Secondness

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1886 | One, Two, Three: Kantian Categories | EP 1:243

If the universe is thus progressing from a state of all but pure chance to a state of all but complete determination by law, we must suppose that there is an original, elemental, tendency of things to acquire determinate properties, to take habits. This is the Third or mediating element between chance, which brings forth First and original events, and law which produces sequences or Seconds.

1887-1888 | A Guess at the Riddle | EP 1:248-249; CP 1.358

Just as the first is not absolutely first if thought along with a second, so likewise to think the Second in its perfection we must banish every third. The Second is therefore the absolute last. But we need not, and must not, banish the idea of the first from the second; on the contrary, the Second is precisely that which cannot be without the first. It meets us in such facts as Another, Relation, Compulsion, Effect, Dependence, Independence, Negation, Occurrence, Reality, Result. A thing cannot be other, negative, or independent, without a first to or of which it shall be other, negative, or independent. Still, this is not a very deep kind of secondness; for the first might in these cases be destroyed yet leave the real character of the second absolutely unchanged. When the second suffers some change from the action of the first, and is dependent upon it, the secondness is more genuine. But the dependence must not go so far that the second is a mere accident or incident of the first; otherwise the secondness again degenerates. The genuine second suffers and yet resists, like dead matter, whose existence consists in its inertia. Note, too, that for the Second to have the Finality that we have seen belongs to it, it must be determined by the first immovably, and thenceforth be fixed; so that unalterable fixity becomes one of its attributes. We find secondness in occurrence, because an occurrence is something whose existence consists in our knocking up against it. A hard fact is of the same sort; that is to say, it is something which is there, and which I cannot think away, but am forced to acknowledge as an object or second beside myself, the subject or number one, and which forms material for the exercise of my will.

1887-1888 | A Guess at the Riddle | EP 1:250; CP 1.361

We have seen that it is the immediate consciousness that is preeminently first, the external dead thing that is preeminently second. In like manner, it is evidently the representation mediating between these two that is preëminently third. Other examples, however, should not be neglected. The first is agent, the second patient, the third is the action by which the former influences the latter. Between the beginning as first, and the end as last, comes the process which leads from first to last.

1887-1888 | A Guess at the Riddle | EP 1:248; CP 1.356

The First is that whose being is simply in itself, not referring to anything nor lying behind anything. The Second is that which is what it is by force of something to which it is second. The Third is that which is what it is owing to things between which it mediates and which it brings into relation to each other.

1887-1888 | A Guess at the Riddle | EP 1:275; CP 1.405

Indeterminacy, then, or pure firstness, and hæcceity, or pure secondness, are facts not calling for and not capable of explanation.

1892 | The Critic of Arguments. II. The Reader is Introduced to Relatives | CP 3.422

I will only mention here that the ideas which belong to the three forms of rhemata are firstness, secondness, thirdness; firstness, or spontaneity; secondness, or dependence; thirdness, or mediation.

1898-06-11 | The Logic Notebook | MS [R] 339:108r

In the contents of consciousness we recognize three sorts of elements, Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness. [—] What a Second is depends partly on another, but is regardless of any third, and thus of any reason. [—] Firstness is feeling-quality; secondness is brute reaction; thirdness is mediation.

1902 | Minute Logic: Chapter I. Intended Characters of this Treatise | CP 2.84-89

All experience compels your acknowledgment. What, then, is the fact that is present to you? Ask yourself: it is past. A fact is a *fait accompli*; its *esse* is *in praeterito*. The past compels the present, in some measure, at least. If you complain to the Past that it is wrong and unreasonable, it laughs. It does not care a snap of the finger for Reason. Its force is brute force. So then, you are compelled, brutally compelled, to admit that there is such an element in the world of experience as brute force. […]

Obsistence (suggesting *obviate, object, obstinate, obstacle, insistence, resistance*, etc.) is that wherein secondness differs from firstness; or, is that element which taken in connection with Originality, makes one thing such as another compels it to be.

1903 | Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism: Lecture III | CP 5.69

Category the Second has a *Degenerate* Form, in which there is Secondness indeed, but a weak or Secondary Secondness that is not in the pair in its own quality, but belongs to it only in a certain respect. Moreover, this degeneracy need not be absolute but may be only approximative. Thus a genus characterized by Reaction will by the determination of its essential character split into two species, one

a species where the secondness is strong, the other a species where the secondness is weak, and the strong species will subdivide into two that will be similarly related, without any corresponding subdivision of the weak species. For example, Psychological Reaction splits into Willing, where the Secondness is strong, and Sensation, where it is weak; and Willing again subdivides into Active Willing and Inhibitive Willing, to which last dichotomy nothing in Sensation corresponds. But it must be confessed that subdivision, as such, involves something more than the second category.

