. In this chapter and throughout this entire thesis, unless otherwise stated, we are using J. A. Smith's translation of the De Anima as it appears in, The Works of Aristotle Translated into English (London: Oxford University Press, 1908-1952), under the editorship of J. A. Smith and W. D. Ross. Smith's translation of the De Anima is contained in volume III of this twelve-volume translation of Aristotle's works.  
We would like to point out here that any italicized material or material enclosed by square brackets that is found in any quotations contained in this chapter of our thesis has not been added by us, but occurs in the sources from which the quotations were taken.
- 2 Ibid., 417a2-9.
- 3 Ibid., 418a24-25.
- 4 Ibid., 427b10-11.
- 5 Ibid., 428b18-19.
- 6 Ibid., 416b32-34. Cf. also, ibid., 415b24-25: "Sensation is held to be a qualitative alteration, and nothing except what has soul in it is capable of sensation."
- 7 Ibid., 431a4-8.
- 8 Ibid., 417a21-417b1. Cf. also, ibid., 412a10-11 and 412a22-27, where the two senses of actuality are also distinguished.
- 9 Saint Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle's "De Anima" in the Version of William of Moerbake and the Commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1951), p. 241, section 361. English translation by Kenelem Foster and Silvester Humphries.
- 10 De Anima, 417b2-9.
- 11 Ibid., 417b15-17.
- 12 Ibid., 417b18-28. Cf. also, De Sensu et Sensibili, 446b2-5 and Metaphysica, 1048b9-34.
- 13 De Anima, 417b16-17.
- 14 Ibid., 417b6.

- 15 Ibid., 418a24-25.
- 16 Cf. ibid., 418a24-25.
- 17 Cf. Aquinas, op. cit., pp. 249-251, sections 375-380 for a description of how universals exist in the soul and a detailed commentary on 417b19-28.
- 18 Cf. Chapter II, pp. 18-19 of this thesis.
- 19 De Anima, 417b29-418a5.
- 20 Aquinas, op. cit., p. 251, section 381.
- 21 De Anima, 417b18.
- 22 Ibid., 418a1.
- 23 Ibid., 417b15-16.
- 24 Ibid., 417b3-5.
- 25 Ibid., 417b16-17.
- 26 This is so true that, for example, the actuality relative to colour and the actuality relative to flavour each goes without any name, implying that so much better known is the potentiality in each case (i.e. the colour and the flavour) because of it. Cf. ibid., 426a2-26 and our analysis of it in Section V of this chapter of our thesis.
- 27 De Anima, 431b24-28. Cf. also, ibid., 431a1-8.
- 28 Ibid., 422a6-7. Cf. also, ibid., 423b27-424a9 on the sense of touch and its corresponding object.
- 29 Ibid., 422a10-11.
- 30 Ibid., 422b1-9.
- 31 Ibid., 422b10-17.
- 32 Ibid., 424a15-23.
- 33 Ibid., 424a17. Cf. also, ibid., 424b1-3, 425b23-24, 429a12-18, and 431b24-30, where the same principle is also stated.
- 34 Ibid., 418a24-25.
- 35 Ibid., 424a16.
- 36 Ibid., 424a24-32. Cf. also, ibid., 423b27-424a9 and 426a27-426b8.



- 37 Aquinas, op. cit., p. 341, section 555-556.
- 38 De Anima, 418a24-25.
- 39 Ibid., 417b16-17. See also our complete analysis of the sense in which sensation does not involve alteration in Section II of this chapter of our thesis.
- 40 Physica, 202b24-29. The translation of this work used throughout this thesis is that of R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gays appearing in volume two of, The Works of Aristotle Translated into English (London: Oxford University Press, 1908-1952), under the editorship of J. A. Smith and W. D. Ross.
- 41 Ibid., 202a7-8; the emphasis is Aristotle's. Cf. also, ibid., 201a10-11.
- 42 Ibid., 202a11-21. Cf. also, ibid., 202a22-202b23, where Aristotle raises and answers objections to the doctrine he is presenting at 202a11-21. The same principle concerning motion put forward at 202a11-21 is also enunciated at Metaphysica, 1066a26-34.
- 43 Ibid., 202a7-8; the emphasis is Aristotle's. Cf. also, ibid., 201a10-11, where Aristotle says of motion that, "The fulfilment of what exists potentially, in so far as it exists potentially, is motion"; the emphasis here is Aristotle's.
- 44 Saint Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on Aristotle's "Physics" by St. Thomas Aquinas (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1963), p. 145, section 306. English translation by Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and W. Edmund Thirlkel.
- 45 Ibid., p. 145, section 307.
- 46 De Anima, 425b26-426a26.
- 47 I.e., ibid., 425b26-426a1.
- 48 I.e., the part of it from ibid., 426a2-15.
- 49 I.e., ibid., 426a15-20.
- 50 Ibid., 426a24-25.
- 51 I.e., ibid., 426a20-26.
- 52 It is to the distinctions we have been examining at, ibid., 425b26-426a26, that Aristotle refers when he says of the proper sensibles in the De Sensu et Sensibili, at 439a13-18, the following:

