

'Virtual' (pub. 25.11.12-11:59). 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-virtual>.

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**Term:** Virtual

**Quote:** (1) A virtual *X* (where *X* is a common noun) is something, not an *X*, which has the efficiency (*virtus*) of an *X*.

This is the proper meaning of the word; but (2) it has been seriously confounded with 'potential,' which is almost its contrary. For the potential *X* is of the nature of *X*, but is without actual efficiency. A virtual velocity is something *not* a velocity, but a displacement; but equivalent to a velocity in the formula, 'what is gained in velocity is lost in power.'

So *virtual representation* was the non-representation of the American colonies in the British Parliament, which was supposed to be replaced by something. So Milton asks whether the angels have *virtual* or immediate touch. So, too, the sun was said to be *virtualiter* on earth, that is, in its efficiency.

(3) *Virtual* is sometimes used to mean pertaining to virtue in the sense of an ethical habit.

**Source:** Peirce, C. S. (1902). Virtual. In J. M. Baldwin (Ed.), *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology, Vol. II* (pp. 763-764). London: Macmillan and Co.

**References:** CP 6.372

**Date of** 1902

**Quote:**

**Manuscript**

**Image:**

CISM, 1.

**Virtual** [Lat. *virtus*, strength, from *vir*, a man]: Ger. *virtuell*; Fr. (1) *virtuel*; Ital. (1) *virtuale*. (1) A virtual  $X$  (where  $X$  is a common noun) is something, not an  $X$ , which has the efficiency (*virtus*) of an  $X$ .

This is the proper meaning of the word; but (2) it has been seriously confounded with 'potential,' which is almost its contrary. For the potential  $X$  is of the nature of  $X$ , but is without actual efficiency. A virtual velocity is something *not* a velocity, but a displacement; but equivalent to a velocity in the formula, 'what is gained in velocity is lost in power.'

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*Virtual knowledge*: a term of Scotus defined

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