

REALITY

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Abstract

As conscious, intelligent beings, we may question reality - whether something is real, imaginary or just hypothetical. Reality is intangible, abstract and we may wonder what it really is. How do we know or prove that something is real and not imaginary, hypothetical or just a dream? This paper attempts to grapple with some of these issues.

1. WHAT REALITY IS

Definition of reality by Wikipedia:

Reality is the sum or aggregate of all that is real or [existent](#), as opposed to that which is merely [imaginary](#). The term is also used to refer to the ontological status of things, indicating their existence.^[1] In [physical](#) terms, reality is the totality of the [universe](#), known and unknown. Philosophical questions about the nature of reality or existence or being are considered under the rubric of [ontology](#), which is a major branch of [metaphysics](#) in the Western philosophical tradition. Ontological questions also feature in diverse branches of philosophy, including the [philosophy of science](#), [philosophy of religion](#), [philosophy of mathematics](#), and [philosophical logic](#). These include questions about whether only physical objects are real (i.e., [Physicalism](#)), whether reality is fundamentally immaterial (e.g., [Idealism](#)), whether hypothetical unobservable entities posited by scientific theories exist, whether [God](#) exists, whether numbers and other [abstract objects](#) exist, and whether [possible worlds](#) exist.

Definitions by Oxford Dictionaries:

- (i) The state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to an idealistic or notional idea of them.
- (ii) A thing that is actually experienced or seen, especially when this is unpleasant.
- (iii) A thing that exists in fact, having previously only existed in one's mind.
- (iv) The quality of being lifelike.
- (v) The state or quality of having existence or substance.
- (vi) Existence that is absolute, self-sufficient, or objective, and not subject to human decisions or conventions.

Those things that could be detected by the physical senses such as sight, smell, taste, touch, hearing could be regarded as real. For example, green is green as seen by the eyes and no one would dispute with one over this (unless of course if the person is colour blind which is a rare personal defect that is found in some people). The same applies to good smell or bad smell, tastiness or rotten taste, hardness or softness, loudness or softness, etc., in general.

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Many have wondered: Is mathematics, which is an exact science, real or invented? In mathematics only the counting numbers appear real, e.g., 1 car, 10 persons, 100 flags, etc., which could be counted/measured, and geometrical shapes which could be seen/measured with the eyes such as roundness, squareness, length, width, etc., which no one would dispute over. The problem appears to be with abstract "objects" which could not be detected/measured/counted by the above-mentioned physical senses such as beauty (e.g., in a beauty contest some may think that the beauty queen is not a deserving winner and the second runner up should be the beauty queen, etc.), ugliness, intelligence, stupidity, good, evil, rightness, wrongness, logic, illogic, kindness, selfishness, etc., which are subject to subjective interpretation and also subject to disputes. Similarly many areas in mathematics which are very abstract and do not directly involve the above-mentioned physical senses also depend on subjective interpretation and are subject to disputes, e.g., the proof of a statement whose logical consistency is a matter of subjective interpretation with nothing to do at all with the above-mentioned physical senses. In mathematics, a statement which is obvious and needs not to have a proof is called an axiom. Other mathematical statements which are not obvious need to have proofs to ascertain their validity. The interesting question here is what is obvious to one person might not be obvious to another person depending on their levels of intelligence; similarly the obviousness of the logical consistency of a mathematical statement or its proof to one person might not be so to another person. A simple example here: $6 + 6 = 12$ might be obvious to a person of normal intelligence but might not be so to a person whose intelligence is at the idiot level.

2. HOW REALITY MAY BE INTERPRETED

This point may be considered: whether reality itself is real? Reality is a term used to denote that something exists. To a conscious, intelligent being like us something that exists is evidently something we are **conscious of** through our physical senses: what we see, hear, feel tactilely, taste, smell. Though we cannot see, hear, feel, taste, smell reality, reality is associated with the objects we could see, hear, feel, taste, smell, i.e., the objects we could see, hear, feel, taste, smell are real to us, and, something we could not see, hear, feel, taste, smell are not real to us (which could perhaps be called imaginary objects).

Paradoxically, something not real could also be considered real, i.e., the non-existence of an object could be considered a reality, in other words, it could be a **fact** that an object does not exist. That is, something could be **really** unreal.

Real objects which we could see, hear, feel, taste, smell are tangible objects, which are grammatically known as nouns. Objects we could not see, hear, feel, taste, smell could be regarded as intangible objects, which are grammatically known as abstract nouns, e.g., reality, non-reality, beauty, ugliness, intelligence, foolishness, honesty, dishonesty, etc.

Reality, which we cannot see, hear, feel, taste, smell, is evidently a **creation** (or concept) of the **conscious** mind. We **created** the term "real" to describe something we could see, hear, feel, taste,

smell - something that exists. Paradoxically, the non-existence or non-reality of an object (an object which we do not see, hear, feel, taste, smell and therefore non-existent or non-real to us) could also be regarded as real, i.e., the non-existence or non-reality of the object is a fact or a truth.

Perhaps, broadly speaking, reality could be regarded as anything the mind is **conscious of** - sight, noise, feel, taste, smell, reality, non-reality, truth, falsehood, sense, nonsense, beauty, ugliness, existence, non-existence, life, death, tangibility, intangibility, visibility, invisibility, fullness, emptiness, consciousness, unconsciousness, intelligence, foolishness, happiness, sadness, anger, humour, imagination, dream, spirituality, nothingness, loneliness, weirdness, etc. **Reality** could thus perhaps be regarded simply as **consciousness**. By this definition, even if the world is devoid of consciousness as would be the case if the world is suddenly without conscious beings, this non-existence or non-reality of reality could still be regarded as a reality by some possibly existent other-worldly, perhaps godly, conscious being who is **conscious** of this non-existence or non-reality of reality, i.e., this non-existence or non-reality of reality is real to this conscious being.

The above is one way of interpreting reality. There could be other ways of interpreting reality, e.g., someone might argue that reality is just an invention of the human mind and if the mind (maybe the mind of an animal, for example) could not conceive reality or think of it it would not exist.

3. CONCLUSION

Reality may in reality be just a creation, invention or concept of the intelligent human mind. It is indeed doubtful if reality exists in the non-human mind, e.g., the mind of an animal such as a dog, cat or horse.

REFERENCES

[1] Wikipedia

[2] Oxford Dictionaries