

# Free creative writing on epistemology

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## **Answer to Two Essay Questions**

1) What's all this emphasis on sense data by empiricists? Explain this elusive idea and its place in modern epistemology?

Sextus Empiricus and his skepticism did not deny human knowledge or even the possibility of knowledge. In fact, it seems his philosophy appears to be a starting point that attempts to actively seek knowledge acquisition. It was just that he never believed one could get beyond the starting point. Or rather, he withheld his assent as to whether one could move beyond skepticism. He cautioned that one must be very careful before affirming as knowledge anything that went beyond affirming appearances. This appearances, or sense data though have been criticized as subjective and therefore, insufficient in leading one to truth.

In this way, a life can be lived not in doubt of everything outside oneself but instead believing everything to be appearances, even true appearances.

Empiricus thought it was best not to allow these appearances to culminate into firm beliefs based upon them.

Skepticism has put into question everything upon which we rely for knowing. A Pyrrhonian skeptic following his beliefs to their necessary conclusions, in addition to countless other queries, would need to doubt whether or not his memory is a reliable source for gauging the world, would need to question whether or not his previous questioning of the question of memory has sufficient evidence to believe it occurred and in turn would need to question whether or not he was actually questioning.

With this said, it is unfortunate that objectivists find it obligatory to address the skeptic's concerns in the manner they have done in the past. That is not

to say that a consideration of the skeptics is not important. Cicero claimed that, " By doubting we come at the truth." This means that the skeptics starting point is philosophically important. As George Iles said, " Doubt is the beginning, not the end, of wisdom." Understanding how limited we are in the scope of ultimate understanding is necessary to arrive anywhere philosophically. But the skeptics are incorrect in their assumption that assent should be withheld from everything and also wrong that such a state of living has the end point of mental tranquility.

2) Many argue that we don't grasp mathematical truths by organizing sense data into statements of knowledge. How then do we apprehend statements such as " $6+6= 12$ "

Mathematics, must start somewhere. It can start with a simple  $1+1= 2$ , and a while system could be developed from this axiom. This indeed is how mathematics work. Some would argue that  $1+1= 2$  is self evident. All of mathematics then is a tautology developed from axioms. Skeptics may argue against this, but as history has proved, arguing philosophically against the skeptics is fruitless. The best method of dealing with skeptics is to philosophically ignore them. This does not mean one should not enter the debate. One should enter the debate and then move on without finding the necessity to devote any more time than necessary addressing a philosophical camp who will merely acknowledge your conclusions and then refuse to go beyond a mere consideration.

This can be done by using the skeptics own method of argumentation against them. The Pyrrhonian skeptics ask other to give them sufficient evidence to prove that appearances of the world are the reality of the world.

The objectivist should merely in turn ask the skeptic to offer him sufficient evidence that the appearances of the world aren't the reality. A faithful skeptic adhering to his own doctrine will contend that he has no such evidence and this is precisely why he is a skeptic; he can offer no compelling evidence for or against objective reality. After this statement the skeptic is of the opinion that he has won the debate. Or, to be fair to the skeptic, it would be more correct to say that he would withhold his assent in determining a winner of the debate.

Yet, with such ridiculous argumentation, the skeptic fails to recognize that his argument has not proven the objectivist wrong in his belief in knowledge. For inferential evidence that the world exists as it does should be sufficient for an objectivist unless there be some compelling reason to doubt that things exist as they appear, then it would seem laughable to simply deny that one can assent to this. Doubt is essential but resting in doubt is fruitless. The skeptic should find it disturbing that philosophy is the only place for such an irrational system of beliefs. Yes, consider one who rests in skepticism as an end as irrational. The nature of their field allows them to stay in doubt. However, no one in the aptly named "real world," if the skeptics will allow me to use the term, could endure with skeptic beliefs being applied to anything outside the realm of thought consideration.

There is no person foolish enough to desire to go to a skeptic doctor. A person suffering from cancer would be withheld treatment. The skeptic doctor would merely attest that, it is true his patient has the appearance of cancer. He may agree that all his previous patients with such symptoms did in fact have cancer and die. However, the skeptic doctor could not move

forward and attempt to save his patients life. Instead, he would be forced to withhold his judgment and watch his patient go get a second and hopefully objective opinion.

A skeptic will not find the previous reasoning as sufficient to overturn his belief system. I have offered nothing that proves Pyrrhonian skepticism wrong, but neither has skepticism proven itself truth or overturned objectivism. Therefore, since both objectivism and skepticism rest upon a similar plane, neither disproving the other, it becomes necessary to assent to the obvious rather than the incredible. By doing this, an objectivist can leave the skeptic in his doubt and go enjoy an objective cup of coffee without having to doubt its actual existence.