

accept this insight as a primitive intuition, the Aristotelian reasoning that explains how the identity comes about is cogent in its own metaphysical setting. The reasoning allows the cognitive agent to be the same individually as the thing known, and not just specifically as in photography or recording or in the simile of the design on wax and signet ring. But the whole epistemological structure rests upon one's acceptance of the cognitive union of knower and known as an immediate indemonstrable intuition.

If accepted, this explanation of cognition in terms of being offers adequate protection against a dogma that has plagued western philosophy since the time of Descartes, namely that nothing can be more present to mind than mind itself and its own ideas. The Aristotelian conception of awareness means that what the mind is cognitively, is first and foremost and directly the external (*De An.*, II 5, 417b20-21) sensible object. Only concomitantly and in virtue of being the external thing cognitively, can the mind, as far as cognition is concerned, be itself. Epistemologically the sensible thing, as a substance in itself, comes first.¹¹

This conception needs much greater development if it is to play its role successfully. It received significant treatment in the middle ages, where from Avicenna on there was no hesitation in asserting that the sensible thing exists cognitively in the mind. A new viewpoint of existence gave the epistemological insights new development. In Aquinas this development reached a high point through explanation of existence as the actuality of every nature yet different from the nature itself. The same nature could readily be seen as open to two different ways of existing, namely in itself and in the mind. Today the Aristotelian conception of awareness still offers interesting possibilities for further development.

8. Aristotelian Soul as Cognitive of Sensibles, Intelligibles, and Self

Joseph Owen

I

With requisite clarity the soul is located by Aristotle (*De An.*, II 1, 412a6-28) in the basic category of substance. Still more precisely it is explained by him as a physical body's primary form or perfection (*eidōs, entelecheia*--a10; cf. 2, 414a14-28). In man it is in this way "that by which we primarily live, perceive and think" (414a12-13). The soul accordingly is for Aristotle a real physical form. Obviously in this context the term "physical" is taken in the sense it has in his philosophy of nature (e.g., *Ph.*, II 1, 193a33; 2, 193b32). The soul as he conceives it is in consequence something that belongs to a composite. It itself is not a body, but is something that belongs to a body (*De An.*, II 2, 414a21-22).

The composite, of which the soul is the primary perfection, is of course able to receive secondary perfections such as waking and sleeping (2, 412a23-26), organic structure (b1-16), health and habitual knowledge (414a8-12; cf. III 4, 429b5-9; *EN*, II 1, 1103a32-b23), along with modifications such as heat and cold (*De An.*, II 12, 424a32-b1). All these secondary perfections actuate the soul in its real mobile life. Consequently they are to be assessed in accord with the constitution of things subject to generation and change, as carefully discussed in the *Physics* (I 7, 191a3-12). The thing's matter can lose one form and take on another. The model is the reception of the statue's form by the bronze or of the form of a bed by the wood. For double assurance of clarity today, the latter example may easily be spelled out in currently familiar details. The wood had first received the form of rough, standard sized lumber. Under the skilful activity of the cabinetmaker, it loses the standard shape of boards and acquires the artistic contours of a bed.

The concern of the present study bears on the activities of perceiving and knowing. The soul, as noted above, is "that by which we primarily . . . perceive and think." In both operations there is awareness of other objects and of self. In each of them reception of form (*De An.*, II 12, 424a18; III 4, 429a15-16) is involved. The reception of a sensible form, however, may take place in two ways each contrasted with the other from the view point of relation to matter.¹ In the non-cognitive

reception of heat or cold the change is described by Aristotle, literally and awkwardly translated, as undergone "with the matter" (II 12,424b3). In any sensation, on the other hand, the form of the sensible object is received "without the matter" (a18-19)

Exactly what does the contrast in reception of forms *with* the matter and *without* the matter mean? In the context here the overall import of the contrast is clear beyond doubt. It carries the weight of the distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive reception of form. Heat in being received as a form not only accelerates the movements of the molecules and modifies the temperature but also is *felt* by the hand. The two actuations occur simultaneously. Yet there is a crucial difference between being warmed and feeling warm. The plant is just made warm. The hand, too, is made warm. But unlike the plant it feels the warmth besides. Though the feeling will always have the accelerated molecular motion as concomitant, the distinction between the two types of reception stays firm. In plants and inanimate things the heat is received without any evidence that it is being felt, and the same Celsius degree of temperature is felt with different intensity by the same person at different times in accord with subjective conditions. The one type of reception may be called merely physical, and the other cognitive. At least this terminology seems to express in preliminary fashion the functional contrast between the two ways of receiving form.

