

12-1966

Does Aristotle Demonstrate the Definition of the Soul?

E. M. Barksdale

Follow this and additional works at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/sagp>

 Part of the [Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity Commons](#), [Ancient Philosophy Commons](#), and the [History of Philosophy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Barksdale, E. M., "Does Aristotle Demonstrate the Definition of the Soul?" (1966). *The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter*.
4.
<https://orb.binghamton.edu/sagp/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). It has been accepted for inclusion in The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter by an authorized administrator of The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). For more information, please contact ORB@binghamton.edu.

Does Aristotle Demonstrate the Definition of the Soul?

The beginning of the second chapter of Book II of Aristotle's de Anima raises difficult problems of interpretation. We are here enjoined to go after our subject from a new point of view, moving from what is unclear and more obvious to what is clear and more knowable in itself (413a11-13). Recommending this policy implies that the earlier policy was different. If the traditional interpretation is correct, this earlier policy was followed in chapter 1 of Book II and issued in the general definition of the soul:

If then we have to give some general statement which applies to all kinds of soul, it would be the first actuality of physical organic body (412b4-6).

The general definition of chapter 1 was arrived at from considerations that were more knowable by nature, so Aristotle seems to say,—and plausibly, in view of the divisions by which the definition was introduced. But this characterization puts us before a puzzle, for Aristotle goes on to say in chapter 2 that the definitory argument must show not only the that but must show the cause (413a13-16). This implies that the preceding chapter, chapter 1 with its general definition, stated the that and not the cause. Aristotle's remarks seem to be contrary to each other, as Cajetan² puts it. The general definition is more knowable and at the same time it is a that-type definition, stating the fact and not the cause.

This puzzle leads straight to another one. If the general definition does not show the cause, some future definition will—so the passage would seem to say. When we look ahead we find an argument that is syllogistic in form and is perhaps the argument to which Aristotle refers, but this argument, nearly everyone agrees³, is a demonstration through the effects, to use the scholastic word. Aristotle here shows that the soul is correctly called form or actuality in the case of three of its particular functions, nutrition, perception and understanding, which are forms of life for which soul is responsible. Here a second definition of the soul is advanced as minor premise, and the conclusion which issues is the general definition of chapter 1. The proof shows that soul is actuality or form because the soul—and this is the second definition—is that by which we primarily live, perceive and understand. But this of course is not a demonstration at all, for none of these so-called effects are causes.

Does Aristotle ever get around to showing the cause? It is our point that there is no proof, no demonstration of the general definition of the soul, for the reason that the definition of the soul is general. This is nothing new. The general definition applies to none of the things that are (414b26-27). The terms of the definition are not precise and therefore cannot be mediated. But it shall also be our point that demonstration is perhaps possible for the particular functions of the soul, the functions of nutrition, perception and intuitive thinking. Demonstration is possible for these functions to the degree that a cause can be shown for each of them. Now each of these functions has a corresponding object. Nutrition has as its object food; perception has as its object the object of perception (color, for example, is the object of the faculty of sight); and intuitive thinking has as its object the object of thought, the νοητόν. We have grounds to suspect that for each of these functions the object is the cause. At least this is the case for perception, which we shall take as model for the other functions. The object of perception arouses the faculty of perception to activity.

If our posing of the problem is correct, we shall have reason for thinking that in the spheres of the particular functions the object is displayed by a middle term showing how a certain kind of actuality pertains to a certain kind of potency characteristic of the function. When this happens, when one term, the actuality, is shown to belong to another, the potency, because of the presence of an object, something is demonstrated about the faculty in question. Now the soul as a whole is not exposed to objects. Therefore the causality of objects in respect to the whole soul cannot be shown. There is no middle term which can show why first actuality, taking this as the major term, belongs to organic physical body, or physical body potentially having life, taking either of these expressions as minor terms. Therefore the general definition of the soul, if its terms are construed univocally, cannot be demonstrated.

But the objects to which the soul is exposed have spheres of operation in the special faculties. Though the objects cannot be objects for the soul as a whole, the actualities they arouse, and the potencies to which those actualities are shown to be connected, bear a certain resemblance to the actuality and potency of the general definition. Put differently, the meaning of actuality and potency--the opposition expressed in the original definition--can be made precise in the case of the particular functions. For these functions an object is furnished--an *ἐπίδοσις* forthcoming--showing how they are aroused to actuality. But the terms, whose connection is by this means displayed, are equivocally the same as the terms of the general definition. In a certain sense, then, the general definition can be demonstrated; it can be demonstrated within the spheres of the particular functions of the soul; it can be demonstrated because its terms are equivocally the same as those of the particular functions.

