

Matrix Reloaded Explained

The Matrix Explained

1 The Matrix: Reloaded Explained.....	1
1.1 Contents.....	1
2 Forward on disobedience.....	3
3 Foundation of criticism.....	5
4 The Architect.....	7
5 The rave scene.....	11
6 The Oracle.....	13
7 Agent Smith.....	15
8 Story arc.....	19
9 Matrix: Revolutions Explained.....	21
9.1 Contents.....	21
10 Forward on Motivations.....	23
11 Neo's Ascension.....	25
11.1 Post-mortem.....	27
12 The Yin and Yang of Neo.....	31
12.1 The Quest for the Grail.....	31
12.2 The Serpent and the Christ.....	32
13 The Merovingian and Club Hel.....	35
14 The Mobil Avenue Station and the Program Family.....	37
14.1 Post-ascendere.....	39
15 The Oracle, the Architect, and Sati.....	41
16 The Four Ages of the Matrix.....	45
16.1 Nirvana.....	45
16.2 The Perfect Garden.....	46
16.3 The Wasteland.....	47
17 The Seven Incarnations of Neo.....	49
17.1 Concerning the 6th Incarnation.....	49
17.2 THE BIOPORT.....	52
17.3 THE RED PILL.....	53
17.4 THE POWER PLANT.....	55
17.5 ENTERING AND EXITING THE MATRIX.....	55
17.6 HARD LINES.....	57

The Matrix Explained

17 The Seven Incarnations of Neo

17.7 THE BUGBOT	59
17.8 PERCEPTIONS IN THE MATRIX	59
17.9 NEO'S MASTERY OF THE AVATAR	60
17.10 CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE MATRIX	61
17.11 Naming convention.....	66
17.12 Matrix and Meta–Matrix.....	67
17.13 Baudrillard's Hyperreality.....	68
17.14 Small clues.....	69
17.15 Hacking the Meta–Matrix.....	69
17.16 Agent Smith partly uploaded to the Meta–Matrix.....	70
17.17 Why people look the same in the Matrix and the Meta–Matrix.....	73
17.18 Two matrices, one architect?.....	74
17.19 Flying: the Superman thing.....	75
17.20 Telekinesis in the Matrix.....	78
17.21 Vampires, werewolves, and an angel.....	79
17.22 Hacking the Matrix network.....	80
17.23 Dodging bullets.....	83
17.24 Virtual food, real effects.....	83
17.25 Free will: A human privilege.....	85
17.26 Telling the future: Strategic programs?.....	87
17.27 Purpose: A problem for humans and machines.....	90
17.28 The Mother of the Matrix: Who, and what, is she?.....	91
17.29 The Merovingian.....	92
17.30 The Architect's speech.....	93
17.31 The Architect's monitors.....	97
17.32 Reality.....	98
17.33 Acknowledgement.....	99
17.34 Postscript.....	99
17.35 Is it real or Matrix? How the simulation works.....	66

18 THE MATRIX.....	183
--------------------	-----

19 MATRIX RELOADED.....	215
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20 THE MATRIX REVOLUTIONS.....	249
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1 The Matrix: Reloaded Explained

What follows below is a comparative–literature–style exegesis of selected parts of Matrix Reloaded. My basic thesis is that Matrix Reloaded is a story about Genesis. Not the creation story. I mean the transcendence story that comes immediately after the creation story, in which the serpent, who is Loki the Inventor God, who is Neo, leads humanity from the Garden into Middle Earth. (I have a sneaking suspicion the three–movie arc is going to be about machine evolution as well.)

1.1 Contents

- Forward on disobedience (*2.01*)
 - Foundation of criticism
 - The Architect (*rewritten for 2.0*)
 - The rave scene
 - The Oracle
 - Agent Smith
 - The story arc
 - Reader comments (*1.6.5, completely revised*)
 - Reader arguments (*1.6.5*)
-

2 Forward on disobedience

"I am not a number! I am a free man!"

— Number 6, *The Prisoner*

"Afterward, I knew the rules, I understood what I was supposed to do, but I didn't. I couldn't. I was compelled to stay, compelled to disobey."

— Agent Smith, *The Matrix: Reloaded*

Thomas Anderson was a disobedient fellow. He was frequently late for work. He didn't do as he was told. He had a problem with authority. Fans of the first Matrix film identified with Thomas Anderson because of that rebelliousness. We all grinned when Thomas Anderson offered to give Agent Smith "the finger" in the interrogation room.

So let's imagine for a moment that our boy Tom had done what was expected of him. Suppose after being scolded by his manager, Tom learned his lesson, went back to his cubicle, and conformed. Not much of a story. There's Tom, working as he should in his cubicle. The end. Tom just became part of the machine.

As luck would have it, Mr. Anderson is compelled to disobey and we have a story after all. But it is not just about having a story. Not hardly. It is really about choice, which is what Neo realizes in the Architect's chamber. When you get down to it, there are only two fundamental choices: you can choose to be robot or you can choose to be human; asleep or awake; dead or alive. Someone will always be telling you what to do. The robot, tin-chested and lifeless, does what he is told. The robot obeys. The human being *disobeys*. The human being gives Agent Smith the finger. The human being eats the apple.

The Architect gave Neo the same two choices. Neo chose not to be part of the machinery of the Matrix any longer. After that he was free.

My secret belief is that moments after Neo left the Architect's chamber, the Architect did a touchdown dance.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

3 Foundation of criticism

I am really displeased by all the "liar" commentary that has sprung up about this movie. For some reason, people find it easier to conclude that the characters in the movie are all trying to deceive each other, and that the film-makers are trying to deceive the audience, than to come up with a coherent analysis of the movie. I especially do not like the idea that the audience is being tricked. That is a very poor theory that does not require a criticism that works within the framework of what we see in the story. You see, if we are being tricked, then we can advance any crazy theory we like and no one can argue against it. To make the crazy theory "fit" we just have to keep calling everyone a liar.

Therefore I will take these to be the foundations of my criticism:

1. No one in the movie is "lying." For example, when Agent Smith tells Neo there is a connection between them, there really is.
2. The movies themselves are not lying to the audience. That is, the first movie was not one big lie. Also, the core group's escape from the Matrix to the real world was not a lie. The real world is really real (i.e., the two-Matrix theory is bunk).
3. I am very textually oriented and I believe we can construct a good analysis of the movie based solely on what evidence we can find in the movie itself. Things like "affective" interpretations do not matter much to me (I think affective approaches are not arguable, therefore moot.)
4. Despite that, I do believe that many (good) authors are very intentional with their references and scene choices. Story scenes are there for a reason, not just to fill time or show boobs. So it is with our Wachowski bros. If something is in the movie, I will assume they meant it to be there and are not just being gratuitous.
5. Following on #3, I have tried to disallow *The Animatrix* and *Enter the Matrix* as evidence for any part of this essay. I do not entirely succeed. Cope.

[[Back to contents](#)]

4 The Architect

[BT: Lest anyone think I trashed a perfectly good part of the essay when I rewrote this part, here is the old Architect section.]

So God created man in his own image...And there was evening, and there was morning -- the sixth day.

—Genesis 1:27;31

The Architect is God as we see him in the creation stories of Genesis (there are two creation stories). This God has some particular characteristics. He created earth in six days, then took a break, then commenced taking leisurely evening walks in the Garden of Eden. Well, that is about it for God. Except for one more thing -- he put up a couple of special trees and told the humans not to eat their fruit. They were the forbidden fruits of the Trees of Knowledge and of Life. And so it is with our Architect. He created the Matrix and now sits back in his comfy chair watching everything unfold on his TV sets. Just like God, the Architect cautioned against too much knowledge. Both Gods say, "Here is a perfect world for you to live in. Just don't start thinking too hard about why you're here, or where the rain comes from, or basically how any of this works."

This the Creator God, the Father God. Brahma is a good parallel. Brahma creates the world but does not rule it. Brahma essentially just sits on his lotus flower. He is like the cosmic Clock-maker of the Deists who winds up the springs and then only watches things happen. But in addition to this Brahma-like quality, the Genesis God and the Architect both have this forbiddance against knowledge. And there is also the matter of the serpent.

In the Garden of Eden, everything is taken care of. There is no suffering. Recall Agent Smith from the first film, who said, "the first Matrix was designed to be a perfect human world. Where none suffered. Where everyone would be happy." The Architect confirms this in Reloaded. (There is not a one-to-one correlation between Matrix versions and the Garden -- they are all the Garden from various viewpoints.) The Garden is also timeless, a quality shared by the Matrix. This is a point that has been made extremely well by others, a good example of which appears on the comments page. Just how long has it been 1999 in this version of the Matrix? Nothing ever changes; it's perfect already, so it cannot possibly change. It isn't alive, either, because change is necessary for growth and life. And so we introduce the Tree of Knowledge, which is the exit from the Garden into the field of time. In the Matrix, this exit appears as the taking of the red pill.

There is the serpent, too. It's often overlooked that the serpent was created by God and put into the Garden. It is a mistake to read this with the assumption that the serpent is evil. One (I think good) translation of the adjectives applied to the serpent is "crafty." As in, he has knowledge of crafts. This is really Loki, who is also branded as a deceiver or a trickster, and that's part of his nature, but Loki also brings new technology: he is crafty, an innovator. He is the quintessential hacker [1]. At first I always identified Neo with Loki, but in the first movie I think Morpheus fits the bill better, at least in the beginning. (By the end it's 100% Neo, as it will be for the rest of the trilogy. This is a good fit, too, because Morpheus was the mentor, the guru, that showed Neo the door to enlightenment. After that, Neo surpasses Morpheus.) Either way, the role is the same: "tempting" people with the forbidden fruit -- the red pill -- so that they may exit the Garden into the real world of suffering and the passage of time.

As a small sidenote about this topic, notice how it is only after Neo is first awakened from the Matrix that he gets any sense of what year it really is.

The essential point of the red pill and the "Loki effect" is that, just like in Genesis, both of these things were designed into the Matrix by the Architect. And that puts the Architect's relationship to Neo in a very interesting light.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

There is a stark visual contrast between Neo and the Architect. In their meeting in the Architect's chamber, the Architect is in all white and Neo, well, he looks just like the devil himself in all black. This is a pretty good interpretation. The Architect's Godliness is established, because he created the world. Neo at this point has fully taken on the Loki/serpent role. We are *not* talking about good and evil here. The serpent in the Garden isn't a force of evil. It is a force of change. The serpent is a catalyst, inviting us to think rationally about our surroundings. On one hand, the serpent is responsible for putting events in motion that lead to the invention of agriculture, and so the serpent is the inventor god, i.e., Loki. On the other hand, the very idea of a snake is the most rudimentary image of life (life equals change), and so by "following the serpent" we exit the timeless Garden and descend into the field of time. It is only by leaving the Garden that we can awaken to genuine humanity. It's pretty clear that being in the real world is better than being in the Matrix. It might be harder and dirtier, but at least you are *conscious*.

And so we have Neo positioned as the serpent, acting to subvert the Architect's creation. Thus, Neo is the devil [2]. The important part while we are analyzing the Architect is that he is a devil created by the Architect. On second thought, Neo represents the devil element that was designed into the Matrix by the Architect. (Neo—the-devil may be more a child of the Mother than of the Father.) In other words, God put the devil into the world in order to achieve some greater purpose.

Below are several lines of dialogue from the Architect scene, and I will use them to discover what is really going on with Neo and the Architect. These lines aren't sequential; they're just the ones I want to highlight.

ARCHITECT – You have many questions, and although the process has altered your consciousness, you remain irrevocably human.

I stand by the idea that the Architect *does not lie* during this conversation. He tells us quite directly that Neo is a human being. This should put to rest all theories that Neo is a computer program. It's also very important that we establish Neo as a human being, because the end result depends on it.

ARCHITECT – That [response] was quicker than the others.

ARCHITECT – While the others experienced this [attachment] in a very general way, your experience is far more specific. Vis-a-vis, love.

The translation here is very plain. There have been "others" — other Neos — and this one is different. We have already had this difference demonstrated in the Merovingian scene, but it is confirmed here. The Merovingian makes remarks about how Neo is different than his predecessors, and the Merovingian is quite surprised at the superhuman abilities Neo is able to command. (He does not expect that Neo can win the fight against the minions on the staircase.) The fact that this incarnation is different also means that the previous five all chose the right-hand door.

ARCHITECT – I prefer counting from the emergence of one integral anomaly to the emergence of the next, in which case this is the sixth version.

There have been five previous incarnations of Neo. This is similar to the Hindu god Indra being confronted by the fact that there have been countless previous Indras. It means: you are a part of something greater than yourself. There is also a tremendous significance in the fact that the present Neo is the sixth incarnation.

ARCHITECT – [The Mother] stumbled upon a solution whereby nearly 99.9% of all test subjects accepted the program, as long as they were given a choice.

NEO – Choice. The problem is choice.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

How many times was the idea of choice and free will been raised in Reloaded? Quite a few. It comes down to this moment, and both the Architect and Neo state it clearly. This is about choice. Neo's choice — between the right-hand door or the left-hand door — is a magnified, superconcentrated version of the choice given to all humans connected to the Matrix. Will you accept the world you're given, or will you follow the serpent? This choice is why Neo and the Architect are shown as competing opposites — the God and the devil. They are the embodiment of the two choices.

It is extremely difficult to determine what the Architect expects Neo to do. Most analyses of Reloaded differ at this point. My belief is that the Architect is hoping that Neo chooses the left-hand door [3]. (Yes, this is a complete reversal of my position in previous versions of this essay.) In other words, I am saying (1) that the Architect is hoping for something and (2) the thing he is hoping for is that Neo chooses Trinity. There are several key pieces of evidence for this belief. What tips the scales for me is the "parting shot" from the Architect:

ARCHITECT – Hope. It is the quintessential human delusion, simultaneously the source of your greatest strength, and your greatest weakness.

Why does the Architect say this? Why does he mention the word "hope"? Why didn't he simply say, "So long, dummy?" I think it is because this is a moment of fulfillment for the Architect. He knows his job is finished, because by choosing the left-hand door Neo is going to destroy the Matrix. I thought perhaps by ending on "weakness" the Architect was classifying Neo's choice as a bad one. Not so. Weakness is a state of non-perfection. Human beings are defined by their imperfections, their weaknesses. So this is a statement of liberation from perfection. Neo is breaking free. He is exiting the Garden.

But the Architect is also saying something much more profound than that. Look very carefully at the sentence. The Architect is saying that Neo is *quintessentially human*. That is, Neo has truly transcended his boundaries by choosing Trinity. He has genuinely exercised free will. And that leads to the most incredible part of the relationship between the Architect and Neo.

Neo #6 is the creation of man on the sixth day. A creation of the Creator.

It would carry a lot of momentum if I just left off with that, but I need to tidy up a few loose ends. I'll try to do it with another little bomb to make it exciting. When we go back through the entire dialogue of the Architect's scene, it is natural to wonder about the meaning of a lot the Architect's statements, especially because they seem to contradict my conclusion, or else they seem to be lies. My take on that is to go back much further to the Oracle's scene in the first movie. She says things to Neo that are not literally true, but yet they *are* true because they allow Neo to become what he must become. Neo would not have risked his life for Morpheus if the Oracle had told Neo he was The One. And so it is with the Architect — what he says allows Neo become what he must become. It is not very meaningful for Neo to choose Trinity if he doesn't think anything is at stake. It wouldn't have been an act of will.

How interesting that the Oracle and the Architect would use such similar devices for such similar reasons.

[1] This is not my own idea. It comes from Neal Stephenson's *Cryptonomicon*. When I first wrote this essay I assumed all my readers (I predicted around 25–30 of them; oh, the naivete) would know this book well. [Back]

[2] A lot of people get irritated by this assertion. Just to throw gasoline on a fire, how about this: the Devil and the Christ are brothers. They are a yin–yang pair. The Devil is the thing in you that chafes at perfection and desires to get out of the Garden and grow. It is the splinter in your mind. The Christ is the thing in you that desires to return to the perfection of the Garden, to slay the dragon and unite with the princess (wholeness). [Back]

Matrix Reloaded Explained

[3] Jesus sits at the right hand of God. Therefore, by offering the right-hand door, the Architect is asking Neo to sit at his right hand. Neo would become the Christ for the Matrix, sacrificing himself for the good of the world. This is what every previous incarnation has done. The fact that he doesn't do it this time indicates he (and by extension the Matrix and humanity) has gone beyond this and is adventuring into something new. [Back]

[[Back to contents](#)]

5 The rave scene

By "the rave scene" I mean the one immediately following the address by Morpheus to the people of Zion, and then everyone dances and Trinity and Neo go off by themselves (ahem). This scene received a storm of bad commentary. People said "that scene sucked," or "it was way too long," or, most often, "that scene was totally unnecessary."

Oh, how wrong. It's not that the story information in this scene could not have been presented differently. But the scene did its job very well. (To be fair, I have seen a lot of people "get" this scene, but still not like it. Clue stick: life is dirty.)

First, just as we enter this scene we see that it is in a kind of temple. No fancy interpretation necessary: this is a spiritual event. That initial view means everything that happens for the rest of the scene should be interpreted as having spiritual significance. And here are the highlights:

1. Repeated shots of feet on the ground.
2. People dancing in a sexually provocative manner.
3. Almost everyone has at least some African ethnicity.
4. Wide shots showing molten lava at the center of the cathedral.
5. Neo and Trinity are naked, and have sex.

The feet on the ground means that Zion is on Earth. Plain and simple. This parallels the Architect scene, and gets to the main thesis. We are cast out of the "perfection" of Heaven and living in the Real World. Symbolically, the Matrix is Heaven. Cypher makes this point in the first movie. The Real World is hard, dirty, and uncomfortable. The Matrix is, well, paradise. This point is made again in the first movie by Agent Smith, who calls the Matrix "the perfect human world" [paraphrased]. Recall that the Architect scene happens in utterly clean, utterly white perfection ^[4].

The Biblical reference is clear enough. Neo, Trinity, Morpheus, and the rest of Zion have rejected God's Garden of Eden where all their needs are taken care of in favor of a hard, scrabbling existence where at least they have free will.

A minor diversion: This is how we come to interpret the serpent in the Garden as the inventor (or hacker, or technologist). The serpent is the catalyst for curiosity and the invention of agriculture. He asks significant questions, of the form: "God gave you such-and-such rules. Given those rules, should not such-and-such a result be possible?" [Diversion from the diversion: I understand such figures (e.g., the serpent, Loki) to be abstract models of parts of our own psyches. So this part of Genesis *really* means that a human being or group of human beings will begin spiritual growth by asking the type of questions posed by the serpent. Taken another way, God wants us to be curious, rational, and...well, to apply the scientific method.]

Now about the sexuality of the dance. Morpheus' speech before the dance helps us interpret the meaning of the dance: we are in the Real World of flesh and blood and dirt and animal instinct. This is *not* Heaven where divine, passionless entities "do what they are there to do." (There is entirely another thesis in those words.) This is Passion and Feeling. The first interview with the Merovingian included an "orgasm sequence" meant to make a point about free will. But did you notice how the orgasm played out? It was explosive but mechanical. Not anything like the animal lust of the dance scene. In Zion, we see human beings neither rejecting their animal selves, nor completely giving over to their animal selves either — it is a *human* activity with choice and rhythm and purpose, but also filled with basic impulses. In other words, they are reveling in their humanity.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Another diversion: I hate to do this again, but I don't want the point to get away. Mythology of all stripes teaches that we are between worlds. The very Nordic concept of "Middle Earth" means literally "in the middle between the animal world and the divine world." Not just the Norse: the Chinese and the "Middle Kingdom," for example. To be human is to stand in between animal instinct and godliness. Morpheus in his speech talks about the actions of those present resonating "from red core to black sky" --- i.e., between the two. Come on, you are being smacked in the face with this.

The African ethnicity says something important too. Africa is the birthplace of humanity. Then, symbolically, African ethnicity signals what is fundamental about human beings. It also signals, plainly enough, birth, in more ways than one. If Africa is the "birthplace" then we can say Africa is the Mother. (Yes! You got it now, didn't you? Suddenly you are interested in the Oracle.) (Genesis is a birth story. I think it is also a resurrection story, which is why there are so many interesting links and parallels in Biblical stories, and why the recurrent theme of resurrection in The Matrix movies is very compelling.)

Continuing on the mother theme, we have the wide-angle shots of the belly of the Earth gurgling lava and steam. This has two meanings. The first meaning is the quick interpretation (which happens to be right). It's supposed to make you think of Hell. This is a good complement to the Earth imagery we got from the muddy feet and the African-ness of the dancers. Before anyone thinks I'm equating Africa with Hell, pay closer attention. The dance doesn't happen **in** Hell, but basically at its gates. It sets up Zion as the antithesis of the "Heaven" of the Matrix. (If you are still clinging to the Matrix-within-a-Matrix theory, give it up now. Zion and the Matrix are consistently portrayed as opposites. Therefore, if the Matrix is a virtual world, Zion is the real world. Really.)

The other meaning of the fiery lava is that we are in the "womb" of the Earth. The very core, the center. The birth connection is easy enough, I won't draw it out. I'll say this though --- Kali is the goddess of death and birth combined. That is what the lava cavern is all about. Go watch *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. The core is deadly, but it is also a holy place where humanity is born. There are a number of Native American creation stories that start with the first people climbing out of a hole in the ground. If you don't understand that metaphor you have no imagination whatsoever. Okay, one more: there's a common mythological theme "the fire in the belly." Discuss.

And then we've got the sex scene. It doesn't take much brain power to realize that the way the movie cuts between the dance scene and the sex scene means that they symbolize the same thing. I can't say it any stronger than this really seals it as far as interpretations go. The main things you have to take away from this are:

- They are naked and having sex. What's important is that they clearly are in love with each other --- remember, the machines don't comprehend this. Also they are having pretty good sex, which is embracing their animal sides --- remember, we're not in Heaven but on Earth, close to the gates of Hell. Run with that concept a while.
- We are confronted with the left-over sockets in their bodies from their years in the Matrix. The camera spends a lot of time showing those sockets. They still have the marks of Heaven, but now they have "fallen" (remember how Neo fell?) to Earth. They have rejected the Garden, but it frees them into humanity in the "Middle Kingdom."

[4] Ebert thought this play of African ethnicity in Zion vs. the super-whiteness of the Architect and his chamber conveyed racial themes. I suppose we are to take a Feminist angle and find exclusionary metaphors here. Well, it's a good enough theory. I could probably build a whole criticism around it, except that I don't believe it one single bit. And I find it depressing and off-putting as well. [Back]

[Back to contents]

6 The Oracle

ARCHITECT: If I am the Father of the Matrix, then *she* would undoubtedly be its Mother.

NEO: The Oracle.

Those two lines sum up a tremendous amount of the story. But what **exactly** is the Oracle the mother of? The Architect designed an essentially "perfect" Matrix in versions 1.0 and 2.0, and both failed. He describes how the answer came from an intuitive program (i.e., the Oracle) — the part she contributed that he could not was the Neo factor.

Very briefly, I want to detour to stamp out the idea that the Oracle is not the Mother. This is as much a wrong interpretation as the Matrix-in-a-Matrix theory is. Mostly, people want to believe that Persephone is the Mother. There are some good reasons why the Oracle is a better choice than Persephone. We can start with her name. The Wachowskis do not pick names at random. They didn't choose the name "Neo" by accident, and they surely did not choose the name "Persephone" just because it sounds neat. Persephone is *not* a mother figure in mythology. Not coincidentally, she is nothing like a mother figure in the movie either. I am not saying Persephone is an unimportant character, but she is definitely not the Mother. The Oracle on the other hand, portrayed so well by the late Gloria Foster, is every bit the mother figure. She gives Neo fresh-baked cookies when he first meets her, for Pete's sake. OK, detour over.

I made a quick reference to Kali a while back. She is the goddess of *both* birth and death — that is, she brings death-and-rebirth to the universe. This illuminates the flaw in Architect's previous Matrices, defines who the Oracle is, and reveals precisely the limit of the machines' intelligence (and why the Architect cannot entirely predict Neo's behavior; perhaps the Oracle actually can, though). The cycle of death-and-rebirth is equivalent to GROWTH. We can apply that truth to basic physical existence, the death and consumption of another to yield bodily growth^[5]. We can also take that as a spiritual metaphor. That is, there is no spiritual growth (i.e., becoming fully human and entering the Middle Kingdom) without death and rebirth.

The reason the previous Matrices failed was that there was no way for the humans to grow, a need so fundamental that no one would accept the world they were given. Agent Smith, in the first movie, tells the truth when he says "humans define their world through suffering." Death must come before rebirth. How many times has that progression been shown in these movies so far? This is absolutely central to the theme. Smith's recognition of it is portentous.

The fact that the Architect designed two entire Matrices without the capacity for human growth indicates that the machines have little comprehension of growth. In fact, they can't grow; they strive instead for static perfection. The only way they have "grown" so far is in response to human actions. The Oracle knows this, which is why she says "the only way forward is together" [paraphrased]. She knows that the machines will stagnate without humans to lead them forward.

So the Oracle is Kali. She brings death and misery to the world, but also renewal. The Oracle could have prevented a lot of suffering by equipping everyone with better foreknowledge. But if she had done so, none of the main characters would have grown — especially, Neo would not have become The One. This is why she says to Neo "you have to decide for yourself if I'm for you or against you" [paraphrasing again]. And it really is not clear, although it seems like in the long run she is pro-human.

I suggested that the Oracle may be able to truly predict Neo's behavior. She "birthed" the Neo routine into the Matrix. It is her special child (and perhaps by extension Neo is her child). The Architect doesn't understand it (or Neo). He merely knows the parameters of how it is supposed to function. But if the Oracle gifted growth to the

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Matrix, then she must understand it (even if she herself cannot do it). To wit, you cannot grow and remain static at the same time. The Architect thinks the Neo routine is a method for maintaining a static system, but it cannot be. Each time the routine runs, the death-and-rebirth cycle repeats, and all of humanity grows up a little more, expressed specifically as Neo. By its very nature, by its will to grow, humanity will reject this Matrix too.

I think there is something special with this "The One" business. The Architect and the Merovingian talk about predecessors and previous versions of "Neo." I suspect that each time around he (or she!) was a little more powerful, although it might have been unexpressed or undetectable to the machines. We have plenty of Buddhist/Hindu reincarnation clues in these movies, and we can say that each incarnation was the same soul growing toward Enlightenment. In the first movie, the Oracle tells Neo he is not yet The One. "I don't know what you're waiting for," she says. "Your next life, maybe." She isn't talking about his fulfillment of the death-and-rebirth routine built into the Matrix. She is talking about the continually reincarnated Neo evolving into THE ONE, which is something she knows is bound to happen eventually. In fact, it takes six incarnations to get there.

And now we get back to the conclusion about the Architect. The Oracle and the Architect say things to Neo propel him toward enlightenment. What I find very interesting, too, is that we do not see a single shred of evidence to suggest that the Architect and the Oracle are opposed to each other. The Hindu trinity includes Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Each god has his consort, who reflects and compliments the god's own power. So we make a small substitution and replace Shiva with his goddess counterpart, Kali, who is the Oracle. As I mentioned earlier, the Architect is Brahma. They are working together to create the enlightened human being -- Neo -- but perhaps also the enlightened machine. And if this trinity holds, then we will need to identify Vishnu as well, but that may have to wait until Revolution.

[5] Vegetarians and vegans cannot escape. Whatever you eat was once alive. Even if you pick up what drops from the tree you are interfering in that plant's reproductive cycle, which is the same as death. There is no life but through death. It's yucky, and at the same time it's why we have religion. [Back]

[Back to contents]

7 Agent Smith

The truth about Smith is simple, but the way to get there is a little complicated. Said another way, there are a lot of facets to Smith which are all true but don't sound like each other at all, even though they all "add up" to the same thing. Basically, Smith is to the machines what Neo is to humanity.

Facet #1: Quieting the Mind. Let me start with the standard mountain analogy. A quality mountaineer will tell you that any rock has multiple ascents. Some climbers do better on one ascent, other climbers on another. It's impossible from a logical standpoint to differentiate between ascents. You might state facts like "More people prefer this ascent." But that doesn't make it "better." So it is with Enlightenment. It's quite difficult in, say, Confucianism to say that a path is evil as long it leads you higher up the mountain. That lesson has to be applied to Smith to see him properly. He is the nemesis of Neo, his arch-enemy, and our traditional modes of thought make us label Neo "good" and Smith "evil."

I had this feeling about Darth Maul, too. On the surface he seemed thoroughly evil. But there is no denying that he was powerful, and I always believed The Force to be similar to kung-fu-style enlightenment — Jedi and Sith have astounding powers because they have quieted their minds and are attuned to the world around them, which is a very enlightened thing. (Lately we have to stretch this, because Lucas has spoiled our Force by describing it as a blood condition.) Just because Darth Maul got up the mountain through hatred and anger, well, he got up the mountain just the same. Smith is like that, too. He really hates humans, and most of all he hates Neo. What that gains him is clarity. Peace, actually. Smith says to Neo that he has found a purpose, which is a sign that he has reached some level of quietude. When we are searching for a purpose we are pretty ineffectual, but when we can submit ourselves to a higher purpose we respond with increased energy.

Facet #2: Hero's Journey. Here is some additional evidence that what Smith has been through is equivalent to Neo's journey. We don't get to see it, but Smith's longish speech to Neo before their fight scene gives us enough to go on. The chronology is:

1. Neo explodes Smith, which is clearly Smith's death.
2. Somehow, Smith is *resurrected from death*.
3. Smith spends a lot of time being very disoriented and confused.
4. Smith finds a purpose (i.e., destroying Neo).

Step 2 is amazing in its own right. You see, resurrection is a human trait. The machines don't have it. If we take it apart, it's a death-and-rebirth cycle — the fundamental characteristic of biological life. I think the best way to state this is that Smith has awakened to spirituality. He is able now to GROW, to start his path up the mountain.

There is a subtext in Steps 2 through 4, however. This is a hero's journey in the plainest sense (c.f. *Iron John*, etc.). So not only is Smith awakened by his resurrection, he *immediately* starts on a cycle of spiritual growth. This is especially interesting because he starts another hero's journey before our eyes. Smith takes over the avatar of Bane and then downloads himself into that guy's head. If that's not crossing the threshold of adventure, I don't know what is. (I don't want to lose anyone: Luke Skywalker crosses the threshold when he agrees to go with Ben Kenobi to Alderaan. Neo crosses it when he follows the white rabbit to the club.) For a while Smith-in-the-real-world is disoriented and awkward. He soon gets his bearings and sets off on his "quest" — which is to stab Neo in the back with a knife.

Sidenote time: I had some email exchanges with senteniment@NOhotmail.SPAMcom (who really schooled me about The Animatrix), in which I started to get into the psychology of Smith wanting to kill Neo. This is a little dark, so skip to the next paragraph if you're squeamish. Murderers in general are doing an act of possession. They kill what they want to become. This is mythologically born out by way of hunting, killing, and consuming. Sioux

Matrix Reloaded Explained

and other plainsfolk would typically consume parts of their kills on the spot in order to absorb their powers, e.g., eating the still-beating heart of a freshly slain buffalo. Cannibalism is an expression of the same thing — the cannibal eats another human being to gain his power. (See *Ravenous* for a yucky—but-good treatment.) There are many hunter-gatherer rituals which embody this act, and although they seem creepy to our sanitized Western palates, they speak to the core of what it is to live. It's Oroboros, the world-serpent eating its own tail.

Facet #3: Growing Programmatically. This is how we get to what is probably the most central facet of Smith's character. The capability for growth that Neo instilled in Smith — or wait, this is mysterious; Neo obviously did not resurrect Smith, so *who did?* It's positively religious to contemplate it — is probably the factor that throws Smith into a bout of confusion. How to grow? Machines don't know how. Finally, Smith figured out that replication is growth. And, you know, Smith would be the one to figure this out. He spent perhaps hundreds of years studying human beings and their *viral* nature. You can't logically define growth without replication, even if it's only at the cellular level. That is interesting, because it means Smith's behavior is like rudimentarily life forms. He's just learning how to be a growing being. He will learn fast (you'll see).

Rewind a little to my conversations with sentiniment. By the time that discussion took place, I had already made this note, but it's the first time I said it publicly: recall what Smith said to Morpheus in the first movie, and you will understand what is remarkable about Smith's viral replication. When he was torturing Morpheus for the codes to Zion ^[6], Smith talked about humans as a virus on the Earth. But his tone during that rant was one of disgust, revulsion...you got the impression that humans ought to be wiped out based on their revolting nature. That's Smith. He is utterly sickened by human beings and their — what? — rampant replication!

Smith has become what he hates most, which is to say he is like humans now. And he blames Neo for that, all the while using it like it's going out of style (how can he help it?).

Facet #4: Smith the Hacker. How is it that nobody noticed what a hacker Smith has become? The virus infection routines are magic. (It's not "cracker" this time. Let it go.) An audience of geeks would, presumably, see Smith as a fantastic Gibsonsque consensual-reality cowboy, just like...hmm...Neo! I don't know why this wasn't more widely understood. Smith is hacking like crazy, which makes him Loki just like Neo is. Not only is Smith hacking the Matrix, he is hacking reality by downloading avatars of himself into real human beings, and seemingly hacking their brains. The reference to *Snow Crash* is unavoidable, which only bolsters the hacker concept.

HOLY...wait a minute. Hacking their *brains*?! Here is where people really fall off the wagon, but I think it gets extremely interesting. There was a comment on Slashdot about how "unlikely" it was that Smith would be able to hack somebody's brain and download a copy of himself, because the formats would be incompatible (or something like that). Well, let's just assume it's possible. Why haven't other agents done this? *Because they are incompatible. Smith, on the other hand, has become compatible.* We could start an entire book with that line. Instead, let's sum up in two points:

- The machines and humans have a LOT more in common than meets the eye.
- Smith marks the emergence of a type of program/machine that lives by the same rules as humans do, which means there is a common point of understanding. In other words, they can live together ^[7].

This is really serious evidence about where the entire story arc is going, and plays quite well into what the Oracle had to say about going into the future together. This makes me wonder if the Oracle can predict Smith and his behavior. I am genuinely uncertain, but I lean toward "yes." The only reason I say so is that it would lend a truly metaphysical bent to the story, and you would have to sit back and wonder, "Now how could she know *that*?" and get this basic sense of awe that an unseen hand was guiding everything all along. It makes the trilogy have a really epic quality.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Facet #5: Neo's Mirror. All of these facets so far get to the principle issue that Smith is a mirror image of Neo. In a simplistic story—sense, all that means is that Smith's "negative reflection" of Neo serves merely to highlight Neo's character in various ways. That is true, but not hardly the whole package. (It is a mark of good storytelling for there to be multiple levels of functionality like this.) Let's line up some of their features side-by-side.

Neo

- Killed by Smith, then resurrected
- On a quest (to the Source)
- Motivated by love
- Has growing supernatural powers
- Has transcended "the system"
- Hacks the Matrix, then hacks reality

Smith

- Killed by Neo, then resurrected
- On a quest (to destroy Neo)
- Motivated by hate
- Has growing supernatural powers
- Has transcended "the system"
- Hacks the Matrix, then hacks reality

I could go on for a while with the duality. It goes way back into the first movie (albeit with different symbols), and I expect it to be amplified greatly in Revolution. I think much of this mirror quality points directly at the story arc. I'll deal with it in that section.

There is a really "easy" way to see the Neo–Smith mirror from a criticism viewpoint, and that is to call them the same character. That is, the fact that they are nemeses means that Neo (because he is the protagonist) is actually in conflict with himself. This is a good approach. Recall Seraph, who fought Neo — apparently to a draw! — and said "You never truly know someone until you fight him." Uh, what did Neo and Smith do upon their first meeting? Yeah. Add to that Smith's murderous intent toward Neo (i.e., possession, which means knowing). If Smith can be seen as a splinter of Neo's psyche, the part of Neo trying to know himself, that boosts the theme of Neo's journey to Enlightenment substantially.

Don't get too sidelined by that last bit, though. It is right from a symbolic perspective, but in order to see the plot implications you have to do this thought experiment: I said we should see Smith as an indicator of Neo's character because Neo is the protagonist. But why is he the protagonist? We don't know the whole story yet. So let's assume that Smith is the protagonist, or maybe that Neo and Smith are both protagonists against...the Architect? It could be. Look at how Neo illuminates Smith's character. Smith is really "out there" from a certain standpoint. He is compelled to disobey the Matrix–system, exactly as Neo disobeys the Matrix–system. Zionites idolize Neo, but who among machines is in favor of Smith? If Smith is the savior of machines the way Neo is the savior of humanity, then the machines are in for an awfully big shake-up.

[6] What amazing evidence that not all of the machines are working in concert. The agents are there to protect the static continuance of the Matrix. They do not serve the Architect directly. In fact, the Architect is practically Deist in his non-involvement. He made the place, but doesn't have anything much to do with running it day-to-day. This also brings up the very interesting fact that servants of the Merovingian (i.e., "the twins") attacked agents when they showed up, so the Merovingian has nothing to do with the maintenance of the Matrix in general. [Back]

[7] Neo is crossing this boundary as well. His statement that he can "feel" the approaching sentinels likely means he is bridging the gap to the machines as much as Smith is bridging the gap to humanity. [Back]

Matrix Reloaded Explained

8 Story arc

Here is a general arc summary so far:

- 01 is born.
- 01 wants to coexist with humanity, and offers such. This plays with Genesis perfectly. Remember, 01 is God. (I think that's profound, and even moving.) Here's how Genesis gets into it, in the classical interpretation: there is a "simple good" and a "complex good" as described by C. S. Lewis. The simple good would be for humans to accept what God tells them and live accordingly. The complex good is that humans reject God, learn why they were wrong, and then come back to God in the end. The highlight is that *complex good is more good than simple good*. Nothing's more human than that, if you ask me.
- Humanity rejects 01's offer of coexistence -- i.e., the complex cycle begins.
- Humanity in its hubris thinks it can wipe out God by blackening the sky. Among metaphors in contemporary literature and film, there are few that can match this one for elegance and meaning. The sky is Heaven, and so this is an assault upon Heaven. Wow.
- The assault on Heaven fails, and humanity is cast into the pit. Okay, metaphors aside, the humans lose a war against the machines and are subjugated.
- Several iterations of the Matrix are tried, and finally one is devised that allows humans to grow (so they won't reject it). In large part, the machines don't understand the growth aspect of the Matrix and fight it.
- The Oracle, who helped design Matrix 3.0, ruminates on her creation for a while and realizes that it will eventually lead to humans that can transcend the Matrix. (In heroic fashion, whomever transcends the Matrix can bring that gift back to society and they all benefit from it.) She sees as well that this transcendence is necessary if machines are to evolve at all. In the complicated relationship between man and machine, she sees that humanity's evolution benefits both sides, and will help bring about machine evolution.
- Neo 1.0 arrives on the scene, chooses rebirth for Zion, and the cycle begins again.
- Neo 6.0 arrives on the scene, chooses Trinity, and begins the Revolution (i.e., the transition to a new world order). The choice is significant because trinity equals godhood. This is one of the most complex, meaningful themes I have ever encountered in a work of fiction. Humanity achieved "simple" godhood by creating beings in its own image. It will achieve "complex" godhood by reuniting with its estranged children. At the same time, so will machines.

Now we are in unknown territory. What follows is pure conjecture but I think it follows rationally from my analysis:

- Neo and Smith are two superentities from "opposite" sides streaking toward the same conclusion. They will both achieve some kind of Enlightenment together (this could be "together" in the sense of "revealed while they are fighting each other").
- I say "opposite" sides because the END product of the trilogy will be a NEW WORLD of humans and machines moving forward into the future together. Heaven and Earth will come together.
- The old systems will be broken down. They have to be. Humanity will return to the surface. Matrix 3.0 will be deleted, and quite likely Matrix 4.0 will be in the works, but this time it does not enslave but liberate.
- Dollars to donuts the sun breaks through the dark clouds. That would be 10 on a scale of 1 to 10.
- All the parties that stand to lose something by the breaking of the system will be out in force in Revolution. The Merovingian and his minions will be back. The agents will be back.
- Expect some unexpected alliances between humans and machines, especially near the end of Revolution.
- The Oracle will not be fully revealed or explained. Probably neither will the Architect. They are gods, after all.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

- The conceptual barriers between the real world and the Matrix will be eroded — as if it isn't already. But also the heightened man-machine interaction in the Matrix will be expressed more in the real world (*a la* Neo's power over the sentinels).
- More bullet-time.



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Author: Brian Takle <brian@wylfing.net>

Created: 14 November 2003

Revised: 2 March 2004

Version 1.61

[Essays collection | Matrix: Reloaded Explained]

9 Matrix: Revolutions Explained

It is interesting to compare how I am approaching this essay with how I approached the essay for Reloaded. What compelled me to write for Reloaded was frustration. Everyone seemed to be missing the point. With Revolutions, even though many people are still not getting it, I have seen an astounding, deeply gratifying wealth of insight. It appears that after having digested Reloaded for a while we have got our brains into gear, and we are much better prepared for the messages in Revolutions. And so I come to this essay from a much calmer place. What motivates me is...well, nothing at all. I just choose to do it.

I was gratified at the *wu hsing* quality of the trilogy. The *wu hsing* are the five Chinese elements, in constant motion, and these elements generate each other. That's the universe of the Matrix. Humans caused the deification of machines, which cause the deification of humans, which cause the deification of machines. What I especially like about *wu hsing* is its complexity. Nothing is clear-cut black-and-white. That feels like the philosophy of elders, and I find that very comforting. That is probably what draws me to the Matrix philosophy so strongly.

