

MAIMONIDES LECTURE ON SCEPTICISM

JANUARY 12, 2021
18:00

THE SUSPENSION OF JUDGMENT IN PYRRHONIAN AND CARTESIAN SCEPTICISM

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Recent years have seen a rapidly increasing interest in the suspension of judgment, usually with a focus on its nature. The now dominant views hold that the suspension of judgment is not to be characterized by the mere absence of doxastic attitudes, but that it either is a *sui generis* indecision-representing attitude or involves a higher-order belief. These views provide an understanding of suspension in terms of the presence of some mental state that (partly) constitutes the doxastic state of suspension. They describe what I call a “positive” conception of the suspension of judgment. In the history of thought, as in contemporary epistemology, suspension has been of particular interest in relation to scepticism, which considers the suspension of judgment to be the only rational reaction to sceptical arguments. Focusing on Pyrrhonian and Cartesian scepticism, I will argue that sceptical arguments do not speak in favour of adopting a positive mental state (be it a *sui generis* indecision-representing attitude or a higher-order belief), but demand the absence of judgment alone. Scepticism involves a “privative” notion of suspension. Thus, present characterizations of suspension are at odds with the central role of the notion within the epistemological tradition.

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