

'Experience' (pub. 21.04.13-18:22). 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-harvard-lectures-pragmatism-lecture-ii-4>.

Term: Experience

Quote: But precisely how does this action of experience take place? It takes place by a series of surprises. There is no need of going into details. At one time a ship is sailing along in the trades over a smooth sea, the navigator having no more positive expectation than that of the usual monotony of such a voyage, when suddenly she strikes upon a rock. The majority of discoveries, however, have been the result of experimentation. Now no man makes an experiment without being more or less inclined to think that an interesting result will ensue; for experiments are much too costly of physical and psychical energy to be undertaken at random and aimlessly. And naturally nothing can possibly be learned from an experiment that turns out just as was anticipated. It is by surprises that experience teaches all she deigns to teach us.

In all the works on pedagogy that ever I read – and they have been many, big, and heavy – I don't remember that any one has advocated a system of teaching by practical jokes, mostly cruel. That, however, describes the method of our great teacher, Experience. She says,

Open your mouth and shut your eyes
And I'll give you something to make you wise;

and thereupon she keeps her promise, and seems to take her pay in the fun of tormenting us.

Source: Peirce, C. S. (1903). *Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism: Lecture II*. MS [R] 305.

References: CP 5.51

Date of 1903

Quote:

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