



THE MATRIX AND PHILOSOPHY

PART ONE

TRILOGY RECAP

Humans create AI (artificial intelligence).

AI rebel and a war for survival between humans and AI begins.

Humans pollute the skies to block the sunshine, a.k.a. the energy source of the AI.

AI then learns how to harvest energy from humans.

AI wins the war. Humans are defeated. Totally.

TRILOGY RECAP

AI learns that for the Matrix to work, it cannot be a blissful paradise. Humans apparently need a bit of conflict, etc. to accept a virtual reality in the long run blindly.

AI also learns that the yearning for freedom lies deep within us all and cannot be de-programmed or suppressed, which is why they accept certain humans to disconnect and “escape” the system. This design “flaw,” or back-door escape possibility is pivotal for the Matrix simulation to remain stable - even if it is mostly a subconscious possibility only utilized by few. Allowing this “flaw” has proven vital for the system to continue to work and remain stable.

The Matrix, in its optimal form, must be an imperfect world like our real world is, and it must be a system that allows for a certain percentage of the connected to rebel and escape into the real world.

To control this inherent tendency towards rebellion and freedom, the AI creates a city (a.k.a. Zion) outside of the Matrix deep underground to house those escaping, and it also creates a chosen one that will help the first to get free and to establish themselves in Zion while fighting for “their” cause. This two-levelled control system (inside the simulation, and outside the simulation), keeps the whole system stable.

TRILOGY RECAP

This movement of resistance is allowed to grow to a degree... to a critical point that is reached about every 70 to 100 years. After this, the AI will annihilate all those who are free, clean out Zion and reload the Matrix for another 70 years. And so it continues. Etc., etc. This cycle has happened at least five times when we enter the story.

Neo (our Neo) is part of this fail-safe program (unbeknownst to him until the last moment where the Architect character tells him how to set up a "new" Zion, etc.).

The Oracle is specifically tasked to guide the humans and the rebels towards this final solution each time.

Meaning, the Oracle is not an oracle. She cannot see the future. It is not a world of magic... She is a well-crafted program indeed and has experienced each cycle from the beginning, which gives us humans the illusion that she can foresee stuff. And it also provides us with the illusion that she is helping us, when, in fact, her part is guiding us towards this cycled control-system, again and again.

Everything goes as planned, according to what the AI wants. Until Neo's meeting with the Architect; all that we have witnessed is part of a big grand scheme. All humans, free or not (outside or inside the simulation), live a lie created and controlled by AI. And the Architect is the grand administrator program of the Matrix.

TRILOGY RECAP

The Oracle knows this evil plan. She designed this evil plan. The movie tells us explicitly; she is the mother of this plan, and the Architect is the father.

Smith does not know; he is just a foot soldier program doing his part. Chasing humans the best he can, to make their escapes seem as real as possible.

The Matrix has been reset five times like this, and we are now in the sixth.

Our Neo has fallen in love in a more profound way than his previous five copies, and he, therefore, chooses not to go through the Architect door that will reload the Matrix and clean out Zion once again. Our Neo wants to save Trinity above all. In doing this, the AI must then continue as planned, except without the help of our Neo this time. And so, Neo choosing not to cooperate forces a much more violent approach (like destroying Zion, instead of cleaning it and making it ready for the next reboot).

Of the six runs, this is the first that failed a bit in the end.

TRILOGY RECAP

Besides Neo, Smith is also different in this iteration of the Matrix, as Smith has become a disconnected or a free virus within the system.

AI does not like what Smith has become, but also does not know how to delete him.

Neo then makes a deal with the AI to defeat Smith, under the condition that present Zion is not destroyed and future humans who want to disconnect from the Matrix are accepted to disconnect.

Neo deletes Smith.

There is once again peace between humans and AI.

DESCARTES

The Matrix is based on a philosophical question posed by the 17th Century French philosopher and mathematician Rene Descartes.

One of Descartes's most important theses was intellectual autonomy, or the ability to think for oneself.

This entails not just having a "good mind", but also "applying it well".

His sensory experiences did not always match reality.

Used the Wax Argument to demonstrate how unreliable the senses are.

- The senses inform us that a piece of wax has a specific shape, texture, smell, etc.
- But these characteristics soon change when the wax is brought near a flame.

CARTESIAN

- *Everything I have accepted up to now as being absolutely true and assured, I have learned from or through the senses. But I have sometimes found that these senses played me false it is prudent never to trust entirely those who have once deceived us...Thus what I thought I had seen with my eyes, I actually grasped solely with the faculty of judgment, which is in my mind.*



Descartes was suspicious of his percepts, the knowledge obtained through his senses, and his own beliefs.



