

**Are the Objects of Sense Proprietary?**  
**Plato and Aristotle on the Diversity of the Sense Organs**  
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Aristotle opens *De Anima* III.1 by arguing not only that there are no other *actual* senses or sense organs beyond the familiar five, but, indeed, that there are no other *possible* ones either. This seems odd: why would Aristotle think that such a thing could be demonstrated, and in any event why would he bother to provide that demonstration? In this paper, I claim that Aristotle is responding to the argument at *Theaetetus* 185a-e that purports to show that we do not in fact perceive objects initially thought to be perceptible by multiple senses: the so-called “common-objects,” which for Plato includes such things as sameness, beauty, and goodness. First I review the passage from *Theaetetus*. I show that Socrates and Theaetetus there infer that the common-objects are not perceived from the fact that there is no one organ for them. Proper attention to the discussion there shows, contrary to interpretations that rely on an implicit reference to the metaphysics of Forms, that Socrates does not deny that there could be an organ for the common-objects; nor, by extension, does he deny that those objects could be perceptible. Instead, he simply gets Theaetetus to agree to the empirical claim that we as a matter of fact don’t have a special organ for them, from which he concludes that we must grasp these objects in a non-perceptual manner. But Aristotle cannot accept that conclusion; indeed, the argument that opens *De Anima* III.1 comes just before his discussion of the perception of the common-objects. I contend, then, that Aristotle here means to show that if the common-objects could in principle be perceived, they must actually be perceptible, at least for creatures with the full range of senses. Given, I argue, that both Plato and Aristotle agree that the common-objects are possible objects of perception, Aristotle then takes himself to have shown that the common-objects are also actual objects of perception.