

'Retroduction' (pub. 03.02.13-18:04). 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-letters-paul-carus-2>.

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**Term:** Retroduction

**Quote:** ... the division of the elementary kinds of reasoning into three heads was made by me in my first lectures and was published in 1869 in Harris's *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. I still consider that it had a sound basis. Only in almost everything I printed before the beginning of this century I more or less mixed up Hypothesis and Induction ... .

The general body of logicians had also at all times come very near recognizing the trichotomy. They only failed to do so by having so narrow and formalistic a conception of inference ( as necessarily having formulated judgments for its premises) that they did not recognize Hypothesis (or, as I now term it, *retroduction*) as an *inference* ... .

When one contemplates a surprising or otherwise perplexing state of things (often so perplexing that he cannot definitely state what the perplexing character is) he may formulate it into a judgment or many apparently connected judgments; he will often finally strike out a hypothesis, or problematical judgment, as a mere possibility, from which he either fully perceives or more or less suspects that the perplexing phenomenon would be a necessary or quite probable consequence.

That is a retroduction. Now three lines of reasoning are open to him. [—]

Or, second, he may proceed still further to study the phenomenon in order to find other features that the hypothesis will *explain* (i.e. in the English sense of explain, to deduce the facts from the hypothesis as its necessary or *probable* consequences). That will be to continue reasoning retroductively, i.e., by hypothesis.

**Source:** Peirce, C. S. (1890-1913). *Letters to Paul Carus*. MS [L] 77.

**References:** CP 8.227-231

**Date of** 1910 [c.]

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