

ARISTOTLE ON COMMON SENSIBLES AND INCIDENTAL PERCEPTION

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I

THE PRESENT INDICATIVE αἰσθανόμεθα in Aristotle's *De Anima* 425a15 has caused persistent trouble for commentators and translators. The tense of the verb makes its clause assert in positive fashion that the common sensibles are perceived incidentally: 'Ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ τῶν κοινῶν οἶόν τ' εἶναι αἰσθητήριόν τι ἴδιον, ὧν ἐκάστη αἰσθήσει αἰσθανόμεθα κατὰ συμβεβηκός (a13–15). Shortly after, however, the passage (a28) states bluntly that we do *not* have incidental perception of them: Τῶν δὲ κοινῶν ἤδη ἔχομεν αἰσθησιν κοινήν, οὐ κατὰ συμβεβηκός.

In the context (a15–16) and elsewhere (418a17–18; cf. *De Sensu* 442b5–6) the common sensibles are enumerated as movement, rest, number, shape, and size. In *De Memoria* (450a10) time is also included. *Prima facie*, the wording of the first Greek sentence just quoted might be taken to imply that these common objects are not actually *sensed* at the moment. Rather, they would be aspects that are merely recalled on account of former concomitance with what is now being sensed, as in the examples given by Aristotle of incidental perception at *De Anima* 418a20–24 and 425a23–b9. In *seeing* something sweet, sight is not affected by the flavor, an aspect that on former occasions had been directly attained by taste. Nor in *seeing* Cleon's son is the filial relationship an object of sight, but only of information previously had from others. Is not that the notion given by the examples? As additions made to what is actually being sensed, these incidental aspects contribute to the total percept, with percept taken as the entire object of one's cognition at the time. Aristotle's use (see below, n. 30) of the one verb αἰσθανόμεθα for both sensation and perception, of course, makes his illustrations none too easy to interpret. "Perceived" has to be taken as broader than "sensed," if his notion of incidental perception is to be grasped.

Yet with the terms so understood, the sentence may without special difficulty for the translator be rendered "But, again, it is impossible that there should be a special sense organ to perceive common sensibles, which we perceive incidentally by each sense."¹ The dominant problem, rather,

¹*De Anima* 425a13–15; trans. W. S. Hett (Loeb). Similarly Hicks, Smith (Oxford), Hamlyn. The full text of the passage (from Siwek [below, n. 4]) is:

'Ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ τῶν κοινῶν οἶόν τ' εἶναι αἰσθητήριόν τι ἴδιον, ὧν ἐκάστη αἰσθήσει αἰσθανόμεθα κατὰ συμβεβηκός, οἷον κινήσεως, στάσεως, σχήματος, μεγέθους,

is how the passage can commence with the assertion that the common sensibles are perceived incidentally, and then go on to show definitively that they are not. Is it a verbal slip, or does some significant difficulty lurk behind the phraseology?

Elsewhere in the passage the present indicative *αἰσθανόμεθα* gives expression to accepted facts—perception of common sensibles through motion (a17), unity of each perceived object (a20), perception of something sweet by sight (a22). On the other hand, contrary-to-fact situations are expressed in regular grammatical fashion by the imperfect *ἡσθανόμεθα* with *ἄν*—if we did not have sensation of both the color and the concomitant sweetness we would have merely incidental perception (a24–25), and if we did not have common sensation of the common aspects we would be perceiving them only in the way we see Cleon's son (a29). These other instances of the verb in the passage seem to give the presumption that by use of the present tense Aristotle expresses his own view, while to imply his disagreement with a tenet he would use the imperfect with *ἄν*.

Still, the *reasoning* in the passage as a whole continues to prompt the query whether the clause “which we perceive incidentally by each sense” (a14–15) may be interpreted in a way that parallels the two contrary-to-fact imperfects just listed, or that in some other way makes it a tenet opposed by Aristotle. Can it be regarded as following upon an unfulfilled

ἀριθμοῦ, ἐνός· ταῦτα γὰρ πάντα κινήσει αἰσθανόμεθα, οἷον μέγεθος κινήσει. ὥστε καὶ σχῆμα· μέγεθος γάρ τι τὸ σχῆμα. τὸ δ' ἡρεμοῦν τῷ μὴ κινεῖσθαι· ὁ δ' ἀριθμὸς τῇ ἀποφάσει τοῦ συνεχοῦς, καὶ τοῖς ἰδίοις· ἐκάστη γὰρ ἐν αἰσθάνεται αἰσθησις. Ὡστε δῆλον ὅτι ἀδύνατον δονοῦν ἰδίαν αἰσθησιν εἶναι τούτων, οἷον κινήσεως. οὕτω γὰρ ἔσται ὥσπερ νῦν τῇ ὄψει τὸ γλυκὺ αἰσθανόμεθα. Τοῦτο δ' ὅτι ἀμφοῖν ἔχοντες τυγχάνομεν αἰσθησιν, ἥ καὶ ὅταν συμπέσωσιν ἅμα γνωρίζομεν· εἰ δὲ μή, οὐδαμῶς ἂν ἀλλ' ἢ κατὰ συμβεβηκός ἡσθανόμεθα, οἷον τὸν Κλέωνος υἱὸν οὐχ ὅτι Κλέωνος υἱός, ἀλλ' ὅτι λευκός· τούτῳ δὲ συμβέβηκεν νῖψ Κλέωνος εἶναι. Τῶν δὲ κοινῶν ἤδη ἔχομεν αἰσθησιν κοινήν, οὐ κατὰ συμβεβηκός.

In the text the problem is whether common sensibles are immediately though commonly *sensed* in every act of sight, touch, etc. It is the common sensation, *already* present in each of those acts, that appears denied the character of “incidental” at a28, seemingly in direct contradiction of the clause at a14–15. Incidental perception may be either (1) of a special object attained by a different special sense, such as in seeing something sweet, or (2) of an object not sensed at all but known by the mind, such as substance or sonship in seeing the son of Cleon, or (3) of a common sensible. Obviously untenable is the stand that common sensibles are never perceived incidentally, as in the claim: “les sensibles communs ne sont jamais sensibles par accident, mais toujours sensibles de soi” (Stanislas Cantin, “La perception des sensibles communs au moyen du mouvement d’après Aristote,” *Laval théologique et philosophique* 17 [1961] 11). Surely a *swimmer* standing on dry land is seen as incidentally as a son or a sweet cube. The point at issue, rather, is whether common sensibles are properly sensed in every perception of a special sensible, e.g., size, shape, and motion along with color. On “proper” (both special and common) perception as opposed to “incidental,” see Stanford Cashdollar, “Aristotle’s Account of Incidental Perception,” *Phronesis* 18 (1973) 157 n. 6.

condition, namely the presence of the sixth sense organ denied by the sentence in which it occurs? If it could, or if it had originally been an imperfect and was later corrupted, its meaning would cohere neatly enough with the rest of the passage. On the supposition of a special sense organ for the common sensibles "we would be perceiving them incidentally by each sense." We would be perceiving them by each of the five senses in the way that sweetness, for example, is perceived by sight. The passage would then go on normally to show that the supposition of the special organ for these sensibles is untenable. Lack of coherence in the thought would thereby be avoided.

