

'Firstness' (pub. 08.01.13-20:34). Quote in M. Bergman & S. Paavola (Eds.), *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce's Terms in His Own Words. New Edition*. Retrieved from <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-minute-logic-chapter-i-intended-characters-treatise-2>.

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.

Source: Peirce, C. S. (1902). *Minute Logic: Chapter I. Intended Characters of this Treatise*. MS [R] 425.

References: CP 2.85

Date of 1902

Quote:

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