

Being and appearance essays example

[Religion](#), [God](#)



Being versus appearance is no doubt one among the most notable questions of philosophy (Russell 11). Being and appearance takes a center stage because it is a question that, by extension, touches on the two most critical questions of philosophy – the existence of God, and human existence, also referred to as Existentialism (Arendt 34). The question has been tackled by various philosophers, most notably by Plato, Rene Descartes, Aristotle and Immanuel Kant. The question of being versus appearance, also known as appearance versus reality has not found a universally acceptable answer, despite the fact that many philosophers – both ancient and modern have invested too much effort into attempting to unravel the difference between these two concepts (Wisdom 7). Fundamentally, appearance is what observers perceive through sight and superficial knowledge. On the contrary, being, or reality is the true form. Essentially, therefore, appearance is that which we see, while reality is that which an object or a person really is. In his dialogues, Plato endeavors to explain that there is a clear distinction between being and appearance. However, he says that the difference is the point of contention among other philosophers because the question is rather epistemological (Plato and Grube 23). Plato wonders how human beings are supposed to point out the distinction between appearance and reality when they have unlimited, immediate access to appearance alone. Plato, in his prominent cave analogy argues that human beings are blinded by appearance to an extent that they believe that the appearance is the reality (Petley 18). Plato however argues that reality cannot be known because all objects are in a continuous state of change. According to Plato reality or being is truer than appearance, because, contrary to common

misconception, reality is the pure or intrinsic feature of an object, for instance, 'goodness', 'beauty' and so on. the arguments of Plato are so much like those of his student Socrates who argues that substance is different from form i. e. the body and the soul are extremely different (Aristotle 2)

Rene Descartes, arguably the most controversial philosopher, believes that there is some malicious and evil genius trying to deceive human beings on matters of reality and appearance (Kierkegaard and Walter 34). Descartes, commonly known for his discourse method and meditations of first philosophy, foremost argues that perhaps human beings do not exist at all. In his self-driven thought and challenge, he later relies on the realization that there is a supreme God who created the human being (Descartes and Cress 31). The presumption that Descartes makes is that since the God that created man is perfect, he knows the reality about the universe and all objects, and on the presumption that God and man are compatible; the faculties that God created should enable us to understand reality. He however, concludes that being or reality is in a continuous flux, or irregular change.

Kant, a philosopher who, to a great extent acknowledges the ideas of Descartes, comes up with what could be described as the most potent explanation of reality. The explanation, which is generally referred to as German Idealism, explains the distinction between appearance and reality through two concepts – the knowledge of what an object looks like and what an object is (Kant and Ellington 19). Immanuel Kant argues that human beings know what all the objects look like. However, he adds that the

knowledge of what an object really is, is inaccessible. Kant's presumption borrows both from Plato and Descartes. He argues that being versus reality is a question of science versus spirituality, basing his argument on the presumption that science is based on solid observable facts while the understanding of God is based on invisible capacities (Hacker 21). He concludes that this puzzle is a manifestation of God's superiority over science because we are able to understand science, but not the mystery of God.

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