

Aristotle, *De Insomniis***Translation**

1. 458a33-b25 (Whitney Schwab – Rachel Parsons)

Chapter 1

After these matters we must inquire about the dream, and first with which part of the soul it is observed, namely whether this is an affection of the noetic or the perceptive part—for it is with these alone among the things within us that we are aware of something. Now, if the use of sight is seeing, and that of hearing is to hear, and that of perception generally is to perceive—both the common objects of perception such as shape, magnitude, motion, and the other such things, and the objects special to each sense such as color, sound, and taste—and it is impossible for all creatures to see while their eyes are closed and while they are sleeping, and similarly in the case of the remaining senses, it is clear that we do not perceive anything in sleep. Thus, we are not aware of the dream by means of sense-perception.

458b10

But, neither are we aware of the dream by means of opinion. For we not only say the approaching thing is a man or a horse, but also that it is white or fine—things which opinion would not say, either truly or falsely, without sense-perception. But in episodes of sleep it happens that the soul does this. For we similarly seem to see that the approaching thing is a man and that it is white.

458b15

Furthermore, we think something else beyond the dream, just as we do while we are perceiving something. For we often also think something about the thing which we are perceiving. In this way too sometimes in episodes of sleep we have something in mind beyond the appearance. This would be apparent to anyone, if one should apply one's mind and try to remember upon waking up. And even now some have noticed that dreams are of this sort. For example, those who are reputed to set out for themselves that which comes before them on the basis of a rule for

remembering. For it often happens to them that they regard something else over and above the dream as an appearance in the place before their eyes. Thus, it is clear that not every appearance in sleep is a dream and that what we have in mind we believe by means of opinion.

2. 458b25-459a22 (Adam Crager - Dimitris Vasilakis)

And about all of this, this much at least is clear: that it is with the same thing, with which we are deceived also when we are wide awake and sick, —that this same thing also produces the affection in sleep. And even to those who are healthy and in the know, still the sun seems to be a foot long. But whether the imaginative [part] of the soul and the sense-perceptive [part] of the soul are indeed the same, or whether [they are] different, by no means does [the affection in question] occur without [our] seeing and sense-perceiving something. For misseeing and mishearing belong to [someone] who is seeing and hearing something real, though not that thing which one supposes [one is seeing/hearing]. But in sleep, it is assumed, there is nothing [we] see nor hear nor in general sense-perceive.

459a1

So then, perhaps it is true that [we] do not see anything, but not true that the sense-perception is not affected; rather it is possible that both sight and the other senses suffer something, and each of these [somethings] in a way hits the sense as when one is awake, but not in the same way as when one is awake. And sometimes opinion says that it's a falsehood ['it': i.e. the presentation, the phantasm, what hits the sense], just as in waking life, but other times [opinion] is subdued and follows the phantasm [i.e. the presentation].

459a8

So then, it is clear that that affection which we call 'dreaming' does not belong to what opines nor to what thinks; but nor does it belong to what sense-perceives in the unqualified sense—for [otherwise] it would be seeing and hearing in the unqualified sense. But just how [the affection belongs to what sense-perceives] and in what way, we must examine.

459a11

So then, let it be assumed, just what is indeed clear: that the affection [i.e. dreaming] belongs to the sense-perceptive [part], if indeed sleep does as well. For, in animals it is not the case that sleep belongs to one thing, while dreaming [belongs] to another—rather, [both sleep and dreaming belong] to the same thing.

459a14

Now since in the treatise *On the Soul* we talked about imagination, and [since] the imaginative [part of the soul] is the same as the sense-perceptive [part of the soul], but the being of the imaginative and the sense-perceptive are different, and imagination is a change which occurs by [the agency of] active sense-perception, and the dream seems to be a kind of phantasm (for we call the phantasm in sleep a dream -occurring either in an unqualified sense, or in some way), [since all this is the case] it is clear that dreaming belongs to the sense-perceptive [part of the soul], but [it belongs] to this qua imaginative.

3. 459^a23 - 459^b22 (Mor Segev - Harun Tarhan)

Chapter 2

What the dream is, and how it comes to be, we may best learn from the circumstances surrounding sleep. For the perceptible objects special to each of the sense organs create sense-perception within us, and the affection coming to be from them not only occurs in the sense organs while the perceptions are active, but also once they have departed. For the affection in these cases seems to be similar to that in the case of projectiles. For in the case of projectiles too, [they] move after [their] mover is no longer in contact [with them]. For the mover has moved some air, with this [air] in turn moving another [portion of air]. And in this way a movement is created, both in air and in liquids, until there should be a standstill.

