Term: Action

Quote: One of the most useful and at the same time one of the most arduous of the labors of cenoscopy consists in starting with a familiar but vague concept and searching out and defining the nearest definite concept of sufficient breadth for the purposes of metaphysics. Treating in this way the concept of action, and at the same time generalizing it so as not to confine it to temporal conditions, we get a concept which may very well be named action in the philosophical sense. It will be defined as a surd dyadic relation by which one correlate, the patient, receives a special determination, while the other correlate, the agent, receives thereby, or perhaps we should say therein, no special determination. The determination is special in the sense that in default of the relation the patient would not have been so determined. Thus, the completing of B by A is an action in the philosophical sense, in which A [is] the agent and B the patient. Duality consists in such action of A upon B together with a reciprocal action of the same completing nature of B upon A.

The double relation of equiparance which constitutes duality is surd. It may be described in words, but those words can only be understood by means of reference to certain experiences; just as a person may be told that a piece of textile fabric is a yard wide, yet can never know what is meant except through an experience immediate or mediate of a certain bar laid up in the Westminster palace. The experiences [that] acquaint us with action are of two varieties, experiences of active effort and experiences of passive surprise.


References: EP 2:383

Date of Quote: 1906

URL: http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-basis-pragmaticism-33