"Three German Commentators on the Individual Senses and the Common Sense in Aristotle's Psychology"

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This paper is undoubtedly pedantic but the point at issue is important for the understanding of Aristotle's psychological writings. It is that the *De Anima* is an incomplete and immature working-out of Aristotle's views on sense perception, whereas Aristotle's matured and crystallized views on this subject are to be sought in the *Parva Naturalia*, particularly in the *De Memoria, De Somno*, and *De Insomniis*. This is a long point and has been argued elsewhere.\(^1\)

The fulcrum of that argument turned on showing that as we read from the *De Anima* through the *Parva Naturalia* we note a development in the notion of the common sense, and see the rise of a more sophisticated and adequate outlook on the relation between the individual senses and the common sense.

Here I wish to bolster that argument by giving an account of a discussion that took place among three German scholars in the latter part of the 19th century. Their discussion, detailed and keen in its way, illustrates the frustrations and contradictions awaiting anyone who accepts the *De Anima* as Aristotle's final word on the nature of the senses. In conclusion I will indicate how their apparently insoluble difficulties disappear when the viewpoint we propose is embraced.

The discussion was initiated by Herman Schell in 1873 in a book entitled *Die Einheit des Seelenslebens aus den Principien der Aristotelischen Philosophie Entwickelt*. As the title suggests, Schell maintained that the primary or common sense is the only genuine sense faculty, the individual senses being aspects or functions of it. A few years later in 1877 C. Baeumker's *Des Aristoteles Lehre von den äussern und innern Sinnesvermögen* appeared in which he criticizes Schell and claims that the individual senses are distinct from the primary sense and are seated in the external organs of the eye, ear etc. A year later in 1878 J. Neus hausser published his volume on *Aristoteles' Lehre von dem Sinnlichen*

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Erkenntnisvermögen und seinen Organen, which in turn criticized Baeumker and reaffirmed the view of Schell. Let us review the salient points of this discussion.

Schell begins by making the important observation that Aristotle uses perceptual terms ambiguously. Sometimes he means by "sight" merely certain physical motions connected with seeing and sometimes he means the psychological act of seeing. In the former case he talks about sight being connected with the eye. This applies to all those passages in the De Anima, the Parva Naturalia and the biological works where Aristotle seems to say that the individual senses are "seated" in the external organs of the eye, ear, etc. Ultimately the only sense faculty is the primary sense connected with heart and only when the proper motions reach there from the external organs is there any sense-perception. As Schell says "To be sure, in that place where the motion (which began by proceeding from the object) is concluded and comes to its final point, there must also be found the psychic representation (die Vorstellung). This place, however, is in the heart" (p. 70). In the external organs there are only motions and "...these are not any psychic phenomena, but are organic effects (Nachwirkung) which come to their psychic appearance for the first time in the heart or more particularly in the central organ. For wherever the ἁμαρτήματα is not to be found, in that place there cannot possibly be any psychic representations (Vorstellen)." (p. 76). Schell claims that this is not only Aristotle's view in the De Insomniiis, chapter 3, upon which he is commenting in the above-quoted passage, but that it is his view in all his writings including the De Anima. Schell therefore has difficulty with certain passages in the De Anima, especially 412b 19 where it is implied that sight is the actuality and form of the eye as the soul is the form of the entire body. It can not be said that Aristotle means physical motions by "sight" in this passage for physical motions alone do not represent the actuality or the form of the eye. Unless there is sight in the perceptual sense there is no eye except equivocally as Aristotle says (412b 21.). What this passage seems to say is that sight is seated in the eye and this contradicts Schell's view.

Schell explains this passage by resorting to the position that Aristotle does not mean this analogy to be taken literally. What Aristotle intends, so Schell says, is that if the psychic act of seeing were seated in the eye, the eye would be to sight as the body is related to the soul. But of course it isn't.

Neuhauser in his book presents much the same argument. He also