The philological problem posed by the juxtaposition of chapters 1 and 2 can be regarded as an invitation to explore the problem of causal mediation for the functions of nutrition, perception and thought. The rest of this paper must be considered an exercise, a sifting of the available material with the aim of discovering the terms for presenting the arguments. The fact that the arguments, with greater or lesser clarity, shall involve objects will give some indication of the point of view that presides over the undertaking. The results of our philological posing of the problem are as follows: The text confronts us with two paradoxes. (1.) The general definition was at once, we were led to believe, more knowable and a that-type definition. (2.) Some future definition stating the cause will be demonstrated, but the only full scale syllogistic argument which seems to fit the bill is an argument showing the fact not the cause, an argument showing the more knowable through the less knowable. We have just indicated how one must go about settling the first paradox. The general definition, which is admittedly a definition stating the fact, is more knowable by virtue of a series of equivocations, by resemblance to terms presented in the discussions of the particular functions. As for the second paradox, a solution depends on whether the particular functions are taken separately or taken together. Taken separately, the accounts of the particular functions, because they show the objects, will show the cause. In this respect these accounts are concerned with the more knowable. Herein consists the analogy with mathematical demonstration. But the knowability of the particular functions has no bearing on their knowability taken together. The particular functions taken together are a listing. There is no proof which shows the ground of their belonging together,--shows it, that is, in the sense of providing the cause. The first question to be asked is what is it about the

general definition that should cause us to seek the solution we have indicated? The root difficulty with the definition is not so much that it is general or common, as that, while being common and therefore applicable to none of the things that are, it nevertheless lays down the guidelines for subsequent investigations. This brings us to the question of homonymy.

The definition seems to be deficient. It does not mention objects which would furnish the εἶδος giving the terms of the definition precision. Not only that, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to derive an account of the objects from the general definition. But the general definition does provide the framework within which the search for the middle term would be meaningful. The general definition, in other words, does not provide material for future deductions, but throws out terms in need of further differentiations.

Now what are these guidelines for investigation? They are what we have called, by a certain license⁴, the major and minor terms. One of the many things we could say about these terms is that there is nothing to prevent first actuality from being called second potency.⁵ The point can be illustrated from Aristotle's own example.⁶ Vision is the soul of the eye (412b18-20). It is the substance and presumably therefore the first actuality. To this is contrasted the activity of the eye, the actual seeing, which is like waking, a higher degree of actuality (412b28). But Aristotle goes on to compare the soul to vision, and vision is the faculty or capacity or power (δύναμις) of the organ of sight (413a1). Vision is here likened in one relation to the actuality which is substance, and in another relation to a potency. The power of an organ, which is the higher degree of potency, must be distinguished from the potency which is the matter. There are then two potencies. The higher degree is presumably equivalent to first actuality, and the faculty of perception is this kind of potency (cf. 417b30-418a1). When we say that something is potentially something, we are not speaking univocally, says Aristotle. There is a difference⁷ in how the word for potency (or potentiality) can be used.

I wish to suggest that the failure to observe this difference, when it is a question of the terms of the general definition, leads to homonymy. The point can be put negatively. Because we can assign numbers to the degrees of potency or degrees of actuality, we must not think, in the absence of extra information, that precision is given to the entities or capacities which are assigned rankings by this means. When we say that something is in second potency in relation to a lower potency and at the same time in first actuality vis-a-vis a second actuality, we are not stating an exact relation between the somethings thus described. The distinction between higher and lower tells us that there is a difference, and in this sense the homonymy is avoidable. But it does not tell us why there is a difference, and in this latter sense homonymy is implicit in the distinction.

If homonymy should occur, it would occur on the following model. An eye without vision is an eye without that kind of potency characteristic of a body such as to live. An eye without vision is homonymously an eye (412b20-22). The relation of dead to living here can be applied to the whole living body. It is the relation of what is not potentially existent so as to live to what is potentially existent so as to live (412b25-26). The whole faculty of perception is proportioned to the whole perceptive body qua such i.e. qua such as to perceive. Such a body is potentially existent so as to function i.e. so as to perceive. Now it is possible that perceptive body could be devoid of this potency, that is to say, dead, in which case perceptive body would be

homonymous. He who mistakes the dead body for a living one (or the dead organ for a living one) would be mistaking a body which is not such for one that is such, i.e. potentially existent so as to live. The mistake would involve the difference between the absence and the presence of a potency.

A similar relation holds between seed and full-fledged organic body. The former is potentially such (412b27), that is to say, potentially potentially (sic) existent so as to live, while the latter is such, i.e. potentially existent so as to live. Now the mistake of taking a seed for a full-fledged organic body would involve differences between degrees of potency: a seed is potentially such body, and such body is potentially existent so as to live.

There is a similar error possible in reference to the organ and the faculty animating it, and still another in reference to the faculty and its activity. Both errors are failures to notice differences in degrees of potency and actuality.

Now the mistake in such cases would not lie in using the word "potency" or "actuality" incorrectly, but in using a word for an organ, faculty or activity and meaning the wrong degree of potency. The homonymy in these cases results from the words used in naming the psychic functions. The point is not that one is likely to say that one potency is another--that one potency is homonymously the same as the other--but that the failure to distinguish the organ from the faculty or the faculty from the activity involves the failure to distinguish degrees of potency, just as in the case of "eye", the failure to distinguish dead from living eye involved the failure to distinguish absence and presence of the relevant potency.

Potency and actuality are technical terms. One uses them to explain the failure of the correct application of other terms. For example, because there is no word "colorizing" expressing the actuality of color, there is the danger of a possible homonymy on color. We are protected from this homonymy by distinguishing an actuality of color, which is nameless, from the potency of color expressed by the word "color" (426a14).

