

'À Posteriori Reasoning' (pub. 05.01.13-10:54). 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-harvard-lectures-logic-science-lecture-ii-1865>.

**Term:** À Posteriori Reasoning

**Quote:** There is a large class of reasonings which are neither deductive nor inductive. I mean the inference of a cause from its effect or reasoning to a physical hypothesis. I call this reasoning *à posteriori*. If I reason that certain conduct is wise because it has a character which belongs *only* to wise things, I reason *à priori*. If I think it is wise because it once turned out to be wise, that is if I infer that it is wise on this occasion because it was wise on that occasion, I reason inductively. But if I think it is wise because a wise man does it, I then make the pure hypothesis that he does it because he is wise, and I reason *à posteriori*. The form this reasoning assumes, is that of an inference of a minor premiss in any of the figures. The following is an example.

Light gives certain fringes		Ether waves give certain fringes
Ether waves give these fringes		Light is ether waves
∴ Light is ether waves		∴ Light gives these fringes.

[—]

The difference in their general character between the three kinds of reasoning is strongly marked. A consequent is inferred *à priori*, an antecedent *à posteriori*, and the nexus between them inductively.

**Source:** Peirce, C. S. (1865). *Harvard Lectures on the Logic of Science. Lecture II, 1865*. MS [W] 95;MS [R] 341, 765.

**References:** W 1:180

**Date of** 1865

**Quote:**

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