

MAIMONIDES LECTURE ON SCEPTICISM

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18:00

Skepticism as Philosophy

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Call this the Philosophy Charge: Pyrrhonian skepticism cannot count as philosophy because skeptics aim at tranquility rather than the truth. Against this, I argue that the Philosophy Charge neglects that the skeptic starts out from a distinctively philosophical experience of the world. The charge misconstrues tranquility as generic rather than truth-related, and employs a notion of philosophy that is too narrow. My response to the Philosophy Charge sheds light on the starting points of skepticism, so-called anomaly and difference, and the ways they motivate inquiry as well as the pursuit of tranquility. Beyond this, I treat the reconstruction of Sextus Empiricus' skepticism as an occasion—and perhaps even a challenge—for reflections on the nature of philosophy. The paper focuses on skepticism's relation to the perennial metaphysical question of what the world must be like for it to strike us in conflicting and divergent ways. Rather than offer a positive metaphysical view, the skeptics engage in a project that, I argue, is of inherent philosophical interest: the devising of mental and linguistic practices that aim to avoid representing the world in misleading ways.

VENUE

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