

'Possibility' (pub. 22.09.14-12:57). 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-issues-pragmatism-13>.

Term: Possibility

Quote: Restricting the word to its characteristic applicability, a state of things has the Modality of the possible – that is, of the merely possible – only in case the contradictory state of things is likewise possible, which proves possibility to be the vague modality. One who knows that Harvard University has an office in State Street, Boston, and has impression that it is at No. 30, but yet suspects that 50 is the number, would say “I think it is at No. 30, but it *may be* at No. 50,” or “it is *possibly* at No. 50.” Thereupon, another, who does not doubt his recollection, might chime in, “It *actually* is at No. 50,” or simply “it is at No. 50,” or “it is at No. 50, *de inesse*.” Thereupon, the person who had first asked, what the number was might say, “Since you are so positive, it *must be* at No. 50,” for “I know the first figure is 5. So, since you are both certain the second is a 0, why 50 it *necessarily* is.” That is to say, in this most subjective kind of Modality, that which is known by direct recollection is in the Mode of *Actuality*, the determinate mode. But when knowledge is indeterminate among alternatives, either there is one state of things which alone accords with them all, when this is in the Mode of *Necessity*, or there is more than one state of things that no knowledge excludes, when each of these is in the Mode of *Possibility*.

Source: Peirce, C. S. (1905). Issues of Pragmatism. *The Monist*, 15(4), 481-499.

References: CP 5.454

Date of 1905

Quote:

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