



Beginning Hegel's Sense-Certainty: or the metaphysical violence of 'this.'

HERB WETHERELL

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Class: Hegel

The thing is violent, nothing precedes it,
it has no meaning before or after-
sweet wounds which burn like stars,
stigmata of the self's own holiness,
appear and plot new zodiacs upon the flesh.

Presenting 'this' marks the beginning. However, to remark so soon on this beginning would falsely present 'this' as already having been presented. 'This' white, sensuously apprehended from this piece of paper - for instance - is still merely caught in the act of presenting itself, much like a thesis does without going further - that is, without remarking on 'this' thesis in a manner similar to proving it.

This pure 'this' unfolds into its own opposition between 'this' as 'I' and 'this' as object. As object, 'this' is immediate sense-impression, which lacks all determination. (At this stage, it lacks even the determination of *an* or *the* immediate sense-impression.) For instance, immediate sense-impression of colour, say white, lacks the determination that 'this' *is* white. In this instance, determination requires a repetition of the sensuous experience of colour to identify and distinguish one colour from an other; that is, to determine colour. To determine that 'this' *is* white is to equally determine that 'this' *is not* non-white. 'This' immediate sense-impression stands before (or is logically prior to) the utterance "white," and this fact of logical priority is equally true of 'this' sense-impression before it was split up into 'I' and object. Thus, as object, 'this' is unconditionally true.

The bifurcation of 'this' simple moment (or 'this' immediate sense-impression) emerges from an already latent alienation of 'I' and object in 'this.' However, this movement towards 'this's own opposition between 'I' and object, unfolds from the 'I', not the object. As object, 'this' is unconditionally true. As 'I', 'this' reflects the true into truth, into its own determination; 'I' *is* the momentary mirror which moves the logic (or syllogism) forward. Initially, 'I' is simply mirror: it is not yet "conscious" that it, in fact, is a mirror. Inwardly (or in terms of singular consciousness), 'this' moves to 'this' as 'I' *and* 'this' as object. Outwardly (or in terms of consciousness), however, 'I' asserts as true 'this' as object: 'I' asserts the certainty of 'this' as object. As Hegel himself says, "certainty as a *connection* is an *immediate* pure connection" (59). This as pure connection *is* the inception of Hegelian Logic. Not that the Logic admits to negation, it has fooled itself into this pure connection, this certain "and." The Logic unfolds through the various moments; but, at this moment,

it *is* both the exterior and interior unfolding of 'this' immediate sense-impression, without, of course, positing difference between these extremes. As an extreme example, let us *return* to the sensuous experience of colour. 'This' white sensuously apprehended from this piece of paper as moment requires a *return* to this *moment* or to turn to a *urthier* moment to determine white. **Before** one actually gets around to turning or returning to moment, however, or before content is found for this moment, this return itself - as movement - is the inward expression of the outer formulation of 'this' as 'I.' For consider that the second sensuous moment when colour *becomes* instantiated reflects the first sensuous moment: 'I' *is* this reflection. This, however, has unfortunately been formulated unclearly: there are several serious problems with this example. One difficulty exists in that there *is not yet* a *real* second moment. Another problem is expressed in the use of the ordinals "first" and "second;" they are misleading. For without this real second moment, it is misleading to speak of priority, logical or otherwise. But this is simple enough: 'I' emerges *as* separation from object, which is not yet separation as such. So at this pole between the two moments, this separation between these two extremes is only incidental. It is not yet separation as separation. It is separation which still imitates unity and takes the form of conjunction (and). 'This' reveals Hegelian Logic.

Immediate unity which unmask 'this' as both 'I' and object is in 'this' from the outset: 'this' from the outset unfolds Hegelian Logic. To be less precise, the whole of Hegelian Logic unfolds from 'this.' But the systematic structure of being (or, more concretely, the whole world) *is* revealed through a moment of Logic; that is, at any particular moment, the Logic reveals the shape of being, just as being reveals the shape of Logic. 'This,' then, can be seen as (reflection of) the whole world. This reflection between 'this' and the world was earlier taken up under both the Christian paradigm and Leibniz's ontology. Concerning the latter, the following passage - at this moment (but developed to express also force and understanding) - seems to further expose the Hegelian 'this' as thoroughly Leibnizian:

That within itself the universal is in undivided unity with this plurality means ... that these 'matters' are each where the other is; they mutually interpenetrate, but without coming into contact with one another because, conversely, the many diverse 'matters' are equally independent. This also means that they are absolutely porous. (81)

Porosity of these independent 'matters' *is* the revelation of the world (or being) in 'this.' However, revelation for Leibniz does not imply change in being: revelation unfolds being through the moments (or the new) as immutable and unchanging. This is untrue for Hegel; the world is constantly in flux. At each moment, introducing the immediate 'this' contiguously reveals being in new light. So although the Logic expressed in 'this' is in a kind of infancy, 'this' infancy appears (to the 'I') as "a knowledge of infinite wealth for which no bounds can be found" (58). This knowledge unfolds for both consciousness and the singular consciousness. In particular, this knowledge unfolds for the singular consciousness by recognizing 'this' in space and time; and it equally divides the object into itself for consciousness. But at this stage, 'this' as present knowledge lacks content, because 'this' lacks the privilege of being one "thing" and *not* an other. For instance, 'this' does not formulate 'I' as identical or different to object. It is simply presented picture (of the world). The relations between "things" (I use brackets here to indicate that things do not as yet exist) are intimate with each other; they do not as yet express a distinction between things. The problem of content is expressed in 'this's infinite wealth of knowledge. Since the 'I' lacks the capacity to distinguish among the infinite wealth of "things" in the picture, this infinite wealth introduces

beyondness or the complete lack of content in the form of 'this.' And since the 'I' is unable to see where to start, it is unable to see how to finish.

Hence, to begin is, perhaps, the most labour-intensive activity. It marks the very act of being mid-wife. For the singular consciousness, beginning marks the non-division of 'this' into 'I' and object. But for consciousness (and here we go beyond sense-certainty), beginning must admit to the immediate birth from nothingness to being. (Just like the singular consciousness has to admit to a birth from 'this.') Once consciousness is to realize that it was born from nothingness, it at once seeks to understand its own non-being, its end. Hence beginning always marks the **end** of nothingness. For in its zeal to understand its own non-being, it confuses its arch[?] with its telos, its beginning with its end. It is the cell which is pregnant with itself: its "birth" both destroys and preserves 'this' as cell.

The Hegelian 'this' is not metaphysically innocent: it has split blood, 'this' is violent. Always at war, it can *never* calm its troubled waters.

It is a rather unhappy fact that as 'I' begins at the close of "this" presentation, that 'this' comes to an end. However, this is only an annihilation of sorts. Beginning only marks a new beginning: 'this' can never be absolutely erased, one can never completely forget. But does 'this' then present too strong of a condition on the scientific inquiry? Consider thoughts as stones thrown upon a still untempered lake. Perhaps one *can* let the ripples of the waves completely die before beginning again....

Bibliography

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SOPHIA

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