

'Real' (pub. 09.03.13-17:44). 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-truth-and-falsity-and-error-0>.

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**Term:** Real

**Quote:** Truth is a character which attaches to an abstract proposition, such as a person might utter. [—] But whether or not there would be perhaps any *reality* is a question for the metaphysician, not the logician. Even if the metaphysician decides that where there is no truth there is no reality, still the distinction between the character of truth and the character of reality is plain and definable. Truth is that concordance of an abstract statement with the ideal limit towards which endless investigation would tend to bring scientific belief, which concordance the abstract statement may possess by virtue of the confession of its inaccuracy and one-sidedness, and this confession is an essential ingredient of truth. A further explanation of what this concordance consists in will be given below. Reality is that mode of being by virtue of which the real thing is as it is, irrespectively of what any mind or any definite collection of minds may represent it to be. The truth of the proposition that Caesar crossed the Rubicon consists in the fact that the further we push our archaeological and other studies, the more strongly will that conclusion force itself on our minds forever – or would do so, if study were to go on forever. An idealist metaphysician may hold that therein also lies the whole *reality* behind the proposition; for though men may for a time persuade themselves that Caesar did *not* cross the Rubicon, and may contrive to render this belief universal for any number of generations, yet ultimately research – if it be persisted in – must bring back the contrary belief. But in holding that doctrine, the idealist necessarily draws the distinction between truth and reality.

In the above we have considered positive scientific truth. But the same definitions equally hold in the normative sciences. If a moralist describes an ideal as the *summum bonum*, in the first place, the perfect truth of his statement requires that it should involve the confession that the perfect doctrine can neither be stated nor conceived. If, with that allowance, the future development of man's moral nature will only lead to a firmer satisfaction with the described ideal, the doctrine is true. A metaphysician may hold that the fact that the ideal thus forces itself upon the mind, so that minds in their development cannot fail to come to accept it, argues that the ideal is *real*: he may even hold that that fact (if it be one) constitutes a *reality*. But the two ideas, *truth* and *reality*, are distinguished here by the same characters given in the above definitions.

**Source:** Peirce, C. S. (1902). Truth and Falsity and Error. In J. M. Baldwin (Ed.), *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology, Vol. II* (pp. 718-720). London: Macmillan and Co.

**References:** CP 5.565-566

**Date of** 1902

**Quote:**

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