In accord with this viewpoint the Greek present indicative has in fact been translated into French by Tricot as *percevions* ("we would perceive"). Tricot's explanation was that to avoid all equivocality he was using the conditional to translate the present tense.² Somewhat similarly Rodier, while allowing the present to remain in his translation, had added in square brackets the conditional *pourrait-on dire* ("we might say") by way of explanation.³ Likewise Siwek, in the third printing of his translation of the *De Anima*, used the conditional *sentirentur* ("would be perceived," 179.16) even though his own preferred solution of the difficulty regards the phrase "incidental perception" as used in two different but compatible meanings in the respective places.⁴ Long before, Trendelenburg had faced the possibility of *perciperentur* ("would be perceived") as a translation, but rejected it because it required change in tense or mood.⁵ The plain fact is that the Greek verb, as it stands, calls for translation by the present indicative, if sufficient counter-instances cannot be found.

How, then, may the problem of reconciling meaning with verbal expression in the clause be met? The long history of the interpretation of the text has seen a number of different ways proposed. These may be grouped conveniently into three general types of approach:

(1) The first, and most drastic, solution is to emend the traditional Greek text by the insertion of a negative. The clause will then read: "which we do *not* perceive incidentally." This is the opposite of what is found in all the better manuscripts. So emended, the text gives the required meaning. It will be in full agreement with the later assertion (a27-28) that we have common, not incidental, perception of the common sensibles.

²Jules Tricot, *Aristote: De l'âme* (Paris 1934) 148. Cf. *ibid.* n. 2.

³Georges Rodier, *Aristote: Traité de l'âme* (Paris 1900) 1.147.

⁴Paul Siwek, *Aristotelis Tractatus de Anima* (Rome 1965) 310-311. The first printing (Rome 1933) had the indicative *sentiantur*, explained (302) as *perciperentur*.

⁵Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg, *Aristotelis De Anima Libri Tres* (Jena 1833) 428. In the second edition (Berlin 1877) 350, a reference to Torstrik's emendation is added in square brackets by the editor, Christian Belger, in accord with the stated revision policy (xxiv).

(2) The second way of proceeding sees in the clause a statement not of Aristotle's own view but rather of a position he is combatting. This method of solution recognizes the positive force of the assertion that we perceive the common sensibles incidentally. But it sees this as an actual or possible position of Aristotle's adversaries. It is a position he will demolish in the body of the passage. So understood, the assertion fits in neatly enough with the construction of the passage as a whole.

(3) The third, and today most popular approach, is that "incidental perception" has a different meaning in the opening sentence from the meaning given it later in the text. There is accordingly no incompatibility between the assertion of incidental perception of the common sensibles in the one sense, and the outright denial of it in the other.

The adherents of these three methods of interpretation may be found listed in Siwek (310–311), together with comments on points of interest within each group. There is no need to repeat the details. But there is still room for a fresh look at the pros and cons of each of the approaches, and for an overall evaluation of their bearing on the problem.

II

The first of the three methods of approach may be dealt with quite briefly. The Greek text of the clause in question is firm up to the Middle Ages, both in the manuscript tradition and in the commentators. Siwek (310) lists only three Greek manuscripts (out of some sixty) with the negative particle $\mu\eta$. All three are very late. They are not considered authoritative. Siwek suggests that the presence of the negative particle in those late Greek manuscripts was due to the influence of Latin translations, in accord with Trendelenburg's remark in 1833 that the negative could more easily get into the Latin than drop from the Greek.⁶ The translation used by Aquinas had the negative *non*.⁷ In the latter half of the nineteenth century Torstrik (1862) conjectured that *ov* should be inserted in the text. Biehl (1884), following that lead, actually did place it in the text in square brackets, though acknowledging that there was strong criticism against it. In the second edition of Biehl's text (1911), however, Apelt relegated it to the critical apparatus.⁸ The reasons for

⁶Trendelenburg 428. On the Islamic side, neither Avicenna nor Averroes shows awareness of the negation in the text; see below, n. 15.

⁷"... non secundum accidens." Aquinas, *In II De An.*, ed. A. M. Pirotta (Turin 1925) 197 (no. 577). Cf. *Versio Antiqua*, *ibid.* 193. Though Moerbeke's translation is to be accorded the authority of a Greek manuscript, it does not witness to any tradition known to the Greek commentators in this instance. The three Greek manuscripts listed by Siwek (310; cf. 24) are later (fifteenth-century). While acknowledging to the full the record of Moerbeke for accuracy, the weight of evidence in the present case goes strongly against the acceptance of the negative particle into the Aristotelian text.

⁸Adolf Torstrik, *Aristoteles: De Anima Libri III* (Berlin 1862); Wilhelm Biehl,

requiring the emendation were outlined by another German scholar of the epoch as consistency with what immediately follows in the text, consistency with the doctrine in the parallel passage 418a8 ff., and accordance with the medieval translation that actually contained the negative.⁹

These reasons, however, have generally been found insufficient by nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars. The basis in the manuscript tradition turns out to be too flimsy to justify the insertion of a negative particle into the text, and other ways are readily at hand for achieving doctrinal consistency. The emendation of the text in the troublesome clause has to be rejected today. It accordingly requires translation by the English present indicative, at least until sufficient examples of the use of the Greek present for contrary-to-fact assertions have been gathered.

III

In contrast to that chronologically later way of meeting the difficulty by emendation of the text, the second approach has quite respectable ancestry in the Greek commentators. It looks upon the clause "which we perceive incidentally by each sense" (*De An.* 425a14–15) as the expression of a difficulty or objection that Aristotle at once proceeded to set aside. Consequently in its fully developed form it finds in the assertion not Aristotle's own view but rather the stand of one or more of his adversaries.

The earliest statement of this approach is in Themistius, the fourth-century A.D. commentator (*De An.* 81.18–82.37). Themistius undoubtedly faced the present indicative (81.21 and 28) in the Aristotelian clause.

Aristotelis de Anima Libri III, ed. stereotypa emendatio (Leipzig 1896) and *editio altera*, ed. Otto Apelt (Leipzig 1911). W. D. Ross, *Aristotle: De Anima* (Oxford 1961) 270, seems quite alone in the present century in conceding that Torstrik's emendation "may be right," though he leaves open the option that "incidentally" here may mean contrast with "primarily."

⁹Josef Neuhaeuser, *Aristoteles' Lehre von dem sinnlichen Erkenntnisvermögen und seinen Organen* (Leipzig 1878) 35–36. On Susemihl's rejection and subsequent acceptance of Torstrik's emendation, see Rodier (above, n. 3) 1.146; 2.351 and 353. The purpose of the emendation, however, was to give an acceptable sense to the passage. Ironically, others have gone to the opposite extreme with the claim that it destroys the meaning—"zerstört den Sinn," Friedrich Ferdinand Kampe, *Die Erkenntnistheorie des Aristoteles* (Leipzig 1870) 104, n. 4. For Kampe, the meaning of the passage is that in fact the common objects in accord with their nature are attained only indirectly (see below, n. 27) by a particular sense. Somewhat similarly: "The emendation entirely destroys the sense of the passage"—William Alexander Hammond, *Aristotle's Psychology* (London 1902) 96, n. 2. Again the reason was that the *sensus communis* in its own nature bore upon the common sensibles, in contrast to incidental perception of them by the individual senses (see below, n. 24). Against this one must keep in mind that the doctrine of Aristotle (*De An.* 418a10–11) makes the common sensibles be *per se* objects of all the particular senses, though in secondary fashion.

