

'Hypothesis [as a form of reasoning]' (pub. 02.02.13-09:34). 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-smithsonian-institution-letters-2>.

Term: Hypothesis [as a form of reasoning]

Quote: Hypothesis is guessing, or if you please starting a question. A phenomenon is observed having something peculiar about it. Rumination leads me to see that *if* a certain state of things existed, of whose actual existence I know nothing, that phenomenon would certainly occur, or at any rate, would in all probability occur. I say, By George, I wonder if that is not the very state of the case! That is hypothesis. The justification of my attaching the slightest weight to such a mere guess is, that there are just these three modes of inference, and neither Deduction or Induction can furnish me with any new idea. Unless I can get to the bottom fo things by hypothesis, I may as well give up trying to comprehend them. But not only that; but just as the general advantage of the inductive procedure admits of deductive proof, so induction in its turn shows that hypotheses have a very decent chance of turning out satisfactory, or at least answering well and being helpful for a long time.

Source: Peirce, C. S. (1894-1911). *Smithsonian Institution letters*. L [R] 409.

References: HP 2:878-879

Date of 1900-05-20

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