THE NOBILITY OF SIGHT

A Study in the Phenomenology of the Senses

Since the days of Greek philosophy sight has been recognized as the most excellent of the senses. The noblest activity of the mind, *theoria*, is described in metaphors mostly taken from the visual field. Plato, and western philosophy after him, speaks of the "eye of the soul" and of the "light of reason." Aristotle, in the very first lines of the Metaphysics, relates the desire for knowledge inherent in the nature of all men to the common delight in perception, most of all in vision. Yet neither he nor any other of the Greek thinkers, in the brief treatments of sight itself which we have, seems to have really explained by what properties sight qualifies for these supreme philosophical honours. Aristotle in the same passage sums up its virtues by stating that it is the sense yielding the most knowledge and excelling in differentiation (Met.A, 980 a 25); and he emphasizes that we enjoy vision for its own sake, apart from its utility. This evaluation merely hints at the qualities which elevate sight over the other senses. I shall here attempt by a more detailed analysis to substantiate these ancient claims for sight.

The unique distinction of sight consists in what we may call the image-performance, where "image" implies these three characteristics: (1) *simultaneity* in the presentation of a manifold, (2) *neutralization* of the causality of sense-affection, (3) *distance* in the spatial and mental senses. In considering these three characteristics we may hope to contribute not only to the phenomenology of the senses by themselves but also to the evaluation of their role in the higher mental performances based upon them in the case of man.

1. The simultaneity of image or the time-aspect of seeing

Sight is par excellence the sense of the simultaneous or the coordinated, and thereby of the extensive. A view comprehends many things juxtaposed, as co-existent parts of one field of vision. It does so in an instant: as in a flash one glance, an opening of the eyes, discloses a world of co-present qualities spread out in space, ranged in depth, continuing into indefinite distance, suggesting, if any direction in their static order, then by their perspective a direction away from the subject rather than towards it. The theme of depth will engage us later under the head of "distance." Sight is unique already in beholding a co-temporaneous manifold as such, which may be at rest. All other senses construct their perceptual unities out of a

temporal sequence of sensations which in themselves are non-spatial. They are therefore in their synthesis bound to the actual progress of these sensations, each of which fills the *now* of the sense from moment to moment with its own fugitive quality. Any such quality is just a point of passage in the transition from the preceding to the subsequent one, with each of which the sense-content completely coincides at a given stage. Thus the whole content is never simultaneously present, but always partial and incomplete. These more temporal senses therefore never achieve that degree of detachment of the signified from the sign, of persistent existence from the transitory event of sense-affection, which sight offers. We may illustrate the difference by the cases of hearing and touch, the two senses which in certain respects deserve particular comparison with sight.

The case of hearing is obvious: according to the nature of sound as such it can "give" only dynamic and never static reality. The wholes which it achieves by the synthesis of its manifold are strictly temporal ones, and their objective time-measure is identical with the time of the sense-activation itself: the duration of the sound heard is just the duration of hearing it. Extension of object and extension of its perception thus coincide. What the sound immediately discloses is not an object but a dynamical event at the locus of the object, and thereby mediately the state the object is in at the moment of that occurrence. The rustling of an animal in the leaves, the roaring of a lion, the footsteps of men, betray their presence by something they do. The immediate object of hearing is the sounds themselves, and then these indicate something else, viz., the actions producing those sounds; and only in the third place does the experience of hearing reveal the agent as an entity whose existence is independent of the noise it makes. I can say that I hear a dog, but what I hear is his bark, a sound recognized as the bark of a dog, and thereby I hear the dog barking, and thereby I perceive the dog himself in a certain way. But this way of perceiving him arises and ceases with his act of barking. By itself it does not reveal anything beyond it, and that there is an agent preceding and outlasting the acoustic act I know from information other than the acoustic one. The object-reference of sounds is not provided by the sounds as such, and it transcends the performance of mere hearing. All indications of existents beyond the sound-events themselves are extraneous to the objectivity which sound, e.g. as music, constitutes in itself. In the case of music, the synthesis of a manifold to a unity of perception refers not to an object other than the sensory contents but to their own order and interconnection. Since this synthesis deals with successive and not with juxtaposed contents, so that at the presence of any one element of the series all the others are either no more or not yet, and the present one must disappear before the next one can appear, the synthesis itself is a temporal process achieved by means

of memory. Through it (and certain anticipations) the whole sequence, though at each moment only atomically realized in one of its elements, is bound together into one comprehensive unity of experience. The acoustic "object" thus created is a time-object which lasts just as long as the act of its synthesis lasts, that is, as the sequence of hearing itself, or of its imaginative reproduction, with whose progress it part for part coincides. It has no other dimension than that of time.

