

'Hypostatic Abstraction' (pub. 18.07.15-19:37). 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-basis-pragmatism-9>.

Term: Hypostatic Abstraction

Quote: When we speak of the depth, or signification, of a sign we are resorting to hypostatic abstraction, that process whereby we regard a thought as a thing, make an interpretant sign the object of a sign. It has been a butt of ridicule since Molière's dying week, and the depth of a writer on philosophy can conveniently be sounded by his disposition to make fun of the basis of voluntary inhibition, which is the chief characteristic of mankind. For cautious thinkers will not be in haste to deride a kind of thinking that is evidently founded upon observation, – namely, upon observation of a sign. At any rate, whenever we speak of a predicate we are representing a thought as a thing, as a *substantia*, since the concepts of *substance* and *subject* are one, its concomitants only being different in the two cases. It is needful to remark this in the present connexion, because, were it not for hypostatic abstraction, there could be no generality of a predicate, since a sign which should make its interpreter its deputy to determine its signification at his pleasure would not signify anything, unless *nothing* be its significate. But hypostatic abstraction (the product of which may be termed a *hypostasis*) renders general classes of predicates possible, and classes of those classes, and so on, in a manner which the dull and lazy brood of modern logicians has failed to investigate sufficiently, not to say altogether.

Source: Peirce, C. S. (1906). *The Basis of Pragmatism*. MS [R] 283.

References: EP 2:394

Date of 1906

Quote:

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