459b1

One should similarly maintain this for cases of qualitative change. For the thing heated by the hot heats that which is close to it, and this passes on until the starting point. So that in sense perceiving,¹ too, since active sense perception is some sort of qualitative change, this must

1 Reading ἐν τῷ αἰσθάνεσθαι in 459^b4 following Ross, against Lulofs.

happen. For this reason, the affection is not only in the sense organs while they are perceiving, but also once they have stopped [perceiving], both in depth and on the surface.

459b7

And this is clear whenever we perceive something continuously. For after we shift our perception (/look away) the affection follows, for instance [when we turn] away from the sun [and] towards the dark. For it happens that we do not see anything due to the movement still persisting in [our] eyes [and which is produced] by the light. Again, if we look at one color for an extended period of time, say white or green, the same [color] appears wherever we shift our perception [i.e. wherever we look].

459b13

And again, if after looking at the sun or some other bright thing we shut our eyes, it appears, upon concentration and on the same straight line as that on which our sight was fixed, first in the same color, and then turns purple, then red, until it fades to black and disappears. And for those who turn [their gaze] away from moving objects, for instance away from rivers, and especially away from rapidly flowing ones, things at rest appear to be moving.² And [some people] become [temporarily] deaf as a consequence of loud noises, and [temporarily] anosmic as a consequence of strong odors, and similarly with similar cases. Indeed, these things clearly occur in the same way.

4. 459b23-460a32 (Vanya Visnjic - Amfithea Polichronaki)

Next, that the sense organs quickly perceive even small differences is evident from what happens in the case of mirrors (about which subject, even considered by itself, one could investigate and work through difficulties). It is also immediately clear from this example that just as the organ of sight is acted upon, so too it acts (upon its object): If a woman looks at a highly polished mirror during the menstrual period, the surface of the mirror becomes like a blood-shot cloud; and if the mirror is new it is not easy to wash away such a stain, but if it is old it is easier to do so. The reason for this, as we have stated, is that the organ of sight is not simply affected by the air but

² Omitting *αἰ* from 459^b18 following LSMSO. Th. Ald., and U, as well as *γὰρ* from 459^b20, following Ross.

also affects it and moves it, just as bright objects do (for the eye too is among the things which are bright and have color).

460a3

Now it stands to reason that, during menstruation, the eyes are affected just as any other part of the body, especially since they happen to be full of blood-vessels by nature. Therefore, when menstruation takes place due to a disturbance and inflammation of the blood, the difference in the eyes, though not visible to us, is nonetheless real (for the nature of semen and of the menses is the same³); and a motion is imparted to the air by the eyes. This air affects the air near the mirrors (since the air is continuous), imparting to it a quality – the same quality it itself was imparted with. This air, in turn, imparts the same to the surface of the mirror.

460a12

Now just as with clothes, the cleanest ones are most readily stained, because a clean object shows clearly whatever mark it receives and the cleanest object shows the slightest effects. Thus, the bronze of the mirror, since it is smooth, is most sensitive to any contact whatsoever (one must think of the contact of the air as a kind of rubbing or like a wiping or washing), and since it is clean, any impact, however slight, becomes manifest. The reason that a stain does not quickly come off from a new mirror is that it is clean and smooth. For because of these qualities the stain penetrates deeply and all over, deeply because it is clean and all over because it is smooth. But in old mirrors a stain does not persist because it does not sink in in the same way but sinks in more superficially.

460a23

Thus, it is clear from these considerations, both that movement is produced by minute differences and that perception occurs quickly and, furthermore, that the color-sensing organ is not only acted upon but also acts in turn. These claims are further supported by what happens with wines and in the preparation of unguents. For oil that has been procured takes on quickly the scents of what is near to it, and wines are affected in the very same way; for they do not just

³ I.e. just as semen is of an active nature, so too the menses are not just passive but active and can thus effect bodily changes, e.g. in the eyes.

take on the smell of what has been thrown or mixed in them, but also of whatever is placed or grows near the vessels which contain them.

5. 460a32-460b27 (Rachel Parsons, Christina Plakoutsi, David Kaufmann)

Let one thing be established with regards to our initial inquiry, which is clear from what has been said, that even after the external perceptible object goes away, the sense impressions remain as objects of perception. In addition, let it be established that we are easily deceived concerning our perceptions when in the grip of emotions, and that different people are deceived when they are in different emotions, for example the coward when in fear and the amorous person when in love, such that from some small resemblance it seems to the one that he sees his enemies and to the other that he sees his lover.

