

Thisness

1897-8 | Abstracts of 8 Lectures | NEM 4:135-6

...it is the composite of pairing in exclusion of another pair with the banding or pairing together of such exclusive pairs which produces *thisness*.

The word *individuality* applied to *thisness* involves a one-sided conception of the matter, as if unity and segregation were its characteristic. But this is not so. Segregate unity belongs to immediate consciousness, to quality; and wherever it appears that is its real origin. The true characteristic of *thisness* is duality; and it is only when one member of the pair is considered exclusively that it appears as *individuality*.

But what is commonly in our minds when we speak of individuality is a positive repugnance to generality. Our thoughts are so impregnated with generality, that we look at everything from its standpoint. Instead of thinking of *thisness* as it is in itself and for itself, we think of it in its relation to generality. But then we so exaggerate the importance of *feeling* or immediate consciousness, that we are accustomed to think of generality as characterized by *unity*, instead of by mediation, and its positive contrary, *thisness*, we think of as also characterized by unity, – which is logically absurd. Positive anti-generality is not unity, but duality, – the setting of objects over against one another with a great gulf between, instead of conceiving them as cases joined by a continuous medium or perpetual thirdness.

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Thisness, in short, is *reaction*. Whatever reacts against something else is a *this*; and every *this* so reacts. Reaction is duality. All duality is like reaction in the world in which the duality subsists.