It is in keeping with these characteristics of the acoustic sense that it allows of almost no simultaneity in the presentation of a manifold. Several sounds can be heard at once, to be sure, but to relate them to differently spaced sources is difficult, and beyond a narrow numerical limit any multiplicity of sounds merges into a compound noise. But the most important feature to be considered in comparison with the achievements of sight is the fact that for the sensation of hearing to come about the percipient is entirely dependent on something happening outside his control. All he can contribute to the situation is a state of attentive readiness for sounds to occur. He cannot let his ears wander, as his eyes do, over a field of possible percepts, already present as a material for his attention, and focus them on the object chosen, but he has simply to wait for a sound to strike them: he has no choice in the matter. In hearing, the percipient is at the mercy of environmental action, which intrudes upon his sensibility without his asking and by mere intensity decides for him which of several qualities distinguishable at the moment is to be the dominating impression. The strongest sound may not be the vitally most important one in a situation, but it simply seizes the attention from among the competing ones. Against this the freedom of selective attention is extremely limited.

In view of these characteristics we understand why for our ears we have nothing corresponding to the lids of our eyes. One does not know when a sound may occur: when it occurs it gives notice of an event in the environment and not merely of its permanent existence: and since an event, i.e., a change in the environment, may always be of vital import, ears have to be open always for this contingency. To have them closed could be fatal, just as it would be useless to open them at arbitrarily chosen moments. The contingency of hearing is entirely one-sided and requires therefore continual readiness for perception. The deepest reason for this basic contingency in the sense of hearing is the fact that it is related to event and not to existence, to becoming and not to being. Thus hearing, bound to succession and unable to present a simultaneous co-ordinated manifold of objects, falls short of sight in respect of the freedom which it confers upon its possessor.

The case is different with touch, though it shares with hearing the sucessiveness of apprehension, while it shares with vision the synthesis of its data into a static presence of objects. A proper analysis of touch is prob-

ably the most difficult in the phenomenology of sense-perception, because it is the least specialized and in its achievements the most compound of the senses. The most elementary level in this complexity is the contact-sensation in which the presence of a contiguous body is felt at the point of incidence. I leave for later consideration the important fact that the contact-situation always involves pressure and therefore a modicum of force as part of the experience. Here we deal as far as possible with the mere qualities sensed. The first observation to be made then is that *shape* is not an original datum of touch, but a construct which emerges additively from a serial multiplicity of single or continuously blending touch sensations, and this in conjunction only with proprioceptive motor sensations. The single touch-sensation confined to the point of contact and without correlation to more of its own kind is rather barren of information. Already the simple tactile qualities, such as soft and hard, and even more so rough and smooth, require a series of changing sensations obtained by pressure and by friction, i.e., generally speaking by movement. Thus in their very constitution a synthesis on the part of the percipient is involved, extending over the time-span of the series and, by a short-term retention, unifying its elements into one impression. Touch and hearing agree in this respect: that their primary objects, the qualities sensed, have process character and are thus essentially time-entities. This observation, incidentally, dispenses with the rather sterile question whether all sentient life is endowed with memory. In the form of immediate short-term retention, memory enters into the very constitution of sensibility, and is thus coeval with it.

