UNIT 3: REALISM: NAIVE AND SCIENTIFIC

Unit Structures:

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3.1: LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- define realism
- explain the characteristics of realism.
- discuss the concept of Naive realism
- discuss the concept of Scientific realism
- explain the difference between Naïve and Scientific Realism.

3.2: INTRODUCTION

Philosophy deals with knowledge and reality. In philosophy various analyses of reality are found. Realism is a philosophical theory according to which, objects of our knowledge are real. This view is also called Objectivism. Realism as a metaphysical theory is concerned with existence of objects or things. Epistemological analysis of Realism is that objects are independent of knowing minds or the knower. According to Realism, knower and the object of knowledge are only externally related. The reality of an object is not affected by its relation with the knower. Therefore, the basic

principle of Realism is that, the object and its qualities are independent of knowing mind.

A few characteristics of Realism are,

- Existence of objects is independent of knowledge.
- Qualities of objects are inherent in the objects.
- Knowledge does not affect an object.

3.3: CLASSIFICATION OF REALISM

There are various types of Realism. Two chief forms of Realism are, Naïve Realism and Scientific Realism. The supporters of common sense view propounded the Naïve Realistic view. According to this view, an object is precisely what it is seen to be. On the other hand Scientific Realism is basically based the scientific view. John Locke put forwarded the scientific theory, according to which objects exist mind-independently. It is a positive epistemic attitude.

3.4: NAÏVE REALISM

Naïve Realism is the most common and simple form of Realism. A perceived object independently exists. It neither depends on our perception nor on our knowledge. This is the Realistic approach for all common individuals. Therefore, it is also called Natural Realism and Commonsense Realism. The central theme of Naïve or popular Realism is that the knower of the objects knows something directly with all its qualities.

The term Naïve Realism was firstly coined by Durant Drake in his "Invitation to Philosophy". The chief characteristics of Naïve-Realism are,

- Objects exist independently of knowledge of them:
  Objects do not come into existence after being known or perceived. All the objects of the world continue to exist independently. They can exist without the knowing mind. For example, a stone has its independent existence. We may or

may not know about it or may not perceive it. And this perception or knowledge in no way, influence its existence.

- Objects possess their own qualities:

  Each object has its quality and characteristics. And these qualities are inhered by the object. The perceiver or the knower does not impose qualities upon the object. For example hardness is a quality of a stone. This quality resides in the stone. Thus, just like an object qualities and characteristics of objects also exist independently.

- Knowledge does not influence objects:

  Knowledge of an object in no way influences the object and its existence. It has its own independent existence. For example as mentions above, a stone and its qualities are never affected by its knowledge of a person.

- The object is that what appears to be:

  The form and the nature of an object cannot be differentiated. An object is that what appears to be. In the same way, a person can not show any difference between the knowledge and experience of an object. While perceiving an object our knowledge and perception of it will be the same.

- Objects are public:

  Objects are always public. Therefore, the knowledge of an object is also public and not limited by an individual. Different people can have knowledge of the same object. For example everyone can experience an object and also can acquire knowledge of that.

- World of external objects:

  There is a self existent external world which is outside of human mind and knowledge.

- Objects can be known directly:

  Objects are known directly. Individuals can directly experience an object. Both knower and the known can have direct relation.

Thus, according to Naïve Realism, our ideas are the copies of the objects of the external world. All the qualities of the objects are real. They have objective existence of their own. All the qualities of the objects are also equally essential and real.

3.5: SCIENTIFIC REALISM

Scientific Realism is, primarily the view that the world described by the science is the real world as it is. Thus, Scientific Realism is basically, a) Positive epistemic attitude towards the content of our best scientific theories and models and b)Basically, it is the idea that science, although not perfect, is doing a decent job of explain the world. Scientific Realism is a form of Realism which was established by John Locke. The origin of Scientific Realism has come with a negative approach by criticising the limitations of Naïve Realism. As a kind of Realism, Scientific Realism believes in the existence of an external world independent of human mind. Locke in his analyses tried to give a scientific account of the experiences of the external world. Locke was an empiricist philosopher. In his book, "*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*", he describes the nature of knowledge. According to him, knowledge proper is certain, instructive and real. He believed in the independent world of objects. As an empiricist philosopher Locke believes that, there is nothing in the intellect that was not previously present in the senses. Thus, Locke explains knowledge in terms of experience.

