

'Leading Principle' (pub. 20.10.15-15:52). 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-fixation-belief-2>.

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**Term:** Leading Principle

**Quote:** That which determines us, from given premisses, to draw one inference rather than another, is some habit of mind, whether it be constitutional or acquired. The habit is good or otherwise, according as it produces true conclusions from true premisses or not; and an inference is regarded as valid or not, without reference to the truth or falsity of its conclusion specially, but according as the habit which determines it is such as to produce true conclusions in general or not. The particular habit of mind which governs this or that inference may be formulated in a proposition whose truth depends on the validity of the inferences which the habit determines; and such a formula is called a *guiding principle* of inference. Suppose, for example, that we observe that a rotating disk of copper quickly comes to rest when placed between the poles of a magnet, and we infer that this will happen with every disk of copper. The guiding principle is, that what is true of one piece of copper is true of another. Such a guiding principle with regard to copper would be much safer than with regard to many other substances – brass, for example.

**Source:** Peirce, C. S. (1877). The Fixation of Belief. *Popular Science Monthly*, 12, 1-15.

**References:** W 3:245; CP 5.367

**Date of** 1877

**Quote:**

**URL:** <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-fixation-belief-2>