The overall bearing of the contrast, then, is sufficiently pointed. But how does the phrasing "with the matter" and "without the matter" express the distinction as intended in the Aristotelian text just cited (supra.n.1). Each of the words has its problems. What sense do the prepositions "with" and "without" carry in the phrases? Is the significance merely concomitance, or does it involve instrumentality? Is the definite article correctly included in the English translation, and if so, what referent does it indicate? Further, does "matter" here mean physical matter, or is the term being used in an extended sense such as in the Aristotelian notion of "intellectual matter" (*Metaph.*, Z 11, 1036b35; cf. 10, 1036a9-12; H 6, 1045a33-35). "Matter" is certainly used by Aristotle in transferred meanings (see Bonitz, *Ind. Arist.*, 787a12-26), though with sensible matter as its basic signification. There is no difficulty in understanding that sensible matter such as wood or flesh is meant when the term designates the recipient of the new form in the case of something that is merely being warmed. But how can sensible matter be excluded in the case of the hand feeling the heat? As already noted, the physical change is here concomitant with the cognitive reception of the form. The physical matter is present throughout the sensation. It is not utterly

excluded. Moreover, how can a subject that receives a form, even cognitively, avoid being regarded as the recipient and thereby the matter that acquires the new form? The exclusion of matter seems to run violently counter to the Aristotelian principles that may be expected to apply in any case of change or reception of form. If a new form is at all received, is it not received into a subject? Is not the subject therefore functioning as the matter in the process? Does not the form, then, enter into composition with the recipient, giving rise to a third something and making this third thing the object of the cognition?

The above questions are of prime interest to anyone approaching the Aristotelian text with epistemological interests today. Unfortunately no explicit answers to them are found in the treatises. The general principles of Aristotelian natural philosophy call for matter in the subject itself function as the matter receiving it. But likewise those principles demand matter in the agent that causes the sensation, for instance in the fire or the boiling water. The composite that possesses the form is what causes the warming (*Ph.*, VIII 5, 257b9-10). Even to say that the soul grieves or rejoices or takes courage or fears, or that one's mind thinks or loves or hates or recalls, is but an abbreviated way of stating that the man does these by means of his soul or mind (*De An.*, I 4, 408b1-29). Matter seems involved in every cognitive act performed by a man, as well as by every sensible agent that imparts the form. Is it then the matter of the thing perceived that is referred to in saying that merely physical reception of forms takes place with the matter, while cognitive reception takes place without the matter? Or is it the matter of the perceiver? Or is the reference to matter in general, common to both and without definite location on either side? Here the Aristotelian text (II 12, 424a19-21) in giving the example of ring, device and wax, would seem to indicate the matter of the ring that does the impressing. It is the matter of the ring that is not received, according to the example. But commentators have not always understood the text in exactly that way. As it stands it is open to different interpretations. The first and most extensive task of the present study will be to examine these interpretations against the background of Aristotle's general philosophical principles, and endeavor to see what light they throw on the meaning of the text.

What, then, is meant in this passage by reception "without the matter"?

II

The passage in question was intended by Aristotle to generalize his notion of what sense or sensation is. It reads in English:

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 condition makes no difference (*De An.*, II 12, 424a17-21; Oxford trans.).

In this assertion Aristotle illustrates the notion of "receiving . . . without the matter" by the reception on wax of the device from the signet ring without the ring's iron or gold or bronze. Clearly enough the iron or gold or bronze is the matter to which reference is made. The device is its form, a form in the accidental order. The device stays with the wax, the iron or gold or bronze does not. As an illustration of the reception of form without matter, it is at least *prima facie* referring solely to the matter of the percipient, nor matter that is common to both. The matter meant is definitely the iron or gold or bronze located solely in the signet ring. The device is received without the matter it informed in the agent. What could be clearer in this illustration?

Nevertheless there are second thoughts. If only the agent's matter were meant, how would its exclusion illustrate any difference between cognitive and non-cognitive reception of forms? In every type of efficient causality observable in the universe does not the matter of the agent remain in the agent? It is not received by the patient. The matter of the carpenter does not pass over into the house he builds, nor does the matter that sustains the human form in the parents enter into the offspring. Yet the expression "without the matter" has to bear here the full burden of the distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive reception. To illustrate the point it must imply something more than merely receiving a form from the agent without receiving the agent's matter. Granting that the basic reference is somehow to the matter in the agent, one has to suspect that much more is involved by the term "matter" in this context.

