

'Hypothesis [as a form of reasoning]' (pub. 02.02.13-09:12). 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-law-mind-1>.

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**Term:** Hypothesis [as a form of reasoning]

**Quote:** The three main classes of logical inference are Deduction, Induction, and Hypothesis. These correspond to three chief modes of action of the human soul. [—]

By hypothetic inference, I mean, as I have explained in other writings, an induction from qualities. For example, I know that the kind of man known and classed as a "mugwump" has certain characteristics. [—] These views, among others, I know to be obtrusive marks of a "mugwump." Now, suppose I casually meet a man in a railway train, and falling into conversation find that he holds opinions of this sort; I am naturally led to suppose that he is a "mugwump." That is hypothetic inference. That is to say, a number of readily verifiable marks of a mugwump being selected, I find this man has these, and infer that he has all the other characters which go to make a thinker of that stripe. [—] Now the mind acts in a way similar to this, every time we acquire a power of coördinating reactions in a peculiar way, as in performing any act requiring skill. Thus, most persons have a difficulty in moving the two hands simultaneously and in opposite directions through two parallel circles nearly in the medial plane of the body. To learn to do this, it is necessary to attend, first, to the different actions in different parts of the motion, when suddenly a general conception of the action springs up and it becomes perfectly easy. We think the motion we are trying to do involves this action, and this, and this. Then the general idea comes which unites all those actions, and thereupon the desire to perform the motion calls up the general idea. The same mental process is many times employed whenever we are learning to speak a language or are acquiring any sort of skill.

Thus, by induction, a number of sensations followed by one reaction become united under one general idea followed by the same reaction; while, by the hypothetic process, a number of reactions called for by one occasion get united in a general idea which is called out by the same occasion. By deduction, the habit fulfills its function of calling out certain reactions on certain occasions.

**Source:** Peirce, C. S. (1892). The Law of Mind. *The Monist*, 2(4), 533-559.

**References:** CP 6.144-146

**Date of** 1892

**Quote:**

**URL:** <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-law-mind-1>

