

'Possibility' (pub. 11.08.17-10:25). 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-logic-relatives-13>.

Term: Possibility

Quote: I formerly defined the possible as that which in a given state of information (real or feigned) we do not know not to be true. But this definition today seems to me only a twisted phrase which, by means of two negatives, conceals an anacoluthon. We know in advance of experience that certain things are not true, because we see they are impossible. Thus, if a chemist tests the contents of a hundred bottles for fluorine, and finds it present in the majority, and if another chemist tests them for oxygen and finds it in the majority, and if each of them reports his result to me, it will be useless for them to come to me together and say that they know infallibly that fluorine and oxygen cannot be present in the same bottle; for I see that such infallibility is *impossible*. I know it is not true, because I satisfy myself that there is no room for it even in that ideal world of which the real world is but a fragment. I need no sensible experimentation, because ideal experimentation establishes a much broader answer to the question than sensible experimentation could give.

Source: Peirce, C. S. (1897). The Logic of Relatives. *The Monist*, 7(2), 161-217.

References: CP 3.527

Date of 1897

Quote:

URL: <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-logic-relatives-13>