Further, there is a definite indication that "matter" is not being taken in the phrase in a jejune physical sense. The "matter" seems to mean the fully determined specific nature of the agent, as distinguished from the merely generic nature of a solid body. The "matter" that is not received is the specific nature of iron or gold or bronze. The generic nature of a solid body always accompanies the notion of a device, since an accident is inconceivable apart from the substance in which it inheres (*Cat.*, I, 1a24-25) and the substance required by a stable device is a solid body, whether iron or gold or bronze or wax. In this case, then, the distinction between matter and form is the distinction between a body specifically

determined, such as gold, and the notion of body in general as determined by a definite accident such as a device. Here the reception of the form is indifferent to what the specific nature of the agent is. The agent impresses the form on the patient as the form of a solid body, and not as the form specifically of iron or gold or bronze.

One is tempted, however, to ask if precision of this kind is congenial to Aristotle. The answer has to be yes. It is used in the *Metaphysics*: "Of matter some is intelligible, some perceptible, and in a formula there is always an element of matter as well as one of actuality" (H6, 1045a33-35; Oxford trans.). The generic aspect is regarded as the matter, the differentia as its actuation. The last differentia, moreover, contains everything in the definition (Z 12, 1038a19-20). The form is accordingly considered from this viewpoint as the whole of the thing, expressed by the differentia. The genus is treated of as though it had corresponding status in the order of potentiality, the order of matter. Aristotle's effort in the context is directed towards showing that they are not in reality two different things but only one. The doctrine, it is true, is not given in Aristotle the highly developed medieval contours of the composition of a whole with a whole.² But the essentials are there with sufficient clarity. Two separate notions of the same thing can be related as matter and form.

In one way, of course, the situation in *De Anima*, II 12, may appear as the reverse of that in *Metaphysics*, Z-H. In the *De Anima* text the specific nature of the iron or gold, as determined by the ultimate differentia, is what is left behind. It is regarded as the matter. The form is received without it. Only the generic notion of corporeal substance required by the accidental nature of the device accompanies the form as received by the wax. But the illustration comes into focus when one considers that the substance as a whole, in this case the iron or the gold, is the subject of the accidents and in that sense the matter in which they inhere and which they actuate. From that viewpoint, required here, the fully specific nature has the aspect of matter. But the specific nature of the iron or gold or bronze does not accompany it when it is impressed upon the wax. It is received without the specific nature of the agent. That would refine considerably the sense intended in the expression "receiving . . . without the matter."

This understanding of sensation as involving reception "without the matter" might suggest that the expression in *De Anima* II 12, bears rather on the doctrine of proper and common sensibles, shortly to follow in *De Anima* III, than on cognition in general. Each sense gives awareness of the same sensible thing under common and proper aspects. In these ways each sense grasps the whole thing without attaining the specific nature of the substance that serves as matter for the respective

characteristics under which the particular sensations take place. Examples may be easily supplied. It is one and the same thing that is perceived by the hunter as first an object moving in the woods, then as something living, then as a man, and finally as Socrates. The same thing that is perceived through sight as a spoonful of white grains is specified to salt or to sugar by taste. Even though in *De Anima* II 12, the difference between feeling warm and being warmed is made to rest on the distinction of reception "without the matter" from reception "with the matter," the question still remains whether the distinction is meant to explain cognition in general or just the way in which a sense grasps a thing under a particular or common aspect.

The context in the *De Anima*, then, indicates that the "matter" referred to in the above expressions is the matter in the agent, e.g., the iron or the gold or the bronze. But it allows the notion to be understood in a highly refined way. How has this been interpreted by the commentators? Do their explanations support the more flexible notion of matter, and do they develop further latent possibilities in the phrase?

III

Our commentaries on the passage in *De Anima*, II 12, go back as far as Alexander of Aphrodisias, writing at the end of the second century or early in the third century A.D. In his own *De Anima*, a personal work, Alexander interprets the Aristotelian text as meaning that a sense in general is a faculty of the soul that is "through certain organs receptive of and discerning of the sensible forms apart from the matter underlying them."³ The sentence as it stands alone can be read to mean by "the matter" either the matter underlying the sensible forms as they are found in the things outside the perceiver, or as they are found in the activities of the sense organs. It could also mean that the reception and cognition take place in general apart from the order of matter. The preposition used by Alexander is *chôris*. It may express merely accompaniment as in the case of *anew*, the preposition in the Aristotelian text. But it carries overtones of "separately from" or "independently of."

