

'Habit' (pub. 11.06.14-19:44). 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-minute-logic-chapter-ii-section-ii-why-study-logic-5>.

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**Term:** Habit

**Quote:** An expectation is a habit of imagining. A habit is not an affection of consciousness; it is a general law of action, such that on a certain general kind of occasion a man will be more or less apt to act in a certain general way. An imagination is an affection of consciousness which can be directly compared with a percept in some special feature, and be pronounced to accord or disaccord with it. Suppose for example that I slip a cent into a slot, and expect on pulling a knob to see a little cake of chocolate appear. My expectation consists in, or at least involves, such a habit that when I think of pulling the knob, I imagine I see a chocolate coming into view. When the perceptual chocolate comes into view, my imagination of it is a feeling of such a nature that the percept can be compared with it as to size, shape, the nature of the wrapper, the color, taste, flavor, hardness and grain of what is within. Of course, every expectation is a matter of inference. What an inference is we shall soon see more exactly than we need just now to consider. For our present purpose it is sufficient to say that the inferential process involves the formation of a habit. For it produces a belief, or opinion; and a genuine belief, or opinion, is something on which a man is prepared to act, and is therefore, in a general sense, a habit. A belief need not be conscious. When it is recognized, the act of recognition is called by logicians a judgment, although this is properly a term of psychology. A man may become aware of any habit, and may describe to himself the general way in which it will act. For every habit has, or is, a general law. Whatever is truly general refers to the indefinite future; for the past contains only a certain collection of such cases that have occurred. The past is actual fact. But a general (fact) cannot be fully realized. It is a potentiality; and its mode of being is *esse in futuro*. The future is potential, not actual. What particularly distinguishes a general belief, or opinion, such as is an inferential conclusion, from other habits, is that it is active in the imagination. If I have a habit of putting my left leg into my trouser before the right, when I imagine that I put on my trousers, I shall probably not definitely think of putting the left leg on first. But if I *believe* that fire is dangerous, and I imagine a fire bursting out close beside me, I shall also imagine that I jump back. Conversely – and this is the most important point – a belief habit formed in the imagination simply, as when I consider how I ought to act under imaginary circumstances, will equally affect my real action should those circumstances be realized. Thus, when you say that you have faith in reasoning, what you mean is that the belief habit

formed in the imagination will determine your actions in the real case. This is looking upon the matter from the psychological point of view. Under a logical aspect your opinion in question is that general cognitions of potentialities *in futuro*, if duly constructed, will under imaginary conditions determine *schemata* or imaginary skeleton diagrams with which percepts will accord when the real conditions accord with those imaginary conditions; or, stating the essence of the matter in a nutshell, you opine that percepts follow certain general laws.

**Source:** Peirce, C. S. (1902). *Minute Logic: Chapter II. Section II. Why Study Logic?* . MS [R] 428.

**References:** CP 2.148

**Date of** 1902

**Quote:**

**URL:** <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-minute-logic-chapter-ii-section-ii-why-study-logic-5>