

PERCEPTION: OR THE THING AND DECEPTION

by

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The movement of Perception

Consciousness in the form of sense-certainty wants to apprehend its particular object as being-there (existing). But as demonstrated in previous articles in

this series, the only truth of sense-certainty is merely that *something is*, and because everything *is*, being is universal. Here it will be shown that perception is the consciousness of the universal as the truth of a particular being. And because universality is the very principle of perception, both object and the I are also universal. Because this universality is *arrived at* through a mediating process or thinking, it is not just an immediate 'happening' as is found in sense-certainty - rather, it proves to be a logically necessitated content.

With the emergence of universality, therefore, the moments of consciousness and its object, which are both merely given as immediately being there in sense-certainty, come into being as universals in perception. In other words, perception is a 'coming into being', i.e., a movement or process of becoming. The conclusion is that the truth of being is becoming. This difficult concept is developed in great detail in Hegel's *Science of Logic*. The process for sense-certainty consists merely in 'pointing out' the here or now. It consisted of three steps: (1) it starts with the original object, (2) negates it, (3) and then negates the negation. These three 'steps' may also be perceived as the moments of a movement.

But the object perceived also changes in this same movement or process since the object is only what we perceive it to be — if our perception changes the object

changes along with it. We must thus consider the object to be essentially this movement. With the universal or movement as the essential object of perception, the immediately distinct ego and object - the perceiver and perceived - become unessential and abstract elements (since they are now mere abstract or fleeting moments of this overall movement). At the same time, they are essential because there is no question of perception unless there is also a perceiver and perceived object. Therefore, the entire triplicity (perceiver-perception-perceived) is involved in the movement.

The perceiver and perceived are opposites - one is what the other is not, but if they are both essential then we cannot take only one as essential and the other as unessential, even though this is what opposition would imply. So at this point all that may be inferred is that they must share the distinction of essentiality and unessentiality equally. At the same time the object is considered to be independent of whether it is perceived or not, so that, from this angle of consideration, the movement of perception seems to be the unessential moment with the object being the essential.

The object of perception is manifold.

The object is itself a universal in its own self (i.e. as a single object- since everything is a single object). Since it is essentially a universal then it must also display this universality in itself, which it does by being a "thing with many properties". This will be described more fully shortly.

The wealth or multiplicity of the objects of sense-certainty is not part of sense-certainty itself, since sense-certainty detects only singleness or individuality. Thus multiplicity or many-ness belongs to perception whereas sense-certainty is merely the source of single instances. Perception contains actual negation (as in the above-mentioned process). This implies difference (because difference means what is **not** This or the negation of This); thus only perception can

contain manifoldness or the difference that allows us to speak of many-ness. This is an important distinction between sense-certainty and perception that is often overlooked by those who try to reduce everything to the mere data of sense. In other words, it is not the senses as such that distinguish one object from another, but perception, constituting the same universality that is generally called mind.

Thinghood and properties.

The This as negated is not-This, but the negation of something is not its annihilation or its relegation to Nothing. Rather as the Nothing of the This it is a determinate Nothing. For example, to say it is not-Night, tells us something. We are not left with Nothing to think about. The content is still Night even though it is negated.



G. W. F. Hegel

The singular This of sense is negated in perception or becomes not-This, i.e. the universal. Thus the not-This has as its content the This. In perception the sense-object perceived does not lose its existence, even though perception grasps the universality of the object, or the

negation of the object as singular being. This negation with preservation is in German *aufgehoben* or *aufheben*, which means sublimation, sublation, or supersession (superseding).

Universal Being is what it is by virtue of the negation of singular being, i.e. as not-this being, thus it has negation within it. This negation or difference that is within universal

Being may, therefore, be considered a determination of universal Being, and when positively *expressed* this determination it is called a property. These properties have the following characteristics:

- a) Many such properties coexisting simultaneously imply the mutual negativity of the properties, i.e. each property is different from the other, or **not** the other.
- b) They are also identical only to themselves and thus may be considered to exist in free indifference to one another.
- c) They are universals since they are determinations within the universality of Being.

