

Direct Realism

What is it?

- There are only two things in perception: the person perceiving an object and the object itself. There is no third thing mediating between the two.
- Direct realism rejects therefore, the notion of sense data (indirect realism).
- We immediately perceive physical objects, when we perceive the world we are directly aware of the objects themselves, (no sense data).

How we perceive physical objects

- Physical objects are mind independent, this is a realist view as it means that objects exist outside of our minds, so if you close your eyes, it does not cease to exist.
- Senses detect properties of objects e.g. colour, shapes etc. which exist in the world, therefore, it is also properties of objects which exist mind-independently.
- Objects retain their properties when unperceived, so if you leave an apple in a drawer and forget about it, it remains round, hard, crisp, red, retaining its flavour and smell. When a tree falls in a forest and there is no one there to hear it, it still makes a sound.

Support for Direct Realism

1. DR links to common-sense. Russell says we should accept common-sense.
2. It avoids scepticism, gives us a clear account of how we come to have knowledge of the world, because our senses provide immediate access to its true nature.
3. If it is true then it explains why I am able to do a whole range of practical actions on a daily basis, for example, find food that I need to survive.
4. It explains why I perceive what I do. I see a tree as green because the tree is green. My perception of the tree is predictable and regular because there is a real tree that exists beyond my mind, I have no control over what I see when I open my eyes because there really is a mind-independent reality.
5. It explains why we agree with others about what we perceive, as we occupy the same world as everyone else, therefore, there is a high chance that there will be agreement about what people perceive.

