

'Action' (pub. 14.08.17-09:33). Quote in M. Bergman & S. Paavola (Eds.), *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce's Terms in His Own Words. New Edition*. Retrieved from <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-basis-pragmaticism-33>.

Term: Action

Quote: One of the most useful and at the same time one of the most arduous of the labors of cenoscopy consists in starting with a familiar but vague concept and searching out and defining the nearest definite concept of sufficient breadth for the purposes of metaphysics. Treating in this way the concept of *action*, and at the same time generalizing it so as not to confine it to temporal conditions, we get a concept which may very well be named action in the philosophical sense. It will be defined as a surd dyadic relation by which one correlate, the *patient*, receives a special determination, while the other correlate, the *agent*, receives *thereby*, or perhaps we should say *therein*, no special determination. The determination is *special* in the sense that in default of the relation the patient would not have been so determined. Thus, the completing of *B* by *A* is an action in the philosophical sense, in which *A* [is] the agent and *B* the patient. Duality consists in such action of *A* upon *B* together with a reciprocal action of the same completing nature of *B* upon *A*.

The double relation of equiparance which constitutes duality is surd. It may be described in words, but those words can only be understood by means of reference to certain experiences; just as a person may be told that a piece of textile fabric is a yard wide, yet can never know what is meant except through an experience immediate or mediate of a certain bar laid up in the Westminster palace. The experiences [that] acquaint us with action are of two varieties, experiences of active effort and experiences of passive surprise.

Source: Peirce, C. S. (1906). *The Basis of Pragmaticism*. MS [R] 283.

References: EP 2:383

Date of 1906

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