

Keen Reasoning Based on the Evidence of the Senses

Post by “Pacatus” of November 28, 2022 at 6:59 PM

I realize I might have been veering into Pyrrhonian territory here, and maybe should clarify –

The Pyrrhonians did not deny evidentiary or logical criteria for agency (decision/action) but for “truth.” Again, I suspect that they – like the other Hellenists – took “truth” to mean objective (infallible?) certainty; and, for the Pyrrhonians, specifically truth about what was “non-evident” (non-observable).

Adrian Kuzminski (in his book *Pyrrhonism: How the Ancient Greeks Reinvented Buddhism* – the best comprehensive introduction to Pyrrhonism I’ve found) argues that reasonable inference from sense experience and observations (appearances) would also be perfectly acceptable from a Pyrrhonian perspective.

Unfortunately, **I think that the Pyrrhonians (i.e., Sextus Empiricus) simply misunderstood Epicurus.** But none of them had modern understandings of, say, inductive logic – and maybe Kuzminski’s conclusion on inference is therefore a bit neo-Pyrrhonian. Epicurus, it seems to me, had a better grasp. But his expression is still (if often intuitively prescient) necessarily limited by the knowledge base available in his time.

Note: Although Sextus can be all over the place, it seems to me that a dyed-in-the-wool Pyrrhonian can’t really deny the possibility of knowledge (that would be more in the bailiwick of the Academic Sceptics) – but would have to maintain agnosticism on the question.