The minimum to be drawn from this discussion so far is that little is gained by being able to say that a faculty is in act vis-a-vis a lower potency and that it is in potency vis-a-vis its activity, although the chances of homonymy are thereby diminished. The reason for this is that the exact relation of potency to potency or of potency to act is not through this means stated. Analogy is not enough. The reason in turn for this is that what the actuality is cannot be stated without the object. The relation, or at least part of it, is made precise when the object is presented. As Aristotle's slogan has it, the faculty of perception is potentially such as the object already is actually (418a3-4). Here the meaning of "potentially" is filled out by the actuality of the object. The object is an *εἶδος*, a visible species without matter, and perception is that which is receptive of this *εἶδος* (424a18-19). The faculty is potentially such; that is, the potency of the faculty is defined by reference to the object in actuality. It is then this potency and no other.

However, I think it can also be said that in default of the *εἶδος* provided by the object, the application of the technical distinctions potency and actuality leads to homonymy, if one wishes to explain, fully explain, psychic functioning by the use of these terms. If it is possible that the relation of a faculty to an actuality can be stated by reference to an object, and if this reference is not forthcoming, then, homonymy connected with the technical

language used to describe this relation becomes possible, for in that case one may or may not be referring to an εἶδος by means of the terms of the language. The homonymy depends on the possibility that the εἶδος is ascertainable, though not yet ascertained. Now we know that there are objects forth coming in the sphere of perception, and that the relation of the faculty to its activity can be stated by reference to this object. And we also know that the terms of the general definition can be used in the attempt to explain the relation of potency and actuality in the sphere of perception,--are so used, for after all they are the same terms. But the terms of the general definition may or may not have reference to the εἶδος provided by the objects. Therefore these terms involve homonymy. In other words, the homonymy connected with the terms of the general definition can be established when it is shown that the object of psychic functioning stands in a certain relation to the faculty and its activity, when, that is, the relation of these factors to each other is laid bare in a demonstration.⁸

Since it is not our view that the argument of chapter 2 (414a4-19), in which the general or first definition of the soul is proven through a second, is an argument showing the cause, the question might well be asked: what kind of argument is it? It is not at all the proof that is required; it does not show how first actuality, the major, pertains to the minor, organic physical body, through a middle showing the cause. What is being shown rather is that the entire definiens of the general definition, form or actuality of that which is capable of receiving it, applies to the definiendum soul. And it is being shown in the case of the functions or parts of the soul distinguished earlier in chapter 2, three of which taken together and prefixed by the expression "that by which we primarily" form the middle term.

It is probable that the demonstration of chapter 2 is of the kind set forth by Aristotle in II 8 of Posterior Analytics (93a37-93b3). The example is as follows:

Moon is C, eclipse A, and B is the full moon's not being able to produce a shadow though there is nothing visible between us and the moon. Then if B, not being able to produce a shadow though there is nothing between us and the moon, belongs to C, and if A, having been eclipsed, belongs to B, it is obvious that there is an eclipse, but why there is an eclipse is not yet obvious, and we know that there is an eclipse but what it is we do not know.

Now the principle to follow in the application of this material from the Posterior Analytics is that in II 2 of de Anima we are not yet clear as to what phenomena are before us; we are not yet clear as to what is the fact. If we are clear as to the fact, then we can go on to find the cause. The function of the demonstration of chapter 2 is to display the fact, to display the interconnections of the meanings of soul, life, and form of such and such a body. But this, which is no easy task, involves special difficulties as to the disposition of terms. The simplest course to take, though it reverses the ordering of Cajetan⁹, is the following: Let A be soul, B that by which primarily we live and perceive and think, and C form. What we want to achieve through this arrangement of terms is to make it obvious that there is soul in the sense in which it is relevant, i.e. through the function of its parts. Soul has the meaning it has through a list of conditions, just as eclipse has the meaning it has through a list of conditions, which together form the middle term of the that syllogism.

An advantage of this arrangement of major, middle and minor is that it permits the minor, form or actuality, to carry with it the complete definiens, albeit in a revised format. If it is said that soul is form and actuality because it is not matter or subject, it is also said that it is form and actuality of some body (cf. 412a17-19 with 414a14 and 414a18-19). Soul is actuality of that which is capable of receiving it (414a9-10). And this should not strike us as strange, for in a proof of the fact before us, it is entirely in place that the whole of the original definition, with its uneliminated "of" and its covert negation, be shown to attach to the major.

Furthermore, it is desirable that soul be the major term rather than the minor. Soul is comparable to eclipse, and in the examples that we have at our disposal (compare II2 of Posterior Analytics with chapter 8 of the same book) eclipse not only turns up as the definiendum. It may also be the major term. That it be the major is to be expected in syllogisms showing the fact, but the reason for this doesn't become apparent until we have moved from factual to causal syllogisms. When setting up a factual syllogism we put forward three terms, one of which is the thing to be defined. When the cause is at length produced, we have the three terms of the causal syllogism plus the definiendum, which was the major of the factual syllogism. When this happens, conversion of the major of the causal syllogism with the definiendum becomes possible. How does this happen? When the cause is produced, it is shown forth by a new term, the middle term of the causal syllogism. The middle term of the factual syllogism is then displaced; it becomes the major (in an abbreviated form) of the syllogism showing the cause. For example, the cause of an eclipse is the interposition of the earth. When the cause is introduced as a middle, this means that the old middle is displaced and a reorganization of the terms of the syllogism must follow. The list of conditions forming the middle of the factual syllogism telling us when an eclipse is present is, in the syllogism showing the cause, represented by the phrase "absence of light." Now eclipse is not a term in the causal syllogism because absence of light or its equivalent, the middle of the factual syllogism, is now the major. But nothing prevents eclipse, the definiendum of the causal syllogism, from being substituted for absence of light, i.e. nothing prevents it from becoming major term. And this is apparently what is happening at Posterior Analytics 93a30-31. The definiendum, then, is convertible with the new major, which we must remember is not merely absence of light, but a series of conditions which present the results of investigation. When the middle of a factual syllogism is sufficiently articulated, the chances of seeing the cause are increased. When the cause is at length produced, the reorganization of the terms of the syllogism is then possible.

