

'Abduction' (pub. 03.01.13-17:02). 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-vii>.

Term: Abduction

Quote: It must be remembered that abduction, although it is very little hampered by logical rules, nevertheless is logical inference, asserting its conclusion only problematically or conjecturally, it is true, but nevertheless having a perfectly definite logical form.

Long before I first classed abduction as an inference it was recognized by logicians that the operation of adopting an explanatory hypothesis – which is just what abduction is – was subject to certain conditions. Namely, the hypothesis cannot be admitted, even as a hypothesis, unless it be supposed that it would account for the facts or some of them. The form of inference, therefore, is this:

The surprising fact, C, is observed;
But if A were true, C would be a matter of course,
Hence, there is reason to suspect that A is true.

Thus, A cannot be abductively inferred, or if you prefer the expression, cannot be abductively conjectured until its entire content is already present in the premiss, "If A were true, C would be a matter of course."

Source: Peirce, C. S. (1903). *Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism: Lecture VII*. MS [R] 315.

References: CP 5.188-189

Date of 1903

Quote:

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