He regarded it as saying the we now¹⁰ perceive the common sensibles more or less incidentally—*νῦν μὲν αὐτῶν σχεδὸν κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς αἰσθανόμεθα* (81.20–21). He was interested in the way the common sensibles had been pushed so strongly in the direction of incidental perception. A ground for this, he explained (81.21–29), is that the common sensibles are not the principal object of any special sense. Rather, they are perceived in concomitant fashion by all the special senses. Sight, for example, now perceives them concomitantly (*συναίσθάνεται*, 81.26) in sensing its principal object, color. If we are thereby perceiving them incidentally, he repeats in the present indicative, a sense with principal cognitive bearing upon them is required.¹¹ But the existence of a special sense of this kind is impossible. The reason is that common perception does not make its objects incidentally sensible, because nothing that is incidentally sensible is acting upon the sense organ or proffering its own form (81.29–31). The common sensibles, however, affect the organ no less than does the color (82.18–21).

In the repetition of the adverb “now” (81.19–23), echoing Aristotle’s use of it in *De Anima* 424b25–425a22, Themistius is quite obviously referring to perception of the present world as outlined in the tenets of that work. In those findings, the senses are listed as five, and five only (*De An.* 424b22 ff.). The list left no place for a special sense that would have as its object the common sensibles already probed at *De Anima* 418a17–19. Immediately after this description of the common sensibles there had followed the mention of the incidentally sensible, which was contrasted with the two types of *per se* sensible (a20–25). The statement had emphasized (a23–24) that as sentient the percipient was not acted upon by the incidentally sensible. Yet, Themistius is claiming, the lack of a special sense for the common sensibles in the fivefold list of senses has been found to occasion the stand that we perceive the common sensibles almost in an incidental way.

Themistius is accordingly regarding the stand as a position that has

¹⁰On a possible background in Democritus for more than five senses among animals or men or gods elsewhere, see Diels-Kranz 68 A116. For a short discussion, see Ross 268–269. On Aristotle’s tendency to find in Democritus a single sense for the common objects, see *De Sensu* 442a29–b11; and on the “now” as the world of our own experience, Robert Drew Hicks, *Aristotle: De Anima* (Cambridge 1907) 422–423; 425.

¹¹Here (81.28) the unfulfilled condition is left in the present indicative, apparently reflecting the original *αἰσθανόμεθα* of the Aristotelian text at *De Anima* 425a15. The condition is then explicitly denied by Themistius (81.29–31). In that way the assertion of incidental perception for the common sensibles is interpreted as a position to which Aristotle has not assented, even though the tense used did not imply a contrary-to-fact situation. The discourse would be regarded as virtually indirect, as though it read “which, it is said, we perceive incidentally by each sense.” Cf. Rodier’s translation (above, n. 3).

not been thought out very carefully. He needs only to examine in rebuttal (81.35–82.30) the two different kinds of incidental sensibles acknowledged by Aristotle. The scrutiny shows that in neither kind is the incidentally sensible acting upon a sense organ, while the common sensibles are in every case acting upon the sense organ even though not as principal object. At the end of the discussion (82.30–37) he extends the alleged ground to the topic of deception. The topic had been mentioned by Aristotle (*De An.* 418a12) in his earlier contrast of the special with the common sensibles. The special sensibles were not able to cause deception. But the common sensibles, along with the incidental sensibles, could occasion it. Themistius' close study, however, shows that these two cases of deception differ from each other. In the case of incidental perception, something not sensed at all at the moment is regarded as being sensed. With the common sensibles, quite differently, something actually being sensed is assessed as though it were a special, not a common, object. But the common should not be confided to a single sense (cf. 93.13–16). This difference between the two types of incidental perception is looked upon as significant in its bearing upon the present theme. It allows an aspect that is actually being sensed to become an occasion of deception, when the aspect is common to the special senses but is assessed only on the basis of cognition by one of them (82.35–37). Accordingly the contradiction in expecting *common* sensation to have a *special* object is regarded as obvious, even though the common as well as the incidental may occasion deception.

Does all this, then, indicate in any way the persons to whom Themistius in his own mind is attributing the stand that common sensibles are aspects "we perceive incidentally by each sense"? Does the above analysis tend to pinpoint it, for him, to the hearers of the Aristotelian *akroasis*?¹² Could Aristotle here be employing the "we-style," quite as at *Metaphysics* 990b8–26? There he speaks of stands that "we" take, and proceeds at once to crush them. Likewise in the *De Anima* (408a31–b15; cf. b25–29), after having stated himself that the soul moves and is moved, Aristotle goes on to show that it is better not to say that the soul does the things, but that a man does them through his soul, even though "we" (including his hearers) say that the soul grieves and rejoices and so on. Somewhat similarly for Themistius (*De An.* 78.8; 79.33–34), who is here following Alexander (*De An.* 62.4–5), Aristotle's notion of reception of form "without the matter" meant that sight did not become whitened or blackened when it perceived those colors. Yet Aristotle (*De An.* 425b17–24) brings up that interpretation aporematically as though it were an objection that has to be faced. After making a necessary distinction he answers that

¹²On the nature of the Aristotelian treatises as school *logoi*, directed towards "hearers," see Werner Jaeger, *Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Metaphysik des Aristoteles* (Berlin 1912) 135–147.

what is seeing has as it were been colored through receiving the sensible object "without the matter." This reply would correct a misunderstanding of reception with and without matter as outlined in *De Anima* 424a17–b3. At any rate Themistius (83.26–34) interpreted the reply to mean that there is nothing absurd in the notion of sight becoming colored, as though he felt that the Aristotelian text might have suggested an absurdity by reason of the immaterial reception of the sensible form. He would in consequence be regarding Aristotle's solution of this *aporia* as removing an intramural misunderstanding.

Correspondingly, then, the mention of the common sensibles in close connection with cases of deception (*De An.* 418a9–16), or the association of apparent size with incidental perception,¹³ could give rise to the misunderstanding that these sensibles are aspects "which we perceive incidentally by each sense." In somewhat parallel fashion to the procedure with the *aporai* noted in the preceding paragraph, Aristotle would be rejecting the misunderstanding. He would be countering it with the definitive assertion that "we already have common sensation of the common aspects, not incidentally" (425a27–28). This would implicitly recall the inclusion of the common sensibles under the *per se* sensible, in direct contrast to the incidentally sensible (418a8–24). The common sensibles, according to this division, are to be regarded as perceived in virtue of themselves, and not through association with something else.

¹³*De An.* 428b1–9. There the perception of size, though not incidental, can occasion a mistaken judgment. Cf. *De Sensu* 442b8–9 for further assertion of the possibility of error in regard to common sensibles, in a context in which both the common and the proper sensibles are equally regarded as sensed at the moment. There an error in the case of the special senses is summarily rejected, just as at *De An.* 418a12 it had been declared impossible. At 428b18–19, perception by the special sensibles is said to be "true, or admitting falsehood only in the slightest degree." In the context (429a5) imaginations resemble sensations when they remain in us, and require reason to make the correction. Cf. *De Mem.* 451a2–7, and an imagination as a "weak sensation" at *Rh.* 1370a28–29. The Greek commentators did not see in this text any infringement upon the radical veracity of the special senses. Themistius (*De An.* 93.20–21) referred the possibility of error regarding their objects to the failure to preserve correctly what was sensed, especially when it had been perceived at a distance. Philoponus (*De An.* 513.16–20) blamed their inability to sense what was very minute, such as a drop of something black mixed throughout a large amount of white liquid. Simplicius (*De An.* 216.2–9) attributed the errors to distance or to some interference. But the basic immunity from deception in what was actually sensed remained for these commentators. Similarly in the middle ages Aquinas, *In III de An.*, lect. 6, Pirotta no. 661, found the reason in some corruption of the sense organ, as in the case of a fever. Likewise Brentano—see below, n. 21. Epistemologically there is a great deal at stake here, since the basing of all human knowledge on sensible things requires fundamental veracity in the special senses. For discussions see W. D. Hamlyn, "Aristotle's Account of Aesthesis in the *De Anima*," *CQ*, n.s. 9 (1959) 11–13; Irving Block, "Truth and Error in Aristotle's Theory of Sense Perception," *Philosophical Quarterly* 11 (1961) 1–9.

