

Objections to claim that Knowledge=Perception

Recall these three theses:

- T: Knowledge = Perception
- M: Man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not.
- H: Nothing is anything in itself, but everything is always in a process of becoming

Theaetetus proposed T. Socrates helped 'birth' T by showing that it stands together with M and H. If Theaetetus wants to defend T, he needs to also accept M and H too. Socrates then proceeds to test whether the T-M-H combo is a wind-egg, i.e., he examines whether they are true. He offers many objections, some more serious than others. Our first series of objections focus on T and M (it can be difficult to identify if T or M is the target). They come in two types: problematic implications and counterexamples. Socrates suggests that we should be careful with using both. Why?

Problematic implications

Consider Peter Singer's famous argument for the claim that we are morally required to donate to charity.

1. Suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad.
2. If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it.
3. By donating large portions of our income to charities, it is in our power to prevent much suffering and death from lack of food, shelter and medical care, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance.
4. Therefore, we ought, morally, donate large portions of our income to charities.

A bad way to challenge this argument is to merely focus on its conclusion's problematic implication. Can you think of any such implications?

Counterexamples

Can you think of counterexamples to the following claims:

- If something is morally wrong, then there ought to be a law against it.
- Everyone has an inalienable right to reproduce.
- Censorship in the case of adults is never morally justified.

- Parents have an absolute right to inculcate their own beliefs in their children.
- If I see something, I know it.
- If I know something, I have seen it.