Now why is soul the major term of the factual syllogism? The reason is that soul is the definiendum, and as such, must be replaceable in the causal syllogism, if there were to be one, by the old middle, the so-called effects. That is to say, with the reorganization of terms produced by the advancement of the cause, the effects would be the new major. Soul would then yield up its place as major in the causal syllogism, and this could not happen unless it were convertible with its effects--unless, in other words, soul were the major of the syllogism showing the fact. Aristotle says that when the terms are immediate the fact and reasoned fact are seen together. I take this to mean that the fully documented fact and its commensurate cause are known simultaneously (93a35-36). In the case of the soul we shall see that the documentation of II2 de Anima leads to the insight that the commensurate cause is to

be found on the level of the particular functions taken separately,--an insight that has certain consequences for the reorganization of terms.

If the demonstrations of the definitions of soul and eclipse were at all points similar, we should expect that just as in the case of eclipse one can show the cause, viz. the interposition of the earth, so one could show why soul is actuality of that which is capable of receiving it. This would be to advance a new middle showing the connection between the so-called effects of the soul and the definiens. That is to say, with the conversion of soul with its effects, we would have had as terms of the causal syllogism, the effects, the cause and the original definiens. In both cases, if the analogy of soul and eclipse held, we should move from a syllogism showing the fact to a syllogism showing the cause. At this point our use of II Posterior Analytics must be revised, for there is no moving from the fact to the cause in the case of the soul. Because the soul in its entirety is not exposed to objects there is no middle term that can be introduced into the so-called demonstration through the effects. What happens rather is that we find causes in the spheres of the particular functions and it is here that we can look for analogues to interposition of the earth, for in the spheres of the particular functions objects are forthcoming. This at any rate was our hypothesis.

In the case of perception, which shall furnish us with a model for the other functions, we have as terms A activity of perception, B object of perception, C faculty of perception. What is being defined is perception. Perception is the activity which belongs to the faculty because of the presence of an object. Where do we get these terms from? Let us return for a moment to the that syllogism, the so-called demonstration of the definition of the soul through its effects. While we can't provide a cause for the soul in its entirety and so reorganize the terms of the that syllogism, we can nevertheless concede on the level of a particular function what must be refused for the whole soul. If a causal middle had been provided for the whole soul, the new major would have contained the "effects", for it would have been the old middle, that by which we primarily live, perceive and understand. Now, as we hypothesized, there is no such major in a causal syllogism for the whole soul, because there is no such syllogism. But the term has as its heir in the sphere of perception the major term activity of perceiving (αἰσθητικότης). This activity is an actuality. Moreover, the actuality in question is the higher grade of actuality that is contrasted by Aristotle to the first actuality characteristic of the soul as a ground phenomenon. And it turns out, conveniently enough, that this first actuality is none other than the minor term. The minor of the demonstration through the effects was the whole definiens, actuality of that which is capable of receiving it. On the level of perception the term undergoes a certain degree of specialization. It is actuality, to be sure, but that kind of actuality characteristic of what it is to be a faculty. In other words, the first actuality of the general definition is on the level of perception properly called not an actuality but a potency, a faculty, and appears therefore as the minor. It is the second potency of our earlier discussion.

These considerations give us the major and minor of the syllogism dealing with perception. On the level of perception, then, we find analogues with the original, general definition,--but also a shift in the degree of actuality. First actuality is paired off with the higher degree of actuality characteristic of the activity of perceiving; these are the majors. Physical organic body, or physical body potentially having life, is paired off with the faculty of perceiving; these are the minors. And because of the shift in the degree of

actuality homonymy is possible. In the case of the major there is homonymy on actuality. The word "actuality" could mean first or second actuality. In the case of the minor there is homonymy on potency (τὸ δυνατόν ὄν). The word "potency" could mean second potency or first actuality. And he who attempts to explain the activity or faculty of perception by reference to the terms actuality and potency is in danger of falling into error because of the homonymy associated with these terms. Precision would be given to these terms, actuality and potency, when there is an εἶδος forthcoming, and this consideration brings us to the middle term.

The middle giving the cause is the new factor, which, as has been indicated earlier, has no antecedent in the general definition of the soul or its demonstration through effects. There are two reasons which cause us to elevate the object of perception to the privileged status of a demonstrative middle. One is that the object is prior to the activity of perceiving, just as the activity is prior to the faculty (415a16-22). The object is, secondly, with the possible exception of the object of smelling, a cause¹⁰ vis-a-vis its media and faculties. For example, the object of hearing, sound, is that which sets in motion a continuous mass of air up to the hearing (420a3-4). The examination of the five senses centers around the definition of the objects, not the faculties.

