

Texts

- *De anima* 60.14-65.21, 78.2-23, 97.8-25 (Bruns)
- *Mantissa* 119.10-19 (Bruns)
- *Quaestiones* III.7 and 9 (Bruns)
[*Q* III.7, 91.24-93.22 on Arist. *DA* III.2, 425b12-25; *Q* III.9, 94.10-98.15 on Arist. *DA* III.2, 427a2-14]
- *In librum de Sensu* 163.18-168.10 (Wendland)
[on Arist. *DS* 7, 449a2-20]

The principle of excluded contraries

The same thing will not be willing to do or undergo contraries in the same part of itself, in relation to the same thing, at the same time. So, if we ever find this happening in the soul, we will know that we are not dealing with one thing but many. (Plato, *Republic* IV, 436b8-9)

Synopsis of *De anima* 60.14-65.21

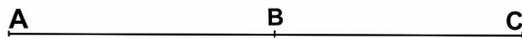
1. perceptual discrimination (60.14-65.2; cf. *Quaestiones* III.9; *In de Sensu* 163.18-168.10)
 - + Problem: that which discriminates two special sensibles has to satisfy two conditions:
 - (i) it has to be one and undivided (60.23 *ff*)
 - (ii) the discrimination has to occur at one and undivided time (61.9 *ff*)
 - two distinct cases:
 - (i) of heterogeneous special sensibles, e.g. white and sweet (61.14-24)
 - (ii) of homogeneous special sensibles, e.g. white and black (61.24-30)
 - + Solution 1 (61.30-63.5): sensibles do not cause material change
 - + Solution 2 (63.6-65.2): the common sense is both one and many
 - the analogy with the centre of a circle in which different radii converge (63.6-19)
the centre is both one and many: many insofar as it is the end-point of many different radii; one insofar as all the end-points coincide in one and the same point ❖ thus the common sense is both one and many: many insofar as it is the end-point of changes caused by sensibles in the peripheral sense-organs and conveyed to the ultimate sense organ (ἔσχατον αἰσθητήριον); one and indivisible insofar as it is a single power of the entire final sense-organ and each one of its parts
 - the perceptual power is both one and many: insofar as it is many, it simultaneously perceives different sensibles, and insofar as it is one, it discriminates (i) heterogeneous sensibles at one and indivisible time (63.19-28)
 - in the same way the perceptual power discriminates also (ii) homogeneous sensibles of which there is perception through one sense organ (63.28-65.2): the sense organ receives affections from contrary sensibles at different parts, transmits them to the ultimate sense organ, and as the ultimate sense organ is similarly affected in different parts, the one and the same power of the whole ultimate sense organ and of each one of its parts simultaneously perceives and discriminates contrary sensibles.
 - this does not violate the principle of exclusion of contraries (64.11-65.1): a discriminative act that contraries are contrary is not itself a contrariety; contrariety in an act of discrimination does not consist in saying that two contraries are contrary, but in saying that one and the same thing is both contraries at once.
2. awareness of perception (65.2-10; cf. *Quaestiones* III.7; *Mantissa* 119.13-15)
 - + it is by means of the common sense that we perceive ourselves seeing and hearing
 - for: (i) the one who is seeing or hearing perceives himself seeing or hearing
 - (ii) we do not perceive ourselves perceiving by means of some power other than the perceptual one (or: ...by means of some power other than the common sense - if κοινήν is inserted before αἰσθησιν in line 6 with Bruns)
 - for we do not *see* that we are seeing, nor do we *hear* that we are hearing
 - + since seeing is not visible, nor is hearing audible

3. perception of the common sensibles (65.10-21)

