

One of the first steps Hegel takes in unfolding the experience of sense-certainty is to enter into the realm (or unity of realms) which operate as the backdrop for every sensual experience; time and space. Every thing, every this that I can come across, on a purely sensual level, is a thing that is now and that is here. Experience at the most basic level concerns itself with what is immediately presented, such that everything that invokes or plays upon or is presented to my senses presents itself as being at the moment of my experience of it.

This is a very simple and seemingly uncontroversial understanding of sense-experience. Hegel now makes a move to test this uncontroversial or 'readily acceptable' notion of sense experience, in order to push the envelope as it were to see whether this conception can withstand itself or is ultimately self-defeating. Hegel makes this move by writing down the truth of a sense experience (95). I will use my particular situation of the moment in order to follow his train of thought. Currently, as I sit here typing this paper up, it is noon. Or to be more precise, it is a quarter after noon exactly. According to Hegel, "*a truth cannot lose anything by being written down, any more than it can lose anything through our preserving it*" (95). So I write: It is a quarter after noon.

A bit of time has passed since my last key stroke. It is now 12:17 exactly. The truth preserved in my writing down "It is a quarter after noon" has expired, it is stale. However, following Hegel's form of thought, 'now', in-and-of-itself, remains. That is, it is still now, but now is no longer the now that was now when it was the now of my writing down of my little truth. 'Now', says Hegel, is self-preserving. It is always Now, and of course, the notion of now can only make sense in the presence of something that is not now. It is not now a quarter after noon, but it is still now, that current now being 12:21. This is my reading of the passage that runs "*This self-preserving Now is, therefore, not immediate but mediated; for it is determined as a permanent and self-preserving Now through the fact that something else, viz. Day and Night, is not*" (96). So it seems that what we thought was very uncontroversial, that being that every sense experience is of something which is immediately presented to us, reveals itself to actually be a mediated experience. Now can only make sense in the presence of a not now, for the notion of not now is what endows meaning upon uttering the phrase 'Now' in the first place. Therefore it seems that our experience of now which at first glance appears immediate is in fact mediated by our being aware of now's that are not. Thus now is "*a simple thing...which is through negation, which is neither This nor That, [it is] a not-This...*" (96).

From this rather lucid passage Hegel claims that we refer to these sorts of things which exist through negation as universals. And accordingly, it now seems as though it is universals, and not particular and individual and immediate things which are the content of sense-certainty (96). Without convoluting the page or your mind any further than it need be, we can see very easily how this same understanding can apply to the other realm of experience – space. Here only makes sense in the presence of not here's, otherwise we would have no use of the word here to differentiate different points of space. Thus here, or space, the other aspect of experience, is also a universal.

Let us summarize how far we have gotten before we get ahead of ourselves. Innocently, we took the content of sense-certainty to be the immediate experience of a thing. But things exist here and now. The words or concepts or notions of 'here' and 'now' derive their meaning out of their own negation; that is, to say here only makes sense if there is a not here, and saying now only carries meaning if there are not nows. Things that exist out of their own negation, and yet are indifferent to either end of the spectrum and are self-preserving in every situation, we call

these things universals. Since things show up as here and now, and since here and now are universals, we were mistaken (though innocently enough) in taking the immediate to be the content of sense-certainty...it was the mediated all along (98).

From and out of this beautiful and elegant line of reasoning we arrive at two significances. The first significance is that language, or at least the language we are currently using, in truth utters the universal when we mean to speak of the particular. If you were to ask me “When would you like to do it” and I respond “Right now” – I envisage the now that is concurrent with my utterance, but the word I use reflects the universal. The universal is the true content of sense-certainty, and language operates in a universal tone, such that it is never possible to actually express in words what we mean when we speak of the sensuous – a particular and immediate thing (97).

The second significance of this reasoning is that it undermines the scientific worldview of things existing in themselves. For example, there is a tree in a forest. If I were to be a scientist, I would say something like: “That tree in the forest is there, whether I know about it or not. Me knowing about the tree is unessential to it being there, it being there is essential to it being there”. However, after having discovered that the universal is the true content of sense-certainty, we see that the roles of essential and unessential are switched. The scientific-me did not see the tree as a universal, but as an immediate object. However we now know that sense-certainty is a process of mediation, and mediation occurs in me, and not in the tree. Thus the essential aspect is now my knowing of the tree, and it is really unessential whether there is a tree there or not (100).

Honestly speaking, this is where my understanding begins to falter, and so I shall take my leave of the investigation and let it sit and breathe, to see if any truth of it is preserved the next time I happen upon it.