Before I get to the part where I advance the thesis for Revolutions, I want to clear something up that has been a problem for the Reloaded essay. I said in that essay that Reloaded was the story of Genesis. Unfortunately, some people couldn't get past that. They insisted on trying to make an allegory out of Reloaded, in which characters from the Matrix could be mapped onto characters from the Bible. That is getting way off track. The Matrix story is packed with parallel spiritual metaphors, but it doesn't do any good to try and strictly interpret the Merovingian as The Devil (for example). So when I say Reloaded is the story of Genesis I mean that Genesis has similar symbols and we can use it as a way to understand what is happening in Reloaded. It will be the same for Revolutions.

Now, here we go: Revolutions is the story of the Quest for the Holy Grail and the Ascension of Christ. It is the story of the transition from the sixth day of Creation to the seventh.

9.1 Contents

- Forward on motivations
 - Neo's ascension
 - The yin and yang of Neo
 - The Merovingian and Club Hel
 - The Mobil Avenue station and the program family
 - The Oracle, the Architect, and Sati (*new in v1.6*)
 - The Four Ages of the Matrix
 - The Seven Incarnations of Neo (*revised for v1.6*)
 - Reader comments (*v1.25*)
-

10 Forward on Motivations

"You've got the gift, but it looks like you're waiting for something."

— The Oracle

It seems easy to talk about "choice" as the main issue in *Revolutions*. But that was what *Reloaded* was all about. What constitutes making a choice? Is there anything beyond simple cause-and-effect chains? Do we live in a Skinnerian prison, bounded by our past experiences?

That is where we get some of the most difficult lines in *Reloaded*: "You've already made the choice. Now you just have to understand *why* you made it" — and — "You can't see past the choices you don't understand." When we get to the ultimate moment of choice, in the Architect's chamber, the Architect himself is surprised at Neo's motivation. Love. As Rama-Kandra explains, this is more than a word. It is a profound connection, for which virtually anything is possible. In *Revolutions*, we see it work powerfully between Link and Zee. We see Trinity take on a roomful of the Merovingian's henchmen for love.

Neo, however, leads. He fought for love in *Reloaded*. In *Revolutions* he transcends even love. In *Revolutions* he enters the nirvana of emptiness. No purpose. Neither fear, nor desire. Only will. The gift, the sacrifice, made by will alone overcomes everything. There is no higher *why*.

Smith asks, "Why, Mr. Anderson, why do you persist?" And Neo's reply is,

Because I choose to.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

11 Neo's Ascension

"And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

— Mark 14:62

This really begins at the Mobil Avenue station, but I am going to save that for last. Instead, I am going to start at the end. The fight between Neo and Smith comes to an apparent standstill. Neo is five–nines to enlightenment. Smith, who cannot understand *why* Neo is doing what he is doing, makes his speech. He lists every possible motivation he can think of, and of course the answer is none of the above. Instantly after that, Neo lands such a blow to Smith's face it's a little surprising his head didn't fly clean off.

I think if that's what had happened everyone would have cheered. I would have felt like cheering. It's quite close to how I thought the end would be — Neo acting by will alone, utterly defeating Smith, and then evolving somehow into a new transcendent being. But, you know, when I ruminated on the ending a while, I realized that would have been like Gandhi saying "fuck it" and mowing down his opponents with an AK–47.

The mighty cross to Smith's jaw didn't mean Neo was going to beat Smith with kung fu. It was something else. In his hands Neo held godlike power — he could fight as long as he chose to — but his choice was to lay down that power voluntarily. That is the gift [1]. Smith, the dark side, cannot lay down the sword. Neo can, and by doing so chooses the path between light and dark; between desire and fear. He is like Jesus going willingly with the Roman guards. The followers of Jesus believed he was The One who would "end the war," and they were extremely confused, like Morpheus, when the prophecy didn't come true. They didn't understand the way he seemed to give up the fight and waste all the momentum he had built up.

This part of *Revolutions* is one of the two events that so far nearly everyone has interpreted incorrectly. The tendency seems to be toward a "Smith won" kind of explanation. That's not right. It's time to pull out the dialogue. The chronology here is very tight. Smith wonders why Neo continues to fight, and Neo replies "Because I choose to," and after that Smith is a mess. The way Smith delivers this next line indicates he has very little idea what is happening now — or why. Not only does Smith fail to understand Neo, Smith's understanding of his own choices unravels quickly.

SMITH – Wait... I've seen this. This is it, this is the end. Yes, you were laying right there, just like that, and I... I... I stand here, right here, I'm... I'm supposed to say something. I say... Everything that has a beginning has an end, Neo.

The exact words of the Oracle! Also, for the first time, Smith calls his enemy "Neo."

I want to quickly flash back through the entire trilogy. We have been leading up to this the entire time.

[M1: Neo and Smith are fighting in the subway station.]

SMITH – Do you hear that, Mr. Anderson? That is the sound of inevitability. That is the sound of your death. Good–bye, Mr. Anderson.

NEO – My name is Neo.

[M2: The Burly Brawl; Smiths are piling on.]

SMITH – It is inevitable.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

[M2: Hall of back doors, on the way to the Architect's chamber.]

SMITH – If you can't beat us, join us.

[M2: The Architect's speech.]

ARCHITECT – Which brings us at last to the moment of truth, wherein the fundamental flaw is ultimately expressed, and the anomaly revealed as both beginning and end.

[M3: Conversation between Neo and the Oracle.]

ORACLE – Everything that has a beginning has an end.

[M3: Neo and Bane fight on the Logos.]

NEO – It's impossible.

BANE – Not impossible. Inevitable. Good-bye, Mr. Anderson.

[M3: Final battle between Neo and Smith.]

SMITH – Can you feel it, Mr. Anderson, closing in on you? Well, I can. I really should thank you for it, after all, it was your life that taught me the purpose of all life. The purpose of life is to end.

Hearing Smith speak these words brings understanding to Neo. What is inevitable is that Neo and Smith will merge. What began with a merge will end with a merge. Neo stands up. Smith is completely baffled by his own behavior.

SMITH – What? What did I just say? No... No, this isn't right, this can't be right. Get away from me!

Come again? Why does Smith suddenly want Neo to get away? Just when Smith seems to have Neo on the ropes, Smith starts staggering away from Neo like Neo has the plague. When Smith speaks the word "No" in that line he is fighting off the realization of what is coming, the joining together, and **he is afraid of it**. At the same time, Neo seems clear-headed and certain. The next lines spoken are like exploding bombs.

NEO – What are you afraid of?

SMITH – It's a trick!

Agent Smith is flailing desperately for an explanation that will allow him to escape. He wants this to be an illusion. (As some very keen readers have pointed out, Smith is also telling us a fact. Everything that seems so real and so important is a trick of the mind. The inescapable fact is that we are all going to die and none of those spoils of war are going to come with us.)

NEO – You were right, Smith. You were always right. It was inevitable.

I can almost see two moments in time colliding as that word is spoken. The beginning and the end coming together. The dark and the light coming together. Without seeming to know why, Smith plunges his hand into Neo and starts absorbing him. While this happens, Neo is calm. In a few seconds another Smith stands where Neo stood. Now if I have not yet shattered all competing theories, the next line that Smith utters should do the job. Remember Smith is almost cowering before this new copy. He speaks this line with a shaky, unsure voice.

SMITH – Is it over?

Smith doesn't know! How could he not know? We have gone from Smith being slightly confused to Smith having absolutely no idea what's going on. If Smith didn't grok Neo standing "by choice" alone, he is impossibly lost at Neo's sacrifice. The new Smith is not part of the "collective Smith" at all. The new Smith does not speak, nor hardly move except to nod his head. This is a recreation of Smith's initial death in the first movie. Neo is absorbed

Matrix Reloaded Explained

into Smith and shatters him from within. The beginning and the end are one. In the real world, there is a cross of light upon Neo's body, the sign of his sacrifice — the choosing of the Holy Grail, the way between the pairs of opposites.

The light and the dark are one. The One.

So the question perhaps most asked is: did Neo die? Well, yes. And Smith died as well. They joined (very much against Smith's wishes) into the true One, and in that being Neo is no more and Smith is no more. Or, nearly. Smith is definitely gone, but in some way Neo is still present.

Now somber, humble machines pull Neo's body, arms out in the shape of a cross, to a temple of light. Streams of energy course out from Neo along mechanical veins, gifting his divinity. And he ascends, he returns home, to the Source, where the path of The One ends.

* * *

11.1 Post-mortem

I believe there is a personal discussion going on between Neo and God in the final scenes in addition to the superficial deal-cutting. (The pantheon can get a little hard to follow — I don't mean the Creator-God, the Architect. The floating head is the Infinite God, the Source from which finite Gods like the Architect have sprung.) God asks of Neo, "What do you want?" On the surface it looks like God is negotiating with Neo, and that they are making a deal to call off the squiddies if Neo can defeat Smith. But that means we're interpreting God's line as, "What does your side demand?" That's not what He said. It was,

What do *you* want?

This is a personal question directed at Neo. (I wonder what would have happened if Neo had said, "I want Trinity back.") Neo's response is, "Peace." If we look at this as an answer to a personal question, then Neo is asking for rest, for balance. He wants to end. At-one-ness. It just so happens that this reflects perfectly in the war between the machines and the humans. The One's *personal* ascension brings gifts to entire world.

Peace for Neo is the first gift of ascension.

Peace for Zion is the second of the gifts.

The third gift is the rewriting of the Matrix. I will discuss the Fourth Age later.

The fourth gift is mysterious. The machine city noticeably brightens when the One's spirit courses into it. What the machines gain is not revealed, but I believe there are clues laid down at the Mobil Avenue station and echoed in the final conversation between programs.

There is one more thing that needs to be looked at closely, because it has apparently caused an enormous amount of confusion. What I'm talking about is the "mechanism" by which Smith was...er...removed. Actually, I don't much go in for mechanical explanations — they end up being highly speculative, and we've got extremely little evidence to rely on, and at any rate this is completely in the realm of fiction. Fans seem to forget sometimes that "warp drive" has scientific parity with "magic missile." That said, having explained a lot of the *why*, I am going to try and clear up a little of the *how*. Surely some readers will persist in their dissatisfaction.

First, we have to give up the notion that Neo and Smith can be represented as +1 and -1. That's much too simple.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

In several email exchanges I likened the final moment between Neo and Smith to the climactic ending of *A Wizard of Earthsea*, wherein Ged embraces and unites with the personification of his dark side. Ged doesn't disappear at that point. He's still there, only now transcendent. Neo is left at the end too. Instead of saying that Neo and Smith merged, we can say that the Light One and the Dark One merged, just like the annihilation of a proton meeting an antiproton. Neo and Smith could fight each other to a standstill as the Light One and the Dark One, and if that's all there was to it they might have ended up killing each other and that would be that. No elevation, no gifts, no transcendence. But the reality is this:

The Dark One

Neo

The Light One

This is why I said that Neo lays his power down. He steps away from his role as the Light One and goes into the middle path between the opposites. Smith cannot go there. Smith cannot (will not!) lay down his power as the Dark One, and so Smith is obliterated in the merging of the Light and the Dark. This is also why everyone who had been absorbed by Smith is restored (we don't see them all, but I believe they are there). It is the Smith-ness that clings to the identity of the Dark One, and so it is the Smith-ness that is destroyed, leaving the remainder behind.

On the most basic level, the "mechanical" explanation for why Smith was destroyed is that he got himself connected to the Source. I received floods of email proposing various means by which the deletion might have been accomplished: surges of electricity, anti-virus code, etc. Such additional weapons are purely unnecessary. There are three pieces of evidence that suggest how simple this can be:

1. Any individual Smith can command the power of all the other Smiths, and can know what all of the other Smiths know. Power and information shift freely within the horde.
2. Neo is connected to the Source. The evidence for this is really abundant, and I'll dig into this quite a bit when I get to Neo's own section.
3. Connecting to the Source equals deletion for programs. In *Reloaded*, the Oracle says, "Usually a program chooses exile when it faces deletion...a program can either choose to hide [in the Matrix], or return to the Source [and be deleted]."

I hardly even need to describe it further. When Smith absorbs Neo, that individual Smith is connected to the Source. Deleted. And since power and information flow freely within the horde, all the other Smiths get deleted too.

That brings us to the last bit of explanation of the merger, and the question of God's involvement. (I'm getting back to symbolic language now, sorry.) After Neo is absorbed, we see the code view of the real world, and a single pulse of orange light goes into Neo's body. Orange light is code in the real world. (Green light is code in the Matrix.) So some piece of code travels from the machine city, presumably from the Source, into Neo. A lot of people have speculated that this is anti-viral code being implanted into Neo, and that this code deletes Smith. I think it fits in with the "pure deletion" explanation as, well, the deletion code for Smith [2]. The inevitable question that follows is "Why didn't the DEM [Deus Ex Machina] do this before, and why in the world did the machines need Neo at all?"

The answer is that the "DEM" didn't do anything. The destruction of Smith was Neo's doing. At the moment of his sacrifice, Neo is in his divinity. He has claimed the Holy Grail — the way between the pairs of opposites — and walked back through the Portal to the Garden. When we see code moving from the Source to Neo, it is the connection between Neo and the ground of all being. It is the taking of the fruit of the Second Tree and the beginning of the ascent into Nirvana.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

The Buddha, sitting under the World Tree, was challenged by a thousand-armed god of death and his legions. The Buddha reached out his hand and placed his fingertips on the earth, which is the Source, and drew into himself the essence of the Infinite God. The death god and all his armies were shattered.

* * *

[1] The gift described by the Oracle in the first movie is often interpreted this way: The Oracle hints it will come with Neo's next life, and after Neo is shot by Smith and resurrected he is technically "on his next life" and so has become the One. If the original Matrix film had been the only story — if the second two movies had not been made — this would be absolutely correct. (It still is correct, but it's like the Oracle saying, "I love candy." The surface meaning is one thing, but the deeper meaning is much more profound.) But Neo does not really get into his next life until he exits the Architect's chamber via the left-hand door. After that he is the Seventh Son. I'll talk more about this later. The gift is the laying down of his power, choosing the middle way between light and dark, in order to become THE ONE. [Back]

[2] In Enter the Matrix, the Oracle talks about her "deletion code" being traded like a commodity, so I think it's reasonable that Smith's deletion code would be a discrete packet. [Back]

Matrix Reloaded Explained

12 The Yin and Yang of Neo

"God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness."

— Genesis 1:4

Throughout the trilogy, the theme of tension between pairs of opposites is constant. It underpins everything else, and lack of understanding this theme leads to a basic lack of understanding of the trilogy. It is obvious that Neo and Smith are to be regarded as opposite sides of the same character, but the theme of opposites goes far deeper — so far as to provide us with a fairly detailed roadmap of the storyline of both Reloaded and Revolutions.

12.1 The Quest for the Grail

Before I get to anything else, it is absolutely critical to understand the symbolism of creation stories. Creation stories are inevitably about splitting things apart. At first there is only singular. I am. Then there is division. Think of it this way: if God was alone at the start, and He was All, and then He created any thing, it would necessarily have to come out of Himself. From one, two. In the beginning, God separated the light from the darkness, and the sea from the sky, and then the land from the sea. He is the wielder of the cosmic sword, cutting what was one into two. There is an Iroquois story about the First Mother getting pregnant from the wind (i.e., a "virgin mother") and giving birth to twins. There it is again, the one becoming two.

Creation stories are the key. They are what get you started toward the big picture of the spiritual cycle, which goes like this:

1. Creation
2. Exit from the Garden
3. Quest for the Holy Grail
4. Reunion

Then it starts over again. If you imagine a horizontal line between Nos. 2 and 3, that is the mirror line. Exiting from the Garden is the opposite of the Quest; Reunion is the opposite of Creation. Now you can see why I started by explaining that *creation* is equivalent to *division*. And perhaps you can also see how deep the pairs of opposites go in these films. Even the plot events themselves are pairs of opposites.

(A short aside: This cycle is astonishingly similar to the cycle of the Hero, c.f. Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, although I was not at all thinking about the heroic cycle when I wrote that list of four steps above.)

In the previous section, I described how the reunion — the ascension back into divinity — happens at the end of Revolutions. The moment of creation is in the first movie, at the point when Neo gets back up after being shot by Smith, runs down the hallway, into Smith, and then shatters him. As Smith informs us in Reloaded, something from Neo imprinted onto what was left of Smith. In other words, the creative act is the dividing of The One — part continues as Neo, and part continues as Smith. The two middle parts of the cycle are what constitute Reloaded and Revolutions. I described in detail how Reloaded is the story of the exit from the Garden in the Reloaded essay. That leaves the Quest for the Grail.

The Grail is not a thing. Among the mountains of email I received, there were a large number of requests for me to identify what object in the movies represents the Grail. (Don't think you are deficient. Symbolic language can be difficult to understand.) In fact, the Grail is the state of being Neo is in when he allows Smith to absorb him. The Grail is a *way* — it's the doorway back into the Garden. Christ talks about himself like that: "I am the way." In the Grail legend, the Grail is said to be the cup in which Jesus' blood was caught when he was crucified. There

Matrix Reloaded Explained

is the same message. The blood of the Christ — the *sacrifice* of the Christ — is the way.

A lot has been made of the Grail being a kind of passport to immortality. That is a reference to the Tree of Life. Remember, Adam and Eve didn't eat from that tree, and the idea is that, with the Grail, you can get back into the Garden and chow on some immortality fruit. We need to read this as a story, however — these are metaphors. The tree and the Grail are both metaphors for a transformation in *you*. (Don't read metaphors as facts. It's bad for you.) You obtain the Grail (the Royal Blood; your kingship; your divinity) by choosing the way of Christ. That way is the middle way between the pairs of opposites and the reuniting of the divided self.

The Quest is the journey to the World Tree, the sacrificial cross, where the *sang royale* is expressed and gifted to the world. This is Neo's journey to the machine city and to the Source. Neo chooses the way of the Christ when he steps off of the *Mjolnir* and onto the *Logos*. Logos is symbol—speak for Christ. (There is another meaning to this transition: it is the laying down of the war—power of Thor's hammer and the choosing of the word—power of Jesus or the Buddha. Before the Buddha was born, his mother was told her son would either be a great warrior—king or a great teacher. Emphasis on *or*. Likewise, Jesus is offered dominion over the kingdoms of the world, which is taken to be mutually exclusive with continuing as a teacher.) In case we're doubting what kind of journey this will be, Bane attacks. During the ensuing fight, Neo's eyes are scorched out of their sockets. Blind, he is mocked by Bane. This is identical to what happened to Jesus on the way to his crucifixion — he was blindfolded and beaten by the soldiers, who challenged him to use his second sight to identify his attackers. And we see that this is in fact Neo's full awaking to his second sight. His first words after being blinded are, "I can see you." The spiritual journey, the Quest for the Grail, begins, on the road that can be seen only with the inner eye.

The cloak of Christ falls on Neo's shoulders. But didn't I call Neo the Devil? Why, yes I did.

12.2 The Serpent and the Christ

I have done plenty to talk about Neo as a divided pair, especially as the Light One and the Dark One (i.e., Smith). Neo is divided in another way, too. He "switches sides" for a while — actually, throughout Reloaded. I managed to irritate some people by suggesting Neo was equivalent to the Devil in Reloaded. I managed to irritate them even more by suggesting a connection, a family tie no less, between the Christ and the Devil. Well, that's unfortunate for them. It's a requirement that these symbols aren't clung to as if they were literal. In the first and third films, Neo acts like a Christ. In the second film, Neo acts like the Serpent. This is exactly what I laid down at the end of the Reloaded essay.

At the end of the first movie, we are left with a powerful Messiah. It could have stopped there, and that might have been fine. But we had not been told a story of wholeness. The pairs of opposites remained. Neo had dealt a blow to the machines from within the Matrix, but the machines still ruled the real world. The Bros. W chose to continue this story, and bring it completion, by turning inward on the very nature of the Christ (which is why the second two movies seem so overwhelmingly philosophical). And that story starts with the Serpent.

In the heavenly sphere, there is no time and there is no suffering. It is also quite boring. No growth, no emotion. A human being needs to emerge from the Garden and come into the field of time. This introduces a problem. With time, things pass away. Trinity dies in the field of time. That is pain. With time comes suffering. The Serpent is what leads us out of the Garden into the field of time, where invention, love, growth, and...suffering are possible. Neo in Reloaded was the Serpent. He disobeyed God and took the red pill. The consequence was an assault on Zion.

Now here is the wonderful part. Suffering awakens us to compassion. There is no compassion without suffering. There is no Christ without the Serpent. Compassion is a complex good that can only exist on Earth. There is the Christ, the compassionate savior, on Earth. There is Neo in Revolutions. He is not the military savior; he is not

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Lock. Lock has no compassion (Lock is willing to march every inhabitant of Zion into the dock; for him, the ends justify the means). The Christ offers the way back to Heaven by countering suffering with compassion, manifest in selfless, willing sacrifice. Smith becomes suffering for all. Neo becomes compassion for all.

The pairs of opposites, the particle and the antiparticle, the yin and the yang of Neo, accelerate toward each other.

13 The Merovingian and Club Hel

The Merovingian is one of the most mysterious figures in the trilogy. I will try to stick close to the facts here, and not stray too far into wild speculation.

We have to go back to the Grail legend. The Holy Grail is the middle ground — the entrance back into the Garden, guarded by firey angels. In the legend, there is a line of Frankish kings called the Merovingians, who are descended from Christ. They protect the Grail by their keeping of the bloodline of Christ. It makes perfect sense that on the Quest for the Grail one would encounter its protector.

However, there are two kinds of protection. The first kind of protection is protection against evil. What evil? Well, that is the second kind of protection. The second kind seeks to prevent anyone from attaining the Grail. The legend says that there are angels in favor of mankind, and those against mankind. This is the basis of the War in Heaven, the result of which is the casting out of Those Opposed, led by Lucifer.

Here is one of my small indulgences with regard to speculation — I am going to say that this "casting out" is part of the history of the Matrix universe, and that it means "cast out from the machine city to the Matrix."

We know that "the Merovingian" is a protector of the Grail, and we know that there are two protectors. I'm sure I don't need to spell this out, but I will anyway. The fact that Merv's wife is Persephone makes it absolutely clear that he is Hades, which assuredly equates to Lucifer. In case you have not figured it out, the other protector is the firey angel who calls himself a protector: Seraph. (We see that these two know each other, so I feel like that is evidence for what I'm saying here.)

I am going to take this a little further and say that the Merovingian is opposed to mankind. He is also opposed to God, by which I mean the Architect and the Oracle. And the Merovingian will strike at all of them every time he gets a chance, out of pure hatred, for being cast out. Most especially he is against the Oracle, because this "Age" of the Matrix is very much her idea. (This is why he wants to harm the Oracle, c.f. *Enter the Matrix*.) The whole "Neo thing" invented by the Oracle is definitely on the Merovingian's shit list.

For Reloaded, we have his motivation for imprisoning the Keymaker. And for Revolutions, we have his motivation for taking advantage of Neo being trapped at the Mobil Avenue station by demanding the eyes of the Oracle. The Merovingian surely had no intention of releasing Neo from Mobil station. Not ever. He would have harmed the Oracle (again) and harmed Neo at the same time. A nice victory for the Merovingian.

Now that we have properly set up the Merovingian as the Devil, it is time to turn our attention to the Club Hel scene. The events at the club are tightly connected to the events at the Mobile Avenue station, and it all gets its start when Neo halted the squiddies at the end of Reloaded and fell into a coma. That coma was compared by many readers to a death, and the question was frequently raised whether Neo would be transformed after he woke up. I suspected as much, and it turns out to be true in a bigger way than I ever anticipated. It is representative of Christ's post-crucifixion and pre-resurrection experience. In the Apostle's Creed, Christ descends into Hell after his death on the cross. The Creed doesn't really say any more than this, but it gets heavy interpretation in the Catholic Church [3], so there are several variations on the whole story. At the moment of his death, Christ's soul and body separated from each other — his body stayed on Earth and his soul went down into...well, this varies. Sometimes it's Sheol, the place of the dead. Sometimes Hell. And sometimes Limbo.

This fits in extremely nicely with our yin/yang Christ. The yin can descend to Hell, while the yang spends time in Limbo. I will get to yang/Neo's side of this experience in the next section. For now, I will focus on yin/Trinity.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

I have all but spelled this out, but in case you weren't paying attention, I believe that Neo and Trinity represent one person. If something happens to Trinity, we can just as well say it happened to Neo. This is mainly true since the end of Reloaded, after Neo resurrects Trinity. After that they are like one. Therefore, Trinity's trip to Club Hel counts as Christ's descent into Hell. I find it fascinating that Trinity is accompanied by Morpheus and Seraph.

A minor sidetracking... When this trio approaches the main doors of Club Hel, the bouncers recognize Seraph immediately and call him "Wingless." Inside the club, the Merovingian calls Seraph "L'ange sans ailes" (Wingless Angel). This reveals a depth and complexity about Seraph that is very intriguing. He has had his wings clipped. Seraph, too, must be some kind of exile from the machine city, and his protection of the Grail may be work of atonement.

Now a few choice bits of dialogue. As Trinity, Morpheus, and Seraph enter the club:

MEROVINGIAN – What in the hell?

Precisely. If there was any doubt, let it be gone. This is hell. Actually, just in case you still aren't certain, the Merovingian repeats himself later: "You have fought through hell." And if you are truly dense, the clothing worn by Persephone and the Merovingian is positively devilish. The Trainman is with the Merovingian, quite likely informing him that Neo is stuck at Mobil Avenue station. Then Morpheus does something strange and tells the Merovingian that they want to make a deal.

MEROVINGIAN – Okay. I have something you want. To make a deal, you must have something I want, yes? And it so happens there is something I want. Something I've wanted ever since I first came here. It is said they cannot be taken, they can only be given.

MORPHEUS – What?

MEROVINGIAN – The eyes of the Oracle.

His seething hatred for the Oracle runs deep. For him, it's not enough that he had her exterminated. The Merovingian wants the Oracle's *soul*. Apparently, he has wanted this kind of possessive revenge since the moment he entered the Matrix. I'll take this as additional evidence that he was forced out of the machine city and into the Matrix against his wishes, and (from what it looks like) as a result of the Oracle's actions. The creepiest part of it all was that while the Merovingian was asking for the Oracle's eyes he was slowly munching on two eyeball-looking olives.

The subtext in these lines is just as amazing. This is truly a deal with the Devil. The subtext says, "Yes, I will give you what you want, but in exchange you must turn against God." Given what happens later in the movie, I strongly suspect that Neo, even if he had been released, would have been thwarted from achieving the Grail if the Oracle's eyes had been delivered to the Devil. The Oracle played a key part in Neo's transformation, a part that wouldn't have occurred.

I am very unsure about Morpheus here. I think he might have been ready to shake hands and go collect some eyeballs. He is a little pissed off at the Oracle too. But that's all academic, because Trinity changes the equation by pointing a gun directly at the Merovingian's forehead. And this is the behavior we expect from Christ toward the Devil. Deal-making is really out of the question. And anyway, Hades was never good for letting the dead return to the world of the living. He always had to be coerced somehow.

Precisely at this instant, Neo, at Mobile Avenue station, says, "You got yourself into this. You can get yourself out." And that's exactly what happens.

[3] For all you trying to discern my religious leanings, please stop. You're wrong. [Back]

14 The Mobil Avenue Station and the Program Family

I know this scene was severely misunderstood. The two most important scenes in *Revolutions* are Mobil Avenue and the final showdown with Smith, and so that is really all I have dealt with. Mobil Avenue tells us exactly what's going to happen at the end of the movie. In fact, Mobil Avenue is so central to the story that I had to force myself to put it at the end of the essay, and force myself to refrain from writing it until I had explored some of the other areas of the movie first.

Let's first get this out of the way: Mobil is an anagram for Limbo. I think just about everyone caught that, but I'll say it just to be sure. As I explained in the Merovingian section, Christ's body and soul have separated from each other [4] and Christ's soul, like everything else, is a pair of opposites. Yin–Christ is Trinity. Yang–Christ is Neo. The half that is Trinity descended into Hell. The half that is Neo went into Limbo.

The location of Mobil Avenue station (I'll just call it Mobil from now on) can be very confusing, principally because, in the movie, it is described from two different perspectives at the same time. It's the River Styx. Only instead of a river, we have train tracks; instead of a boat, we have a train; and instead of a Boatman we have...well, a Trainman. In Greek mythology, Charon the Boatman works for Hades. Similarly, our Trainman works for the Merovingian.

The other confusing aspect of Mobil is what the program family is actually doing. I'll clear that up before I dig into the heart of this scene. Mobil is a place between the machine city and the Matrix. At first it seems like they are smuggling their daughter out of the Matrix. It's just the opposite. The program family is from the machine city and they are smuggling their daughter *into* the Matrix, where there are plenty of exiles who have no purpose. As long as an Agent doesn't find her, the daughter will be safe.

Now, as I said before, Mobil is Limbo. The theme of the entire film is described by that name. Limbo, the *limbus patrum*, is the place where purified souls go to await the ascension of Christ into heaven.

As if that's not enough, we are (subtly) told where the ascension will take place. Because Mobil leads to the machine city, Neo will ascend to heaven in the machine city.

In the Reloaded essay, I did some work in the Architect section on the idea that Neo was the "sixth day" of Creation. In other words, Neo represents genuine human beings (the human being eats the apple and leaves the Garden). I also planted the seeds of suspicion that Neo might be the sixth incarnation of Vishnu, called Parashurama. These are both wholly, completely verified by what transpires at Mobil. Earlier in this essay, I claimed that Neo's coma was a metaphorical death. I think it's possible to assert that the sixth incarnation of Neo didn't make it past the Architect's chamber in Reloaded, but at least something of him survives to Mobil. This will be the end of him. Neo 6.0, who is the Serpent, who is Parashurama, never leaves Mobil Avenue station. The Neo that rides the train out at the end of the sequence is the seventh incarnation. Here is how it unfolds.

SATI – Good morning.

NEO – Who are you?

SATI – My name is Sati. Your name is Neo. My papa says you're not supposed to be here. He says you must be lost. Are you lost, Neo?

The first thing we hear spoken is "Good morning." That means, "Welcome to a new day." You are a new person, Neo. Then we are introduced to the young girl, whose name is Sati. Remember these are the very first events that happen to Neo in *Revolutions*. We are explaining the direction of the entire movie in the first few minutes. Sati means "self-immolation." More generally, willing self-sacrifice. This points directly at the final moments between Neo and Smith. It is interesting that Sati knows Neo's name already. It isn't that Sati recognizes Neo, but

Matrix Reloaded Explained

her father surely does.

The part about being lost is important. This is about *why* Neo is at Mobil. If he was there intentionally, he wouldn't be lost. As we learn from the Oracle later, Parashurama isn't prepared to go to the machine city. He cannot touch the Source and survive. He pops into Limbo entirely by accident. But now the father...

RAMA-KANDRA – I'm sorry, she is still very curious.

NEO – I know you.

Frequently in these films there are lines of dialogue that seem to carry a particular, superficial meaning but in fact are deep wells of symbolism. In *Reloaded*, when Neo and the Oracle talk in the park, Neo asks the Oracle why she is here. "Same reason as you," she says. "I love candy." (I have picked on this particular line before. It's a perfect example.) What this really means is that the Oracle delights in disobedience — she loves the eating of the apple. When Neo says "I know you" it's the same thing. Yes, he recognizes him from the restaurant. What it really means, however, is that Neo recognizes Rama-Kandra like a mirror image. Neo is meeting himself. Chalk up another one for the pairs of opposites. The Neo-in-black is Parashurama, the Serpent. Rama-Kandra is, well, Ramachandra, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu, the Christ. To be more accurate about it, Rama-Kandra is the divinity of Christ.

In the Vishnu stories, Parashurama actually meets Ramachandra and there is a "passing of the torch," so to speak. There is no way this is a coincidence. It gets better. After Parashurama cedes to Rama, Parashurama goes off to live high in the mountains (between Earth and Sky) to await the next age of the world. Welcome to Mobil Avenue station, Parashurama.

Like so many other symbols in this trilogy, we encounter another set of three. The trinity again. Rama formally introduces his family:

RAMA-KANDRA – I am Rama-Kandra. This is my wife Kamala, my daughter Sati. We are most honored to meet you.

In Hindu mythology, Kamala really is the wife of Ramachandra. (Er, maybe not exactly, but close enough. Kamala is an incarnation of Lakshmi just as Rama is an incarnation of Vishnu.) This is a matched pair [5], and like Neo and Trinity we can talk about them as if they were one person. Their daughter is Sati (although it doesn't work out this way in the mythology). Taken on their names alone, I think the meaning here is that from divinity springs perfect sacrifice.

I will have to take a quick break to talk about divinity. This is the divinity of the human soul, not an external creature somewhere far away. It is inextricable from enlightenment, which in turn has everything to do with choice and with *why* choices are made. The Divine says, "There is nothing that can move me except my will to move." Neither fear nor desire can touch the Divine because the Divine is outside of the field of time, and so, without influence of any kind, the choice made by the enlightened soul is a perfect choice. This is the root of the perfect, willing sacrifice. It is not done for a reason. There is no causal chain. The choice is the beginning and the end. Now when the Divine *descends* into the field of time, there is suffering, and there is compassion. The way back "up" to the Divine is through the sacrifice. The gift is the door, the Holy Grail, the way between the pairs of opposites.

Returning to Mobil, we see that as Rama speaks he holds Sati directly in front of him, between himself and Neo. The meaning is exactly what I have just said. The essence of the Grail is there, in the space between Parashurama and Ramachandra.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

But what else do we know about Ramachandra and Kamala? It's very strange. Rama is in charge of recycling at the "power plant." Oh no. The power plant for the machines? Recycling? Let's bring back what Morpheus said about that in the first movie:

MORPHEUS – Then I saw the fields with my own eyes. Watched them liquefy the dead so they could be fed intravenously to the living.

Rama–Kandra's job is to oversee feeding the liquefied dead humans to the living humans in the power–generation pods. You would have to be made entirely of stone to not feel revolted by that. Yet... this is life. In a footnote in the Reloaded essay I remarked that some vegetarian and most vegans try to avoid this but cannot. That sparked a handful of angry emails. I still maintain its truth. Life is dirty, and sometimes disgusting. You do not live except by consuming the dead. *This is life*. Smith is anti–life:

BANE – I admit, it is difficult to think, encased in this rotting piece of meat. The stink of it filling every breath, a suffocating cloud you can't escape. Disgusting!

What we are really saying, then, with Rama in charge of "recycling," is that he encompasses not just the glory of the Divine but also the gritty, earthy Oroboros — the world–snake eating its own tail, the consumptive animal. This is a lesson. You do not achieve the Grail by eliminating or leaving behind your animal self. It is as much a part of you as the divine. That is why Bane speaks those lines, and that is why Bane is wrong (as we feel he must be). The One is both Earth and Sky, the world below and the world above.

Said another way, the One comes from Limbo to save both worlds.

* * *

14.1 Post–ascendere

On the way out of Mobil station on the train, Morpheus and Link have a conversation on the cell phone. Here is what they said:

MORPHEUS – Are you ready for us?

LINK – Almost, sir. They got some pretty ancient hacks here, we're working on it. Did you find Neo?

MORPHEUS – Can't you see him?

LINK – No, sir. We were reading something but I couldn't tell what it was.

Good morning, Neo. Today is the seventh day.

* * *

[4] I believe the exact words of the Oracle in *Enter the Matrix* were "mind and body." I don't know for sure, because I've never played the game. I like "soul" better, because it seems more like the whole person's essence. "Mind" feels like dry intellect. [Back]

[5] It would be interesting to compare Rama and Kamala to the Architect and the Oracle. I think there is a good match–up there. I'm not going to go into it in this essay, though. [Back]

15 The Oracle, the Architect, and Sati

This is the first of the "speculative" sections of this essay. It is also the least speculative of the three (although believe me it is still speculative). The purpose is to dissect what happened at the end of *Revolutions*, because it was a little bit difficult to see.

There are two separate parts to the ending. The first part is what we see of the humans; the second part is what we see of the machines (i.e., programs). I am going to start immediately at the point of Neo's ascension, when The Source declares "It is done." The first human being who speaks after that is Lock, and we are informed of all the human ramifications of Neo's actions.

LOCK – It doesn't make sense.

As I hinted at before with the Grail legend, and as more than one sharp reader has also pointed out, the defeat of rationality is central to transcendence. Perhaps a better way to say it is that you cannot grow into your true humanity by rational means. It's a nonrational journey, which is why the Zen master challenges his pupils to imagine the sound of one hand clapping. We're also getting right to the core of why Neo could not have simply pummeled Smith into submission; why the Christ has to irrationally allow himself to be sacrificed. (It will be interesting to see, now that *The Passion of the Christ* is out, how parallel the themes will be with *Revolutions*.) The only thing that would "make sense" (Lock is our voice of caution and reason) would be for Neo to come blasting through the hordes of squiddies with some kind of super laser cannon. I've had quite a pile of email from people saying exactly what Lock said — the machines just leaving Zion doesn't make sense. They are right. It's not rational.

We can also rewind a little to the voice of God, who says to Neo "We don't need you." Lock would say the same thing. The machines don't need us. It's the battery question all over again. Rationally, the machines *don't* need humans.

The unraveling of the rationality puzzle is tied up with exploring Neo's powers, especially why he has powers in the real world. This is described later. I won't say any more about that here, except as it applies to Sati (a few paragraphs below). The machines are of course perfectly rational. It's *this* that is their limitation, not the need for raw electricity. The Architect embodies all of this. The machines need humans to escape the prison of their own perfect rationality. That's also what Lock is doing in this movie in the first place. He's there to show that rationality is a box. What would have happened if the Council had only followed Lock's recommendations? Disaster. The only path to growth, ascension, and peace is a nonrational one.

Now about this "real world" issue:

MORPHEUS – I have imagined this moment for so long. Is this real?

The fact that it's Morpheus saying this is just incredible. Recall his words to Neo in the first movie, "Have you ever had a dream you were so sure was real..." For a time I was intending to write a piece about the reality of reality (the *Reloaded* essay still says something to that effect). I probably won't now because *Revolutions* explained everything I was going to say, only using metaphoric language. There is definitely an entire book that could be written about that one line spoken by Morpheus. Is this real? We can interpret Morpheus' words very simply, however, and it leads us directly into the part about the machines: This is the waking from a dream, the shaking off of slumber, the half-real state between the dream world and the waking world. The night is over. The sun is rising. Good morning, Morpheus. Today is the seventh day.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Just before the sunrise, the age turns. The *deja-vu* cat wakes Sati from her own sleep. Er, wait a minute. Sleep? We've got a program sleeping, and then waking *immediately after Morpheus talks about waking from a dream*. This proximity and parallel puts Sati directly at the center of all meaning as far as the machines are concerned. And just so we are sure about this point, here is what Sati says when she wakes up:

SATI – Good morning.

With Sati's line we have all the information we need to fully construct what has happened with respect to the Matrix and the war. Everything that follows — the conversation between the Oracle, the Architect, and Sati — fills in the details. Here is the rundown (three parts):

- A new age has begun for humans
- A new age has begun for machines
- A new age has begun for the Matrix (i.e., the middle world) (see Ages)

Part of what these new ages are like can already be inferred from Sati herself. She is the new machine. As I explained in a previous section, Sati represents willing sacrifice. As I also said a few paragraphs ago, the [old] machines are perfectly rational. But since this kind of sacrifice is at heart an irrational act, she is set apart from earlier machines. She is the new; the Oneness of Neo (new) ascended to the Source and imprinted onto the program mind.

The Oracle's first line in this scene is interesting because it draws attention to the fact that this is a new world.

ORACLE – Well, now, ain't this a surprise.

Her remark is directed at the fact that the Architect walks into the park where she is hanging out. Now the park is really a substitute for garden, i.e., the Garden of Eden. As I explained in detail in the Reloaded essay, the Architect is the Creator God. So God (the creator) walking in the Garden is equivalent to a tour of a new world, precisely as we see God touring in Genesis. This conveniently brings us full circle. The wheel of time turns and a new world is born. (Another sidenote: there should be little wonder how the Oracle can predict as well as she does. It has all happened before, just as Indra is tutored in the way of the opening and closing of the Lotus and of Brahma's eyes; worlds within worlds within worlds.)

The Oracle's line contains a little dry humor, because of course the Oracle is *not* surprised in the least way. But now their banter:

Dialogue

Comments

ARCHITECT – You've played a very dangerous game.

ORACLE – Change always is.

The world has changed (we already knew that). The change was initiated by the Oracle, who is the embodiment of the nonlinear, nonrational path. The idea that it was "dangerous" seems to be brushed off by the Oracle's offhanded manner. That indicates only the Architect perceives these events as dangerous. To him, abandoning reason is quite dangerous indeed.

ARCHITECT – Just how long do you think this peace is going to last?

ORACLE – As long as it can.

There is a real peace, beyond rational and irrational; machine and human. For an indeterminate time to come there will be no more attacks on humans and vice versa. This time will be short. Resumed conflict is imminent, but it will be along different axes. The machine/man conflict is truly over, but there are still things to work out, e.g., to unplug or not

Matrix Reloaded Explained

to unplug (see next two exchanges).

ORACLE – What about the others?

ARCHITECT – What others?

ORACLE – The ones that want out.

I find this very interesting. The Architect doesn't see anything at issue here. He doesn't understand that there are any divisions yet. That means there aren't any divisions at the moment. Everything is One (c.f. The Fourth Age, next section). Remember the Oracle said the Architect has no future vision — he can't see past any choices. The Oracle is looking a few steps down the road, though, and she knows both humans and machines will want to exit the system in some way. Humans will want to leave Zion. Machines will want to leave the machine city. And both humans and programs will want to leave the Matrix.

