

Some questions I had (maybe answered in previous weeks!):

- Why care about the philosophy of virtual reality? (What makes philosophy of x something to care about? Why is there no philosophy of air conditioning or steam engines or wheels or other useful inventions? Is philosophy of Facebook friendship a good topic? Is philosophy of TikTok a good topic?)
- Is the book about something possibly eventually existing (VR we can plug into) or only about the simulation argument?
- Does Chalmers make the case that simulated reality is real according to his criterion? Or at least does he make it seem initially plausible?
- Why or why not does Sherlock Holmes come out as real per Chalmers's definitions?
- Is the quantum mechanics---its-from-bits analogy good?
- Why is "perfect" simulation so necessary?
- Is that a problem?
- Which is the best view of reality?
- "What could make a being worthy of worship, and why?"

Chapter 6: What is reality?

"virtual realism is the thesis that virtual reality is genuine reality, with emphasis especially on the view that virtual objects are real and not an illusion"

"simulation realism: If we're in a simulation, the objects around us are real and not an illusion."

(Question for you and Chalmers: imagine we're sims. A guy comes, hits us over the head, and plugs us into a sim exactly like our (sim) life. What if anything has he done wrong?)

"virtual digitalism. Virtual digitalism says that objects in virtual reality are digital objects—roughly speaking, structures of binary information, or bits."

Reality, a reality, etc.

"reality as an entity, we mean something like everything that exists: the entire cosmos"

“a reality, we mean something like a world. When we talk about realities plural, we mean worlds. When we talk about a virtual reality, we mean roughly a virtual world. A world is roughly equivalent to a universe: a complete interconnected physical or virtual space.”

“reality ... the property of being real”

The Reality+ view:

“reality contains many realities, and those realities are real. Or more mundanely: the cosmos (everything that exists) contains many worlds (physical and virtual spaces), and the objects in those worlds are real.”

but what is "real"?

- Reality as existence (Biden vs Santa Claus. But what is existence?)
- Reality as causal power (numbers?)
- Reality as mind-independence (social constructs? thoughts?)
- Reality as non-illusoriness--things are roughly as they seem (does gravity seem like space-time curvature? Does the meaning of life seem like whatever it is?)
- Reality as genuineness (To be real=>to be a real X)

Is simulated reality real?

(A simulated tree is an existing digital object; it produces leaves (?); the doesn't depend on the mind--"in principle the true could continue to exist as a digital object"; it is as it seems to be (because of ... reasons?); are they real xs? "If I've lived my whole life in a simulation, every real flower I experience has been digital all along.")

Another def of simulation realism:

“If we’re in a *perfect* simulation, the objects around us are real and not an illusion”

“if we’re in a perfect simulation, then some things aren’t exactly as they seem. Some of what we believe will be wrong. Most people believe that they’re not in a simulation. They believe that flowers are not digital. They may believe that their universe is the ultimate reality. If we’re in a simulation, those beliefs will be wrong. But the undermined beliefs here are mostly scientific or philosophical beliefs about reality. Undermining them does not undermine everyday beliefs such as There are flowers blooming in the garden.”

So easy?

“Science has taught us that there’s much more to reality than initially seems to be the case. For millennia, we didn’t know that cats and dogs and trees are made of cells, let alone that the cells are made of atoms or that those are fundamentally quantum mechanical. Yet these discoveries about the nature of cats and dogs and trees have not undermined their reality.

If I’m right, the discovery that we’re in a simulation should be treated the same way. It will be a discovery about the underlying nature of cats and dogs and trees—that they spring from digital processes—but it won’t undermine their reality.

“Importantly, I’m not saying in an unqualified way that a simulated tree is the same as a real tree. I’ve said that if we’re in a ***perfect permanent*** simulation, then the real trees of our universe are simulated trees—that is, real trees have been digital trees all along. On the other hand, if we’re not in such a simulation and are merely looking at one from the outside, then the trees in the simulation are completely different from the trees in our outside world: Simulated trees are digital; real trees are not.” (my emph)

So...reality depends on ... how much time we've spent in a simulator. If we leave a perfect simulator, reality changes

“the simulation hypothesis is not a skeptical hypothesis in which nothing exists. Instead it is a metaphysical hypothesis, a hypothesis about the nature of reality. It’s equivalent to a metaphysical hypothesis (the creation hypothesis) about how our world was created, plus a separate metaphysical hypothesis (the it-from-bit hypothesis) about what underlies reality in our world. If the simulation hypothesis is right, the physical world is made of bits, and a creator created the physical world by arranging those bits.”

Chapter 7: God

If the simulation hypothesis is true and we’re in a simulated world, then the creator of the simulation is our god.

What follows from this?

God

creator ✓ ish—not the whole world.

all-powerful not quite

all-knowing depends on software

all-good nah

“The godliness of simulators will also be limited in another way. The simulator might be the creator of our universe—but not of the entire cosmos.”

Arguments for God's existence

(Why do we need arguments if we know ourselves to be in a simulator?)

Ontological. Imagine designing a character in an RPG Speed: 100, Strength: 100, Skill: 100, Existence: ... 100!

Cosmological. Everything we know of has a cause, so there must be something else we don't know that doesn't, other not everything would have a cause or the chain of causation would go on forever.

Argument from design

Simulation argument?

"Might the simulation argument then be the most powerful argument for the existence of God?"

“1. A few top-level populations will each create many populations.

2. If a few top-level populations each create many populations, then most intelligent beings are created.

3. If most intelligent beings are created, we are probably created.

_____ 4. So: We are probably created”

“The simulation route leads to a distinctive sort of god. The simulator is a natural god, one who is part of nature.”

Simulation Theology

“Simulation theology is the study of the nature of the simulator-as-God from the point of view of those within the simulation”

“We can reason about the character of our simulator by reasoning about what sort of simulations will be most likely to emerge in the history of the cosmos.”

“Is the simulator probably humanlike, or some sort of artificial intelligence? Is the simulator running the simulation for entertainment? For science? For decision-making? For historical analysis?”

“For example, we might wonder whether our simulator is more likely to be a biological or quasi-biological entity in its own universe, or something more like an artificially intelligent system or perhaps a simulated being that inhabits its own simulation. At least in our world, it seems probable that in the long run, AI systems will be both much faster and much more capable than biological systems. If so, we can expect that AI systems will produce many more simulations than biological systems. It seems not unreasonable that the same may apply throughout the cosmos. If so, we should expect our simulator to be an AI system and not a biological or a quasi-biological system.”

“...we should take seriously the possibility that our creator is ignoring us.” (because it’s simultaneously simulating many worlds)

Should we worship our simulator? It’s hard to see why...find myself thinking that even if our simulator is our creator, is all-powerful, is all-knowing, and is all-good, I still don’t think of her as a god. The reason is that the simulator is not worthy of worship. And to be a god in the genuine sense, one must be worthy of worship.