But is it plausible to keep within Aristotelian circles in locating the origin of this misunderstanding? Why should it not be? People speaking in terms of common sensibles and incidental perception are hardly to be looked for in Presocratic or Academic traditions. The presumption clearly is that the misunderstanding rose from within, and that it was introduced aporematically by Aristotle for immediate correction. With Themistius, however, it does not seem to be presented formally as an "objection" against an Aristotelian doctrine, but merely as a misunderstanding that accidentally arose. So, even though the present case may not parallel too exactly the other Aristotelian examples, it seems to fit in well enough with a general Aristotelian technique.

Philoponus, in the first half of the sixth century A.D., took a quite similar stand (*De An.* 453.31–455.9). From what Aristotle had said about the common sensibles in the second book of the *De Anima* (418a8–25), *someone perhaps could* have thought that there is a sixth sense for their perception over and above the recognized five. But a close study of that chapter of the *De Anima*, Philoponus insisted, shows just the opposite. Attributing to Aristotle Themistius' explicit twofold division of the incidentally perceptible, one type in which the object of a different sense is incidentally attained, the other in which the incidental object comes under no sense at all, Philoponus (454.15–20) illustrated the second type by the example of substance (*ousia*, 454.20–21; 455.5; 461.12–14). The substance is not the object of any sense, but is known through characteristics incidental to what is sensed, as when Cleon's son is recognized not through his substance but through characteristics such as pale, potbellied, and the like. But neither type of the incidentally sensible is acting upon the sense at the time. The common sensibles, however, are doing just that. Accordingly they do not come under the incidentally sensible, nor can they as common be the object of a sixth sense, a sense that thereby like the other five would be special.

Philoponus (454.1–2; 34–39), using the present indicative though explaining its meaning by the imperfect (457.10–23), insisted that a sixth special sense for the common sensibles makes these the incidental objects of the other five. But the conclusion is untenable, for the common sensibles, unlike the incidental ones, are acting upon each special sense. Yet Philoponus makes no attempt to identify any people who say we perceive them incidentally. Nor is he looking upon it as a standardized "objection." Rather, it seems presented, as with Themistius, in the guise of a misunderstanding that somebody *perhaps could* have had. It is faced as a recognizably false premise that runs counter to Aristotelian doctrine. Its consequence would be a sixth sense (457.18–23).

Writing in roughly the same epoch as Philoponus, Simplicius (*De An.* 182.16–183.20) nevertheless explicitly called the statement an "objection"

(ἐνστασις—182.33). It is something that Aristotle “solves.” Simplicius quotes it in the indicative and attributes it to people who insist on a further sense over and above the recognized five (183.1–2). But he does not make any closer identification of its proponents. It is moreover what “they *would* say” (182.39), rather than anything that had actually been said.

The statement under scrutiny is accordingly regarded here as coming from Aristotle himself, who spoke “as though they were saying this” (183.2). The Aristotelian background was outlined concisely by Simplicius (182.16–32). There are two kinds of *per se* sensibles. There is the principal type, consisting of the special objects of each of the five senses. There is also a secondary type, consisting of the objects the special senses have in common. These common objects act upon the sense organs along with the special sensibles.

For Simplicius, therefore, both the special and the common sensibles affect the senses directly. Yet the common sensibles cannot have a special sense for their perception, because the special is the contrary of the common. A power belonging to a number of senses cannot in consequence be contradistinguished from those senses in a way that would make it a special sense (183.10–16). The inherent opposition stands out.

Simplicius, then, is looking upon the statement as an objection that might be made by persons who insist on an extra sense for the common sensibles. For him (183.3) the objection is answered from that viewpoint. The answer leaves no doubt that for him Aristotle is in radical disagreement with their alleged assertion.

In the fourteenth century Sophonias (*De An.* 107.9–109.4) paraphrased the Aristotelian doctrine on the topic. He repeated (108.9–12) that if there were a special sense and sense organ for the common sensibles the five senses would be perceiving them incidentally. But they are perceiving them *per se*, since they are affected by them.

Sophonias accordingly is continuing the tradition of the Greek commentators. He is understanding the clause as expressing a stand opposed to the Aristotelian doctrine. In his own phrasing he uses the imperfect ἀντελαμβάνοντο (108.10) for the contrary-to-fact situation. This need not at all suggest that he read an imperfect in the Aristotelian text at *De Anima* 425a15. It would seem rather to reflect the use of ἀντελαμβάνοντο by Philoponus (*De An.* 457.17), where the imperfect emerges from the explanation of the indicative read (457.10–23) in the original text.¹⁴

¹⁴The same procedure is found in Themistius, *De An.* 81.28–31. See above, n. 11. Quite similarly Willy Theiler, *Aristoteles über die Seele* (Berlin 1959) 131, in comparison with the denial of incidental perception at 418a8 ff., suggests that the thought here is cursorily touched upon and only by way of a supplementary remark, causing one to expect rather the optative αἰσθανοίμεθ' ἄν.

The tradition of these Greek commentators is consistent in interpreting the passage. It maintains that for Aristotle the common sensibles are affecting the senses, and are therefore not being perceived incidentally. The assertion that they are being perceived incidentally has to be explained in an imperfect tense as a stand that Aristotle is opposing, in fact overthrowing, in the course of the passage.

This Greek tradition has been followed among the moderns by Rodier, Tricot, and Kahn. The first two interpret the statement as an "objection."¹⁵ The Greek explanation, however, meets explicit disapproval with Hicks (426), since for him the clause expresses Aristotle's "own belief" that the common sensibles are perceived incidentally.¹⁶ It is set aside implicitly, without direct refutation, by modern writers who claim that in one way or another the incidental perception of the common sensibles is in fact Aristotle's own teaching, as with Trendelenburg (430), Kampe (104, n. 4), Hammond (97, n. 2), Siwek (311) and others who will be encountered in the following section of the present article. It has to face the charge of being obscurely (*ἀσαφῶς*, Philoponus, *De An.* 457.18) expressed in the Aristotelian text. In a modern translation the bearing of the clause might be made clearer by placing it in quotation marks, to indicate that it states a position alien to Aristotle's thought. It would be

¹⁵"Aristote, en effet, n'expose pas ici ses propres idées; il énonce une objection," Rodier (above, n. 3) 2.353; "... une théorie qu'il combat et non pas sa propre doctrine," Tricot (above, n. 2) 148, n. 2. Charles H. Kahn, "Sensation and Consciousness in Aristotle's Psychology," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 48 (1966) 53, n. 24, regards the controverted assertion as "part of the hypothesis which Aristotle is rejecting." For Theiler (above, n. 14), it is a hastily fashioned way of stating what follows from accepting a sixth special sense. In Islamic circles in the Middle Ages the assertion was read as somehow contrary-to-fact, yet not so obviously that it could be passed by without explanation. Avicenna's comment in its regard has been translated as "il n'est pas vrai de dire que ces choses ne sont senties qu'accidentellement," *Avicenna Latinus: Liber de Anima I-II-III*, ed. Simone Van Riet (Louvain 1972) 280, n. 50. Averroës, with the text as "que sentimus, nisi per unumquodque sensuum accidentaliter," comments: "Et dixit hoc quia, si essent eis accidentaliter, contingeret ut essent alicui sensui accidentaliter;" *Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis de Anima Libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford (Cambridge, Mass. 1953) 331, no. 133.2-3 and 14-15. The clause is looked upon as expressing a consequence that could not be accepted. Yet these Islamic writers do not show acquaintance with manuscripts that had inserted the negative particle to make manifest its contrary-to-fact character. They accordingly offer no support for the conjecture (see above, n. 7) that Greek manuscripts with the negative particle existed in the thirteenth century.

