

Call it the search for the "grand unified theory of reality" perhaps, if you want to make fun of my reach. And it isn't easy to explain clearly since all our prior learning is an obstacle to the fundamental but subtle conceptual shift it requires. But once it is understood this is actually a much simpler, "scientifically beautiful" and intuitively smooth explanation than we've previously had.

[Consider for instance, all the absurdly counter-intuitive concepts of what "reality" might be like that have come from quantum physicists. Take as an example the "many worlds" solution, where it was asserted that at *each* quantum measurement *all* potential outcomes are realized and multiple universes branch off to continue on, one for each of the outcomes. That's billions and billions of universes as Carl might have said.]

We might explain the [proposed] new model like this:

What we call reality (reality-as-experienced) is "assembled" from perceptions.

Perceptions are "assembled" from the various structural changes the brain undergoes during cognitive activity.

Cognitive action, at its lowest level of complexity, is a sensori-motor "coupling" with "*latent reality*" (the same "latent reality" for all).

This "coupling" is much like a quantum measurement, wherein *some* latent characteristics are made manifest, while others are left latent, or even rendered *unknowable* by virtue of our action. Conversely, this measurement produces changes in the "equipment" doing the measuring -- i.e., our cognitive processes -- which is how we "register" this experience in the brain.

Important: the "latent reality" is like pre-measured quanta in that it has *no* finite characteristics until it is engaged via the sensori-motor process.

Shared "experiential reality" is at the top of the complexity chain, the product of all our biological and intellectual processes in interaction, while "latent reality" at its bottom, nothing but unstructured potential waiting to be realized (like chaos in need of an attractor -- i.e. cognition).

You might say this theory accepts the most troublesome discovery of quantum physics as it's fundamental premise and rethinks and re-explains our intuitive understanding of reality in that light.

Note that many of these terms, "assembled" and "registered" particularly, are only conveniently understandable words for something which actually has no "subjects" or "objects" but consists entirely of processes and sub-processes, emergent and enactive, which cannot be isolated from the over all system.

Also there is no need to distinguish between "mental" and "physical" experience, or "real" and "imagined" experience, because all are essentially the same cognitive process which senses and creates structural changes interactively and seamlessly.

And perhaps most importantly, note that differences in the cognitive process yields differences in reality-as-experienced.

The flow and pattern we detect in our experience (indeed, the very "we" which detects it) emerges from this cognitive process.

With reference to the model above, it seems obvious to me (i'm sorry if i haven't made it this obvious in my explanation, but this is a difficult concept to convey), that "reality-as-experienced" is as much a product of our imaginations as it is the product of what we usually refer to as our senses. In fact, i would say that it is our imaginations (sitting at the very top of the bio-complexity chain) which do the "assembly". So to enrich experiential reality to its fullest potential requires a fully extended and operational imagination as well as fully extended and operational senses, so as to transform into experience — to realize — as much of the "latent reality" as possible [within our species' limitations].

And it should be obvious to anyone reading this that it is our imaginations which are the most likely restriction in this process since it is the sense we have most control over.

No, there are no errors in our encounter with "latent reality", only differences in the cognitive processes (which include the imagination) which yield differences in the structural changes and differences in perception, etc. finally ending in differences in the *personal* reality-as-experienced which then affects the degree to which we can enter into a *shared* reality-as-experienced.

These differences are most obvious, of course, from species to species, but also vary within species.

So ultimately, reality-as-experienced is both personal and shared:

Personal in that we all "assemble" our own from our interaction with the same "latent reality".

Shared because to the degree our cognitive processes are identical, our reality-as-experienced will be identical because we are encountering the same "latent reality" (producing the same raw materials for "assembly").

The question of what is "in our heads" or "out there" becomes an arbitrary matter of where one places the line, and therefore ultimately meaningless, since it is all one seamless process.

Our cognitive processes are producing our reality-as-experienced flawlessly. Any discrepancies between our personal reality-as-experienced and that of others may result in a more limited shared reality, or it may not. Either way, it is no longer a matter of comparison to some given standard, but to a common experience which can be altered, certainly by evolution, but perhaps even by enlightened direct action.

The real question is no longer "illusion or reality?" but "to what degree can we share that reality-as-experienced with others?" And that is simply a matter of how much agreement there is between *our* personal reality-as-experienced and that of all others.

The big question for surrealism then becomes: to what degree can we integrate everyone's imagination into an enhanced shared reality.

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