Now, each of them may be spoken of from two points of view, i.e., either as actual or as potential. We have in the De Anima explained in what sense the colour, or sound, regarded as actualized [for sensation], is the same as, and in what sense it is different from, the correlative sensation, the actual seeing or hearing. The point of our present discussion is, therefore, to determine what each sensible object must be in itself, in order to be perceived as it is in actual consciousness.

From this passage we can see that the cognitive realism in Aristotle's theory of sensation as regards proper sensibles is continued in the De Sensu et Sensibili, where he says that he intends to tell us what their essential nature is.

- 53        De Sensu et Sensibili, 442a30-442b9.
- 54        Cf. also, De Anima, 418a18-19.
- 55        Cf., ibid., 418a15-17.
- 56        De Sensu et Sensibili, 442b10-24.
- 57        Cf., ibid., 437a8-9, where Aristotle says of sight that, "...it is through this sense especially that we perceive the common sensibles, viz. figure, magnitude, motion, number".
- 58        De Anima, 429a3.
- 59        De Sensu et Sensibili, 437a8-9. Cf. also, Metaphysica, 980a27-28, where Aristotle says that sight, "...most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things".
- 60        For some detailed discussion of Locke's treatment of proper sensibles - or secondary qualities, as Locke calls them - and a criticism of any attempt to identify that position taken by Locke with Aristotle's position, see Section III of Chapter III of this thesis.

NOTES - CHAPTER THREE

- 1 John Herman Randall (jr.), Aristotle (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960). Paperback edition, 1962. Randall's development of Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles runs from the bottom of p. 81 to the bottom of p. 83.
- 2 Ibid., p. 81.
3. Ibid.
- 4 Ibid., pp. 81-82; the reference in square brackets is given by Randall at the foot of p. 82, and we have placed it inside the text for the sake of convenience. Of the quotations from Aristotle that Randall uses in his book, he says the following in the Forward (pp. v-vi):

It is an indication of the role of precision of language in Aristotle's thinking that no student of that language is ever completely satisfied with any English ~~says~~ his own. Yet it would be presumptuous folly - indeed, hybris - for one who has not enjoyed the training of a classical philologist to fail to make full use of the skill of competent Greek scholars of our day. The outcome in this volume is a compromise. In the main there have been employed the English translations of the Aristot-lian texts - with the Physics, the superior French of M. Carteron - that in each particular passage seemed closest to the meaning of the original. But there has been no hesitation to alter them, usually in the interest of bringing them nearer to what the Greek actually says. A literal translation is undoubtedly closer to Aristotle than a more polished English version.

We, on the other hand, having been using the English translations of Aristotle (especially J. A. Smith's translation of the De Anima) as they appear in: The Works of Aristotle Translated into English (London: Oxford University Press, 1908-1952), under the editorship of J. A. Smith and W. D. Ross. Consequently, for the sake of uniformity in this thesis, anytime we give Randall's translation of any passage from Aristotle's De Anima in the body of this chapter of our thesis, we shall also give J. A. Smith's translation of that same passage in our footnotes. (All other passages from the De Anima in the body of this thesis are from Smith's translation.) Thus, Smith's translation of 426a4-6 reads as follows: "...for it is in the passive factor that the actuality of the active or motive factor is

realized; that is why that which causes movement may be at rest<sup>m</sup>.

5 Randall, op. cit., p. 82.

6 Ibid.

7 We have given Randall's rendering of this text here. The Smith translation of that passage is substantially the same and reads:

For as the-acting-and-being-acted-upon is to be found in the passive, not in the active factor, so also the actuality of the sensible object and that of the sensitive subject are both realized in the latter.

8 De Anima, III ch. 2: 426a<sup>4</sup>-6, as quoted by Randall on p. 82 of his book. The Smith translation reads as follows:

For it is in the passive factor that the actuality of the active or motive factor is realized; that is why that which causes movement may be at rest.

9 Randall, op. cit., p. 82. Obviously this is intended by Randall as one example that can be extended by analogous reasoning to all the proper sensibles.