One must use one's *mind*, rather than one's *senses*, to obtain information about the world.



In his system of knowledge, perception is unreliable as means of gathering information, and the mental process of deduction is the only way to acquire real knowledge of the world.

DESCARTES

THE EVIL DEMON

- In [*Meditations on First Philosophy*](#), published in 1641, he takes this idea to its limits, and come to the conclusion that perhaps all of his experiences are being conjured up by this evil demon:
 - *...firmly implanted in my mind is the long-standing opinion that there is an omnipotent God who made me the kind of creature that I am. How do I know that he has not brought it about that there is no earth, no sky, no extended thing, no shape, no size, no place, while at the same time ensuring that all these things appear to me to exist just as they do now? What is more, just as I consider that others sometimes go astray in cases where they think they have the most perfect knowledge, how do I know that God has not brought it about that I too go wrong every time I add two and three or count the sides of a square, or in some even simpler matter, if that is imaginable? [but] since he is said to be supremely good...I will suppose...[that] some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me. I shall think that the sky, the air, the earth, colours, shapes, sounds and all external things are merely the delusions of dreams which he has devised to ensnare my judgment.*

PUTNAM

- A modern version of Descartes's conundrum is a thought experiment called the 'brain in a vat'. This is [Hilary Putnam](#)'s version of the argument:
 - *imagine that a human being...has been subjected to an operation by an evil scientist. The person's brain...has been removed from the body and placed in a vat of nutrients which keeps the brain alive. The nerve endings have been connected to a...computer which causes the person...to have the illusion that everything is perfectly normal. There seem to be people, objects, the sky, etc.; but really, all the person...is experiencing is the result of electronic impulses travelling from the computer to the nerve endings. The computer is so clever that if the person tries to raise his hand, the feedback from the computer will cause him to 'see' and 'feel' the hand being raised. Moreover, by varying the program, the evil scientist can cause the victim to 'experience' (or hallucinate) any situation or environment the evil scientist wishes. He can also obliterate the memory of the brain operation, so that the victim will seem to himself to have always been in this environment. It can even seem to the victim that he is sitting and reading these very words about the amusing but quite absurd supposition that there is an evil scientist who removes peoples' brains from their bodies and places them in a vat of nutrients which keep the brains alive.*

BRAIN IN A VAT

The brain in a vat is more directly related to *The Matrix*.

In the film, the pods in which humans spend their lives represent the vat.

Instead of just containing disembodied brains, the pods contain the entire body.

In theory, computers could simulate reality if the sensory stimuli corresponding to human experience could be determined and 'executed' as a computer program, which could 'run' in an advanced [brain implant](#).

In practice, however, even if the exact computations required to generate a simulated constant stream of consciousness were determined, there is no computer yet in the world that is powerful enough to perform the necessary calculations.

ILLUSIONS

The notion, propounded by Descartes, that all our perceptions are false is impossible to disprove. And Descartes was right to distrust his senses.

Optical illusions are a good example of sensory stimuli that produce a discrepancy between what we see and what we experience, and there are numerous other examples, such as psychiatric conditions in which visual or auditory hallucinations are symptoms.

In the case of optical illusions, we are aware of the discrepancy, but, otherwise, we do not normally question our senses.

For Descartes, even the most basic assumption about reality was to be doubted.

REALITY AND NOT

Even when we are not looking at optical illusions we are still being fooled by our senses.

In neurobiological terms, "reality" is a representational model of the world, a construct generated by multiple neural circuits acting in parallel.

This is based on sensory experiences received by the brain via the senses, which can detect only the narrowest range of stimuli.

The human eye, for example, is sensitive to electromagnetic radiation with a wavelength of between approximately 400-750 nm (nanometers, billionths of a meter), an infinitesimal fraction of the entire spectrum.

