UNIT 11: APPEARANCE AND REALITY

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1. Learning Objectives

11. 2. Introduction: Are there any differences between appearance and reality?

11.3. Different views on the distinction between appearance and reality.

11.3.1. Bradley on the Distinction between Appearance and Reality:

11.3.2. Russell on the Distinction between Appearance and Reality:

11.3.3. Plato on the Distinction between Appearance and Reality:

11.3.4. Bradley on the Distinction between Appearance and Reality:

11.4. Responses against the distinction between appearance and reality.

11.4.1. Berkeley's Response on the Distinction between Appearance and Reality:

11.4.1. Thomas Reid's Response on the Distinction between Appearance and Reality:

11.5. Let us sum up

11.6. Further Readings

11.7. Answer to check your progress

11.8. Model questions

11.1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- Differentiate clearly the idea of "appearance from the idea of reality."
- Know how different philosophers tried to substantiate the idea of the distinction between appearance and reality.
- Know the responses of different philosophers regarding the division between appearance and reality.

11.2. INTRODUCTION:

This unit introduces to you the concepts of appearance and reality and will try to find out whether they are different from each other or not. Daniel Webster once stated, "The world is governed more by appearances

than realities, so that it is fully as necessary to seem to know something as to know it." In other words, much of what goes on in the world is due to what people think rather than what actually is; therefore, the only thing one must do is present himself in the way he wants others to believe he truly is. The difference between appearance and reality is studied extensively in the field of metaphysics. Distinguishing between reality and appearances is something that is done by everyone on a daily basis. The University of Oregon stated that appearances are deceptive and derivative, whereas reality is genuine. For instance, the appearance of the size of the sun from an observer on the ground is not the reality of the actual size of the sun but rather a derivative formed by the observer.

In the book "The Problems of Philosophy" Bertrand Russell also referred to the distinction between appearance and reality as "one of the distinctions that cause most trouble in philosophy." The distinction has played an important part in the thinking of many philosophers, and some of them, including Russell, have employed it in curious ways to support odd and seemingly paradoxical claims. It may be this last fact that Russell had in mind when he spoke of trouble.

11.3. DIFFERENT VIEWS ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN APPEARANCE AND REALITY:

11.3.1. BRADLEY ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN APPEARANCE AND REALITY:

Bradley's argument of Appearance and Reality is quite simple. It is divided into two books. The first and shorter one is titled "Appearance" and is about the contradictory character of only appearances. Book II is titled "Reality" and is about the Absolute. In Book I, certain concepts, such as relation, cause, space, time, thing, and self, and certain philosophical concepts, such as the thing-in-itself and the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, are declared to be self-contradictory and are in consequence "degraded to the rank of mere appearances." In Chapters 2

and 3 of Book I, titled, respectively, "Substantive and Adjective" and "Relation and Quality," In Book II, it is argued that if it is being self-contradictory that degrades mere appearances, then reality must at least be not self-contradictory, but consistent and pleasant. Finally, it is clear that reality must be inclusive and include all that is. If reality is a consistent and pleasant and all-inclusive experience, then it cannot be a plurality of independent reals, for whatever is related to anything else must be to some extent dependent on it. "Plurality and relatedness are but features and aspects of a unity." According to Bradley, our experience of related things arises out of a prior immediate experience in which there are felt differences but no distinct qualities, and therefore no conception of things with different qualities in relation with one another. In passing from the primitive harmonious vagueness to knowledge of related things, we pass from what might be called the state of precognitive innocence to the flawed world of contradiction. Wherever there is thought, there is the distinction between them and the, between ideal content and reality, between adjective and substantive; and hence wherever there is thought, there is contradiction. It is clear that contradiction, error, and evil are not harmonious and hence are not real, but it is equally clear that they are not anything. The Absolute must be conceived as analogous to immediate experience but transcending thought rather than falling short of it. How then must they be considered in the light of the Absolute? To this question Bradley gives a very interesting answer and his answer protects him against the demands to show exactly how appearances are self-contradictory, unreal, not nothing, and yet are elements in the total harmony. He says that although error and evil are conflicting and hence not real, it is possible that they contribute to the harmony of the whole, and if this is possible then we must conclude that it is so even though we do not know how it is possible. "For what is possible," he says, "and what a general principle compels us to say must be, that certainly is" (Appearance and Reality, Ch. 16).