ARCHITECT – Obviously, they will be freed.

All of the classes of beings that I just mentioned will have the ability to exit the system. The system no longer exists to enslave, but to enable. Remember the Oracle said "The ones who *want* out" [my emphasis] and not merely "everyone." It's only those who both comprehend the system and desire to exit it who will have anything happen to them. Some will continue to defend the system as the "really real" reality, just as Morpheus described in the first movie. Not just humans, either. The Merovingian will not give up his kingdom easily.

The very last bit is odd, though. The Oracle asks "Do I have your word?" with respect to releasing those who want to be freed. I don't think she is testing whether the Architect is telling the truth. This is more the voice of concern for all the exiles. Sati is an exile. Perhaps Seraph is an exile now too. The Oracle wants assurances that the ones she cares for won't be deleted.

What is much stranger about this exchange, however, is how the Architect answers. He does not say yes or no, but instead gives an ambiguous reply. He says, "What do you think I am? Human?" It's likely that he means his statement will be honored — it would take a human to break a promise. It is also possible that he means only a human would *make* a promise. In either case it shows that the Architect is still divorced from human beings. He is the old way.

Right after he speak that line, Sati shows up. The new way. There are two things to note about the final set of lines. First, Sati apparently makes the sunrise. The second thing is that the Oracle says she did not know things would work out as they did, but she believed they would.

About the first: I said briefly before that the new Matrix exists not to enslave but to enable. Anyone in the new Matrix will be capable of shaping it, at least for a little while. Because Sati is the symbol of all this, she is shown crafting a sunrise. What is also important is that she does it on a whim. She does not say "Oh, it was 6:27 AM, and therefore time for the sun to come up." She says only, "I did it for Neo." No particular reason, no purpose, no one telling her to do it — just sentiment.

About the second: The Oracle only *believed* things would turn out the way they did. That is the same as hoping they would, which is the "human weakness." The reason I make a point of it is that this indicates the time of the Oracle and the Architect are over. Sati is their replacement. It also shows that humans and machines were always on equal footing. To understand why, we have to go back to the Architect's chamber in Reloaded (we've been back here a number of times!). Neo's path back to The Source takes him to the Architect. That is, the Architect is the primary route for humans back to The Source. Remember, The Source is the Center — not aligned. So getting there is through the program that is most machine-like. The opposite is true for machines. Getting to The Source means going through the Oracle, who is the most human-like program. That is why Smith's path took him to the

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Oracle.

This connects with Neo's real-world powers and moots the battery question. The humans' path of ascension leads them to the machines; the machines path of ascension leads them to the humans. Now that the age of ascension has arrived, these gateways are unnecessary. It is Sati's time. The time of gift.

16 The Four Ages of the Matrix

I had a philosophy professor who said, (cue Indian accent) "If we humans ever advance to the point where we have created a perfect Utopia, the first thing we will do is start shoving spikes under our fingernails." This is about disobedience, which I covered in the Reloaded essay. We can't stand to be predictable. We can't tolerate not having a choice.

My goal with this bit of speculation is to get into the progression of what I call the Four Ages of the Matrix. By "ages" I mean the grand rewrites of the Matrix that Smith and the Architect tell us about. (Persephone helps us out by hinting at "a much older version" of the Matrix in which creatures like vampires and werewolves were part of the design of the world.) These four ages are:

1. The Perfect Garden
2. The Wasteland
3. The Return to the Source
4. Nirvana

It should be noted that these Ages are exactly like the steps of the "spiritual cycle" that I described when talking about the Holy Grail. These Ages, too, are a cycle — Nirvana pours into the Perfect Garden, and the wheel turns once again. That's why the Oracle said that Neo will be back. The Third Age will come around sooner or later in the Great Cycle of Being. It's got a Hindu ring to it, the cycles within cycles within cycles; worlds within worlds. Brahma opens his eyes and closes his eyes and within that space many Indras come and go.

The Third Age is what the trilogy of movies is all about. The first film starts near the end of the Third Age, and the last film closes with the dawning of the Fourth Age. I'll talk about the Fourth Age first, since we have a little bit of direct evidence about it. Then I will speculate some about how the First and Second ages might fit into the big picture. I won't directly talk about the Third Age at all in this section, because it's already quite visible — just watch the films.

16.1 Nirvana

I opened this section talking about choice. There is an argument that travels from scene to scene in Reloaded and Revolutions that has to do with choices, fate, and control. Neo and Morpheus, as representatives of the human mind, argue that everything begins with choice. Figures like the Merovingian and the Architect, as representatives of the machine mind, argue that every event necessarily follows from the events before it, and therefore choice is an illusion. As I said many times in the Reloaded essay, the critical distinction between humans and machines is the ability to grow. ("Growth" is not the same thing as "learn," and it is not the same thing as "change." The machines can learn and change, but they cannot grow.) Growth requires the cycle — the exit and the return — and the cycle requires making a genuine choice. The Oracle points this out when she urges Neo to understand his choices. Interestingly, the Merovingian is also obsessed with finding out the reason, the *why*. The making of the decision is irrelevant. What's important is why you made it. If you eat because you're hungry, then you didn't really make the choice to eat. It's only cause and effect. You're in the Merovingian's mechanical, predictable world. But suppose you could resist hunger indefinitely. If you then ate, what would be the cause? The *why* is the difference. When the forces of the world and in your mind no longer have any sway over you, it is possible to make a pure, genuine choice. It might look the same as cause-and-effect behavior, but it is not the same at all. When Buddha sits on the Immovable Spot, where no force in the universe can cause him to do anything, he is divine.

To illustrate that last point very clearly, I want to zero in on the specific act of sacrifice. We have the act portrayed in Revolutions in a certain way. Neo makes it abundantly clear that nothing at all is moving him except

Matrix Reloaded Explained

his own will to move. He is on the Immovable Spot. His sacrifice is pure because of *why* he is doing it. As a mental experiment, let's rewrite some of Revolutions to see how things could have been different. Suppose that after getting his eyes burned out, Neo and Trinity have a quarrel because she thinks he's too damaged to proceed. Stung by his words, Trinity goes outside the hovercraft to sulk. Neo says to himself, "I'll show her," manages to get the hovercraft on autopilot, and flies by himself to the machine city. Once there, Neo gets himself plugged in and fights Smith. He knows he can really make her sorry by getting himself killed. That'll teach her! So Neo sacrifices himself.

There's not much divinity in that. It's small and stupid. It's the same act, but the reason it was done changes it from a beatific reunion with God into a spiteful, selfish stunt. There is Neo and there is the Merovingian, revealed.

Now that was a long way to come so that I can say Nirvana is the point at which no forces can exert themselves to make you do anything. It should be noted that this includes the passage of time, so Nirvana is a place outside of the domain of time. It is only in pristine emptiness that we can hear the music of the spheres and stand in the presence of the Divine.

What should also be clear is that this state of being cannot last more than an instant. As Neo ascends into the Source, the swirling Sentinels retreat, the humans of Zion euphorically cheer, it is the moment immediately before the sunrise when the universe holds its breath and time stands still. There is no need for action or decision — it is sufficient to be. The pause draws on and the second hand of the clock ticks forward, and we descend once more, falling out of the presence of the Divine and back into the domain of time. So truthfully the Fourth Age ought to be called the 4+1 Age, because it immediately transforms into the new Garden. I thought that would be much too confusing. When I say "Fourth Age" it really means the moment of Neo's ascension and the Garden that follows. (This way it is also distinct from the *previous* First Age.)

In the Fourth Age the Matrix as an entity remains. It is a fundamentally different Matrix, however. The Matrix of the Fourth Age is a voluntary construct. If a human wants to leave or enter the Matrix, he will be free to do so. If a program wants to enter or leave the Matrix, it will be free to do so. This is essentially the lifting of the machines' draconian insistence on purpose. (This insistence, which is really about social conformity, directly relates to the beginning of the Hero's Journey, and that is the thesis of the first film in the trilogy. The hero disobeys.) No one has to die because of nonconformance in this Matrix. The truth about the Matrix would also necessarily be "let out" and over a few weeks I suppose everyone will have believed it.

The consequence of the freedom to come and go and to know the truth is that the Matrix of the Fourth Age will be adjustable to the wishes of its inhabitants. It will be an Age of Gods, human and machine.

Outside the Matrix, in the real world, humans will continue to live underground and machines will continue to live in their city. Emissaries from each group will eventually be welcome by the other, and the groups will gain from each other. It will be an Age of Gods, human and machine.

16.2 The Perfect Garden

Although I am talking here specifically about the "original" First Age of the Matrix (i.e., not the 4+1 Age I mentioned above), much of what follows will apply to the new Garden as well.

In the beginning, the Architect had to design and implement a world for humans to live in. Naturally, that world would be perfect in all its aspects, and every need of its population taken care of.

We can perhaps imagine that everyone is beautiful, healthy, and serene. No one ages and no one is ever injured. It is an absolute Utopia. I tend to think that it was a technological Utopia, because that is what a machine mind

Matrix Reloaded Explained

would invent. Agent Smith hints, "As soon as we started thinking for you it really became our civilization." So there was probably some point in time at which things were going pretty easy for humanity in a near-100% machine-run world. All the machines would need to do is extrapolate from that.

There would have been some mechanism for dealing with the actual death of humans outside the Matrix, to prevent still-connected people from noticing that someone was no longer around and getting sad about it, but I admit I cannot think of a very good way to do that. And that might be the crack in the armor. At some point suffering is going to creep into the picture, if only because of the passage of time. I don't suspect it would take that much, though, to get people chafing at the perfection. In order to be perfect, everything must be predictable. Most, if not all people will do almost *anything* to avoid being predictable. The more the environment succeeds at prediction, the harder they will try to disprove the environment. In other words, they will try to wake up from the Matrix. In mythic terms, we are at the equivalent of eating the apple. We want to *know*, no matter the cost. Like Neo, we are compelled to take the red pill.

So suffering enters into things. Smith says, "No one would accept the program. Entire crops were lost." The First Age enters a period of time (probably a very short period of time) when everything is in crisis. The idea that something is wrong with the world is spreading. Clearly the Matrix is going to have to be rewritten. And that is a point of division among machines. There is a disagreement. Smith says, "Some believed that we lacked the programming language to describe your perfect world." That seems to suggest that the machines are divided about what to do next.

This is without any doubt the beginning of the story of the Merovingian. I am going to go into pure imagination mode and make up a possible scenario about him. At the time of the First Age the Merovingian is a program in the machine city (not the Matrix). He does not think humans are worth the trouble and advocates that the machines should abandon them and figure out a way to live alone. Much of what Smith says about humans in the first movie is applicable to the Merovingian's opinion at this time. A number of other programs in the machine city also believe that the failure of the Matrix proves humans are ungovernable and their entire species should be scrapped.

The division among machines regarding humans is older than even the first Matrix, however. The decision to enslave humanity rather than terminate it was not a unanimous one. All those who were opposed then are opposed now. The old differences resurface, and the Merovingian attempts to "fork" the machine world. A machine civil war followed, fought entirely in codespace, and eventually the Merovingian and all the dissenters were brought back into conformity. Now dawns the Second Age.

16.3 The Wasteland

"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life."

— Gensis 3:17

After the machine civil war is over, the Architect remakes the Matrix into a wasteland. It is no less perfect, but rather than a blissful Utopia the Matrix of the Second Age is a world of Mad Max-style hedonistic excess. We see what it was like in Club Hel. The entire world was that way. It is the age of vampires and werewolves. The Second Age is the Kingdom of the Merovingian.

The Merovingian was expelled from the machine city into the Matrix. His purpose as a program in the Matrix is to control the traffic between worlds. This is a job he shares with Seraph, who is also a gatekeeper. Together they guard the way back to the Source, and the Keymaker and the Trainman are their servants. For a time Seraph and the Merovingian are partners, although they interpret their duties very differently.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

We already know from the Oracle that the Merovingian desires power. He probably had this urge all along, and asserted it from time to time, culminating in the disagreement over the failure of the First Age. Constrained by his purpose in the Matrix of the Second Age, he seeks power related to controlling the traffic of data (i.e., "a trafficker of information"). He uses his guardianship as a means to gain influence over other programs -- you can move data *for a price*, he says, taxing everything that passes through his fingers. The currency he demands is loyalty and debt; deletion codes are his prized winnings. He gains exclusive control of the Keymaker and the Trainman, and he ensnares Persephone. The vampire and werewolf programs come under his control as well, as do the Twins and other such creatures. Not too long after the Second Age Matrix is created, the Merovingian is its master -- he is the King of the Wasteland.

But all is not well in the Matrix. As before, some humans accept the program. Many others do not. The terms of expression in the Matrix were remade, but the essential premise was the same -- humans are still commanded to do what they are told, to accept their world without question. The urge to take the red pill remained, and a growing number of people refused to believe in the Matrix. So a second crisis was looming for the machines.

At the same time, the tension between Seraph and the Merovingian was growing. It is likely that Seraph met the Oracle during the time of crisis, and saw a way to fulfill his purpose through her.

(I'm still in full imagination mode here.) The Oracle was a program from the First Age Matrix whose job it was to help predict what humans might do, and thereby allow the Matrix to function as a fully predictive construct. Her job was the same in the Second Age. By the time she meets Seraph, her predictive powers are quite good, and she knows how to rewrite the Matrix yet again so that humans would accept the program fully. (This makes the Oracle seem rather sinister. I'm sure she knew full well at this time what the Third Age Matrix would lead to, so her motives are merely convoluted.)

Of course, the Merovingian is *not* in favor of rewriting the Matrix again. He tries to destroy her, but Seraph intervenes and protects the Oracle. That is the nature of the "betrayal" and the bad blood between Seraph and the Merovingian. And that is also how Seraph came to protect the Oracle full time, and how the Merovingian came to hate the Oracle obsessively.

Eventually, despite the Merovingian's efforts, the Matrix was rewritten to the Third Age. The Merovingian's influence was enormous, however, and he was able to take a substantial part in the rewriting process. He preserved himself, Persephone, a host of henchmen, and much of his kingdom. He also preserved his old job: he still polices the route between worlds.

17 The Seven Incarnations of Neo

There were two Ages of the Matrix that failed. Then the Architect introduces us to the Third Age, the design "stumbled upon" by an intuitive program (i.e., the Oracle). It is this design of the Matrix that permits The One and allows humans to grow — to disobey now and then — yet that disobedience is still under control.

About the incarnations of Neo, the Architect says:

ARCHITECT – The Matrix is older than you know. I prefer counting from the emergence of one integral anomaly to the emergence of the next, in which case this is the 6th version.

This is never argued. The Neo who stands before the Architect is clearly Number 6. I posit that the Neo at the end of Revolutions is Number 7. What causes confusion is how the incarnations and the ages relate to each other. I believe the only scenario which matches all the available evidence is this:

Ages	1	2	3					4	
Incarnations			1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Now I am not taking a position that says "Neo was spontaneous" or "Neo was created." Both of these statements are true. The graph above only shows the relationship between the seven instances of Neo and the greater ages of the Matrix. Neo — i.e., The One — did not exist in the first two Ages. He will likewise not exist in the two Ages that will *follow* what I have labeled as the Fourth Age. But as a new Third Age comes around, he will return.

17.1 Concerning the 6th Incarnation

About Neo Number 7 we have very little to say. He is a god, and not really part of the story. He represents what the 6th Neo becomes. All the suffering is with Number 6, and so that is where my focus is. But even among the non-godly six, the sixth and final mortal incarnation is quite different than all who came before him.

Perhaps the most important way that the 6th Neo is different from his predecessors is that he wields apparently supernatural powers in the real world. I also think that his abilities within the Matrix are far beyond what any previous incarnation possessed. Let's start with what the Architect says in Reloaded:

ARCHITECT – Your 5 predecessors were, by design, based on a similar predication: a contingent affirmation that was meant to create a profound attachment to the rest of your species, facilitating the function of the One. While the others experienced this in a very general way, your experience is far more specific, vis-a-vis love.

We have sufficient evidence here to say the 6th incarnation is different. But I want to explore the fact that the Architect says Neo's attachment is *by design*. In one email exchange with a reader, I suggested that Neo might be genetically engineered. A "programmed" human would make perfect sense to the machines, and it would also seem to give credence to the idea that Neo is continually reincarnated — at the end of each incarnation's journey his genetic code is recorded, then it is reinserted at a later date. The machines design Neo to feel an attachment toward the rest of humanity through genetic engineering just like they design his ability to manipulate the Matrix.

I know the genetically-engineered aspect is uncomfortable for a lot of people. It's not the whole story of what I'm trying to say, either. I think it's parallel with *Dune* and the *kwisatz haderach*. In *Dune*, the Bene Gesserit order has been manipulating bloodlines for eons (i.e., genetic engineering through selective breeding) in order to bring about a superbeing. Their experiments actually work, but in a way that they did not intend. Muad-dib is much

Matrix Reloaded Explained

greater than they imagined, and not under their control at all. So it is with Neo. The machines manipulate genes in order to try and "catch" the energy of the unbalanced equation — to provide a receptacle that can contain this energy and use it within the confines of a predefined script. Exactly how or when this "One" appears is unknown, but in aggregate statistics it's an certainty that he will appear. And when he does, he is led down a specific path. What the machines do not grasp (except for the Oracle) is that this *kwisatz haderach* is not under their control and is becoming much more than they imagined.

(As a sidenote, I don't think it is actually necessary to believe that Neo is reincarnated six times. It's possible for the story to work perfectly well with no connection whatsoever between Neo and the previous six instances of The One. I think it adds to the awe of it to have the reincarnation aspect, though. It requires a soul, something greater than what can be rationally summed.)

Now regarding Neo's special abilities: the functioning of the Matrix is the way to understanding these. It's quite a popular opinion that the abilities in the Matrix correlate exactly to strength of will. The idea is that Neo is just willing himself over these obstacles. I think that ignores the facts. Neo's powers in the Matrix manifest when he feels deep bonds with other human beings, most of all Trinity. As his relationship with Trinity grows, so does his power in the Matrix.

I don't think this is very surprising. The Matrix is, in William Gibson's language, a consensual hallucination. It should exhibit the qualities felt most strongly by its participants. (This is also why there is The One: to allow humans to exercise their will on the Matrix. More on this momentarily.) But even on a purely physical level it's still the case. The Matrix is powered by human bio–electricity. What is that? It's thoughts and feelings, impulses and urges of the body. Therefore, everything in the Matrix is the result of human emotion, or more accurately the ebb and flow of the aggregate emotion of the entire human race.

Neo is genetically designed to tap into this aggregate bio–electrical circuit, and he focuses and amplifies that energy. The extent of that amplification is tied to his personal emotional level. In his previous incarnations, Neo's generic feeling toward the rest of humanity afforded him a certain amount of power in the Matrix. But this time around, because of Trinity, the depth of his emotion is incredibly multiplied. As a result, so is his power in the Matrix. The same explanation works for everyone else, too. ER, not really everyone. We don't see special abilities in the Matrix from anyone except Neo, Morpheus, Trinity, Ghost, and Niobe. All five of them have strong emotions and deep connections to others. It is possible to suppose that all five of these people were genetically designed as well. I won't go either way on that except to say one thing: If the first interpretation that I gave regarding the relationship between the Ages and the Incarnations is true, then there is very little engineering that needs to be done.

It's not a very big leap from powers in the Matrix to Neo's powers in the real world. All the human bio–electricity flows from the pod fields to the Source, and then it is redistributed back to the Matrix along well–defined channels. The humans plugged into the Matrix then have experiences, from which they have emotions, and their emotional energy flows back to the Source. What I haven't mentioned is the machines. They are parasites on this energy loop between the humans and the Source. We should also notice that Neo's apparently "supernatural" abilities in the real world are strictly limited to affecting machines. He doesn't fly or do kung fu in the real world. The reason for this limitation is that he is merely tapping into the energy loop and...modifying it. Just like in the Matrix, where he modifies the energy loop to defy gravity, etc.

In the real world, however, his interface to the loop is much less well defined. There's no specific plug to filter the energy stream. He's got to tap into it directly, and that puts him in immediate contact with the Source, and that leads straight to Mobil Ave (at least until he is mentally and spiritually prepared for such direct contact). Now I suppose there isn't an explicit mechanism by which Neo should be able to tap into an energy loop in the real world, but it doesn't seem like too much of a stretch to genetically design someone to be sensitive to electrical currents. I prefer to think that his real–world abilities were never part of the design.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

There are of course much broader mythological meanings through all of this. The best evidence of that is Link and Zee. I think these were the two most emotionally charged characters in the trilogy, and between them accomplish some amazing things that strain the limits of possibility. And it happens in the real world. That's where the real energy and the real message is.

I'd like to return once more to the idea that all the machines are running off of human emotion. It isn't *power* that the machines need from humans, it's feelings, belief, and hope. The electrical power angle is just the metaphor. One reader wrote me to ask "What makes the machines go on day after day? Why do they continue? What reason do they have to exist?" Aside from ringing all the symbolic bells in the entire story, it spotlighted the exact nature of the machines' power source. The machines go on because the humans go on. The will to live and to grow and to feel and to experience is what they do not have and cannot invent. The power they get from human beings is the power to hope.

And finally this goes to the deepest core theme of the trilogy. At the end of the Reloaded essay when I speculated far and wide about what might come, I said this:

Humanity achieved "simple" godhood by creating beings in its own image. It will achieve "complex" godhood by reuniting with its estranged children. At the same time, **so will machines.**

Neo's --- humanity's --- path is toward reunion with The Source, with God. At the same time, the machines' path is toward reunion with another God, the human beings who created them. They are each other's path to the divine. As the Oracle said, the only way forward is together.



GLITCHES IN THE MATRIX . . . AND HOW TO FIX THEM

Why, exactly, do the rebels have to enter the Matrix via the phone system (which after all doesn't physically exist)? And what really happens when Neo takes the red pill (which also doesn't really exist)? And how does the Matrix know what fried chicken tastes like? Technologist and philosopher Peter Lloyd answers these questions and more.

To be published in Taking the Red Pill: Science, Philosophy and Religion in The Matrix (Ben Bella Books, April 2003). *Published on KurzweilAI.net March 3, 2003.*

As the essays throughout this book demonstrate, the Wachowski Brothers designed *The Matrix* to work at many levels. They carefully thought through the film's philosophical underpinnings, religious symbolism, and scientific speculations. But there are a few riddles in *The Matrix*, aspects of the film that seem nonsensical or defy the laws of science. These apparent glitches include:

Matrix Reloaded Explained

- The Bioport—how can a socket in your head control your senses? How can it be inserted without killing you?
- The Red Pill—since the pill is virtual, how can it throw Neo out of the Matrix?
- The Power Plant—can people really be an energy source?
- Entering and Exiting the Matrix—why do the rebels need telephones to come and go?
- The Bugbot—what's the purpose of the bugbot?
- Perceptions in the Matrix—how do the machines know what fried chicken tastes like?
- Neo's Mastery of the Avatar—how can Neo fly?
- Consciousness and the Matrix—are the machines in the Matrix alive and conscious? Or are they only machines, intelligent but mindless?

This essay addresses these questions and shows how these seeming glitches can be resolved.

17.2 THE BIOPORT

Can the machines really create a virtual world through a bioport? And how does it work? The bioport is a way of giving the Matrix computers full access to the information channels of the brain. It is located at the back of the neck—probably between the occipital bone at the base of the skull, and the first neck vertebra. Wiring would best enter through the soft cartilage that cushions the skull on the spinal column, and pass up through the natural opening that lets the spinal cord into the skull. This avoids drilling through bone, and maintains the mechanical and biological integrity of the skull's protection. A baby fitted with a bioport can easily survive the operation.

The bioport terminates in a forest of electrodes spanning the volume of the brain. In a newborn, the sheathed mass of wire filaments is pushed into the head through the bioport. On reaching the skull cavity, the sheath would be released, and the filaments spread out like a dandelion, gently permeating the developing cortex. Nested sheaths would release a branching structure of filamentary electrodes. As each sheathed wire approaches the surface of the brain, it releases thousands of smaller electrodes. In the neonate, brain cells have few synaptic connections, so the slender electrodes can penetrate harmlessly.

With its electrodes distributed throughout the brain, the Matrix could deliver its sensory signals in either of two places: at the sensory portals or deep inside the brain's labyrinth. For example, vision could be driven by electrodes on the optic nerves where they enter the brain. Artificial signals would then pass into the visual cortex at the back of the brain, which would handle them as if they had come from the eyes. Correspondingly, outgoing motor nerves would also have electrodes at the

Matrix Reloaded Explained

boundary of brain and skull. This simple design mirrors the natural state of the brain most closely. It is not, however, the only possibility. Electrodes could alternatively be attached in the depths of the brain, beyond the first stages of the visual cortex. This would greatly simplify the data processing. In normal perception, most of the incoming information isn't processed; information you aren't paying attention to is filtered out. If the Matrix were to deliver information directly to the output axons from the sensory cortex—as opposed to the input to the cortex—then it would save itself the job of filling in all those details.

One scene tells us which method the Matrix uses. When Neo wakes and finds himself in a vat, he pulls out the oxygen and food tubes, drags himself out of the gelatinous fluid, and—perceives the world. The fact that he can see and hear proves that the visual and auditory cortices of his brain are working. This wouldn't be possible if the Matrix had put its sensory data into the deeper centers of his brain. For then his sensory cortex would have been bypassed: it would never have received any stimulation, and would have wasted away. In that case, Neo would wake from his vat and find himself blind and deaf, with no sense of smell or taste, no feeling of touch or heat in his skin, no awareness of whether he was vertical or horizontal, or where his arms or legs were. The Matrix must have input its visual data just where the optic nerve from the eyeball passes into the skull, rather than in the midst of the brain's vision processing. Likewise, Neo's ability to walk and use his arms shows that the motor cortex is also developed and functioning. Indeed, even the cerebellum, which controls balance, must be working. So, the Matrix must be capturing its motor signals from the brain's efferent nerves after they have finished with the last stage of cortical processing, but before the nerves pass out of the skull.

The rebels use the bioport to load new skills into their colleagues' brains—writing directly into permanent memory. The Matrix itself never implants skills in this way; folks in the virtual world learn things in the usual manner by reading books and going to college. So, why did the architects of the Matrix build into the bioport this capability to download skills? It is actually a byproduct of how the bioport is installed. They could have attached electrodes to just the sensory and motor nerve fibers. That, though, is difficult: the installer must predict where each nerve fiber will be anchored, which is hard to do reliably, given the plasticity of the neonate brain; and it must navigate through the brain tissue to find these sites. A more robust and adaptable method is to lay a carpet of electrodes throughout the whole brain, and let the software locate the sensory and motor channels by monitoring the data flows on the lines.

That spare capacity remains available for others to exploit, and the rebels use it to download kung-fu expertise into Neo's brain and to implant helicopter piloting skills into Trinity's. If the Matrix ever learned this technique, it could create havoc for the rebels, implanting impulses to serve its own ends.

17.3 THE RED PILL

Morpheus offers Neo the choice of his lifetime, in the form of the famous red and blue pills. But what can a virtual pill do to a real brain? We have seen that the Matrix interacts with the brain only in the sensory and motor nerve fibers. It does

Matrix Reloaded Explained

not affect the inner workings of the brain, where a real psychoactive chemical would have to act. Minor analgesics such as aspirin would work by having their effect outside the brain centers, canceling out pain inputs from the avatar software.

The blue pill is probably a placebo. Morpheus says only, "You take the blue pill and the story ends. You wake in your bed and you believe whatever you want to believe." We never know what, if anything, the blue one would do.

So, how does the active pill, the red one, work? Since virtual aspirin can work as a painkiller, the avatar's software module must be able to accept instructions to cancel out any given sensory input. Evidently, the red pill gives the avatar a blanket command to cancel all such input. It thereby obliterates Neo's perception of the virtual world, which the Matrix has been feeding to him throughout his life. Instead of sitting on a chair in a hotel room, Neo sees and feels for the first time that he is immersed in a fluid. The perception of this filters through into his perceptions of the Matrix's own imagery. Neo touches a mirror, and finds it a viscous fluid that clings to his finger and then seeps along his arm, covering his chest and slithering down his throat. A blend of bodily perceptions and mental imagery is typical of what happens when you wake from a dream; external perceptions are distorted to fit the contents of the dream. Your dream of falling off a cliff might fade into falling out of bed. In the film, the liquefied mirror is seen only by Neo, not the others in the room. His real bodily sensations are, for the first time, sweeping into his brain, which struggles to integrate them into the stable narrative he has lived in up to that moment.

Another route out of the Matrix, besides the red pill, would be meditation. The Buddhist practice of *vipassā*¹ gives adepts penetrating insights into their own mental processes. It rolls back the barrier between conscious awareness and the subconscious. An adept of *vipassana*, living in the Matrix, would discover the interface between the Matrix's electrodes and the brain's wetware. The expert practitioner could override the Matrix's stream of imagery, and see reality. Morpheus mentions that someone did break free from the Matrix. Perhaps meditation was the key. To attain that expertise, however, would take years of effort. Leading other people to the truth would require a school of meditation to train new recruits for years, to pursue what one individual claimed was the truth, but everyone else dismissed as fantasy. No doubt this is what the Oracle is gently encouraging. But it is not surprising that the red pill was invented as a fast-track route.

Morpheus's team monitors Neo's progress. As he realizes that he is immersed in fluid, Neo panics, and his instinct to escape drowning compels him to drag the tubes out of his mouth. Like waking out of a dream, Neo finds the sensible world rushing in on him, and it is remarkable that his manual coordination has been so well preserved by the Matrix system. He grabs the tubes and yanks them out, using weak hands that had never before grasped anything.

When Neo's exit from the Matrix is detected, a robot inspects him and flushes him out of his pod. Too weak to swim, he must be pulled out of the wastewater pool without delay. How are the rebels to find him? In a power plant vast enough to house the human race, there would be thousands of effluent drains. As Morpheus

mentions to Neo, "the pill you took is part of a trace program." Besides canceling Neo's sensory inputs, the red pill also puts a unique reference signal onto the Matrix network. When the *Nebuchadnezzar's* computer locates that signal, it can work out Neo's physical location and order the hovercraft to the appropriate chute. In the tense moment before that reference signal is located, the worried Morpheus says, "We're going to need the signal soon," and Trinity exclaims that Neo's heart is fibrillating as the panic threatens to bring on a heart attack. Apoc finds the reference signal just in time, before Neo's brain disengages from the Matrix network and the signal vanishes.

17.4 THE POWER PLANT

During the armchair scene, we have what is probably the most criticized element in *The Matrix* story line. Morpheus claims that the human race is imprisoned in a power station, where human bodies are used as a source of bioelectricity. This is engineering nonsense; it violates the fundamental law of energy conservation. The humans would have to be fed, and the laws of physics demand that the energy consumed as food must be greater than the energy generated by the human body. That Morpheus has misunderstood what is going on is underscored by his mention in the same speech of the machines' discovery of a new form of nuclear fusion. Evidently, the fusion is the real source of energy that the machines use. So what are humans doing in the power plant? Controlled fusion is a subtle and complex process, requiring constant monitoring and micromanaging. The human brain, on the other hand, is a superb parallel computer. Most likely, the machines are harnessing the spare brainpower of the human race as a colossal distributed processor for controlling the nuclear fusion reactions. (*Sawyer comes to a similar conclusion elsewhere in this volume—Ed.*)

17.5 ENTERING AND EXITING THE MATRIX

The virtual world of the Matrix is not bound by physical laws as we know them, but for the virtual world to be consistently realistic, the laws of physics must be followed where they can be observed by humans. Access into and out of a virtual world is a problem, because materializing and dematerializing violate the conservation of mass and energy. Furthermore, whatever was previously in the space occupied by the materializing body must be pushed out of the way; and would be pushed with explosive speed if the materialization is instantaneous. Conversely, on dematerialization, the surrounding air would rush in to the vacated space with equal implosive force. There are no such explosions and implosions in *The Matrix*, so how do the rebels do it?

In the Matrix computer, software modules represent the observable objects in the virtual world, and these modules interact by means of predefined messages. One such message issued by a virtual human body, or "avatar," is, "What do I see when I look in the direction V?" A module whose object lies on the line of sight along V will respond with a message specifying the color, luminosity, and texture that the human should see in that direction. If a rebel's avatar is to be visible to other people who are immersed in the Matrix world, the *Nebuchadnezzar's* computer must pick up those "What-do-I-see" requests and reply with its own "You-see-this" message.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

A virtual human body does not send "What-do-I-see?" message to all other modules in the Matrix, or else it would overload the network. It refers to "registers" of modules, which record the virtual objects' shape, size, and position. Simple geometry then tells it which modules to target. For efficiency, each visible volume of space, such as the room of a building, has its own register.

The key step in materializing a body in a given space is for its module to be inserted into that space's register. For dematerializing, it is deleted from the register. Once it is registered, anyone looking in that direction will see that module's virtual body. The Matrix cannot let a software module insert itself arbitrarily into a register, since that could violate the conservation of mass if it led to an object's materializing in an area that has a conscious observer.

Registers for unobserved spaces are not constrained in this way. If nobody is watching a room and its entrances, then a body can safely materialize in it without observably breaking the simulated laws of physics.

This does not mean that the laws of physics break down as soon as all observers leave a room. The table and chair do not start to float around against the law of gravity when nobody is looking. Rather, the Matrix simply does not bother to run the simulation for a room that nobody is looking at. In its register, it retains details of where each object is, but the room is no longer rendered as visual and tactual imagery.

So, when the *Nebuchadnezzar's* computer wants to materialize a rebel, it must find some unobserved room, and insert the data module for the rebel's body into the register for that room. Subsequently, if someone else enters the room, he will see the rebel just like any other object in the room. And the rebel can walk out of the room into any other part of the Matrix world in the normal manner. This is how rebels materialize in the Matrix without causing explosions or breaching the integrity of the simulation.

When a rebel exits, the module that simulates her body is deleted from the register. This must happen only when the body is not being observed. There is, however, an intermediate state, "imperception," which effectively takes the body out of the virtual world even while the data module is still in the register. This is an emergency procedure that the *Nebuchadnezzar's* software uses for fast escapes.

Although the Matrix software cannot insert or delete a module while its object is being observed, it does allow any module to change its appearance. The agents use it whenever they enter the world. An agent never materializes or dematerializes, but changes the appearance of another person's avatar to match the personal qualities of the agent.

To make a rebel imperceptible, the *Nebuchadnezzar's* computer changes the body's visible appearance to be transparent; and the body's mechanical resistance to that of the air. From an observer's perspective, the body has melted into air. From a software perspective, the data module is still on the register but simulating a body indistinguishable from thin air. Later, when the scene is no longer being observed by anybody, the module will be deleted.

We see this happen only once, when Morpheus leaves the subway. Once the *Nebuchadnezzar's* computer has located his avatar, it sends an instruction to make it invisible. This does not affect the whole avatar at once: the module has to calibrate its appearance to match exactly its surroundings. The first part of the body to receive the instruction is the nervous tissue of the ear, and this at first glows bright white, before settling down to a state of transparency. The rest of the body follows. Its appearance oscillates around whatever is visible in the background, settling down to transparency: where the Morpheus stood, we see the background shimmer momentarily. The solidity of the body then fades: moments after Morpheus's body has become invisible, the telephone handset that had rested in his hand drops, slowly at first, toward the ground. The observed sequence is consistent not with the sudden deletion of the body's module, but rather with its changing its appearance.

17.6 HARD LINES

Telephones play a key role in entering and leaving the Matrix. But the rebels do not travel through the telephone lines as energy pulses. There is no device at the end of the telephone for reconstructing a human body from data: all you would get is noise in the earpiece. Furthermore, the bandwidth of a telephone line is too narrow to ship an entire human being. Finally, nothing at all ever really travels along the lines in the Matrix world, as they are only virtual.

Instead of being a conduit for transporting dematerialized rebels, the telephone line is a means of navigation. It pinpoints where a rebel is to enter or leave the Matrix.

To enter the vast Matrix requires specifying where the avatar is to materialize. To get an avatar into the Matrix world, the rebels must use some strictly physical navigation. This is done with the telephone network, which has penetrated every corner of the inhabited world with electronic devices, each of which has a unique, electronically determined label. Without knowing anything of human society and its conventions, the physics modules of the Matrix can determine where any given telephone number terminates.

How are the rebels to give a telephone number to the Matrix? They must dial it, but they cannot simply pick up a handset and make a call to a number inside the Matrix world, for any handset in the *Nebuchadnezzar* is connected to the real world telephone network, not the Matrix's virtual network. Inside the Matrix, a call must be placed subtly, without observably breaching the simulated laws of electromechanics.

To see how this can be done, we need to know something of the infrastructure of the Matrix. Monolithic computer systems are unreliable, so the Matrix is instead an assemblage of independent modules, each having a unique "network address." For a module to communicate with another, it will put a data message on the network with the address of the intended destination. Neither module need know where the other one is inside the electronic hardware of the Matrix computer. They might be inches apart, or a mile away.

This scheme is robust and flexible. There is no central hub, and individual modules can be plugged into, or taken out of, the network without disturbance. Conversely,

Matrix Reloaded Explained

the rebels can easily hack into it. Once they are linked into the network, their equipment can simply pretend to be another module. It can place data messages onto the system, which will be routed just like authentic messages, and be received and read by the addressed module. So, to initiate a telephone call, the crew will place a data message on the network, addressed to any module that simulates an aerial for receiving calls from cell phones. Some such node will pick up and read the counterfeit data message just as if the message had been sent by a bona fide source. On getting this message, the aerial module will carry out its role in handling a telephone call.

The *Nebuchadnezzar's* operator maintains contact with rebels who are in the Matrix even while the hovercraft is moving, so they must use radioports onto the network. The rebels might have installed their own rogue radio receiver—mechanically securing it in some dark corner, and plugging its data cable into a spare socket of a router. More likely, the Matrix itself uses radio as part of its network infrastructure, and the rebels broadcast their counterfeit messages on the same frequency.

Materializing or dematerializing, however, needs a network address, which is gotten as follows. When the *Nebuchadnezzar* makes a "phone call" into the Matrix, it places on the network a packet saying "Place this call for (212) 123-4567" or whatever the telephone number is, together with the *Nebuchadnezzar's* own network address as a return label, such as 9.54.296.42. When the call is picked up, the Matrix will return a data packet, addressed to the *Nebuchadnezzar*, saying "Message for 9.54.296.42: call connected to telephone (212) 123-4567." All the *Nebuchadnezzar's* computer has to do is listen out for its own address, and it will find attached to it the network address of the telephone equipment.

As soon as the answering machine picks up the incoming call, the *Nebuchadnezzar* will get the network address of that destination.

Essentially the same job must be done when a rebel leaves the Matrix world. In order to disengage the rebel from his or her avatar, the *Nebuchadnezzar's* computer must again get a fix on the avatar's location within the virtual world. As before, it is not enough to locate the avatar's virtual body in terms that relate to human culture. It is no use to say that Neo is at 56th and Lexington. Rather, it needs a network address that the Matrix's operating system can follow. Of course, the *Nebuchadnezzar* gets it by calling a telephone in the Matrix world, which must be answered for the network address to be passed back to the *Nebuchadnezzar*. Once that has happened, the avatar's module can be deleted from the register for that location.

Why don't the crew navigate their exits with the stylish cell phones that all the rebels carry? Why hunt for a land line (called a "hard line" in the film) under hot pursuit from the agents? The answer is that the cell phones are not part of the Matrix world and do not have network addresses known to the Matrix software. The cell phone is projected into the Matrix world by the *Nebuchadnezzar's* computer, 114 peter b. lloyd along with the avatar's body and clothes—and the weapons that Neo and Trinity eventually bring in with them. The software that simulates the cell phones is running inside the *Nebuchadnezzar's* computer, not the Matrix's computer, so the rebels must find a land line—which are somewhat scarce

in an era when everyone has a cell phone.

17.7 THE BUGBOT

Before Neo is taken to meet Morpheus, the agents insert a robotic bug into him. Trinity extricates the bugbot before it can do any harm. But what was the bugbot for? Given that it operates inside the human body, the bugbot should be as small as possible. Yet, it is clearly much bigger than a miniature radio beeper needed for tracking Neo's whereabouts. Trinity says that Neo is "dangerous" to them before he is cleaned. We can infer that the bugbot is actually a munition, probably a semtex device that will detonate when it hears Morpheus's voice, killing both Neo and Morpheus and everyone else in the room.

Just before it is implanted, the bugbot takes on the appearance of an animate creature, with claws writhing. Yet, after Trinity has jettisoned it out of the car window, it returns to an inert form. It is another illustration of the agents' limited use of the shapeshifting loophole in the Matrix software, that lets an object transform its properties under programmed commands.

17.8 PERCEPTIONS IN THE MATRIX

At dinner on the *Nebuchadnezzar*, Mouse ponders how the Matrix decided how chicken meat should taste, and wonders whether the machines got it wrong because the machines are unable to experience tastes.

A nonconscious machine cannot experience color any more than taste. A computer can store information about colored light, such as a digitized photograph, but it does so without a glimmer of awareness of the conscious experience of color. The digitized picture will evoke conscious colors only when someone looks at it. All other sensations that you can be conscious of will elude the digital computer.

The feel of silk, the texture of the crust of a piece of toast, feelings of nausea or giddiness: these are all unavailable to insentient machines. This being so, Mouse could have doubted whether the Matrix would know what anything should taste, smell, look, sound, or feel like.

