

"Firstness is the same as abstractness, possibility, or essence: and no concrete or actual feeling, with its actual quality, is a pure First.

"However, there is another way of viewing the matter Granted that an actual feeling is always Second (because [r]elative to a stimulus), does it follow that the stimulating entity is, in its turn, relative to the feeling it elicits? . . . [I]n itself, say as an event, it need not be taken as relative to the feeling. Rather the feeling is Second to the thing felt, which *in this context* is First; and this relation is not reversible or symmetrical. . . . Nevertheless, the First event to which the Second feeling is relative may itself, *in another context*, be relative. As an event it may be relative to a still earlier event. Indeed, it may itself be a prior responsive or reactive feeling, with its own stimulus. . . . Thus we have a chain of Seconds which, reversing the direction of analysis, is also a chain of Firsts. The Firstness or Absoluteness is, to be sure, relative only, but for all that, perfectly definite and genuine. The earlier experience was *strictly* independent of its successor, though not of its predecessor" ("Peirce's 'One Contribution'": 459).

"The concretely, though relatively, First or nonrelative is . . . simply the earlier in the causal-temporal series. What about the *absolutely* nonrelative, if there can be such a thing? Must it not be some primordial and eternal essence, or realm of essences, the pure possibility of existence in general, which is prior to any particular situation? Theologically this must somehow coincide with the 'primordial nature' of God, or with [God's] primordial creativity or power. . . . Pure Firstness must be completely abstract, for by definition it is independent of, and so abstractable from, all particular concrete cases" (460).

"[E]ven the relatively nonrelative is, in a sense, abstract. . . . [T]he relatively absolute is also relatively abstract. And moreover, we may also say . . . that the relatively nonrelative is (in a similarly relative sense) possibility rather than actuality. Yesterday, to be sure, was no 'mere possibility,' absolutely speaking; it ~~is~~ was possibility, relatively speaking, for it furnished that possibility of which today is the actualization. It was the possibility of a certain kind of successor which otherwise would not have been possible. So

. . . Firstness as such means the possibility and the essence, not the actual *existence*, of feeling. Only so far as the earlier feeling was itself a Second was it, too, actual" (460 f.)

"[W]hereas a First is always something abstract and potential, a Second as such is concrete and actual; and thus, just as the absolute First is the most abstract, and is pure possibility, so the absolute Second must be maximally concrete and actual" (463).

"[T]he concretely or relatively First is not a continuum, but a discrete unit of feeling. . . . Yet it furnishes the possibility of its successor; and possibility . . . is continuous! However, though the concretely First is not in itself a continuum, the *possible ways in which it can be succeeded* do, in certain respects, form continuous ranges. The more abstract forms of Firstness, such as the quality *blue*, are then simply wider or more abstract ranges of continuous possibility, and the ultimate or absolute First is the continuum of unlimited range. But, in all cases, to look upon the past as possibility for the present is to look upon it as having had the present event (indeterminately or in outline) as its future. And the more abstract forms of possibility are reached by greater or less degrees of abstraction from the actual past, giving a more and more abstract version of the present as that which once was only future, hence only a more or less indeterminate spread of continuous possibilities. And so all continuity and all possibility is in this sense being *in futuro*. That the absolute First of possibility must . . . be the divine power simply means that . . . [God] must have an aspect to which any given event once was an indeterminate *future* possibility" (471).

"Simply or Absolutely First is only the universal Source of all things; simply or Absolutely Second is only the universal Summation or divine Memory of all things; simply or Absolute Third is only the universal Law or Guiding Purpose of all things" (473).

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"[Firstness] is not an actual feeling; for that is relative to a given which, by sympathetic suggestion, imparts quality to it. Only the quality itself, in abstraction from what imparts it or receives it, is self-sufficient or nonrelative. It is what might be imparted or received. . . . But now we must note that nonrelativity admits of more or less, and that there is no contradiction in the idea of an absoluteness which is not absolutely absolute. The absolutely absolute is that which is what it is regardless of *all* else, or that which is independent of any and all relations to other things. But a thing may be independent of *some* relations, and with respect to these relations and their terms literally absolute, while remaining as literally relative so far as certain other relations and terms are concerned. Thus 'relatively absolute' is a perfectly sensible expression, meaning, 'not affected or constituted by *some* relations having the thing as term,' though constituted by other relations. Accordingly, 'absolute' means the negation of relativity or dependence with respect to various relations or terms; and only in the extreme case will this negation apply to *all* relations and terms. Apart from this extreme case, we have the relatively absolute. This does not mean a vague dilution of the idea of absoluteness. With respect to certain terms, the thing is literally and strictly absolute. It might be better to say, respectively absolute, rather than relatively absolute" ("Relativity of Nonrelativity": 219).