10 De Anima, 425b26-426a26. In addition to what we are about to say about this passage here, see also Chapter II, Section V of this thesis for a more complete analysis of it.

11 That is, De Anima, 425b26-426a1.

12 That is, De Anima, 426a2-26.

13 Cf. De Anima, 426a2-6; while Aristotle puts what he says here in the form of a hypothetical statement, he clearly accepts this doctrine as can be seen from Physica, III, Chapter 3.

14 De Anima, 425b26-426a1.

15 Randall, op. cit., p. 82.

16 Cf. De Anima, 426a8-9.

17 Cf. ibid., 426a9. At this point the reader is advised to see Chapter II, Section V of this thesis to see just why Aristotle has introduced this discussion at 425b26-426a26.

18 Cf. ibid., 426a9-11.

19 It shouldn't be thought that the theme of ambiguity of terms being developed here is a kind of topic of 425b26-426a26. On the contrary, the discussion of the namelessness of certain of the actualities involved in sensation is meant to help the reader see that Aristotle's doctrine that the actuality of the active and passive elements in any alteration differ only in concept and reside in the passive element is an adequate account of all cases of sensations. The idea is that verbally this doctrine does not seem to be true. For it is sensibly evident that, say, colour is not in the eye, but on the surface of the coloured object. Thus, the actuality of the sensible object would not seem to be one with the actuality of the perceiving sense. Consequently, Aristotle says, notice that 'colour' is not the name of the appropriate actuality here. Thus, even though what we call 'colour' is not in the one who sees, nevertheless, it can still be said that the actuality of the sensible object is one with the actuality of the sense of sight. Cf. further, pp. 45ff. of Chapter II, Section V of this thesis.

20 Ibid., 426a13-15.

21 Randall, op. cit., p. 82.

22 Ibid.

23 De Anima, 426a13-14.

24 Randall, op. cit., pp. 82-83; the references contained in square brackets are given by Randall at the foot of p. 82 and p. 83, and we have placed them inside the text for the sake of convenience. Smith's translation of 417b2-5 reads as follows:

....It may mean either (a) the extinction of one of two contraries by the other, or (b) the maintenance of what is potential by the agency of what is actual and already like what is acted upon, with such likeness as is compatible with one's being actual and the other potential.

Smith's translation of 417a18-20 reads as follows:

Hence it is that in one sense...what acts and what is acted upon are like, in another unlike, i.e. prior to and during the change the two factors are unlike, after it like.

25 Randall, op. cit., p. 82.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 De Anima, 417a21-417b1.

29 Ibid., 417b2-9.

30 Ibid., 417b18-24.

31 Ibid., 418a3-5. For a more complete analysis of all the Aristotelian texts we have been discussing in this section, see Chapter II, Section II of this thesis.

32 Ibid., 426a13-14.

33 Ibid., 426a14-15.

34 Randall, op. cit., p. 83.

35 Ibid.

36 Randall, op. cit., p. 83; the reference in square brackets is given by Randall at the foot of p. 83, and we have placed it at the end of the text for the sake of convenience. Smith's translation of 426a15-25 reads as follows:

Since the actuality of the sensible object and of the sensitive faculty are one actuality in spite of the difference between their modes of being, actual hearing and actual sounding appear and disappear from existence at one and the same moment, and so actual savour and actual tasting, etc., while as potentialities one of them may exist without the other. The earlier students of nature were mistaken in their view that without sight there was no white or black, without taste no savour. This statement of theirs is partly true, partly false: 'sense' and 'the sensible object' are ambiguous terms, i.e. may denote either potentialities or actualities: the statement is true of the latter, false of the former.

37 Randall, op. cit., p. 83.

38 John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), vol. I, p. 170; Book II, chap. viii, section 10. This Dover edition is a two-volume set containing the complete text collated and annotated with biographical, critical and historical prolegomena by Alexander Campbell Fraser.

In this book Locke distinguishes between two types of qualities, namely, primary and secondary qualities, and he divides the latter kind into two subdivisions: thus:

Beside those before-mentioned qualities in bodies, viz. bulk, figure, extension, number, and motion of their solid parts; all the rest, whereby we take notice of bodies, and distinguish them one from another, are nothing but several powers in them, depending on those primary qualities; whereby they are fitted, either by immediately operating on our bodies to produce several different ideas in us; or else, by operating on other bodies, so to change their primary qualities as to render them capable of producing ideas in us different from what they did before. The former of these, I think, may be called secondary qualities immediately perceivable: the latter, secondary qualities mediately perceivable. [ ] vol. I, pp. 181-182; Book II, chap. viii, section 26 [ ]

Colours, sounds, smells, tastes, etc., says Locke, belong to secondary qualities immediately perceivable (see vol. I, pp. 178-179; Book II, chap. viii, section 23).

