

# Experience

1893 | Grand Logic 1893: Division III. Substantial Study of Logic Chapter VI. The Essence of Reasoning | MS [R] 408:146-7

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The historic happenings which affect men's beliefs [are] called *experience*. [—]

As for this experience under the influence of which beliefs are formed what is that? It is nothing but the forceful element in the course of life. Whatever it is that in our history wears out our attempts to resist it, that is *experience*. Its sanction is the best possible: *victory*. The maxim that we ought to be "guided" by experience means that we had better submit at once to that to which we must submit at last.

1895 [c.] | On the Logic of Quantity, and especially of Infinity | MS [R] 16:7; PM 48

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Mathematical hypotheses are arbitrary creations of the mind. As such, their substance is not *experienced*. For an experience is the irresistible influence from without which an incident exerts upon the mind. An experience may be either cognitive or emotional; but by experience philosophers mean the aggregate of cognitive experiences. Life presents a course of experience...

1896 [c.] | Logic of Mathematics: An attempt to develop my categories from within | CP 1.426

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Experience is the course of life. The world is that which experience inculcates.

1899 | On Topical Geometry, in General (T) | CP 7.538

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I use the word "experience" in a much broader sense than it carries in the special sciences. For those sciences, experience is that which their special means of observation directly bring to light, and it is contrasted with the interpretations of those observations which are effected by connecting these experiences with what we otherwise know. But for philosophy, which is the science which sets in order those observations which lie open to every man every day and hour, experience can only mean the total cognitive result of living, and includes interpretations quite as truly as it does the matter of sense. Even more truly, since this matter of sense is a hypothetical something which we never can seize as such, free from all interpretative working over.

1902 | Minute Logic: Chapter III. The Simplest Mathematics | CP 4.318

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What is experience? It is the resultant ideas that have been forced upon us. We find we cannot

summon up what images we like. Try to banish an idea and it only comes home with greater violence later.

1902 | Minute Logic: Chapter I. Intended Characters of this Treatise | MS [R] 425:106

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By experience, I do not mean the first impressions of sense merely, I mean all that the history of our lives has forced us to assent to and accept.

From an earlier/discarded draft

1902-03 [c.] | Reason's Rules | CP 5.539

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...*experience* means nothing but just that of a cognitive nature which the history of our lives has forced upon us. It is *indirect*, if the medium of some other experience or thought is required to bring it out. Duality, thought abstractly, no doubt requires the intervention of reflection; but that upon which this reflection is based, the concrete duality, is there in the very experience itself.

1903 | Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism: Lecture II | CP 5.51

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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.

1904 | Letters to Lady Welby | CP 8.330

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The type of an idea of Secondness is the experience of effort, prescinded from the idea of a purpose. It

may be said that there is no such experience, that a purpose is always in view as long as the effort is cognized. This may be open to doubt; for in sustained effort we soon let the purpose drop out of view. However, I abstain from psychology which has nothing to do with ideoscopy. The existence of the word *effort* is sufficient proof that people think they have such an idea; and that is enough. The experience of effort cannot exist without the experience of resistance. Effort only is effort by virtue of its being opposed; and no third element enters. Note that I speak of the *experience*, not of the *feeling*, of effort. Imagine yourself to be seated alone at night in the basket of a balloon, far above earth, calmly enjoying the absolute calm and stillness. Suddenly the piercing shriek of a steam-whistle breaks upon you, and continues for a good while. The impression of stillness was an idea of Firstness, a quality of feeling. The piercing whistle does not allow you to think or do anything but suffer. So that too is absolutely simple. Another Firstness. But the breaking of the silence by the noise was an experience. The person in his inertness identifies himself with the precedent state of feeling, and the new feeling which comes in spite of him is the non-ego. He has a two-sided consciousness of an ego and a non-ego. That consciousness of the action of a new feeling in destroying the old feeling is what I call an *experience*. Experience generally is what the course of life has *compelled* me to think.

1905 | Letters to William James | NEM 3:834

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The *phaneron*, as I now call it, the sum total all of the contents of human consciousness, which I believe is about what you (borrowing the term of Avenarius) call *pure experience*, - but I do not admit the point of view of Avenarius to be correct or to be consonant to any pragmatism, nor to yours, in particular, and therefore I do not like that phrase. For me *experience* is what life has forced upon us, - a vague idea no doubt. But my *phaneron* is not limited to what is *forced* upon us; it also embraces all that we most capriciously conjure up, not *objects* only but all modes of contents of cognitional consciousness.

1905 | Letters to Mario Calderoni | MS [R] L67

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*Experience* may be defined as the cognitive element which the course of life has brutally forced upon me, without reason. It implies a conservative, inert clinging to former ideas which has been conquered. This purely brute force is Secundan.

This passage has been obtained from the transcription provided by the Peirce Study Group at the University of Navarra

1905 [c.] | Pragmatism, Prag [R] | CP 5.524

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The breaking of a belief can only be due to some novel experience, whether external or internal. Now experience which could be summoned up at pleasure would not be experience.

1906 | Phaneroscopy: Or, The Natural History of Concepts | LI 351

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We experience vicissitudes, especially. We cannot experience the vicissitude without experiencing the perception which undergoes the change; but the concept of *experience* is broader than that of *perception*, and includes much that is not, strictly speaking, an object of perception. It is the compulsion, the absolute constraint upon us to think otherwise than we have been thinking that constitutes experience. Now constraint and compulsion cannot exist without resistance, and resistance is effort opposing change. Therefore there must be an element of effort in experience; and it is this which gives it its peculiar character. But we are so disposed to yield to it as soon as we can detect it, that it is extremely difficult to convince ourselves that we have exerted any resistance at all. [—]

Of course we must distinguish between knowing by experience and experiencing itself. We know all the actual facts that we do know by experience; but our experience itself is limited to that which we are irrationally immediately, and absolutely, constrained to accept.

1907 | Pragmatism | MS [R] 319:8

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An experience [...] is a single event, or is an expectation of it; and no sum of single objects can make up a general. An experience, or the generalization of experiences, seems to me to be rather the object determining a concept than the meaning determined by it.

1908 | A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God (O) | CP 6.454

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An "Experience" is a brutally produced conscious effect that contributes to a habit, self-controlled, yet so satisfying, on deliberation, as to be destructible by no positive exercise of internal vigour.

1909 | Studies of Meaning | MS [R] 630:6

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Experience, in the proper sense of the term, is all that one has *gone through*. It consists in the *events* of one's life.

nd | A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God (O) (O) | MS [R] 843: 2/3

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By Experience, I mean any conscious effect contributing to a habit, satisfactory and selfcontrolled yet destructible by no exercise of intellectual vigor but only by deadening one's powers.

nd | Philosophy in the Light of the Logic of Relatives | MS [R] 1336:1

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Experience is that which is quite irresistibly forced in upon us in the course of life.