In explanation of the terms as I have arranged them here it must be noted that just as there is a distinction between the activity of the faculty and the faculty itself, and this is the distinction between major and minor, so also is there a distinction between activity of object and object itself.¹¹ But this latter distinction does not yield a new term, for the actuality of the object and that of the faculty is the same.

Taking this arrangement as paradigmatic (we shall have occasion later on for a revision), let us move on to nutrition, the most primitive of the soul's functions. Aristotle does us the favor of presenting a schema for the function of nutrition as follows, ringing changes on the root verb "to feed": There are three factors, the thing fed and that by which it is fed and the feeder. The feeder is the first soul, the thing fed is the body having this, and that by which it is fed is food (416b20-23). The feeder is a psychological function. It is the first soul, that grade of actuality sufficient to guarantee a minimum of life. The thing fed is itself a composite including this function, viewed as a potency capable of having it. The feeder and the thing fed are respectively the major and minor. But what about the middle?

Food is a problematic term and a treacherous middle. The first thing we notice about it is that it is not a cause in the desired sense: it does not involve an εἶδος which is bequeathed by its agency to a factor receiving it. It is rather like matter. Understood as a contrary (416a31-b3), it suffers at the agency of the thing fed (here to be taken as including the capacity to feed). The thing fed on the other hand does not suffer. Its only change is that from inactivity to activity (416b2-3), and, moreover, this actuality does not seem to involve actuality of the food.

The difference with perception is striking. In the case of perception, there is a change of the faculty¹² from unlike to like. After it has suffered it is like its object (417a18-20). This "suffering" is a progress to actuality (417b7), a preservation of what is potential by what is actual (417b3-4). The object is itself responsible for the change (compare 417b20-21 with 417a17-18 and 417b3-5). But the movement of food from undigested to digested, from unlike to like, does not seem to be an actuality; and food is not responsible for

this change (416a29-416b9). It is rather the first soul that is the agent.

Food has two rôles, one as like and another as unlike. Whereas in the case of perception the difference of like and unlike is suspended in the higher perfection of an actuality, this does not seem to be possible with food. Food has as a term two meanings, not one. Moreover, it does not perform its job as mediating between the first grade of actuality and the compositum which possesses this. We cannot say of feeding that the actuality of food and the actuality of feeding is the same.¹³

It might be argued that though the defects of food as a term render suspect its rôle as a middle showing the cause, the sins of the object on the level of nutrition are redeemed elsewhere--on the level of perception. We turn therefore to further observations on perception, which we took as our model case.

According to Aristotle, the actuality of the object of perception and the faculty of perception is one and the same (425b26-27). Here, so it seems, we have the results of the successful functioning of the middle term. We even have, in a related argument, something that looks like a syllogism. When that which is capable of hearing is activated and that which is capable of sounding sounds, then the actuality of hearing and actuality of sound takes place at the same time (425b29-31). Now we started out in our earlier discussion suggesting, with the materials then at our disposal, that the faculty of perception is aroused to activity through the presence of an object. A few considerations will show that the earlier approach was misleading, in that it implied that the object of perception, without qualifiers, was sufficient to produce the result stated in the conclusion: that actuality pertains to the faculty. This orientation will have to be revised.

What we have here in the premises is a statement as to the actuality of sound as well as a statement as to the actuality of hearing. Granted these premises, the simultaneity of the two actualities would follow. We may take it, since the actualities are assumed in the premises, that the combined capacities (that what has hearing can hear, and that what has sound can sound) are not sufficient to produce the desired simultaneity. Not only this, the capacities taken separately are not sufficient. It is not necessary for that which has hearing to be actually hearing, and it is not necessary for that which has sound to be always sounding (425b28-29).

These observations show us, among other things, that the object of perception, though it may be the causative factor in perception, is something in potency and is therefore not in itself sufficient to guarantee the actualization of what is potential. This object must be in actuality before anything follows,¹⁴ but once the object is in activity we have some entailments. The actuality of the object involves that of the faculty, and the actuality of the faculty involves that of the object. For, as Aristotle says, it is necessary that hearing and sound, if spoken of in the inflections of actuality, be saved and destroyed at the same time (426a17-18). The object of perception is not tout court the middle term. This is certainly one lesson to be drawn from the present passage.

But Aristotle goes on to say that just as the action and the passion are in the passive factor and not in the active factor, so also the activity of the object and that of the faculty of perception is in the faculty (426a9-11). This stating of the argument throws a new light on our problem. The interest of the passage lies in showing that once the actualities are present they must

be in the passive factor. It was for this reason that Aristotle had said at the outset that though the object and faculty were in actuality the same, in being they were other (425b27). They must be other in being, because after actualization, there must be something left over, something different in being from actuality, in which the actuality takes place. Or rather, in order for the actuality to take place, there must be present as a condition that in which it takes place. This is the faculty.

We have here not a solution to the question of the mediation between potency and act but a sharpening of the question. It is necessary that the actuality of both the faculty and the object be in that factor which is affected. If this is the conclusion to be shown, then the issue is no longer how the faculty may be raised to actuality, as we thought in our earlier discussion. Nor is the issue the identity of the two actualities, that of object and faculty. That identity is now among the premises. The faculty of perception receives the *Εἶδος* of the objects without the matter. This passage of *Εἶδος* is now assumed, and the problem has become, not the fact of successful vision, but the grounds upon which the actuality of vision could be in something, could be sustained by something in potency. But this is, in more narrowly restricted terms, the problem with which we began: the relation of an actuality to what is potential.

