

'Categories' (pub. 05.01.13-19:28). 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-notes-categories>.

Term: Categories

Quote: Perhaps it is not right to call these categories conceptions; they are so intangible that they are rather tones or tints upon conceptions. In my first attempt to deal with them, I made use of three grades of separability of one idea from another. In the first place, two ideas may be so little allied that one of them may be present to the consciousness in an image which does not contain the other at all; in this way we can imagine *red* without imagining blue, and *vice versa*; we can also imagine sound without melody, but not melody without sound. I call this kind of separation *dissociation*. In the second place, even in cases where two conceptions cannot be separated in the imagination, we can often suppose one without the other, that is we can imagine data from which we should be led to believe in a state of things where one was separated from the other. Thus, we can suppose uncolored space, though we cannot dissociate space from color. I call this mode of separation *prescission*. In the third place, even when one element cannot even be supposed without another, they may oftentimes be distinguished from one another. Thus we can neither imagine nor suppose a taller without a shorter, yet we can distinguish the taller from the shorter. I call this mode of separation *distinction*. Now, the categories cannot be dissociated in imagination from each other, nor from other ideas. The category of first can be prescinded from second and third, and second can be prescinded from third. But second cannot be prescinded from first, nor third from second. The categories may, I believe, be prescinded from any other one conception, but they cannot be prescinded from some one and indeed many elements. You cannot suppose a first unless that first be something definite and more or less definitely supposed. Finally, though it is easy to distinguish the three categories from one another, it is extremely difficult accurately and sharply to distinguish each from other conceptions so as to hold it in its purity and yet in its full meaning.

Source: Peirce, C. S. (1885). *Notes on the Categories [R]*. MS [R] 895; MS [W] 545.

References: CP 1.353

Date of 1885

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