Alexander (p.60.6-62.1) himself, in the immediately following lines, keeps his attention focused on the matter in the sense organ. He emphasizes that in cognition the sentient powers are forms of the bodily organ, and that the sensation is in the organ not insofar as the organ is a body but insofar as it has a power of that kind.⁴ He is looking towards the way sensation discerns sweet from white, and how the same sense discerns black from white at the same time. The same matter cannot receive contraries such as black and white simultaneously. The sense

organs accordingly do not receive the qualities of the sensible thing as though the senses were matter for the reception, since sight does not become black or white in seeing these qualities.⁵

What Alexander understands by the matter that is excluded in the definition of sensation is in consequence the matter in the sense organ. He means apparently that sensation takes place "apart from" or "independently of" that physical matter. This is at first sight rather surprising, since in the Aristotelian example the matter indicated is clearly the bronze or gold or iron of the signet ring. However, Alexander's commentary here is not in the form of literal exegesis of the Aristotelian text. It is meant to give his own personal understanding of the doctrine in the passage. Granting that he understood Aristotle's example to indicate immediately the matter in the agent, one can see quite easily how he could take this to mean that cognition is concerned with form "apart from" matter, and accordingly concentrate, in his own thought, upon the way the form is received in the sense organ. It is a way different from physical change, since the recipient does not function as matter. Through the perception of whiteness, for example, sight does not play the role of a matter made white.

"Apart from the matter," then, means for Alexander that sensation is not a material modification of the sense organ. What is received without the matter of the sensible thing is received apart from composition with the sense organ. It is received not insofar as the sense organ is a body, but insofar as the sentient power is a *form*. This sounds quite like the notion that in cognition form is received not into matter but into form. At first hearing it may seem unaristotelian for sensation, even though for Aristotle (*De An.*, III 4,429a27-28) there is approval of the view that the soul is a "place of forms" in intellection, and (430a3-4) that in things "without matter" intellect and intelligible object are the same. Is a parallel tenet possible for sensation? If so, it might do away with the objection that every recipient functions as matter for the form it takes on. True, there is no mention of form receiving form in the text. Yet the way lies open for Alexander's interpretation, insofar as the form of the sensible thing may be regarded as functioning in cognition "without" the matter it actuated in the real world, and the form of the sense organ may be looked upon as receiving the new form from an outside agent. With Alexander's own reasoning the reception is seen in that way to be "apart from" the matter of the recipient. In any case, Alexander's point is that sensation is not a material reception of form by the *organ*.

This line of interpretation can be seen explicitly followed out in Themistius, in the fourth century A.D. Repeating much of Alexander's reasoning and some of his phraseology, Themistius in his *Paraphrasis* ex-

plains the Aristotelian phrase "without the matter" as meaning that only the qualities of the signet ring come through to the senses, and not the matter or subject (p. 77.28-34). But he sees in this a further thrust, formulated much more clearly than it had been in Alexander. Here, in contrast to non-psychic motion, only the *form* of the agent moves the sense organ. In cutting or burning, on the contrary, it is the *composite* of matter and form, i.e., the knife or the fire, that causes the effect. Like Alexander, Themistius (p. 77.34-78.10) emphasizes that the senses do not become matter for the sensible forms. The two ways of undergoing the activity of the agent differ greatly from each other. No matter is able to discern the form that is brought into being in the patient, since matter is something that lacks intelligence and is undiscerning and insensible. Different from the non-psychic reception of form by matter, sensation means that form grasps or apprehends form.⁶

For Themistius, consequently, the matter referred to in the Aristotelian phrase is first of all the matter in the agent, the matter of the thing that is perceived. But for him this involves a more important consideration. It means that only the form of the sensible object, and not the composite of matter and form, produces the cognitive effect in the patient. In corresponding fashion, the form is not received into any matter, but is grasped solely by form. In neither agent nor recipient is there any cognitive functioning of matter. The crucial difference between cognitive and non-cognitive reception of form is seen first of all in the action of the agent through form alone and not as composite of form and matter. But it is also seen, as with Alexander, in the exclusion of a role for matter on the part of the patient in the reception. In a word, the Aristotelian expression is interpreted as setting aside the functioning of matter in both agent and patient. That is given as the reason why the activity is cognitive. All goes as though here form receives form instead of matter receiving form, and as though this immateriality is the characteristic of cognition. But no attempt is made to show how Aristotelian composites can act and undergo through form alone.

