

# General

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1903 [c.] | Topics. Chapter I. Singular Systems | MS [R] 151

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It is essential clearly to discriminate between vagueness and generality. As applied to assertions, this distinction is very easy. Namely, an assertion is *comprehensive* in so far as it extends the person to whom it is addressed a certain latitude in the interpretation of it; it is *vague* in so far as it reserves to the utterer of it a similar latitude.

Peirce has replaced the word "general" with "comprehensive" in this passage

1904 | Foundations of Mathematics [R] | MS [R] 11:1-2

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If a sign allows a latitude of choice to the interpreter, within certain limits and in certain respects, as to what its object or meaning shall be regarded as being, it may be called *general*, or *non-individual*.

1904 | Foundations of Mathematics [R] | MS [R] 9:2

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If a sign is apt to represent many things, the option as to what single thing it shall be taken to represent may be reserved by the utterer of it, to whom it naturally belongs; in which case it may be said to be used *vaguely*, or *not definitely*. The utterer may, however, transfer this option to the interpreter; in which case the sign may be said to be used *generally*, or *not individually*.

1905 | Issues of Pragmaticism | EP 2:350-351; CP 5.447-448

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A sign (under which designation I place every kind of thought, and not alone external signs) that is in any respect objectively indeterminate (i.e., whose object is undetermined by the sign itself) is objectively *general* in so far as it extends to the interpreter the privilege of carrying its determination further. [—]

Perhaps a more scientific pair of definitions would be that anything is *general* in so far as the principle of excluded middle does not apply to it and is *vague* in so far as the principle of contradiction does not apply to it.

1906 | The Basis of Pragmaticism | EP 2:394; CP 5.448 n.

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The October remarks made the proper distinction between the two kinds of indeterminacy, viz: indefiniteness and generality, of which the former consists in the sign's not sufficiently expressing itself to allow of an indubitable determinate interpretation, while the latter turns over to the interpreter the right to complete the determination as he pleases. [—]

The October remarks, with a view to brevity, omitted to mention that both indefiniteness and generality might primarily affect either the logical breadth or the logical depth of the sign to [which] they belong.

"The October remarks" is a reference to the Monist article 'Issues of Pragmatism' (1905)