

'Abduction' (pub. 04.01.13-17:09). 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-syllabus-syllabus-course-lectures-lowell-institute-beginning-1903-nov-23-some>.

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**Term:** Abduction

**Quote:** The whole operation of reasoning begins with *Abduction*, which is now to be described. Its occasion is a *surprise*. That is, some belief, active or passive, formulated or unformulated, has just been broken up. It may be in real experience or it may equally be in pure mathematics, which has its marvels, as nature has. The mind seeks to bring the facts, as modified by the new discovery, into order; that is, to form a general conception embracing them. In some cases, it does this by an act of *generalization*. In other cases, no new law is suggested, but only a peculiar state of facts that will "explain" the surprising phenomenon; and a law already known is recognized as applicable to the suggested hypothesis, so that the phenomenon, under that assumption, would not be surprising, but quite likely, or even would be a necessary result. This synthesis suggesting a new conception or hypothesis, is the Abduction. It is recognized that the phenomena are *like*, i.e. constitute an Icon of, a replica of a general conception, or Symbol. This is not accepted as shown to be *true*, nor even *probable* in the technical sense, - i.e., not probable in such a sense that underwriters could safely make it the basis of business, however multitudinous the cases might be; - but it is shown to be *likely*, in the sense of being some sort of approach to the truth, in an indefinite sense. The conclusion is drawn in the interrogative mood (there is such a mood in Speculative Grammar, whether it occur in any human language or not). This conclusion, which is the Interpretant of the Abduction, represents the Abduction to be a Symbol, - to convey a general concept of the truth, - but not to *assert* it in any measure.

**Source:** Peirce, C. S. (1903). *Syllabus: Syllabus of a course of Lectures at the Lowell Institute beginning 1903, Nov. 23. On Some Topics of Logic*. MS [R] 478.

**References:** EP 2:287

**Date of** 1903

**Quote:**

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