11.3.2. RUSSELL ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN APPEARANCE AND REALITY:

Russell begins by asking his reader to consider what knowledge exists that can be known beyond reasonable doubt. His purpose is to produce the realization that radical doubt soon brings even the most self-evident assumptions in our everyday lives under reconsideration. In the beginning of his chapter of The Problem of Philosophy, Russell describes a scene: "I am now sitting in a chair, at a table of a certain shape, on which I see sheets of paper with writing or print." All of these "facts" are easily called into question. Russell engages in his discussion to find out how knowledge of such things is possible at all. In order to lay bare the ordinary assumptions at issue, Russell concentrates on one example, and the table before him. Walking around the table, he distinguishes different colors from different points of view: in places seeming to reflect more light, a brighter shade of brown appears. In reality we assume that there is only one color of the table, yet the appearance of many colors contradicts our assumption. The color seems to be a relation depending on the observer, his point of view, and conditions like "the way the light falls on the table." It seems clearly that no two people could share one identical point of view, doubt raises on Russell's mind as to whether one real color of the table even exists. Russell continues his investigation of color by reasoning that in ordinary language usage, when we refer to the color of an object; we actually refer to something perceived from the usual perspective of observer. However, he continues, there is no reason to assume that the usual perspective should be considered real and other perspectives, under other conditions, be considered less real. Russell does not think that the most usual brown should be considered the brown of the table, to the exclusion of other apparent browns. As with color, the existence of just one quality of the table is unclear, because "to the naked eye, the table appears to be smooth and hard. Aided by microscope, the grain of the wood enlarges to appear as a mountainous range of different qualities. Russell argues that one cannot consider one texture more real than another. The shape of the table, a rectangle, also

changes immediate shape as one walks around it. Sensation of pressure depends on the force we exert on the table, as does the production of sound when we rap on the wood. Thus, the sensations of touch and sound, like sight, are not fixed by a reality; they are apparent possibilities and each depends on the conditions of observation. These observations lead to Russell's first distinction between appearance and reality. Russell writes, "The real table, if there is one, is not immediately known to us at all, but must be an inference from what is immediately known." The reality of the table, in the sense that there is a table, depends on a process of inference based on a knowable part of reality; the part Russell calls "sense-data". Sense-data are not the same as our sensations. Sense-data are "the things that are immediately known to us in sensation." Variations in our sensations indicate that sensation does not directly reveal the reality of an object like the table. Instead, it is probable that our sensations are "signs of some property which perhaps causes all the sensations." To fully grasp Russell's distinction, consider sensation as an act belonging to the realm of experience and consider the object of that direct experience to be sense-data. Since we have seen that certain knowledge of the table's reality is not available through the senses, Russell asks how we can know that a real table exists at all and what kind of certainty we can have. It remains clear that we do have an experience of awareness where we recognize colors and other properties as part of the table. While we may doubt the existence of a real table, it is harder to doubt our awareness of our own sensations. The next problem that arises is one of understanding if there is one real table, how can we relate it to our sense-data. Russell states that it is impossible to understand, if or how the relation would work. The questions we must first approach are: "is there a real table at all" and "if so, what sort of object can it be?" This relation, between sense-data and the real table, is a substantial concern for Russell's enquiry. Returning to his table, he admits that when we have been saying the "real table," we have meant the "physical object." Physical objects may be understood as "matter." The questions at issue become: "is there any such thing as matter" and "if so, what is its nature? " This is how Russell tried to explain the idea of the distinction between

appearance and reality in The Problem of Philosophy.