About the second quarter of the sixth century A.D., Philoponus also made the Aristotelian phrase bear first upon the matter in the agent. The form is received in sensation without the sensible thing's matter. But he observes that this holds for all non-generative efficient causality. No patient at all receives the matter of the agent, but only its form. Yet here the reception has to be cognitive, an impression of the pure *logoi* of the sensible thing. The sense becomes what the sensible thing is, not through generation, nor as mirrors and substances for molding receive impressions, but in a way that gives awareness and discernment. This is accor-

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ding to form alone, not by way of composite, and is caused by the form only of the sensible thing.⁷

Philoponus, accordingly, continues the stress on the lack of matter in the functioning of both agent and patient in sensation. In the accompanying process of being warmed and the like, the composite of matter and form is functioning both in the sensible thing and in the sense organ. But the distinguishing characteristic of sensation requires something further. It is not sufficient that the form be received as an image on a mirror or as an impression on a plastic material. Rather, the form has to be received cognitively (pp. 437.20-21; 438.13). This seems to be defining cognition merely by cognition, unless Philoponus is assuming that Aristotle has elsewhere established a general doctrine that form existing or functioning apart from matter is by that very fact cognitive. Themistius (*De An.*, p. 78.10-12) had already put forward the notion that reception of form without the matter brings about cognition, since matter is non-cognitive. At any rate, Philoponus describes the contrasted notion of reception "with the matter" as meaning "materially and bodily." He notes that some have explained the phrase as referring to the matter of the recipient. He has no quarrel with this exegesis, since non-psychic recipients undergo the action of the composite, while in sensation the activity undergone is on the part of the form alone. The Aristotelian phrase did refer to the matter in the sensible object, but the meaning extends in this way to the matter in the recipient (*In de An.*, p. 440.27-35). In general, Philoponus continues the reasoning of Themistius in more developed and closely knit fashion. The tenet that the sense becomes what the object is instead of just being affected by it is brought into explicit play. Finally, the phraseology of receiving a form "materially and bodily" may be seen as opening the way for the contrasted notion of receiving a form immaterially, or immaterial reception, as the explanation of cognition.

Themistius, a contemporary of Philoponus, like the commentators before him allows the nature of cognition to carry the burden of the distinction between the two types of reception. With his strong Neoplatonic background, he is interested in showing (*In de An.*, p. 166.1-34) that the sensible forms come from the outside while the intelligible forms come from within. In order to go into action, the sense has to presuppose simultaneous action upon itself by the sensible thing. To that extent its action has the aspect of passivity (1.12-13). In the context, actualizing is understood as contrasted with undergoing (4.5; 24.25), not however as producing but as discerning. The Aristotelian doctrine that the actuality of the agent is in the patient is exploited (1.19-21) changes to explain

Not F(6) & G(6) → H(6)

how undergoing the action of agents in the order of form makes what is proper to them appear in the patient. In this way the sense expresses the sensible object and is aware of it in accord with the stable form, which is received "without matter" (.28-.32). The article is not used here before the term "matter," as though matter in general is meant without any particularization to the matter of either the agent or the patient. In accord with this stable type of reception sensation takes place. Not the matter, but just "what appears" (*emphasis*-.19; .22; .27; .31) in the sensible thing, is received by the sense organ, in this way allowing the sensible thing itself to be perceived.

With Simplicius, then, the tendency to make the nature of cognition account for the reception of form without matter, instead of vice versa, is maintained. The role of the sensible thing's "appearance" in giving the sense a stable form received "without matter" is emphasized, along with the way the sense is thereby made aware of the thing. Even though the Aristotelian text is read in a Neoplatonic framework, it is accorded a faithful exegesis in these respects.

Sophonias, writing as far as is known around the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century A.D., pursued the topic in the language and reasoning of his predecessors, especially of Simplicius, though in his own particular manner of paraphrase and without noticeable Neoplatonic cast. But he gave definite expression to the tenet that the forms (*logoi*) of the sensible objects are impressed upon the sense "immaterially and cognitively" (*De An. Paraphr.*, p. 102.29). Reception in the order of form only bears the brunt of the distinction between the sentient undergoing and the merely corporeal undergoing of activity by sensible things (.30-.35). Yet more is required. Reception of forms that leaves the matter unaffected as in the case of substances for molding, or in the case of mirrors, does not suffice for cognition. The reception has to be vital and has to give concomitant awareness of what is taking place (.35-.37). The recipient in bodily change is affected in its own matter, not in the matter of the agent, and in general every agent transmits form, not matter, to the patient (p. 104.10-13).