The chief characteristics of Scientific Realism are,

- Objects are independent of knowledge:
  As a form of Realism, Scientific Realism believes that objects exist independently of the knowledge of them. They exist by themselves.
- Objects are not known directly:
  One can know an object by its qualities. In explaining, this Locke introduced the idea of primary and secondary qualities. Locke describes knowledge as an indirect process.

- There is a distinction between the primary and secondary qualities of objects:

  John Locke distinguishes between primary and secondary qualities of objects. The primary qualities are immune to any influence of knowledge, because they belong to the object itself. A few examples of primary qualities are shape, size, length, solidity, number and mobility etc. These are primary qualities, because they belong to the objects. On the other hand, the qualities those do not exist in the objects, are called secondary qualities. For example, colour, taste, smell, heat etc are secondary qualities and they vary to different person or same person at different time.

- The primary qualities of the objects do not depend on the knower:

  As the primary qualities belong to the object, therefore knowledge cannot influence the primary qualities. The primary qualities are objective and general. Mind does not conjure up the primary ideas, because they are images of primary qualities. But, secondary ideas are copies of secondary qualities and they are influenced by knowledge.

- Primary ideas originating in objects are public:

  For primary ideas objects are public. As the fundamental criterion on realism, objects do not depend on knowledge for their existence. By differentiating between primary and secondary qualities, Scientific Realism holds that objects, primary qualities and primary objects are public or objective. They do not differ from person to person.

  In this way, by showing the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, Locke tried to give away a scientific interpretation of the nature of external world. Knowledge is obtained as a representation of the objects of the external world. Hence, his view of knowledge is also known as Representationalism.

3.6: DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NAÏVE AND SCIENTIFIC REALISM

Naïve and Scientific Realism are two types of realism, which put forward their own versions of Realism. Both types of Realism possess the Realistic attitude. But, Naïve and Scientific Realism differ in the following points,

- According to Naïve Realism, objects exist independently of knowledge of it. Scientific Realism also accepts that objects are independent of knowledge, but also accepts that metaphysical speculation depends upon the mind.
- According to Naïve Realism, qualities of objects exist in it. But, in Scientific Realism, the secondary qualities of the objects are imposed by the mind in the objects.
- According to Naïve Realism, knowledge does not influence the objects. But according to Scientific Realism, ideas can influence the objects in some cases.
- According to Naïve Realism, object is what appears to be. But, in Scientific Realism, there is a difference between the actual object and its ideas, which is only an image of the real object.
- According to Naïve Realism, knowledge is direct. But, in Scientific Realism, knowledge is indirect.
- According to Naïve Realism, objects are known directly. But, Scientific Realism holds that, knowledge of an object is in its complex form through the help of simple ideas.
- Naïve Realism holds that objects are public. But Scientific Realism states that primary ideas are public. But, in case of secondary idea, objects are not public. Because, they differ from person to person for the same object.

3.7: CONCLUSION

The basic criterion of Realism is that object of knowledge is independent of the knowing mind. But, on the basis of whole or partial

independence of the objects on the knower's mind, Realism is divided into different types. Naïve or Popular Realism is the simplest form of Realism. It is called Natural Realism and it put forward the commonsense view of the external world. For the Naïve Realists, nature of the object is just like as we perceive. On the other hand, empirical interpretation of John Locke establishes to the Scientific Realistic view, according to which there is a real world of the objects. But, unlike the Naïve Realists, these objects are not directly known. They are known by the qualities of objects. All objects possess their own qualities. The qualities of the objects are divided into two types by the Scientific Realistic thinkers. They are primary and secondary qualities. Primary qualities are unchanging and objective properties of mind. On the other hand, secondary qualities are changing and subjective. Locke in his attempt to reform the limitations of Naïve Realism established a new version of Realism, which is called Scientific Realism or Representationalism. Although Scientific Realism is also criticised by some later thinkers, yet it bears a lot of significance in the history of epistemology.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: What is Realism?

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Q2: What are the two different types of Realism?

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Q3: What is Naïve Realistic approach?

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Q4: How the Naïve Realistic thinkers describe the status of the objects?

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Q5: Who for the first time coined the term Naïve Realism?

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Q 6: "Naïve Realism is also known as Representationalism" – True or false?

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Q 7: Who established Scientific Realism?

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Q 8: How the Scientific Realism described the status of the objects?

