

Knowledge as Appearance of the Real

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Book Notes V09BN

3-LETTER CODE: EPI

TOPIC: Epistemology

SUBJECT: Knowledge and Reality

SUBSUBJECTS: Appearance and Reality, Essence and Existence, The Absolute, Knowing and Being, Coherence, The What and the That

ORIGINAL LOCATION & FILE NAME (of PDF used for typing): EPI lectures by Anthony P 15p.PDF (pp. 9-10)

CONTENTS:

Where the realists go wrong

You can't know that something is without knowing what it is

Ideas by themselves aren't knowledge of reality; an idea is knowledge only when asserted of something real

From "all we have is ideas" to "all we have is appearances"

The Absolute put beyond experience, cut off from anything that appears

Acceptable version: reality shows itself through our system of ideas; mistaken version: dismissing that system as merely apparent

Faulting knowledge for being relational asks for something impossible

The root confusion: measuring knowing by the standard of being — "to know the Absolute, become it"

Its cost: no system fully true, everything known is appearance

Confusing reality with truth is what produces the "mere appearance" verdict

To know a thing is not to be it; the mind constructs knowledge by the laws of reason, which are self-evident

Reality has to be assumed rational, or knowing is impossible; coherence is the rule that orders the facts

No last word — an infinite reality keeps on revealing itself

Thought is the tool, not the destination

"But we can't know reality as it is in itself" — what would that even mean?

Reality has a definite nature — that nature shows itself only to a mind that looks for it

Two things "what is known" can mean: which thing is known, and the content by which we know it

Qualities and essences show what reality is like in a given context — appearances of the real, not the real

**The “that” lies beyond our grasp of it, but isn’t a thing-in-itself we’re shut out from
We build knowledge out of experience and assert it of reality; reality, as existing,
outruns our knowledge of it**

ARTICLES QUOTED FROM OR REFERENCED:

- Unidentified article (the source abridged in this paper)

AD HANDWRITING: Typewriter typed, no AD edits

COMPLETENESS: Full Paper, abridgment of an article whose author and title have not yet been identified

PUBLISHABILITY: No, already published

ALTERNATE VERSIONS: WG Class 1974 1027 (combined AB and JC notes)

DATE ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PAPER: 1974 1027

RETYPE, REFORMAT, AND PROOFREAD by IT 2026

NOTES:

- **RETYPE BOOK NOTES presented in class (V09BN).**
- This is **1974 10/27b, Epistemology; Knowledge and Reality Book Notes, and the second entry associated with this date. 1974 10/27a = Epistemology; Knowledge and Reality Class.**
- This is an abridgment of an as-yet-unidentified article. Its style and argument closely resemble the writing of A.C. Mukerji, whose “Suggestions for an Idealistic Theory of Knowledge” and “Reality and Ideality in the Western and the Indian Idealistic Thought” Anthony Damiani also abridged; neither is the source. The title “Knowledge as Appearance of the Real” was supplied by IT, taken from the paper’s description of the contents of knowledge as “an appearance of the real.”
- These Book Notes are one of several papers read and discussed in WG Class 1974 1027a, the last of five classes in the 1974 “Epistemology Review” series. See also WG Classes (and related papers) 1974 0929(a, b), 1006(a, b), 1013(a, b), and 1020(a, b).
- The lecture heading in the source PDF reads “Lecture Three”; it has been corrected here to “Lecture Five.”
- All spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and similar errors have been silently corrected.

KNOWLEDGE AS APPEARANCE OF THE REAL

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EPISTEMOLOGY LECTURES: Lecture Five

Realists are convinced that reality is not mental and that it transcends experience but do not grasp the fundamental point which is that it is the same reality that reveals itself as content of knowledge to an apprehending mind. And this content is relative not only to the subject that knows but also to reality that is known – both inhere in knowledge

Essence is of existence, and to know existence is to know it in terms of its essence. To seek to understand existence apart from essence is to seek to know existence which is the existence of nothing in particular, and further the attempt to know existence apart from essence is to reduce existence apart from essence to some sort of quality or essence.

Ideas or ideational contents of knowledge taken by themselves without reference to reality they are involved in – in judgments, cannot be taken as knowledge of reality. Some regard them as appearances. But they posit an absolute in non-relational terms transcending experience and unrelated to the appearances. If they mean that reality appears to us in terms of a system which embodies our knowledge of the real world, ok. But if they condemn it as mere appearances, as if it could be anything else...because of its relational character as if it could be knowledge without involving relations. They judge knowledge by [a] standard of reality. They forget the reference to reality that knowledge essentially involves but confuse being and knowing. To understand the Absolute one should oneself become the Absolute – knowing identical with being, truth with reality. The criterion of knowledge becomes reality itself. So that even a complete system of knowledge is not completely true, whatever is known is phenomena.

A confusion between reality or being and truth – which is characteristic of reality – knowledge is responsible for condemning it as mere appearance. To know is not to be the thing known. Knowledge is an intellectual construction of the nature of reality, embodied in a system of (section missing)...in accordance with laws of reason. Laws of thought are self-evident and we have to assume the real is rational, otherwise knowledge is impossible. The principle of coherence is the regulating principle of knowledge which orders facts in accordance with logic. There is no finality in human knowledge, as reality which is infinite goes on revealing itself.

Thought or consciousness is the instrument for constructing knowledge. What is revealed in knowledge is not the revelation of thought itself, but what thought reveals about reality. To identify the dialectical process of thought with the being of reality itself is to identify the means with the end.

It is contended that we cannot know reality in itself.

But what is meant by the nature of reality in itself? The essence is what the mind apprehends. Reality has a nature...it's not empty being, for being which is nothing in particular is nothing. What the nature is can be apprehended only by a mind that seeks to know it. To speak of the nature or the qualities of reality as they are in themselves apart from a mind is to divest reality of all the qualities that may be known and still ask for qualities.

The confusion between reality and phenomena...the “what” in the question what is known may mean what is it that is known or what are the contents of knowledge in terms of which the “it” is known.

Such abstracted contents are designated as a quality, universal, or essence which mind understands as revealing the nature of reality in a particular context...and not to be taken as real. It is an appearance of the real. Knowledge consists of such appearances. They are the *what* detached from the *that*, the latter being transcendental in regard to the knowledge of it. But the “that” is not on that account a thing in itself. Because knowledge consists of what...it is not consistent or legitimate to hold that the “that” is beyond knowledge. Knowing is not being. Knowledge is an intellectual construction of the nature of reality by subjects in accordance with reason and out of data furnished by experience and affirmed of reality. Therefore reality which is in its existential aspect transcends knowing [sic; knowledge] as known. (Always keep in mind the growing and fragmentary aspect of this knowledge.)

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