

The Phenomenology of Mind

– A – CONSCIOUSNESS ⁽¹⁾

I: Certainty at the Level of Sense Experience – the “This”, and “Meaning”

1. The Object of Sense Certainty

Φ 90. THE knowledge, which is at the start or immediately our object, can be nothing else than just that which is immediate knowledge, knowledge of the immediate, of what *is*. We have, in dealing with it, to proceed, too, in an immediate way, to accept what is given, not altering anything in it as it is presented before us, and keeping mere apprehension (*Auffassen*) free from conceptual comprehension (*Begreifen*).

Φ 91. The concrete content, which sensuous certainty furnishes, makes this *prima facie* appear to be the richest kind of knowledge, to be even a knowledge of endless wealth – a wealth to which we can as little find any limit when we traverse its *extent* in space and time, where that content is presented before us, as when we take a fragment out of the abundance it offers us and by dividing and dividing seek to penetrate its *intent*. Besides that. it seems to be the truest, the most authentic knowledge: for it has not as yet dropped anything from the object; it has the object before itself in its entirety and completeness. This bare fact of *certainty*, however, is really and admittedly the abstractest and the poorest kind of *truth*. It merely says regarding what it knows: it *is*; and its truth contains solely the *being* of the fact it knows. Consciousness, on its part, in the case of this form of certainty, takes the shape merely of pure Ego. In other words, I in such a case am merely *qua* pure This, and the object likewise is merely *qua* pure This. I, *this* particular conscious I, am certain of *this* fact before me, not because I *qua* consciousness have developed myself in connection with it and in manifold ways set thought to work about it: and not, again, because the fact, the thing, of which I am certain, in virtue of its having a multitude of distinct qualities, was replete with possible modes of relation and a variety of connections with other things. Neither has anything to do with the truth sensuous certainty contains: neither the I nor the thing has here the meaning of a manifold relation with a variety of other things, of mediation in a variety of ways. The I does not contain or imply a manifold of ideas, the I here does not *think*: nor does

the thing mean what has a multiplicity of qualities. Rather, the thing, the fact, *is*; and it *is* merely because it *is*. It *is* – that is the essential point for sense-knowledge, and that bare fact of *being*, that simple immediacy, constitutes its truth. In the same way the certainty *qua relation*, the certainty “of” something, is an immediate pure relation; consciousness is I – nothing more, a pure *this*; the *individual* consciousness knows a pure *this*, or knows what is *individual*.

Φ 92. But, when we look closely, there is a good deal more implied in that bare pure being, which constitutes the kernel of this form of certainty, and is given out by it as its truth. A concrete actual certainty of sense is not merely this pure immediacy, but an example, an instance, of that immediacy. Amongst the innumerable distinctions that here come to light, we find in all cases the fundamental difference – viz. that in sense-experience pure being at once breaks up into the two “thises”, as we have called them, one this as I, and one as object. When we reflect⁽²⁾ on this distinction, it is seen that neither the one nor the other is merely immediate, merely *is* in sense-certainty, but is at the same time *mediated*: I have the certainty through the other, viz. through the actual fact; and this, again, exists in that certainty through an other, viz. through the I.

Φ 93. It is not only we who make this distinction of essential truth and particular example, of essence and instance, immediacy and mediation; we *find* it in sense-certainty itself, and it has to be taken up in the form in which it exists there, not as we have just determined it. One of them is put forward in it as existing in simple immediacy, as the essential reality, the *object*. The other, however, is put forward as the non-essential, as *mediated*, something which is not *per se* in the certainty, but there through something else, ego, a state of knowledge which only knows the object because the *object* is, and which can as well be as *not* be. The object, however, is the real truth, is the essential reality; it *is*, quite indifferent to whether it is known or not; it remains and stands even though it is not known, while the knowledge does not exist if the object is not there.

Φ 94. We have thus to consider as to the object, whether in point of fact it does exist in sense-certainty itself as such an essential reality as that certainty gives it out to be; whether its meaning and notion, which is to be essential reality, corresponds to the way it is present in that certainty. We have for that purpose not to reflect about it and ponder what it might be in truth, but to deal with it merely as sense-certainty contains it.

Φ 95. Sense-certainty itself has thus to be asked: What is the *This*? If we take it in the two-fold form of its existence, as the *Now* and as the *Here*, the dialectic it has in it will take a form

as intelligible as the This itself. To the question, What is the Now? we reply, for example, the Now is night-time. To test the truth of this certainty of sense, a simple experiment is all we need: write that truth down. A truth cannot lose anything by being written down, and just as little by our preserving and keeping it. If we look again at the truth we have written down, look at it *now*, *at this* noon-time, we shall have to say it has turned stale and become out of date.