- 39 Locke, op. cit., vol. I, p. 173; Book II, chap. viii, section 15.
- 40 Cf. De Anima, Book II, chapter 6. Cf. also, Chapter II, Section VI of this thesis where we saw that Aristotle refuses to allow that proper sensibles can be reduced to any modes of the common sensibles (as Locke claims they can). Randall has not taken notice of this.
- 41 Locke, op. cit., vol. I, p. 174; Book II, chap. viii, section 17; the italics are Locke's.
- 42 Cf. Randall, op. cit., pp. 83-84.
- 43 De Anima, 424a17-23. For a more detailed analysis of this text than we are giving here, see Chapter II, Section III of this thesis.
- 44 Randall, op. cit., p. 83.

NOTES - CHAPTER FOUR

- 1 David Ross, Aristotle (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1964),  
p. 138. Fifth edition, revised 1949.
- 2 De Anima, 418a17. Cf. the whole of De Anima, Book II,  
chapter 6 where Aristotle distinguishes between proper  
sensibles, common sensibles, and the incidentally sen-  
sible. Proper sensibles, in contemporary terminology  
are called 'secondary qualities', while common sensibles  
are called 'primary qualities'.
- 3 Although Ross places this reference in a footnote at  
the bottom of p. 138 of his book, we have placed it in-  
side the text within square brackets for the sake of  
convenience. It should also be noted that in that same  
footnote Ross gives additional references to the Cate-  
gories, 7b35-8a12, Metaphysics, 1010b31-1011a2, and to  
p. 162 of his own book, Aristotle, where he is dealing  
with part of the Metaphysics. However, as all of those  
additional references fall outside of the scope of this  
thesis (which is to deal with the De Anima and the De  
Sensu et Sensibili and with comments made by, in this  
case, Ross on them), we shall not be considering these  
additional references. Thus, we are interested in the  
text we have quoted from Ross here only in so far as  
it claims to be explaining a given passage in the De  
Anima.
- 4 Ross, op. cit., p. 138.
- 5 I.e. Chapter III, Section I of this thesis, Cf. also,  
Chapter II, Section V, of this thesis.
- 6 Ibid., 425b30. But cf. the whole of 425b26-426a1.
- 7 Cf. ibid., 426a2-6.
- 8 I.e. ibid., 426a6-20. For a more detailed analysis of  
this text than we shall give here, and to see just why  
Aristotle has introduced all of this discussion at 425b26-  
426a26, see Chapter II, Section V, of this thesis.
- 9 Cf. Ross, op. cit., p. 138.
- 10 Cf. De Anima, 426a8-9.
- 11 Cf. ibid., 426a9.
- 12 Cf. ibid., 426a9-20.
- 13 Cf. ibid., 426a9-11.



- 14 Cf. ibid., 426a11-13. It is with what is being said here in mind that the example at 425b27-426a1 should be interpreted.
- 15 Aristotle only deals specifically with the proper sensibles, sound, colour, and flavour at 426a8-15. However, he does say that what he is saying here concerns, not only the terms, 'sound' and 'hearing', but that, "The same account applies to the other senses and their objects" (426a9).
- 16 De Anima, 426a17-20.
- 17 Remember that this also applies to the other proper sensibles corresponding to the other senses, even though they aren't specifically mentioned here. Cf. our footnote 15 supra.
- 18 Ross, op. cit., p. 138.
- 19 Cf. Chapter III, Section I of this thesis.
- 20 Leaving aside the consideration of the incidentally sensible object here.
- 21 Ross, op. cit., p. 138.

## NOTES - CHAPTER FIVE

1

Charles De Koninck, Abstraction from Matter (Québec: Les Presses Universitaires Laval). This is a two-pamphlet reprint of an unfinished article appearing in the following issues of the Laval Théologique et Philosophique, XIII N. 2 (1957), and XVI No. 1 and 2 (1960). All page references to this work of De Koninck's appearing in this thesis are to those of pamphlet I of these two pamphlets.