¹⁶Similarly Marcel De Corte, "Notes exégetiques sur la théorie aristotélicienne du *sensus communis*," *The New Scholasticism* 6 (1932) 191, n. 16, rejected Rodier's explanation (above, n. 15) of the clause explicitly, on the ground that "incidentally" (*κατὰ συμβεβηκός*) has to be understood here solely in its etymological sense and not in its philosophical meaning. For De Corte the truth was that the clause expresses Aristotle's own thought, and the structure of the passage as a whole requires the non-philosophical meaning of "incidentally" in the clause.

bringing forward a mistaken characterization of the common sensibles as aspects "which we perceive incidentally by each sense," regardless of where that wrong view arose. In any case, the overall interpretation of the statement as opposed to Aristotle's own stand and immediately rejected by him thoroughly respects the basic Aristotelian doctrine as well as the tradition of the Greek commentators. The basic doctrine in this regard is that the common sensibles are acting upon the sense organs when they are perceived in conjunction with the special sensibles. From the viewpoint of the Greek commentators that is the really essential tenet.

IV

The third way of meeting the difficulty occasioned by the clause originates in the nineteenth century. It consists in finding two different meanings for the phrase "incidentally perceive" in the opening chapter of *De Anima III*. In the first occurrence (425a15) the phrase would mean that the common aspects are not the principal objects of any of the special senses. They accompany the special objects and are perceived as incidental to them. In its second occurrence (a28), on the other hand, the phrase has the meaning given it previously (418a9-24), where it refers to the perception of something that is not affecting the sense organ. Accordingly there is no contradiction in affirming incidental perception in the one meaning and denying it in the other. As with the approach of the Greek commentators, this interpretation calls for lengthy study in its originator and a briefer survey of its subsequent versions.

Trendelenburg (427-430; 2nd ed. 350-352) came to grips with the *prima facie* contradiction from this angle as far back as 1833. The notion "incidentally" seemed to him to have a twofold bearing. In the one case it was wider and more open. In the other it was narrower and more sharply focused. The latter meaning was illustrated by the example of Cleon's son. A white object is perceived as Cleon's son not through discernment by the eye, but through conjunction with what has elsewhere been known by rational cognition. As far as the sense is concerned this connection is extrinsic. There is no interior bond. Likewise the fact that something seen is bitter is not discerned through the eye. But in this case, different from the instance of Cleon's son, the "bitter" characteristic may be attained simultaneously through another sense, the sense of taste. Then the conjunction is evident even to those who do not want to believe it.

Accordingly, Trendelenburg continues, there are different degrees of proximity and remoteness in "incidental" perception. Closer still than in the second of the two above examples is the conjunction of common with special sensibles. Here one and the same sense gives awareness of their union, in contrast to the simultaneous cognition by two different senses

that is required for the immediate perception of the bitter flavor in a white object. Yet intimate as this conjunction between common and special sensible may be, it nevertheless continues to be "incidental." It is only incidentally that something colored happens to be in motion. Moreover, awareness of motion requires comparison of the two spatial points between which the motion takes place. It involves in consequence not just sense alone, but sense in conjunction with a comparison made by judgment.

Hence there are three degrees of incidental perception, Trendelenburg claims, graded according to the closeness of the conjunction between the two objects involved. The closest type of conjunction is between two objects of one and the same sense, as in the case of the special and the common sensibles. The second type is between objects of different special senses, as when something bitter is seen. The third and by far the loosest type of conjunction is between object of sense and object of speech and mind, as in the case of Cleon's son. As a result it can be said consistently that on the one hand the common sensibles *are* perceived incidentally by each of the special *senses* because they are incidental to each of the special *sensibles*; and that on the other hand in an overall view of cognition they are *not* perceived incidentally, because they are attained purely by sensation and not through conjunction with an object of mind as in the case of the son of Cleon.

Trendelenburg's position is clearly expressed. Its grounds, taken just in themselves and in isolation from the present context, are frankly unassailable. One may make the case even stronger. The special sensibles all belong to the third division of the category of quality for Aristotle (*Cat.* 9a28–b29). Shape, on the other hand, belongs to the fourth division of quality (10a11), size and number to the category of quantity (4b20–5b10), while local motion and rest (15a14–b4) follow upon the categories and later became known as postpredicaments. Crossing the categorial boundaries in these ways, the links between common sensibles and special sensibles are indeed "incidental" in soundest Aristotelian fashion, and are expressly so termed (5a39–b10) where the category of quantity is involved. Objects in the category of substance, such as a man, and in the category of relation, such as sonship,¹⁷ are obviously in different categories

¹⁷Although Philoponus (*De An.* 454.20–21; 455.5) mentions substance (*ousia*) as the incidental sensible meant in the example "Cleon's son," the repeated use of the notion "son" instead of just a proper name, which would denote the substance only, suggests that both the category of substance and the category of relation are involved. Aristotle would otherwise be open to the query "Why should he choose the cumbersome son of Diaretes when Diaretes would serve equally well?"—Colin Murray Turbayne, "Aristotle's Androgenous Mind," *Paideia*, Second Special Issue (1978) 37. Actually, the relation of sonship illustrates the incidental perception much more strongly. Every accident involves substance in its very notion, since it is the accident of something. "White" does not involve *per se* either Cleon or Diaretes, but it does involve the notion of a substance of

from, and thus incidental to, the category in which the special sensibles are found. All this may be added without hesitation to Trendelenburg's case.

There is no question, then, about the occurrence of a type of incidental connection between the special and the common sensibles. What may be asked, though, is whether this type is sufficient to ground what Aristotle understands by "incidental *perception*." At *De Anima* 418a21–24, Aristotle does say that the son of Diares is perceived incidentally because the sonship is incidental to the pale object. But he requires here the type of incidental connection in which the percipient as such is not acted upon by the sensible object. In this context the common sensibles are contradistinguished from the incidentally sensible, and are listed under the *per se* sensibles (a8–11). Moreover, while there are two kinds of *per se* sensibles, only one kind of incidental sensibles is acknowledged. Does not this imply that the criterion for an incidentally sensible object is failure to act upon the sense? From that viewpoint the sonship and the bitterness are incidentally sensible for exactly the same reason and in exactly the same way, namely that they are not acting upon a sense organ. They can be used interchangeably as examples. On the other hand, when the bitterness is acting upon the sense organ, it is being attained *per se*. But also the common sensibles are attained *per se*.¹⁸ In these cases the incidental connection between the objects does not ground incidental perception of them.

