Seeing as being prepared to see philosophy essay

Ralph Waldo Emerson says aptly: “ People only see what they are prepared to see”[1]. It means that people will only see thing as they want it to be. On the other hand, it simply means that we see things as we are. Why could not we see things as they are instead as we are? Therefore, how can we be sure that what we perceive now is the way it is supposed to be? The reasons of why this happened because of the ways of knowing. There are four ways of knowing that can misled our seeing and understanding of the things which are perception, reason, emotion and language. But however without them, we cannot create knowledge of reality and truth because brain does not have a direct contact to the real world. It is somehow these ways of knowing do help us to see and understand things as they are but just to a certain extent. Therefore, in this essay, I intend to discuss to what extent we see and understand things not as they are but as we are.

Language is a conventional code of symbols that allows a sender to formulate a message that can be understood by a receiver. How we see things is strongly influenced by our language and our seeing also makes influence on our thinking. Therefore, our thinking cannot be separated from our language and even we could say that our language limits our thinking. According to the Linguistic Relativity Theory, an individual’s nature language determines the way the individual thinks and perceives the world which also can bewitch the intelligences[2]. One example is infinite monkey theorem. This theorem states that a monkey hitting keys at random on a typewriter keyboard for an infinite amount of time will almost surely type a particularly chosen text, such as

the complete works of William Shakespeare[3]. People always misinterpret by the true meaning of this theorem (by linguistic and perception). With the picture of the chimpanzee typing a typewriter will cause people to regard and value it as an art. People may have thought that the picture of the chimpanzee is the same as the Cassius Marcellus Coolidge's work of his paintings in the " dogs playing poker"[4]genre. But the truth is the picture and the theorem is all about Mathematics that illustrates the perils of reasoning about infinity by thinking a vast but finite number and vice versa From the context, the words of " almost surely" is a mathematical term with precise meaning and the " monkey" is not an actual monkey but it is a metaphor for an abstract devices that produces a random sequences of letters ad infinitum. At first we really do see it not as the theorem but instead as the art of the monkey. It is because the sense of our sight which is perception and the language give us false idea of what the theorem really is. Hence, the language itself will limit our seeing and understanding things not as they are but as we are.

Unless we already study about the theorem beforehand, we will know what the picture of chimpanzee and the context of the sentence of the theorem are trying to convey the meaning. So, we will see the theorem as it is but not as we are. This implies that many words have no true meaning; rather they have so many different meanings which can only be appreciated in context. Therefore, we must be aware of the true meaning to be able to use a word accurately because word can mean so many things in so many situations that require us to perceive it based on our knowledge and experiences which are often being limited by our senses. So, one must understand the context,

or background, in which a word is used to have a grasp on the meaning of the word itself. Understanding the context of a word is nearly as important as an understanding of the word itself, as the situation controls to a degree how the word will be used. The result would be language which is far more clear, precise, and less misleading, or bewitching. When language free of most problems it would make it an even greater tool and developing better understanding and knowledge through this communication, ultimately it would help us to see things as they are.

Moving on to science, I believe there is always a new paradigm to it due to scientists see things as (we are) where suppose they should have see things as they are. Why does paradigm changes from time to time? Does paradigm occur because of we (scientists) see and understand things not as they are but as we are (scientists)? According to the historian of science, Thomas Kuhn, paradigm is the word refers to the set of practices that defines a scientific discipline at any particular period of time.[5]In other words, scientists have always work based on their paradigm which is a normal science of that particular scientific community. Normal science is an assumption (might be deceived by the perception, emotion and reasoning) that the scientific community knows what the world is like. So, scientists will adjust and modify their paradigm if falsifications become apparent but consistently stay within it. Eventually, there comes a point when new observations are no longer compatible with the existing paradigms. From here the revolution occurs and new paradigm will replace the old one. All this is happening because the paradigm itself is a human construct and all the scientific observations are made by using our human senses, human

intelligences and human rationality which the ways of knowing are necessary in these processes. However, these ways of knowing (perception, emotion, language and reasoning) that exist among scientists can limit their capabilities to see things as they are. Therefore, scientists will always come about with new ideas, assumptions and theory that cause the amendments of the paradigm.

To further up, according to Kuhn’s book, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions[6], he said that the perception of the world depends on how the percipient conceives the world where two scientists who witness the same phenomenon and are steeped in two radically different theories will see two different things. One of the examples is the ideas of the Charles Darwin and Abbot Gregor Johann Mendel about the inherited characteristics from two parents into their child[7]. Darwin suggested that the characteristics of the mother and father were “ blended” to produce a child who looks similar to both. Abbot Gregor Johann Mendel developed theories over seven years by studying and testing pea plants. In the 1930s, the Mendel’s conjectures, The Law of Segregation and the Law of Independent Assortment were found correct after the genetics and research into inheriting traits began to be investigated. On the other hand, Darwin’s speculations of the “ blending theory” only pervaded into the first offspring of two parents but not with the characteristics which Darwin could not explain, but Mendel did. This shows that the two scientists have two different theories on the same phenomenon because of the perception, emotion and reasoning are different to each other. But this paradigm could not be a promising in the future since

paradigm always changing based on human being observations and assumptions that are mainly seize by our ways of knowing.

“ The first principle is that you must not fool yourself and you are the easiest person to fool.” (Richard Feynman, American theoretical physicist, 1918-1988)[8]

Even though sciences always give us the areas of uncertainty, but without sciences we would not be able to know the world. We could not see the things as they are without the existence of science. Whatever inadequacies as a way-of-knowing science may have are inadequacies caused by the fact that it is a human construct but there is no way-of-knowing created by humans will ever be entirely reliable, entirely precise, and entirely objective. The way we develop our scientific knowledge, science as a way-of-knowing is pragmatic. Thus, it must be consider as reliable, precise and objective. On the other hand, there is a scientist who models their claim on science for good reason. It also can be the most reliable way-of-knowing and be the best justified true belief if we are limiting ours way-of-knowing to the physical and world around us. Without our realisation, there is an absolute way-of-knowing in which justification is absolutely independent of observation. Plus, there is also an observation that requires our justification that based on our way-of-knowing solely. Hence, the thing that we see and understand may do not need us to see them as they are but as we are.

In conclusion, we do see things as we are but not as they are but just to a certain extent. All the areas of knowledge will help us to see and understand things more as they are but not as we are. Although there is some part that we as a human are not capable of seeing and understanding the thing as

they are since our ways of knowledge can be deceiving but we can be guided by any theories in Mathematics and Sciences. Not only that, with the developing technologies we will eventually see and understanding things as they are and we can reassure our belief in the world.