

SI.A.2. 'Phantasia', Imagination and Imagery.

The remainder of the present work could largely be construed as an exploration, in the light of modern psychological findings and theory, of the viability and implications of a solution to 'Aristotle's problem' along the lines which have come down to us from Aristotle himself. That is to say, we shall be trying to provide an account of imagination which will reveal how genuine scientific knowledge, getting in touch with reality, is possible. This, first of all, will require an adequate theory of the nature of the imagination, a question we shall be approaching mainly in terms of the nature of the mental image, the phantasmas, a topic which has been receiving a great deal of attention from psychologists over the past fifteen years or so. This, we may hope, will have advanced our potential grasp of the problem beyond that of the classical Athenians. Since, as Aristotle understands it, the primary meaning of "imagination" is "that in virtue of which an image arises in us" (1), this approach ought to take us to the heart of the matter.

But it may be objected that to discuss the issues we have raised here under the head of "the place of imagination in science" would be misleading at the best. A number of recent authors (2) have argued that our present day usage of "imagination" and its cognates encompasses things which have nothing to do with "imaging" (whatever

that may be conceived of to be). In his recent, and very careful and detailed, exposition of this view, Dix lists fifteen (no doubt more could be produced) "areas of association" from the "conceptual thicket" surrounding "imagination", of which the experiencing of mental imagery is only one {3}; and a major burden of his whole dissertation is to show that despite all arguments to the contrary {4}, and what he admits to be a tradition unchallenged for over two thousand years {5}, neither the production nor the capacity for production of mental imagery need play any rôle whatever in any of the other fourteen "areas of association".

Now I am prepared to admit that there are uses of "imag-" words, particularly when "imagine" is used as a synonym of "suppose" or "think (mistakenly)" {6} which do not imply any necessary involvement of imaging, or even the potentiality to image (Furlong's {7} suggestions to the contrary do not seem convincing to me). However, I would like to maintain that the core of the modern conception of imagination and imaging, the heart of the "conceptual thicket", is still the Aristotelian *phantasia* as we have described it above - even if some usages have managed to 'get away' {8*}. We should not expect to overthrow a two thousand year old tradition, or a substantive psychological theory, by discussion, however careful, of the vagaries of current English or Australian idiom. Dix's {9} arguments against even the capacity to image being necessarily involved in other senses of "imagination" - particularly

creative thought and erroneous perception - seem to me to implicitly rely on questionable introspections (although he acknowledges the unreliability of introspection in such areas {10}) and on an, admittedly equally venerable, view of imaging which I shall be at pains to reject {11*}. (Much the same applies to Gross {12}.) Dix agrees, however, with the Aristotelian points (although he seems to regard them as philosophical accretions to the pure, and seemingly timeless, 'commonsense' concepts) that imagination (though not *phantasia*, the capacity to image) is necessarily involved in all perceptual recognition and, centrally for him, the "importation of meaning or significance" {13} into our thinking {14*}.

According to Juhasz {15} and Schofield {16} modern concepts of imagination descend from the Aristotelian *phantasia*, and I think this is correct {17*}. Aristotelian conceptions of imagination and the image were continued by the great medieval Aristotelians Albertus Magnus and Aquinas {18} (they, of course, used the Latin term "*imaginatio*" for the image forming faculty), and pass on from them to Renaissance thinkers {19}. Indeed, the history of one particular aspect of the Aristotelian theory, the 'intentionality' of the image {20*}, has been traced by McMahon {21} from Aristotle himself right up to the post-Behaviorist psychology of the 1960s. Even the anti-Aristotelians of the scientific revolution retain much of The Philosopher's influence. Descartes' 'neuro-physiology' explicitly identifies together the functions of

image (or "idea") formation in perception, memory and fantasy with a *sensus communis* {22}, and Hobbes, for whom imagination is nothing but the mechanical formation of "phantasms", almost seems to quote Aristotle on the subject in several places {23}. He explicitly says that although he uses the Latin derived "imagination" to designate what is, for him, the central mental faculty, the Greek *phantasia* {24} or its direct English descendant "fancy" {25} would be more accurate {26*}. It is from the successors of these authors that Romantic, and thence modern, conceptions of imagination and imagery ultimately largely derive {27}. Rees {28} notes echoes of Aristotle in Hume's influential account of imagination. Coleridge, whose own views on imagination have probably been even more influential, claimed that Hume's discussion of it in his "essay on association" closely follows Aquinas' commentary on Aristotle's *Parva Naturalia* {29}. Although Burton {30} vigorously defends Hume from this charge of "plagiarism" the general Aristotelian influence is not denied, and certainly Coleridge himself professes a high regard for Aristotle's account. Engell {31} even detects distinct parallels between the views on imagination of two such very different thinkers as Hobbes and Shelley; and he ascribes this, in part, to their mutual interest in Greek thought.