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 is 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 Quote: 1865

URL: http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-harvard-lectures-logic-science-lecture-ii-1865