

Perceptual variation

The appearance of physical objects can vary depending on the conditions in which they are perceived.

Russell's table example

- A table can appear different colours due to light reflecting off of it. Therefore, the table cannot be said to have a particular colour.
- The shape can also vary depending on the angle from which I perceive it. Since the table does not change shape, we must distinguish the real table from the one appearing in our minds. Russell says the table is not known to us immediately, but is an inference from what is immediately known to us via our perception.

P1: DR immediate objects of perception are material objects and their properties.

P2: But, the appearance of physical objects when perceived can vary.

P3: The properties of the objects themselves do not vary.

C: So DR is false, the apparent properties are not the same as the real properties of physical objects.

- Therefore, the immediate objects of perception are appearances or sense data, so we do not perceive the world directly. As we must infer the existence and the real properties of objects on the direct acquaintance with sense data.

Berkeley's example

- If you place one hot hand and one cold hand into a bowl of lukewarm water the water will appear cold to one and hot to the other. He uses this example to show that it is absurd for realists to claim that the perceived qualities exist in matter as they are perceived.

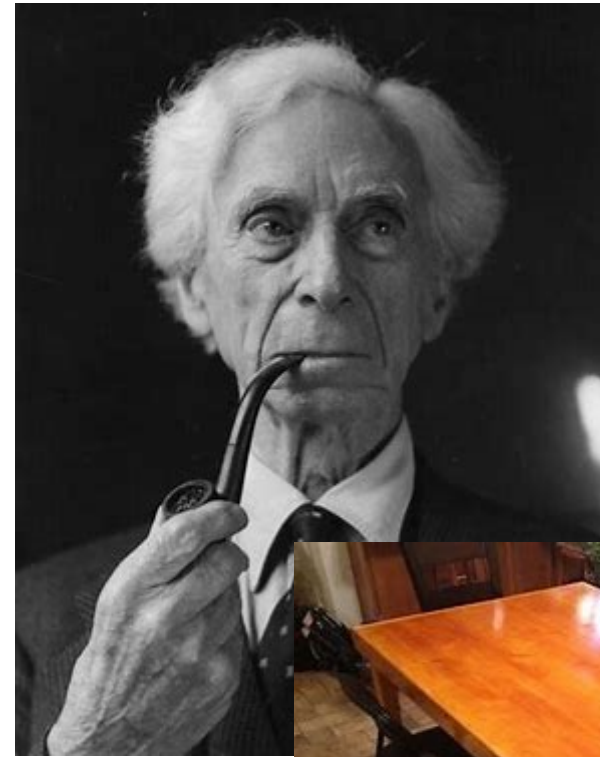
P1: DR claims material objects possess mind-independent properties (such as heat/cold, tastes, smells and colours) which we directly perceive.

P2: But, material objects are perceived to have incompatible properties (for example, cold and hot at the same time).

P3: They cannot possess incompatible properties in reality as it is contradictory.

C; Therefore, DR is false, material objects do not possess such properties.

Russell denying that objects have real properties, as we do not perceive them directly as they are, but Berkeley's conclusion is that the perceived qualities of objects are in the mind, rather than the object.



Response

- DR can accept that objects may appear differently to perceivers, but, insist that they are nonetheless directly perceived. Water can appear cold to a perceiver even if it is lukewarm, this does not mean it is not directly perceived.
- We have agreed methods for determining the correct temperature of the water or colour of the table. We rarely find ourselves in disagreements about such things, if we are in any doubt, then we can move around the table to avoid any glare to tell the real colour of the table.
- We can explain why the colour of the table can vary, this is due to the reflection of light from its surface, also, the water feels warm or cold as this is relative to the temperature of our hands to that of the water.