Term: Firstness

Quote: Let us now consider what could appear as being in the present instant were it utterly cut off from past and future. We can only guess; for nothing is more occult than the absolute present. There plainly could be no action; and without the possibility of action, to talk of binarity would be to utter words without meaning. There might be a sort of consciousness, or feeling, with no self; and this feeling might have its tone. Notwithstanding what William James has said, I do not think there could be any continuity like space, which, though it may perhaps appear in an instant in an educated mind, I cannot think could do so if it had no time at all; and without continuity parts of the feeling could not be synthetized; and therefore there would be no recognizable parts. There could not even be a degree of vividness of the feeling; for this [the degree of vividness] is the comparative amount of disturbance of general consciousness by a feeling. At any rate, such shall be our hypothesis, and whether it is psychologically true or not is of no consequence. The world would be reduced to a quality of unanalyzed feeling. Here would be an utter absence of binarity. I cannot call it unity; for even unity supposes plurality. I may call its form Firstness, Orience, or Originality. It would be something which is what it is without reference to anything else within it or without it, regardless of all force and of all reason. Now the world is full of this element of irresponsible, free, Originality. [—]We mostly neglect them; but there are cases, as in qualities of feeling, self-consciousness, etc., in which such isolated flashes come to the front. Originality, or Firstness, is another of my Categories.


References: CP 2.85

Date of Quote: 1902

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