

'Critical Common-Sensism' (pub. 24.05.14-15:35). 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-basis-pragmaticism-7>.

---

**Term:** Critical Common-Sensism

**Quote:** ...I am happy to think that you do not yourself sincerely judge all the sages of human nature to have been conscious liars who from time immemorial have testified to their conviction that man possess no infallible introspective power into the secrets of his own heart, to know just what he believes and what he doubts. The denial of such a power is one of the clauses of critical common-sensism. The others are that there are indubitable beliefs which vary a little and but a little under varying circumstances and in distant ages; that they partake of the nature of instincts, this word being taken in a broad sense; that they concern matters within the purview of the primitive man; that they are very vague indeed (such as, that fire burns) without being perfectly so; that while it may be disastrous to science for those who pursue it to think they doubt what they really believe, and still more so really to doubt what they ought to believe, yet, on the whole, neither of these is so unfavorable to science as for men of science to believe what they ought to doubt, nor even for them to think they believe what they really doubt; that a philosopher ought not to regard an important proposition as indubitable without a systematic and arduous endeavour to attain to a doubt of it, remembering that genuine doubt cannot be created by a mere effort of will, but must be compassed through experience; that while it is possible that propositions that really are indubitable, for the time being, should nevertheless be false, yet in so far as we do not doubt a proposition we cannot but regard it as perfectly true and perfectly certain; that while holding certain propositions to be each individually perfectly certain, we may and ought to think it likely that some one of them, if not more, is false.

This is the doctrine of Critical Common-sensism, and the present pertinency of it is that a pragmatist, to be consistent, is obliged to embrace it.

**Source:** Peirce, C. S. (1905 [c.]). *The Basis of Pragmaticism*. MS [R] 282.

**References:** CP 5.498-499

**Date of** 1905 [c.]

**Quote:**

**URL:** <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-basis-pragmaticism-7>