The universality of Being is also distinct from its properties or expressed determinations. As simple identity with itself it is the *medium* in which the various determinacies or properties are found. Since this medium is a simple unity, the various properties must interpenetrate in order for the many to coexist in this unity. In fact it is through this participation in this simple universality or medium that they are understood as completely indifferent to one another so that they can interpenetrate, i.e. without interference from each other. This abstract universal medium of many properties is called *thinghood* or simply the Thing. It is essentially the same as the togetherness that was found, for example, in the Here and Now examined in the previous installments, where any This was a unity of Here and Now, that were in truth universals.

An example will help to clarify these abstract notions. Consider a crystal of salt. It is situated in a simple Here, yet at the same time it is manifold since it is also white, also tart, also cubical, etc. The many properties coexist within the simple Here as it does in the simple Now. Each property is not a different Here but represents the same Here regardless of the property. Thus they interpenetrate each other without modifying themselves in any way. In this manner they are indifferent to each other and connected to each other only by the indifferent Also which is their medium. This medium is abstract *thinghood* which holds the various properties together.

Thinghood as One or the Thing.

Thinghood is abstract unity because it is being considered here merely indifferently, as a universality along with other universalities. Because there are *many* properties, distinction or determination is implied. Thus although their indifference is found to be necessary for their interpenetration, they must also be different from one another, i.e. non-interpenetrating or excluding one another. As such they would then fall outside the medium of the indifferent. Also, as exclusive of others, this medium is then a One, i.e. a unity which excludes an other. It is as exclusive of its properties, i.e. as a One, that the abstract *thinghood* becomes a Thing.

In other words, a Thing is considered different from its properties or **not** its properties. In *thinghood* each element is transparent to any other - both the medium and the properties. This is certainly a necessary aspect of the situation, but it is abstract since it does not give a full understanding. A Thing is **not** the same as its properties. This is the way we understand Things. At the same time the abstract aspect that is first considered is not wrong, it is just one *aspect* that *must* be there since the many properties do interpenetrate in one place. But this is only an aspect or moment of the whole and that is why it is considered abstract.

The One is the moment of negation since it *excludes*, or is **not**, the other. Negation is inherent as a property of determinateness since to determine means to negate. Determinateness is immediately one with the immediacy of Being since what something is determined as being, is considered its being. The immediate unity of being and the negative is the sensuous universal. An immediacy that is united with its negation or determination in this way is called universality, i.e. the universal is the negation of the singular immediate instance and therefore its determination - it tells us what the singular is. As a One, however, this determinateness or negation is itself excluded from it so that the One exists in and for itself. In other words, the

One is different from whatever determinations are made of it, e.g. its qualities.

Summary and completion of the Thing.

A Thing consists of all these moments taken together:

- 1) The indifferent medium or universality which includes the many properties or *matters*.
- 2) The negation, or the One which excludes the many properties.
- 3) The many properties themselves - i.e., the negation which is implicit in the *many* indifferently related properties [relates the negation in (2) to the indifference in (1)].

In so far as the different properties are considered part of the universal medium, they are indifferent to one another as universals. In so far as they are considered as different from each other, they are exclusive or different from the Thing as One. Both of these moments are necessary to the Thing. In addition, the pure universality develops through the properties as different from one another to the One as necessarily exclusive of those properties. It is in this sense that the properties form the link or unite the pure universality (*thinghood*) with the One. It is all these moments and their relations that finally constitute the Thing.

Notice how Hegel identifies the Thing as the totality of thought determinations and development that are intrinsically present in the concept of Thing. There is a flow of rational necessity that drives the progressive development from one moment to the next. Hegel does not discard anything of this process but incorporates it all as the comprehensive substance of whatever particular subject matter is under consideration. This process is followed throughout the *Phenomenology*. It is necessary to be careful of failing to account for anything or adding anything extraneous to the rational necessity that is intrinsic to the development of the subject matter itself.

(To be continued in next month's edition)