11.3.3. PLATO ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN APPEARANCE AND REALITY:

According to Plato, knowledge is of reality and opinion can be related to the appearance of reality. The ways in which people makes sense of the world around them comes from a combination of appearances and reality, Plato presents "The Allegory of the Cave" to clearly explain the distinction between appearance and reality. The Allegory begins by describing what Plato takes to be an analogue of the epistemic position in which the majority of people belong to: People are inside a cave, facing away from a fire, and see only the shadows of objects which are moving behind them. Because they see nothing other than these shadows, they mistakenly assume that these shadows are real objects, and put much effort into watching them and discovering their details. Yet, Plato asserts, it is possible for someone to escape this position and leave the cave. Such a person would at first be blinded by the light of the real sun, yet would start acquiring knowledge of true things and realize the absurdity of the shadow-examination that continues in the cave. Explaining the meaning of each of the elements of the Allegory is a significant interpretive challenge, but the basic ideas are straightforward. The shadows correspond to the appearances with which our senses present us. The aspect of the story where the shadows are generated by objects illuminated by a light other than the sun is meant to indicate that they are somehow produced by real things, but in a very indirect manner. Leaving the cave is meant to correspond to a philosopher's ability to cease relying on his senses as a guide to reality and instead use his faculty of reason. Reason not only puts him in epistemic contact with the true elements of reality (the "Forms" of Plato's metaphysics), but also allows him to understand the degree to which appearances differ from these elements, and how they are produced by them.



LET US KNOW

In the Book VII of Republic Plato talks about the famous theory of "The Allegory of the Cave"

11.3.4. DESCARTES ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN APPEARANCE AND REALITY:

In the Modern period of philosophy, a distinction between appearance and reality is also found in Rene Descartes' philosophy. He asked how much differences there could possibly be between the appearances he encountered and the world in which he existed. The answer is made clear by his description of a scenario in which he is the subject of deliberate and near-complete deception by a powerful "evil genius" a scenario which no appearances give him any grounds for ruling out as a genuine possibility. Descartes finally concluded that the gap between appearance and reality is resolvable, and that he can rule out the evil genius scenario. He reaches this conclusion by arguing from the fact that he has an idea of an omnipotent, benevolent God to the existence of that God, and then by arguing from the existence of such a God to two claims:

(1) Since God is responsible for the world and its appearances, it would be incompatible with God's goodness if there were to be a dramatic difference between the two.

(2) Since God is responsible for Descartes' own faculties, he must be capable of knowing the truth about the world around him.

Though Descartes' arguments made a huge impact on philosophy yet they were by no means universally accepted. There is a general agreement that his proofs for God's existence are much less convincing than he took them to be. Yet, for those who continued to accept the

fundamental distinction in Descartes' terms, it was unclear what else besides a knowable, benevolent God could fill the needed role.



LET US KNOW

'Meditations on First Philosophy' by Rene Descartes were originally published in 1641. Here Descartes highlighted the distinction with a simple but powerful imaginative project.

11.4 KANT

Immanuel Kant provided a more refined answer to the problem of the distinction between appearance and reality, over a century after the publication of Descartes' Meditations, by which would inspire the tradition known later as "German Idealism. Kant appears to accept something like Descartes' distinction, yet he poses the issue in terms of an opposition between "objects as they appear" and "objects as they are in themselves." Observers have no real knowledge of objects as they are in themselves, Kant claims, but it was a mistake on Descartes' part to think that they ever wanted such knowledge. Properties like spatial extension, temporal duration, and causal connection, Kant argues, properly belong to the realm of appearances. According to Kant an object of experience, when viewed from the transcendental perspective, it technically refers to an object considered to be conditioned by space and time, but not by the categories. Kant's appearances are a kind of representation which, as empirically real but transcendentally ideal, are also empirical objects, and are the objects of empirical knowledge and the objects of experience. The matter of all sensible thought is sensation, and our "receptivity" to sensation causes intuitions, which are representations of appearances. Appearances themselves contain both intuitive matter (corresponding to sensation) and discursive or conceptual form (which "determines the manifold" of sensation); we know them as "determined objects"--as empirically real objects, the only kind of

objects and only kind of reality which we can experience--only after sensation has been synthesized through the transcendental unity of apperception and judgment. According to Kant there are two types of world. One is phenomenal and the other one is noumenal. The phenomenal world is full of living beings and other material nonliving things. And the noumenal world is the world of spiritual things. For him the phenomenal world is known and knowable as we can directly connect with them and the noumenal world is unknown and unknowable though it has existence as we cannot directly come into contacts with them.