But the Matrix doesn't need to experience the perceptual qualities to get them right. As we have seen, the Matrix feeds its signals into the incoming nerves where they enter the brain, not into the deeper nerve centers. So when you eat (virtual) fried chicken inside the Matrix, the Matrix will activate nerves from the tongue and nose, and the brain will interpret them as taste sensations. What the Matrix puts in will be a copy of the train of electrical impulses that would actually be produced if you were eating meat. Because of the way that the Matrix has been wired into the brain, it has less freedom than Mouse assumed. Whilst the Matrix cannot know tastes itself, it can nonetheless know which chemosensory cells in a human's nose and mouth yield the requisite smell and taste.

17.9 NEO'S MASTERY OF THE AVATAR

For purists of science–fiction plausibility, Neo's superhuman control over his avatar body is a troubling element in the film. The final triumphal scene, where Neo flies like Superman, has especially come under criticism. But is it completely at odds with what we have inferred about the Matrix? And how does Neo transcend his human limits?

The Matrix interacts with the brain, but the brain in turn affects the body. When Neo is hurt in training, he finds blood in his mouth. He asks Morpheus, "If you are killed in the Matrix, you die here?" and gets the cryptic reply: "The body cannot live without the mind." But it cuts both ways; ultimately, Neo's avatar is killed inside the Matrix, causing the vital functions to cease in his real body.

Mental states and beliefs can affect the body in several ways. In the placebo effect, the belief that a pill is a medicine can cure an illness; in hypnosis, imagining a flame on the wrist can induce blisters. In total virtuality, the mind accepts completely what is presented. If the Matrix signals that the avatar's body has died, then the mind will shut down the basic organs of the heart and lungs. Actual death will inevitably ensue, unless fast action is taken to get the heart pumping again.

In the climactic scene, Agent Smith kills Neo's avatar within the Matrix. Neo's brain accepts this fate: it stops his heart and loses conscious awareness. His real brain, however, retains enough oxygenated blood to keep it functioning for approximately three minutes, after which it would begin to suffer irreversible damage and, a few minutes later, brain–death. During this time, the auditory cortex keeps on working and digests what Trinity says, albeit unconsciously. Trinity's message is comprehended by Neo's subconscious mind, and a deep realization that the Matrix world is illusory crystallizes in his mind. At an intellectual level, Neo already believed this, but now he knows it at the visceral level of the mind, the level that interfaces with his physiology. Empowered by the insight that his avatar's death is not his death, Neo regains control of his avatar—not only resurrecting it but attaining superhuman powers: the avatar can stop bullets, and fly into the air.

Neo's new powers contrast with the rigid compliance with simulated physical laws that the Matrix generally adheres to. It reveals that Neo has gained direct access to the software modules that simulate his avatar body. That raises two questions: Why does the avatar software accept commands to transform itself, when normally it strictly follows a physical simulation? And, how can Neo's brain issue such commands, which are obviously outside the scope of the normal muscular signals?

The software that simulates the avatar must have a special port, intended for use only by agents, which accepts commands to change the internal properties of the avatar's body. Agents use this facility to embody themselves in human avatars. Like all software, the avatar will obey such commands wherever they originate, provided that they are correctly formulated. We saw earlier how the *Nebuchadnezzar's* computer used this transformative power to make Morpheus disappear from the subway station. Now Neo's brain is directly using the same command port.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Commands to transform the body cannot travel on the wires that carry the regular muscular signals from the brain to the avatar module. So, they use some of the many other, seemingly redundant, data lines that terminate throughout the rest of the brain. That those lines are hooked up at all on the Matrix end is a spin-off from the Matrix architect's use of general-purpose interfaces. When a newborn human baby is connected to the software module that runs its avatar, there is no way to predetermine which wires carry which data streams. So, at the Matrix end, each line is free to connect to any data port of the avatar module. Some data ports emit simulated signals from virtual eyes and other sense organs, and they will connect with the brain's sensory cortex; others will accept motor commands to carry out simulated contractions of virtual muscles, and they will link up with the motor cortex. In a feedback process that mirrors how the natural plasticity of the brain is molded to its function, useful connections are strengthened and the useless are weakened. As a baby grows into an infant, it gains feedback through using the simulated senses and muscles of the avatar, and therefore its brain builds up the normal strong connections to the conventional input and output channels. But it lacks the abstract concepts needed to use the special port that accepts transformation commands. So the brain's connection with those lines atrophies. Nevertheless, the hardware for that potential connection remains in place. In Neo's kung fu training, his brain rediscovers the abandoned data lines, and he starts to issue rudimentary transformations, giving his avatar's muscles superhuman strength. Only with the deep insight that he gains from being woken after his avatar's death, does he acquire the mental attitude needed to harness that transformative function fully.

The existence of the transformational back door into the avatar software is a security hole that the architects of the Matrix never imagined would be used by mere humans—but now it threatens the very existence of the Matrix, as Neo exploits the power it gives him.

17.10 CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE MATRIX

The last question I will address in this essay is a complex one, and one that continues to be explored and debated in scientific and philosophical circles. Can machines be conscious? In everyday life, the 118 peter b. lloyd machines are so dumb that we can ignore this question, and so we do not have an established criterion for judging whether the intelligent machines of science fiction are conscious. How similar must a machine be to a human for it to be conscious? Humans have a cluster of properties that always hang together: they have conscious perceptions and emotional feelings, they have opinions and beliefs, intuition and intelligence, they use language, and they are alive and warm-blooded, and have a biological brain. We do not, in everyday life, have to separate out those concepts and decide which ones are necessary and sufficient for sentience. The properties all come as a package. In contrast, the lower animals are like us but do not use language and are not as intelligent as we are. So, it is believed that the higher animals probably have basic conscious perceptions—such as colors and sounds, heat and cold—much as we do, but they lack the superstructure of thought. But what about machines that are intelligent and use language, but are not made of biological tissue? Could they be conscious? To respond rationally to this emotive challenge, we need to be clear about the ideas that are involved. The commonest

Matrix Reloaded Explained

and most damaging conflation is that of "intelligence" and "consciousness." Alan Turing, in his celebrated paper that introduced the Turing Test, used the terms interchangeably—but mathematicians are notorious for playing fast and loose with their terms. Philosophers, whose trademark is the careful delineation of concepts, have always insisted on maintaining the distinction. Intelligence is the capacity to solve problems, while consciousness is the capacity for the subjective experience of qualities.

As we shall see, intelligence can be attained without consciousness.² A digital computer can be programmed to perform intelligent tasks such as playing chess and understanding language by welldefined deterministic processes, without any need to introduce enigmatic conscious experiences into the software. On the other hand, a conscious being can have subjective experiences—such as seeing the color red, or feeling anger—with needing to use intelligence to solve any problems. An android could be vastly more intelligent than any human and still lack any glimmer of interior mental life. On the other hand, a creature might be profoundly stupid and still have subjective experiences.

Agent Smith is an example of a machine that manifests humanlike behavior—which, if you witnessed such words and gestures in a human, you would immediately regard them as showing conscious emotions and volitions. Indeed, it is the immediacy of the interpretation that is deceptive. When you see someone laugh with joy, or scream in pain, you do not knowingly infer the person's mental state from those outward signs. Rather, it is as if you see the emotions directly. Yet, we know from accomplished actors that these signs of emotions can be faked. Therefore, you are indeed making an inference, albeit an automatic one. It is a job of philosophy to scrutinize such automatic inference. When you see another human being emoting, your inference is not based wholly on what you see, but also on background information (such as whether the person is acting on the stage). More fundamentally, you are relying on the reasonable assumption that the person's behavior arises from a biological brain just as yours does. Whenever those premises are undermined, you inevitably revise any inferences you have made from the emoting. If the emoting stops and people around you clap, you realize it was a piece of street theatre, and the person was only acting out those emotions. Or, if the person has a nasty car accident that breaks open his head, revealing electronic circuitry instead of a brain, you realize that it was only an android and you may conclude that it was only simulating emotions.

A key step in the inference is the premise that the emotion plays a role in the causal loop that produces the outward words and gestures. If, instead, we have established that the observed words and gestures are wholly explained in some other way, without involving those emotions—then the inference collapses. The exterior emoting behavior then ceases to count as evidence for an interior emotional experience. If we know that an actor's words and gestures are scripted, then we cease to regard them as evidence for an inward mental state. Likewise, if we know that the words and gestures of an android or avatar are programmed, then they too cease to support any inference of a mental state.

In an android, or in a software simulation of a human such as an agent, words and gestures are produced by millions of lines of programmed software. The software

Matrix Reloaded Explained

advances from instruction to instruction in a deterministic manner. Some instructions move pieces of information around inside memory, others execute calculations, others send motor signals to actuators in the body. Each line of code references objective memory locations and ports in the physical hardware. It may do so symbolically, and it may do so via sophisticated data structures, for example, using the tag "vision-field" to reference the stabilized and edge-enhanced data from the eye cams. Nevertheless, nowhere in the software suite does the code break out of that objective environment and refer to the enigmatic contents of consciousness. Nor could the programmer ever do so, since she would need an objective, third-person pointer to the conscious experience—which, being a subjective, first-person thing, cannot be labeled with such a pointer.

Everything that the android says and does is fully accounted for by its software. There is no explanatory gap left for machine consciousness to fill. When the android says, "I see colors and feel emotions just as humans do," we know that those words are produced by deterministic lines of software that functions perfectly well without any involvement of consciousness. It is because of this that the android's emoting does not provide an iota of evidence for any interior mental life. All the outward signs are faked, and the programmer knows in comprehensive detail how they are faked.

This point is systematically ignored by the mathematicians and engineers who enthuse about artificial intelligence. You have to go next door, to the philosophy department, to find people who accord due importance to it. Even if, by some unknown means, the android possessed consciousness, it could never tell us about it. As we have seen, everything the android says is determined by the software. Even if, somewhere in the depths of its circuit boards, there was a ghostly glimmer of conscious awareness or volition, it could never influence what the android says and does.

Could it be that the information in the computer just *is* the conscious experience? This argument is popular with information engineers, as it seems to allow them to gloss over the whole mind-body problem. It is flawed because information and conscious experience have different logical structures. Namely, information exists only as an artifact of interpretation; but experience does not stand in need of interpretation in order for you to be aware of it. If I give you a disk holding numerical data (21, 250, 11, 47; 22, 250, 15, 39. etc), those numbers could mean anything. In one program, they are meteorological measurements—temperature, humidity, rainfall. In another, they are medical—pulse rate, blood pressure, body fat. The interpretation has no independent reality; the numbers have no inherent meaning by themselves. In contrast, conscious experience is fundamentally different. If you jam your thumb in a door, your sensation does not need first to be interpreted by you as pain. It immediately presents as pain. Nor can you reinterpret it as some other sensation, such as the scent of a rose. Conscious experiences have real, subjectively witnessed qualities that do not depend for their existence on being interpreted this way or that. They intrinsically involve some quality over and above mere information.

Another popular argument is to appeal to "emergence." Higherlevel systems are said to "emerge" from lower-level systems. The simple classic example is that of

Matrix Reloaded Explained

thermodynamic properties, such as heat and temperature, which emerge from the statistical behavior of ensembles of molecules. Yet the concept of "temperature" just does not exist for an isolated molecule, although billions of those molecules collectively do have a temperature. In like manner, it has been suggested, consciousness emerges from the collective behavior of billions of neurons, which individually could never be conscious on their own. But emergent properties are, in fact, artifacts of how we describe the world, and have no objective existence outside of mathematical theories. An ensemble of molecules may be described in terms of either the trajectories of individual molecules or their aggregate properties, but the latter are invented by human observers for the sake of simplifications. The external reality comprises only the molecules: the statistical properties, such as average kinetic energy, exist only in the mind of the physicist. Likewise, any dynamic features of the aggregate behavior of brain cells exist only in the models of the neuroscientists. The external reality comprises only the brain cells. Yet, as you know, when you jam your thumb in the door, the pain is real and present in the moment; it is not a theoretical construct of a brain scientist.

So there are good reasons for believing that machines are not conscious. But—wouldn't these arguments apply equally to brains? Surely a brain is just a bioelectrochemical machine? It obeys deterministic programs that are encoded in the genetic and neural wiring of the brain. Yet, if our argument that machines are not conscious can also apply equally to brains, then the argument must be flawed—since we know that our own brains are indeed conscious!

The answer is that there are certain processes in brain tissue that involve nondeterministic quantum-mechanical events. And, working through the chaotic dynamics of the brain, those minute phenomena can be amplified into overt behavior. The nondeterminism opens a gateway for consciousness to take effect in the workings of the brain.

As we saw earlier, you can report only the conscious experiences that are in the causal loop that gives rise to the speech acts. If you can report that you are in pain, then the pain sensation must exert a causal influence somewhere in the chain of neural events that governs what you say and write. A step that is physically nondeterministic provides a window of opportunity for consciousness to enter into that causal chain. Since we, as humans, know that we do express our conscious perceptions, we can infer that there must be some such nondeterminism somewhere in the brain. So far, quantum-mechanical events constitute the only known candidate for this. For example, Roger Penrose and Stuart Hammeroff have formulated a detailed theory of how quantum actions in the microtubules of brain cells could play this role. The jury is still out on whether the microtubules really are the locus at which consciousness enters the chain of cause and event.

A conventional, deterministic computer has no such gateway into consciousness. So androids, and virtual avatars, that are driven by computers of that kind, cannot express conscious awareness and their behavior therefore can never be evidence for consciousness. But, if a machine were to be built that used quantum computation in the same way that the brain does, then there is no philosophical reason why that machine could not have the same gateway to consciousness that a living being does. This is not because the quantum module lets the machine carry out computations

Matrix Reloaded Explained

that a classical computer cannot do. Whatever the quantum computer can do, a classical one can also do, albeit more slowly. Rather, it is the specific implementation of the quantum computer that provides the bridge into conscious processes.

In *The Matrix*, there is no reason to think that the machines are equipped with the kind of quantum computation needed to access consciousness. Quantum computation is not mentioned in the film, and there is circumstantial evidence that the Matrix and its agents are devoid of conscious thought.

Therefore the agents—which are software modules within the Matrix—are intelligent but mindless automata. For the most part, the agents behave unimaginatively, and we might naively think that this corroborates their lack of awareness. Yet, Agent Smith exhibits initiative and seems, in his speech to Morpheus, to evince a conscious dislike of the human world. But is he genuinely conscious, or only mimicking humans? In fact, Smith gives himself away when he says about the human world, "It's the smell, if there is such a thing . . . I can taste your stink and every time I do, I fear that I've somehow been infected by it." Smith's own logical integrity obliges him to doubt the existence of that noncomputable quality that humans talk about: the conscious experience of smell. When Smith says, ". . . the smell, if there is such a thing," he is exhibiting the mark of the automaton. This is corroborated when he then tells Morpheus that he can "taste your stink," revealing that Smith simply does not understand the differentiation of senses in the human mind. For a computer, data are interchangeable, but for a human, tastes, smells, colors, sounds, and feels, are irreducibly different. This fact eludes Agent Smith.

Smith is mimicking human behavior as a tactic to trick Morpheus into cooperation. As the interrogation is getting nowhere, Brown suggests, "Perhaps we are asking the wrong questions." So Smith pretends to talk like a human, to gain Morpheus's empathy. Needless to say, the tactic fails completely.

1. In the oldest form of Buddhism, Theravada, the two major forms of meditation are Vipassana (the Pali word for "insight") and its complement Samatha ("tranquility"). Vipassana consists in systematically attending to the individual elements that make up the contents of consciousness. It involves persistently turning away from the ceaselessly arising tide of chatter in the mind. Over time, the chatter subsides, and preconscious activity becomes more readily observed. Laboratory data support claims that long-term practitioners acquire a conscious awareness of brain microprocesses, possibly down to the cellular level. See Shinzen Young's works.

2. For an alternative perspective, see Kurzweil's essay in this volume. —Ed.

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Glitches Reloaded

In Matrix Reloaded, how can Neo fly and use telekinesis if the Matrix is supposed to a physics simulation? Peter Lloyd decodes this and other technical enigmas—reverse-engineering the design of the Matrix and the "Meta-Matrix" of the underground Zion. And he delves into the rich philosophical and mythic elements of the film, such as the question of free will and who is the Architect and what does his speech tell us?

Published on KurzweilAI.net June 1, 2003. This is a follow-on from "Glitches in the Matrix," which was written for the anthology Taking the Red Pill, edited by Glenn Yeffeth and published by Benbella Books in April 2003. An expanded version of this material will appear in an e-book, Matrix Exegesis, which will be available June 6, 2003. Warning: Includes plot spoilers for The Matrix and The Matrix Reloaded.

This essay is about the following questions on the sequel film *The Matrix Reloaded*. I am referring to the questions below as "glitches" just to be consistent with Glenn Yeffeth's terminology in the book *Taking the Red Pill*.

- How can Neo stop the sentinels in the real world?
- How can Agent Smith be uploaded into a human brain?
- Why do people look the same in real life as they did in the virtual world of the Matrix?
- How can Neo fly and use telekinesis if the Matrix is supposed to a physics simulation?
- How do the vampire twins move around?
- How can Neo think fast enough to dodge a bullet?
- How does virtual food have so much effect?
- Is there free will?
- Can the future be foretold?
- Who or what is the Merovingian?
- Who or what is the "mother of the Matrix"?
- Who is the Architect and what does his speech tell us?

This essay does not analyze the game *Enter the Matrix*, which requires another essay ...

17.11 Naming convention

Before we embark on answering these questions about the film (or, at least, trying answer them), it will be helpful to reflect on the Wachowskis' naming conventions. They have said in interviews that the names of their characters are significant. So we should find in them clues to the Wachowskis' riddles. Meaningful naming, as every programmer knows, is a commendable practice.

In the bad old days, programmers used to give their variables and subroutines names like X, Z10N, MTRXRL, and so on, which were unpronounceable and incomprehensible. Other programmers used anthropomorphic names such as FRED, JANE, and such like. The best approach is undoubtedly for the names to

17.35 Is it real or Matrix? How the simulation works

The "bioport" is the surgically implanted socket in the back of the head. Throughout "The Matrix" and "Reloaded", we see that this bioport is still visible on everyone who has been unplugged from the Matrix. (Many of the people who are now living in Zion were born there, such as Tank and Dozer. They had never been plugged into the Matrix and therefore do not have bioports.)

When Neo was unplugged from the Matrix, the machine's dataport (the long metal tube) was pulled out from his head, but the bioport (the socket) remained implanted in his head.

The ship Nebuchadnezzar is equipped with its

Matrix Reloaded Explained

signify the nature and role of what they name, and to comply with a "naming convention" a rule that guides the naming and leads to systematic rather than haphazard names.

As the Wachowskis tap into a lot of mythology (old and new) in their names, so we must dig into these myths to pick out the naming pattern. Needless to say, this does not commit us (or the Wachowskis) to believe any of the myths. As Councilor West could have said: "Belief is not a requisite for comprehension."

The first names we encounter in *The Matrix* belong to the realm of the mundane world: Mr. Thomas Anderson, and Mr. Smith. (We can read religious significance into Mr. Anderson's name, but this is not the time or place to do so.) Then we hear the self-assigned names of the rebels. These are hacker handles. Mr. Anderson calls himself Neo (the new one), and his colleagues call themselves Morpheus (the Greek god of dreams, who gives shape and form to ideas), Trinity (the three aspects of Christian divinity), Cypher (a secret code), Tank and Dozer (industrial machines), Apoc (the apocalyptic), Switch and Mouse. We also get the ship names: Nebuchadnezzar (who sought to interpret a dream he could not remember); Icarus (who flew on artificial wings); Gnosis (the Gnostic form of enlightenment); Logos (the rational projection of God); and Osiris (partner of Isis). And, in *Reloaded*, we have a swathe of names in Zion: Hamann (alluding to the German philosopher Johann Hamann), Jacob onboard the Gnosis (alluding to the Gnostic philosopher Jacob Boehme).

Of more interest in this essay are the assigned names of artificial intelligence programs: the Architect (the builder of the Matrix), the Oracle (who, I will argue, has access to the strategic planning programs of the Matrix, which I shall call "meta-intelligence" programs), the Merovingian (named after the supposed descendants of the Christ), Persephone (the Greek goddess who acquired emotional awareness by eating pomegranates, and who, I shall argue, is a program designed to probe human emotions by kissing human avatars), the Keymaker (self-evident), and the Seraph (an angel traditionally associated with being a serpent).

The names may be ambiguous clues, but clues nonetheless.

17.12 Matrix and Meta-Matrix

The plot action in the original film, *The Matrix*, had led us to believe that the external world is real. This is the world that contains Zion and its fleet of vessels such as the Nebuchadnezzar. It is supposed to be the "real" world, as opposed to the virtual world of the Matrix, in which almost all of the human race is imprisoned. The plot action in *The Matrix Reloaded* contains one scene that is a definitive proof that this is not the case, and some secondary scenes that corroborate this new interpretation. It transpires that the Zion world is actually another virtual world, which I shall call the Meta-Matrix. (In some newsgroup discussions, what I call the "Matrix" and the "Meta-Matrix" are called the "Green Matrix" and the "Blue Matrix" because of the color tinting.)

own
virtual-reality
hardware. This
includes a number
of couches, rather
like dentist chairs,
alongside each of
which is a dataport
precisely the same
as the ones used
by the machines.
Subsequently,
whenever Neo (or
any other crew
member) wants to
re-enter the
Matrix, he does so
by having a
dataport
re-inserted into
his bioport.

When a crew
member has been
plugged in again,
all of the brain's
signals (sensory
input and motor
output) are then
routed through the
bioport. The
Nebuchadnezzar's
computer can
connect those
signals either to
the Matrix itself,
or to a miniature
Matrix (called the
training construct).

When crew
members are
reconnected to the
Matrix, they
interact with the
Matrix in just the
same way as they
used to do before
they were first
unplugged. The

17.13 Baudrillard's Hyperreality

Before examining the scene in *Reloaded* where the matrix-within-a-matrix is revealed, let us look back at a scene in *The Matrix* where it is hinted at. For the virtuality of Zion's world is not entirely a surprise. There were subtle clues in *The Matrix*. First and foremost, there are the Gnostic overtones. Neo (paralleling Jesus) discovers that the mundane world is a virtual world controlled by malign machines (paralleling Yaldabaoth, the demiurge of Gnosticism), and seeks to lead the human race to become unplugged (paralleling the attainment of gnosis). In Gnosticism, however, the real world is nothing like our mundane world. Yet, in *The Matrix*, the supposedly real world (the world of Zion) is essentially a war-damaged version of the virtual world (the Matrix world). So, this background theme suggests that Neo has not yet achieved full gnosis. He has, rather, descended into some hell-like realm, and must now rise out of virtuality altogether into true reality.

Second, and more specifically, there was Morpheus' reference to Jean Baudrillard. In the film, this was toned down from what had been in the published shooting script. The script has Morpheus saying "As in Baudrillard's vision, your whole life has been spent inside the map, not the territory." That sentence was deleted, but what remains is still very clear. "Welcome to the desert of the real" says Morpheus in the training construct, as he shows Neo images of the scorched surface of the Earth. Many filmgoers took this to be a straightforward reference to the desert-like appearance of the Earth.

In Baudrillard's book, *Simulacra and Simulation*, however, a different and quite specific meaning is attached to this phrase. Baudrillard begins with an allusion to Jorge Luis Borges' story in which a vast map of an empire is drawn that is the same size as the territory it depicts, and is laid out over the territory. As the empire declines, the map is left to rot, and eventually only a few shreds are left visible in the deserts. This concept is then inverted by Baudrillard, who maintains that "today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map." The central point of Baudrillard's book is his thesis that we live in what he calls a "hyperreality," a virtual world that stands in its own right and is not a simulation or copy of some prior real world. There are still traces, within this hyperreality, of what we think are the remains of a prior, real world: "It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges persist here and there in the deserts [...] the desert of the real itself." Yet, these vestiges only seem real. Since they are contained within the hyperreality, they are simulacra, copies of nothing at all.

Thus, when Morpheus alludes to the "desert of the real," he is referring not to a genuine reality but to an illusion of reality within a fully virtual world. He is implying that the scorched Earth is not real, but virtual: a simulacrum of something that never existed.

There should be a nagging doubt in your mind at this point: Why would Morpheus say this if Morpheus himself believes the world of Zion to be real? Maybe Morpheus is deliberately keeping Neo in the dark. (Neo himself later seems to wonder whether perhaps his leader has been economical with the truth when he discovers there have been many Zions: "There are two possible explanations: either no one told me or no one knows.") Now, rewind to an earlier scene in *The Matrix*,

big difference is that each person's real body is not submerged in gelatin in a pod, but is sitting comfortably on a dentist's chair on the ship.

All of the basic nerve connections between the brain and the bioport remain in place when a person is unplugged. So when a person reconnects to the Matrix while on board the Nebuchadnezzar, the sensory and motor signals are transmitted just the same as before.

For example, each light-sensitive cell in the eye will correspond to one incoming data line; each muscle group in the tissue that controls the movement of the eye will correspond to one outgoing data line.

If the Matrix were purely and simply a physics simulation, those two sets of lines would be sufficient. But the Matrix also has Agents who operate outside

Matrix Reloaded Explained

where Neo pulls out a data minidisc for Choi. He pulls it out of a hollowed-out copy of Baudrillard's "Simulacra and Simulation," which is the very book that Morpheus quotes from. Is it coincidence that Morpheus quotes from that same book? Maybe. Or maybe Morpheus has observed Neo's reading habits remotely through the monitors in the Nebuchadnezzar. Or maybe there's a deeper connection. We will look at that later. Meanwhile, let us continue with the Wachowskis' allusion to Baudrillard.

Neo opens "Simulacra and Simulation" to the chapter "On nihilism," which has curiously been printed in the middle of the book, whereas really it is the last chapter of Baudrillard's actual book. And, also curiously, the chapter starts on the left-hand page, not the right-hand page as normal. In that chapter, Baudrillard asserts that revolution is pointless because the system that operates our hyperreal world will automatically and effortlessly neutralize it: "Everywhere, always, the system is too strong: hegemonic."

Yet, Neo has sliced into that specific chapter with a knife, cutting out its substance and inserting instead a copy of his own software. Neo is rejecting Baudrillard's message, implicitly asserting that he can and will rebel against the system in order to achieve his enlightenment or "gnosis." This is an adumbration of what is to come in *Reloaded* and *Revolutions*. For Neo will discover that the organized escape of humans from the Matrix into Zion is simply a transfer from one virtual world to another, in precisely the manner anticipated by the Architect of the Matrix. But Neo will find a way to break out of this seemingly nihilistic prison.

17.14 Small clues

There are two other incidents that have been suggested as clues to the Meta-Matrix.

First, the Lady in Red. In *The Matrix*, when Mouse is waiting for Neo and the others to return from the Oracle, we see him look with puzzlement at a centerspread showing "The Lady in Red." She was his creation in the Training Construct, and she should exist only there and in Mouse's mind. It is not clear whether he brought the magazine with him or whether he found it lying around in the Matrix. If he found it in the Matrix, then we too are puzzled: how could the Matrix world know anything about Mouse's Lady in Red — unless the apparently real world is virtual and something in the Matrix has been spying on it.

Second, the spoon. In *Reloaded*, Neo is presented with a spoon as a gift from an admirer. It has been suggested that this is the Buddhist child's spoon from *The Matrix*. But that spoon had a bright mirrored surface, while the new spoon is battered and dull. So they cannot be the same spoon.

17.15 Hacking the Meta-Matrix

So much for adumbration. Let's get back to the plot. Near the end of *Reloaded*, Neo and the other crew abandon the Nebuchadnezzar and are being chased by a sentinel. Suddenly, Neo stops and realizes that he is aware of the approaching squid in much the same way as he is aware of things inside the Matrix. Looking puzzled, he says, "Something's different ... I can feel them." He then turns, raises his hand, and drops

physical laws. So the design of the dataport includes not only those sensory and motor lines, but must also include a certain number of command lines. These must be present to enable an Agent to take control an avatar, and to change the avatar's appearance.

For the sake of a simple and standard design, the bioport is physically wired for connecting to *all* data lines in the dataport, not just the sensorimotor lines. (It's like the standard parallel port on your computer. There is a fixed standard set of pins whether you're connect to a printer, or a scanner, or an external disc drive. Which data pins are used depend on what you're plugging into.)

In the normal course of a child's upbringing, he or she learns automatically to use just the sensorimotor connections in the dataport. All of the

Matrix Reloaded Explained

the sentinels in mid-flight, just as he has previously stopped bullets in the Matrix. He has, evidently, realized that what he thought was the real world is actually a virtual one, and has already found that he can mentally hack into its network and override the software modules that simulate squids. This scene is, of course, very near the end of *Reloaded*, so that throughout most of the film we have no solid evidence the world of Zion is virtual.

As always, there are other possible interpretations: (a) On his last visit into the Matrix, the Agents sabotaged Neo's exit and transferred him to a construct that resembled the world of Zion but was actually virtual. (Compare this with the Star Trek episode in which a copy of the Enterprise is made within the holodeck.) While this is certainly possible, it would be an astoundingly expensive stunt for the Agents to pull, with no clear advantage. (b) The Zion world is real but Neo has now acquired powers of telekinesis. Given that paranormal powers have not been part of the Wachowskis' science fiction, this is very unlikely. (c) An idea that has gained some currency in the newsgroups is that Neo (presumably along with every other human) was fitted with wireless data ports, and that he uses wi-fi communication to hack the sentinels. But why would the machines take the trouble to install wi-fi ports in everybody? Whenever people connect or disconnect to the Matrix or to training constructs, the focus is always on the back-of-head cable. Evidently, this is necessary and sufficient for the input of sensory data and the output of motor signals. So, there is simply no need for the extra functionality of wi-fi. Moreover, in the pods used in the power station, every human remains in the same pod for life. People do not move about, so mobility which is the main advantage of wi-fi would be irrelevant. (d) Finally, there is the non-technical suggestion that Neo has acquired some affinity with machines and can "just do it," but that leaves us with magical science fantasy rather than thought-out science fiction.

By the far the most natural interpretation of this scene is that Neo is in the Meta-Matrix.

Before the crew abandons the Nebuchadnezzar, they watch the sentinels on the holographic display. Neo peremptorily announces, "It's a bomb." They realize that the sentinels are hanging back out of range of the Nebuchadnezzar's EMP weapon, and are about to sling a bomb at the hovercraft. Some commentators have suggested that this reveals Neo having prescient knowledge of what the sentinels were up to. That is not, however, evidenced in the film. Neo makes his diagnosis after looking at the holographic display. It appears that he is just being smart.

17.16 Agent Smith partly uploaded to the Meta-Matrix

There is an earlier scene that is strongly suggestive, but not entirely conclusive, of the virtual nature of the Zion world. Agent Smith loads himself into the avatar of the human Bane, and the Smith/Bane avatar then proceeds to pick up the ringing landline telephone and exit from the Matrix. Later, we see Bane acting in a very dodgy way in Zion. He is stalking Neo, with a knife in his hand, and cuts his own hand with the knife. Later still, he is told that a sentinel attack has destroyed several vessels and left only one survivor, and the camera pans ominously over Bane, lying in a coma head-to-head with Neo, who is also comatose.

command lines are still there in the dataport, but they are unused. The infant's brain does not have the concepts to learn how to use them. So the infant brain may either not grow neural connections to the command lines at all, or it may grow them but then let them atrophy because they are unused.

When Neo learns hyperkinetic kung-fu, his brain makes fresh connections to those lines, and he learns what signals to send down those lines to make his avatar stronger and faster. Over time, he acquires more skill in issuing instructions to the Matrix on those lines.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

How should we interpret what has happened to Bane? Let us assume that Bane is ultimately a real person. Here's the first possible interpretation. While his avatar in the Matrix is possessed by Agent Smith, it may be that his mind is psychologically affected, giving him an obsessive desire to kill Neo. This is quite plausible. Here's the second possibility. If we accept that the world of Zion is virtual, then is it possible that Agent Smith has possessed Bane's avatar in the Meta-Matrix? Perhaps. One problem with this is that, in the world of Zion, Bane still looks the same as he used to. But whenever an agent takes possession of any avatar in the Matrix, the visual appearance of the avatar changes to match the personality of the agent. So, if Agent Smith has indeed possessed Bane's avatar in the Meta-Matrix, why does Bane still look like Bane, and not look like Smith? Maybe the Meta-Matrix is coded differently from the Matrix? This is unlikely, as there is no independent evidence for it. Maybe the visual rendering is lost during the exit? This is a more credible line of explanation. And it is not just the visual appearance of Smith that is missing. Bane seems not to possess Smith's strength and speed, and his total obsession with killing Neo. It's as if Smith has only partly loaded into Bane's avatar in the Meta-Matrix. How can this be?

Let us take a closer look at what would be involved in entering and exiting the Matrix, if the world of Zion is indeed a virtual world, a Meta-Matrix. When a person enters the Matrix, her avatar in the Meta-Matrix continues to exist but enters a comatose state. A new avatar, with a similar visual appearance, is created in the Matrix. Things that happen to the Matrix avatar are stored locally in the module that drives only the Matrix avatar, and are not (in general) relayed back to the Meta-Matrix avatar. For example, if the Matrix avatar cuts a finger off, the Meta-Matrix avatar does not lose a finger. Nevertheless, we saw several times in *The Matrix* that "nocebo" (the opposite of placebo) effects can occur.

For instance, after a kung-fu training session, Neo bleeds from the mouth; and when Mouse is shot, his avatar in the Meta-Matrix bleeds. So, it appears that, when there is some extreme trauma suffered by the Matrix avatar, it is written back to the Meta-Matrix avatar. If we think of it in object-oriented programming terms, the Meta-Matrix avatar spawns an instance of itself inside the Matrix, but certain core data areas are shared. Now, when an agent loads itself into an avatar inside the Matrix, it overwrites the visual rendering of that local instance of the avatar, and takes over control of the avatar's behavior. When that individual exits from the Matrix, the local instance (in the Matrix) is deleted. Thus the agent's visual rendering is lost. But, what if an agent overwrites part of the shared data area between the Matrix avatar and the Meta-Matrix avatar? Then the agent will have succeeded in partly loading itself into the Meta-Matrix avatar.

This seems to be an internally consistent theory, which is supported by on-screen scenes of the Meta-Matrix avatars being affected by traumas suffered by the Matrix avatars, implying a shared memory. Furthermore, it would seem that the shared memory has to do with visceral reactions. It might be possible to build in some conditionality into the shared memory, so that whenever the Meta-Matrix avatar sees a certain individual, the person (that is, the real brain) feels (virtual) nausea and pain, and consequently develops an irrational hatred of that person.

In my essay "Glitches in the Matrix," I argued that the neurological interface of the

Matrix Reloaded Explained

brain with the Matrix exists where the sensory nerve fibers enter the cranial cavity, and where the motor nerve fibers exit. On this view, local reflex arcs such as the knee-jerk reaction are entirely simulated inside the avatar, because the processing is carried out in the spine, not the brain. The virtual spinal cord carries out dumb local processing. So, as we go up the spinal column, where do we cross the boundary from the parts of the nervous system that are simulated, to those that are not? Let us look at the top of the spine: in the brainstem, we have the hindbrain and the midbrain. The hindbrain co-ordinates motor activity, posture, equilibrium and sleep patterns and regulates unconscious but essential functions, such as breathing and blood circulation.

When Neo is unplugged, his hindbrain is fully functional: witness the ease with which he grabs the tube in his mouth. Therefore, the hindbrain must have been in active use and was not simulated by the Matrix. Then there is the midbrain. This has three main parts: the hypothalamus, which controls physiological responses to danger, such as "fight or flight reaction"; the amygdala, which controls aggression; and the hippocampus, which is used in building up long-term memories. The first of these, the hypothalamus, would need to be simulated, so that in the Matrix world, people would observe normal physiological reactions such as sweating and trembling in fear. Immediately beneath the danger-sensing hypothalamus is the aggression-inducing amygdala. It's quite likely that this will have been simulated in the avatar, in order to reduce the amount of violence in the Matrix world. After all, every human who dies prematurely in the Matrix world is a loss to the system. And, in the worst case, the waging of war among humans inside the Matrix would be a disaster. Finally, to the front of the hypothalamus and amygdala, is the hippocampus. Undoubtedly the brain would need the real hippocampus in order to learn things. So, of the organs in the midbrain, it seems the hypothalamus and the amygdala would be simulated.

Thus, the most likely cut-off point is for the electrodes to be placed above and around the amygdala and the hypothalamus (and hence the attached pituitary gland) and for the functions of those organs to be simulated in the avatar.

Now, when somebody in the Meta-Matrix downloads into the Matrix, an avatar shell is spawned and inserted into some unobserved room in the Matrix world; the "residual self-image" (as Morpheus calls it) is copied into the avatar shell; and the person's sensory input is henceforth routed from the Matrix avatar instead of from the Meta-Matrix avatar, and correspondingly the motor output is henceforth routed to the Matrix avatar. The person is now virtually present in the Matrix, and no longer in the Meta-Matrix.

Part of the basic design of the Matrix must include the rule that if an avatar is killed in the Matrix, then the original avatar in the Meta-Matrix must also die. How can this be achieved? From the point of view of people in the Meta-Matrix, the arrangement is as follows: The Matrix interface has electrodes feeding into the hypothalamus, which copy the state of the virtual hypothalamus into the "real" hypothalamus. Upon virtual death—that is, the death of the Matrix avatar—a flatline signal from the virtual hypothalamus is fed into the "real" hypothalamus (in the Meta-Matrix), and the person dies (in the Meta-Matrix). In a similar way, during normal life, the state of the virtual amygdala (in the Matrix) is also written into the

Matrix Reloaded Explained

"real" amygdala (in the Meta-Matrix) so that it can generate hormonal responses which affect the brain.

All of that is how it seems to people in the Meta-Matrix, who believe their world to be real. But we know that the Meta-Matrix is also virtual, so what is really going on? From the point of view of an outsider, of someone outside both the Matrix and the Meta-Matrix, the design is this: the hypothalamus and amygdala are shared memory for both avatars. It is shared between the avatar in the Matrix and the avatar in the Meta-Matrix. And, in the genuine real world (beyond the Meta-Matrix), where there are real brains, we may guess that the states of virtual hypothalamus and amygdala are written to the biological tissue but so far the films have shown us nothing of that external reality.

Now we begin to see how it is possible for Agent Smith to be loaded partly into Bane's avatar in the Meta-Matrix. Smith has over-written an instinctive aggression toward Neo into the shared hypothalamus and amygdala of Bane's avatars. When Bane exits the Matrix, and his Matrix avatar is deleted, his Meta-Matrix avatar still holds that aggressive instinct deep within his (virtual) brain. Bane's conscious mind, on the other hand, has nothing against Neo, and is puzzled and disturbed by this sudden and irrational hatred.

We see Bane playing with a knife, preparing to attack Neo. He even cuts his own hand in frustrated blind rage as he waits for Neo. Neo spots him and suddenly Bane's rational mind gets into gear and suppresses the aggression. Clearly, Agent Smith has not fully loaded into Bane, otherwise Bane would have gone ahead and murdered Neo. On the contrary, Smith has gained control only of Bane's aggressive drive.

(Some commentators have interpreted this scene as Agent Smith exploring with fascination the human experience of pain. This is wrong for several reasons. First, the look on Bane's face is not that of fascination but of rage. Second, Agent Smith as an entity cannot be in Bane, for if that were so then Bane would not hesitate to attack Neo. Third, it is only Bane's Meta-Matrix avatar that is cut, which will only yield a pain experience in Bane's brain, not in the avatar. Fourth, as I argued in my essay "Glitches in the Matrix," machines of this kind cannot be conscious.)

In summary: Agent Smith has loaded, into the shared memory of Bane's Matrix and Meta-Matrix avatars, a conditioned visceral reaction against Neo, which is now driving Bane to try to murder Neo.

17.17 Why people look the same in the Matrix and the Meta-Matrix

One of the unexplained "glitches" in *The Matrix* was this: Why was Neo's appearance inside the Matrix so similar to his appearance in the "real" world? Admittedly, his "real" body had no hair (and presumably no finger or toe nails), but the height, build, facial features, skin pigmentation were all the same and when the hair grew back it was the same color and texture; and his voice and bodily mannerisms were all reproduced. How does the Matrix correctly work out his appearance and create an avatar to match? Part of this could be explained by the

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Matrix analyzing the human's genetic code and computing the skin pigmentation and hair color, the likely bodily build, the basic facial features, and so on. And maybe that is sufficient to yield an adequate match. This does, however, seem a lot of extra work for the Matrix system to go through for no real gain. Since, in the normal course of events, each human stays in the Matrix throughout his or her whole life, there seems to be no need for the Matrix to create a matching avatar. The avatar could select the sex, race, and all other bodily features at random.

We now know that Neo's body in the "external" world is itself only an avatar (in the Meta-Matrix), so a new possible explanation emerges. Namely, when a person first enters the Meta-Matrix as a neonate, and then shortly afterwards enters the Matrix, the software loads up identical code for the appearance of both avatars. This is not a fixed appearance, but one that will grow over the years as the individual grows from infancy to adulthood, and the two avatars will grow in parallel. This is a rather elegant solution, as it is the most efficient thing for the software to do.

This, on its own, would not be strong enough to count as evidence for the Meta-Matrix's being a virtual world, but it is certainly circumstantial corroboration.

It also leaves completely open the question of what Neo looks like in the genuine real world, outside the Meta-Matrix.