460b7

In addition, the more impassioned someone is, the more it appears this way to someone from a smaller similarity. In the same way, everyone is easily deceived when in anger and when subject to any sort of desire, and the more so the more they are so impassioned. Wherefore, to those in a feverish state, and from a small similarity of the lines arranged on the walls, animals sometimes appear. And sometimes the appearances thus act upon those who are affected with the result that, if the affected are not excessively ill, it does not escape their notice that what appears to them is false, but if their affection is severe, they are in fact moved with regard to the appearances.

460b16

And the reason for these things occurring is the fact that the authoritative part in respect of judging and the part by which appearances come to be are not grounded in the same capacity. And evidence for this is that the sun appears to be a foot across, but something else often speaks against the appearance. And by the crossing of the fingers, the one seems to be two, but nevertheless we do not say this. For sight is more authoritative than touch.

460b20

But if there were touch alone, we would judge that the one is two. And a reason for being deceived is that something of whatever kind appears not only when the object of perception sets things into motion, but also when the sense faculty itself is moved, if it is moved in the same way, as though by a perceived object.⁴ I mean, for example, that the land seems to those sailing to be moving, because their faculty of sight is moved by something else.

6. 460b28-461b7 (David Kaufmann - Amfithea Polichronaki)

Chapter 3

Now from these things it is clear that the motions arising from sense-perceptions, both those stemming from external things and those which are present [in the senses] from the body,⁵ appear not only in the case of waking people, but also whenever that affection which is called sleep arises, and more then. For in the day they are knocked out, since the senses and thought are active, and they are made invisible just as a small fire next to a great one and small pains and pleasures next to great ones, but when these⁶ have paused the small things also come to the surface.

461a2

And at night, on account of the inactivity of each sense, and their inability to act on account of the flowing back of heat from the outside to the inside, [the motions] are borne down to the principle of sense-perception and they become clear when the disturbance has settled down. And it is necessary to suppose that just as small eddies arise in rivers, so too each motion arises continuously, often alike but often dissolved into other shapes on account of striking against

⁴ Alternatively: “And a reason for being deceived is that something of whatever kind appears when not only the object of perception sets things into motion, but also the sense faculty itself is moved, if it is moved in the same way, as though by a perceived object.”

⁵ Reading ἐνουπαρχουσῶν of the mss SU instead of Bywater’s conjecture ἐνυπάρχουσιν that Ross follows. Cf. the use at 459a26-27, where there is the fuller expression “οὐ μόνον ἐνυπάρχει ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητηρίοις.”

⁶ The antecedent of “these” is uncertain, it might either be: (i) the senses and thought, (ii) the greater fire and pains and pleasures, or (iii) both (i) and (ii).

[another motion]. For this reason no dreams arise either after food or for the very young, for instance children.

461a13

For there is great motion on account of the heat arising from nourishment. Just as in water, if someone moves it vigorously, sometimes no image appears, but sometimes an image appears that is altogether scrambled, such that it appears to be of a different sort than it is, but if the water is at rest, the images are pure and clear. So too also in sleeping the images and the remaining motions, resulting from sense-impressions, are sometimes made altogether invisible by a greater motion of the sort that has been described, but sometimes disturbed and monstrous visions and unhealthy dreams appear,⁷ such as appear to those who are melancholic, feverish, or drunk. For all such illnesses, being pneumatic, cause much motion and disturbance.

461a25

But when the blood in sanguineous creatures has settled and is separated out, the motion stemming from the sense-perceptions of each of the senses is preserved, which makes the dreams healthy and makes something appear and makes it seem that one sees it on account of motions being borne down [to the principle of sense-perception] from sight,⁸ and makes it seem that one hears it on account of motions being borne down from hearing, and similarly also from the other senses. For by the motion coming to the principle from there, someone who is awake also seems to see and to hear and to perceive, and we say that we are seeing, although our sight is not moved, on account of our sight sometimes seeming to be moved, and the one seems to be two on account of touch announcing two motions.

⁷ Reading ἔρρωμένα; this reading is supported by the immediate ascription of such dreams to melancholic, feverish, and drunk people.

⁸ In support of the supplied phrase “to the principle of sense-perception,” as well as the translation of the phrases τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς ὄψεως καταφερόμενα and τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀκοῆς as “motions” being borne down to sight and hearing, compare the expression ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς αἰσθήσεως καταφέρονται in 461a6-7 above.