Now the situation moves to a higher level if the sentient body itself is the voluntary agent of that motion which is required for the acquisition of this serial sequence of impressions. Then touch passes over from suffering to acting: its progress comes under the control of the percipient, and it may be continued and varied with a view to fuller information. Thus mere touch-impression changes into the act of feeling. There is a basic difference between simply having a tactile encounter and *feeling* another *body*. The former may be said to be the atomic element in the more complex totality of the latter, but this totality is more than the mere additive result of such atomic touch-sensations. The motor element introduces an essentially new quality into the picture: one of the intrinsic potentialities of this element is that it may disclose spatial characteristics, which are no inherent part of the elementary tactile qualities. Through the kinesthetic accompaniment of voluntary motion the whole perception is raised to a higher order: the touch-qualities become arranged in a spatial scheme, they fall into the pattern of *surface*, and become elements of *form*. This is a synthesis of a higher order, superimposed on that synthesis which is already operative in the constitution of the simple sense-qualities, which require their own atomic time-

series of contact-sensations, but now enter as material into the larger unit of spatial order. In this order the manifold concresces into a shape. The higher order of synthesis means also a larger time-span for its performance, and thus involves more of the memory we found to be inherent in sense-perception.

An organ for real shape-feeling we have probably only in the human hand, and there is more than mere coincidence in the fact that in his hand man has a tactile organ which can take over some of the distinctive achievements of his eye. There is a mental side to the highest performance of the tactile sense, or rather, to the use which is made of its information, that transcends all mere sentience, and it is this mental use which brings touch within the dimension of the achievements of sight. Briefly, it is the image-faculty, in classical terms: *imaginatio, phantasia,* which makes that use of the data of touch. Only a creature that has the visual faculty characteristic of man can also vicariously "see" by touch. The level of form-perception at the command of a creature will be essentially the same for both senses, incommensurable as they are in terms of their proper sensible qualities. Blind men can "see" by means of their hands, not because they are devoid of eyes but because they are beings endowed with the general faculty of "vision" and only happen to be deprived of the primary organ of sight.

We are engaged in showing the unique position of sight with respect to simultaneity of presentation, the thesis being that all the other senses operate on the basis of time-series in the presentation of their qualities. Hearing, as we have seen, stays entirely within this dimension in that the results of its synthesis, the extensive acoustic objects (such as a melody), retain the successiveness of elements which the succession of experience itself originally possessed. Melody not only is generated by sequence, but is a sequence. The time-measure is an essential aspect in the content of the sound-experience. A visual value, the presence of a color, may have a long or short duration: this may make a difference to the percipient for reasons of his own, but it does not make any difference to the experience-content itself. This color-quality has no intrinsic reference to time. With touch we found that already the single "atomic" sensation includes a time-element as part of the sense-content itself, the time without which such a quality as rough cannot be "generated" for experience and in which alone it presents itself; and moreover we found the composite tactile objectivity to emerge from a successive synthesis of such sensations. But the result of the synthesis itself, in the case of surface- and shape-perception, represents a spatial and not a temporal entity, and we have here presentation of simultaneity through successiveness. In this presentation the original time-order of the atomic sensations becomes irrelevant and forms no part in the synthesized content now "present." It is merely the accidental order of the

acquisition of data which can be *ad libitum* changed and still procure the same result, whereas in hearing the order of the acquisition of data is the order of the object itself.

Thus it would seem that the three cases can be distinguished in this formula: Hearing—presentation of sequence through sequence; touch—presentation of simultaneity through sequence; sight—presentation of simultaneity through simultaneity.

According to this formula sight retains its unique position even in relation to the most developed case of tactile performance. We may take it that the achievement is at its best in the case of blind people who have learned to glean full information about shape and spatial situation of objects from the tactile data which they collect through their own activity. Yet even the densest distribution of the point-determinants collected and correlated in the course of extensive scanning by touch still leaves areas to be supplied by imagination. Knowledge of the complete form emerges progressively in this series of partial delimitations and from a certain stage onward it is for all practical purposes "complete." How complete it can be is testified by the work of blind portrait sculptors. But this completeness is the product of an elaborate synthesis of many single perceptions, integrated into the one simultaneous form in whose presentness to the imagination the time sequence of its building up is forgotten.[1] Thus we have here to distinguish what in the case of sight is identical, namely, the feat of the sense itself and the feat of the image-presentation *on the basis* of this sense-performance. The latter is strictly speaking no longer a matter of touch but a kind of seeing by means of the heterogeneous material of touch. But however many data may be registered in succession and entered into the plane of simultaneous presentation, they can never fill a horizon such as is disclosed to one glance of the eyes. There are bound to remain blank spaces in between and an unrealized horizon in depth beyond the proximity of the actually contacted resistant objects.