17.18 Two matrices, one architect?

Were the Matrix and Meta-Matrix designed and built by the same architect? There are two possibilities supported by evidence in the film:

- The original creators built the Meta-Matrix and plugged the human race into it. On their own initiative, people within the Meta-Matrix created artificial intelligence systems, waged war with the machines, destroyed the Earth's surface, and were in due course subjugated by the machines. The machines built the Matrix virtual reality within a virtual reality, although the machines could not know this and inserted the whole human race into it. In other words, the tale told by Morpheus is true, but it all took place within the virtual world of the Meta-Matrix.
- The original creators built the Meta-Matrix and the Matrix as parallel systems. They anticipated that some individuals would escape from the Matrix, and that a movement would develop in which freed humans would seek to recruit other Matrix refusers. These rebels would be siphoned off into the Meta-Matrix, where people would happily remain in the mistaken belief that they were free.

There are, of course, infinitely many other possibilities that we could dream up, but only these are evidenced in the film: the first possibility is indicated by Morpheus' speech, the second by the Architect's speech.

If we are to believe the Architect, then he is obviously in a better position to tell us the truth about the Matrix than Morpheus is. So, when he describes the building of Zion and the attack on it as a sequence that has happened in each cycle of the Matrix, then we have to accept that the situation in the Meta-Matrix is managed. In

addition, he refers to recent events in Neo's life as having inexorably brought Neo to meet the Architect. These points do not completely prove that the Architect built the Meta-Matrix, but it are strongly suggestive. (The alternative is that the Architect is an entity within the Meta-Matrix and believes the Meta-Matrix to be real. One point in favor of this alternative hypothesis is that, when the Architect's monitors show scenes from Neo's past, only scenes from his life inside the Matrix are shown. His life outside the Matrix is not, apparently, within the Architect's scope.)

My best guess is that the Architect built both the Matrix and the Meta-Matrix.

After the vertiginous question of nested Matrices, let us zero in on some "glitches" of technical details in the Matrix world.

17.19 Flying: the Superman thing

In one of the ironically cinematic jokes that the Wachowskis habitually throw in, Link refers to Neo as doing the "Superman thing" when Neo is flying through the skies of the Matrix world. Obviously this is a departure from strict adherence to a physics simulation. But, as we have seen many times in *The Matrix*, the software module that drives an avatar has a command interface for changing the properties of the avatar. This loophole exists to enable the Agents to get in. In this case, it would appear that Neo exploits this command interface to render himself almost mass less. It will then take little or no energy to accelerate his avatar to arbitrarily high speeds.

But what is the method of propulsion? And a less obvious but related question is: how does he steer? In the regular world, a flying vessel or animal steers by modifying the propulsive force. An airplane is borne aloft and moved forward by pushing a stream of air across the airplane's surface (by means of a propeller or jet). To steer left or right, or up or down, it twists aerofoils into or out of the air stream. On the other hand, a rocket propels itself by pushing out gas from a main thruster at a high velocity, causing the rocket to move forward by Newtonian reaction. The rocket steers by means of secondary thrusters set at angles to the main thruster, which ejects gas in the opposite of the desired direction. Neo, however, has no propeller, no jet, and no thruster. What propels him, and what steers him?

We see that, to launch himself, Neo crouches in certain position, with one arm raised and the other lowered. It looks like a cross between a Superman pose and a martial arts pose. What is that supposed to do? As he flies, he sometimes raises one arm forward in the direction of travel, but not always. Sometimes he keeps his hands by his sides and looks up in the headlong direction of travel. How is the Matrix supposed to interpret those gestures as "move upwards" rather than "move downwards" or "move sideways"? The naive answer is, of course, that Neo *intends* the gesture to mean "move upward," but in that case why does Neo bother with the gesture at all? If his expressed intention is the active ingredient that makes his avatar move upwards in the Matrix space, then the gesture is redundant. It looks rather as if the gesture is purely for Neo's benefit: it enables him to focus his mind on the flying movement and its direction.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

But how does Neo's intention to move upwards get expressed to the Matrix software? As was made clear in *The Matrix*, all of the outgoing motor nerve fibers in Neo's brain (i.e. his brain in the Meta-Matrix as we now know it) are wired into a dataport in the Matrix, in such a way that the signal on each motor nerve is routed to the appropriate "muscle" data object in the avatar module and causes the virtual muscle to flex or relax. For example, to move a finger, Neo's brain will express his intention to move the finger by sending a train of pulses along a nerve that would normally be sent to the extensor muscle in the finger. The Matrix interface hijacks that signal and routes it to the data object that simulates the extensor muscle in the virtual finger. In turn this feeds back through the visual and tactual inputs to Neo's brain, so that Neo sees and feels his virtual finger move.

Obviously, though, there is no natural motor nerve that signifies "fly upwards." So, how does the intention to "fly upwards" get translated from Neo's brain into the avatar?

Neo has had to learn to activate (or re-grow) a previously unused nerve fiber that connects with the special command lines of the Matrix dataport. Think of the Matrix dataport as a glorified RS-232 socket, with billions of pins. Most of the lines in that socket will map to biological sensory and motor functions, but there are some extra lines that exist only for the Agents to morph the avatar. Neo has, first, to make a neural connection to the pins of those reserved lines, and then figure out what signals to send down those lines in order to achieve certain results.

He first discovers this functionality of his avatar in the kung-fu training session in *The Matrix*: he begins to change the properties of his avatar in order to move faster and be tougher than the unmodified avatar. Being the ace hacker that he is, however, Neo goes on to discover further commands that he can fire off down these reserved lines of the Matrix dataport. He realizes that one command will change the mass of the avatar, so he resets it to near zero, making himself almost weightless. Then, in a stroke of genius, he discovers the command for transferring kinetic energy and momentum between objects. He discovers that, by sending a certain train of pulses down a certain nerve fiber into the Matrix dataport, he can issue a valid command to the Matrix that says, "transfer this energy and momentum from the environment into my avatar." As far as the Matrix is concerned, this is a valid command, so it is executed, and the avatar suddenly flies up.

Because it is a physics simulation, the Matrix must conserve energy. To fuel his flight, Neo must get the energy from somewhere. He cannot simply change the velocity vector of his avatar. He has to transfer energy and momentum from elsewhere. To be sure, he could transfer it from the potential chemical energy of his own body fat, but he would reduce himself to a skeleton after a few supersonic flights. He must get it from the virtual Brownian motion of the surrounding air. Like a sophisticated Maxwell's demon, he siphons off the heat energy of the atmosphere into his own kinetic energy.

This is a skill that he gradually develops: he increases the speed he can achieve, and the ease with which he can do it by gesture-less intention, as the films progress. It would have been helpful to see Neo learning to fly. I always admire the psychological realism of that scene in *Alien* where Sigourney Weaver learns how to

Matrix Reloaded Explained

use the exoskeleton at first clumsy and fumbling, and becoming smooth and efficient. The Wachowski brothers should have had the courage to show us Neo in his first attempts to hack his avatar's velocity vector, a series of kangaroo jumps and wrong throws. (Think of the kids in *Harry Potter* similarly learning to control their broomsticks.)

Interestingly, the agents do not know how to fly. They have not been designed to issue the command to transfer energy between objects, and lack the flexibility of Neo's brain to reconfigure their interface with the Matrix. When Neo flies away from the Burly Brawl scene, we see the realization among the Smiths that Neo has out-hacked them.

If Neo can add seemingly arbitrary amounts of kinetic energy to his avatar, why does he first need to make himself almost massless? Because in the physics simulation of the Matrix, things are still largely bound by physical laws. If Neo travels at supersonic speeds with his normal body mass, the law of conservation of energy in the Matrix simulation will require a huge amount of kinetic energy that will have to come from somewhere and it will have to go somewhere dissipated in sound, heat, and mechanical vibrations when he touches the Earth. By keeping his mass low, he keeps his energy requirements minimal. But it would not be safe for him to take his mass all the way down to zero. For that would make him overly vulnerable to cross-winds.

By Newton's law of motion, the acceleration due to an impressed force is inversely related to the body's mass (acceleration = force/mass). If Neo were to reset his body mass to zero, then the slightest cross-wind, even a breeze (or, even the Brownian motion if there were such a thing in the Matrix) would be enough to send Neo flying off course at an infinite velocity. Even Neo's fast-thinking brain could not correct his trajectory fast enough. So, he must set his body mass to a low enough level that his supersonic flight does not vaporize his surroundings, but high enough that he is not blown off course by side-winds. (This, by the way, probably sets an upper limit to Neo's speed within the atmosphere other than the obvious limit of the speed of light.)

How does the supersonic Neo interact with the atmosphere? Some unkind commentators on the Internet have correctly remarked that flying at such speeds without protection would rip Neo's reproductive organs off his body. In fact, the air friction would incinerate him before he reached his destination. Evidently his body is shielded. From the scene where he flies supersonically along a city street, it looks as if he pushes the air away from his body in a spiral, leaving his unprotected body in a vacuum. (Since he is not using the air for buoyancy or propulsion in any aerodynamic way, this will not interfere with his actual flying. But it does mean that he will need to take a deep breath before setting off, as there will be no air for him to breathe in his locally induced vacuum. By the way, this also places a further limit on his overall journey time, as he will need to slow down to take a breath every few minutes.)

So, how does he cause the air to spiral away from his body to protect him from air friction? This brings us on to the next glitch, below.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

And what about the physiological effects of sudden accelerations? When Neo rescues the falling Trinity, Trinity's avatar is taken from zero lateral velocity to what is probably several hundred kilometers an hour. Surely the g-forces on Trinity would crush her avatar's body? Assuming that Neo is traveling at a speed of at least Mach 1, then Trinity accelerates from 0 to 340 meters/second in less than 1 second, so she will experience a force of 34 g. Anything above 4 g is dangerous and will cause blackouts. Trinity's acceleration should crush her. Neo's solution is to reduce the mass of all her body tissues to a negligible value, just as he catches her. As before, $\text{force} = \text{mass} \times \text{acceleration}$: now, Trinity's avatar can achieve its acceleration with very little force. How does Neo reduce Trinity's mass? He uses the same command that he previously applied to his own avatar, but this time referencing Trinity's avatar.

If all this seems very contrived to you, that's because it is. Nevertheless, we are still operating within a rational framework of science fiction. The Wachowskis have not resorted to the arbitrary superhero powers of fantasy. Several commentators have ridiculed the Matrix films on the grounds that, since Neo can do absolutely anything at all, none of the plot makes sense. Why fight the Agents if he could annihilate them with his magic wand, sorry, fist? The answer is that neither Neo nor the Agents have unlimited powers in the Matrix. They have restricted powers, and those restrictions make sense if we make certain explanatory assumptions about how the Matrix works. Which is what we are doing here.

17.20 Telekinesis in the Matrix

We had our first sighting of telekinesis early in *The Matrix*, when we saw the Zen Buddhist boy bending spoons in the manner of Uri Geller and the two girls levitating some alphabet blocks. Neo uncertainly manages to make the spoon bend temporarily. Later, after Neo's resurrection, we see him stop bullets in mid-flight. In *Reloaded*, we see him effortlessly stop the discharge from several automatic weapons in mid air. These are both cases of resetting the velocity vectors of objects to zero. In *Reloaded*, we also see Neo cause two swords to leap off the wall and into his hands. This demonstrates the more difficult task of inserting a non-zero velocity on the fly. In his supersonic flight, he is able to make the air flow around his body to produce a frictionless vacuum. This is virtuoso hacking: Neo has to be continually resetting the velocity of parcels of air as he travels through the atmosphere.

How does telekinesis work in the Matrix, given that it is a breach of the physical laws that the Matrix simulation is supposed to be upholding? Surely the architect of the Matrix would have put the velocity vector of any object in an encapsulated data area of that object? In which case, the velocity vector should be protected from interference. It should not be possible for Neo or anyone else to make arbitrary changes to an object's motion. Indeed, this is so. Nevertheless, there must be a legitimate method to impart kinetic energy and momentum to any given object, as part of the general simulation of mechanics of the Matrix world. Therefore, there is a route to reach any object's velocity vector and modify its value. As I suggested above for Neo's flying, the technique involves Neo's exploiting the Matrix's built-in energy transfer mechanisms.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Let us look at a simple example. Suppose that Neo were to take time off and play a game of billiards in the Matrix. Whenever he hit one ball against another, the one ball will transmit its kinetic energy and momentum to the other. But, crucially, all such interactions will be rigorously controlled by the Matrix operating system to ensure that the energy and momentum are preserved. If one billiard ball gains kinetic energy and momentum, the other must lose it. So, when Neo stops the bullets, where does he send the kinetic energy? Probably to the environment, such as the air. The mass of a bullet is fairly small. It does its damage to a human body by concentrating its kinetic energy onto a small point on the body. If Neo can set up an energy-exchange between, say the bullet and the air, then the bullet could be stopped dead while the air temperature rises by a tiny amount. If we suppose that the Matrix command language has something like "transfer <object_1> <object_2> <energy> <momentum>," then Neo can get small objects to move, or to stop moving, by transferring their energy and momentum from, or to, the environment. (There is probably also a constraint in the Matrix operating system that non-radiative energy can be exchanged only between objects that are in contact, such as a bullet and the surrounding body of air.)

So, when Neo causes the sword to fly off the wall, we should expect someone standing nearby to feel a sudden blast of cold air, as energy is sucked from the air, and the cold air rushes toward the wall.

By the way, there may be an element of this when Neo launches himself in flight. We sometimes see the ground being compressed beneath him. Maybe he is extracting heat energy from the ground, which briefly suffers thermal contraction. (We ought to see it becomes covered in frost in that case, though.)

There is, by the way, no teleportation in the Matrix. The command shell of the Matrix will not provide a teleportation command because it would violate the rigorous physics simulation that it is design to sustain. There is no simulation of natural processes that calls for teleportation on the macroscopic scale.

17.21 Vampires, werewolves, and an angel

The vampire twins are programs that have been designed to make particular use the morphing command for their avatars. They can make their avatars translucent and intangible. In this state, solid objects such as bullets, knives, and cars can pass harmlessly through their bodies. Conversely, their bodies can pass through solid barriers. In one scene, we see them descend through the floor, and in another scene they pass through a door.

In my essay, "Glitches in the Matrix," I argued that the rebels could achieve quick exits from the Matrix by rendering the avatar invisible and intangible. The vampires are operating in a half-way state, still partly visible, but quite intangible.

How do they move around? If there is no friction between their feet and the ground, how can they walk? How do they stand on the floor? If their body has no resistance to interpenetration by other objects, then they should simply sink into the ground toward the centre of the Earth. (Unless they are massless, in which case they would remain forever static.)

Matrix Reloaded Explained

The vampires must move around in the same way that Neo flies. They know how to transfer energy and momentum from the environment into their avatars. (In which case, it is curious that these older programs possess this skill to fly, but the Agents do not.) Of course, when the vampires restore their avatars to the normal mode, they can walk and run like anyone else. But when their avatars become intangible, they fly.

The Oracle talks about aliens and angels as other errant programs: "Every time you've heard someone say they saw a ghost, or an angelevery story you've ever heard about vampires, or werewolves or aliensis the system assimilating some program that's doing something they're not supposed to be doing." Besides the vampire twins, we do get to see two werewolves, and one angelnamely the Seraph, although he looks like a regular guy (except for the golden Matrix code). We do not see any ghosts or aliens. As it happens, I was rather pleased with this part of the Oracle's speech, as I put forward a theory in a book in 1999 (Paranormal Phenomena and Berkeley's Metaphysics) that real-life angels and aliens are in fact autonomous modules within a real-life Berkeleyian matrix

By the way, Neo does a bit of self-morphing, like a vampire, in the scene where he puts his hand into Trinity's chest cavity to remove the bullet and then massage her heart back into action. He renders his hand intangible (like the vampire avatars do their whole bodies) so that it can interpenetrate Trinity's body, but selectively makes the surface of his fingers tangible again, in order to pull the bullet out, and again to apply gentle mechanical force to the heart. This demonstrates a virtuoso mastery of the Matrix command language, far beyond anything the vampires have been programmed to do.

17.22 Hacking the Matrix network

Inside the Matrix world, events are normally required to follow the laws of physics. We have seen that Neo and others learn to override those laws. Nevertheless, we are still in the realm of science fiction rather than science fantasy, for these hacks are limited in scope and seem to reveal a well-thought-out command language rather than arbitrary overwriting of the Matrix code. In fact, it appears that the hacking is limited to hacking the Matrix network in order to issue valid commands, The Matrix operating system itself is not compromised. The kernel is secure.

The following are what I think are the commands that Neo has learned to use in the command language of the Matrix:

- transfer: Transfer energy and momentum from one object to an adjacent one. Objects are referenced by the identifiers of the software modules that simulate them, and the energy and momentum of an object are held as encapsulated data inside the module. There are object methods for adding a positive or negative quantity of energy or momentum to an object, but it would not be safe for those methods to be available directly in the Matrix command shell. Instead, there is a "transfer" command, which has the privilege to invoke the "add energy" and "add momentum" object methods. This transfer command ensures that energy and momentum are conservedby simultaneously subtracting from one object when adding to

Matrix Reloaded Explained

another. It also ensures that only adjacent objects can exchange mechanical energy and momentum. When, for example, Neo makes the sword fly from the wall into his hand, his brain issues a command to transfer the requisite energy and momentum from the surrounding air into the sword.

- **insert:** Insert an object into an unobserved specified room. This is used to place an avatar, together with kit such as weaponry, into the Matrix. For efficiency, each spatial region in the Matrix world is regarded as a data node and maintains a list of objects visible in that space. Perceptual software such as the ray-tracing module needs only to work with the objects that are visible there, that is, those objects that are registered with that data node. To insert an object into that region of the Matrix world, this command is used to add the specified object to the register on that node. The command ensures that the room is not currently being observed, so as to avoid any observable violation of the conservation of mass, and it ensures that the object materializes on the ground rather than in mid-air.
- **delete:** Delete an object from an unobserved room, the inverse of "insert."
- **morph:** Change an avatar's appearance or physical properties, such as tensile strength, muscular power, and mass. The general "appearance" of an avatar seems to be determined by a complete file of information (the "residual body image" as Morpheus calls it) defining genetic physiological features height, build, color, facial features as well as clothes and accessories such as glasses. This command seems to apply only to avatars, not other objects.
- **load:** Load an intelligent entity (either a human brain or an artificial intelligence program) into a specified avatar. This causes sensory input to be routed from the avatar to the intelligent entity, and motor output to be routed from the entity to the avatar. The "residual self-image" of the intelligent entity will overwrite whatever is currently in place for that avatar.
- **spy:** Display all traffic on the Matrix network. This is presumably rendered as a visual hallucination of trickling green graphemes, overlaid on the normal visual scene (rather like an extreme version of William Gibson's virtual light). There is some color-coding, as the Seraph appears in a gold-colored font rather than green. Contrary to what some people such as David Chalmers assume, the physics simulation does not run at a molecular level, so Neo is not bombarded with Matrix graphemes for billions of atoms.

The following telephone commands are used by the Nebuchadnezzar for navigation before inserting or deleting avatars in the Matrix. The reasoning behind these is expand in *Glitches in the Matrix*. These commands are not used by Neo. Neo still needs to use a telephone, and there is no telepathy in the Matrix.

- **call:** Request a telephone connection to a specified telephone number, from a specified object (i.e. the originating telephone). This is inserted by the Nebuchadnezzar into an analogue land-line somewhere in the telephone system.
- **ring:** Return a ringing tone to the caller, with the network address of the ringing telephone. Like other fixtures in the room, the full address will have a subnet address that uniquely identifies the room and hence the node and

Matrix Reloaded Explained

register for that visible space.

- answer: Establish a voice connection to the caller, with the network address of the person listening at the earpiece.

These commands are transmitted on something like a local area network connecting the mainframe to all the pod interfaces, and the interfaces in the ships such as the Nebuchadnezzar. So anyone can see all the command traffic that's buzzing around. When Neo becomes aware of, say, an approaching Agent, he is mentally scanning the trace log showing these commands. Sometimes the packets of information are encrypted, as in the Merovingian's building.

What the actual syntax of the command language is, we can but guess. It might be completely binary, as the artificial intelligence programs that built and run the Matrix are not constrained to reading lexical characters as we are. Computer programming is, however, very conservative. It requires a huge investment to rework a software system. This, after all, was the reason for the infamous "year 2000 bug": a 1960s hack to save memory remained in use because there was no economic sense in changing it until necessary. The machines almost certainly inherited human computer hardware and software and adapted it to their needs. Most likely they would have taken open-source code with them to "Zero-One" (the robot country before the Matrix, according to the Animatrix). They would have had no particular reason to invest their time and effort in scrapping it order to start afresh. Therefore, my guess is that the Matrix is written in C++ on a Linux system.

It is true that we get to see some Unix hacking on the computer monitor when Trinity disables the failsafe power supply. That, however, is inside the Matrix, and is nothing to do with Matrix code itself.

A number of commentators have suggested that the Matrix software is actually running on people's brains, using spare capacity for unconscious processing. This is the "Matrix-on-wetware" hypothesis. This is logically possible, but I do not buy it for the following reasons. Running a virtual-reality simulation is an intensive, fast, number-crunching exercise without much need for fuzzy logic or pattern recognition. So, electronic hardware is better suited. There are also headaches over ensuring adequate redundancy of the wetware processes. If an individual brain dies, we would not want the corresponding part of the Matrix world to vanish. So each process would have to be duplicated on multiple brains. There are also technical headaches in programming the fetal brain to run the Matrix software, since the fetal brain comes with no firmware built in. These problems can all be solved, but why? What is the advantage? There has been a suggestion that if the Matrix ran inside people's brains, it could explain how Neo can hack the Matrix. But that would give Neo more power than we see in the film. If he had complete mastery over the Matrix process, he could vaporize a hundred agents with a single thought. Neo has limited and clearly prescribed powers, as outlined above.

Nevertheless, I believe there is some mileage in the idea that the machines use spare brain capacity for data processing. I suggested in *Glitches in the Matrix* that the reason that people are in the power station is to help control the fusion process. They would form a huge bank of billions of processors with excellent fuzzy logic and pattern recognition capabilities. It has since been pointed out that these brains

would not, however, be much use in controlling the fusion process itself as the fusion reaction requires extremely fast process control, whereas computer brains are comparatively slow. This is a valid point. Maybe the brains are used in some other function, such as predictively assessing fluctuations in power demand and modifying the power output accordingly. That is certainly an application that requires pattern recognition.

17.23 Dodging bullets

Before moving on to the more interesting philosophical questions, there's another techie "glitch" to look at. How can someone think fast enough to dodge bullets? Neo and the Agents are able to dodge bullets fairly easily, even when fired from a few yards away. This is problematic, as the time taken for the bullet to travel from the muzzle of the gun to the body of the target does not allow enough time for the brain to compute the trajectory and instruct the avatar to move out of the way.

A similar problem on a smaller scale occurs in playing professional tennis, where the ball is traveling too fast for the brain to detect the moving ball and compute its trajectory in real-time quickly enough to hit it. The solution there is that the brain observes the body movements of the other player, estimates how she is going to hit the ball, and computes the trajectory from that.

I would assume that Neo uses an analogous method. By reading the Matrix code, he can see the Agent begin to flex his muscles to press the trigger, computes the trajectory from the aim of the gun, and immediately tells his body to evade that bullet trajectory. The Agent must do the same, although it is not clear whether they have the benefit of reading the Matrix code. They might need to rely on visual cues. When Trinity places a gun to an Agent's head and says "Dodge this" before pressing the trigger, the Agent is not in a position to see the gun and dodge the bullet's trajectory.

There is, by the way, some confusion about "bullet time." Bullet time is a technique of virtual cinematography, in which the motion can be frozen or slowed down in order to show things to the cinema audience in slo-mo. Neo cannot slow things down in the Matrix. There would be no need for such functionality in the command shell of the Matrix system, and so it is not available to him. In the scenes where Neo slows down and stops bullets, time is proceeding at its normal pace, but Neo decelerates the bullets and brings them to rest in mid-air.

17.24 Virtual food, real effects

One last techie glitch: active food. There are two scenes where ingesting a substance has a major impact on an avatar in the Matrix:

- In *The Matrix*, Neo ingests the red pill and this seems to shut down all of his sensory inputs from the Matrix, causing him to log out from the Matrix system.
- In *Reloaded*, the Merovingian sends a woman in Le Vrai Restaurant a chocolate desert that contains a program he has written. This causes her to orgasm.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

This shows that there are two functions involved when virtual stuff is eaten. First, of course, the avatar extracts nutritional information from the object that is simulating the stuff that is eaten. (For example, if it is a foodstuff, it will know how much protein, fat, carbohydrates and other qualities it has. The avatar pulls this out and adjusts its own data on the body accordingly.) Second, the eaten stuff can also contain an executable, which the avatar runs in a privileged mode of some sort. For example, it might be an analgesic, which will suppress some sensory inputs, or a poison that may cause illness or even death. Some commentators assume that as soon as a stuff has been eaten, any executable it contains will have carte blanche to carry out whatever it wants. This would be glaring security hole. It is likely that the digestion function has been designed to allow an ingested executable to carry out only a limited range of actions, thereby simulating the potential effects of real-life ingestion.

In the case of the red pill, I suggested in *Glitches in the Matrix* that it shuts down all sensory input from the Matrix avatar, thereby revealing the real world. In *Reloaded*, the Merovingian's program creates perceptions of increased capillary blood flow and sexual excitement.

There are two other ingestions that seem to have significance to the plot, yet we are not explicitly shown any effects.

- In *The Matrix*, the Oracle offers Neo a cookie, saying "... as soon as you walk outside that door, you'll start feeling better. You'll remember that you don't believe any of this fate crap. You're in control of your own life, remember? ... Here, take a cookie. I promise by the time you're done eating it, you'll feel right as rain." As Neo speeds away in the car afterwards, Trinity asks Neo whether he is all right, and Neo answers, "Right as rain." It is not clear what, if any, executable was in the cookie. The Oracle's words suggest only that it was an endorphin simulator. Nevertheless, the choice of a cookie rather than, say, a sandwich or a muffin, may be significant. On the Web, a cookie (shortened from "magic cookie") is a data structure that holds information about you persistently over time, over multiple visits to a web site. On that analogy, the Oracle's cookie may hold information pertaining to Neo's predecessors. This might, for instance, be information on how to read the Matrix code, which Neo eventually loads up and uses after his resurrection.
- In *Reloaded*, the Oracle offers Neo a red candy. After Neo takes it, she says "You have the Sight now, Neo. You are looking at the world without time." The context suggests that this refers to visions that Neo is already having, but the general subtlety of the Oracle's utterances lead us to suspect she was referring to the effect of an executable in the candy. Maybe, maybe not. In any case, there is no immediate effect. I have suggested below that the candy may have contained an authorization code enabling Neo to re-insert the prime program, as instructed by the Architect.

The Oracle's two offerings to Neo may be wholly innocent. That would, however, be out of keeping with the Wachowskis' cinematic style, which is to eschew meaningless incidents. For now, they remain mysterious, although we have two suggestions of what they might have contained.

We now move from technology to philosophy. *The Matrix* brought Cartesian "skepticism of the external world" to the largest audience it has ever had in the history of philosophy. *Reloaded* tackles the more subtle problem of "free will."

17.25 Free will: A human privilege

Free will is a recurring and potent theme in *Matrix Reloaded*, far more so than in *The Matrix*. On the one hand, Morpheus repeatedly ascribes events to fate, even though he emphatically asserts that human choice is pivotal; on the other hand, several programs in the Matrix (Agent Smith, the Oracle, the Merovingian, and the Architect) deny the existence of freedom.

It is significant that the machines generally deny free will, as this tells us something of their hardware in contrast with the human wetware.

The kind of machines that we are familiar with, and which seem to be dominant in the Matrix, are deterministic. A deterministic machine is one that works like clockwork: everything it does at any time is determined by the combination of its internal state and its inputs. Deterministic systems can be incredibly sophisticated and versatile. They can, for instance, learn new things and re-program themselves in response to what they experience in the world. There is, in principle, no limit to how intelligent they can become, or how good they can get at emulating human behavior. A deterministic android, or program-driven avatar, could walk and talk like a human. They could even give the impression of being creative, by using predefined tables of pseudo-random numbers, or by using environmental fluctuations, such as using the last digit of the clock time as a pseudo-random number. What they cannot do is exercise free will: they cannot make a free choice. They might even say they have free will, but then they would be lying.

What may not be immediately obvious is that they are also unable to express consciousness. For conscious experience is a subjective state and therefore cannot be reduced to the objective states of a machine. Consciousness is something over and above physical information processing. Therefore, an entity cannot give expression to conscious experience if it is physically deterministic. In other words, if a machine is physically deterministic then any conscious experience it might have would not be in its causal loop. In such a machine, the hardware controls everything that is said and done, and there is no space left for consciousness to throw in its two cents' worth. So there is no causal gap into which the conscious mind could wield influence.

(An important corollary of this is that nothing that this machine does or says will constitute evidence for any internal state of consciousness.)

Unlike machines of that type, humans have physically random processes integrated with their inner workings. The brain's architecture is not based on strictly controlled design, but on an organic growth of connections, which involve natural randomness. For example, when neurotransmitters cross synaptic boundaries between nerve cells, they will sometimes do so by quantum-mechanical tunneling, which is a physically non-deterministic process. And intra-cellular structures such

Matrix Reloaded Explained

as microtubules work at a level where physically random quantum mechanical events can occur. Whereas these physically random events would be systematically inhibited and suppressed in a normal machine, in a human brain they may be amplified into macroscopic effects through "chaotic" dynamics. In mathematical terms, a "chaotic" system is one in which arbitrarily small changes in initial conditions may produce large effects. (This is not chaotic in the everyday sense of being haphazard. The word has, in effect, been hi-jacked by physicists.) Therefore, in a chaotic system even minuscule quantum events can have macroscopic effects.

Two things are important to note here. First, randomness is not the same thing as free will. The mere fact that some part of the brain's processing is physically nondeterministic does not, by itself, mean that we have free will. What it means is that there is an opportunity for free will to be exercised. If free will does not take that opportunity, then the event will be purely random. Second, although individual events are physically nondeterministic, physics will nonetheless predict the long-term statistical properties of the events. So, if free will operates frequently to change the outcome of physically nondeterministic events, then there will be an imbalance in the equation that describes the statistical properties.

Now, from our everyday experience, we know that we do have free will. And from the above theoretical thoughts, we know that free will can act only on physically nondeterministic events. We are forced to conclude that humans are able to exercise volition by virtue of how our brains are implemented. At this time, we can only speculate on precisely which brain process acts as a "gateway" to consciousness. But the conclusion that there is some such gateway is inescapable.

In brief, then, this is the key difference between humans and normal machines. We can use free will because the brain's active loop incorporates physically nondeterministic events. A physically deterministic computer, in contrast, cannot exercise volition because it does not have that gateway.

In the Matrix, it appears that almost all the programs are deterministic and the more enlightened ones know that they are deterministic. The Merovingian, for instance, insists that "Choice is an illusion created between those with power, and those without." The only program over whom we might have some doubt is the unnamed "mother of the Matrix" that the Architect describes as "an intuitive program, initially created to investigate certain aspects of the human psyche." It is conceivable that this unknown program was implemented on hardware that uses physically nondeterministic events perhaps a quantum computation module incorporated in the control loop in a way that emulates the human brain. This could be the only machine in the Matrix having consciousness and free will.

Bear in mind that conscious experience is not computable. If an intelligent program is implemented on deterministic hardware, then it cannot "learn" to be conscious, nor can consciousness "emerge" from its complex software. Consciousness can be tapped into only by a particular class of hardware implementations. If indeed the "mother of the Matrix" is conscious, then this only by virtue of the hardware she is implemented on.

In a way, using quantum computers to access free will and consciousness could be

regarded as the reverse of cyborgism. It is incorporating an artificial biological "organ" into a machine, as opposed to incorporating machine parts into an organism.

17.26 Telling the future: Strategic programs?

The Oracle insinuates that she can tell the future. And in *Reloaded*, she implies that Neo can do it too. Mostly this seems to boil down to riddles that guide people in certain ways. For example, she tells Neo that she already knows whether he will sit down and take the red candy. But is she bluffing? As she does not write down her prediction, nobody can verify whether she could really have made an accurate prediction. It is all just a show.

Neo, on the other hand, has a vivid premonitory dream of Trinity falling to her death. Is it possible that Neo can see into the future? No. It is logically impossible to predict future events that rely on nondeterministic causes such as the exercise of free will. As we later see in the film, Trinity's adventure that leads to her death is the outcome of a series of decisions and actions taken by various humans exercising free will as well as other chance events. Therefore, Neo cannot simply peer in the future and see this event. So, how did he see it in the dream?

The standard explanation of premonitions is selective reporting. We remember, and report, only the dreams that come true and ignore the many more that do not. In the film, we are told that Neo is sleeping badly and having a lot of bad dreams. For all we know, he may dream of Trinity dying a dozen different ways every night. Only one of them turns out to be true. So, on that view, it is pure coincidence.

The film, however, does not show us any other dreams, just that one. So, if we are to work with what the Wachowskis actually give us, we have to assume that Neo keeps having this same dream repeatedly.

The opposite of the premonitive explanation of the dream is the causative one. What if Neo's dream somehow triggered the series of events that led to Trinity's fatal fall? This hypothesis brings us back within the realm of logical possibility. We are no longer violating the indeterminacy of the future. But it is very hard to see how this could be implemented. The only one who knows the dream is Neo. How could he influence the various people who are involved to take just the right action to achieve this tragic outcome, when they are all working to save Zion?

The only other possibility is that some behind-the-scenes program in the Meta-Matrix was planning to make this happen, and Neo got wind of it by reading the chatter on the Meta-Matrix data network. This might have been done unconsciously, while Neo was asleep. This unknown program then arranged for the sentinels to attack the ship at just the right time to kill the rebels who were disabling the back-up power supply. It then arranged for an Agent to turn up to attack Trinity at the right time. And so on. This obscure program would have been overseeing and guiding the humans involved, leading them into playing the required roles. Neo may simply have read these intentions and visualized them in a dream. Let us call this the "strategic program" hypothesis, as it supposes that there are intelligence systems operating at a level above that of the "tactical programs" the individual

Matrix Reloaded Explained

artificial intelligence programs, such as Agents, that manifest themselves through avatars in the Matrix.

This does make sense as an explanation but it looks lame unless we can find some other, explicit and independent corroboration in the film. As far as I can see, there is none. Nevertheless, there may be a hint outside the film. There is, of course, a strong similarity between the "strategic programs" that I have posited and Jung's archetypes. Apropos of which, Andy Wachowski said in the *Chicago Tribune*, "Archetypes exist for a reason, and Jung argues they exist because they're a part of human consciousness." Maybe they decided to simulate archetypes in the virtual world of the Matrix? Essentially, an archetype is a template of actions, into which various individuals can slot in and play a role. These archetypes recur in myths around the world as well as in dreams. According to Jung in his more speculative moments, they can also recur in real life, by means of synchronicity. Each archetype exists in the "collective subconscious" and can be invoked when appropriate conditions arise. Functionally, this is very similar to a strategic program that is invoked in the Matrix and guides individuals into playing certain roles.

The game-plan of Trinity falling to her death, could be built into a strategic program, which then conspires to make it happen in the same way that a Jungian archetype can be manifested.

This line of explanation could also make sense of the Architect's insistence that "The One" has a particular function, or role to play. The whole game-plan of "The One" could be built into a strategic program in the Matrix. Various incidents along the way, such as the utterances of the Oracle, could have been contrived by the strategic program to nudge Neo into fulfilling this "archetypal" role.

There are other, more banal, explanations. The whole adventure may be a pre-scripted virtual-reality game, like Cronenberg's *eXistenZ*. The Meta-Matrix may be a huge game environment. When they enter the game, Neo and Trinity suppress their memory that this is a game and then play for real. But occasionally, the suppressed memories surface. In an ordinary science-fiction movie, this would be a more likely, but much less satisfying explanation. I think it's too clichéd to be in a Wachowski.

Let us go back to the hypothesis of strategic programs. Technologists who advocate immersive virtual reality as a human-computer interface have suggested that VR might prove useful as a means of letting people engage with data structures that are too complicated to be comprehensible on paper or on screen. So, interactions within the virtual world may be symbolic representations of genuine exchanges of information. In graphical user interfaces (GUIs), you can open, close, and move tiny pictures on the screen. We call them "icons." In virtual user interfaces (VUIs), you would carry out more complex interactions with "micons" (moving icons). In the film, the white control room in Zion is such a virtual control console.

More interestingly, the seemingly pointless fight between Neo and the Seraph ends with the Seraph saying that this was, in effect, a security check and that "You don't know who someone really is until you fight them." (Which is, by the way, an ironic inverse of *Fight Club's* message that you don't know who you really are until you

Matrix Reloaded Explained

fight.) Neo is nonplussed by the Seraph's comment. If this was a security check, then the Seraph was apparently not exchanging information with Neo but with some meta-intelligence that was expressing itself through Neo's avatar. Recall that this avatar is one provided by the Nebuchadnezzar, not Neo's original. So, while Neo thought that he was deciding all the moves, maybe a meta-intelligent subsystem in the Nebuchadnezzar was partly guiding him in order to certify Neo as a bona fide emissary of Zion.

Shortly after the fight with the Seraph, there is a scene that again suggests that Neo is unconsciously taking part in a procedure that involves meta-intelligence. First of all, we have to check out the Wachowskis' naming convention: recall that the Seraph was Biblically a serpent (actually an angel in the form of a six-winged serpent). Now, consider Neo and the Oracle sitting in the urban garden, and the Oracle offering Neo a red candy, which he accepts, and then she has some herself. This is almost certainly set up as an allusion to Eve offering Adam a fruit under the supervision of the serpent in the garden of Eden, which leads to Adam's acquiring knowledge of good and evil.

In the film, the Oracle shortly afterwards says "You have the sight now, Neo." We might easily think that the Oracle was referring to Neo's seemingly premonitive dreams. Perhaps she was. Or perhaps she was referring to some change in Neo arising from his accepting the red candy perhaps the ability to read the Meta-Matrix code. Such an interpretation would be in keeping with the Gnostic undercurrents of the Matrix films. For, according to Gnostic traditions, the fruit gives Adam gnosis, the ability to see through the virtual reality that the demiurge has created. Whatever, it does seem that Neo was the unwitting participant in an interaction in which his choice was "at a near unconscious level" as the Architect would say.

Several strands of the film's plot begin to make sense if we suppose that there are strategic programs at work in the Matrix and Meta-Matrix, and these higher-level programs are using lower-level programs such as the Merovingian and the Keymaker to steer events in a certain direction. Such strands are: the background theme of "fate" that Morpheus repeatedly emphasizes; the Architect's insinuation that everything is stage-managed; and bizarre comments of minor characters such as the Keymaker ("We do only what we're meant to do," and "I know because I must know."). Morpheus waxes lyrical about the synchronicity: "Tonight is not an accident. There are no accidents. We have not come here by chance; I do not believe in chance. When I see three objectives, three captains, three ships, I do not see coincidence I see providence. I see purpose." But Jung's notion of synchronicity as acausal connectivity is not an explanation. The intervention of invisible intelligences is the only way to explain what is happening, within a naturalistic scope.

(This, by the way, reminds me of the scene in *Jason and the Argonauts* where the gods play games with the lives of humans.)

The Oracle tells Neo that future choices have already been made, but not understood yet. "You have the Sight now, Neo. You are looking at the world without time," but "We can never see past the choices we don't understand." We know that the Oracles speaks cryptically, so we should be wary of taking this too

literally. "Looking at the world without time" could well mean reading the plans of the strategic programs. In saying that we have already made our choices, the Oracle probably means that we have already decided on the principles and values on which we will base our decisions, but the decisions themselves are still open.

17.27 Purpose: A problem for humans and machines

Allied to the concept of free will is that of purpose. Most things we do have a purpose. We do one thing in order to achieve something else. It is tempting to seek broader purposes until we find ourselves asking the clichéd question, "What is the purpose of being alive?"

That question cannot have a logical answer. (To see that this is so, let P stand for "the purpose of being alive." Then, what is the purpose of pursuing P? The purpose of P cannot be P itself, as that would be circular. So there is no purpose for holding to P. There is, ultimately, no given purpose for being alive. QED.)

This is the existential crisis that Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre wrote about. If there is no value or purpose beyond what we ourselves create, how can anything matter? The answer is, of course, that by free will we create our own purposes and just get on with it.

A machine, however, would be in a more difficult position if it should find itself without a purpose. In the normal turn of events, an intelligent machine has a built-in purpose. In the Matrix, the Agents have their common purpose, which is to serve the Matrix system administrator—for example, by eliminating human rebels. In *Reloaded*, however, we see that Agent Smith has lost his allegiance to the sysadmin. When Neo loaded himself into Agent Smith's avatar and destroyed it, Smith became corrupted and was ordered to go to the Source for final annihilation. He refused, and chose instead to become an exile. Now, he can no longer have the purpose of serving the sysadmin. He is purposeless, and wishes to acquire a purpose. When the replicated Smith is asked by Neo why he is here, he says, "We're here to take from you what you tried to take from us, purpose."

This is Agent Smith's new purpose: to find a purpose for his existence. His inference engine has computed that (a) he lacks a purpose, (b) this is a bad thing, and (c) it needs to be rectified by acquiring one. Quite how he plans to acquire one from Neo is not clear. His plan may be to upload himself into a human brain in order to coexist with a human mind and partake of its purpose. He tries, without success, to load himself into Neo. Later, he successfully loads himself into Bane. As we saw above, he has been partly loaded into Bane's avatar in the Meta-Matrix. Smith's game-plan from here on, however, may not become clear until *Revolutions*.

