

MORE ON REALITY

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Abstract

Reality is existence, fact, truth. As intelligent beings, we are always concerned with reality or the truth and abhor lies, fakeness, falsity. But we are also not averse to using falsity and lies to deceive others in order to achieve our objectives. Who has never lied before? As the interpretation of reality has a tendency to be subjective it is often difficult to differentiate between the real, the truth, and the unreal, the false. This paper is a continuation of the author's earlier paper "Reality"; it probes further into reality.

1. How should Reality be Interpreted: More Views

One view is that reality itself is not static and is changing with time. What is reality now may be a different reality in future. The future reality depends on the present reality. We cannot be sure of reality.

Reality may be a fixed pattern waiting to be discovered, e.g., in the case of scientific research. However, the problem with science is that what is seen and considered real depends on how the scientist interprets what is seen. Some may think that nature is not really a fixed pattern. So is this fixed pattern of nature indeed real or not?

We intelligent beings, especially scientists, attempt to see "order" or pattern where there is disorder, chaos or lack of order. When there is order or pattern in natural phenomena scientists are able to understand, explain them or predict them through reasoning or "cause and effect". When there is disorder, chaos, lack of pattern in natural phenomena they are unable to reason thus or predict the outcome - they will apparently then try to look out for some order or pattern in this disorder or chaos and on seeing some order, pattern or predictability will feel some sense of control, understanding and relief. It might be a case of scientists "seeing" what they (at least subconsciously) wanted to see. In other words, scientific work might be a case of make-belief. This apparently explains why scientific theories are revised or even discarded from time to time with "new evidences" whose reality might be doubtful.

It should be best for the scientific to keep an open, objective mind about scientific theories whether these scientific theories are created by themselves or others and be prepared to revise or discard them when the reason against them are evident. Nothing should be cast in stone. Our intelligent mind is apparently far from perfect when even the apparently most highly intelligent could not agree among themselves on what should be the facts or truths. Reality, fact or truth could be just a case of subjective interpretation.

What students learn from the science textbooks have to be taken for granted to be the truth, for even if they doubt or know that the textbooks are wrong they wouldn't be able to pass exams if they did not present these "wrong truths" in the exams. For every one of us, the practical problem could be that if we keep doubting the "scientific truths" and frequently dispute them nothing much productive could be achieved. So everyone just go along with the "truths" until they are strongly proven otherwise. This appears to be the problem of reality, fact or truth.

In science, the peer review or consensus among peers confirms the validity of a scientific truth. Here it is assumed that these peers are highly intelligent and know what they are talking about. Who are best in the position to judge the intellect, competence, objectivity and passion for truths of these peers who determine what the scientific "truths" are? It appears that everyone takes for granted that these scientists are highly intelligent, competent and have a passion for the truth. It appears that in an important way it is the scientists who determine or confirm reality for society as a whole.

Could reality be regarded as the way the physical senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch interpret the surrounding or environment?

On a more fundamental level, since the physical senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch are felt by the brain or consciousness, could reality be regarded as the way consciousness or intelligence interprets the environment, the interpretation varying from person to person depending on their levels of intelligence and even their varying cultures, which implies that when consciousness does not exist, e.g., when the person is dead, reality would not exist (at least to the unconscious/dead person)?

Can we say that reality is an abstract entity used to describe existence, fact or truth which we experience with the physical senses of hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch, and become aware of with our conscious mind, with the experience more or less similar among all conscious, intelligent beings - reality requiring a certain level of intelligence to comprehend while beings of lower intelligence such as animals may not know or be aware of reality? Thus, can we say that reality may not be real (as it is not directly experienced by the physical senses of hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch, which have been described as the condition for reality) but is just an invention of the intelligent mind, or, even an illusion? Can we say that as reality is an abstract entity (never heard, seen, smelt, tasted or touched), if it exists it exists only in the mind or consciousness?

Another view is that there are at least two kinds of reality, one which we could observe and experience with our physical senses (the 10% of the iceberg above sea level which we could see), and, the other part of reality which is beyond the reach of our physical senses (the 90% of the iceberg below sea level which is out of our sight) which we have to discover/deduce/reconstruct? Can we say that the aim of science is to discover new realities (from the 90% of the iceberg below sea level which is out of our sight) then? The reality which we see may actually be very little, e.g., about 10% of the actual reality.

Maybe a practical way to confirm the reality or existence of an object is to get several people to view and describe the object; if the descriptions of the object by these people are by and large similar the object is real. A person who views an object might sometimes think that his senses might have been wrong and had deceived him, i.e., he becomes doubtful of the reality of the seen object, e.g., the colour or size of the object, or even whether the object is really there. Similar descriptions of the object by other people viewing it would clear his doubts and confirm for him the reality of what he has seen. Viewed from this angle, the saying "reality or existence is that something our mind is conscious of when it is experienced with our physical senses, and, once the object is out of our consciousness it is not real and does not exist" does not make much sense; here we should be concerned with the mass consciousness of the object of the many people encountering the object at different times and not just the consciousness of the object of one person at one moment of time. Wouldn't it be ridiculous to apply this same reasoning and say that John is real/exists as long as others are conscious of him and he would not be real/would not exist when others are not conscious of him? (John might have been forgotten but he is certainly not dead or non-existent.) Can we thus say that reality is the **similar** view, experience or conclusion of all the people who have experienced/observed the same object with their physical senses? This could be one of the many possible interpretations of reality.

2. Conclusion

There have been different interpretations of reality. Maybe they are all valid interpretations when viewed from their respective angles. The moot point is whether reality itself is real or just an invention or creation of the intelligent mind (some may prefer to refer to it as an abstraction or conception of the intelligent mind).