

# Keen Reasoning Based on the Evidence of the Senses

Post by “Pacatus” of November 28, 2022 at 1:30 PM

A few notes -

The idea that anyone can or should objectively *believe* a proposition - regardless of evidentiary confidence - **because** such belief will relieve anxiety is absurd. Such a “belief” would, at best, involve some cognitive dissonance (or at least some non-evidentiary notion of “belief” that would, I think, would allow anyone to believe anything willy-nilly - allowing any kind of religious cultism or conspiracy theories flying in the face of empirical evidence).

Now, I use the word “believe” (or “belief”) strictly to mean such things as: “It seems [or appears] to me that ...;” or “the [preponderance of] evidence indicates that ...;” and the like.

Subjective confidence, even when supported by a plethora of evidence is still not the same as objective (empirical) certainty - though a subjective attitude of confidence in the face of recognized objective uncertainty can be a psychological help in agency/action (ala in sports psychology).

And while absence of evidence might not be evidentiary proof of absence, repeated null findings can add to a reasonably secure confidence (think of supernatural, interventionist gods - or unicorns).

However, belief in something that is logically absurd is simply delusive. The opposite of “logical” (in the deductive sense) is not “false” but - absurd, incoherent, “gobbledygook.” (Hmm: once again I think of supernatural, interventionist gods ... But maybe I’m wrong. ☐ )\*

For some people, the very idea that they **could** be wrong is a source of anxiety. (I suspect that has a lot to do with a person’s experiences and pressures during their formative years - which can often be a kind of psychological conditioning than can be difficult to jettison, even if one realizes it is there.) And that can lead to a willingness to “believe” anything at all - and back to the first paragraph ...

And, to make a long story longer, the best we've got is the evidence of the senses and our best, evolving reasoning therefrom (and a due nod to prolepsis). And, for me personally, once I let go of a perceived need for certainty, a lot of prior anxiety fell away too.

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\* I always liked that quote by the detective Mr. Monk (from the TV series *Monk*) : “I could be wrong. ... But I don’t think so.”