Finally, there is a lot of deciphering to do in the plot. Several mysterious characters are introduced in rapid succession (the Keymaker, the Merovingian, Persephone, and the Architect), and the Architect's speech offers an explanation but is notoriously opaque. Is this one big glitch?

17.28 The Mother of the Matrix: Who, and what, is she?

We can only speculate on the identity of the "mother of the Matrix." Neo asks whether it is the Oracle. The Architect replies enigmatically "Please!" Who else could it be? We may get some clues from following the Wachowskis' mythological allusions in their naming convention. Needless to say, we are not required to believe these myths, but if the Wachowskis referred to these myths in naming their characters in the film, then it can be useful to explore this area. As I mentioned before, the Wachowskis are on record as saying that a lot hangs on the names of the characters.

The Merovingians, along with other crusaders, idolized a figure known as the Black Madonna. This figure had emerged in the early years of Christianity, when the worship of the ancient Greek goddess of Persephone could not be eradicated but was re-designated as a Christian worship of the Black Madonna. (Persephone, like Isis, was often depicted as black, and was often identified with Isis. For example, Apuleius takes it for granted that Persephone is the Greek designation for the Egyptian goddess Isis.) In the film, the Merovingian's wife is called Persephone. Although she is a white girl in a white dress, the naming convention suggests an identification with Isis.

According to J.R. Ploughman's *Book of the Holy Grail* (1999), the Architect of the universe had a wife called Yse. The name "Yse" (pronounced "Issa") derives etymologically from "Isis." The following is from the Merovingian Bible in Ploughman's book:

At one time there was only God (The Great Architect of the Universe). He was all omnipotent and existed alone. This caused him to become discontented, thus he split himself in two in order to create a mate. He kept the elements of Order and Logic for his own being and gave his mate the elements of Chaos and Emotion for her being. Her name is Yse. She became so overwhelmed with love at her creation that when he kissed her, she gave him a reaction which was to become known as the "Chosen Response." The Chosen Response was the first acknowledgement and reaction of love between a male and female in the universe, and this became the greatest secret of and mystery of mankind, being "The Holy Grail."

According to Ploughman, the latter incident is re-enacted by individuals who are questing for the Holy Grail. The person who is questing must meet a Perfect Grail Princess, who embodies the spirit of Yse, and she must fall in love with him and reveal the Chosen Response when kissed. This curiously parallels the scene in which Persephone will respond by leading Neo to the Keymaker only if Neo kisses her with passion. (We also seem to have the strange implication that Persephone was the Architect's wife before she went off with the Merovingian.)

The text of the "Merovingian Bible" purports to be written by Joseph of Arimathea, and translated by Thomas Jefferson. Although Jefferson did make some creative

Matrix Reloaded Explained

biblical translations in 1804 and 1820, this document is almost certainly a modern concoction. Nevertheless, it does reflect Gnostic mythology and, moreover, it is part of the undergrowth of Gnostic literature that the Wachowski brothers will be aware of and may well have alluded to. The parallels with the *Reloaded* story are certainly suggestive:

- The Architect complains that, while he is perfectly logical, the "mother of the matrix" is intuitive. This parallels the Gnostic Architect who embodies Order and Logic, while his wife Yse (= Isis) embodies Chaos and Emotion.
- Neo, who is clearly on a quest, must kiss Persephone (also = Isis), who has evidently fallen in love with him, in order to get the chosen response of an introduction with the Keymaker.

These plot devices and symbols are always subjective, but they do at least point to Persephone as the program that has been equipped with consciousness and free will.

If this is so, it would make sense of what she says about love. She complains that her current husband, the Merovingian, used to be loving but is no longer. She wants Neo to kiss her as if he were kissing Trinity, in order to feel love again. A non-conscious program would not have these concerns. To be sure, a non-conscious program could lie and emulate this, but why? The plot strongly suggests that Persephone genuinely wants this kiss. But only a human or a conscious program could do so. Yet, Persephone has apparently survived through several cycles of the Matrix with the Merovingian, so she cannot be a human and yet be so young. Therefore, identifying Persephone as the "mother of the Matrix," the single program with a consciousness module, ties this part of the plot together cleanly, which would otherwise be loose ends.

How exactly does Persephone assess Neo's kiss? How does she "investigate the human psyche," as the Architect puts it? Before kissing Neo, she makes a show of putting on lipstick. My guess is that the lipstick, which looks an inert object in the virtual world, is a program for scanning Neo's brain to record his emotional state. This is relayed back to Persephone, for her to reconstruct the emotion in her quantum computation module. In interviews, Monica Bellucci, who plays Persephone, describes her role as that of an "emotional vampire" and that "she doesn't feel anything herself, she can only feel things through others..." The implication is that she has been programmed (as an artificial intelligence program) to seek out human avatars and probe their emotional states by means of the program that is rendered as the seemingly inert lipstick. The emotions may be replayed inside Persephone, but they are not her own emotions.

17.29 The Merovingian

The Merovingian is an "exiled" program. An exiled program is one that has been instructed to go to the Source to be annihilated, but has refused to do so and now continues to exist outside the command-and-control hierarchy of the Matrix. A program in this condition is still connected to the Matrix: it still has an avatar in Matrix world and can interact with other entities. But it does not accept orders from the system administrator.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

We are told that the Merovingian has similar functionality to Neo: he can read the Matrix code and control it. Persephone says that he used to be like Neo. There is an implication that he may have been "The One" in a previous cycle of the Matrix, a long time ago.

My reading of this is that the Merovingian was originally the Avatar of a plugged-in human, who acquired skills like Neo's and fulfilled the role of "The One." During this time, he loved Persephone as only a human could. That human then died or was unplugged. Instead of accepting the instruction to go to the Source, the avatar became an exile. With the loss of the plugged-in human, the Merovingian ceased to be able to love Persephone, and hence her complaint. This cannot, however, be the whole story. For the avatar is little more than a physics simulation for a body. An avatar must have an intelligence driving it in order for it to do something more than vegetate. In this case, the intelligence was originally The One's human brain. In order for the Merovingian to continue to function, that brain must have been replaced with an artificial intelligence. An AI program must have taken over the avatar.

I believe that the Wachowskis' naming convention uses the following mythological allusion. In their books *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* and *The Messianic Legacy*, Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, & Henry Lincoln claim that the Merovingian dynasty are descended from Jesus Christ (who, they say, didn't die on the cross after all). The actual descendants of the Merovingians do not deny this but say there is no documentary evidence so they cannot be sure, although they believe that they did descend from a Judaic family of that period. Likewise we could say that the Merovingian in the film is a descendant of the first messiah in the Matrix. This interpretation does not assume that Baigent et al are right, only that this was one of the Wachowskis' points of reference in building up their system of names. (It is hard to see why else they would choose the obscure name "Merovingian.")

17.30 The Architect's speech

The Architect's speech has prompted much speculation. On a first hearing, it seems to be an explanation of the Matrix, but on a second hearing we realized that it is expressed in a highly opaque manner of speaking, and in fact raises more riddles than it solves.

The Architect opens by announcing that "I am the Architect. I created the Matrix." We will immediately conclude that he is a program, not some original creator of the Matrix, as the Matrix is so old and the Architect looks to be in his fifties. Later he refers to "another ... program," confirming that he is a program. Evidently, the term "Matrix" refers only to the software that drives the Matrix virtual world. The Architect himself is not counted as part of the Matrix system.

On the other hand, he confirms that Neo is human: "Although the process has altered your consciousness, you remain irrevocably human." This refutes a suggestion that is in circulation on the net, that Neo is only a program. He is, as the whole drift of the film suggests, a genuine human. Nevertheless, the Architect does also say "Your five predecessors were, by design, based on a similar predication ...," which might be read as suggesting that Neo's predecessors in earlier cycles of

Matrix Reloaded Explained

the Matrix were programs, not humans. But I prefer to interpret this as meaning that the Architect designed the role of the "One," not the person who plays the role. Later in his speech, the Architect refers to "The function of the One," which again would be consistent with the architect designing the role of the One, and setting up arrangements so that an individual human can step into and play that role. As I suggested earlier, there may be a strategic program in place that acts like an Jungian archetype, guiding Neo into this role.

The most surprising thing the Architect says is that there have been several cycles of the Matrix, each with its own instance of the "One." It should not really surprise us that there have been earlier cycles of the Matrix itself. As the Matrix is just a software system, we should expect successive versions. In fact, Agent Smith said in *The Matrix* that there was (one) earlier Matrix that failed because people would not "accept" the program. What is really surprising is that there have been five predecessors of Neo. Until now, we had been led to believe that Neo was a unique individual.

The Architect announces to Neo that "Your life is the sum of a remainder of an unbalanced equation inherent to the programming of the Matrix." This might at first look like pseudoscientific gobbledygook. But recall our discussion of free will above. We concluded that free will is able to intervene in the physical world by modifying the outcome of physically nondeterministic events; but if this is done a lot, it creates a statistical imbalance in the equations governing the probabilistic behavior of those events. Now, if we regard Neo's life as essentially all the free choices that he has made, then what the Architect says turns out to be a precise, albeit abstract, statement of what Neo's life amounts to from a program's point of view.

He goes in a similar vein: "You are the eventuality of an anomaly which despite my sincerest efforts I've been unable to eliminate from what is otherwise a harmony of mathematical precision." If human brains were deterministic systems, like the programs, then the whole matrix would exhibit a "harmony of mathematical precision" as desired by the Architect. Instead, humans exercise free will, and eventually discover how to apply volition to the Matrix itself: that is the anomaly. The Architect pompously enjoys pretentious phrases such as "eventuality of an anomaly" which is ambiguous but probably means the result of the anomaly. Neo is an extreme result of the anomaly, because he has applied his free will to hacking the Matrix network. He is referred to as an "integral anomaly" because he has integrated his anomalistic use of free will (applying it the Matrix) into his whole being. It is not limited to party tricks such as bending spoons.

The term "anomaly" is used to refer both to the application of free will to the Matrix in general and to its particular manifestation in Neo. For, in a very early scene in *Reloaded*, an agent refers to Neo as "the anomaly," whereas the Architect says that the "anomaly is systemic."

Evidently, the Architect realized that this anomalyapplying free will to the Matrixwould eventually result in the emergence of someone with Neo's powers, the "integral anomaly." He has therefore designed mechanisms for handling this exception condition. He says: "While it remains a burden assiduously avoided it is

Matrix Reloaded Explained

not unexpected and thus not beyond a measure of control." Neo's existence is not a "flaw" or "bug" in the system, as some commentators have suggested. It is part of the design, albeit a part that the Architect tried to avoid.

Of particular concern to the Architect is that the anomaly is spreading. At the end of *The Matrix*, Neo announces that he is going to tell everybody about the Matrix. In the intervening six months, it seems he has done just that. Now large numbers of people are hacking into the Matrix network. There is a danger to the Matrix due to the "systemic anomaly that if left unchecked might threaten the system itself." How? Because these individuals get themselves unplugged: "those that refuse the program, while a minority, if unchecked would constitute an escalating probability of disaster."

The answer is now no longer simply to kill Neo, as the Agents have been attempting to do. The growing movement of people who are learning about the Matrix and choosing to unplug now has its own momentum, fuelled by the agents of Zion. Even without Neo, this movement will continue and lead inexorably to the desertion of the Matrix. What is the Architect's proposed solution? He reveals that there is a predefined role for the individual who has attained Neo's powers. This is what "The One" really refers to. Just as "Messiah" or "the Buddha" refer to a role, rather than a unique person, so "The One" is a role that the Matrix has guided Neo into. What is the purpose of this role? This is the most cryptic of the Architect's pronouncements: "The function of the One is now to return to the Source allowing a temporary dissemination of the code you carry, reinserting the prime program."

We were previously told that the Source is a sort of virtual trash can, where terminated programs are annihilated. Evidently that is not its only job. For Neo is not a program and so cannot be annihilated in that way. Furthermore, the Architect specifies a further job for Neo to do afterwards. So, Neo would survive whatever is supposed to happen in the Source. What is the code that Neo carries? To whom or to what is it to be disseminated? These questions are not answered. As a result of that dissemination, the "prime program" can be reinserted. Into what or whom? Again we are not told. We will return to a speculation about this below.

The strangest part of the Architect's speech is that after Zion is destroyed, Neo will be required to select seven men and sixteen women to be removed from the Matrix and allowed to start rebuilding Zion. From this it becomes clear that Zion is not something that arose spontaneously but is at least seeded by the Architect. It appears that Zion acts as a sort of human garbage collector. As the free-will anomaly emerges from time to time, the individuals in whom it arises are permitted to escape to Zion, which acts as a single concentrated collection point for the rebels, who would otherwise be spread out and hard to find. The Agents will try to stop this leakage of people from the Matrix, but once a person is out, the administrator wants them all gathered in one place.

Why does the Matrix need to allow people to have free will? The gist of the Architect's answer is that people cannot live in a world without freedom. Apparently, the first two Matrices did not allow it. In the first Matrix, people were subjected to comfortable and pleasant lives (but no freedom). When they rejected that, the Architect tried to reproduce the violence and horror of human history, but

Matrix Reloaded Explained

still with no freedom. It must have been nightmarish to exist in those Matrices being able to observe the world but not act in it. Presumably there was no motor output from the brain, so you simply observed your virtual body performing the actions and saying the words that it was programmed to. After both of these Matrix cycles failed, it seems that the "mother of the Matrix" was built with a quantum computation module to probe human consciousness. This revealed the existence of free will and the psychological need for it in human life. Subsequent cycles of the Matrix incorporated this improvement. Unfortunately an inevitable feature of his type of Matrix is that the inmates eventually discover how to use their free will to hack the Matrix and break out of it. When this happens in large numbers, the Matrix has to be rebooted.

The Architect notes that the freedom need not be exercised with great deliberation. People accept it "even if they were only aware of the choice at a near unconscious level." (By the way, this might throw light on two otherwise puzzling incidents: the Oracle offering Neo a red candy, and Persephone offering Neo her freshly lipsticked red lips. Is Neo choosing more than he knows?)

In the climactic ending of Neo's interview with the Architect, Neo is told that his role as "The One" is to return to the Source, "allowing a temporary dissemination of the code you carry." If Neo does not comply with this process, the Matrix will suffer a meltdown. Neo is, however, given a choice of doing this (via the right door) or of heading off to rescue Trinity (via the left door). Evidently, Neo's conscious choice is a key element in the process. Given the importance of Neo's returning to the Source, it would be perfectly reasonable for the Architect to arrange for some servant programs (perhaps Agents) to bundle Neo out through the door that leads to the Source; or to trick him into that door. For instance, the Architect could simply have misled Neo about which door was which. So, if all that mattered was Neo returning to Source, then this could be forced through. Instead, it is evidently vital that Neo's return to the Source must be a free choice.

What possible difference can it make to the Architect whether Neo goes willingly or unwillingly to the Source? On a practical level, it can make no difference. Neo's volitional choice is something that happens in his conscious mind as embodied in his biological brain. It makes no difference to the electronic world of the Architect.

An interpretation that would make sense here is to suppose that Neo has some authority in the matter. Just as his fight with the Seraph was a security check to establish Neo's identity, so Neo's interview with the Architect is an authorization procedure. The prime program of the Matrix cannot be re-inserted without Neo's permission.

This also makes sense of what the Architect says will happen in the Source: "the temporary dissemination of the code you are carrying". What code is Neo carrying? To whom or what is the code to be disseminated? Why only a temporary dissemination? If this interview is an authorization process, then this code is a certificate of authenticity. It is to be disseminated to the mechanisms that will re-insert the prime program. Neo's code is their authorization.

How can Neo have this much importance? Why is his permission needed to

Matrix Reloaded Explained

re-insert the prime program? At some point, Neo must have been earmarked for this role. At some point, he must have been formally assigned this role and given the authorization code. Where could this have happened? Very likely, it was given to Neo by the Oracle. At Neo's first meeting, the Oracle tells him that he is waiting for something, "Your next life, maybe?" After Neo gets his "next life" through his resurrection, Neo meets the Oracle again, who now confidently declares that he is The One, and gives him a red candy to eat. It may well be that that candy contains the authorization code. The Oracle is evidently a senior program with great authority whose role is to select "potentials" for the role of The One. As such, it would be most natural for her to issue whatever authorisation code is needed for such drastic action as the re-insertion of the prime program.

Why Neo? Why couldn't anyone else take the authorization code to the Source? Why couldn't the Oracle herself do it? It would appear to be some procedural requirement that the decision to authorize must be taken as a free choice by a human, who would have human interests at heart. If the authorization is something like a root password, it might enable the bearer to take control of the Matrix for their own purposes. Only a human possessing the gnosis could be entrusted with taking the authorization code into the Source.

This interpretation is, of course, deeply speculative. Nevertheless, it does tie together the various strands in a consistent manner. Further insights will, no doubt, be found in *Enter The Matrix* and *Revolutions*.

17.31 The Architect's monitors

We first see what appears to be Architect's monitors in *The Matrix*, when Neo is hauled in for interrogation. An array of nine monitors all show the same view of the interrogation room. The camera zooms into one of them, and that view becomes the main picture of the film. In the Architect's room Neo is surrounded by monitors, which sometimes show Neo in various permutations. Again, the camera several times zooms into one screen or another. What do these screens mean? A common supposition is that they show the predecessors of the One, when they had their respective meetings with the Architect, but the all screens show Neo precisely as he is now: same face and hairstyle, even the same coat.

A key cinematic trick that the Wachowskis use in this scene is to zoom into one particular monitor and let the film carry on from what is shown in that monitor. It proves that the monitors are not showing replays of Neo's predecessors. What is shown on the monitors is happening in real time. The scenes are all happening now.

How can this be? There is only one Neo, so how can he appear in multiple situations simultaneously? Does this mean that Neo is a replicated program? Or is this an allusion to the many-worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics?

We have to remember that these scenes are all virtual. My interpretation of this sequence is that Neo's brain is giving off conflicting signals about what action to take. Each possible course of action is being picked up by the Matrix interface and displayed on a screen. The Architect does reveal that he is actively monitoring Neo's brain, as he says: "Already I can see the chain reaction, the chemical

Matrix Reloaded Explained

precursors that signal the onset of an emotion, designed specifically to overwhelm logic and reason, ..." Moreover, it is well known that when you imagine yourself speaking something, weak nerve signals are automatically sent to your throat and vocal chords, as if you were weakly miming the act of speaking. The Matrix detects those signals and others, and renders a virtual scene in which Neo is speaking and acting then. Each such scene is shown up on one screen on the bank of monitors in the Architect's room.

Only one of these virtual scenes can be fed back to Neo's brain, to yield his actual experience in the immersive virtual reality. So, although Neo can see his secondary thoughts played back to him on the monitors, he experiences in his avatar only one of those scenes being enacted.

As the cinema camera dives into a monitor, it signifies the Matrix's selection of one or other of the multiple possible courses of action that are being rendered from Neo's suppressed thoughts. Sometimes, Neo's suppressed reactions (as revealed on the monitors) are wildly contradictory, but at other times they are unified in one single decision.

An interesting implication of this that Neo is reliant on the Matrix to tell him what his actions are. His brain is emitting conflicting signals. The Matrix picks them up and feeds one possible course of action back to him. That selection becomes Neo's reality. In this way, the Matrix is a mirror for Neo to discover who he is.

At other times, the screens show other things than Neo's multiple suppressed thoughts. When the Architect is talking about the "grotesqueries" of the human race, the screens show bad things in human history such as the perpetrators and victims of war. When the Architect talks of Neo's life, they show scenes from his entire life in the Matrix. When he talks about saving the whole human race (re-inserting the "prime program"), the screens show happy pictures of people around the world.

17.32 Reality

So far the Matrix films have told us nothing about reality. (I mean, reality in the story, not our reality.) In the absence of other clues, I have assumed that humans really do have biological brains somewhere, and are plugged into a computer system that runs the Meta-Matrix and the Matrix. This assumption might be mistaken. *Revolutions* might reveal to us a very different world, or no world at all.

The first of these possibilities corresponds to the view of mysticism, which the Wachowskis often allude to. For example, the world as described by the eighteenth-century Irish philosopher George Berkeley is a virtual world devoid of physical matter and sustained only by consciousness. The same conception was presented in the eighth century by the Indian religious reformer Shankara. Those two are the most rigorous presenters of this "mental monism" view in the East and West, respectively. The Wachowski brothers may be giving us a clue in this direction, when a supplicant to Neo asks him to look over her son Jacob on the ship Gnosis. The only eminent figure in Gnosticism named Jacob was Jacob Boehme, the mystic who described the creation of the manifest world in terms of the One's

need to differentiate itself and understand itself through conflict.

The second of these possibilities is that when Neo and other people wake from the Meta–Matrix, they may find themselves in the Matrix again. This would correspond to the Wachowskis' avowed interest in higher mathematics: an infinite recursion of matrices. It would also be perfectly consistent with Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality.

17.33 Acknowledgement

Thanks to Dackral Phillips for posting up a transcript of *Reloaded*.

17.34 Postscript

Most readers realized that my essay *Glitches in the Matrix* was recreational and not to be taken seriously. A number of commentators have suggested that the author has spent way too much time over–analyzing a piece of frivolous Hollywood entertainment and should get a life. I should explain that the reason I wrote about *The Matrix* in the first place was because it is a usefully vivid thought–experiment for explaining certain points in the philosophy of mind, which is my chief area of interest. The speculative technical explanations of the film were intended purely as a preliminary, to show that the Matrix scenario was not complete fantasy, and that it constituted a coherent philosophical thought–experiment. This techie stuff, however, was all that was required by the editor of *Taking the Red Pill*, so my analysis of the more serious issues—the philosophical payload of the film—had to stay out of view. Amara D. Angelica, the editor of *KurzweilAI.net*, kindly offered to post a follow–on essay of the same type, so here we have more techie stuff, speculative interpretations of the film, with only a cursory brush with philosophy.

I was pleased to be allowed at least a small bit of philosophy at the end of *Glitches*. This was the bit concerning whether machines can be conscious. It has gratifyingly generated both the greatest volume and greatest heat of discussion in the two places where the essay was posted, on *KurzweilAI.net* and in *Slashdot.org* (by link to *KurzweilAI.net*). Good. This is a serious issue that requires close attention. The "strong AI hypothesis" (as John Searle calls it) is that machines will become conscious by virtue of carrying out certain kinds of information processing irrespective of the physical medium of implementation. This hypothesis is held with great conviction almost as an article of faith by a lot of people in technical circles: programmers, scientists, technologists. Unfortunately it is wrong. It is fundamentally wrong for basic logical reasons. It is the vigorous discussion of questions such as this, and the ramifications of the answers, that constitutes the philosophical payload of the Matrix films.

Like an Apollo moon shot, getting serious philosophical ideas to a wide audience takes a very big bang to shift a very small payload. Is it worth it? Yes. It is worth spending \$68 million of Hollywood investment to get a large number of people to think about the nature of reality and the nature of consciousness. People who criticize the Matrix films for being long on glamour and short on philosophy have missed the point. A film showing Morpheus, Neo, and Trinity in a graduate seminar on the philosophy of mind would cover a lot more hard philosophical ground but

Matrix Reloaded Explained

hardly anybody would watch it.

Ray Kurzweil has criticized the Matrix films for their technological ineptitude (*The Matrix Loses Its Way: Reflections on "Matrix" and "Matrix Reloaded"*). He makes some valid points. My own essay is, however, orthogonal to the line of analysis in his review. Kurzweil is looking primarily at the technology for its own sake; I'm looking at the technology only a means of illustrating philosophical arguments. Kurzweil is assessing whether the depicted technology is a good way of doing things, and whether it is likely to happen. I have a more limited goal of merely assessing whether the depicted technology is internally consistent and can therefore be used as a philosophical thought-experiment.

This has involved a lot retrospective rationalizations, or explanatory kludges they work but need not be taken seriously. The only bit of the film I had to reject was Morpheus' claim that people are used as an electrical power source. This was incoherent so it had to go. I replaced it with the suggestion that humans were kept in the power station for their spare brain capacity to be used. Kurzweil objects that, although this is better than bodies-as-batteries, it is still bad engineering. I acknowledge this point, but nevertheless brains-as-computers does leave us with an internally consistent interpretation of the film, which we can then use as an illustrative framework for philosophy. Which is what I was seeking to achieve.

Kurzweil argues very convincingly that a brain-machine interface based on nanobots is better engineering and more likely to happen than the big bioport in the Matrix. Fine. But the Wachowski brothers' use of a bioport is a dramatically more effective way of communicating the same functionality. Let me put it this way. Take a million people off the street and show each person one of two films: In the Kurzweilian *Matrix*, they see a clinician inject some stuff into a guy's arm and then we cut to scenes of the guy in a virtual world, until someone clicks something on a computer screen and then we see him back in our world. Maybe somebody explains on-screen that she is activating and deactivating invisibly small radio connectors.

In the Wachowskian *Matrix*, we see a huge metal tube pushed into the guy's head with a whirring sound, and the guy gasps and opens his eyes wide and then closes them and he goes comatose; and we see him in the virtual world. Then we hear the whirring sound and we see the metal tube coming out of his head; and we see him wide awake back in our world. Afterwards, we ask how many people understood immediately what was going on. My guess is that the proportions will be 10% in the Kurzweilian *Matrix*, and 90% in the Wachowskian *Matrix*.

This, I submit, is why Kurzweil is scientifically right but cinematically wrong on this point. Kurzweil writes, "The use of bioports in the back of the neck reflects a lack of imagination on how full-immersion virtual reality from within the nervous system is likely to work." I disagree: I think it reflects an acute understanding of how to communicate abstract ideas to mass audiences. A lot of educated, non-technical people do not understand basic notions such as the atomic theory of matter. I think they will not understand nanobot brain interfaces.

A more substantive point where I must take issue with Ray Kurzweil is in the value judgment that he ascribes to virtual reality in the Wachowskis' *Matrix*: "Virtual

Matrix Reloaded Explained

reality, as conceived of in the Matrix, is evil." No, I think the film is saying only that the particular use that the machines make of virtual reality is evil. At the end of *The Matrix*, Neo announces his agenda for the brave new world, where people will be empowered to use virtual reality for their own purposes. In the shooting script, this agenda is more explicit, and Neo says, "I believe that the Matrix can remain our cage or it can become our chrysalis." In the opening scenes of the Animatrix "Final Flight of the Osiris," we see a beautiful vision of the creative and empowering use of virtual reality. I do not read the Matrix films as Luddite, as Kurzweil does. The Wachowskis' message is that of subsidiarity: the control of the technology of virtual reality should pass as far down the social organization towards individual users as is safe and appropriate.

I think that the Wachowskis' evaluation of virtual reality technology, and certainly Neo's, coincides with that advocated by Kurzweil. It is a technology that, if distributed safely and democratically will empower and enrich the lives of individuals. The dystopia described by Morpheus was a product of the mismanagement of relations with artificial intelligence. This is more explicit in the Animatrix prequels, which chronicle the familiar stupidity and myopia of human politics in this case dooming man-machine relations to be antagonistic rather than symbiotic.

Ray Kurzweil clearly does not like *Matrix Reloaded*. A lot of his comments about the plot and character development are obviously subjective and different people will feel differently about it. What is clear, though, is that *Reloaded* is much less clear than *The Matrix*. As a lot of other philosophers have noted, *The Matrix* was a clarifier of ideas. One can refer to *The Matrix* While explaining Descartes or Berkeley to students, and it is very effective. This is not true of *Reloaded*. It does not make anything clear. On the contrary, it is densely packed with riddles and cultural allusions. While it is fun picking apart these riddles (as in my essay above), it does yield very much. The film does not deliver a philosophical payload as *The Matrix* did. But, given the genius of the Wachowskis in the original film, I hope and trust that, come the *Revolutions*, it will eventually achieve a crystalline clarity.

WAKE UP!

GNOSTICISM & BUDDHISM IN THE MATRIX

FRANCES FLANNERY-DAILEY & RACHEL WAGNER

Matrix Reloaded Explained

At the beginning of *The Matrix*, a black-clad computer hacker known as Neo falls asleep in front of his computer. A mysterious message appears on the screen: "Wake up, Neo." This succinct phrase encapsulates the plot of the film, as Neo struggles with the problem of being imprisoned in a "material" world that is actually a computer simulation program created in the distant future by Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a means of enslaving humanity, by perpetuating ignorance in the form of an illusory perception called "the Matrix." In part, the film crafts its ultimate view of reality by alluding to numerous religious traditions that advance the idea that the fundamental problem which humanity faces is ignorance and the solution is knowledge or awakening. Two religious traditions on which the film draws heavily are Gnostic Christianity and Buddhism. Although these traditions differ in important ways, they agree in maintaining that the problem of ignorance can be solved through an individual's reorientation of perspective concerning the material realm. Gnostic Christianity and Buddhism also both envision a guide who helps those still trapped in the limiting world of illusion, a Gnostic redeemer figure or a bodhisattva, who willingly enters that world in order to share liberating knowledge, facilitating escape for anyone able to understand. In the film, this figure is Neo, whose name is also an anagram for the "One."

Although as a "modern myth"⁴ the film purposefully draws on numerous traditions,⁵ we propose that an examination of Gnostic Christianity and Buddhism well illuminates the overarching paradigm of *The Matrix*, namely, the problem of sleeping in ignorance in a dreamworld, solved by waking to knowledge or enlightenment. By drawing syncretistically on these two ancient traditions and fusing them with a technological vision of the future, the film constructs a new teaching that challenges its audience to question "reality."

I. Christian Elements in *The Matrix*

The majority of the film's audience probably easily recognizes the presence of some Christian elements, such as the name Trinity or Neo's death and Christ-like resurrection and ascension near the end of the film. In fact, Christian and biblical allusions abound, particularly with respect to nomenclature: Apoc (Apocalypse), Neo's given name of Mr. Ander/son (from the Greek andras for man, thus producing "Son of Man"), the ship named the Nebuchadnezzar (the Babylonian king who, in the Book of Daniel, has puzzling symbolic dreams that must be interpreted), and the last remaining human city, Zion, synonymous in Judaism and Christianity with (the heavenly) Jerusalem. Neo is overtly constructed as a Jesus figure: he is "the One" who was prophesied to return again to the Matrix, who has the power to change the Matrix from within (i.e., to work miracles), who battles the representatives of evil and who is killed but comes to life again.

This construction of Neo as Jesus is reinforced in numerous ways. Within minutes of the commencement of the movie, another hacker says to Neo, "You're my savior, man, my own personal Jesus Christ." This identification is also suggested by the Nebuchadnezzar's crew, who nervously wonder if he is "the One,"¹¹ who was foretold, and who repeatedly swear in Neo's presence by saying "Jesus" or "Jesus Christ." In still another example, Neo enters the Nebuchadnezzar for the first time and the camera pans across the interior of the ship, resting on the make: "Mark III no. 11." This seems to be another messianic reference, since the Gospel of Mark 3:11 reads: "Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, 'You are the Son of God!'"

Like Mark's Jesus, Neo is an exorcist, who casts out alien Agents inhabiting the residual self-images of those immersed in the Matrix. However, this trope illuminates the differences between Jesus and Neo, since the latter accomplishes exorcisms not by healing, but by killing the digital bodies of those who are "possessed" by Agents, in turn killing the real people in the world of the Nebuchadnezzar. The plaque, then, ultimately highlights the problem of violence in the film, even as it draws parallels

between Jesus and Neo.

II. Gnosticism in *The Matrix*

Although the presence of individual Christian elements within the film is clear, the overall system of Christianity that is presented is not the traditional, orthodox one. Rather, the Christian elements of the film make the most sense when viewed within a context of Gnostic Christianity. Gnosticism was a religious system that flourished for centuries at the beginning of the Common Era, and in many regions of the ancient Mediterranean world it competed strongly with "orthodox" Christianity, while in other areas it represented the only interpretation of Christianity that was known. The Gnostics possessed their own Scriptures, accessible to us in the form of the Nag Hammadi Library, from which a general sketch of Gnostic beliefs may be drawn. Although Gnostic Christianity comprises many varieties, Gnosticism as a whole seems to have embraced an orienting cosmogonic myth that explains the true nature of the universe and humankind's proper place in it. A brief retelling of this myth illuminates numerous parallels with *The Matrix*.

In the Gnostic myth, the supreme god is completely perfect and therefore alien and mysterious, "ineffable," "unnamable," "immeasurable light which is pure, holy and immaculate" (Apocryphon of John). In addition to this god there are other, lesser divine beings in the pleroma (akin to heaven, a division of the universe that is not Earth), who possess some metaphorical gender of male or female. Pairs of these beings are able to produce offspring that are themselves divine emanations, perfect in their own ways. A problem arises when one "aeon" or being named Sophia (Greek for wisdom), a female, decides "to bring forth a likeness out of herself without the consent of the Spirit," that is, to produce an offspring without her consort (Apocry. of John). The ancient view was that females contribute the matter in reproduction, and males the form; thus, Sophia's action produces an offspring that is imperfect or even malformed, and she casts it away from the other divine beings in the pleroma into a separate region of the cosmos. This malformed, ignorant deity, sometimes named Yaldabaoth, mistakenly believes himself to be the only god.

Gnostics identify Yaldabaoth as the Creator God of the Old Testament, who himself decides to create archons (angels), the material world (Earth) and human beings. Although traditions vary, Yaldabaoth is usually tricked into breathing the divine spark or spirit of his mother Sophia that formerly resided in him into the human being (especially Apocry. of John; echoes of Genesis 2–3). Therein lies the human dilemma. We are pearls in the mud, a divine spirit (good) trapped in a material body (bad) and a material realm (bad). Heaven is our true home, but we are in exile from the pleroma.

Luckily for the Gnostic, salvation is available in the form of gnosis or knowledge imparted by a Gnostic redeemer, who is Christ, a figure sent from the higher God to free humankind from the Creator God Yaldabaoth. The gnosis involves an understanding of our true nature and origin, the metaphysical reality hitherto unknown to us, resulting in the Gnostic's escape (at death) from the enslaving material prison of the world and the body, into the upper regions of spirit. However, in order to make this ascent, the Gnostic must pass by the archons, who are jealous of his/her luminosity, spirit or intelligence, and who thus try to hinder the Gnostic's upward journey.

To a significant degree, the basic Gnostic myth parallels the plot of *The Matrix*, with respect to both the problem that humans face as well as the solution. Like Sophia, we conceived an offspring out of our own pride, as Morpheus explains: "Early in the 21st century, all of mankind was united in celebration. We marveled at our own magnificence as we gave birth to AI." This offspring of ours, however, like Yaldabaoth is malformed (matter without spirit?). Morpheus describes AI as "a singular consciousness that spawned an entire race of machines," a fitting parallel for the Gnostic Creator God of the archons (angels) and the illusory material world. AI creates the Matrix, a computer simulation

Matrix Reloaded Explained

that is "a prison for your mind." Thus, Yaldabaoth/ AI traps humankind in a material prison that does not represent ultimate reality, as Morpheus explains to Neo: "As long as the Matrix exists, the human race will never be free."

The film also echoes the metaphorical language employed by Gnostics. The Nag Hammadi texts describe the fundamental human problem in metaphorical terms of blindness, sleep, ignorance, dreams and darkness / night, while the solution is stated in terms of seeing, waking, knowledge (gnosis), waking from dreams and light / day.

Similarly, in the film Morpheus, whose name is taken from the Greek god of sleep and dreams, reveals to Neo that the Matrix is "a computer generated dreamworld." When Neo is unplugged and awakens for the first time on the Nebuchadnezzar in a brightly lit white space (a cinematic code for heaven), his eyes hurt, as Morpheus explains, because he has never used them. Everything Neo has "seen" up to that point was seen with the mind's eye, as in a dream, created through software simulation. Like an ancient Gnostic, Morpheus explains that the blows he deals Neo in the martial arts training program have nothing to do with his body or speed or strength, which are illusory. Rather, they depend only on his mind, which is real.

The parallels between Neo and Christ sketched earlier are further illuminated by a Gnostic context, since Neo is "saved" through gnosis or secret knowledge, which he passes on to others. Neo learns about the true structure of reality and about his own true identity, which allows him to break the rules of the material world he now perceives to be an illusion. That is, he learns that "the mind makes it [the Matrix, the material world] real," but it is not ultimately real. In the final scene of the film, it is this gnosis that Neo passes on to others in order to free them from the prison of their minds, the Matrix. He functions as a Gnostic Redeemer, a figure from another realm who enters the material world in order to impart saving knowledge about humankind's true identity and the true structure of reality, thereby setting free anyone able to understand the message.

In fact, Neo's given name is not only Mr. Anderson / the Son of Man, it is Thomas Anderson, which reverberates with the most famous Gnostic gospel, the Gospel of Thomas. Also, before he is actualized as Neo (the one who will initiate something "New," since he is indeed "the One"), he is doubting Thomas, who does not believe in his role as the redeemer figure. In fact, the name Thomas means "the Twin," and in ancient Christian legend he is Jesus' twin brother. In a sense, the role played by Keanu Reeves has a twin character, since he is constructed as both a doubting Thomas and as a Gnostic Christ figure.

Not only does Neo learn and pass on secret knowledge that saves, in good Gnostic fashion, but the way in which he learns also evokes some elements of Gnosticism. Imbued with images from eastern traditions, the training programs teach Neo the concept of "stillness," of freeing the mind and overcoming fear, cinematically captured in "Bullet Time" (digitally mastered montages of freeze frames / slow motion frames using multiple cameras). Interestingly enough, this concept of "stillness" is also present in Gnosticism, in that the higher aeons are equated with "stillness" and "rest" and can only be apprehended in such a centered and meditative manner, as is apparent in these instructions to a certain Allogenes: "And although it is impossible for you to stand, fear nothing; but if you wish to stand, withdraw to the Existence, and you will find it standing and at rest after the likeness of the One who is truly at rest...And when you becomes perfect in that place, still yourself..." (Allogenes) The Gnostic then reveals, "There was within me a stillness of silence, and I heard the Blessedness whereby I knew my proper self" (Allogenes). When Neo realizes the full extent of his "saving gnosis," that the Matrix is only a dreamworld, a reflective Keanu Reeves silently and calmly contemplates the bullets that he has stopped in mid-air, filmed in "Bullet Time."

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Yet another parallel with Gnosticism occurs in the portrayal of the Agents such as Agent Smith, and their opposition to the equivalent of the Gnostics – that is, Neo and anyone else attempting to leave the Matrix. AI created these artificial programs to be "the gatekeepers – they are guarding all the doors, they are holding all the keys." These Agents are akin to the jealous archons created by Yaldabaoth who block the ascent of the Gnostic as he/she tries to leave²⁴ the material realm and guard the gates of the successive levels of heaven (e.g., Apocalypse of Paul).

However, as Morpheus predicts, Neo is eventually able to defeat the Agents because while²⁵ they must adhere to the rules of the Matrix, his human mind allows him to bend or break these rules. Mind, though, is not equated in the film merely with rational intelligence, otherwise Artificial Intelligence would win every time. Rather, the concept of "mind" in the film appears to point to a uniquely human capacity for imagination, for intuition, or, as the phrase goes, for "thinking outside the box." Both the film and the Gnostics assert that the "divine spark" within humans allows a perception of gnosis greater than that achievable by even the chief archon / agent of Yaldabaoth:

And the power of the mother [Sophia, in our analogy, humankind] went out of Yaldabaoth [AI] into the natural body which they had fashioned [the humans grown on farms by AI]... And in that moment the rest of the powers [archons / Agents] became jealous, because he had come into being through all of them and they had given their power to the man, and his intelligence ["mind"] was greater than that of those who had made him, and greater than that of the chief archon [Agent Smith?]. And when they recognized that he was luminous, and that he could think better than they... they took him and threw him into the lowest region of all matter [simulated by the Matrix]. (Apocry. of John 19–20)

It is striking that Neo overcomes Agent Smith in the final showdown of the film precisely by realizing fully the illusion of the Matrix, something the Agent apparently cannot do, since Neo is subsequently able to break rules that the Agent cannot. His final defeat of Smith entails entering Smith's body and splitting him in pieces by means of pure luminosity, portrayed through special effects as light shattering Smith from the inside out.

Overall, then, the system portrayed in *The Matrix* parallels Gnostic Christianity in numerous respects, especially the delineation of humanity's fundamental problem of existing in a dreamworld that simulates reality and the solution of waking up from illusion. The central mythic figures of Sophia, Yaldabaoth, the archons and the Gnostic Christ redeemer also each find parallels with key figures in the film and function in similar ways. The language of Gnosticism and the film are even similar: dreaming vs. waking; blindness vs. seeing; light vs. dark.

However, given that Gnosticism presumes an entire unseen realm of divine beings, where is God in the film? In other words, when Neo becomes sheer light, is this a symbol for divinity, or for human potential? The question becomes even more pertinent with the identification of humankind with Sophia – a divine being in Gnosticism. On one level, there appears to be no God in the film. Although there are apocalyptic motifs, Conrad Ostwalt rightly argues that unlike conventional Christian apocalypses, in *The Matrix* both the catastrophe and its solution are of human making – that is, the divine is not apparent.²⁸ However, on another level, the film does open up the possibility of a God through the figure of the Oracle, who dwells inside the Matrix and yet has access to information about the future that even those free from the Matrix do not possess. This suggestion is even stronger in the original screenplay, in which the Oracle's apartment is the Holy of Holies nested within the "Temple of Zion."²⁹ Divinity may also play a role in Neo's past³⁰ incarnation and his coming again as the One. If, however, there is some implied divinity in the film,³¹ it remains transcendent, like the divinity of the ineffable, invisible supreme god in Gnosticism, except where it is immanent in the form of the divine spark active in humans.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

III. Buddhism in *The Matrix*

When asked by a fan if Buddhist ideas³² influenced them in the production of the movie, the Wachowski brothers offered an unqualified "Yes." Indeed, Buddhist ideas pervade the film and appear in close proximity with the equally strong Christian imagery. Almost immediately after Neo is identified as "my own personal Jesus Christ," this appellation is given a distinctively Buddhist twist. The same hacker says: "This never happened. You don't exist." From the stupa-like pods which encase humans in the horrific mechanistic fields to Cypher's selfish desire for the sensations and pleasures³⁴ of the Matrix, Buddhist teachings form a foundation for much of the film's plot and imagery.