With sight, all I have to do is open my eyes, and the world is there, as it was all the time. We have seen that the case is different with hearing; and touch has to go out and seek the objects in bodily motion and through bodily contact, and this narrows down the actual object-relation to one particular instant: the realized relation is committed by the previous choice in which it originated, whereas in sight selection by focusing proceeds non-committally within the field which the total vision presents and in which all the elements are simultaneously available. The particular focus impairs nothing of this simultaneous presentness. It has not committed freedom

[1] Cf. the excellent analysis, by a blind author, in: Pierre Villey, The world of the blind; a psychological study; tr. by Alys Hallard (London, Duckworth, 1930), pp. 187 f.

to this one choice at the expense of all the other possible ones, which remain at its instantaneous disposal without involving the kind of action that would change the situation obtaining between the subject and its vis-à-vis, the environment. Only the simultaneity of image allows the beholder to compare and interrelate: it not only offers many things at once, but offers them in their mutual proportion, and thus objectivity emerges pre-eminently from sight.

As regards the time-aspect as such, the simultaneity of sight is not only of practical advantage, in that it saves the time needed to collect the manifold data successively, but it introduces the beholder to a whole time-dimension otherwise not disclosed to him, namely, the *present* as something more than the point-experience of the passing *now*. In the case of every other sense, no instant is closed in itself, and no instantaneous datum tells its story. Sensation has to go on, to follow up the beginnings made in the evanescing antecedent, datum has to follow upon datum to let the larger units of experience in process emerge. Sound exists in sequence, every *now* of it vanishing into the past while it goes on: to arrest this flow and "view" a momentary "slice" of it would mean to have not a snapshot but an atomic fragment of it, and strictly speaking nothing at all. Transience is thus of the very essence of the *now* of hearing, and "present" is here a mere following in the stream of onmoving process. The situation is similar with touch, only that here the sequence is one more of active performance than of mere incoming data. In neither case is there a static present; to put it in Platonic terms, they are senses not of being but of becoming. Only the simultaneous representation of the visual field gives us co-existence as such, i.e., the co-presence of things in one being which embraces them all as their common present. The present, instead of being a point-like experience, becomes a *dimension* within which things can be beheld at once and can be related to each other by the wandering glance of attention. This scanning, though proceeding in time, articulates only what was present to the first glance and what stays unchanged while being scanned. The time thus taken in taking-in the view is not experienced as the passing away of contents before new ones in the flux of event, but as a lasting of the same, an identity which is the extension of the instantaneous *now* and therefore unmoved continued present—so long as no change occurs in the objects themselves. If it does, then time starts rolling visually. Indeed only the simultaneity of sight, with its extended "present" of enduring objects, allows the distinction between change and the unchanging and therefore between becoming and being. All the other senses operate by registering change and cannot make that distinction. Only sight therefore provides the sensual basis on which the mind may conceive the idea of the eternal, that which never changes and is always present. The very contrast between

eternity and temporality rests upon an idealization of "present" experienced visually as the holder of stable contents as against the fleeting succession of non-visual sensation. In the visual presence of objects the beholder may come to rest and possess an extended *now*.

Over these wider issues we must not forget the immense advantage which an instantaneous survey of the whole field of possible encounters represents in the biological situation. In the simultaneous field of vision a co-ordinated manifold, as yet outside active communication with me, offers itself to my selection for possible action. In this connection simultaneity means selectivity, and is thus a major factor in the higher freedom of the self-moving animal.

