

'Abduction' (pub. 30.12.12-17:23). 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-proper-treatment-hypotheses-preliminary-chapter-toward-examination-humes-0>.

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**Term:** Abduction

**Quote:** A singular salad is abduction, whose chief elements are its groundlessness, its ubiquity, and its trustworthiness. [—]

*Abduction* is that kind of operation which suggests a statement in no wise contained in the data from which it sets out. There is a more familiar name for it than *abduction*; for it is neither more nor less than guessing. A given object presents an extraordinary combination of characters of which we should like to have an explanation. That there is any explanation of them is a pure assumption; and if there be, it is some one hidden fact which explains them; while there are, perhaps, a million other possible ways of explaining them, if they were not all unfortunately, false. [—] By its very definition abduction leads to a hypothesis which is entirely foreign to the data. To assert the truth of its conclusion ever so dubiously would be too much. There is no warrant for doing more than putting it as an interrogation. To do that would seem to be innocent; yet if the interrogation means anything, it means that the hypothesis is to be tested. Now testing by experiment is a very expensive business, involving great outlay of money, time, and energy; so that comparatively few hypotheses can be tested. Thus, even the admission of an abductive conclusion to the rank of an active interrogation is a concession not to be too lightly accorded.

**Source:** Peirce, C. S. (1901). *The Proper Treatment of Hypotheses: a Preliminary Chapter, toward an Examination of Hume's Argument against Miracles, in its Logic and in its History*. MS [R] 692.

**References:** HP 2:898-899

**Date of** 1901

**Quote:**

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