Sophonias tries to face the question brought forward by Philoponus about the reception of images on mirrors and plastic material. He grants that these forms are received without affecting the matter of the recipient, but has only the same answer as Philoponus. The forms in this case are not received cognitively. The real reason for the difference is that in sensation the reception is cognitive. Cognition is still explained by cognition.¹⁰ But the deficiency of Aristotle's example comes to the fore when it is required to explain awareness. As it stands it would apply, at

least in Sophonias' understanding of it, to any non-cognitive reception of design by a plastic material. Moreover, the example indicates the matter in the agent. But that matter is not received by the patient even in merely physical change. The example, accordingly, fails to account for the really significant difference between cognitive and non-cognitive reception of form.

The tradition of the Greek commentators, then, ends in a hardly satisfactory explanation of the Aristotelian immaterial reception of form in cognition. It shows clearly enough how the Aristotelian example of wax and signet ring limps. It focuses rather upon the immateriality on the part of the recipient sense. The sense functions immaterially in sensation. This is a signal gain from the viewpoint of interpretation. But the type of immateriality is left unexplained. The type cannot be that of separate substance, for any soul is the form of a body. In sensation it cannot be the functioning of a sense power apart from its material organ, since to act separately it would have to have separate existence, as Aristotle (*De An.*, III 4, 429a18-b22) reasons in demonstrating the separate status of mind. What is meant by the sense functioning solely in the order of form in cognition, and what is meant by form grasping form in sensation, is not dealt with satisfactorily. There is scarcely more than the affirmation that the sense does not function as matter informed by the sensible object, but only as form apprehending form.

A new basis for explaining the difference between material and immaterial reception of forms is brought forward in Averroes. It springs from the different ways in which a sensible thing can exist. The new viewpoint is accordingly that of existence. The background appears in Avicenna. For the Persian thinker the nature of a sensible thing, for instance equinity, was of itself neither singular nor universal. As existent in sensible things it was singular. As existent in the human soul it was universal.¹¹ This is a radically different approach from that of the Greeks. In Aristotle himself the viewpoint was from the side of the soul. The soul was all things potentially, and became the things of which it was aware. The Greek commentators kept their thought within that perspective. The new approach in medieval times was from the side of the things known or perceived. These existed first in themselves in the real world, and then in human cognition. In neither case was there question of the senses producing originally the objects of which they were aware. In this respect the cognitive faculties remained passive from both viewpoints. But the medieval perspective offered a new way of explaining immaterial reception. The immateriality consisted in a different way of existing. To exist in matter meant that the form was received materially. To exist in

the soul meant that the form was received in a different way, a way that in contrast could be termed immaterial.

Against this new background Aquinas repeats the tenets that every patient whatsoever receives form without matter from the agent, and that an agent "acts through its form and not through its matter." But he goes on to locate the meaning of "without matter" in the different mode of existence had by the sensible thing in being perceived. In his terminology the sensible form has natural existence in the sensible thing, but intentional or spiritual existence in the sense.¹³ Elsewhere, citing Averroes, he speaks of the forms being received immaterially, with the type of cognition depending upon the degree of immateriality.¹⁴ The notion of immaterial union of subject and object as the explanation (*ratio*) of cognition was given serious attention in the tradition of the Thomistic commentators.¹⁵ With the two ways of existing so sharply distinguished, the subject and the object were readily described as different in real or material existence but one and the same in cognitional or intentional existence. Their real distinction but cognitional identity was no longer a problem. In real existence the two remain really different.

Finally, to round out the picture, it might be well to note Zabarella's observation that the soul is the active cause of sensation because of its judging aspect, even though when dealing with the reception of the form Aristotle stresses the passive aspect. But the soul could not act in sensing unless the passive reception of the form had preceded.¹⁶ This was implicit in the Greek commentators (supra, nn. 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9) through their added requirement that cognitive unlike non-cognitive reception of form had to be "discerning," and that while passively receiving the form the sense went into action (see Simplicius, 166.12-17; supra, n. 9).