2. DYNAMIC NEUTRALIZATION

The freedom of choice just mentioned is dependent not only on the simultaneity of presence but at the same time on the fact that in seeing I am not yet engaged by the seen object. I may choose to enter into intercourse with it, but it can appear without the fact of its appearance already involving intercourse. By my seeing it, no issue of my possible relations with it is prejudged. Neither I nor the object has so far done anything to determine the mutual situation. It lets me be as I let it be. In this respect sight differs decisively from touch and hearing. The obtaining of the touch-experience itself is nothing but the entering into actual intercourse with the object: i.e., the very coming into play of this sense already changes the situation obtaining between me and the object. A fuller information then involves further such changes, each of which affects the object and my body at once and so is already itself a phase in my practical commerce with the object, for which on the other hand my sense-information is meant to prepare me. We therefore do not have in touch that clear separation between the theoretical function of information and the practical conduct, freely based on it, that we have in vision. Here again we have in the very constitution of a sense and its physical conditions the organic root of a highly spiritual distinction on the human level: that between theory and practice. While in touch subject and object are already doing something to each other in the very act in which the object becomes a phenomenal presence, the presence of the visual manifold leaves me still entirely free as to actual commerce, as I see without doing and without the object's doing anything.

In hearing, it is true, there is also no doing on my part, but all the more on the part of the object. Things are not by their own nature audible as they are visible; it does not belong to their existence to emit sound as it belongs to them to reflect light. I can therefore not choose to hear something, but have to wait till something happens to a part of my environ-

ment to make it sound, and this sound will strike me whether I choose or not. And since it is an event of which sound informs me and not merely the existence of things in their total configuration, my choice of action is determined for me by the acoustic information. Something is going on in my surroundings, so hearing informs me, and I have to respond to that change, which affects me as an interested party not free to contemplate: I have to strain myself toward what may come next from that quarter, to which I am now bound in a dynamical situation.

Now it is the complete absence of such a dynamical situation, of any intrusion of causality into the relation, which distinguishes sight. I have to do nothing but to look, and the object is not affected by that: and once there is light, the object has only to be there to be visible, and I am not affected by that: and yet it is apprehended in its self-containment from out of my own self-containment, it is present to me without drawing me into its presence. Whatever dynamic commerce there is in physical fact between source of light, illuminated object and perceiving eye, this context forms no part of the phenomenal result. This complete neutralization of dynamic content in the visual object, the expurgation of all traces of causal activity from its presentation, is one of the major accomplishments of what we call the image-function of sight, and it results in a subtle balance of gain and loss in the cognitive economy of man, the pre-eminently seeing creature.

The gain is the concept of objectivity, of the thing as it is in itself as distinct from the thing as it affects me, and from this distinction arises the whole idea of *theoria* and theoretical truth. Furthermore, the image is handed over to imagination, which can deal with it in complete detachment from the actual presence of the original object: this detachability of the image, i.e., of "form" from its "matter," of "essence" from "existence," is at the bottom of abstraction and therefore of all free thought. In imagination the image can be varied at will. This is also the case with sound, it is true, of which "imagination" can compose a freely created world of its own: but this has no reference to the world of things and therefore no cognitive function, whereas even the freest exercise of visual imagination retains this reference and may reveal properties or possibilities of the external world, as the case of geometry shows. Only the curious causal "indifference" of visual presence provides the material and engenders the attitude for these mental feats.

The loss, on the other hand, consists in the very feature which makes these higher developments possible, namely, the elimination of the causal connection from the visual account. The pure form-presentation which vision affords does not betray its own causal genesis and it suppresses with it every causal aspect in its objects, since their self-containedness vis-à-vis the observer becomes at the same time a mutual self-containedness among

themselves. No force-experience, no character of impulse and transitive causality enters into the nature of image, and thus any edifice of concepts built on that evidence alone must show the gap in the interconnection of objects which Hume has noted. This means only that we have to integrate the evidence of sight with evidence of another kind which in the exclusiveness of "theoria" is all too often forgotten.

