

## **Aristotle on [Part of] the Difference between Belief and Imagination**

### **Abstract**

In chapter 3.3 of the *De Anima*, Aristotle argues for the non-type-identity of belief and imagination, i.e. that belief and imagination are distinct types of mental states. His argument raises two puzzles. First, it is not clear how the argument works. He claims that imagination is under our mental command, and that belief must either be true or false. These characteristics, however, are not mutually exclusive, and so could not establish type-non-identity. Second, it is mysterious why he chooses to argue as he does.

Despite initial appearances, Aristotle's argument does work, and he has reason to deploy the premises in the form he does. I propose a reading that solves both interpretive puzzles. Belief is sensitive to evidence in a way that imagination is not, and so the contents of our belief are constrained in ways that the content of imagination is not. If we can initiate a mental state with a certain content whenever we want, it follows that it is not sensitive in this way. This explains why Aristotle argues as he does in 3.3; it gives him access to an intuitive and compelling example, while preserving the force of his argument.