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Q9: "For the Scientific Realism objects are directly known" – true or false?

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Q10: What is primary quality according to Locke?

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Q11: What is secondary quality of an object, according to Locke?

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Q12: Are primary qualities of an object, subjective or objective as described by Locke?

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Q 13: Are secondary qualities of an object, subjective or objective as described by Locke?

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3.8: LET US SUM UP

- Philosophy deals with knowledge and reality.
- Realism is a philosophical theory according to which, objects of our knowledge are real.
- Realism as a metaphysical theory is concerned with existence of objects or things.
- Epistemological analysis of Realism is that objects are independent of knowing minds or the knower.
- Two chief forms of Realism are, Naïve Realism and Scientific Realism.

- Naïve Realism is the most common and simple form of Realism according to which, a perceived object independently exists.
- The term Naïve Realism was firstly coined by Durant Drake in his "Invitation to Philosophy".
- According to Naïve Realism, objects exist independently of the knowledge of them and knowledge does not influence objects
- Scientific Realism was established by the Empiricist philosopher, John Locke.
- In his book, "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding", Locke describes the nature of knowledge according to which, knowledge proper is certain, instructive and real.
- As a form of Realism, Scientific Realism believes that objects exist independently of the knowledge of them and they exist by themselves.
- According to Locke, one can know an object by its qualities.
- Locke introduced the idea of primary and secondary qualities.
- Locke describes knowledge as an indirect process.
- According to Scientific Realism, primary qualities are objective and secondary qualities are subjective
- Scientific Realism of Locke is also known as Representationalism
- Scientific Realism holds that, knowledge of an object is in its complex form through the help of simple ideas.



3.9: FURTHER READING

1) Masih, Y. (1993). *A Critical History of Western Philosophy.* Motilal Banarsidass

2) Sharma,R.M (2010). Western and Indian Metaphysics and Epistemology. Surjeet Publication.

3) Sinha, J. N.(2014). *Introduction to Philosophy.* New Central Book Agency (P)Ltd.



3.10: ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q 1: Realism is a philosophical theory according to which, objects of our knowledge are real.

Ans to Q 2: Two chief forms of Realism are, Naïve Realism and Scientific Realism.

Ans to Q 3: The Realistic viewpoint, according to which an object is precisely what it is seen to be, is known as Naïve Realism.

Ans to Q 4: According to Naïve Realism, objects exist independently of the knowledge of them

Ans to Q 5: The term Naïve Realism was firstly coined by Durant Drake in his "Invitation to Philosophy".

Ans to Q 6: False. Naïve Realism is also known as Natural Realism or Common sense.

Ans to Q 7: Scientific Realism was established by the Empiricist philosopher, John Locke.

Ans to Q 8: As a form of Realism, Scientific Realism believes that objects exist independently of the knowledge of them and they exist by themselves.

Ans to Q 9: False. According to Scientific Realism, objects are not known directly

Ans to Q 10: According to Locke, the qualities those exist in the object are called primary qualities. For example, shape, size, length, solidity, number and mobility etc are primary qualities and they are immune to any influence of knowledge.

Ans to Q 11: According to Locke, the qualities those do not exist in the object are called secondary qualities. For example, colour, taste, smell, heat etc are secondary qualities and they vary to different person or same person at different time.

Ans to Q 12: According to Locke, primary qualities are objective.

Ans to Q 13: According to Locke, primary qualities are objective; because they exist in the object themselves and they are immune to any influence of knowledge.



3.11: MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions:

Q 1: What is Realism?

Q 2: What are the types of Realism?

Q 3: What is Naïve Realism?

Q 4: What is Scientific Realism?

Q 5: Define primary quality?

Q 6: Define secondary quality?

Q 7: What is the status of objects of external world in Realism?

B. Short Questions: (Write in about 150 words)

Q 1: Write briefly about characteristics of Realism.

Q 2: Write a short note on Naïve Realism.

Q 3: Briefly explain Locke's Representationalism.

Q 4: What are the differences between primary and secondary qualities?

Q 5: Write briefly about the Scientific Realism.

C. Long Questions: (Write in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: What is Scientific Realism? Write the characteristics of Scientific Realism.

Q 2: What is Naïve Realism? Write the characteristics of Naïve Realism.

Q 3: Explain the differences between primary and secondary qualities.

Q 4: Distinguish between Naïve Realism and Scientific Realism.

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