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.