Φ 96. The Now that is night is kept fixed, i.e. it is treated as what it is given out to be, as something which *is*; but it proves to be rather a something which is *not*. The Now itself no doubt maintains itself, but as what is *not* night; similarly in its relation to the day which the Now is at present, it maintains itself as something that is also not day, or as altogether something negative. This self-maintaining Now is therefore not something immediate but something mediated; for, *qua* something that remains and preserves itself, it is determined through and *by means* of the fact that something else, namely day and night, is *not*. Thereby it is just as much as ever it was before, Now, and in being this simple fact, it is indifferent to what is still associated with it; just as little as night or day is its being, it is just as truly *also* day and night; it is not in the least affected by this otherness through which it is what it is. A simple entity of this sort, which is by and through negation, which is neither this nor that, which is a *not-this*, and with equal indifference this as well as that – a thing of this kind we call a Universal. The Universal is therefore in point of fact the truth of sense-certainty, the true content of sense-experience.

Φ 97. It is as a universal, too, that we⁽³⁾ give utterance to sensuous fact. What we say is: “This”, i.e. the universal this; or we say: “it is”, i.e. being in general. Of course we do not present before our mind in saying, so the universal this, or being in general, but we *utter* what is universal; in other words, we do not actually and absolutely say what in this sense-certainty we really *mean*. Language, however, as we see, is the more truthful; in it we ourselves refute directly and at once our own “meaning”; and since universality is the real truth of sense-certainty, and language merely expresses *this* truth, it is not possible at all for us even to express in words any sensuous existence which we “mean”.

Φ 98. The same will be the case when we take the *Here*, the other form of the This. The Here is e.g. the tree.

I turn about and this truth has disappeared and has changed round into its opposite: the Here, is not a tree, but a house. The Here itself does not disappear; it *is* and remains in the disappearance of the house, tree, and so on, and is indifferently house, tree. The This is

shown thus again to be *mediated simplicity*, in other words, to be *universality*.

Φ 99. *Pure being*, then, remains as the essential element for this sense-certainty, since sense-certainty in its very nature proves the universal to be the truth of its object. But that pure being is not in the form of something immediate, but of something in which the process of negation and mediation is essential. Consequently it is not what we *intend* or “mean” by being, but being with the characteristic that it is an abstraction, the purely universal; and our intended “meaning”, which takes the truth of sense-certainty to be *not* something universal, is alone left standing in contrast to this empty. indifferent Now and Here.

Φ 100. If we compare the relation in which knowledge and the object first stood with the relation they have come to assume in this result, it is found to be just the reverse of what first appeared. The object, which professed to be the essential reality, is now the non-essential element of sense-certainty; for the universal, which the object has come to be, is no longer such as the object essentially was to be for sense-certainty. The certainty is now found to lie in the opposite element, namely in knowledge, which formerly was the non-essential factor. Its truth lies in the object as my (*meinem*) object, or lies in the “meaning” (*Meinen*), in what I “mean”; it *is*, because *I* know it. Sense-certainty is thus indeed banished from the object, but it is not yet thereby done away with; it is merely forced back into the I. We have still to see what experience reveals regarding its reality in this sense.

Φ 101. The force of its truth thus lies now in the I, in the immediate fact of my seeing, hearing, and so on; the disappearance of the particular Now and Here that we “mean” is prevented by the fact that *I* keep hold on them. The Now is daytime, because *I* see it; the Here is a tree for a similar reason. Sense-certainty, however, goes through, in this connection, the same dialectic process as in the former case. I, *this* I, see the tree, and assert the tree to be the Here; *another* I, however, sees the house and maintains the Here is not a tree but a house. Both truths have the same authenticity – the immediacy of seeing and the certainty and assurance both have as to their specific way of knowing; but the one certainty disappears in the other.

Φ 102. In all this, what does not disappear is the I *qua* universal, whose seeing is neither the seeing of this tree nor of this house, but just seeing *simpliciter*, which is mediated through the negation of this house, etc., and, in being so, is all the same simple and indifferent to what is associated with it, the house, the tree, and so on. I is merely universal, like Now, Here, or This in general. No doubt I “mean” an individual I, but just something as little as I am able to

say what I “mean” by Now, Here, so it is impossible in the case of the I too. By saying “this Here”, “this Now”, “an individual thing”, I say all Thises, Heres, Nows, or Individuals. In the same way when I say “I”, “this individual I”, I say quite generally “all I’s”, every one is “I”, this individual I. When philosophy is requested, by way of putting it to a crucial test – a test which it could not possibly sustain – to “deduce”, to “construe”, “to find a priori”, or however it is put, a so-called *this thing*, or *this particular man*,⁽⁴⁾ it is reasonable that the person making this demand should say *what* “this thing”, or *what* “this I”, he means: but to say this is quite impossible.

