

Duquesne University

Duquesne Scholarship Collection

Hallowed Secularism

The Collective Works of Bruce Ledewitz, Adrian
Van Kaam C.S.Sp. Endowed Chair in Scholarly
Excellence and Professor of Law

1-5-2010

January 5, 2010: Is the World Real?

Bruce Ledewitz

Duquesne University, ledewitz@duq.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism>



Part of the [Constitutional Law Commons](#), and the [Law and Philosophy Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Ledewitz, B. (2010). January 5, 2010: Is the World Real?. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/375>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Collective Works of Bruce Ledewitz, Adrian Van Kaam C.S.Sp. Endowed Chair in Scholarly Excellence and Professor of Law at Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Hallowed Secularism by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection. For more information, please contact beharyr@duq.edu.

Title: Is the World Real?

Date: 2010-01-05T19:01:00.002-05:00

1/5/2009—Defenders of religion, even atheists like myself, often face the criticism that religion is unreal and thus untrue. God does not exist and neither do any other supernatural entities. For that matter, spiritual experiences in general are derided as purely subjective. A strictly materialist account of the world is fostered by some of these critics. This is said to be a scientific attitude. Imagine my amazement, then, in learning from Manjit Kumar's book, *Quantum: Einstein, Bohr and the Great Debate about the Nature of Reality*, just what the implications were in the disagreement over the meaning of quantum physics between Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr in the 1920's. Bohr maintained that at the subatomic level, roughly the level of electrons, entities could not be said to exist until they were measured. In contrast, Einstein maintained the classical view that there existed an observer-independent reality, whether we could have direct access to it or not. Bohr's position is not so different from wondering whether the world disappears whenever you go to sleep or turn your back. And one can well understand Einstein's hesitancy. But, since all matter is made up of subatomic particles, what does it mean to say that they do not exist until they are measured? It raises the question of what is real, and whether the word "real" itself has any meaning at all. What is materialism in such a world?