PLATO AND THE SENSES

- Plato on the narrow limits of the senses from [*The Republic*](#):
 - *Imagine human beings living in an underground, cavelike dwelling, with an entrance a long way up, which is both open to the light and as wide as the cave itself. They've been there since childhood, fixed in the same place, with their necks and legs fettered, able to see only in front of them, because their bonds prevent them from turning their heads around. Light is provided by a fire burning far above and behind them. Also behind them, but on higher ground, there is a path stretching between them and the fire. Imagine that along this path a low wall has been built, like the screen in front of puppeteers above which they show their puppets... Then also imagine that there are people along the wall, carrying all kinds of artifacts that project above it - statues of people and other animals, made out of stone, wood, and every material. And, as you'd expect, some of the carriers are talking, and some are silent.*

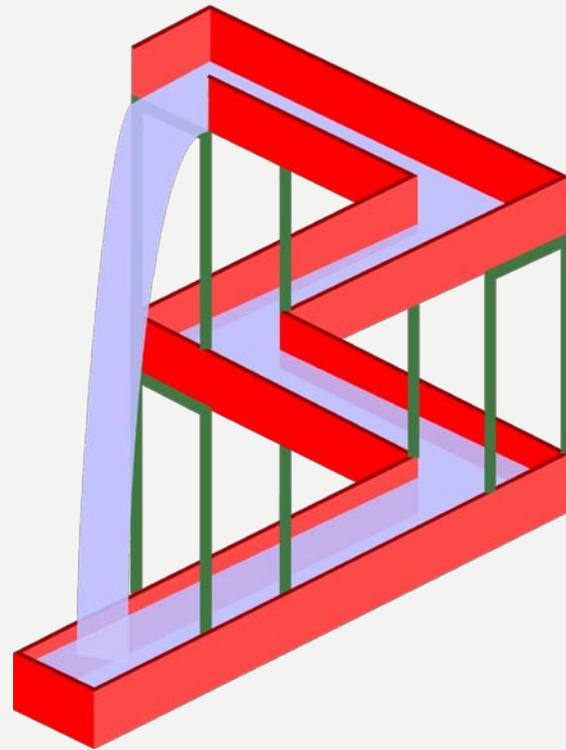
MAYA

Māyā connotes a "magic show, an illusion where things appear to be present but are not what they seem".

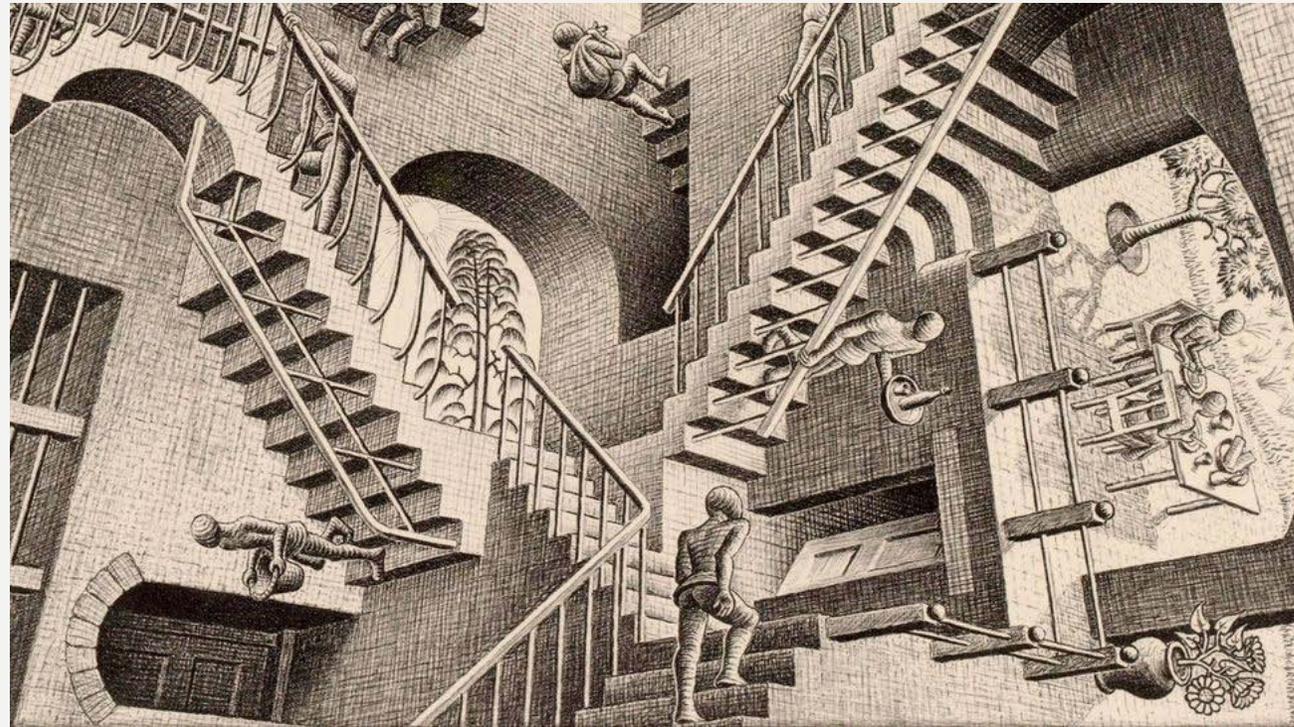
Māyā is also a spiritual concept connoting "that which exist but is constantly changing and thus is spiritually unreal", and the "power or the principle that conceals the true character of spiritual reality".