1903 | Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism: Lecture III | CP 5.66

Category the Second is the Idea of that which is such as it is as being Second to some First, regardless of anything else, and in particular regardless of any *Law*, although it may conform to a law. That is to say, it is *Reaction* as an element of the Phenomenon.

1903 | Lowell Lectures on Some Topics of Logic Bearing on Questions Now Vexed. Lecture III [R] | CP 1.24

Let us begin with considering actuality, and try to make out just what it consists in. If I ask you what the actuality of an event consists in, you will tell me that it consists in its happening *then* and *there*. The specifications *then* and *there* involve all its relations to other existents. The actuality of the event seems to lie in its relations to the universe of existents. A court may issue *injunctions* and *judgments* against me and I not care a snap of my finger for them. I may think them idle vapor. But when I feel the sheriff's hand on my shoulder, I shall begin to have a sense of actuality. Actuality is something *brute*. There is no reason in it. I instance putting your shoulder against a door and trying to force it open against an unseen, silent, and unknown resistance. We have a two-sided consciousness of effort and resistance, which seems to me to come tolerably near to a pure sense of actuality. On the whole, I think we have here a mode of being of one thing which consists in how a second object is. I call that Secondness.

1903 | C.S.P.'s Lowell Lectures of 1903 2nd Draught of 3rd Lecture | MS [R] 462:76

The second element is directly experienced in our sense of being here, in our sense of present fact, which is the experience of actual reaction with a non-ego. It consists in anything's being that which another makes it to be here and now. I give to this element of doubleness the name of Secondness. Besides […] directly experiencing it, we regard outward objects as compelling one another, as exerting force upon one another.

1903 | Lowell Lectures on Some Topics of Logic Bearing on Questions Now Vexed. Part 1 of 3rd draught of 3rd Lecture | MS [R] 464:30-34; CP 1.324

I begin with the [element] which the rough and tumble of life renders most familiarly prominent. We are continually bumping up against hard fact. We expected one thing, or passively took it for granted,

and had the image of it in our minds, but experience forces that idea into the background, and compels us to think quite differently. You get this kind of consciousness in some approach to purity when you put your shoulder against a door and try to force it open. You have a sense of resistance and at the same time a sense of effort. There can be no resistance without effort; there can be no effort without resistance. They are only two ways of describing the same experience. It is a double consciousness. We become aware of ourself in becoming aware of the not-self. The waking state is a consciousness of reaction; and as the consciousness *itself* is two-sided, so it has also two *varieties*; namely, action, where our modification of other things is more prominent than their reaction on us, and perception, where their effect on us is overwhelmingly greater than our effect on them. And this notion, of being such as other things make us, is such a prominent part of our life that we conceive other things also to exist by virtue of their reactions against each other. The idea of other, of *not*, becomes a very pivot of thought. To this element I give the name of Secondness.

1903 | CSP's Lowell Lectures of 1903. 2nd Part of 3rd Draught of Lecture III | CP 1.532

As to Secondness, I have said that our only direct knowledge of it is in willing and in the experience of a perception. It is in willing that the Secondness comes out most strongly. But it is not pure Secondness. For, in the first place, he who wills has a purpose; and that idea of purpose makes the act appear as a *means* to an end. Now the word *means* is almost an exact synonym to the word *third*. It certainly involves Thirdness. Moreover, he who wills is conscious of doing so, in the sense of *representing* to himself that he does so. But representation is precisely genuine Thirdness. You must conceive an instantaneous consciousness that is instantly and totally forgotten and an effort without purpose. It is a hopeless undertaking to try to realize what consciousness would be without the element of representation. It would be like unexpectedly hearing a great explosion of nitroglycerine before one had recovered oneself and merely had the sense of the breaking off of the quiet. Perhaps it might not be far from what ordinary common sense conceives to take place when one billiard ball caroms on another. One ball “acts” on the other; that is, it makes an exertion *minus* the element of representation. We may say with some approach to accuracy that the general Firstness of all true Secondness is *existence*, though this term more particularly applies to Secondness in so far as it is an element of the reacting first and second. If we mean Secondness as it is an element of the occurrence, the Firstness of it is *actuality*. But actuality and existence are words expressing the same idea in different applications. Secondness, strictly speaking, is just when and where it takes place, and has no other being; and therefore different Secondnesses, strictly speaking, have in themselves no quality in common.

1903 | CSP's Lowell Lectures of 1903. 2nd Part of 3rd Draught of Lecture III | CP 1.535

Now we found the genuine and degenerate forms of Secondness by considering the full ideas of first and second. Then the genuine Secondness was found to be reaction, where first and second are both true seconds and the Secondness is something distinct from them, while in degenerate Secondness, or mere reference, the first is a mere first never attaining full Secondness.

