

# Ask Aristotle ... on Metaphysics!

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*Q: "How can you answer the [statement] "one cannot prove the existence of the world, it is wrong to even try."*

**A: You may be a little surprised at the answer to this question. The statement is actually true, but not for the reasons usually associated with the cynics who make the claim. You can certainly object to the implicit meaning of the statement, which amounts to "the world is unknowable and it is wrong for you to even think that what you think you see is actually real." Worded this way, the statement is completely wrong.**

**The key to answering this question is to understand what constitutes proof. According to Objectivism, proof of something requires antecedent knowledge on which all other knowledge must rest. But knowledge cannot be reduced ad infinitum. One must recognize a starting point upon which all knowledge must rest. In Objectivism, these are referred to as the basic axioms. Axiomatic concepts are that which all proofs must rest upon. There is no prior knowledge to axioms. These can only be validated, not proven. They are validated by the fact that they are self-evident.**

**The basic axioms are; existence exists, existence has identity, and consciousness is valid. And for a validation of these, I refer you to Leonard Peikoff's book, Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand, where he discusses and validates these in the very first chapter.**

**After grasping these axioms and understanding how they are validated, it becomes self evident that reality is indeed knowable and that what you actually do see actually is real.**

**Your Friend in Reason,  
Aristotle**

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*Q: "Why are only some people blessed with the companionship of a perfect bear?"*

**A: Because I am finite and limited.**

**Your Friend in Reason,  
Aristotle**

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*Q: "Dear bear-nevolent Aristotle: Correct me if I am wrong. I gather that while existence exists, reality is what I perceive as existence around me. If my perception of existence is correct, my reality is an identical reflection of existence. But if my perception is impaired, my reality is*

*flawed. From the above I make two conclusions: - reality is different for each person; - almost all through Objectivist literature and talks, the word reality should be replaced by the word existence."*

**A: Reality is that which exists. The two words can be used interchangeably. The fact that one's perception can be flawed does not mean that reality is different for each person. If what you perceive does not exist, then it is not real. In such a case, it is not reality that is flawed, it is your consciousness that is flawed. Just like Mr. Spock says in one of the Star Trek movies, "Nothing unreal exists."**

*[Follow-Up Question...] Thank you, Aristotle. Your answer is sufficient if you just state that Reality and Existence is one and the same thing. If this is a matter of definition, I cannot make an argument and any further explanations are superfluous. I will have to pay more attention when I do my further reading (or cassette listening). I still have the impression that Ayn Rand discerned between the two. If I ever see such a quote, I will come back to you. And [then] again, why would Ayn Rand, who was so precise and economical with words, use two words for the same thing? I do not expect that from her.*

**If you have not already done so, buy "The Ayn Rand Lexicon." When you look up the work 'reality' it says "see Existence." When you go to 'existence,' the second quote by Ayn Rand is "Reality is that which exists." Yes, Ayn Rand is very economical and precise with her words, but that does not mean she did not recognize the fact that synonyms exist (are real).**

**Aristotle**