Φ 103. Sense-certainty discovers by experience, therefore, that its essential nature lies neither in the object nor in the I; and that the immediacy peculiar to it is neither an immediacy of the one nor of the other. For, in the case of both, what I “mean” is rather something non-essential; and the object and the I are universals, in which that Now and Here and I, which I “mean”, do not hold out, do not exist. We arrive in this way at the result, that we have to put the *whole*, of sense-certainty as its essential reality, and no longer merely one of its moments, as happened in both cases, where first the object as against the I, and then the I, was to be its true reality. Thus it is only the whole sensecertainty itself which persists therein as immediacy, and in consequence excludes from itself all the opposition which in the foregoing had a place there.

Φ 104. This pure immediacy, then, has nothing more to do with the fact of otherness, with Here in the form of a tree passing into a Here that is not a tree, with Now in the sense of day-time changing into a Now that is night-time, or with there being an other I to which something else is object. Its truth stands fast as a self-identical relation making no distinction of essential and non-essential, between I and object, and into which, therefore, in general, no distinction can find its way. *I, this I*, assert, then, the Here as tree, and do not turn round so that for me Here might become not a tree, and I take no notice of the fact that another I finds the Here as not-tree, or that I myself at some other time take the Here as not-tree, the Now as not-day. I am directly conscious, I intuit and nothing more, I am pure intuition; *I am-seeing, looking*. For myself I stand by the fact, the Now is day-time, or, again, by the fact the Here is tree, and, again, do not compare Here and Now themselves with one another; I take my stand on one immediate relation: the Now is day.

2. The Subject of Sense Certainty

Φ 105. Since, then, this certainty wholly refuses to come out if we direct its attention to a

Now that is night or an I to whom it is night, we will go to it and let ourselves point out the Now that is asserted. We must let ourselves *point it out* for the truth of this immediate relation is the truth of *this ego* which restricts itself to *a* Now or *a* Here. Were we to examine this truth *afterwards*, or stand at a distance from it, it would have no meaning at all; for that would do away with the immediacy, which is of its essence. We have therefore to enter the same point of time or of space, indicate them, point them out to ourselves, i.e. we must let ourselves take the place of the very same I, the very same This, which is the subject knowing with certainty. Let us, then, see how that immediate is constituted, which is *shown* to us.

Φ 106. The Now is pointed out; this Now. “Now”; it has already ceased to be when it is pointed out. The Now that is, is other than the one indicated, and we see that the Now is just this – to be no longer the very time when it is. The Now as it is shown to us is one that *has been*, and that is its truth; it does not have the truth of being, of something that *is*. No doubt this is true, that it *has been*; but what has been is in point of fact not genuinely real, it is *not*, and the point in question concerned what is, concerned being.

Φ 107. In thus pointing out the Now we see then merely a process which takes the following course: *First* I point out the Now, and it is asserted to be the truth. I point it out, however, as something that *has been*, or as something cancelled and done away with. I thus annul and pass beyond that first truth and in the *second* place I now assert as the second truth that it *has been*, that it is superseded. But, *thirdly*, what *has been* is *not*; I then supersede, cancel, its having been, the fact of its being *annulled*, the second truth, negate thereby the negation of the Now and return in so doing to the first position: that *Now is*. The Now and pointing out the Now are thus so constituted that neither the one nor the other is an immediate simple fact, but a process with diverse moments in it. A *This* is set up; it is, however, rather an *other* that is set up; the *This* is superseded: and this otherness, this cancelling of the former, is itself again annulled, and so turned back to the first. But this first, reflected thus into itself, is not exactly the same as it was to begin with, namely something immediate: rather it is a something reflected into-self, a simple entity which remains in its otherness, what it is: a Now which is any number of Nows. And that is the Genuinely true Now; the Now is simple day-time which has many Nows within it – hours. A Now of that sort, again – an hour – is similarly many minutes; and this Now – a minute – in the same way many Nows and so on. Showing, indicating, pointing out [the Now] is thus itself the very process which expresses what the Now in truth really is: namely a result, or a plurality of Nows all taken together. And the pointing, out is the way of getting to know, of *experiencing*, that *Now is a universal*.

Φ 108. The Here pointed out, which I keep hold of, is likewise a *this* Here which, in fact, is

not *this Here*, but a Before and Behind, an Above and Below, a Right and Left. The Above is itself likewise this manifold otherness – above, below, etc. The Here, which was to be pointed out, disappears in other Heres, and these disappear similarly. What is pointed out, held fast, and is permanent is a negative This, which only is so when the Heres are taken as they should be, but therein cancel one another; it is a simple complex of many Heres. The Here that is “meant” would be the point. But it *is* not: rather, when it is pointed out as *being*, as having existence, that very act of pointing out proves to be not immediate knowledge, but a process, a movement from the Here “meant” through a plurality of Heres to the universal Here, which is a simple plurality of Heres, just as day is a simple plurality of Nows.