The purpose of this work by DeKoninck is, "... to provide a general introduction to a philosophy of nature ancient by more than two thousand years," and, "...to set forth what Aristotle had in mind as St. Thomas understood it" (p. 134, "footnote"). He does this by way of commenting on this paragraph of St. Thomas' commentary on Aristotle's Physica, which reads, as quoted by De Koninck (p. 134), as follows:

'Since the treatise called the Physica, which it is our purpose to explain, is also the one that comes first in the study of nature, we must show, at its very beginning, what natural science is about - viz. its matter and subject. To this end, we should point out on the one hand, that inasmuch as every science is in the intellect, and since a thing becomes intelligible in act insofar as it is more or less abstracted from matter, things, since they are diversely related to matter, are the concern of different sciences. Again, since science is obtained by demonstration, and the middle term of demonstration is the definition, it follows of necessity, that the sciences will be distinguished according to a difference in their mode of definition.'

It is in explaining what Aquinas means in saying that a thing becomes intelligible in act to the extent that it is abstracted from matter that leads De Koninck eventually into a discussion of sensation and its reliability. For De Koninck points out that, "...science abstracts from the individual sensible matter attained in sensation" (p. 166). However, this raises the question, "Why... retain the adjective sensible to describe an abstract matter which cannot be actually sensed?" (p. 167). The reason is, he says, as follows (p. 167):

Unless anchored in sense experience, the study of nature can never keep to the right track, nor lead towards truth.

If such a beginning and end in sensation are necessary, and if it is the 'sensible individual' matter that this science must abstract from while not abstracting from the 'sensible matter' that enters into the definition of sensible things,

we will first have to look more closely into what is meant by 'sensible' in this context. It is in order to see just what is meant by 'sensible' in the phrase "sensible matter" that is the immediate cause of De Koninck's entering into a discussion of Aristotle's theory of sensation and, as part of that discussion, into Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles (cf. pp. 167ff.).

- 2 Ibid., p. 175. The reference in square brackets has been added by us; in De Koninck's work it appears at the foot of the page.
- 3 De Anima, 418a15-17; Smith translation.
- 4 De Koninck, op. cit., p. 176.
- 5 Ibid., p. 175.
- 6 Ibid., p. 187, footnote 2.
- 7 For a detailed discussion of this notion of sensation as alteration and what we consider it to mean for Aristotle's position on the reality of proper sensibles, see Chapter II, Section II of this thesis.
- 8 De Koninck, op. cit., p. 176.
9. De Anima, 418a15-17; Smith translation.
- 10 Ibid., 418a24-25; Smith translation.
- 11 De Koninck, op. cit., pp. 174-175.
- 12 De Anima, 417a2-9. For a more detailed discussion of this passage than we shall give here, see Chapter II, pp. 18-19 of this thesis.
- 13 Namely, De Anima, 418a15-17.
- 14 Ibid., 424a25-424a32. For a much more detailed analysis of this passage than we shall give in what follows, see Chapter II, Section IV of this thesis.
- 15 Ibid., 418a25.
- 16 Ibid., 418a3-5.
- 17 De Anima, 424a16-23.
- 18 De Koninck, op. cit., p. 175.
- 19 Ibid., p. 176.

- 20 De Anima, 424a17.
- 21 Namely, the statement made at 418a15-17 of the De Anima that, "Each sense has one kind of object which it discerns, and never errs in reporting that what is before it is colour or sound (though it may err as to what it is that is coloured or where that it, or what it is that is sounding or where that is)."
- 22 De Anima, 418a24-25.
- 23 De Koninck, op. cit., p. 176.
- 24 De Anima, 424a17.
- 25 Ibid., 418a15-17.
- 26 Cf. ibid., 418a20-24. In addition, cf. also, ibid., 428b20-22 and 432b29-30.
- 27 Cf. ibid., 418a18-19. In addition, cf. also, ibid., 428b22-24.
- 28 De Koninck, op. cit., p. 176.
- 29 Cf. ibid., p. 175.
- 30 Ibid., p. 176.
- 31 Ibid., pp. 179-180.
- 32 Ibid., pp. 181-182.
- 33 Ibid., p. 182.
- 34 Cf. ibid., p. 176.
- 35 Ibid., p. 180.
- 36 De Anima, 425b26.
- 3 7 Ibid., 426a2-5.
- 38 Ibid., 426a9-11.
- 39 Ibid., 426a11-26. Cf. also, Chapter II, Section V of this thesis.
- 40 Aristotle clearly says that what he is saying here applies to all the senses and all the corresponding proper sensibles: cf. De Anima, 426a9.

- 41 Cf. Chapter III, Section I and all of Chapter IV of  
this thesis.
- 42 De Koninck, op. cit., p. 176.
- 43 De Anima, 418a15-17.

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