1904 | Letters to Lady Welby | CP 8.328

... I was long ago (1867) led, after only three or four years' study, to throw all ideas into the three classes of Firstness, of Secondness, and of Thirdness. This sort of notion is as distasteful to me as to anybody; and for years, I endeavored to pooh-pooh and refute it; but it long ago conquered me completely. Disagreeable as it is to attribute such meaning to numbers, and to a triad above all, it is as true as it is disagreeable. The ideas of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness are simple enough. Giving to being the broadest possible sense, to include ideas as well as things, and ideas that we fancy we have just as much as ideas we do have, I should define Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness thus:

Firstness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, positively and without reference to anything else.

Secondness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, with respect to a second but regardless of any third.

Thirdness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, in bringing a second and third into relation to each other.

1904 | Letters to Lady Welby | CP 8.330

The type of an idea of Secondness is the experience of effort, prescinded from the idea of a purpose. It may be said that there is no such experience, that a purpose is always in view as long as the effort is cognized. This may be open to doubt; for in sustained effort we soon let the purpose drop out of view. However, I abstain from psychology which has nothing to do with ideoscopy. The existence of the word *effort* is sufficient proof that people think they have such an idea; and that is enough. The experience of effort cannot exist without the experience of resistance. Effort only is effort by virtue of its being opposed; and no third element enters. Note that I speak of the *experience*, not of the *feeling*, of effort. Imagine yourself to be seated alone at night in the basket of a balloon, far above earth, calmly enjoying the absolute calm and stillness. Suddenly the piercing shriek of a steam-whistle breaks upon you, and continues for a good while. The impression of stillness was an idea of Firstness, a quality of feeling. The piercing whistle does not allow you to think or do anything but suffer. So that too is absolutely simple. Another Firstness. But the breaking of the silence by the noise was an experience. The person in his inertness identifies himself with the precedent state of feeling, and the new feeling which comes in spite of him is the non-ego. He has a two-sided consciousness of an ego and a non-ego. That consciousness of the action of a new feeling in destroying the old feeling is what I call an *experience*. Experience generally is what the course of life has *compelled* me to think. Secondness is either *genuine* or *degenerate*. There are many degrees of genuineness. Generally speaking genuine secondness consists in one thing acting upon another, – brute action. I say brute, because so far as the idea of any *law* or *reason* comes in, Thirdness comes in. When a stone falls to the ground, the law of gravitation does not act to make it fall. The law of gravitation is the judge upon the bench who may pronounce the law till doomsday, but unless the strong arm of the law, the brutal sheriff, gives effect to the law, it amounts to nothing. True, the judge can create a sheriff if need be; but he must have one. The stone's actually falling is purely the affair of the stone and the earth at the time. This is a case of *reaction*. So is *existence* which is the mode of being of that which reacts with other things.

1904 | A Brief Intellectual Autobiography by Charles Sanders Peirce | Peirce, 1983, p. 72; MS [R]

L107:22-23

Secondness is that mode or element of being by which any subject is such as it is in a second subject regardless of any third; or rather, the category is the leading and characteristic element in this definition, which is prominent in the ideas of dyadic relativity or relation, action, effort, existence, individuality, opposition, negation, dependence, blind force. Secondness has two grades, the *genuine* and the *degenerate* (just as a pair of rays is called a “degenerate” conic) and this is true in several ways. Every genuine secondness has two correlative aspects, of which one is more active or first, the other more passive or second; and these two together make a total secondness between two correlative subjects.

This quote has been taken from Kenneth Laine Ketner's 1983 reconstruction of Peirce's 'Autobiography'

1904 | Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness, and the Reducibility of Fourthness [R] | MS [R] 914:5

…*Secondness*, or the mode of being of that which is such as it is relatively to a second object but regardless of any third…

1905 | Letters to Mario Calderoni | MS [R] L67:17-18

I find that there are in the phaneron,
[—]
2nd, elements each of which is such as it is relatively to to something over against it, regardless of any third. Such an element may also have a character in itself, a priman character, inseparable from what it is *to* the other. But however inseparable that priman character may be, it can be *distinguished* from the *Secundan* element, which I give to that which is such as it is to another, regardless of any third.

1905-06-01 | The Logic Notebook | MS [R] 339:242r

Secondness is the Mode of Being of that which is such as it is relatively to a Second but regardless of any third. That makes it of a brute nature.

1907 | Pragmatism | CP 5.469

Careful analysis shows that to the three grades of valency of indecomposable concepts correspond three classes of characters or predicates. Firstly come ” firstnesses,” or positive internal characters of the subject in itself; secondly come “secondnesses,” or brute actions of one subject or substance on another, regardless of law or of any third subject; thirdly comes “*thirdnesses*,” or the mental or quasi-mental influence of one subject on another relatively to a third.