In a word, Trendelenburg's threefold grading of incidental connection between objects, soundly Aristotelian as it may be in itself, can hardly be

which it is the color. Even to speak in modern epistemological fashion of a "white patch" is to speak of something that is white. The patch, no matter how finely abstracted, remains a substance in the Aristotelian sense. In this sense one may readily agree that "the white patch one perceives is incidentally the son of Diares"—Roger A. Shiner, "*Aisthesis, Nous, and Phronêsis in the Practical Syllogism*," *Philosophical Studies* 36 (1979) 384. But the "propositional attitude" goes much further. It joins with the colored thing a particular individual, a proper name, a family relationship, and everything else recalled through association. The whole existential composite is grasped in sensation. A discussion of this topic of "sense judgment" as grounded in Aristotle and developed in Aquinas may be found in my article "Judgment and Truth in Aquinas," *Mediaeval Studies* 32 (1970) 138–158. The term "percept" may be applied easily enough to the composite whole, with the result that the son of Cleon is perceived in what is sensed by sight as something pale. In the context "pale" seems preferable to "white," cf. *De An.* 430b5, where Cleon's color seems to be regarded as changeable with time.

¹⁸E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen* 2.2⁴ (reprint Hildesheim 1963), 542–543, n. 2, would make the *per se* sensibles in the passage from *De Anima* II include what is "not entirely incidental." This allowed the location of the common sensibles under the *per se* division, for perception of them cannot be regarded as entirely incidental. The partial overlapping enabled Zeller to regard as Aristotle's own the assertion "which we perceive incidentally by each sense" (*De An.* 425a14–15), and to find it compatible with the denial of merely incidental ("nur nebenher"—543, n. 1) perception of the common sensibles at a27–28.

carried over into Aristotle's own conception of the incidentally perceptible. In his listing Aristotle seems to recognize only one type of the latter, with but the one criterion, namely failure to act upon the senses.¹⁹ Accordingly, the Greek commentators discussed above seem to be entirely right in seeing this criterion as the basis for distinguishing incidental from *per se* awareness. It is a criterion that leaves the common sensibles completely under the *per se* division.

Finally, in the *De Anima* as elsewhere,²⁰ Aristotle delights in meeting a difficulty by saying expressly that the notion in question has various meanings. He does not mention this technique in the present case. Without distinguishing between significations he denies categorically the incidental character of our perception of the common sensibles (*De An.* 425a28). He proceeds as though the statement "We perceive the common sensibles incidentally through each sense" had been made aporematically. He does not answer "Of course, but you know 'incidentally' has more than one meaning, and in another of its meanings we do not perceive them incidentally." Rather, his attitude seems to be "You want to base an argument for a sixth sense on the fact that we perceive the common sensibles incidentally. But we do not perceive them incidentally." He proceeds as though here, just as at 418a9, he recognizes only one type of incidental perception in his different examples. He does not seem to fall back upon a distinction between different meanings of the notion.

Brentano, though basing himself on Trendelenburg, regards the use of "incidentally" at 425a15 as different from its ordinary meaning. The reason for this extraordinary use is that the common sensibles are merely secondary, and not the first object to which the sense is naturally oriented. He cites texts elsewhere for incidental connection with common objects, but none for incidental perception of them.²¹ In reply to him one may

¹⁹Themistius (*De An.* 81.35–36) and Philoponus (*De An.* 454.15–26) recognize two kinds of incidentally sensible objects, in accord with the two types of examples given by Aristotle. But the reason seen for the incidental character of the perception is the same in each type. It is that neither type of the incidentally perceptible is acting upon the sense. The primary and secondary fashions in which the *per se* sensibles act upon the senses give rise to a further and explicit subdivision in Aristotle. But a parallel subdivision under the incidentally sensible is not listed by him, and does not seem called for on grounds intrinsic to the nature of the cognition in question. On the basis of incidental connection between objects, of course, the grounds could be indefinite in number. Not only three, as with Trendelenburg, but various others could be introduced in accord with the incidental ways in which the objects are related to one another, or to the percipient as in the case (Aristotle *E.N.* 1118a9–13) of being incidentally temperate or profligate in enjoyment given through the sense of smell.

²⁰E.g., *De An.* 415b2–3; 417a10–13; 426a23; *E.N.* 1146b31, etc.

²¹Franz Brentano, *Die Psychologie des Aristoteles* (Mainz 1867) 98, n. 55. Cf. 83–84. For Brentano, apart from sickly conditions (*krankhafte Zustände*) the natural orientation of sense to special object guarantees immunity from error: "denn die Natur selbst würde es sein, die ihn täuschte" (84–85).

stress that the secondary status of the common objects *vis-à-vis* the special objects does not prevent them from acting upon the sense organs or from being ranged by Aristotle under the *per se* sensibles in contradistinction to the incidentally sensible. Rather, a special sense bears *naturally* upon its secondary as well as its primary objects.

Kampe (104) explained the incidental perception of the common sensibles as "indirect," in accord with their nature and in contrast to the direct perception of the special ones. In this way he claimed that the common sensibles, though accompanying the special, are not the objects upon which the special senses properly bear. Like Trendelenburg he regarded the common sensibles as objects of a third type of incidental perception (105, n. 5). In regard to the notion "indirect," one might remark that it involves more than a nuance and is unfortunate in the present context (see below, n. 27).

For Baeumker,²² the perception of the common sensibles was not "merely incidental," since those sensibles are perceived as common and as distinct in themselves by the "internal, first and common sense." Relatively to that "proper and full" cognition, the awareness of them by each particular may indeed be called incidental. This develops Trendelenburg's position by making explicit the contrast between incidental perception by the special senses and proper perception by common sensibility. Somewhat similarly for Wallace, who repeats Trendelenburg's threefold division of the incidental, Aristotle in saying that the common sensibles are perceived incidentally "simply means that they are perceived *concomitantly*, for in perceiving something as colored we perceive it incidentally 'as a surface' "²³—so described, the concomitant perception, though called incidental, readily overlaps into the *per se* kind of perception. Also in the same vein Hammond makes "incidentally" refer "to the function of the individual sense" at 425a15 and at a28 "to the function of the 'common sense.'" He finds no contradiction, therefore, between cognition of the common properties by the *sensus communis* in its own nature and in incidental fashion by the individual senses.²⁴ This

²²Clemens Baeumker, *Des Aristoteles Lehre von den äusseren und inneren Sinnesvermögen* (Leipzig 1877) 65. "Accidentell würde die Wahrnehmung werden, da das spezifische Objekt eines Einzelsinnes für die anderen Einzelsinne eben nur accidentell erfassbar ist." (*Ibid.* n. 3).

²³Edwin Wallace, *Aristotle's Psychology* (Cambridge 1882) 253. Wallace distinguishes the three types of the incidentally sensible under the designations (a) concomitants of sensation; (b) associated qualities; and (c) qualities referred to objects (254). In his *Outlines of the Philosophy of Aristotle* (Cambridge 1883) 89, n. 1, the description of objects of the Common Sense as "qualities which we perceive by each sense incidentally" is presented as Aristotle's own view, without comment or distinction.

²⁴Hammond (above, n. 9) 96–97, n. 2: "... it being the reiterated doctrine of Aristotle ... that 'common properties' are cognized by the 'sensus communis' in its own nature, and by the individual senses only *per accidens*."

explanation continues the refusal to allow perception of the common sensibles to each special sense in its own nature.

