

- a) Briefly explain one difference between idealism and phenomenism.

Idealism is a philosophy which maintains that the ultimate nature of reality is based upon ideas. It holds that matter is dependant on our minds, and similarly that the real world and knowledge of it is inseparable from our consciousness. Berkley's Idealism holds that something only exists when it is being perceived, "to be is to be perceived", and that is it impossible to think of something that cannot be imagined, for to conceive such a thing is to imagine it. Phenomenalism on the other hand, puts an emphasis on how we speak of experience and use our sense data to understand reality. It says that objects do not exist in themselves but only as sensory stimuli. Furthermore, it reduces talk about physical objects in the external world to talk about bundles of sense data.

- b) Explain and illustrate why dreaming may lead to skepticism about our perceptual knowledge.

For many, a dream will seem like reality until full consciousness is regained. Even the most obscure of dreams lead us to believe that what is taking place when we are asleep is actually a chapter in our lives. For this reason it becomes difficult to justify whether our conscious state (when we are awake) is the truth, as we seem so certain that our unconscious state is the real one when we are experiencing it. Descartes was the first to write about the problem of dreaming in his meditations. It is otherwise known as the argument from illusion. He uses the example of himself sitting by the fire in his dressing gown holding a piece of paper. Although he believes himself to be awake, to his astonishment, he is sleeping, dreaming this realistic and vivid experience. He states that "there are never any sure signs of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep", meaning that how can we be sure that when we are awake, eating an apple for example, we are not actually asleep, dreaming this experience. The two states appear to be indistinguishable, it is for this reason that skepticism about perceptual knowledge occurs.

- c) Assess naïve realism.

Naïve realism is theory which is said to be the common viewpoint of many who have not acquainted themselves with philosophical studies. It holds that when we open our eyes to the world, what we see is simply the world, nothing more, nothing less. Every sound, smell and taste is directly perceived, and contains nothing more than what it appears to. This theory is otherwise known as common-sense realism, and unlike other philosophical ideas such as representative realism, it maintains that all there is to be perceived is the physical object itself, with no subjective components such as sense data. Furthermore, it claims that objects continue to exist when not being perceived, a fact which Berkley argues against in his theory of Idealism.

Some philosophers dismiss the theory of naïve realism, claiming that it is useless because it ignores key elements of existence and perception such as the way things look, feel or sound. For example, like how a bowl of water can feel warm to one hand, but cold to the other. It is difficult to dispute them because we are all aware of how important sensory experience is. The above example forms part of the argument from illusion- in which we believe we are experiencing something but we are actually experiencing something else, such as when a stick is half immersed in water, it appears to be bent even though we absolutely know it is not. Or to a greater extent, when someone is hallucinating and believes to be perceiving something that was never there in the first place, such as in Shakespeare's Macbeth, when Lady Macbeth believes her hands to be covered in blood.

Philosophers such as Ayer hold that to perceive at this type is to believe that everything you are witnessing is true; furthermore there is no difference in the actual experience to the illusionary one. AJ Ayer maintained that to verify a statement is to call it meaningful, consequently if we are to claim that we see a bent stick, we are saying that it is just like seeing a bent stick in water. Thus passing this perception as meaningful, when it not. Therefore, we must conclude that naïve realism is incompatible with the existence of deceptive experience.

Another criticism of naïve realism is of the whole foundation of the argument itself. It fails to treat the problem of perception seriously; this is due to the fact that it is just a common sense theory of a matter which is highly beyond it. This being the case, we should surly dismiss the theory altogether, as it is nothing more than a viewpoint of the ignorant masses which needs not to be examined.

Although direct realism is unpopular and carries criticisms, there are some reasons why we should not dismiss it as an argument for perception. Firstly, we may argue that naïve realism is a realistic and practical way to view the world. This is due to the fact that it eliminates difficulties in perception which, for example, representative realism and phenomenalism both hold. Representative realism states that we experience reality indirectly by perceptions that represent the real world, so for example, if we see a red cup, what we are seeing is not the cup itself but a representation of it. This seems to be a slightly more ambiguous and difficult idea to grasp for an ordinary person, especially as it requires veridical experience. Similarly with phenomenalism, the fact that ideas are permanent possibilities of experience leaves us with a bigger mystery than the one we began with. This is where naïve realism has its benefits, in its simplicity and certainty. Furthermore, direct realism allows us to be in direct cognitive contact with the world and is completely consistent with the view of that 'what you see is what you get', which so many tend to hold.

Secondly, the idea of naïve realism on the whole should not be dismissed as we cannot claim for sure that its ideas are wrong. For all we know the way that we see the world is the only way we can see the world, without the need of sense data and overstated ideas by philosophers who believe that common sense theories are primitive.

In conclusion, it seems that naïve realism is a very simplistic way of explaining how our perceptions work. Many dispute this as they believe that there is more to existence than just 'what you see is what you get', it can be likened to the view of atheists who take a pessimistic stance of the world and make claims such as 'when we die, that's it, we die' (Dawkins). Furthermore, this simple way of viewing existence seems to be an insult to its entirety, which leads me to believe that perception isn't just a matter of opening my eyes to view the world, but more to do with ideas or forms which are provided by our minds. Therefore, it seems that I have placed myself in the idealist camp, and must conclude that naïve realism is most defiantly naïve, and not at all useful when discussing perceptions within existence.