

The Meaning of Meaning in the Context of Reality

What is the meaning of meaning in the context of the universe. Does existence have value? What matters to Reality itself? Maybe nothing has meaning. Maybe nothing has value. Maybe nothing matters to Reality. Maybe we are just a roll of the dice that is no different than any other roll. To exist or not to exist - who cares? Why does it matter? Who is to say that any outcome is better than any other outcome? What does "better" even mean?

Does humanity just exist for no reason at all. Does it matter what I do with my life? Who is to say what is right and what is wrong? What does it mean for anything to matter. What makes something better than something else? Is survival really better than extinction? Wouldn't the world be better off if humans went extinct? Why should we care about what the Truth is? Who is to say what's important? Does importance even exist in the context of the universe? Why should we even ask why? What is it that wants to know? Is there value in knowing anything? Does Reality care if I exist? What does Reality want me to do?

What is knowledge? What is thought? Do I have free will? Do I have agency? Or - am I just a puppet in a deterministic universe acting out a script that has already been written? Is Reality itself real? Or are we just an app running on someone's cell phone in a higher plane of existence? Maybe this is just a dream? Maybe I'm just part of someone else's dream? Maybe I'm a brain in a vat? Maybe I'm just running code? Maybe the space aliens are controlling my mind?

What is this place? Why am I here? What am I supposed to do? Why am I alive? What is life? What does it mean to be aware - or not aware? Who are these other people who share existence with me? Are they like me. Should I care about them? Should they care about me?

And the biggest question of all. How did I end up in a world where I, Marc Perkel, own the Registered Trademark to the word REALITY and isn't that just a little sad?

So how do we answer these questions? Let's start with Reality itself. Let's start looking at the world and seeing what's going on.

The important question is - What does Reality Want?

Whatever this universe we live in is - this is Reality to us. So if this is a simulation and we are part of that simulation - then this is still our Reality. If we are a brain in a vat this is still reality to us. So if the universe isn't real then neither are we. So let's assume Reality is real. The question now is - what does Reality want? What is Reality itself trying to do?

At this point you might be questioning the question "What does Reality want to do?", because Reality itself doesn't have a brain and without a brain, or other information processing unit, the term "want" is meaningless. However human language is sometimes imprecise and humans tend to personify. What we are really talking about is the nature of the thing. Examples of this would be, "An apple wants to fall to the ground." "Plants want to grow towards the sun." We are really talking about natural laws and not something desiring something, which is a different kind of want.

Ever since the Big Bang Reality has been evolving. Starting out as pure energy and then forming particles, then atoms, then stars, then heavier elements, then planets, then life, and eventually us. As the evolutionary process continues the universe becomes more complex. In isolated areas such as here on this planet the universe has become very complex.

We are the mechanism through which Reality contemplates its own existence.

Evolution can be looked at as a rather simple process. Evolution is randomness that selects on survivability. That which survives is here, that which doesn't survive is not here. This simple process however created us and we have evolved to the point where we are beginning to be able to understand and contemplate the very processes that created us. Since we are a product of Reality evolving then we are the part of Reality that allows Reality to contemplate its own existence. Reality contemplates itself through us.

To understand understanding, we have to figure out what is doing the understanding. What is it that understands? What is it that is understood? The simple answer is, "I understand. It is me that's doing the understanding." in some contexts that answer is sufficient. But if you get more specific, isn't it the brain that understands? Isn't the body more of a biological robot that carries the brain around and supports it's functioning?

I think - therefore I am - a complex network of nerve cells forming a biological computer.

But that answer is too simplistic. The brain is a collection of nerve cells. So is it the nerve cells that understand? Not hardly. A nerve cell isn't complex enough to understand anything. It's really the collection of nerve cells forming a network that forms a biological computer that makes up our awareness and gives us agency. But - does that tell the whole story?

Consider this. A child is raised on a desert island where there are no other humans. Let's say the child is raised by wolves. What is that child's experience of Reality going to be like? What is that person going to understand? Not a whole lot. That person's existence would be about the same as any other animal. If the child were adopted by a tribe of chimpanzees the child's experience would be a little better, because the child is part of a group. As a group - even a group of chimps - individuals have the collective knowledge of the tribe.

I think therefore I am. vs We think therefore we are.

Although we as individuals have understanding, how much of what we know is actually known by us individually rather than collectively? Do I know that the universe is 13.8 billion years old, or do WE know the universe is 13.8 billion years old. And if there are things that WE know rather than I know - what is the mechanism of collective understanding?

Just like our brains are a collection of neurons forming a biological computer, humans are more like individual computers forming a computer network. The internet as a computer network is a model that reflects in many ways how humans organize in societies and it helps us understand the function of society in collective understanding.