Let us consider more closely this causal detachment by which sight is the freest and at the same time the least "realistic" of the senses. Reality is primarily evidenced in resistance which is an ingredient in touch-experience. For physical contact is more than the geometrical fact of contiguity: it involves impact. In other words, touch is the sense, and the only sense, in which the perception of quality is normally blended with the experience of force, which being reciprocal does not let the subject be passive; thus it is the sense in which the original encounter with reality as reality takes place. Touch brings the reality of its object within the experience of sense in virtue of that by which it transcends mere sense, viz., the force-component involved in its original make-up. The percipient on his part can magnify this component by his voluntary counter-action against the affecting object. For this reason touch is the true test of reality: I can dispel every suspicion of illusion by grasping the doubtful object and trying its reality in terms of the resistance it offers to my efforts to displace it. Differently expressed, external reality is disclosed in the same act in which one's own reality is disclosed by self-action: in feeling my own reality by some sort of effort I make, I feel the reality of the world. And I make an effort in the encounter with something other than myself.

The effortlessness of sight is a privilege which, with the toil, forgoes also the reward of the lower sense. Seeing requires no visible activity either on the part of the object or on that of the subject. Neither invades the sphere of the other: they let each other be what they are and as they are, and thus emerge the self-contained object and the self-contained subject. The non-activity of the seen object in relation to the seeing subject is not impaired by the fact that physically speaking action on its part (emission of light) is involved as a condition of its being seen. The singular properties of light[2] permit the whole dynamic genesis to disappear in the perceptual result, so that in seeing the percipient remains entirely free from causal involvement in the things to be perceived. Thus vision secures that standing back from the aggressiveness of the world which frees for observation and opens a

[2] The smallness of the disturbances in which light consists affords all the major advantages of sight over the other senses: the distance of reach, the detachment from the cause-effect situation, its replacement by a quiescent image, the simultaneous representation of a manifold, and the extreme minuteness and precision of point-to-point "mapping" in this representation.

horizon for elective attention. But it does so at the price of offering a calmed abstract of reality denuded of its raw power. To quote from a previously published account: "The object, staying in its bounds, faces the subject across the gap which the evanescence of the force context has created. From the onrush and impact of reality, out of its insistent proximity in influence, the distance of appearance (phenomenon) is won: image, in the place of effect, can be looked at and compared, in memory retained and recalled, in imagination varied and freely composed. This separation of contained appearance from intrusive reality gives rise to the separableness of *essentia* from *existentia* underlying the higher freedoms of theory. It is but the basic freedom of vision, and the element of abstraction inherent in image, which are carried farther in conceptual thought; and from visual perception, concept and idea inherit that ontological pattern of objectivity which vision has first created. The stillness of object, withdrawn from the turmoil of forces, recurs enhanced in the stableness and permanent availability of *idea*: it is in the last analysis at the bottom of 'theory' as such."[3]

Thus in speaking of the advantage of the causal detachment of sight, it must be borne in mind that this results also in the causal muteness of its objects. Sight indeed withholds the experience of causality: causality is not a visual datum. Thus Hume, understanding percepts ("impressions" and "ideas") mainly on the model of visual images, was perfectly right in arguing that "causation" is not found among the contents of sense so understood. Vision however is not the primary but the most sublime case of sense perception and rests on the understructure of more elementary functions in which the commerce with the world is carried on on far more elementary terms. A king with no subjects to rule over ceases to be a king. The evidence of sight does not falsify reality when supplemented by that of the underlying strata of experience, notably of motility and touch: when arrogantly rejecting it, sight becomes barren of truth.

3. SPATIAL DISTANCE

Neither simultaneity of presentation nor dynamic neutrality would be possible without the element of distance. A manifold can be presented simultaneously only if it does not crowd my immediate proximity where each item observed would block out all the rest. And causality could not be neutralized if the object invaded my private body-sphere or its closest vicinity. Now sight is the ideal distance-sense. Light travels farther than sound and smell and does not suffer distortion on its way over any distance. Indeed, sight is the only sense in which the advantage lies not in proximity

[3] "Causality and Perception", *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 47, no. 11: May 25, 1950, p. 323.

but in distance: the best view is by no means the closest view; to get the proper view we take the proper distance, which may vary for different objects and different purposes, but which is always realized as a positive and not a defective feature in the phenomenal presence of the object. By distance up to a point sight gains in distinctness of detail, and beyond that point in comprehensiveness of survey, in accuracy of proportions—generally speaking, in integration. We consciously stand back and create distance in order to look at the world, i.e., at objects as parts of the world: and also in order to be unembarrassed by the closeness of that which we wish *only* to see; to have the full liberty of our scanning attention. No other sense gains by distance. Its perception may bridge distance effectively, i.e., it overcomes what is in itself a disadvantage for it, but it can only lose from its increase and will always tend to gain better information by its decrease and the optimum at closest range.

