

## Aristotle's Perceptual Realism in De Anima 3.2



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In this paper I reexamine an interpretive problem raised by Aristotle's treatment of perceptible qualities in De Anima 3.2. A common reading of the second puzzle or aporia in that chapter over the past century attributes to Aristotle a form of perceptual antirealism, according to which colors, sounds, and other perceptible qualities possess a merely potential existence apart from perceptual acts. I challenge this view on the grounds that it rests on an overly isolated view of the aporia which fails to take into account Aristotle's broader philosophical commitments. When those commitments are taken into account the aporia is more convincingly read as a clarification and defense of perceptual realism. Methodologically, this paper offers a close reading of the second aporia of De Anima 3.2 (425b26-426a26) in a manner which makes it consistent with Aristotle's broader psychology and metaphysics. In particular, I focus on the like-like theory and the causal account of perception, both given in De Anima 2.5, as well as the ontological status of perceptible qualities as dual-category entities as articulated in the Categories. When these doctrinal commitments are taken seriously, I argue, numerous explanatory tensions emerge on the antirealist reading with respect to causal efficacy, qualitative alteration, and existential independence of perceptual qualities. On the realist reading, however, these tensions dissolve. Accordingly, I conclude that De Anima 3.2 actually reinforces rather than undermines the perceptual realism assumed elsewhere in the corpus, thereby restoring coherence to Aristotle's philosophy of perception and challenging a dominant trend in recent interpretation.

### Biography:

J. C. Weaver is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Oklahoma City University. His research focuses on ancient Greek philosophy, ethics, metaphysics, and philosophy of religion, with particular interests in Aristotelian psychology and metaphysics, and theories of perception. He also has active research interests in medieval philosophy, philosophy of science, and epistemology.