There are two kinds of Deduction; and it is truly significant that it should have been left for me to discover this. I first found, and subsequently proved, that every Deduction involves the observation of a Diagram (whether Optical, Tactical, or Acoustic) and having drawn the diagram (for I myself always work with Optical Diagrams) one finds the conclusion to be represented by it. Of course, a diagram is required to comprehend any assertion. My two genera of Deductions are first those in which any Diagram of a state of things in which the premisses are true represents the conclusion to be true and such reasoning I call Corollarial because all the corollaries that different editors have added to Euclid’s Elements are of this nature. Second kind. To the Diagram of the truth of the Premisses something else has to be added, which is usually a mere May-be, and then the conclusion appears. I call this Theorematic reasoning because all the most important theorems are of this nature.


References: EP 2:502

Date of Quote: 1909-12-25

URL: http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-letters-william-james-0