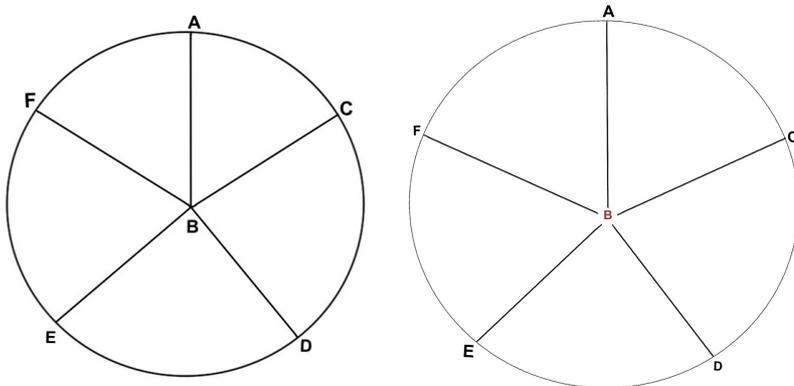
- + perception of the common sensibles is also achieved by means of the common sense
 - each type of common sensible is carried together with the sensibles special to each sense through the sense organs proper to them
 - for vision is changed by colour together with a magnitude, shape, rest or motion, number and distance; so, a colour causes change in the sense of vision together with the common sensibles, and the changes from them are carried together with colours
 - the power that discriminates colours (vision) does not discriminate also the common sensibles - discrimination of them is the work of the common sense

Illustrations1. Aristotle's analogy with a point bisecting the line (*DA* III.2, 427a9-14)

ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἦν καλοῦσί τινες στιγμὴν, ἢ μία καὶ δύο, ταύτη <καὶ ἀδιαίρετος> καὶ διαιρετή. ἢ μὲν οὖν ἀδιαίρετον, ἐν τῷ κρῖνόν ἐστι καὶ ἅμα, ἢ δὲ διαιρετὸν ὑπάρχει, δις τῷ αὐτῷ χρήται σημεῖω ἅμα· ἢ μὲν οὖν δις χρήται τῷ πέρατι, δύο κρίνει καὶ κεχωρισμένα, ἔστιν ὡς κεχωρισμένως· ἢ δὲ ἐνί, ἐν καὶ ἅμα.

2. Alexander's analogy with the centre of the circle in which different radii converge (*De an.* 63.5-19)

ἢ δυνήσεται οὕτως ἡ κοινὴ αἴσθησις ἅμα τὰς διαφορὰς γνωρίζειν τῶν διαφορῶν αἰσθητῶν, εἰ πῆ μὲν ἐν εἴῃ τὸ αἰσθητικόν, πῆ δὲ πλείω τε καὶ διαιρούμενον. ὡς γὰρ ἐπὶ κύκλου αἱ ἀπὸ τῆς περιφερείας αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ κέντρον ἐπιζενγνύμεναι οὐσαι πολλαὶ πάσαι κατὰ τὸ πέρασ εἰσὶν αἱ αὐταὶ τῷ τὰ τε πέρατα αὐτῶν ἐφαρμόζειν τῷ τοῦ κύκλου κέντρῳ καὶ ἔστι τὸ πέρασ τοῦτο ἐν τε καὶ πολλά, καθόσον μὲν πολλῶν ἐστι καὶ διαφερόντων πέρασ, πολλά, καθόσον δὲ πάντα ἀλλήλοις ἐφήρμοσεν, ἐν, οὕτως ἔχειν ὑποληπτέον καὶ τὴν κοινὴν αἴσθησιν τὸ ἐν τε καὶ πολλά.

**Summary**

1. Alexander restricts the common sense to a strictly perceptual higher-order capacity directed at the operations of the special senses, thus dissociating the common sense from *phantasia*
2. The common sense is in the heart (an aspect of Alexander's robust cardiocentrism)
3. Functions Alexander ascribes to the common sense: (i) perceptual discrimination, (ii) perceptual awareness, (iii) perception of the common sensibles
4. Ad (i): innovation - the analogy of the common sense with the centre of the circle
5. Ad (ii): independence - opting for Aristotle's account in *De somno* 2 instead of the account in *De anima* III.2
6. Ad (iii): inconsistency - elsewhere Alexander claims that the special senses apprehend the common sensibles