

'Thirdness' (pub. 09.03.13-12:38). 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-guess-riddle-6>.

Term: Thirdness

Quote: Among thirds, there are two degrees of degeneracy. The first is where there is in the fact itself no thirdness or mediation, but where there is true duality; the second degree is where there is not even true secondness in the fact itself.

[—] Nature herself often supplies the place of the intention of a rational agent in making a thirdness genuine and not merely accidental; as when a spark, as third, falling into a barrel of gunpowder, as first, causes an explosion, as second. But how does nature do this? By virtue of an intelligible law according to which she acts. If two forces are combined according to the parallelogram of forces, their resultant is a real third. Yet any force may, by the parallelogram of forces, be mathematically resolved into the sum of two others, in an infinity of different ways. Such components, however, are mere creations of the mind. What is the difference? As far as one isolated event goes, there is none; the real forces are no more present in the resultant than any components that the mathematician may imagine. But what makes the real forces really there is the general law of nature which calls for them, and not for any other components of the resultant. Thus, intelligibility, or reason objectified, is what makes Thirdness genuine.

Source: Peirce, C. S. (1887-1888). *A Guess at the Riddle*. MS [R] 909.

References: EP 1:254-5; CP 1.366

Date of 1887-1888

Quote:

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