Term: Thirdness

Quote: Now for Thirdness. Five minutes of our waking life will hardly pass without our making some kind of prediction; and in the majority of cases these predictions are fulfilled in the event. Yet a prediction is essentially of a general nature, and cannot ever be completely fulfilled. To say that a prediction has a decided tendency to be fulfilled, is to say that the future events are in a measure really governed by a law. If a pair of dice turns up sixes five times running, that is a mere uniformity. The dice might happen fortuitously to turn up sixes a thousand times running. But that would not afford the slightest security for a prediction that they would turn up sixes the next time. If the prediction has a tendency to be fulfilled, it must be that future events have a tendency to conform to a general rule. “Oh,” but say the nominalists, “this general rule is nothing but a mere word or couple of words!” I reply, “Nobody ever dreamed of denying that what is general is of the nature of a general sign; but the question is whether future events will conform to it or not. If they will, your adjective ‘mere’ seems to be ill-placed.” A rule to which future events have a tendency to conform is ipso facto an important thing, an important element in the happening of those events. This mode of being which consists, mind my word if you please, the mode of being which consists in the fact that future facts of Secondness will take on a determinate general character, I call a Thirdness.


References: CP 1.26

Date of Quote: 1903

URL: http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-lowell-lectures-some-topics-logic-bearing-questions-now-vexed-lecture-iii-r-1