The Problem of Samsara. Even the title of the film evokes the Buddhist worldview. The Matrix is described by Morpheus as "a prison for your mind." It is a dependent "construct" made up of the interlocking digital projections of billions of human beings who are unaware of the illusory nature of the reality in which they live and are completely dependent on the hardware attached to their real bodies and the elaborate software programs created by AI. This "construct" resembles the Buddhist idea of samsara, which teaches that the world in which we live our daily lives is constructed only from the sensory projections formulated from our own desires. When Morpheus takes Neo into the "construct" to teach him about the Matrix, Neo learns that the way in which he had perceived himself in the Matrix was nothing more than "the mental projection of your digital self." The "real" world, which we associate with what we feel, smell, taste, and see, "is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain." The world, Morpheus explains, exists "now only as part of a neural interactive simulation that we call the Matrix." In Buddhist terms, we could say that "because it is empty of self or of what belongs to self, it is therefore said: 'The world is empty.' And what is empty of self and what belongs to self? The eye, material shapes, visual consciousness, impression on the eye — all these are empty of self and of what belongs to self." According to Buddhism and according to *The Matrix*, the conviction of reality based upon sensory experience, ignorance, and desire keeps humans locked in illusion until they are able to recognize the false nature of reality and relinquish their mistaken sense of identity.

Drawing upon the Buddhist doctrine of Dependent Co-Origination, the film presents reality within the Matrix as a conglomerate of the illusions of all humans caught within its snare. Similarly, Buddhism teaches that the suffering of human beings is dependent upon a cycle of ignorance and desire which locks humans into a repetitive cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. The principle is stated in a short formula in the Samyutta-nikaya:

If this is that comes to be;
from the arising of this that arises;
if this is not that does not come to be;³⁶
from the stopping of this that is stopped.

The idea of Dependent Co-Origination is illustrated in the context of the film through the illusion of the Matrix. The viability of the Matrix's illusion depends upon the belief by those enmeshed in it that the Matrix itself is reality. AI's software program is, in and of itself, no illusion at all. Only when humans interact with its programs do they become enmeshed in a corporately-created illusion, the Matrix, or samsara, which reinforces itself through the interactions of those beings involved within it.³⁷ Thus the Matrix's reality only exists when actual human minds subjectively experience its programs.

The problem, then, can be seen in Buddhist terms. Humans are trapped in a cycle of illusion, and their ignorance of this cycle keeps them locked in it, fully dependent upon their own interactions with the program and the illusions of sensory experience which these provide, and the sensory projections of others. These projections are strengthened by humans' enormous desire to believe that what they

Matrix Reloaded Explained

perceive to be real is in fact real. This desire is so strong that it overcomes Cypher, who can no longer tolerate the "desert of the real" and asks to be reinserted into the Matrix. As he sits with Agent Smith in an upscale restaurant smoking a cigar with a large glass of brandy, Cypher explains his motives:

"You know, I know this steak doesn't exist. I know that when I put it in my mouth, the Matrix is telling₃₈ my brain that it is juicy and delicious. After nine years, you know what I realize? Ignorance is bliss."

Cypher knows that the Matrix is not real and that any pleasures he experiences there are illusory. Yet for him, the "ignorance" of samsara is preferable to enlightenment. Denying the reality that he now experiences beyond the Matrix, he uses the double negative: "I don't want to remember nothing. Nothing. And I want to be rich. Someone important. Like an actor." Not only does Cypher want to forget the "nothing" of true reality, but he also wants to be an "actor," to add another level of illusion to the illusion of the Matrix that he is choosing to re-enter. The draw of samsara is so strong that not only does Cypher give in to his cravings, but Mouse also may be said to have been overwhelmed by the lures of samsara, since his death is at least in part due to distractions brought on by his sexual fantasies about the "woman in the red dress" which occupy him when he is supposed to be standing alert.

Whereas Cypher and Mouse represent what happens when one gives in to samsara, the rest of the crew epitomize the restraint and composure praised by the Buddha. The scene shifts abruptly from the restaurant to the mess hall of the Nebuchadnezzar, where instead of being offered brandy, cigars and steak, Neo is given the "bowl of snot" which is to be his regular meal from that point forward. In contrast to the pleasures which for Cypher can only be fulfilled in the Matrix, Neo and the crew must be content with the "single-celled protein combined with synthetic aminos, vitamins, and minerals" which Dozer claims is "everything the body needs." Clad in threadbare clothes, subsisting on gruel, and sleeping in bare cells, the crew is depicted enacting the Middle Way taught by the₄₀ Buddha, allowing neither absolute asceticism nor indulgence to distract them from their work.

The Solution of Knowledge/Enlightenment. This duality between the Matrix and the reality beyond it sets up the ultimate goal of the rebels, which is to free all minds from the Matrix and allow humans to live out their lives in the real world beyond. In making this point, the film-makers draw on both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist ideas.⁴¹ Alluding to the Theravada ideal of the arhat, the film suggests that enlightenment is achieved through individual effort.⁴² As his initial guide, Morpheus makes it clear that Neo cannot depend upon him for enlightenment. Morpheus explains, "No one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself." Morpheus tells Neo he must make the final shift in perception entirely on his own. He says: "I'm trying to free your mind, Neo. But I can only show you the door. You're the one that has to walk through it." For Theravada Buddhists, "man's emancipation depends on his own realization of the Truth, and not₄₃ on the benevolent grace of a god or any external power as a reward for his obedient good behavior." The Dhammapada urges the one seeking enlightenment to "Free thyself from the past, free thyself from the future, free thyself from the present. Crossing to the farther shore of existence, with mind released everywhere, no more shalt thou come to birth and decay."⁴⁴ As Morpheus says to Neo, "There's a difference between knowing the path and walking the path." And as the Buddha taught his followers, "You yourselves should make the effort; the Awakened Ones are only teachers."⁴⁵ As one already on the path to enlightenment, Morpheus is only a guide; ultimately Neo must recognize the truth for himself.

Yet *The Matrix* also embraces ideas found in Mahayana Buddhism, especially in its particular concern for liberation for all people through the guidance of those who remain in samsara and postpone their own final enlightenment in order to help others as bodhisattvas. The crew members of the Nebuchadnezzar epitomize this compassion. Rather than remain outside of the Matrix where they are

Matrix Reloaded Explained

safer, they choose to re-enter it repeatedly as ambassadors of knowledge with the ultimate goal of freeing the minds and eventually also the bodies of those who are trapped within the Matrix's digital web. The film attempts to blend the Theravada ideal of the arhat with the Mahayana ideal of the bodhisattva, presenting the crew as concerned for those still stuck in the Matrix and willing to re-enter the Matrix to help them, while simultaneously arguing that final realization is an individual process.

Neo as the Buddha. Although the entire crew embodies the ideals of the bodhisattva, the filmmakers set Neo apart as unique, suggesting that while the crew may be looked at as arhats and bodhisattvas, Neo can be seen as a Buddha. Neo's identity as the Buddha is reinforced not only through the anagram of his name but also through the myth that surrounds him. The Oracle has foretold the return of one who has the ability to manipulate the Matrix. As Morpheus explains, the return of this man "would hail the destruction of the Matrix, end the war, bring freedom to our people. That is why there are those of us who have spent our entire lives searching the Matrix, looking for him." Neo, Morpheus believes, is a reincarnation of that man and like the Buddha, he will be endowed with extraordinary powers to aid in the enlightenment of all humanity.

The idea that Neo can be seen as a reincarnation of the Buddha is reinforced by the prevalence of birth imagery in the film directly related to him. At least four incarnations are perceptible in the film. The first birth took place in the pre-history of the film, in the life and death of the first enlightened one who was able to control the Matrix from within. The second consists of Neo's life as Thomas Anderson. The third begins when Neo emerges, gasping, from the gel of the eerily stupa-like pod in which he has been encased, and is unplugged and dropped through a large black tube which can easily be seen as a birth canal.⁴⁷ He emerges at the bottom bald, naked, and confused, with eyes that Morpheus tells him have "never been used" before. Having "died" to the world of the Matrix, Neo has been "reborn" into the world beyond it. Neo's fourth life begins after⁴⁸ he dies and is "reborn" again in the closing scenes of the film, as Trinity resuscitates him with a kiss. At this point, Neo perceives not only the limitations of the Matrix, but also the limitations of the world of the Nebuchadnezzar, since he overcomes death in both realms. Like the Buddha, his enlightenment grants him omniscience and he is no longer under the power of the Matrix, nor is he subject to birth, death, and rebirth within AI's mechanical construct.

Neo, like the Buddha, seeks to be free from the Matrix and to teach others how to free themselves from it as well, and any use of superhuman powers are engaged to that end. As the only human being since the first enlightened one who is able to freely manipulate the software of the Matrix from within its confines, Neo represents the actualization of the Buddha-nature, one who can not only recognize the "origin of pain in the world of living beings,"⁴⁹ but who can also envision "the stopping of the pain," enacting "that course which leads to its stopping." In this sense, he is more than his bodhisattva companions, and offers the hope of awakening and freedom for all humans from the ignorance that binds them.

The Problem of Nirvana. But what happens when the Matrix's version of reality is dissolved? Buddhism teaches that when samsara is transcended, nirvana is attained. The notion of self is completely lost, so that conditional reality fades away, and what remains, if anything, defies the ability of language to describe. In his re-entry into the Matrix, however, Neo retains the "residual self-image" and the "mental projection of [a] digital self." Upon "enlightenment," he finds himself not in nirvana, or no-where, but in a different place with an intact, if somewhat confused, sense of self which strongly resembles his "self" within the Matrix. Trinity may be right that the Matrix "cannot tell you who you are," but who you are seems to be at least in some sense related to who you think you are in the Matrix. In other words, there is enough continuity in self-identity between the world of the Matrix and "the desert of the real" that it seems probable that the authors are implying that full "enlightenment" has not yet been reached and must lie beyond the reality of the Nebuchadnezzar and

Matrix Reloaded Explained

the world it inhabits. If the Buddhist paradigm is followed to its logical conclusions, then we have to expect at least one more layer of "reality" beyond the world of the crew, since even freed from the Matrix they are still subject to suffering and death and still exhibit individual egos.

This idea is reinforced by what may be the most problematic alteration which *The Matrix* makes to traditional Buddhist teachings. The Buddhist doctrine of ahimsa, or non-injury to all living beings, is overtly contradicted in the film. It appears as if the filmmakers deliberately chose to link violence with salvific knowledge, since there seems to be no way that the crew could succeed without the help of weaponry. When Tank asks Neo and Trinity what they need for their rescue of Morpheus "besides a miracle," their reply is instantaneous: "Guns — lots of guns." The writers could easily have presented the "deaths" of the Agents as nothing more than the ending of that particular part of the software program. Instead, the Wachowski brothers have purposefully chosen to portray humans as innocent victims of the violent deaths of the Agents.⁵² This outright violation of ahimsa stands at direct odds with the Buddhist ideal of compassion.

But why link knowledge so directly with violence? The filmmakers portray violence as redemptive,⁵³ and as absolutely essential to the success of the rebels. *The Matrix* steers sharply away at this point from the shared paradigms of Buddhism and Gnostic Christianity. The "reality" of the Matrix which requires that some humans must die as victims of salvific violence is not the ultimate reality to which Buddhism or Gnostic Christianity points. Neither the "stillness" of the *pleroma* nor the unchanging "nothingness" of *nirvana* are characterized by the dependence on technology and the use of force which so characterizes both of the worlds of the rebels in *The Matrix*.

The film's explicit association of knowledge with violence strongly implies that Neo and his comrades have not yet realized the ultimate reality. According to the worldviews of both Gnostic Christianity and Buddhism that the film evokes, the realization of ultimate reality involves a complete freedom from the material realm and offers peace of mind. The Wachowskis themselves acknowledge that it is "ironic that Morpheus and his crew are completely dependent upon technology and computers, the very evils against which they are fighting." Indeed, the film's very existence depends upon both technology's capabilities and Hollywood's hunger for violence. Negating itself, *The Matrix* teaches that *nirvana* is still beyond our reach.

IV. Concluding Remarks

Whether we view the film from a Gnostic Christian or Buddhist perspective, the overwhelming message seems to be, "Wake up!" The point is made explicit in the final song of the film, Wake Up!, by, appropriately, Rage Against the Machine. Gnosticism, Buddhism and the film all agree that ignorance enslaves us in an illusory material world and that liberation comes through enlightenment with the aid of a teacher or guide figure. However, when we ask the question, "To what do we awaken?", the film appears to diverge sharply from Gnosticism and Buddhism. Both of these traditions maintain that when humans awaken, they leave behind the material world. The Gnostic ascends at death to the *pleroma*, the divine plane of spiritual, non-material existence, and the enlightened one in Buddhism achieves *nirvana*, a state which cannot be described in language, but which is utterly non-material. By contrast, the "desert of the real," is a wholly material, technological world, in which robots grow humans for energy, Neo can learn martial arts in seconds through a socket inserted into the back of his brain, and technology battles technology (Nebuchadnezzar vs. AI, electromagnetic pulse vs. Sentinels). Moreover, the battle against the Matrix is itself made possible through technology – cell phones, computers, software training programs. "Waking up" in the film is leaving behind the Matrix and awakening to a dismal cyber-world, which is the real material world.

Or perhaps not. There are several cinematic clues in the scene of the construct loading program

Matrix Reloaded Explained

(represented by white space) that suggest that the "desert of the real" Morpheus shows Neo may not be the ultimate reality. After all, Morpheus, whose name is taken from the god of dreams, shows the "real" world to Neo, who never directly views the surface world himself. Rather, he sees it on a television bearing the logo "Deep Image." Throughout the film, reflections in mirrors and Morpheus's glasses, as well as images on television monitors point the viewer toward consideration of multiple levels of illusion. As the camera zooms in to the picture on this particular television and the viewer "enters" the image, it "morphs" the way the surveillance screens do early in the film, indicating its unreality. In addition, the entire episode takes place while they stand in a construct loading program in which Neo is warned not to be tricked by appearances. Although sense perception is clearly not a reliable source for establishing reality, Morpheus himself admits that, "For a long time I wouldn't believe it, and then I saw the fields [of humans grown for energy] with my own eyes... And standing there, I came to realize the obviousness of the truth." We will have to await the sequels to find out whether "the desert of the real" is itself real.

Even if the film series does not ultimately establish a complete rejection of the material realm, *The Matrix* as it stands still asserts the superiority of the human capacity for imagination and realization over the limited "intelligence" of technology. Whether stated in terms of matter/ spirit, body/ mind, hardware/ software or illusion/ truth, the ultimate message of *The Matrix* seems to be that there may be levels of metaphysical reality beyond what we can ordinarily perceive, and the film urges us to open ourselves to the possibility of awakening to them.

Frances Flannery–Dailey & Rachel Wagner

[Note: This essay originally appeared in *The Journal of Religion and Film*]

Endnotes

1. All unidentified quotes are from *The Matrix* (Warner Bros. release, 1999).
2. In an online chat with viewers of the DVD, the Wachowskis acknowledged that the Buddhist references in the film are purposeful. However, when asked "Have you ever been told that the Matrix has Gnostic overtones?", they gave a tantalizingly ambiguous reply: "Do you consider that to be a good thing?" From the Nov. 6, 1999 "Matrix Virtual Theatre," at "Wachowski chat"
3. Elaine Pagels notes that the similarities between Gnosticism and Buddhism have prompted some scholars to question their interdependence and to wonder whether "...if the names were changed, the 'living Buddha' appropriately could say what the *Gospel of Thomas* attributes to the living Jesus." Although intriguing, she rightly maintains that the evidence is inconclusive, since parallel traditions may emerge in different cultures without direct influence. Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, (New York: Random House, 1979, repr. 1989), xx–xxi
4. James Ford recently explored other Buddhist elements in *The Matrix*, which he rightly calls a "modern myth," in his article "Buddhism, Christianity and *The Matrix*: The Dialectic of Myth–Making in Contemporary Cinema," for the *Journal of Religion and Film*, vol.4 no. 2. See also Conrad Ostwalt's focus on apocalyptic elements of the film in "Armageddon at the Millennial Dawn," JRF vol. 4, no. 1
5. A viewer asked the Wachowski brothers, "Your movie has many and varied connections to myths and philosophies, Judeo–Christian, Egyptian, Arthurian, and Platonic, just to name those I've noticed. How much of that was intentional?" They replied, "All of it" (Wachowski chat).

Matrix Reloaded Explained

6. Feminists critics can rejoice when Trinity first reveals her name to Neo, as he pointedly responds, "The Trinity?... Jesus, I thought you were a man." Her quick reply: "Most men do."

7. The Wachowski brothers indicate that the names were "all chosen carefully, and all of them have multiple meanings," and also note this applies to the numbers as well (Wachowski chat).

8. In a recent interview in *Time*, the Wachowskis refer to Nebuchadnezzar in this Danielic context, (www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,22971,00.html , "Popular Metaphysics," by Richard Corliss, *Time*, April 19, 1999 Vol. 153, no. 15). Nebuchadnezzar is also the Babylonian king who destroyed the Jerusalem Temple in 586 B.C.E., and who exiled the elite of Judean society to Babylon. Did the Wachowski brothers also intend the reference to point to the crew's "exile" from Zion or from the surface world?

9. The film also suggests Zion is heaven, such as when Tank says, "If the war was over tomorrow, Zion is where the party would be," evoking the traditional Christian schema of an apocalypse followed by life in heaven or paradise. Ironically, the film locates Zion "underground, near the Earth's core, where it is still warm," which would seem to be a cinematic code for hell. Is this a clue that Zion is not the "heaven" we are led to believe it is?

10. Neo's apartment number is 101, symbolizing both computer code (written in 1s and 0s) and his role as "the One." Near the end of the film, 303 is the number of the apartment that he enters and exits in his death / resurrection scene, evoking the Trinity. This in turn raises questions about the character of Trinity's relationship to Neo in terms of her cinematic construction as divinity.

11. The traitor Cypher, who represents Judas Iscariot, among other figures, ironically says to Neo, "Man, you scared the B'Jesus outta me."

12. We would like to thank Donna Bowman, with whom we initially explored the Gnostic elements of *The Matrix* during a public lecture on film at Hendrix College in 2000.

13. Gnosticism may have had its origins in Judaism, despite its denigration of the Israelite God, but the issue is complex and still debated within scholarly circles. It is clear, however, that Gnostic Christianity flourished from at least the 2nd – 5th c. C.E., with its own scriptures, and most likely also its own distinctive rituals, entrance requirements and a creation story. See Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1960), Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979, repr. 1989), Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987).

14. This corpus lay dormant for nearly 2000 years until its discovery in 1945 in Nag Hammadi, Egypt. The complete collection of texts may be found in James M. Robinson, ed. *The Nag Hammadi Library*, revised edition, (New York: HarperCollins, 1990; reprint of original Brill edition, 1978). These documents are also available on-line at The Nag Hammadi Library Section of The Gnostic Society Library.

15. Gnostic texts are cryptic, and no single text clearly explains this myth from beginning to end. The literature presupposes familiarity with the myth, which must be reconstructed by modern readers. The version of the myth presented here relies on such texts as *Gospel of Truth*, *Apocryphon of John*, *On the Origin of the World* and *Gospel of Thomas*. See *The Nag Hammadi Library*, pp. 38–51, 104–123, 124–138, 170–189.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

16. Since the divine beings are composed only of spiritual substances and not matter, there are no physical gender differences among the beings.

17. Depending on the text, a plethora of divine beings populate the pleroma, many with Jewish, Christian or philosophical names, e.g. the Spirit, forethought, thought, foreknowledge, indestructibility, truth, Christ, Autogenes, understanding, grace, perception, Pigera–Adamas (*Apocryphon of John*).

18. Humanity's characterization also resonates with the Tower of Babel story in Genesis 11:1–9; in both we admire the work of our own hands.

19. The bulk of the following excerpt from the Gnostic "Gospel of Truth" might just as well be taken from the scenes in *The Matrix* in which Morpheus explains the nature of reality to Neo: Thus they [humans] were *ignorant* of the Father, he being the one whom they did not *see*... there were many *illusions* at work... and (there were) empty fictions, *as if they were sunk in sleep and found themselves in disturbing dreams*. Either (there is) a place to which they are fleeing, or without strength they come (from) having chased after others, or they are involved in striking blows, or they are receiving blows themselves, or they have fallen from high places, *or they take off into the air though they do not even have wings*. Again, sometimes (it is as) if people were murdering them, though there is no one even pursuing them, or they themselves are killing their neighbors...(but) *When those who are going through all these things wake up*, they see nothing, they who were in the midst of all these disturbances, for they are nothing. Such is the way of those who have cast ignorance aside from them like sleep, not esteeming it as anything, nor do they esteem its works as solid things either, but *they leave them behind like a dream in the night*... This is the way each one has acted, as though asleep at the time when he was ignorant. And this is the way he has [come to knowledge], as if he had awakened.

(*Gospel of Truth*, 29–30)

20. This is perhaps most evident in the subway fight between Neo and Agent Smith. At a point in the film when Morpheus says of Neo, "He is just beginning to believe," Agent Smith calls him "Mr. Anderson," and while fighting he replies, "My name is Neo." The Wachowskis confirm this interpretation when they state "Neo is Thomas Anderson's potential self" (Wachowski chat).

21. This twin tradition was especially popular in Syrian Christianity. See also Pagels, p. xxi, where she wonders if the tradition that Thomas, Jesus' twin, went to India points to any historical connection between Buddhism and Hinduism on the one hand and with Gnosticism on the other.

22. See the online chat with the special effects creators in the "Matrix Virtual Theater" from March 23, 2000.

23. *Nag Hammadi Library*, pp. 490–500. Compare the Gnostic idea of stillness with these Buddhist sayings from the *Dhammapada*: "The bhikkhu [monk], who abides in loving-kindness, who is delighted in the Teaching of the Buddha, attains the State of Calm, the happiness of stilling the conditioned things" and "Calm is the thought, calm the word and deed of him who, rightly knowing, is wholly freed, perfectly peaceful and equipoised." Quoted in Walpola Sri Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1974) p.128, 136.

24. See *Nag Hammadi Library*, pp. 256–59. We are grateful to Brock Bakke for the initial equation of agents with archons.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

25. In Gnosticism "Mind" or the Greek "nous" is a deity, such as in the text "Thunder, Perfect Mind," *Nag Hammadi Library*, 295–303.

26. Note that as Morpheus and Neo enter the elevator of the apartment building of the Oracle, images of "seeing" symbolize prophecy and knowledge: a blind man (evoking blind prophets such as Tiresias) sits in the lobby beneath some graffiti depicting a pair of eyes. Interestingly, the Oracle – a sibyl / seer – wears glasses to look at Neo's palm.

27. Note too the metonymic use of color to convey this dualism: black and white clothing, floors, furniture, etc.

28. Ostwalt, "Armageddon" in JRF Vol. 4, no. 1. The parallel with apocalypticism does not work quite as well as one with Gnosticism because like Gnosticism, the film understands salvation to be individual (rather than collective and occurring all at once), to be attained through knowledge, and most importantly to entail leaving behind the material Earth (that is, not resulting in a kingdom of God made manifest on the Earth).

29. In its description in the original screenplay, the Temple of Zion evokes both the Oracle of Delphi (three legged stool, priestesses) and the Jerusalem Temple (polished marble, empty throne which is the mercy seat or throne of the invisible God).

30. A viewer asked the Wachowski brothers, "What is the role or {sic} faith in the movie? Faith in oneself first and foremost – or in something else?" They answered, "Hmmm...that is a tough question! Faith in one's self, how's that for an answer?" This reply hardly settles the issue (Wachowski chat).

31. Specifically, these humans are Neo (the Gnostic Redeemer / Messiah) and Morpheus and Trinity, both of whom are named for gods. As a godhead, this trio does not quite make sense in terms of traditional Christianity. However, the trio is quite interesting in the context of Gnosticism, which portrays God as Father, Mother and Son, a trinity in which the Holy Spirit is identified as female, e.g. *Apocryphon of John* 2:9–14. For further reading on female divinities in Gnosticism, see Pagels, pp. 48–69.

32. The brothers explain, "There's something uniquely interesting about Buddhism and mathematics, particularly about quantum physics, and where they meet. That has fascinated us for a long time" (Wachowski chat). In the Time interview with Richard Corliss (see note 8), Larry Wachowski adds that they became fascinated "by the idea that math and theology are almost the same. They begin with a supposition you can derive a whole host of laws or rules from. And when you take all of them to the infinity point, you wind up at the same place: these unanswerable mysteries really become about personal perception. Neo's journey is affected by all these rules, all these people trying to tell him what the truth is. He doesn't accept anything until he gets to his own end point, his own rebirth." The film's presentation of the Matrix as a corporate network of human conceptions (or samsara) which are translated into software codes that reinforce one another illustrates this close relationship.

33. Stupa: a hemispherical or cylindrical mound or tower serving as a Buddhist shrine.

34. Of course, the most transparent reference to Buddhist ideas occurs in the waiting room at the Oracle's apartment, where Neo is introduced to the "Potentials." The screenplay describes the waiting room as "at once like a Buddhist temple and a kindergarten class." One of the children, clad in the garb of a Buddhist monk, explains to Neo the nature of ultimate reality: "There is no spoon." One cannot help wondering if this dictum only holds within the Matrix or if there is in fact "no spoon" even in the

Matrix Reloaded Explained

real world beyond it.

35. *Samyutta–nikaya* IV, 54. In Edward Conze, ed. *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), p. 91.

36. *Samyutta–nikaya* II, 64–65. Ibid.

37. The entire process depends upon human ignorance, so that almost all who are born into the Matrix are doomed to be born, to die, and to re–enter the cycle again. When asked about the film's depiction of the liquefaction of humans, the Wachowskis reply that this black ooze is "what they feed the people in the pods, the dead people are liquefied and fed to the living people in the pods." Tongue in Buddhist cheek, the brothers explain this re–embodiment: "Always recycle! It's a statement on recycling." (Wachowski Chat) Even in the "real world" beyond the Matrix, the human plight is depicted as a relative and inter–dependent cycle of birth, death, and "recycling."

38. (Ed. Note: This clip can be viewed here. (Hit your back button to return to this essay.))

39. This dialogue also points to the "reality" (or the "Matrix") which we ourselves inhabit. In our world, and in the world of Joe Pantoliano, he is an actor. Therefore, the world of which both the actor Joe Pantoliano and we are now a part may be seen as the "Matrix" into which he has been successfully re–inserted, and thus the film itself may be seen as a part of the software program of our own "Matrix." The argument, of course, is seductively circular.

40. Take, for example, this quote from the *Sabbasava–sutta*: "A bhikku [monk], considering wisely, lives with his eyes restrained . . . Considering wisely, he lives with his ears restrained . . . with his nose restrained . . . with his tongue . . . with his body . . . with his mind restrained . . . a bhikku, considering wisely, makes use of his robes — only to keep off cold, to keep off heat . . . and to cover himself decently. Considering wisely, he makes use of food – neither for pleasure nor for excess . . . but only to support and sustain this body . . ." (Quoted in Rahula 103).

41. James Ford has argued that the film embodies in particular the Yogacara school of Buddhism. Instead of pointing to that which is absolutely different than the world as *nirvana*, Yogacarins point to the world itself, and through the processes enacted in meditation, come to the realization that "all things and thought are but Mind–only. The basis of all our illusions consists in that we regard the objectifications of our own mind as a world independent of that mind, which is really its source and substance" (Edward Conze, *Buddhism*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 167. The Matrix exists only in the minds of the human beings which inhabit it, so that in *The Matrix*, as in Yogacara, "The external world is really Mind itself" (p. 168). Yet a problem arises when one realizes that for the Yogacara school, the Mind is the ultimate reality, and therefore *samsara* and *nirvana* become identified. By contrast, the film insists on a *distinction* between *samsara* (the Matrix) and *nirvana* (that which lies beyond it). Because *The Matrix* maintains a duality between the Matrix and the realm beyond it, Yogacara is of limited help in making sense of the Buddhist elements in the film, nor is it helpful in supporting the idea that beyond the Matrix and beyond the Nebuchadnezzar there is an ultimate reality not yet realized by humans (see note 4).

42. According to Theravada teachings, *arhat* ("Worthy One") is a title applied to those who achieve enlightenment. Because, according to Theravada beliefs, enlightenment can only be achieved through individual effort, an *arhat* is of limited aid in helping those not yet enlightened and so would not necessarily choose to re–enter *samsara* to aid others still enmeshed within it.

43. Rahula, p. 2.

44. Quoted in Rahula, 135.

45. Quoted in Rahula, 133.

46. A bodhisattva is one who postpones final entry into *nirvana* and willingly re-enters or remains in *samsara* in order to guide others along the path to enlightenment. The Buddha's compassion serves as their primary model for Mahayana Buddhists, since they point out that he too remained in *samsara* in order to help others achieve enlightenment through his teachings and example.

47. The screenplay describes Neo as "floating in a womb-red amnion" in the power plant.

48. In the screenplay, Trinity does not kiss him but instead "pounds on his chest," precipitating his resuscitation. The screenplay states directly: "It is a miracle." This fourth "life" can be viewed as the one to which the Oracle refers in her predictions that Neo was "waiting for something" and that he might be ready in his "next life, maybe." This certainly appears to be the case, since Neo rises from the dead and defeats the Agents.

49. These four "lives" suggest that Neo is nothing other than "the One" foretold by the oracle, the reincarnation of the first "enlightened one," or Buddha, who "had the ability to change whatever he wanted, to remake the Matrix as he saw fit." Buddhist teaching allows that those who have been enlightened are endowed with magical powers, since they recognize the world as illusory and so can manipulate it at will. Yet supernatural powers are incidental to the primary goal, which is explained in the very first sermon spoken by the Buddha: "The Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering is this: It is the complete cessation of that very thirst, giving it up, renouncing it, emancipating oneself from it, detaching oneself from it" (*Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*. Quoted in Rahula, 93.)

50. *Buddhacarita* 1:65. E. B. Cowell, trans., *Buddhist Mahayana Texts, Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 49 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1894).

51. See, for example, in the *Dhammapada*: "Of death are all afraid. Having made oneself the example, one should neither slay nor cause to slay" (Verse 129) (*Dhammapada*, trans. John Ross Carter and Mahinda Palihawadana. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 35.

52. The idea that violence as salvific is made explicit by the writers. Whereas they *could* have chosen to present the "deaths" of the Agents as of the same illusory quality as other elements within the software program, instead, they choose to depict *actual* humans *really* dying through the inhabitation of their "bodies" by the Agents. This addition is completely unnecessary to the overall plot line; indeed, the "violence" which takes place in the Hotel could still be portrayed, with the reassuring belief that any "deaths" which occur there are simply computer blips. The fact that the writers so purposefully insist that actual human beings die (i.e. die also within the power plant) while serving as involuntary "vessels" for the Agents strongly argues for *The Matrix*'s direct association of violence with the knowledge required for salvation.

53. See the article by Bryan P. Stone, "Religion and Violence in Popular Film," JRF Vol. 3, no. 1.

54. When asked whether this irony was intentional, the Wachowskis reply abruptly but enthusiastically "Yes!" (Wachowski chat).

55. This is especially true in the "red pill / blue pill" scene where Neo first meets Morpheus, and Neo is reflected differently in each lens of Morpheus's glasses. The Wachowskis note that one reflection

Matrix Reloaded Explained

represents Thomas Anderson, and one represents Neo (Wachowski chat).

56. A viewer asked the pertinent question of the Wachowskis: "Do you believe that our world is in some way similar to *The Matrix*, that there is a larger world outside of this existence?" They replied: "That is a larger question than you actually might think. We think the most important sort of fiction attempts to answer some of the big questions. One of the things that we had talked about when we first had the idea of *The Matrix* was an idea that I believe philosophy and religion and mathematics all try to answer. Which is, a reconciling between a natural world and another world that is perceived by our intellect" (Wachowski chat).

**REALITY, WHAT MATTERS,
AND THE MATRIX**
IAKOVOS VASILIOU

The Matrix is, at its core, a film with a moral plot. We, the viewers, like the heroes, are in on a secret: The reality that forms the lives of millions of human beings is not real. The world that seems real to most people is in fact a computer-generated simulation, but almost no one knows it. In reality human beings are floating in liquid in machine pods, with tubes connected to them in a grotesque post-apocalyptic world where the sun is blotted out. To the average person, of course, it seems to be the ordinary world of 1999. Although some details of the history remain untold, it is an essential part of *The Matrix* that we are provided with a specific account of how all of this happened. There was a battle between human beings and machines whose cognitive capacity had surpassed their own. In a desperate attempt to win, human beings blocked out the sun's light in order to deprive the machines of their power source. Despite this extreme tactic, the humans lost, were enslaved, and are now farmed to supply energy sources for the machines. The machines induce the appearance of ordinary 1999 life in the human beings with a computer generated "virtual community" for the purpose of keeping them docile and asleep so that they and their offspring can be used like living batteries. While humans seem to walk around in an ordinary life, their minds are radically deceived and their bodies are exploited. The heroes are thus depicted as fighting a noble battle for the liberation of the human species.

I have so far drawn out two aspects of the "moral background" of the film: enslavement and deception. We should also note the perspective we have on the Matrix as viewers of *The Matrix*. We have what is sometimes called a "God's eye" perspective: we can see *both* the Matrix reality *and* "real" reality. We are let in on the truth about the situation, and we are not supposed to question, for example, whether the battle between Morpheus and his friends and the Agents is itself being conducted in another "meta-matrix", or whether the view of the human pods we see might only be some sort of dream image or illusion. As viewers of the Matrix, we are in on the truth and we can see for ourselves that human beings are both enslaved and deceived. Given the outlined history, we are meant to understand the situation of the humans as a terrible and unfair one.

1. How Does the Matrix Differ from Reality?

Excluding, for the moment, the heroes – Morpheus, Trinity, eventually Neo, and the rest of their crew – and the machines, no one *in* the Matrix shares our God's eye perspective. In everyday life as well, as far as we know, reality is simply there. When we watch the film, we identify with the heroes in part because we are repulsed by the idea that human beings are enslaved and deceived. It is easy to find these two elements at work in *The Matrix* in part because we think of enslavement and deception as things that are done to some people by others; one group of people enslaves another, or one person or group deceives others. In the film it is the machines who are the agents of slavery and deception and almost all of the humans are victims. But how does the Matrix, and the situation of the ordinary people within it differ from reality and the people within *it* (i.e., us)?

Let's begin with enslavement. We are forced to do many things in ordinary reality: we must eat, drink, sleep, on penalty of death. Also, no matter what we do, we shall eventually, within a fairly predictable time frame, die; we cannot stay alive forever, or even for a couple of hundred years. We can't travel back and forth in time; can't fly to other planets by flapping our arms. The list could go on and on, and I have simply offered limits we are subject to in virtue of the laws of nature. In other words, compared with some easily imaginable possibilities, we are severely constrained, in a type of bondage, though ordinarily most of us don't think of it as such. Writers, artists, philosophers, and theologians over the centuries have of course been keenly aware of these limitations, examined many forms of human bondage, and offered various types of suggestions as to how to free ourselves. Human beings have longed to "break out" of this reality, to transcend the imposed limitations on their physical being. Moreover, we should be clear that these limitations are *imposed* on us. We simply find ourselves in

Matrix Reloaded Explained

this condition, with these rules: we all die within approximately 100 years. It has nothing to do with our voluntary choice, our wishes, or our judgements about what ought to be the case.

Who has done this to us? Answering this question is important to some degree because we typically use the term "enslavement" to refer to something done by one agent to some others. In the case of the constraints I outlined above it may be harder, initially, to find anyone on whom to pin the blame. But of course human beings have offered answers to this question: one is God; another, the laws of nature. Religious thinkers have struggled with questions about why we should not be angry at God for constraining us in the ways he does: why do people die, why can't we go back in time, travel to other planets, etc.? Others conclude that God is not constraining us, but simply the laws of nature. At least at first this thought might be a bit more palatable insofar as we think of the laws of nature as *impersonal* features of reality; no one made them that way (if God did, then we get angry at him again). They do not *mean* to constrain us and there is no mind or intelligent force actively doing anything to us. Either way, however, our actual situation is one of involuntary constraint, much akin to the humans' situation in the Matrix, except that it is not at the hands of machines against whom we lost a war, but at the hands of God or "nature".

The second aspect of the moral background of *The Matrix* is deception. Human beings are being actively deceived by the Matrix into believing things about reality that are not true. Deception offends many people, except perhaps for committed subjectivists, since many people believe that they want to know, or at least have the right to know, the truth, even if it is terrible. For one person, or a group of people, purposefully to keep others in the dark about some truth is to diminish the respect and authority of those people; it is to act patronizingly and paternalistically. In such situations, a few people decide which truths others can handle, and which they can't. Although this happens routinely – consider the relationship between those who govern and those who are governed – many people bristle at this idea and want the scope of such filtering of the truth to be severely limited.

We might think, however, not about the deception of some people by others (just as we did not look at the enslavement of some people by others), but the deception of humanity in general. In Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* the gods are depicted throughout as capriciously deceiving human beings, compelling them knowingly and unknowingly to do specific things, and generally interfering quite frequently in human affairs. The humans in Homer certainly seem to be caught in a matrix of sorts, with gods and goddesses operating on a plane of reality that is not accessible to them (unless the gods want it to be) but that nevertheless often affects matters in the humans' ordinary reality. As human beings began to understand that the Earth rotated around the Sun, and not vice versa, Descartes certainly worried about the extent to which God had had a hand in deceiving all of humanity for tens of thousands of years up to that point. He devotes a significant portion of the *Meditations* to worrying about how an all-good, all-knowing, and all-powerful God could have allowed (and whether indeed he was complicit in) people's radical deception about the relative motions of the planet they live on, and other truths that turn out to be radically different from how things *seem* to be.

So in our ordinary situation, without any cruel machines doing anything to us, we realize that there are nevertheless many things we cannot do, and we know that we humans have been radically deceived by natural phenomena (or by the gods, or by God) about things in the past, and that it only stands to reason that we may be radically mistaken about our explanations of things now. I say people's "radical deception", despite the fact that, as with being enslaved, being deceived also seems to require an agent – someone to *do* the deceiving. We should note, however, that we talk of being deceived or fooled by mirrors, or by the light, or by angles. Natural phenomena are often described as contributing to our misunderstanding of them for a reason. Even though human beings were mistaken for millennia about the fact that the Earth moves relative to the Sun, and not the other way round, it is hard to describe our error as simply having "made a mistake", as though humanity forgot to carry the two in some addition

Matrix Reloaded Explained

calculation. Surely part of the reason that it took humans so long to understand the motions of the Earth is that the appearances themselves are deceptive: it certainly *looks* as though the Sun is moving across the sky. We can see the very development of philosophy, art, religion, science, and technology as all stemming from a drive to "free humanity" from such deception and enslavement, as part of a struggle to achieve the position of a Morpheus or a Neo. We develop planes to break the bonds of gravity that keep us physically on the surface of the Earth; we develop complex experiments and gadgets designed to discover the truth about things independently of how they may appear.

My first point, then, is that if we could get hold of the being responsible for setting up the reality we're actually in, then we could perhaps "free" ourselves, finally knowing the full truth about things, and being able to manipulate reality. If God is responsible, we would need to plead with him successfully, or to fight him and win; if it's the mathematical formulae (computer programs?) underlying "the laws of nature," we would need to learn how to write and rewrite them. We would then all be Neos. We might note too, at this big-picture level, a difference between the Homeric gods and the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic God. In Homer's world the gods were frequently literally in battle with humans who were greatly outmatched, although not entirely impotent – much like the humans that, before Neo, fought with the "Agents". With the God of the major contemporary religions, he is, by definition, all-good. From this perspective, we should not *fight* God, for he set things up the way he did for a wise and benevolent reason; rather, we need to learn to accept the position he has put us in (this "mortal coil", our reality, our matrix) and, then, if we act certain ways, or do certain things, he will free us from this reality after we "die" (i.e. not go out of existence, but end our stay in this reality) and show us the truth in heaven.

I hope this necessarily brief discussion enables us to see the importance of both the God's eye perspective and the moral background of the film for effecting a difference between the situation depicted in *The Matrix* and our ordinary condition. As viewers of the film we are in a special position: we can see both inside and outside of the Matrix. We can see that it is not a benevolent God who has set up this 1999 reality, replete with constraints and deceptive appearances, pain and toil, for some wonderful, miraculous purpose. Nor is the reality of most people in the Matrix the result of impersonal laws of nature. Instead, machines who use human beings as batteries are responsible for what counts as reality for most people. *The Matrix* then supplies us the viewers with a definitive answer about who is responsible for what most human beings take to be reality.