We have remaining as a problem the relation of intuitive knowledge to its objects. We already know that the object (*νοητόν*) is prior to the activity of thinking (*νοεῖν*) just as thinking is prior to the faculty (*νοητικόν*). See II 4.415a16-22. The question may be asked, what among these three terms is the cause?

If we are to believe III 5 de Anima it is not the object of thought that is the cause, for the teaching of that celebrated chapter is rather that the mind or intellect is the cause. To the mind in its active capacity belongs the epithet *νοητικόν* and this would seem to settle the issue. There is a mind which is related to a passive factor, also designated mind, as cause and agent is related to matter. One mind is what it is by becoming all things, the other mind by making all things (*ποιεῖν* 430a15). The chapter seems to put insuperable difficulties before our hypothesis that the object of knowledge is causative.

Now one can agree that the mind which is separated and impassive and unmixed is *νοητικός*, and that it is immortal and eternal, but one is not thereby committed to an interpretation that would have this mind active and causative vis-a-vis the objects of knowledge. One is not thereby committed, for it does not follow that because the mind is active it is active vis-a-vis its proper objects. The mind is indeed the active factor, but not because it works on its proper objects. The objects of knowledge are themselves unmoved and eternal (Met. 1072a24-27), and qua objects of knowledge cannot be said to be in a relation of potency to a faculty which knows them. If chapter 5 does not establish that the object of knowledge is the causative factor in knowing, it does not deny this; and there is no passage in this chapter which can be so construed as to say that what is actually¹⁵ an object of knowledge suffers at the agency of the intellect. We have no right to deny the title *νοητικόν* to *νοητόν* because that title has been awarded to *νοῦς*, just as we have no right to deny primacy to *νοῦς* on the contrary supposition.¹⁶

The thesis asserting that the mind in its active capacity is primary and that the νοητά, its objects, suffer at its agency produces difficulties for the interpretation of chapter 4, which rests its exposition on the analogy with perception (cf. 431b21-24). The passive¹ mind rather than the active mind is the theme of chapter 4, but at no point does this chapter suggest that the factor which operates on the passive mind bringing it to actuality is the active mind, and in this respect the chapter stands in contrast to chapter 5. It is rather the object which is assigned the role of acting upon the mind.¹⁸ And it certainly does not suggest that the objects in actuality suffer at the agency of mind.

If thinking is like perceiving, it must be either a process in which the mind is acted upon by the object of thought or a process different from but analogous to that. The thinking part of the soul must therefore be, while impassible, capable of receiving the εἶδος; it must be potentially such as this object, but not identical with it. Mind must be related to what is its object as perception is to its object (429a13-18).

Chapter 4 is silent on the active mind as such, just as chapter 5 is silent on the object as such. We seem to be confronted with two different doctrines. The doctrine of chapter 4, based on the analogy with perception, suggests that just as the object of perception is ποιητικόν, so also is the object of mind. The doctrine of chapter 5 suggests that mind, because it makes all things, ought to be called ποιητικός. The solution to the question of the relation of mind and object lies in the connection of the doctrines. Now there is no reason why both doctrines should not hold. Granted the truth of the former, i.e. granted our interpretation of chapter 4, how can we bring ourselves to accept the latter? To ask the question why mind is active is to ask for the syllogism which will produce as a conclusion the doctrine of chapter 5. The solution lies in providing the extra premise that will give this as a result. We do not have to look far for this extra premise. It lies in the dictum that the mind in actuality is its object, a dictum that is the common property of chapters 4 and 5. In the words of chapter 4: In the case of things without matter, that which is thinking and that which is being thought is the same, for theoretical science and that which is known by theory is the same (430a3-5). In the words of chapter 5: science in actuality is the same as the thing (430a19-20). If mind is its object in actuality it would follow that mind or object could with equal justice be designated ποιητικόν. The doctrines of chapters 4 and 5 both hold as long as the identity of mind and object holds. The syllogism before us is: if the mind is in actuality the object, and if the object is causative, then the mind is causative.

But what kind of gain is this, and is this the syllogism which would show, once and for all, the relation of the actual to the potential? The syllogism is neater than the arguments suggested for nutrition and perception, but this neatness puts us before a problem. For we obtain the syllogism by virtue of a degree of abstraction that takes it altogether out of the sphere of entities whose connections we wanted to demonstrate. If any of the terms, mind, object and ποιητικός involved potentiality to any degree, the conclusion wouldn't follow; but because no potentiality is involved, nothing is demonstrated which is of help for the earlier problems we posed. For what we wanted to demonstrate was the connection between a faculty which was a potency and its activity, and we wanted to do this through an object that was a cause.

In the present case we have an object and a faculty but neither term is a potency.

The same difficulty could be raised in connection with the term ΠΑΘΗΤΙΚΟΝ. The utility of this word lies in its relation with ΠΑΘΗΤΙΚΟΝ, that which is affected by the agency of what is active. But there is no something else in the syllogism the receptivity of which is underscored.

