

'Abduction' (pub. 11.06.14-18:20). 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-lowell-lectures-some-topics-logic-bearing-questions-now-vexed-eighth-lectur-3>.

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**Term:** Abduction

**Quote:** For abduction commits us to nothing. It merely causes a hypothesis to be set down upon our docket of cases to be tried.

I shall be asked, Do you really mean to say that we ought not to adopt any opinion whatever as an opinion until it has sustained the ordeal of furnishing a prediction that has been verified?

In order to answer that question, it will be requisite to inquire how an abduction can be justified, here understanding by abduction any mode or degree of acceptance of a proposition as a truth, because a fact or facts have been ascertained whose occurrence would necessarily or probably result in case that proposition were true. The abduction so defined amounts, you will remark, to observing a fact and then professing to say what idea it was that gave rise to that fact. One would think a man must be privy to the counsels of the Most High so to presume. The only justification possible, other than some such positive fact which would put quite another color upon the matter, is the justification of desperation. That is to say, that if he is not to say such things, he will be quite unable to know anything of positive fact.

In a general way, this justification certainly holds. If man had not had the gift, which every other animal has, of a mind adapted to his requirements, he not only could not have acquired any knowledge, but he could not have maintained his existence for a single generation. But he is provided with certain instincts, that is, with certain natural beliefs that are true.

**Source:** Peirce, C. S. (1903). *Lowell Lectures on Some Topics of Logic Bearing on Questions Now Vexed. Eighth Lecture, Abduction*. MS [R] 475.

**References:** CP 5.602-603

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**Quote:**

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