

Essential Necessity

1893-1895 [c.] | Division III. Substantial Study of Logic. Chapter VI. The Essence of Reasoning | MS 409:106; CP 4.67

There are two meanings of the words possible and necessary which are of special interest to the logician more than to other men. These refer to the states of information in which we are supposed to know *nothing*, except the meanings of words, and their consequences, and in which we are supposed to know everything. These I term *essential* and *substantial possibility*, respectively: and of course necessity has similar varieties. That is *essentially* or *logically possible* which a person who knows no facts, though perfectly *au fait* at reasoning and well-acquainted with the words involved, is unable to pronounce untrue. The *essentially* or *logically necessary* is that which such a person knows is true. For instance, he would not know whether there was or was not such an animal as a *basilisk*, or whether there are any such things as serpents, cocks, and eggs; but he would know that every basilisk there may be has been hatched by a serpent from a cock's egg. That is essentially necessary; because that is what the word basilisk means.