An important question may arise: if appearances are representations, what are they meant to represent? For Kant they do not represent things in themselves (or, at least, we cannot know that they do). On the one hand, there are certain "laws of appearances" which must agree with the conditions of understanding and sensibility (e.g., with the conditions of space and time and with the categories). On the other hand, "things in themselves would necessarily conform to laws of their own" and since we cannot know these laws (or anything about things in themselves), we cannot state that appearances represent things in themselves. It seems better to say that for Kant appearances are empirical objects and that, in the final analysis, empirical objects for Kant turn out to be a strange species of representation. Kant holds that much of reality remains unknowable, yet he takes this to be a desirable result, for it precludes scientific considerations (which only concern the appearance-based properties of objects) from ever ruling out freedom of the will or the existence of God, even while the actuality of the latter two remain unknowable.



LET US KNOW

As determined in empirical knowledge, there is no further question as to what appearances are or represent; they simply are empirically real objects. It takes discursive judgment to determine the appearance

as an empirical object; as given through intuition, appearances are "the undetermined object of an empirical intuition". Because appearances are in some sense "in us," and people are capable of knowing themselves, this opens the possibility of knowing whether objects really are spatially extended, causally related, etc.

11.5. RESPONSES AGAINST THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN APPEARANCE AND REALITY:

There are again some responses that reject the distinction between appearance and reality. Those arguments or responses were given by Berkeley, Reid and many other thinkers. Let us discuss about Berkeley and Reid's responses towards the distinction between appearance and reality:

11.5.1. BERKELEY'S RESPONSE ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN APPEARANCE AND REALITY:

The Irish Bishop George Berkeley saw skepticism as a serious, but resolvable, philosophical threat. Berkeley believed that it was a mistake to distinguish appearances from reality in the first place. Following his predecessor John Locke, Berkeley puts the discussion in terms of "ideas," where these include both the appearances one encounters in sensory perception, as well as the mental entities involved in one's thoughts. Berkeley's fundamental claim was that all that exists are minds and the ideas they have. Skepticism about the external world, he argued, arose from a wholly unwarranted positing of "material substance," understood as something distinct from ideas and minds, which is somehow represented by ideas and thereby mediately encountered by minds. Yet, Berkeley argued, it was an unwarranted break with common sense for philosophers to assume the existence of material substance, and in doing so to create the distinction between appearance and reality. The objects that populate the world aren't something to be accessed by means of ideas; rather, they are those ideas. Berkeley has a simple argument for this claim:

People perceive objects immediately.
The only entities people can perceive immediately are ideas.
Therefore, objects are ideas.

Berkeley's system is strikingly elegant. Unsurprisingly, however, he is hard-pressed to account for the phenomena that originally motivated the distinction, such as perceptual illusions and scientific advancement. Ultimately, Berkeley appeals to God, as causal source of the ideas, who maintains a certain order among them that one can only gradually come to understand. So we can say that Berkeley rejected the appearance/reality distinction by making reality more mental (and so, in a sense, claiming that all there is are appearances).

Let us know: Berkeley's claims against the distinction between appearance and reality developed in his books- Principles of Human Knowledge (1710) and in his Three Dialogues between Hylan and Philonous (1713)),

11.4.2. THOMAS REID'S RESPONSE ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN APPEARANCE AND REALITY:

The first sustained attempt to develop the position to reject the distinction between appearance and reality came from Thomas Reid, a Scottish minister and professor. When one perceives an object, Reid claimed, they do so directly, not by means of any idea or appearance. Such ideas would amount to a veil between observers and the world, whereas in truth there is no such barrier. Like Berkeley, however, Reid was hard-pressed to explain away illusions, and ultimately ended up assuming the existence of "sensations"-mental entities with some similarity to Lockean ideas. Nevertheless, many contemporary philosophers have found his attempt convincing.