If we revert to the state of the question as we left it with perception, we find that the terms were on the one hand the actuality of perception and its object, and on the other hand that in which the actuality was at home. In the case of perception we were unable to find a middle term showing the cause for the connection of these terms. It is conceivable that the situation is similar here. But whereas in the case of perception the issue, as redefined, was showing how the actuality of the active and passive factors could be in that which suffers, here the issue is, or ought to be, to account for an absence. Here we have an actuality, the identity of mind and object, but there is no passive thing corresponding to the faculty of perception, which is to receive this actuality when it is actual. If the actuality of mind and object is one term constituting a major, there is no minor term to which this term could stand in a positive relation.

The point requires a little elucidation. On the level of perception the actuality of perception and object was the same. But this actuality did not exhaust the nature of either object or faculty. Perception and object of perception are in being different. They retain connections with their respective substances or bearers. The faculty of perception was that in which the activity of object and faculty took place. Because it was in being other than that actuality the faculty was not entirely consumed in the actuality, but maintained a residual existence in which the actuality, that of object and faculty, had its life. Therefore the faculty qua that in which was a separate term, and therefore there was a problem as to the relation of the two terms.

But mind is not this kind of entity. Though it is true to say of mind and its object, the actuality of the mind and its object is the same, it is not true to say that they are in being other. The clause "in being they are different" doesn't apply, because the mind is nothing before it thinks and is therefore not a being at all. The relation between mind and object in actuality is an identity that is complete, whereas the identity of perception and its object was not expressible without reference to other conditions, the complexity of the animal or the complexity of the world to which the animal was exposed. Perception, for example, needs an organ. Thought on the theoretical level is not limited by this condition; and thought is perhaps independent of the lower faculties.

In short, it would be a mistake to think of mind as possessing attributes, as if it were a faculty like perception, before it thinks. And it would be a mistake, when mind has become its objects in actuality, to think that there is a mind still there, possessing the attributes of a finite potency, a faculty in which thinking takes place. Mind is not that kind of faculty.

Even in its revised presentation, we cannot bring our undertaking to completion, i.e. cannot show the connection between what is in actuality, here the identity of mind and object, and that which is in a relation of potency to it, for mind is in its passive condition nothing at all, and therefore

not a term. The immediacy of the relation between mind and object in actuality makes mediation between this, taken as a major, and the passive mind, taken as a minor, impossible. Further, we can't show that the object is cause in the sense providing the middle between potency and act, for the difficulty that has arisen in the case of perception rises again for thinking: the result of the causality of the object, however it is brought about, meets us in the premises, and what remains to be proven is the relation between this result and the potency.

Our conclusion must be that the definition of the soul is not, in the light of the evidence we have advanced, demonstrated. There is a certain irony attaching to this conclusion. We have seen that the perfection of actuality, i.e. the identity of mind and object, involved the elimination of potency to which it could be related. And we should be reminded in this connection of an aporia of theoretical or intuitive thinking. It is the activity of no body (413a7), and if mind is part of the soul then the thesis that the soul is not separated from the body must be qualified (cf. 415a10-11). Now one of the claims made for actuality was that the unity of soul and body was preeminently a unity of actuality (412b6-9). We had every reason to suspect that if once precision were given to the term actuality, the relation of it to body in a condition of potency could be shown. But on the level of intuitive thinking this promise has been fulfilled in a peculiar way. There is an identity to be sure, that of mind and object, but this identity enters into no relation to passive mind ascertainable by syllogistic analysis, or to any term that is heir to body in a condition of potency. And the absence of a relation between the terms must put an end to the attempt to demonstrate the definition of the soul on any level,--unless we allow that the terms can be related through negation, though the chances for demonstration in the sense of providing knowledge of the essence (Post. An. 79a26-27) would be diminished by this relaxation.

Our search for the middle term has been a search for the object. The ambiguous results of this undertaking should cause us to review the posing of the problem. The mathematical example, so far undiscussed by us, provides a clue. At the beginning of chapter 2 Aristotle says that the argument stating that squaring is the discovery of the mean proportional states the cause of the thing (413a19-20). The middle term here is discovery of the mean, not simply the mean. It is not the object simply that should have been advanced as a term in our use of the Aristotelian materials, but the object considered in its relation to the circumstances of discovery. What would this have meant? Undoubtedly a fuller use of the devices of Aristotle's formal logic. Negation is one such device, already mentioned; and from the beginning a reduction of the modalities has been a desideratum. It is the purpose of the present paper to have given some indication of the problems which the formal instruments would be introduced to solve.

Edward Barksdale

FOOTNOTES

¹See for example St. Thomas' commentary, Pirotta ed. # 212 and # 245 to # 252. For a recent version of the two-layers theory see I. Düring, Aristoteles (Heidelberg, 1966), pp. 558-59.

²Vio Cardinalis Caietanus, Scripta Philosophica, Commentaria in de Anima Aristotelis, Vol. II (ed. Coquelle; Rome, 1939), # 82, p. 77.

³Albert the Great is an important exception. See J. Vennebusch, Ein anonymer Aristoteleskommentar des XIII. Jahrhunderts (Paderborn, 1963), p. 41.

⁴This is a license because there is no mediation of the terms of the general definition, and therefore those terms are, strictly speaking, not major and minor.

⁵Philoponus 204. 35. Cf. H. Cassirer, Aristoteles Schrift "Von der Seele" (Tübingen, 1932), p. 46 and p. 181.

