

Example of can  
indirect realism be  
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## **Can indirect realism be demonstrated in the psychological laboratory?**

The psychologist asserts that certain kind of scientific data strongly support the existence of a theory of knowledge commonly known as indirect or representative realism although it has been referred to by different names in various quarters. The aim of this paper is to show the difficulties inherent in such a view. Three steps will be required to achieve this aim. The first step will basically be an introduction in which the different classes of scientific facts presumed to be compelling evidence for representative realism will be summarized. The second step is the part in which how paradoxical the thesis that the facts provided in step one prove indirect realism is will be explained. In the final part recommendations on how the difficulties discussed can be avoided and an amicable solution reached will be provided.

## **The psychological evidence for indirect/representative realism**

The psychologist cum epistemologist concerns himself with two types of facts; one, 'psychological facts proper' which are derived from studying the behavior of organisms and two, 'structural' facts that arise from the study of either the morphology of the sense organs or from the environmental aspects of the world. The thesis in question posits that structural facts give us a picture of the world entities that a perceiver confronts immediately as well as the perceiver's anatomical features that make contact with these entities. Psychological facts on the other hand tell us that since the information the perceiver obtains is only but partially complete, he must add to it that is; the perceiver must reconstruct a sensory world that is equivalent

with the entities and events of the external world. The latter conclusion captures in a precise manner the central focus of this paper that is the widely supported theory of knowledge termed indirect/representative realism. This theory states that the process through which the perceiver arrives at knowledge of the world is an indirect one. It also holds that perceivers use a number of atomic elements to rebuild the world via some form of schematism or quasi-rational inference. In our opinion, this theory has some serious defects. However, this paper will not delve into these defects per se rather; it will focus on the implications of this theory on the thesis that indirect/representative realism can be demonstrated scientifically.

### **The thesis is paradoxical**

The subjective side of indirect realism holds that perceivers are epistemically isolated and are only able to know the world indirectly via incomplete sensations. Meanwhile, the objective side of the same states that the perceiver in the end comes to know the world regardless of the limitations inherent in the process which he uses in doing so. This latter assertion prompts the question on how the perceiver comes to know the world in actuality despite the fact that his view is just but a mere reconstruction of the reality. The answer to this question lies with the psychologist because he is the one who judges and therefore knows when the perceiver views the world as it is and when he errs. The psychologist achieves this by interpreting the sensations perceived indirectly by the perceiver on the basis of a second epistemology termed direct realism which is the antithesis of indirect realism to be proven via scientific facts. This implies that the

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psychologist contends with two epistemologies; direct and indirect realism. This is so because for him to make such judgments, he interprets the sensations experienced by the perceiver against presuppositions arrived at via direct realism. The latter fact has two major implications, one it disputes the thesis put forth that indirect realism can be proven empirically and two, it brings out the paradoxical nature of this thesis. It is paradoxical because if the psychologist perceives the world indirectly, then he has no means of knowing how the actual world is. Moreover, if he is able to perceive the world directly, then his knowledge of the world would be so much to an extent that he would not be able to perceive it indirectly. This paradoxical nature is further amplified by the fact that the psychologist and the perceiver can in the process of demonstrating indirect realism switch places such that the perceiver becomes the psychologist and the psychologist the perceiver.

## References

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