

'Belief' (pub. 20.03.13-19:58). 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-harvard-lectures-pragmatism-lecture-ii-3>.

Term: Belief

Quote: But you will mark the limitation of my approval of Ockham's razor. It is a sound maxim of *scientific procedure*. If the question be what one ought to *believe*, the logic of the situation must take other factors into account. Speaking strictly, *belief* is out of place in pure theoretical science, which has nothing nearer to it than the establishment of doctrines, and only the provisional establishment of them, at that. Compared with living *belief* it is nothing but a ghost. If the captain of a vessel on a lee shore in a terrific storm finds himself in a critical position in which he must instantly either put his wheel to port acting on one hypothesis, or put his wheel to starboard acting on the contrary hypothesis, and his vessel will infallibly be dashed to pieces if he decides the question wrongly, Ockham's razor is not worth the stout belief of any common seaman. For stout belief may happen to save the ship, while *Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem* would be only a stupid way of spelling Shipwreck. Now in matters of real practical concern we are all in something like the situation of that sea-captain.

Source: Peirce, C. S. (1903). *Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism: Lecture II*. MS [R] 306.

References: CP 5.60

Date of 1903

Quote:

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