

Aristotle's Soul

**Professor Sean Kelsey,
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3:00 PM | Friday, December 9, 2016

105 S. Kedzie Hall

Light refreshments served just before 3pm;
discussion to follow at 4pm.

Aristotle holds that it often happens that we cannot make progress in an area without getting clear of certain difficulties, and that it is essential in this that we first identify those difficulties and develop them thoroughly. The theory of soul is a case in point; it too presents difficulties that "we must be clear of to make progress" (DA I 2, 403b21). My topic in this paper is DA II 5, and it is in this vein that I propose to read it: not as giving Aristotle's 'theory' of perception in general, i.e. his account of its causes, but rather as dealing with certain difficulties that need getting around first, before we begin inquiring into causes. Much of the literature on DA II 5, and on Aristotle's theory perception quite generally, is at least tacitly animated by an interest in difficulties we think stand in the way of making progress in the theory of perception: roughly put, difficulties of explaining intentionality and consciousness without falling into dualism. My main contention will be that Aristotle's own preoccupations are rather different. The problem he thinks needs getting around does not have to do with how animals manage to represent the world at all (whether accurately or not), nor with how they manage to be aware of how they represent it as being, but rather with how they manage to discriminate correctly, and thereby successfully navigate, salient features of their environments. Put another way, Aristotle's preoccupations are not with the problems of intentionality or consciousness, but with the problem of objectivity.