"[L]et us reconsider the nonactuality of Firstness, its identity with possibility. Actuality is relative, for at least it supervenes upon an antecedent actuality to which it is essentially related. The effect is relative to the cause, as a preceding event. But is a cause in the same sense relative to succeeding events, its effects? The doctrine of determinism implies that this is the case. . . . But . . . an event is relative only to earlier events, never to later ones in their exact particularity. The present is the utmost verge of determinate actuality. . . . Regardless of what happens later, the present is what it is. Thus the present is absolute with respect to later events. There can be no dyadic relation of action-reaction, no *mutual* relativity, between it and succeeding events, but only a one-way relation of responsiveness or adaptation. Future events will relate themselves to this present event, but it has nothing to do with them. As it takes determinate shape, there are no actual later events, for it is the latest of actualities. Only antecedent actualities can be objects of *its*

relativity. Thus every event is First so far as succeeding events are concerned, and Second so far as earlier ones are concerned. Now . . . this is, in a way, a confirmation rather than contradiction of the doctrine that the Monad is possibility rather than actuality. For the actuality of the present is the possibility of the future. That such and such an event is here and now possible is because a suitable predecessor of such an event is here and now actual. . . . The actuality of the present involves the antecedent actuality of its past, but it involves merely the potentiality of later events. It is their potentiality. For this potentiality is not something outside the present (where then could it be?). Nor is it a mere part of the present. For the present as a whole is the condition for later events. So one and the same event as one whole or unity is actuality, relatively to the past, and potentiality, relatively to the future. It has a retrospective face of Secondness and a prospective face of Firstness" (219 f.).

"[T]here are two extremes of absoluteness. At one end of the scale is concrete particular actuality as not implying any particulars of the future, but relative to all the particulars of the past, a Second in the latter aspect, a First in the former. At the other extreme is the purely universal possibility, the primordial continuum of quality as such. This is what is left if we abstract from each and every particular in its particularity or specific aspects. We are then thinking of the primordial potency which . . . is theologically indistinguishable from the pure power of God. It is not the actuality of [God's] exercise of this power, not [God's] doing or enjoying, but [God's] ability to do or enjoy; not [God's] feeling but [God's] power of feeling. This primordial potency is purely absolute and independent. Whatever is actually felt includes in itself reference to the antecedent potency thus actualized; but the potency refers only to a 'capacity for determinateness' and this capacity itself is as indeterminate or universal as the potency and is the same thing.

"We have then a pure First, which is sheer possibility or universality, and we have a Janus-faced Actuality, equally absolute and relative, according to which face we consider. In between we have a steady diminution of relativity, as we abstract from what is specific, first to the present, and then to the more and more remote past, the limit of pure nonrelativity being the referent of the abstraction from *every* particular moment of past process.

"This is the Primordial Nature of God, whose content (in this primordial aspect) is one with the continuum of 'eternal objects.' However these . . . are not specific qualities. . . , but only vague directions of determinability or specificability" (223 f.).

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"[R]elations of an experience to other experiences or events are not adequately described by saying simply that particular past events are implied as conditions of the experience, while particular future events . . . are simply not implied. Were that the whole story, we could foresee nothing of the future and there would be no causal laws at all, however statistical or approximate. Future events in their full particularity are indeed unpredictable and matters of chance, . . . but the approximate *kinds* or *classes* of such events are predictable and determined. Like countable items, events later than a given event are not unclassified; they all share the relational property of having that event in their past as among their necessary conditions. . . . [W]hile the past is the 'sum of accomplished [meaning fully particularized] facts,' the future can only be conceived in more or less 'general' terms, through laws or 'real thirds.' The past is what happened, the future is what (within certain limits of probability) *may* happen. Thus there really is a third relation among events beside or intermediate between simple dependence and simple independence, and this third relation is real possibility, probability, or law. . . .

