

'Collection' (pub. 11.09.14-13:16). 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-whole-and-parts>.

Term: Collection

Quote: We may say that a whole is an *ens rationis* whose being consists in the copulate being of certain other things, either not *entia rationis* or not so much so as the whole; so that a whole is analogous to a *collection*, which is, in fact, a special kind of whole. There can be no doubt that the word whole always brings before the mind the image of a collection, and that we interpret the word whole by analogy with collection. The idea of a collection is itself, however, by no means an easy one to analyze. It is an *ens rationis*, abstraction, or fictitious subject (but the adjective must be understood in a broad sense, to be considered below), which is individual, and by means of which we are enabled to transform universal propositions into singular propositions. Thus, the proposition "all men are mortal," with a new subject and new predicate, appears as "The collection of men is a collection of mortals"; just as, for other purposes, and by means of other abstractions, we transform the same proposition into "The character of mortality is possessed by every man"; and the members of the collection are regarded as less fictitious than the collection. It very often happens that an object given indirect perception as an individual is, on closer scrutiny, seen to be identifiable with a collection of parts. But it does not seem to be strictly accurate to say that the larger object of perception is identical with that abstraction, the collection of the smaller objects. It is rather something perceived which agrees in its relations with the abstraction so well that, for convenience, it is regarded as the same thing. No doubt the parts of a perceived object are virtually objects of consciousness in the first percept; but it is useless to try to extend logical relations to the sort of thought which antecedes the completion of the percept. By the time we conceive an object as a collection, we conceive that the first reality belongs to the members of the collection and that the collection itself is a mere intellectual aspect, or way of regarding these members, justified, in ordinary cases, by certain facts. We may, therefore, define a collection as a fictitious (thought) individual, whose being consists in the being of certain less fictitious individuals.

Source: Peirce, C. S. (1902). Whole and Parts. In J. M. Baldwin (Ed.), *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology, Vol. II* (pp. 814-815). London: Macmillan and Co.

References: CP 6.382

Date of 1902

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