Though there are both types of arguments in support and against of the distinction between appearance and reality yet most convincing points are in favor of the support of the distinction between appearance and reality.

There are both common-sense and historically contingent sources of motivation for the distinction between appearance and reality. Because of everyday experience, people frequently find themselves in situations where they are presented with appearances known to be misleading. Some instances of this are dramatic, such as crafted perceptual illusions that immediately come across as unbelievable. In other cases, the knowledge that the appearances are misleading requires more experience and investigation (e.g. rainbows). In general terms, these are cases which one can report in a sentence of the form, "It seemed to me that Z, but really, it's not the case that Z." Further, one might compare two instances where things seemed to be the same way, whereas there was a difference in reality. One way to report that would be to say that the appearances were the same in both instances, though the underlying reality differed. Whether it is looking at the rainbows in the sky or watching a person perform a magic trick, people constantly discern between what is real and what appears to be real. In general, appearances are more likely to be misleading when compared to reality, which exists regardless of whether or not.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who are the philosophers who have given arguments in support of the distinction between appearance and reality?

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Q2: Name any two philosophers who denied any distinction between appearance and reality.

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Q3: Who presented the idea of "The Allegory of the Cave?"

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Q4: What are the two claims made by Descartes?

.....

Q4: Write the names of the two famous books written by Berkeley.

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11.6. LET US SUM UP

- There are clear differences between appearance and reality
- Russell asserts that no two people could share one identical point of view, doubt raises on Russell's mind as to whether one real color of the table even exists.
- Russell continues, there is no reason to assume that the usual perspective should be considered real and other perspectives, under other conditions, be considered less real.
- For Plato knowledge is of reality and opinion can be related to the appearance of reality. The ways in which people makes sense of the world around them comes from a combination of appearances and reality.
- Plato presented in his Republic "The Allegory of The Cave" to explain clearly the distinction between appearance and reality
- Descartes reaches his conclusion that the gap between appearance and reality is resolvable by arguing from the fact that he has an idea of an omnipotent, benevolent God to the existence of that God.
- Kant argues; properly belong to the realm of appearances.
- Berkeley rejected the appearance/reality distinction by making reality more mental
- Reid claimed, when one perceives an object, they do so directly, not by means of any idea or appearance.



11.7. FURTHER READING:

1. The history Philosophy, Bertrand Russell,1945
2. The History of western philosophy, Frank Thilly, 1914
3. The Problems of Philosophy, Bertrand Russell, 1912
4. Appearance and Reality, F.H Bradley,1893

5. Appearance and Reality (Stanford Encyclopedia)

11.8. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q 1: Bertrand Russell, Plato. Kant, Descartes

Ans to Q. No.2: Berkeley and Reid

Ans to Q. No.3: Plato

Ans to Q. No.4: The two claims made by Descartes are-

(1) Since God is responsible for the world and its appearances, it would be incompatible with God's goodness if there were to be a dramatic difference between the two.

(2) Since God is responsible for Descartes' own faculties, he must be capable of knowing the truth about the world around him.

Ans to Q. No.5: The name of the two famous books written by Berkeley are- 1. Principles of Human Knowledge (1710) and 2. Three Dialogues between Hylan and Philonous (1713)

10.11. MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very short Questions

Q1: Who is the author of the book "The Problems of Philosophy?"

Q2: What is the title of Bradley's BOOK II?

Q3: Who wrote Meditation?

B. Short Questions (Write in about 100-150 words)

Q1: How many types of world are there according to Kant what are they? Are they all known and knowable?

Q2: What are the main concepts that are declared to be self-contradictory by Bradley in his BOOK I?

C. Long Questions (Write in about 150 words)

Q1: Explain Russell's idea about the distinction between appearance and reality

Q2: Explain the ideas of Kant and Descartes regarding the distinction between appearance and reality and compare.

Q3: Who gave arguments against the distinction between appearance and reality? Explain their arguments and justifications.

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