"Given a particular past, all later events are, in their full concreteness, arbitrary additions to that past, but certain abstract, more or less general, features of these additions are settled in advance. Because of the reality of chance and (the same thing from a different aspect) the partial openness of the future, no event is a necessary successor to its predecessors, which are thus Firsts with respect to all their successors. But there is, nevertheless, a positive relation of an event to the intensive [*sc.* intensional] class of its possible successors.

"Thirdness, then, is neither sheer dependence nor sheer independence but an intermediate relation: nondependence with respect to definite particulars, dependence with respect to more or less general outlines. Futurity, or real possibility (causality in the forward direction), contrasts alike

to sheer necessity [*sc.* sheer dependence] and pure possibility [*sc.* sheer independence]" (*CIAP* ["Revision"]: 79).

"[O]ne-way independence or Firstness is unqualifiedly so only with respect to future *details*. Although there are no particular successors that an event must have, it does have to have successors, and some *general* features of these are settled in advance. The independence of events from their successors does not mean that any sort of event could follow a given event, any more than we count totally unclassified entities. A world in which the future was completely unforeseeable and without even probabilistic or approximate laws is not . . . more than verbally conceivable. Its existence would be entirely 'unknowable.' . . . It follows that there are three forms of dependence: (1) the positive form, strict dependence; (2) the negative form, strict independence (both holding asymmetrically among definite particulars) [;] and (3) dependence that leaves the final particularity open and can be stated only in more or less general terms" (81).

"[W]ithout Secondness there can be no understanding of what it is distinctively to be a caused or conditioned phenomenon, . . . without Firstness there can be no understanding of what it is distinctively to be a cause or condition, and . . . without a third and intermediate relation between sheer dependence and sheer independence there can be no understanding of time's arrow, the contrast between the already settled, decided past, and the not yet decided, needing-to-be-decided—yet not merely indeterminate—future. The past is 'the sum of accomplished facts'; the future is the set of real or limited possibilities for future accomplishment, a determinable seeking further determination. The nominalistic error is not to see that futurity and generality are inseparable, as are pastness and particularity. Time is indeed 'objective modality'" (84)

"[I]ndividuals can hardly be regarded as entirely definite. After all, each moment they receive new determinations not prescribed by causal laws and initial conditions. The secret lesson of Leibniz's theory of genetic identity, an

open secret since Whitehead, is that only the past (not the future) careers of individuals are wholly definite. Aristotle knew this, Leibniz denied it and thereby burdened his doctrine with serious paradoxes Peirce agreed with Aristotle, not Leibniz, but like Aristotle he failed to clearly draw the conclusion, that each moment there is a new determinate actuality, the individual-now. It is a continuation of the individual career as it has previously been, but, since the less cannot contain the more, the indeterminate the determinate, if we are looking for concrete definite unitary wholes of reality, we should recognize that the individual-now is always a new such whole. The Buddhists, whom Peirce admired, saw this. But [Peirce's] assertion of the continuity of becoming makes it impossible to conceive definite single wholes in the succession of such wholes constituting an individual career.

"I shall never forget what Bochenski once said to me, apropos the thesis that 'reality consists of events': 'Aristotle said so. He did not dot all the i's and cross all the t's, but. . . .' So when I encounter writers who defend Aristotelian substances against Whitehead, who did dot the i's and cross the t's, I am not immensely impressed. They all fail to see what Bochenski did see, that Whitehead's 'societies' are nicely tailored to do what 'substance' was primarily intended to do, and that is to furnish identifiable features of reality sufficiently definite for ordinary purposes but not necessarily so for science or metaphysics. To suppose them entirely definite is to commit oneself implicitly to the paradoxes of Leibnizian laws of succession unique to each individual and equally determinate for past and future.

"How right Bochenski was, in comparison to extreme opponents of Whitehead who yet appeal to Aristotle, may be seen by considering how Aristotle explained the identity of an individual through change as the actualization of potentialities inherent in the individual all along. Aristotle's point is translatable into process terms. Of course an individual event-sequence or career, once begun, has the potentiality for later prologations. But the actualization of a potency is not contained in the potency; rather the potency is contained in the actualization. The present is more than the past; there is a new whole of determinations. This is the creationist view of reality. Events are capable of being superseded by what is more than they are. An infant 'self' does not contain the adult phases of 'itself.' There is a numerically new concrete reality with each new determination.