⁶Consult Trendelenberg, 2nd ed., p. 257 with footnote and p. 273.

⁷The difference is ἰσχυρισμός (418a1).

⁸It is to be noted that terms for faculty, object and activity of a particular function have all the same root, e.g. αἰσθητικόν, αἰσθητόν, αἰσθησέσθαι. It is possible that we have here a phenomenon similar to that described at Met. 1003a33-b4. The terms within the sphere of a particular function are said in many ways but not homonymously. This is a necessary condition, as I have suggested, of the homonymy of the terms of the general definition.

⁹Caietanus, op. cit., # 94, pp. 85-86; # 107, p. 95: Major, ratio and species (or actus # 96, pp. 86-87); middle, that by which we primarily live and perceive and move and think; minor, soul. The vet. trans. (and Moerbeke) after sentimus adds et movemur. This would have made the tally with the listing at 413b12-13 easier. P adds at the same place καὶ κινούμεθα, dropping καὶ ἰσχυρισμέθα.

¹⁰Note presence of ποιητικόν and κίνητικόν and related words in the chapters of Book II dealing with the objects of perception: 418a31-32, 420a3, 422b15-16, 424a1. Cf. P. Siwek, La Psychophysique humaine d'après Aristote (Paris, 1930), p. 101. Note, moreover, that the object of sight is an essence, τὸ κίνημα τε εἶναι 419a9-10.

¹¹Hicks and Siwek retain the MS. reading αἰσθησέσθαι. If we follow Alex. ἀπ. καὶ λυσ. 83.6, we ought to read αἰσθητόν at 417a13. Whether this is right or not depends on how καὶ is taken at 417a18: ὑπὸ τῷ ποιητικῷ καὶ ἐν ἐργείᾳ αὐτοῦ. See nr. 12 and 14 below.

¹²The point is that the faculty of perception, not the object, bears the parallel with the object in the sphere of nutrition. In the sphere of perception, the change of the faculty from unlike to like does not seem to involve a similar change on the part of the object of perception.

¹³Cf. Philoponus 280.17: "food is potentially like the thing fed, in actuality opposed."

¹⁴The doctrine of III 2 on this point is perhaps different from that of II 5. At 417a17-18 we learned that everything is moved by the agency of a causative factor which is in a state of actuality. We now see that the object of perception, if it is still to be dubbed causative, is not, by virtue of that consideration alone, in actuality.

¹⁵The image at 430a15-17, however it is to be interpreted, cannot be used to subvert this contention, for the reason that the action of light, to which mind is compared, is directed to colors in a state of potentiality. The image says something about the action of mind on what is potentially knowable--a question that is not within the scope of the present essay.

¹⁶This is the mistake of Barbotin, who, postulating the primacy of the intellect, seems to think the activity of the object would rule out that primacy. According to Barbotin, if the active intellect is moved by the intelligible object it loses its autonomy (E. Barbotin, La Théorie aristotélicienne de l'intellect d'après Théophraste (Louvain, Paris, 1954), pp. 155-7). But there is nothing in the relevant Theophrastean fragments I^b, VI, VIII (ibid., pp. 121-2) which states, as a proposition to be rejected, that the mind in a state of actuality is moved by its object; and there is nothing which states, as an implication to be embraced, that the mind would lose its primacy if moved by its object. Fragment VI says merely "...for the actuality of the mind to submit to another thing moving it is moreover absurd, in particular it is to make something other than the mind prior to it..." The absurdity results if something else (ἕτερον) moved the mind in actuality. But that "something else" is not here the νοῦτόν, as Barbotin assumes. If Priscian's context is to be credited, it is rather the mind's relations to soul when soul is preoccupied with bodily things (29.10) that is here at issue, and not its relations to objects of knowledge. It is indeed absurd to think that mind in act could be moved by soul thus preoccupied by bodily concerns. The problem of the "other intellect" clears itself up very nicely within the context of the interrelations among the faculties. The only possible exception to the rule that among the faculties (i.e. exclusive of objects) the mind is mover and not moved would be another mind.

Similar considerations should govern the interpretation of fragment XIII. Here the issue is the interrelations between principles of motion associated with body and those associated with soul. The "other" is not a νοῦτόν, as Barbotin thinks, but a lower principle (i.e. a principle which is not κρείττον) within the body-soul complex, that governing somatic movement. Naturally one cannot refer the movement of mind to a principle lower than it; and naturally Theophrastus rejects this alternative, the alternative namely that intellectual activities could be referred to a somatic principle. Now Barbotin assumes that the principle in question is the νοῦτόν. But where does Theophrastus or Aristotle say that the νοῦτόν is a principle inferior to the mind in actuality?

The aporiai of fragment I^b are solved by the identity of mind in actuality with its object; the fragment gives no support for Barbotin's case.

¹⁷Or possible intellect, if one prefers (429a22). "Passive," of course, is to be understood in light of the revisions of 417b2-16. Further qualifications on the use of this word for mind emerge from the discussion of ἀπὸθεῖα 429a29-b5 and from the aporia at 429b23-26, b29-31. One cannot conclude from the revised acceptance of πῶς ἔειν, meaning a kind of passage to ἐννοεῖα, that the νοῦτόν does not play the active role.

¹⁸Cf. ἐπὶ 429a14 with the same preposition at 417a18 and 417b4. Cf. also Met. 1072a30.