461b3

For, in general, the principle [of sense-perception] says that which is borne down from each sense, unless another more authoritative sense speaks against that. Now then, there is an appearance in every case, but the appearance does not, in every case, seem real, unless the judging faculty is dominated or does not move with its proper motion.

7. 461b7-462a8 (Brennan McDavid - Panagiota Ouranou)

Just as we said that different people are deceived on account of different conditions, in the same way the sleeping man is deceived on account of sleep, his sense organs undergoing motions and the other things pertaining to sense-perception, with the result that something having a small likeness to another thing seems exactly like that thing. For whenever a man sleeps, with most of his blood going down to his heart, the motions within the blood—some of which are potential, some actual—go down together with it. And the motions are such that in any motion of the blood this motion emerges from it, and if this motion perishes, that one emerges.

461b15

In fact, they relate to one another just like the artificial frogs which float up in the water as the salt dissolves—in the same way the motions are present potentially, and with their restraint removed, they actualize, and having been set free they move around in the little bit of blood remaining in the sense-organs, having a likeness as figures in the clouds which people compare now to men, then to centaurs as they quickly transform.

461b21

Each of these is, as was said, a leftover from the actual sense perception and with the true sense perception departing, this stays present. And it is true to say that this is like Coriscus but is not Coriscus. When a person was perceiving, his ruling and judging part was not saying that the sense impression was Coriscus, but because of this sense impression the true Coriscus is there. The thing by which, then, when in fact perceiving, the judging part says this, whenever not entirely dominated by the blood, is moved as if perceiving by the motions, and the thing like

something else seems to be the true object.⁹ And the power of sleep is such as to make this go unnoticed by the judging part.

461a30

Just as, if someone is not aware that a finger is pressed to their eye, one would not only *appear* to be two, but also *seem* to be two. But if the person is aware, one appears to be two, but does not seem to be so. In this same way, too, in sleep if someone is aware that he is sleeping and of the condition of the sleeper in which the perception occurs, then something appears to him but something in him says that Coriscus is apparent but it is not Coriscus (for, often something in the soul of the sleeping man says that the thing that is apparent is a dream). And if he doesn't notice that he is sleeping, nothing speaks against the phantasia.

8. 461a8-462b11 (Simon Shogry - Tasos Karakatsanis)

It's clear that we speak truly and that there are sensory movements in the sensory organs, if someone who is paying attention attempts to remember the things which we experience while we are asleep and also while we are awake. For sometimes, for the person who is sleeping, when he wakes up he will discover that the appearing images are movements in the sensory organs. If it is dark, and they look all around them, many moving images appear to some of the younger ones, with the result that they often cover themselves since they are afraid. From all these things, one must conclude that a dream is an appearance, particularly one in sleep. For the images mentioned just now are not dreams, and (it is not a dream either) if something else appears while sense perception has gone away.

462a18

And not every appearance in sleep is a dream. For first it happens to some that they perceive in some way sound, light, taste, and touch, but weakly, like it was from far away. For already when those glancing out during sleep, although still sleeping, saw faintly, as they thought, the light of a lamp, but having woken up they immediately recognized the real lamp. Also, those faintly

⁹ We opted to translate this sentence according to the text of ms L, which uses the dative $\phi\acute{\sigma}$ to open the relative clause instead of the genitive $\omicron\upsilon$ that Lulofs has. Ross writes $\acute{\omicron}$.

hearing the cry of cocks and dogs, after waking up recognized them clearly. And some, when they are asked, answer.

462a26

For it's possible, of waking and sleep, that one holds in a certain way (i.e. sleep) while the other holds in an unqualified way (i.e. waking). Of these, it should not be said that they are dreams, and neither that as many true thoughts as come to be in sleep besides the appearance (are dreams). But the appearance which comes to be from the movement of sense perceptions, this is a dream, whenever it is in sleep, insofar as he is sleeping.

462a31

Already it has happened to many who have not seen a dream their whole life but having progressed rather far into old age first see what they had not seen. But the cause of these not coming to be appears similar to the case involving children and that after eating. For, for many, their nature has been constituted such that much vapor is carried up to the upper part, and, while it is coming down again, makes many motions, it is reasonable that for these no appearance appears. But it's not out of place, with old age progressing, for dreams to appear. For after some change has happened, either due to the old age, or due to affection, it's necessary that the opposite of this (motion) occurs.