This alone would distinguish sight from the rest of the senses, but there are more distinctive characteristics in the *manner* in which distance is experienced in vision. Sound or smell may report an object as merely distant, without reporting the state of the intervening space: in sight the object *faces* me *across* the intervening distance, which in all its potential "steps" is included in the perception. In viewing an object there is the situation of a "vis-à-vis," which discloses the object as the terminal of a dimension leading from me towards it, and this dimension lies open before me. The facing across a distance thus discloses the distance itself as something I am free to traverse; it is an invitation to forward motion, putting the intervening space at my disposal. The dynamics of perspective depth connects me with the projected terminus.

This terminus itself is arbitrary in each given case, and my glance even if focused on it includes as a background the open field of other presences behind it, just as it includes, as a corona fading towards the edges, the manifold co-present in the plane. This indefinite "and so on" with which the visual perception is imbued, an ever-ready potential for realization, and especially the "and so on" in depth, is the birthplace of the idea of *infinity*, to which no other sense could supply the experiential basis. Touch conjoined with locomotion certainly also includes awareness of the potentiality of going on to the next point, and thence to the next, and so on. But touch does not already adumbrate these imminent realizations in its perceptual content, as a marginal part into which the core continuously blends. In the visual field it is this continuous blending of the focused area into more and more distant background-planes, and its shading off towards the fringes, which make the "and so on" more than an empty potentiality: there is the co-represented readiness of the field to be penetrated, a positive pull which draws the glance on as the given content passes as it were of itself over into further contents. No such blending of actual and potential

content is given in touch; there is only the abstract possibility of replacing the present by a subsequent content, and the whole results only from the progressive addition of discrete parts. Sight includes at any given instant an *infinite* manifold at once, and its own qualitative conditions open the way into what lies beyond. The unfolding of space before the eye, under the magic of light, bears in itself the germ of infinity—as a perceptual aspect. Its conceptual framing in the idea of infinity is a step beyond perception, but one that was taken from this base. The fact that we can look into the unbounded depth of the universe has surely been of immense importance in the formation of our ideas.

To revert to the straight phenomenon of distance, it goes without saying that sight by this mere widening of the horizon of information confers a tremendous biological advantage. Knowledge at a distance is tantamount to foreknowledge. The uncommitted reach into space is gain of time for adaptive behavior: I know in good time what I have to reckon with. The apprehension of distant objects therefore means an immediate increase in freedom by the mere increase which remoteness allows in the time-margin; just as we found simultaneity of presentation to mean an increase in freedom by the opportunity of choice it offers in the presented manifold. It has been said already that these two aspects of the freedom of sight are closely interrelated. Their union in one performance is the crowning achievement of freedom in the sphere of sentience.

It would not be correct to say that in sight the distant is brought near. Rather it is left in its distance, and if this is great enough it can put the observed object outside the sphere of possible intercourse and of environmental relevance. In that case, perceptual distance many turn into mental distance, and the phenomenon of disinterested beholding may emerge, this essential ingredient in what we call "objectivity," of which we have found another condition in causal neutrality.

We turn back to the beginning, the partiality of classical philosophy for one of the bodily senses. Our investigation has shown some grounds for this partiality in the virtues inherent in sight. We even found, in each of the three aspects under which we treated vision, the ground for some basic concept of philosophy. *Simultaneity of presentation* furnishes the idea of enduring present, the contrast between change and the unchanging, between time and eternity. *Dynamic neutralization* furnishes form as distinct from matter, essence as distinct from existence, and the difference of theory and practice. *Distance* furnishes the idea of infinity.

Thus the mind has gone where vision pointed.

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