

APPEARANCE

Appearance is a term and concept long explored by philosophers (Plato; Hinduism) --in an attempt to determine the meaning of truth--the opposite of appearance. Appearance, then, is what only seems to be this or that. A treasured example features the stick which falls into a body of water so that the stick gives the appearance of being bent in the water—which it is not. The stick only appears to be bent. This is a case of appearance as illusion.

Appearance, which often seems illusory, is in fact the substance of art, one of mankind's pathways to truth. Theater, which at its best is rich with our truth, is all about make believe—this jolly fat man pretends to be Falstaff, and we are taken in, as we are by the appearance of the stick in the water

Dreams, the ancient Greeks believed, were sent to mortals by the Gods, to guide us on our way. But these dreams were also appearances, which needed to be interpreted, before their meaning could become clear to us. Soothsayers and prophets were used to clear away the appearances that temporarily obfuscated the meaning of the dream. 'If Croesus crosses the Halys he will destroy a great empire,' asserts the soothsayer to Croesus, while neglecting to mention to him that the great empire will be his own.