What leads may be gathered from this survey of the commentators? They show convincingly enough that reception "without the matter" cannot mean merely that the matter of the agent is not received by the patient, since that is common to all action and could not be the distinguishing mark of cognitive reception. The meaning, they make clear, has to be that cognitive reception takes place in an immaterial way, that is, without any matter being brought into a new form. This leaves the conclusion that only form receives further form in cognitive reception. For a Neoplatonist commentator that could hardly present difficulty. In the doctrine of Plotinus (*En.*, VI.5, 6) all the forms can be in any one form and are one in many. Yet the Aristotelian tenet that sense and the thing sensed are one in the actuality of cognition seems fully open to the notion that their forms become one in a way different from the reception of form in matter, which is a union that results in a further thing, the

composite. What is perceived is not a composite made of object and per-
cipient, but the object itself or the percipient itself. This aspect of cognition is not used by Aristotle to explain the present text, but it has to have been in his mind if the text is to have pertinent force.¹⁷ It is introduced early in Book III of *De Anima*, and the use of the phrase "without matter" continues,¹⁸ as though an integral part of that doctrine of cognition. The two belong together as different facets of the same epistemological doctrine.

Against the background of the interpretation developed in the Greek commentators, the retention of the article in the English translation "without the matter" may tend to be deceptive. The Greek article no more particularizes the matter than it does the term "sense" in the same sentence. In both instances the article serves to generalize. Reception "without matter," or "immaterial reception," or "receiving a form immaterially" would carry the notion much more exactly.

But if the identity of (sense) with (sensible object) in the actuality of cognition is the premise from which the immateriality of cognitional reception is drawn, how can Aristotle fail to mention the premise at this stage? When he states the premise elsewhere,¹⁹ he offers no proof of it. He proceeds as though a mere mention is necessary to recall the notion. He seems in those places to take for granted that it is familiar to and accepted by his hearers. In the present text, he neglects even to mention it. Nevertheless the notion does have to be presupposed in order to understand the assertion that the physical splitting of the wood and the sound in the percipient are different kinds of effect produced by the one cause, the thunderbolt (*De An.*, II 12.424b3-18). Laying aside the Cartesian philosophical notion that material things are inert, and keeping in mind the immense energy their nuclear structure contains as well as present tendencies towards limited acceptance of abiogenesis, there seems nothing too objectionable against the tenet that the energy emitted by a material thing should bring about both a new physical form in the patient and a cognitional form in the sense organ.

The difference between the two types of effect is immediately described in the text (424a26-32). Cognitional reception is located in a definite mean, in contrast to the indefinite (b15) aspect of physical reception. Physical movement can be had in any intensity, while sensation is always definite. Elsewhere the difference is placed as that between the actuality of something perfect, on the one hand, and the actuality of something imperfect on the other. This is understood in a way that allows the actuality of what is perfect to be expressed by the present and perfect tenses taken together. Sight and pleasure, for instance, are complete from the

things intellectually shows that there is such a mind at work. It has a mind that brings about all things in the potential mind, as light makes potential colors actual (*De An.*, III 5, 430a10-17).

What does this mean? The nature and identity of the Aristotelian active intellect has puzzled commentators through the centuries. There is still no satisfactory explanation. There are difficulties in recognizing it as an efficient cause. Aristotle had stated shortly before (*De An.*, III 2, 426a2-11) that the actuality (*energeia*) of the efficient cause is in the patient. He can hardly be expected now to attribute without reservation efficient causality to a fully actualized separate mind. He has to represent light as though by its mere presence it renders potential colors actual. Apparently in the presence of the separate intellect the things attained in phantasms become actually understood. Likewise from the side of the potential mind efficient causality, as Aristotle knew it from the sensible world, seems inadmissible. At least in this respect the mind is impassive even in receiving forms (4, 429a15-16). Though entirely potential, it cannot be acted upon in the way matter undergoes change. In this respect it receives the forms immaterially. On its own level it becomes the thing known parallel to the way the percipient becomes the thing perceived. On both levels the one and the same thing is attained by the one and the same cognitive agent. Concomitant sensible and intellectual cognition is thereby accounted for, the potentially intelligible in the sensible object becoming actually intelligible.

Each of these two levels of cognition, namely sensation and intellection, is accompanied for Aristotle by a corresponding awareness of self. In the light of the foregoing considerations the reason is not hard to see. Since in the actuality of sensation the percipient *is* the thing perceived, there cannot be awareness of the one apart from the awareness of the other. The two are identical in the closest of all unions, that of cognition. Every sensation accordingly involves self-awareness (*De An.*, III 2, 425b12-28). In strictly exact language this means that the percipient, that is, the man or the animal, is aware of himself in every act of sensation. Perceiving the object, he concomitantly perceives himself. It is always the man who perceives by means of the sense and is thereby aware of himself.