3. The Concrete Experience of Sense Certainty

Φ 109. It is clear from all this that the dialectic process involved in sense-certainty is nothing else than the mere history of its process – of its experience; and sense-certainty itself is nothing else than simply this history. The naïve consciousness, too, for that reason, is of itself always coming to this result, which is the real truth in this case, and is always having experience of it: but is always forgetting it again and beginning the process all over. It is therefore astonishing when, in defiance of this experience, it is announced as “universal experience” – nay, even as a philosophical doctrine, the outcome, in fact, of scepticism – that the reality or being of external things in the sense of “Thises”, particular sense objects, has absolute validity and truth for consciousness. One who makes such an assertion really does not know what he is saying, does not know that he is stating the opposite of what he wants to say. The truth for consciousness of a “This” of sense is said to be universal experience; but the very opposite is universal experience. Every consciousness of itself cancels again, as soon as made, such a truth as e.g. the Here is a tree, or the Now is noon, and expresses the very opposite: the Here is not a tree but a house. And similarly it straightway cancels again the assertion which here annuls the first, and which is also just such an assertion of a sensuous This. And in all sense-certainty what we find by experience is in truth merely, as we have seen, that “This” is a universal, the very opposite of what that assertion maintained to be universal experience.

We may be permitted here, in this appeal to universal experience, to anticipate⁽⁵⁾ with a reference to the practical sphere. In this connection we may answer those who thus insist on the truth and certainty of the reality of objects of sense, by saying that they had better be sent back to the most elementary school of wisdom, the ancient Eleusinian mysteries of Ceres and Bacchus; they have not yet learnt the inner secret of the eating of bread and the drinking of wine. For one who is initiated into these mysteries not only comes to doubt the being of

things of sense, but gets into a state of despair about it altogether; and in dealing with them he partly himself brings about the nothingness of those things, partly he sees these bring about their own nothingness. Even animals are not shut off from this wisdom, but show they are deeply initiated into it. For they do not stand stock still before things of sense as if these were things *per se*, with being in themselves: they despair of this reality altogether, and in complete assurance of the nothingness of things they fall-to without more ado and eat them up. And all nature proclaims, as animals do, these open secrets, these mysteries revealed to all, which teach what the truth of things of sense is.

Φ 110. Those who put forward such assertions really themselves say, if we bear in mind what we remarked before, the direct opposite of what they mean: a fact which is perhaps best able to bring them to reflect on the nature of the certainty of sense-experience. They speak of the “existence” of external objects, which can be more precisely characterized as actual, absolutely particular, wholly personal, individual things, each of them not like anything or anyone else; this is the existence which they say has absolute certainty and truth. They “mean” this bit of paper I am writing on, or rather *have* written on: but they do not say what they “mean”. If they really wanted to *say* this bit of paper which they “mean”, and they wanted to *say* so, that is impossible, because the This of sense, which is “meant”, cannot be reached by language, which belongs to consciousness, i.e. to what is inherently universal. In the very attempt to say it, it would, therefore, crumble in their hands; those who have begun to describe it would not be able to finish doing so: they would have to hand it over to others, who would themselves in the last resort have to confess to speaking about a thing that has no being. They mean, then, doubtless this bit of paper here, which is quite different from that bit over there; but they speak of actual things, external or sensible objects, absolutely individual, real, and so on; that is, they say about them what is simply universal. Consequently what is called unspeakable is nothing else than what is untrue, irrational, something barely and simply meant.

If nothing is said of a thing except that it is an actual thing, an external object, this only makes it the most universal of all possible things, and thereby we express its likeness, its identity, with everything, rather than its difference from everything else. When I say “an individual thing”, I at once state it to be really quite a universal, for everything is an individual thing: and in the same way “this thing” is everything and anything we like. More precisely, as this bit of paper, each and every paper is a “this bit of paper”, and I have thus said all the while what is universal. If I want, however, to help out speech – which has the divine nature of directly turning the mere “meaning” right round about, making it into something else, and so not letting it ever come the length of words at all – by pointing out this

bit of paper, then I get the experience of what is, in point of fact, the real truth of sense-certainty. I point it out as a Here, which is a Here of other Heres, or is in itself simply many Heres together, i.e. is a universal. I take it up then, as in truth it is; and instead of knowing something immediate, I “take” something “truly”, I per-ceive (*wahrnehme*, *per-cipio*).

Perception: Or Things and their Deceptiveness

1. In addition to the works mentioned on p. 40 (note), the reader may be referred to the analysis of Sensation and Perception in Plato's *Theaetetus*, and to Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, Chaps. II, V, VIII and XIX.
2. I.e. For the purposes of philosophical analysis.
3. I.e. the naïve consciousness here analyzed.
4. Cf. Encyclo. § 250.
5. Cf. Analysis of *Desire*, p. 220 ff.

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