The same basic interpretation, renewed in terms of direct and indirect perception, was continued in Beare. The common sensibles were "indirectly perceived by the special senses; but directly and properly by the κοινὴ αἰσθησις."²⁵ In more significant fashion, Hicks (above, n. 10, 426) equated indirect with incidental perception, acknowledging "degrees of indirectness" (431). He conceded (427) that for Aristotle the common sensibles "are perceived directly," and that they are perceived "by all the special senses," but without any assertion that they "are *directly* perceived by the special senses." Rather, since "sight is not affected by magnitude as magnitude, by motion as motion, and so on," Hicks was led to the "irresistible conclusion" that the way a special sense is affected by the common sensibles is "incidentally." On the other hand, the perception of the common sensibles by the *sensus communis* "is direct and *not incidental*" (432). Against this explanation by Hicks, De Corte strongly objected that the notion "direct" cannot be contrasted with "incidental" in that sharp way, since the common sensible affects the sense indirectly, yet by virtue of intrinsic nature.²⁶ Of its own nature it acts upon the special senses, but it requires a back and forth play with objects incidental to each sense if it is to be recognized as common.²⁷ This has to mean that

²⁵John Isaac Beare, *Greek Theories of Elementary Cognition* (Oxford 1906) 284-285. Hence (283, n. 5) the incidental perception of the common sensibles at *De An.* 425a14-15 is Aristotle's own doctrine.

²⁶"... le sensible commun qui la cause indirectement mais, en vertu de sa nature intrinsèque," De Corte (above, n. 16) 190.

²⁷"Il se produit là un chassé-croisé de perceptions de sensibles accidentels relatifs à un seul et même objet" (De Corte *ibid.* 196). This involvement of the incidental gives rise to the designation "incidental perception" in regard to the common sensibles. But the emphasis remains on the "sensible" rather than on the "incidental:" "on pourrait dire qu'aux yeux d'Aristote le sensible commun est un sensible accidentel, à condition de mettre l'accent, non point sur *accidentel*, mais sur *sensible*" (196). This suffices to show how unsatisfactory the notions of direct and indirect turn out to be when applied in the present context. Here "direct" should be expected to mean action without an intermediary. The common sensibles, as Aristotle describes them, act precisely in that way. In the phrasing of Themistius (*De An.* 82.21) their form is impressed upon the sense of sight no less than that of the color. Size, in fact, does not affect sight through color as an intermediary any more than color affects it through size. Both are equally immediate, from that viewpoint, in their action upon the sense even though from the viewpoint of specifying the sense they have a primary and secondary order. In consequence, if the term "direct" is to be used, both types act directly upon the sense and are directly perceptible by each special sense. Kampe, however, restricted "direct" to the perception of the proper sensibles on the ground that these are the specifying objects of the particular senses, without giving regard to the direct action of the common sensibles upon each of those senses. Against the background of Baumeister's description of the common sensibles as a *proper* object of a common sense, and Hammond's view of them as attained by the *sensus communis* in virtue of its own nature, Beare could readily say that they are

the common sensibles are perceived *per se* by each of the special senses, but in incidental fashion. The divisions overlap.

Ross (above, n. 8, 270) allows two meanings for incidental perception. One is wide enough to include the perception of the common sensibles as secondary and not primary objects of each special sense. The other and "narrower" meaning is seen in the case of Cleon's son. To this one need only say that in Aristotle the contrast of primary with secondary is made explicitly within the *per se* sensible, as distinguished from the incidentally perceived (*De An.* 418a8–25).

Siwek (above, n. 4, 310–311) describes his position as the same as Trendelenburg's, though expressed in a different way. The special senses have a twofold function, namely general and particular. The general function comes to them from the primary sense faculty, in which all the senses have their base. The second and particular function comes to each

perceived "directly and properly" by the common sense. Likewise Hicks (above, n. 10, 427) could reject direct perception of them by the special senses, and explicitly maintain that "sight is not affected by magnitude as magnitude," even though the special sense takes in a "confused whole." Finally, De Corte (above, n. 16, 190) was explicit in stating that here the indirect perception does involve an anterior activity *through* which it takes place: "Les sensibles communs sont ainsi perçus grâce à l'activité antécédente des organes sensibles spéciaux." He accordingly interprets the primary status of the Aristotelian special sensibles as meaning that upon them alone the essential structure of a special sense naturally bears: "à strictement parler (*κρυπτός*) sont seuls sensibles les sensibles propres auxquels est naturellement relative la structure essentielle (*ἡ οὐσία*) de chaque sens" (189). The primary role of the special sensibles in specifying makes them in this way the object of a sense activity anterior to the perception of the common sensibles, an activity that furnishes the intermediary required by the notion of indirect perception. But the result is that the common sensibles, though sensible in virtue of their own nature, are no longer immediately attained by the external senses. They may be regarded as *sensed* only in an extended meaning of that term: "Ils ne sont toutefois dits sensibles que par extension de la signification de ce mot" (189). The rationale behind the use of "direct" and "indirect" in this context could hardly be brought out more tellingly, together with the devastating effect on the basic Aristotelian tenet that human cognition originates in sensible things. The extended and mobile aspects of the things would be withdrawn from immediate external sensation. If the terms "direct" and "indirect" are to be used, the perception of the common sensibles by the special sense has accordingly to be looked upon as direct. The Aristotelian doctrine of cognition does not permit a prior sensation of the special apart from the common objects, with the special then regarded as the means *through* which the common sensibles act upon a sense. Neuhaeuser (above, n. 9, 36), rejecting Baumecker's explanation through accompaniment on the ground that it would apply equally to the special sensibles *vis-à-vis* the common, had noted this consequence: "die gemeinsamen Objecte . . . nur im Gegensatz zu den eigenthümlichen Objecten verstanden werden, die allein *an sich* und *durch welche* jene erst wahrgenommen werden." The terms "direct" and "indirect" in this context are explicitly set aside by Hamlyn (above, n. 13) 13, 15–16. In the Scholastic tradition the proper sensibles came to be known as *per se primo sensibilia* and the common sensibles as *per se secundo sensibilia*, while in the tradition inaugurated by Locke the notion "primary" was applied to the common and "secondary" to the proper sensibles, in quite opposite fashion.

sense from itself. Since the formal aspects in which this twofold function has its origin are not separate in reality, the way in which the common sensibles may be said to be perceived *per se* by the special senses is readily apparent. Siwek's explanation, accordingly, upholds the direct and immediate perception of the common sensibles by each special sense. But its ground for allowing the common sensibles to be regarded also as incidentally perceived does not seem to go beyond Brentano's stand that they are secondary, not primary, objects of each special sense. One has still to show how the secondary status keeps the common sensibles from acting upon the sense organs. As long as they are acting upon the organs it is hard to see how they qualify for Aristotle's conception of the incidentally perceived.

Finally, Hamlyn denies any conflict between "incidentally" at 425a15 and "not incidentally" at a28, on the ground that in the first case the reference is to the special character of each particular sense while in the second it is to a more general form of perception. On the one hand, "since the common objects are perceptible by more than one special sense they are not essential to any one of them." On the other hand, the common sensibles "are objects essential to a form of perception."²⁸ From these two different viewpoints "incidentally" at a15 can mean "not essential," while at a28 "not incidentally" means "essentially." In the one signification, according to Hamlyn's approach, the common sensibles are incidental to each special sense. In the other signification, the common sensibles are not incidental to sensible cognition. Against this approach, one may again urge that non-essential connection between special and common sensibles does not seem to be used by Aristotle to ground incidental perception. Rather, failure to act upon the sense organ seems to be his sole criterion. For him the common sensibles do act upon the sense organs.²⁹

To sum up, the way of meeting the present difficulty through a twofold meaning for "incidental" has the support of nearly all recent com-

²⁸D. W. Hamlyn, *Aristotle's De Anima Books II and III* (Oxford 1968) 117. Cf. also, *C. Q.* n.s. 9 (1959) 14-15; *Monist* 52 (1968) 197. The question is, however, whether the common sensibles are not "essential," in Aristotle's meaning of *per se*, to the special as well as to anything else called a sense. Three-dimensional extension, with the consequent capability for motion, is obviously essential to the status of sense object. To limit "essential" to the specifying principle, and exclude thereby the generic characteristics from its essence, seems to generate confusion. Extension and mobility belong *per se* to every sensible object (see above, n. 27).