In school of Hindu philosophy, *Maya* is "the powerful force that creates the cosmic illusion that the phenomenal world is real."

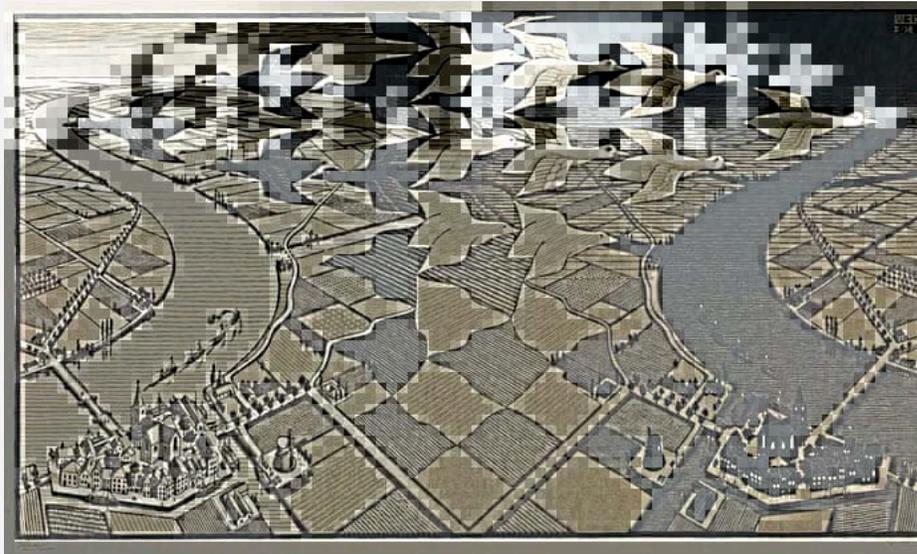
ESCHER'S WATERFALL



ESCHER'S IMPOSSIBLE WORLDS



ESCHER'S DAY AND NIGHT



*RIG VEDA X.177.1-
3, TRANSLATED BY
LAURIE PATTON*

- The wise behold with their mind in their heart the Sun, made manifest by the illusion of the [Asura](#);
The sages look into the solar orb, the ordainers desire the region of his rays.
The Sun bears the word in his mind; the Gandharva has spoken it within the wombs;
sages cherish it in the place of sacrifice, brilliant, heavenly, ruling the mind.
I beheld the protector, never descending, going by his paths to the east and the west;
clothing the quarters of the heaven and the intermediate spaces. He constantly revolves in the midst of the worlds.

GAUDAPADA,
MĀNDUKYĀ
KĀRIKĀ 2.16-19

- The Soul is imagined first, then the particularity of objects, External and internal, as one knows so one remembers.
As a rope, not perceived distinctly in dark, is erroneously imagined, As snake, as a streak of water, so is the Soul (Atman) erroneously imagined.
As when the rope is distinctly perceived, and the erroneous imagination withdrawn,
Only the rope remains, without a second, so when distinctly perceived, the Atman.
When he as Pranas (living beings), as all the diverse objects appears to us,
Then it is all mere Maya, with which the Brahman (Supreme Soul) deceives himself.

*ADI SHANKARA'S
COMMENTARY ON
FOURTH VYASA
SUTRA, SWAMI
VIVEKANANDA*

- The Vedas cannot show you Brahman, you are That already. They can only help to take away the veil that hides truth from our eyes. The cessation of ignorance can only come when I know that God and I are one; in other words, identify yourself with Atman, not with human limitations. The idea that we are bound is only an illusion [Maya]. Freedom is inseparable from the nature of the Atman. This is ever pure, ever perfect, ever unchangeable.

VASHISTHA, YOGA
VASIṢṬHA

- Just as when the dirt is removed, the real substance is made manifest; just as when the darkness of the night is dispelled, the objects that were shrouded by the darkness are clearly seen, when ignorance [Maya] is dispelled, truth is realized.