Correspondingly the mind that has been actuated by the forms of other things through the active intellect becomes those things intellectually. It is identical with them in cognition. In knowing them it thereby

knows itself. Moreover, it remains habitually informed by them and in this way is habitually capable of self-knowledge: "But when the mind has become the several groups of its objects . . . the mind is then capable of thinking itself" (*De An.*, III 4, 429b5-10; trans. Heft). This in fact is for Aristotle the condition on which the human mind can have knowledge of itself. Unless it knows other things it is not immediately able to know itself.²² Unlike a Cartesian mind it does not have itself as an object independently of the cognition of sensible things. All human knowledge for Aristotle has accordingly its origins in the objects provided by sensation.

In both sensation and intellection, then, an object other than self has epistemological priority over self-awareness. This explains the assertion "But it appears that *knowledge* and sensation and opinion and *thought* are always of other objects, and only incidentally of themselves" (*Metaph.*, A 9, 1074b35-36; trans. Apostle).

For the purposes of the present inquiry, then, the picture rounds out very roughly but sufficiently. All the intelligible objects are encountered originally in the things of the sensible world. They are made present to the mind through the union of identity achieved in sensation, in which the cognitive agent, the man, is identical with the thing itself that is perceived. The thing's intelligible aspects necessarily continue in the thing when it is perceived, and are there to be known through the operation of the mind, as cognitional identity with the thing is pursued on the higher plane. The separate and active intellect supplies for the efficient causality of the sensible thing, which could act upon the sense organ but not upon the mind. In this way the parallelism of the immaterial reception of forms runs through the Aristotelian doctrine of cognition on both the sensible and the intelligible levels.

Though definite enough in its broad outlines, the doctrine inevitably stirs up a horner's nest of trouble. The separate intellect has to be "something" (*De An.*, III 5, 430a10-12) of the soul's nature. Certainly it is a required factor for intellection. How then can it remain separate? It cannot function as an efficient cause in the full sense, yet it has to bring a potentiality into actuality. It has the aspect of a *hexis* (430a15), suggesting that it already has the intelligible forms as it were in a relatively habitual state and accordingly is able to bring them into actuality when the sense images are present to the cognitive agents. Yet in its separate status it is its own self only (a22-23). These difficulties are not answered

in the text of Aristotle. They are loose ends left dangling. But each conclusion is reasoned to carefully and cogently. Together they provide globally an insight into human intellection that would be difficult to match in any other philosophy. They are themes that still reward careful and patient study, even though modern philosophy has not as yet chosen to follow them out in depth. The philosophical principles they involve are unmatched in the explanation of our immediate awareness of the sensible world, of which, as even Locke (*Essay*, IV, 11, 3) observed, nobody seriously doubts. With that immediate certainty, things external to ourselves and existing independently of us can serve as the objective and common measure of truth.

9. A Note on Aristotle, De Anima 3.4,429b9

I

The conclusion drawn by Aristotle at *De Anima* 3.4,429b9-10 has been understood traditionally to bear in one way or another upon the knowledge the human intellect has of itself. The manuscript text, handed down without significant variants, allows only that meaning.¹ This text reads: καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ αὐτὸν τῷτε δύναται νοεῖν. It is rendered in the Oxford translation "the mind too is then able to think itself" (J. A. Smith), in the Loeb "moreover the mind is then capable of thinking itself" (W. S. Hett), and in similar ways in other English versions—Wallace (1882), Hammond (1902), Hicks (1907), Foster-Humphries (1951)—before Hamlyn's translation (1968).

Likewise self-knowledge of the intellect was what the Greek commentators undertook to explain when dealing with the Aristotelian text at this point. Though radically divided in their understanding of the manner in which the human intellect knows itself, they regularly focussed their attention on the problem of self-knowledge for discussion here. That way of accepting the text can be documented as far back as Alexander of Aphrodisias in the late second and early third centuries of our era.² In orthodox Aristotelian fashion Alexander (p. 86.14-29) accounted for the self-knowledge in terms of the cognitional identity of knower with what is known, for in this identity the one could not be grasped cognitively without awareness of the other. He referred to the Aristotelian parallel of the tenet with what had been shown to take place in sensation. But he also explained that just as the intellect when exercising its cognition is identical with the form known, so on the habitual level it is already *able* to know itself once it possesses that form. It has the habitual knowledge directly and *per se* of the known form. But coincidentally³ it is able to know itself because it *happens* to have become that which it knows. There can be no doubt that Alexander is understanding the line in the sense that the intellect is able to know itself, and is able to do so because it has been actualized by the habitual possession of the form or forms of something else.