²⁹The suggestion (see Kahn, above, n. 15, 54, n. 24) that Aquinas might be ranged with those who allow a twofold sense for "incidental" in this context is without foundation. Rather, Aquinas (*In II de An.* lect. 13, Pirota nos. 388-393) rejected in strongest terms the application of "incidental" to the perception of the common sensibles, after careful consideration of the arguments offered for the opposite view. His own reason was that the common sensibles cause a difference in the way the senses are affected and are therefore sensible *per se*.

mentators. The norms it uses are taken clearly enough from the Aristotelian writings. In one fashion or another it shows that in the wider scope of sensation in general the perception of the common sensibles takes place *per se* and not incidentally. No quarrel with this stand need arise. On the other hand, in one manner or another it bases an incidental perception of the common sensibles by each particular sense upon an incidental connection of common with special sensible. This latter procedure seems to be entirely lacking in Aristotle himself. An incidental connection between the two types of object may be readily established on the basis of other Aristotelian texts. But to show how that incidental connection of objects may function as the ground for incidental perception of them is another and far different problem. The connection that is incidental for Aristotle from the viewpoint of components in a thing's essential nature (*An. Post.* 1.4 73a34–37) may be *per se* from a second viewpoint, namely that of something in which the thing's essential nature has to inhere (a37–b4). In this second way extension belongs *per se* to color, since color, to exist in reality, has to be extended over a surface. Correspondingly, motion is suggested by Aristotle (*Ph.* 250b11–15) to have the role of a sort of life in all things natural. This *per se* character of the connection needs to be balanced against the incidental one in any effort to establish incidental connections of objects as a basis for incidental perception. The respective ways in which each of the two types of *per se* is found to bear upon perception have to be carefully assessed against the background of *per se* predication. Moreover, a convincing explanation why Aristotle does not mention in this regard the technique of multiple meaning, or at least of different ways of application, and why he gives only the failure to act upon the sense organs as the characteristic of incidental perception, has to be sought. Unless satisfactory answers can be found for these questions, solutions by way of a twofold meaning for incidental perception seem to be unacceptable, in spite of their popularity today.

v

The relation of the common sensibles to incidental perception brings to the fore a number of interesting problems in the Aristotelian doctrine on sensation. Each of them would require a long study in itself. For instance, there is the problem of translating *αἰσθῆσιν κοινῇν* at *De An.* 425a27. Does it mean that we have common sensation of the common aspects? Or is it saying that we have a common sense for the common sensibles? *Αἰσθησις* can mean either the action or the faculty, and keeps varying in the context between the two significations. Or does the translation make any real difference for present purposes? Common sensation of the common objects is neater, for it brings out the tenet that each

special sense shares in the sensation of those aspects. But a common sense for them does not differ radically in meaning, since it makes the basic faculty of sensation bear commonly on all of them. For present purposes, then, the problem may be by-passed. The varying meanings of the one Greek term have to be gauged from the context, as also in the case of its uses for "sensation" and "perception."³⁰

Similarly the question how objects of sensation can be from one angle connected only incidentally, and from another connected *per se*, is interesting in itself. But an answer to it is not essential to the present inquiry. As long as a connection can be shown to be in some way incidental, a proponent of explanation by way of a twofold meaning for incidental may urge it in support of his claim. Nevertheless, those who find in Aristotle a notion of incidental perception that is based only upon failure to act upon the sense organ will find the question superfluous. In like manner other interesting questions that arise in the course of the study may be left for further inquiry.

As regards the present problem, then, the solution through emending the Greek text by the insertion of a negative has only very shaky support in Greek and medieval tradition, skimpy acceptance in the nineteenth century, and no firm adherence in the twentieth. The solution by way of a twofold meaning for the incidental originates in the nineteenth century and has attained nearly unanimous support today. It is based upon unchallengeably Aristotelian principles, though it is not found expressly in Aristotle nor is it used by the Greek commentators. It is hard to fit into the context of the *De Anima*, in which perception of the common sensibles

³⁰"It covers both what we should call 'perception' and also what we should call sensation," Hamlyn (above, n. 13) 6. In fact, it keeps changing from the one to the other meaning: "bald Wahrnehmung, bald eher Wahrnehmungsvermögen," Theiler (above, n. 14) 131. On its extension to the incidental, in saying that "you see" the man who owes you money, cf. William Charlton, "Aristotle's Definition of Soul," *Phronesis* 25 (1980) 181. On its sharing in the wider notion of judgment, see Hamlyn 6 and 8. Further, "there is no distinction between the change of the sense and the change of the sense organ"—Thomas J. Slakey, "Aristotle on Sense Perception," *Philosophical Review* 70 (1961) 476—because the sense is the formal element of the sense organ. On the tendency to parallel incidental perception with incidental connections in the object; "The systematic use of the same term 'common' for both object and faculty tends inevitably to suggest a one-to-one relationship between the two, whereas in fact nothing could be more misleading," Kahn (above, n. 15) 52. For views on the relation of "the common sense" to what is elsewhere designated in Aristotle as "the primary sense," "the common faculty," "the sense faculty for all things," see Kahn 50–74; Hamlyn, *Monist* 52 (1968) 195–208. Hamlyn rejects "common sensation" as the meaning at *De An.* 425a27 (206–207). But even as a faculty "common sense" would be a capacity common to the special senses, just as the activity of "common sensation" is common to them. Since in the present context a further sense organ is emphatically denied, no doctrinal difference is involved in the two translations. "Common sensation," however, seems more expressive, paralleling "the sensation of the proper objects is true" at 428b18.

bears only upon objects that are perceived *per se*, in contrast to what is incidentally perceived, and in which failure to act upon the sense organ is the only criterion given for incidental perception. Accordingly the statement that the common sensibles are aspects that "we perceive incidentally by each sense" is best explained as an assertion that Aristotle brings forward for direct denial. That is the one explanation of it that is found in the Greek commentators. The fact that it is not expressly labelled in this way by Aristotle himself, nor is introduced by him with an inserted qualification like "as some say," makes the reading awkward. But Aristotle's failure to mention a twofold meaning or twofold application of incidental in this context is correspondingly awkward for the alternative solution that has been accepted generally today.³¹ On account of its intrinsic merits as well as its ancestry in Greek tradition, the explanation of the troublesome clause as an objection is still worthy of serious attention.

If factual considerations could be disregarded for the moment, the insertion of a negative particle into the text at 425a15 would of course be the easiest and systematically the neatest solution. Next in order of facile explanation would be a twofold meaning for incidental perception. But factual evidence is stubborn. Neither of these two attempted solutions accords satisfactorily with the relevant texts in the Aristotelian writings or with the traditional interpretation of the ancient commentators. Rather, the view that the controversial assertion at 425a14–15 was not meant to express Aristotle's doctrine, but on the contrary a stand he was deliberately opposing, retains its appeal even though today there may not be much enthusiasm about its acceptance.

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³¹Kahn ([above, n. 15] 54, n. 24), in fact, refers to the modern alternative as the "much less natural view."