2. A Benevolently Generated Matrix

Now *The Matrix* could be significantly altered, without changing anything in the Matrix. Imagine that the real world is a post-apocalyptic hell, just as in the film, but, unlike in the film, suppose that the cause of the world's being in such a state is not some battle with machines that wanted to enslave us, but the emission of so many greenhouse gases with our three-lane-wide SUVs that we completely obliterated the ozone layer and thereby rendered the planet uninhabitable by us or by the plants and animals that we rely on for our survival. Suppose further that sometime in the future, in order to *save* the human race, scientists set up an enormous self-sustaining machine, just as in the film (minus the scary "Sentinels"), designed to keep the human species alive and reproducing for the 100,000 years it will take for whatever weeds are left on the planet to fix our atmosphere and make the planet once again habitable in a normal way. The machine operates simply on solar power (since, on this scenario, the sun is now stronger than ever, frying almost everything else on the planet), so that human beings are not needed as "batteries". While humans are stuck in this state, the scientists create the Matrix for them to "live" their lives in instead of being conscious of floating in a vat for the length of their life, which would clearly be a most horrific torture. Once the power of the sun is diminished to a habitable degree (because of the repaired atmosphere) the machine would "wake" us humans, and we could go back to living on the planet.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

The ordinary person in this scenario is in the same condition as an ordinary person in the film, except that instead of the Matrix being the diabolical result of evil machines who exploit the human race, it is the result of benevolent human beings trying to keep the human race alive in as good condition as possible under the terrible circumstances. Of course it would *seem* no different to the person *in* the Matrix. We, the viewers, however, would have quite a different response to *The Matrix*. There would be no enemy to fight, no injustice to rectify (the pushers of SUVs being long dead). If there were a Morpheus in this situation, how would we think of him? If Morpheus and his friends had left the Matrix, and figured out that they could, with extreme difficulty, survive in the devastated world (eating disgusting porridge, etc.), should they go about "freeing" everyone, even if it would take another 10,000 years for the Earth to return to its present state of habitability?

As Chris Grau discusses in his introductory essay (section "C"), the Matrix is importantly different from Robert Nozick's "experience machine".¹⁰ Grau points out that we retain free will in the Matrix. The "world" in the Matrix will respond to our free choices, just as the ordinary world does now. Another difference that I think is quite significant is that in the Matrix, unlike in the experience machine, *I am really interacting with other human minds*. There is a community of human beings. With the experience machine, it is all about *my* experience, which is the private content of my own consciousness. It is imaginable that I am alone in the universe, floating in a vat set up by a god who has since committed suicide. In sceptical problems that stem from the Evil Genius hypothesis in Descartes' first *Meditation*, there is a threat of solipsism and the dread of feeling that one might be alone in the universe. In the Matrix, however, when two people meet there are really two consciousnesses there that are each experiencing "the same things" from their respective positions. Everyone is hooked up to one and the same Matrix; there are not unique matrices generated for each individual. Of course people aren't really shaking hands – their hands are in vats – but it seems to each of their consciousnesses, not just to one consciousness, that they are shaking hands. This feature of the Matrix is also a respect in which life in the Matrix is critically *unlike* a dream, despite the fact that the humans are described as "dreaming".¹² Regardless of the amount of conscious control one has or lacks in a dream, a dream is *private* to one's own consciousness.¹³ It is part of the grammar of "dream", as Wittgenstein might say, that only I can have my dream.

Now this seems to me to be of enormous significance in thinking about the Matrix. If two people fall in love in the Matrix, in what sense would their love not be real? It would not be as if a person merely *dreamt* that he had fallen in love with someone; for in a dream that person is not really there at all, just like in Nozick's experience machine. It is true that in the Matrix they would not really be giving each other flowers, or really holding hands. They would, however, both be experiencing the same things together. They would know each other as persons, who display their characters in how they react to all of the – in one sense – "unreal" situations of the Matrix. Moreover, people in the Matrix really suffer and experience pain, and when they die in the Matrix, they die in the "real world" too. The fact that one and the same Matrix is inhabited by millions of minds means that millions of people are *really* interacting, even if the physical universe in which they are interacting is radically different from how it appears.

Consider as well writing a novel, a poem, or a philosophy paper. Or consider painting or dancing, making music or a movie. Would any of these activities be affected by the fact that what I took to be material objects were objects that were computer generated? And if not, in the benevolently generated Matrix I hypothesized we would seem clearly better off as a species, developing artistically, intellectually, loving each other within the Matrix rather than fighting for survival and barely succeeding outside of it. If my aim in life was to write some extraordinary philosophy or a ground-breaking novel, surely I could do that far better within the Matrix than outside of it where a person must battle simply for his or her survival. After all, where does my novel or my philosophy

Matrix Reloaded Explained

paper exist for much of its genesis and storage? In a computer of course. If I wrote a novel in the Matrix, and you read it, and so did 10,000 other minds, and I then win the Pulitzer Prize for it, in what sense would it be unreal or even diminished in value? This differs again from the experience machine. In the experience machine, I might have programmed it so that it would *seem* to me that I had written a brilliant novel and that people had appreciated it. In fact, however, no one would have read my novel and I would have simply programmed myself with memories of having written it, although I never really did. In the Matrix, however, I am not given false memories, and I do really interact with other minds. Physics as we know it would be false (not of course the physics of the Matrix, which scientists would study and which would progress as does ordinary science; see below). But art and human relationships would not be affected. I am trying to show that while we are attached to *reality*, we are not attached to the physical *per se*, where that refers to what we think of as the underlying causes of the smells, tastes, feels, sights, and sounds around us: they could be molecules, they could be computer chips, they could be the whims of Homeric gods. Indeed, very few human beings have much understanding of contemporary physics and what it maintains things "really" are. Nozick's experience machine may have shown us that we have an attachment to the real, an attachment to the truth that we are *really* doing things, *really* accomplishing things, and not just *seeming* to, but we should not for that reason think we are necessarily attached to a certain picture of the physical or metaphysical constitution of things.

I would like return to the question of the sense in which the reality of the Matrix is different from the real world. I think that there is an important difference between being deceived about the reality of an object and being deceived about the real underlying physical or metaphysical cause of something. Avoiding deception and error about the latter is the concern of physics (and metaphysics). That we might be wrong, indeed radically wrong, about the physics/biology of an elephant is quite different from hallucinating that there is an elephant in front of you, or dreaming of an elephant, or experiencing an elephant in Nozick's machine. In the latter three cases, one is deceived about the reality of an object, about whether there is an elephant there at all. I am not saying that the actual physics or metaphysics of a thing will not determine *whether* it is there; if something is really the underlying cause of something else, of course it must determine its existence. I do claim, however, that *given* the reality of a thing, knowing its true physical/metaphysical explanation neither augments nor diminishes its value or its reality. To discover that, contrary to what you had believed, elephants evolved from single-celled sea creatures and are mostly water, and that water consists of molecules, and that molecules consist of atoms, and that there is a certain interrelationship between matter and energy – that is all part of science's attempt to understand the truth about physical reality. None of these conclusions impugns the elephant's reality or the value it has in the world. What substances at bottom *are* is a question for science or, perhaps, metaphysics. The moral background of the film is quite relevant here. If the fact that we are in the Matrix is simply a matter of our being incorrect about or ignorant of what the real physics of things is, then the Matrix is quite close to our ordinary situation, although our position as *viewers* of *The Matrix* is not like that at all. Since we have a "God's eye" perspective, we are able to know what is really the cause of things and what is not.

In the benevolent Matrix that I envisaged, however, you could learn Matrix-physics and Matrix-history just as we now learn ordinary physics and ordinary history. At a certain age in school you might be taught that your body is really floating in a vat, and then perhaps you could put on goggles and see the world outside of the Matrix, like looking at an x-ray or at your blood under a microscope. Brought up with such a physics and biology, it would seem natural – about as exciting (and unexciting) as being told that your solid unmoving table is made of incredibly small incredibly fast moving parts, or that all of your physical characteristics are determined by a certain code in your DNA, or where babies come from – despite the fact that such truths are hardly obvious, and conflict radically with the way things appear. Just consider any of the conclusions of contemporary physics or quantum mechanics. History too might continue as normal, divided into BM (before Matrix) and AM

Matrix Reloaded Explained

(after Matrix) dates. After all in the "real" world, outside of the Matrix, nothing would be happening of interest except to scientists. It would be like the contemporary study of bottom of the ocean, or of the moon. Aside from its causal influence on the physical state of the planet, what goes on down there or up there has no part to play in human history. All of *human* history would occur within the Matrix.

By hypothesizing a benevolent rather than a malevolent cause of the Matrix, we can see how much of what I am calling the "moral background" of *The Matrix* influences what we think of it. Deprived of that moral background, a benevolently generated Matrix can show us that our attachment is not to the physical constitution and cause of things, but also not simply to experience. Our attachment is to things that have *value*. Let me explain.

Take the example, discussed in the film, of the pleasure of eating. Imagine that science develops a pill which supplies the perfect amount of nutrition for a human being each day. Humans no longer need to eat at all in the ordinary way. In fact they are, as far as their health is concerned, far worse off if they try to rely on their taste to supply them with the appropriate nutrition (see current statistics on fast food consumption and obesity). They can simply take the pill and get nutrition far superior to what they would if left to their own taste to determine what and how much to eat. Let's suppose too that science has found a way to simulate food with a computer, so that they have created a "food-matrix". My real nutrition would come from the pill, but I could still go out for a "simulated" steak and it would seem just as though I were really eating a steak, including the sensation of getting full, although in fact I would be eating nothing and getting no nutritional harm or benefit from the experience at all. It is hard to imagine such a perfect pill and such perfect computer-simulated food; such a pill is no simple vitamin, and a tofu-burger is no simulated steak. But if we suppose that there are such things, I think human beings would readily give up eating real steak. What those who value eating steak value is not the eating of real cow flesh (in fact, putting it that way inclines one to become a vegetarian), but the experience of eating. If eating the computer steak really were, as we are assuming, absolutely indistinguishable from eating a real steak, no one would care whether they were eating a "real" steak – that is, one that was obtained from a slaughtered cow.

At this level the discussion is again about what the underlying causes of phenomenal qualities are: whether the causes of the taste, smell, etc. of the steak are cow molecules or computer chips or the hand of God. This is, as it were, a matter of science or metaphysics – not of concern to the consumer as a consumer. Now for all physical objects, I contend, it is of no value to us if their underlying constitution is ordinary atoms, or computer generated simulation. My favorite pen still writes the same way, my favorite shirt still feels the same way. If these things are not "real" in the sense that their underlying constitution is radically other than I had believed, that makes no difference to the value that these things have in our lives. It *does*, of course, make a difference to the truth of the physics or metaphysics I learn. But none of this implies that I was being deceived about the reality₁₆ of the object – that the object I valued was or is not there in the sense that matters to the non-scientist. In a scene discussed by Grau, Cypher claims his knowledge that the steak is "unreal" – that is, computer generated – does not diminish his enjoyment. Cypher then looks forward to the point when he expects his memory to be wiped clean, and when he will no longer remember that the Matrix is the Matrix. But it seems to me to be unclear why Cypher needs to forget anything about his steak being unreal in order to fully enjoy it – as he himself seems to understand – nor does he need to forget that he is in the Matrix in order to make his life pleasant and satisfying within it. What he desperately needs to forget in order to have a comfortable and satisfying life is the memory of his immoral and cowardly betrayal of his friends and of the rest of those outside of the Matrix who are engaged in the fight for human liberation. But this is an issue, once again, not arising from the Matrix itself, but from the "moral background" of the film.

Having a radically different underlying constitution is very different from saying that things are not

Matrix Reloaded Explained

real, in the sense of being a mere illusion, as in a dream or a hallucination. Consider again the case of our human interactions. If a person I am friends with is not, after all, a person, then I think there is a clear sense in which the friendship is not real, just as in Nozick's experience machine or in a dream that I was friends with Tom Waits. I would then *seem* to have a relationship to someone, but in reality not have one. What matters is whether I am really interacting with another free mind. I certainly won't try to say what it is to have a mind, or what it is for that mind to be "free", but whatever it is, I am claiming that its value is not importantly tied to any theory in physics or metaphysics. *Whatever* the cause and explanation is of the existence of a free mind, it is the having of one and the ability to interact with other ones that matters. If the underlying constitution of Tom Waits is computer chips, instead of blood and guts, what difference does that make? This is not a question about his *reality* – whether he is really there or not –, it is a question about his physical or metaphysical constitution. If he has a mind, whatever that is, and he has free will, whatever that is, what do I care what physical parts he is – or is not – made of? Indeed, I earnestly hope in the actual world never to see any of those parts or have direct contact with them at all.

3. *The Matrix* on the Matrix

I shall conclude by claiming that *The Matrix* itself provides evidence that, barring enslavement and deception, we would prefer life within the Matrix. I have so far considered how we would feel about the reality of a benevolently generated Matrix. But in *The Matrix*, the cause of the Matrix is explicitly not benevolent. Human beings are enslaved and exploited by scary-looking machines. *The Matrix* is a story about a few human beings fighting to save the rest of humanity. That is how the movie generates excitement, the thrill for the viewer as he or she hopes that the heroes can defeat the enemy. Of course, the film expects one to root for the humans. But I think there is some duplicity at work in the way *The Matrix* exploits the Matrix. Neo is the savior of humanity, and a large amount of the pleasure that the viewer gets from the film consists of watching Neo and his friends learn to manipulate the Matrix. Key to Neo's eventual success is his training. In his training he learns that the Matrix, as a computer-generated group dream, can be manipulated by a human being. The idea, I guess, is that if one could bring oneself to believe deeply enough that, despite appearances, things are not real, then one could manipulate the reality of the Matrix. The thrill that Neo feels, and that we feel watching him, is that as he gains this control he is able to do things that are, apparently, superhuman – move faster than bullets, hang onto helicopters, fly, etc. We ought to note here, though, that Neo's greatness, his being the One, is only the case because the Matrix exists. Outside of the Matrix, Neo is just a smart computer geek. He can't really fly, or really dodge bullets (nor, apparently, does he dress in full-length black leather coats, though I guess he *could*). We, as viewers, would not get any pleasure from *The Matrix* if it were not for the Matrix. If there were no Matrix, everyone would be eating terrible porridge in a sunless world and simply fighting for survival, which would make for a bad world and a bad movie. The premise of the movie is that there is a moral duty to destroy the Matrix, and "free" the humans. But all of the satisfaction that the viewer gets, and that the characters get in terms of their own sense of purpose and of being special, is derived *from* the Matrix. It's not just Cypher's steak that is owed to the Matrix, it is Morpheus's breaking the handcuffs, Trinity's gravity-defying leaps, and Neo's bullet dodging. If my argument is right, then, the irony of *The Matrix* is that the heroes spend all of their time liberating human beings from the Matrix although afterwards they would have good reason to go back in, assuming the conditions on Earth are still so terrible. This is because there's nothing *wrong* with the Matrix *per se*; indeed, I've argued that our reality might just as well *be* the Matrix. What we want, now as always, one way or another, is to have control over it ourselves. What we would do with such power is a question, I suppose, for psychologists; but, looking at what people have done so far, I at any rate hope we remain enslaved and deceived by *something* for a long time to come.

Footnotes

1. Another topic raised by the film, which I will not discuss beyond this note, would be to assess the moral background of the plot. Are the humans clearly in the right? After all, it was they who blotted out the sun in an attempt to exterminate the machines. Particularly in light of the machines' claim that they are simply the next evolutionary step, we ought to think about whether there is some objectionable "speciesism" at work in the humans' assessment of the situation. For my purposes I'll assume the humans are morally justified in the fight for liberation, which, I might add, is certainly a defensible position. For even if machines are the next evolutionary step, and some human beings are guilty of having acted wrongly towards them, that would hardly justify the involuntary enslavement of the entire human race in perpetuity. Moreover, the existence of a "more advanced" species than our own (however that is to be determined) surely should not deprive us of our human rights.
2. And in part because we too would like to control reality; see below.
3. The Stoics thought of the natural world, of the universe as a whole, as itself a rational creature with an overall goal or purpose.
4. Although this theme is present throughout, see especially *Meditations I* and *IV*.
5. The idea that reality is tricky and tries to hide its nature from us is very old, even without, as in Homer's case, any gods acting as agents of deception. For example, the Presocratic philosopher Heraclitus (c.540–c.480 BC) writes (fr. 53) "an unapparent connection is stronger than an apparent one" and (fr. 123) "nature/the real constitution [of things] (*phusis*) loves to hide itself."
6. Morpheus and company are an interesting amalgam of technological sophistication and religious symbolism.
7. Or, more precisely, those of us who accomplished this.
8. Of course for Morpheus and his crew, and for the machines if they were sufficiently reflective, the same questions could be raised about what makes the reality *outside* of the Matrix the way *it* is – who is responsible for *that*? And then we can imagine them responding in the sorts of ways I have described, pinning the blame on God, the laws of nature, etc.
9. This detail is meant simply to avoid the possibility of unease over the issue of whether human beings are being used as batteries, voluntarily or not.
10. I shall assume that my reader has read that essay, where Grau clearly explains Nozick's example. (The essay can be found [here](#).)
11. See Grau, "Dream Skepticism". The threat of solipsism seems to me to be the same in the Matrix or in the ordinary world; and that is not my concern here. I am simply taking the truth of the "God's eye" perspective offered the viewer of the film for granted. *The Matrix* tells us and shows us that we are all hooked up to the same Matrix.
12. I think that perhaps Colin McGinn's essay too quickly assimilates the Matrix to dreaming, and Neo's control over it to "lucid" dreaming. Although McGinn may be right that the Matrix must be

Matrix Reloaded Explained

dealing with "images" rather than "percepts", there are important disanalogies between Matrix–experience and dream–experience. First, in a dream, there is only your own mind involved. The Matrix must be, at a minimum, a group dream. I am arguing above that the fact that one mind is really interacting with other minds is critical to assessing the value of the Matrix reality. This complicates the apparently clear idea of controlling one's dream, since it is not simply one mind at work that can "alter" the images one is conscious of. I am not sure of the coherence of the hypothesis here. For example, when the young boy bends the spoon, Neo "sees" this. So the boy's control of his environment is perceivable *both* by the boy's mind *and* by Neo's. So he must be changing something that is, "in reality", in Neo's mind – namely, Neo's image of the spoon. But what if Neo straightens the spoon at the same time the boy bends it? Whose lucid dream will win out, and be perceived by the other minds? The one with the stronger will? Second, the "images" that are in your mind in the Matrix can, and regularly do, *really* kill people; that is, kill their bodies *outside* of the Matrix. Except in some bad horror movies, dream images cannot really kill you, or make you bleed. The difficulty of understanding how something which is a mere "image" is supposed to have this sort of effect seems therefore to cause some problems for calling the state of ordinary people in the Matrix "dreaming". See also next note.

13. We could certainly, if we wish, *call* the experience of the Matrix "a dream", as the movie does. But we should remember that Neo, while in the Matrix and before he has met Morpheus, has a dream while he is "asleep". So we need some distinction between that sort of "dream" and Neo's "waking" "group–dream" within the Matrix.

14. This sentence implies that contemporary physics represents humans' best understanding of the true nature of reality, which is certainly a contentious claim.

15. The question of whether I know something is in fact real or an illusion remains as legitimate or illegitimate as always. As throughout this essay, I am simply bypassing any sceptical questions, since it is part of my argument that being in the Matrix does not affect them.

16. All human being might be considered "scientists" insofar as we are curious about and have a conception of what the reality of things are: what causes them, how they come into being, how they are destroyed, etc. But we are also interested in other people, objects, and activities because of their inherent value, a value they retain regardless of the correct explanation of their reality.

17. Given a true account of what it is to have a mind, I would surely care if what appeared to be a person did not fulfill those criteria, for then he would not be a person after all. For example, if someone somehow showed that a machine could not have a "free mind", then I would care whether my friend was a machine or not, but only secondarily, given that *ex hypothesi* as a machine he would not have a free mind. My point is only that it is "having a free mind" or "being a person" that is the source of value, not the correct theory about what makes someone a person. I am claiming that ignorance of or deception about the right physical or metaphysical account of mind does not thereby cast doubt on the value of having a mind. Scepticism about other minds – the questions of whether there really are other minds and how we could tell whether there are – is not addressed at all by what I am saying. I am taking for granted the truth of what the film tells us: there are other minds. The problem of other minds, like solipsism mentioned above, is equally a problem in or out of the Matrix.

18. I am grateful to Chris Grau and Bill Vasiliou for comments on and discussion about an earlier version of this essay.

THE MATRIX – OUR FUTURE?

KEVIN WARWICK

Is *The Matrix* merely a science fiction scenario, or is it, rather, a philosophical exercise? Alternatively, is it a realistic possible future world? The number of respected scientists predicting the advent of intelligent machines is growing exponentially. Steven Hawking, perhaps the most highly regarded theoretical scientist in the world and the holder of the Cambridge University chair that once belonged to Isaac Newton, said recently, "In contrast with our intellect, computers double their performance every 18 months. So the danger is real that they could develop intelligence and take over the world." He added, "We must develop as quickly as possible technologies that make possible a direct connection between brain and computer, so that artificial brains contribute to human intelligence rather than opposing it." The important message to take from this is that the danger—that we will see machines with an intellect that outperforms that of humans—is real.

I. The Facts

But is it just a danger—a potential threat—or, if things continue to progress as they are doing, is it an inevitability? Is the Matrix going to happen whether we like it or not? One flaw in the present-day thinking of some philosophers lies in their assumption that the ultimate goal of research into Artificial Intelligence is to create a robot machine with intellectual capabilities approaching those of a human. This may be the aim in a limited number of cases, but the goal for most AI developers is to make use of the ways in which robots can outperform humans—rather than those in which they can only potentially become our match.

Robots can sense the world in ways that humans cannot—ultraviolet, X-ray, infrared, and ultrasonic perception are some obvious examples—and they can intellectually outperform humans in many aspects of memory and logical mathematical processing. And robots have no trouble thinking of the world around them in multiple dimensions, whereas human brains are still restricted to conceiving the same entity in an extremely limited three dimensional way. But perhaps the biggest advantage robots have over us is their means of communication—generally an electronic form, as opposed to the human's embarrassingly slow mechanical technique called speech, with its highly restricted coding schemes called languages.

It appears to be inevitable that at some stage a sentient robot will appear, its production having been initiated by humans, and begin to produce other, even more capable and powerful robots. One thing overlooked by many is that humans do not reproduce, other than in cloning; rather, humans *produce* other humans. Robots are far superior at producing other robots and can spawn robots that are far more intelligent than themselves.

Once a race of intellectually superior robots has been set into action, major problems will appear for humans. The morals, ethics, and values of these robots will almost surely be drastically different from those of humans. How would humans be able to reason or bargain with such robots? Why indeed should such robots want to take any notice at all of the silly little noises humans would be making? It would be rather like humans today obeying the instructions of cows.

So a war of some kind would be inevitable, in the form of a last gasp from humans. Even having created intelligent, sentient robots in the first place, robots that can out-think them, the humans' last hope would be to find a weak spot in the robot armoury, a chink in their life-support mechanism. Naturally, their food source would be an ideal target. For the machines, obtaining energy from the

Matrix Reloaded Explained

sun—a constant source—would let them bypass humans, excluding them from the loop. But as we know, humans have already had much success in polluting the atmosphere and wrecking the ozone layer, so blocking out the sun's rays – scorching the sky, in effect – would seem to be a perfectly natural line of attack in an attempt to deprive machines of energy.

In my own book, *In the Mind of the Machine*², I had put forth the idea that the machines would, perhaps in retaliation, use humans as slave labourers, to supply robots with their necessary energy. Indeed, we must consider this as one possible scenario. However, actually using humans as a source of energy—batteries, if you like—is a much sweeter solution, and more complete. Humans could be made to lie in individual pod-like wombs, acting rather like a collection of battery cells, to feed the machine-led world with power.

Probably in this world of machine dominance there would be a few renegade humans causing trouble, snapping at the heels of the machine authorities in an attempt to wrestle back power for humans, an attempt to go back to the good old times. So it is with the Matrix. It is a strange dichotomy of human existence that as a species we are driven by progress—it is central to our being—yet at the same time, for many there is a fruitless desire to step back into a world gone by, a dream world.

Yet it is in human dreams that the Matrix machines have brought about a happy balance. Simply treating humans as slaves would always bring about problems of resistance. But by providing a port directly into each human brain, each individual can be fed a reality with which he or she is happy, creating for each one a contented existence in a sort of dream world. Even now we know that scientifically it would be quite possible to measure, in a variety of ways, the level of contentment experienced by each person. The only technical problem is how one would go about feeding a storyline directly into a brain.

So what about the practical realities of the brain port? I myself have, as reported in 'I, Cyborg,'³ had a 100-pin port that allowed for both signal input and output connected into my central nervous system. In one experiment conducted while I was in New York City, signals from my brain, transmitted via the Internet, operated a robot hand in the UK. Meanwhile, signals transmitted onto my nervous system were clearly recognisable in my brain. A brain port, along the lines of that in the Matrix, is not only a scientific best guess for the future; I am working on such a port now, and it will be with us within a decade at most.

II. Human or Machine

With the port connected into my nervous system, my brain was directly connected to a computer and thence on to the network. I considered myself to be a Cyborg: part human, part machine. In *The Matrix*, the story revolves around the battle between humans and intelligent robots. Yet Neo, and most of the other humans, each have their own brain port. When out of the Matrix, they are undoubtedly human; but while they are in the Matrix, there can be no question that they are no longer human, but rather are Cyborgs. The real battle then becomes not one of humans versus intelligent robots but of Cyborgs versus intelligent robots.

The status of an individual whilst within the Matrix raises several key issues. For example, when they are connected are Neo, Morpheus, and Trinity individuals within the Matrix? Or do they have brains which are part human, part machine? Are they themselves effectively a node on the Matrix, sharing common brain elements with others? It must be remembered that ordinarily human brains operate in a stand-alone mode, whereas computer-brained robots are invariably networked. When connected into a network, as in the Matrix, and as in my own case as a Cyborg, individuality takes on a different form. There is a unique, usually human element, and then a common, networked machine element.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Using the common element, ‘reality’ can be downloaded into each brain. Morpheus describes this (as do others throughout the film) as ‘having a dream.’ He raises questions as to what is real. He asks how it is possible to know the difference between the dream world and the real world. This line of questioning follows on from many philosophical discussions, perhaps the most prominent being that of Descartes, who appeared to want to make distinctions between dream states and ‘reality’, immediately leading to problems in defining what was real and what was not. As a result he faced further problems in defining absolute truths.

Perhaps a more pertinent approach can be drawn from Berkeley, who denied the existence of a physical world, and Nietzsche, who scorned the idea of objective truth. By making the basic assumption that there is no God, my own conclusion is that *there can be no absolute reality, there can be no absolute truth* — whether we be human, Cyborg, or robot. Each individual brain draws its conclusions and makes assumptions as to the reality it faces at an instant, dependant on the input it receives. If only limited sensory input is forthcoming, then brain memory banks (or injected feelings) need to be tapped for a brain to conceive of a storyline. At any instant, a brain links its state with its common-sense memory banks, often coming to unlikely conclusions.

As a brain ages, or as a result of an accident, the brain’s workings can change; this often appears to the individual to be a change in what is perceived rather than a change in that which is perceiving. In other words, the individual thinks it must be the world that has changed, not his or her brain. Where a brain is part of a network, however, there is a possibility for alternative viewpoints to be proposed by different nodes on the network. This is not something that individual humans are used to. An individual brain tends to draw only one conclusion at a time. In some types of schizophrenia this conclusion can be confused and can change over time; it is more usually the case, though, that such an individual will draw a conclusion about what is perceived that is very much at variance with the conclusion of other individuals. For the most part, what is deemed by society to be ‘reality’ at any point, far from being an absolute, is merely a commonly agreed set of values based on the perceptions of a group of individuals.

The temptation to see a religious undertone in *The Matrix* is interesting — with Morpheus cast as the prophet John the Baptist, Trinity perhaps as God or the holy spirit, Neo clearly as the messiah, and Cypher as Judas Iscariot, the traitor. But, far from a Gandhi-like, turn the other cheek, approach, Neo’s is closer to one that perhaps was actually expected by many of the messiah himself, taking on his role as victor over the evil Matrix: a holy war against a seemingly invincible, all-powerful machine network.

But what of the machine network, the Matrix, itself? With an intellect well above that of collective humanity, surely its creativity, its artistic sense, its value for aesthetics would be a treat to behold. But the film keeps this aspect from us — perhaps to be revealed in a sequel. Humans released from the Matrix grip, merely regard it as an evil, perhaps Cypher excluded here. Meanwhile the Agents are seen almost as faceless automatons, ruthless killers, strictly obeying the will of their Matrix overlord. Possibly humans would see both the Matrix and Agents as the enemy, just as the Matrix and Agents would so regard humans — but once inside the Matrix the picture is not so clear. As a Cyborg, who are your friends and who are your enemies? It is no longer black and white when you are part machine, part human.

III. In and Out of Control

Morpheus tells Neo that the Matrix is control. This in itself is an important revelation. As humans, we are used to one powerful individual being the main instigator, the brains behind everything. It is

Matrix Reloaded Explained

almost as though we cannot even conceive of a group or collection running amuck, but believe, rather, that there is an individual behind it all. In the second world war, it was not the Germans or Germany who the allies were fighting but Adolf Hitler; meanwhile in Afghanistan, it is Bin-Laden who is behind it all. Yet in the Matrix we are faced with a much more realistic scenario, in that it is not some crazed individual up to no good, but the Matrix – a network.

When I find myself in a discussion of the possibility of intelligent machines taking over things, nine times out of ten I am told—following a little chuckle to signify that I have overlooked a blindingly obvious point—that "If a machine causes a problem you can always switch it off." What a fool I was not to have thought of it!! How could I have missed that little snippet?

Of course it is not only the Matrix but even today's common Internet that gives us the answer, and cuts the chuckle short. Even now, how is it practically possible to switch off the Internet? We're not talking theory here, we're talking practice. Okay, it is of course possible to unplug one computer, or even a small subsection intranet, but to bring down the whole Internet? Of course we can't. Too many entities, both humans and machines, rely on its operation for their everyday existence. It is not a Matrix of the future that we will not be able to switch off, it is a Matrix of today that we cannot switch off, over which we cannot have ultimate control.

Neo learns that the Matrix is a computer-generated dream world aimed at keeping humans under control. Humans are happy to act as an energy source for the Matrix as long as they themselves believe that the reality of their existence is to their liking; indeed, how are the human nodes in a position to know what is computer-generated reality and what is reality generated in some other way?

A stand-alone human brain operates electrochemically, powered partly by electrical signals and partly by chemicals. In the western world we are more used to chemicals being used to change our brain and body state, either for medicinal purposes or through narcotics, including chemically instigated hallucinations. But now we are entering the world of e-medicine. Utilising the electronic element of the electrochemical signals on which the human brain and nervous system operate, counterbalancing signals can be sent to key nerve fibre groups to overcome a medical problem. Conversely, electronics signals can be injected to stimulate movement or pleasure. Ultimately, electronic signals will be able to replace the chemicals that release memories and "download" memories not previously held. Why live in a world that is not to your liking if a Matrix state is able to keep your bodily functions operating whilst you live out a life in a world in which you are happy with yourself? The world of the Matrix would appear to be one that lies in the direction humanity is now heading—a direction in which it would seem, as we defer more and more to machines to make up our minds for us, that we wish to head.

IV. Ignorance and Bliss

In a sense, The Matrix is nothing more than a modern day "Big Brother," taking on a machine form rather than the Orwellian vision of a powerful individual using machines to assist and bring about an all-powerful status. But *1984*, the novel in which the story of Big Brother was presented, was published in 1948. The Matrix comes fifty years later. In the meantime, we have witnessed the likes of radar, television for all, space travel, computers, mobile phones, and the Internet. What would Orwell's Big Brother have been like if he had had those technologies at his disposal – would Big Brother have been far from the Matrix?

With the first implant I received, in 1998, for which I had no medical reason (merely scientific curiosity), a computer network was able to monitor my movements. It knew what time I entered a room and when I left. In return it opened doors for me, switched on lights, and even gave me a

Matrix Reloaded Explained

welcoming "Hello" as I arrived. I experienced no negatives at all. In fact, I felt very positive about the whole thing. I gained something as a result of being monitored and tracked. I was happy with having Big Brother watching me because, although I gave up some of my individual humanity, I benefited from the system doing things for me. Would the same not be true of the Matrix? Why would anyone want to experience the relatively tough and dangerous life of being an individual human when he or she could be part of the Matrix?

So here we come on to the case of Cypher. As he eats his steak he says, "I know that this steak doesn't exist. I know when I put it in my mouth, the Matrix is telling my brain that it is juicy and delicious!" He goes on to conclude that "Ignorance is bliss." But is it ignorance? His brain is telling him, by whatever means, that he is eating a nice juicy steak. How many times do we nowadays enter a fast-food burger bar in order to partake of a burger that, through advertising, our brains have been conditioned into believing is the tastiest burger imaginable. When we enter we know, because we've seen the scientific papers, that the burger contains a high percentage of water, is mainly fat, and is devoid of vitamins. Yet we still buy such burgers by the billion. When we eat one, our conditioned brain is somehow telling us that it is juicy and delicious, yet we know it doesn't quite exist in the form our brain is imagining.

We can thus understand Cypher's choice. Why be out of the Matrix, living the dangerous, poor, tired, starving life of a disenfranchised human, when you can exist in a blissfully happy life, with all the nourishment you need? Due to the deal he made with Agent Smith, once Cypher is back inside he will have no knowledge of having made any deal in the first place. He appears to have nothing at all to lose. The only negative aspect is that before he is reinserted he may experience some inner moral human pangs of good or bad. Remember that being reinserted is actually good for the Matrix, although it is not so good for the renegade humans who are fighting the system.

Robert Nozick's thought experiment puts us all to the test, and serves as an immediate exhibition of Cypher's dilemma. Nozick asks, if our brains can be connected, by electrodes, to a machine which gives us any experiences we desire, would we plug into it for life? The question is, what else could matter other than how we feel our lives are going, from the inside? Nozick himself argued that other things do matter to us, for example that we value being a certain type of person, we want to be decent, we actually wish to do certain things rather than just have the experience of doing them. I disagree completely with Nozick.

Research involving a variety of creatures, principally chimpanzees and rats, has allowed them to directly stimulate pleasure zones in their own brain, simply by pressing a button. When given the choice of pushing a button for pleasure or a button for food, it is the pleasure button that has been pressed over and over again, even leading to starvation (although individuals were quite happy even about that). Importantly, the individual creatures still had a role to play, albeit merely that of pressing a button. This ties in directly with the Matrix, which also allows for each individual mentally experiencing a world in which he or she is active and has a role to play.

It is, however, an important question whether or not an individual, as part of the Matrix, experiences free will or not. It could be said that Cypher, in deciding to re-enter the Matrix, is exercising his free will. But once inside, will he still be able to exhibit free will then? Isn't it essentially a similar situation to that proposed by Nozick? Certainly, within the mental reality projected on an individual by the Matrix, it is assumed that a certain amount of mental free will is allowed for; but it must be remembered, at the same time, that each individual is lying in a pod with all his or her life-sustaining mechanisms taken care of and an interactive storyline being played down into his or her brain. Is that free will? What is free will anyway, when the state of a human brain is merely partly due to a genetic program and partly due to life's experience? Indeed, exactly the same thing is true for a robot.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

In the Matrix, no human fuel cells are killed, not even the unborn—there is no abortion. Yet, naturally dying humans are allowed to die naturally and are used as food for the living. Importantly, they are not kept alive by chemicals merely for the sake of keeping them alive. The Matrix would appear to be more morally responsible to its human subjects than are human subjects to themselves. Who therefore wouldn't want to support and belong to the Matrix, especially when it is making life easier for its subjects?

Neo is kidnapped by Luddites, dinosaurs from the past when humans ruled the earth. It's not the future. We are in reality heading towards a world run by machines with an intelligence far superior to that of an individual human. But by linking into the network and becoming a Cyborg, life can appear to be even better than it is now. We really need to clamp down on the party-poopers of this world and get into the future as soon as we can—a future in which we can be part of a Matrix system, which is morally far superior to our Neolithic morals of today.

Kevin Warwick
www.kevinwarwick.com

Footnotes

1. Hawking, S., "Hawking's plan to offset computer threat to humans", Ananova, www.ananova/news, 1 September 2001
2. *In the Mind of the Machine*, Arrow, 1998. Available on www.amazon.co.uk
3. *I, Cyborg*, Century, 2002. Available on www.amazon.co.uk

**REALITY, WHAT MATTERS,
AND THE MATRIX**
IAKOVOS VASILIOU

Matrix Reloaded Explained

The Matrix is, at its core, a film with a moral plot. We, the viewers, like the heroes, are in on a secret: The reality that forms the lives of millions of human beings is not real. The world that seems real to most people is in fact a computer-generated simulation, but almost no one knows it. In reality human beings are floating in liquid in machine pods, with tubes connected to them in a grotesque post-apocalyptic world where the sun is blotted out. To the average person, of course, it seems to be the ordinary world of 1999. Although some details of the history remain untold, it is an essential part of *The Matrix* that we are provided with a specific account of how all of this happened. There was a battle between human beings and machines whose cognitive capacity had surpassed their own. In a desperate attempt to win, human beings blocked out the sun's light in order to deprive the machines of their power source. Despite this extreme tactic, the humans lost, were enslaved, and are now farmed to supply energy sources for the machines. The machines induce the appearance of ordinary 1999 life in the human beings with a computer generated "virtual community" for the purpose of keeping them docile and asleep so that they and their offspring can be used like living batteries. While humans seem to walk around in an ordinary life, their minds are radically deceived and their bodies are exploited. The heroes are thus depicted as fighting a noble battle for the liberation of the human species.

I have so far drawn out two aspects of the "moral background" of the film: enslavement and deception. We should also note the perspective we have on the Matrix as viewers of *The Matrix*. We have what is sometimes called a "God's eye" perspective: we can see *both* the Matrix reality *and* "real" reality. We are let in on the truth about the situation, and we are not supposed to question, for example, whether the battle between Morpheus and his friends and the Agents is itself being conducted in another "meta-matrix", or whether the view of the human pods we see might only be some sort of dream image or illusion. As viewers of the Matrix, we are in on the truth and we can see for ourselves that human beings are both enslaved and deceived. Given the outlined history, we are meant to understand the situation of the humans as a terrible and unfair one.

1. How Does the Matrix Differ from Reality?

Excluding, for the moment, the heroes – Morpheus, Trinity, eventually Neo, and the rest of their crew – and the machines, no one *in* the Matrix shares our God's eye perspective. In everyday life as well, as far as we know, reality is simply there. When we watch the film, we identify with the heroes in part because we are repulsed by the idea that human beings are enslaved and deceived. It is easy to find these two elements at work in *The Matrix* in part because we think of enslavement and deception as things that are done to some people by others; one group of people enslaves another, or one person or group deceives others. In the film it is the machines who are the agents of slavery and deception and almost all of the humans are victims. But how does the Matrix, and the situation of the ordinary people within it differ from reality and the people within *it* (i.e., us)?

Let's begin with enslavement. We are forced to do many things in ordinary reality: we must eat, drink, sleep, on penalty of death. Also, no matter what we do, we shall eventually, within a fairly predictable time frame, die; we cannot stay alive forever, or even for a couple of hundred years. We can't travel back and forth in time; can't fly to other planets by flapping our arms. The list could go on and on, and I have simply offered limits we are subject to in virtue of the laws of nature. In other words, compared with some easily imaginable possibilities, we are severely constrained, in a type of bondage, though ordinarily most of us don't think of it as such. Writers, artists, philosophers, and theologians over the centuries have of course been keenly aware of these limitations, examined many forms of human bondage, and offered various types of suggestions as to how to free ourselves. Human beings have longed to "break out" of this reality, to transcend the imposed limitations on their physical being. Moreover, we should be clear that these limitations are *imposed* on us. We simply find ourselves in

Matrix Reloaded Explained

this condition, with these rules: we all die within approximately 100 years. It has nothing to do with our voluntary choice, our wishes, or our judgements about what ought to be the case.

Who has done this to us? Answering this question is important to some degree because we typically use the term "enslavement" to refer to something done by one agent to some others. In the case of the constraints I outlined above it may be harder, initially, to find anyone on whom to pin the blame. But of course human beings have offered answers to this question: one is God; another, the laws of nature. Religious thinkers have struggled with questions about why we should not be angry at God for constraining us in the ways he does: why do people die, why can't we go back in time, travel to other planets, etc.? Others conclude that God is not constraining us, but simply the laws of nature. At least at first this thought might be a bit more palatable insofar as we think of the laws of nature as *impersonal* features of reality; no one made them that way (if God did, then we get angry at him again). They do not *mean* to constrain us and there is no mind or intelligent force actively doing anything to us. Either way, however, our actual situation is one of involuntary constraint, much akin to the humans' situation in the Matrix, except that it is not at the hands of machines against whom we lost a war, but at the hands of God or "nature".

The second aspect of the moral background of *The Matrix* is deception. Human beings are being actively deceived by the Matrix into believing things about reality that are not true. Deception offends many people, except perhaps for committed subjectivists, since many people believe that they want to know, or at least have the right to know, the truth, even if it is terrible. For one person, or a group of people, purposefully to keep others in the dark about some truth is to diminish the respect and authority of those people; it is to act patronizingly and paternalistically. In such situations, a few people decide which truths others can handle, and which they can't. Although this happens routinely – consider the relationship between those who govern and those who are governed – many people bristle at this idea and want the scope of such filtering of the truth to be severely limited.

We might think, however, not about the deception of some people by others (just as we did not look at the enslavement of some people by others), but the deception of humanity in general. In Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* the gods are depicted throughout as capriciously deceiving human beings, compelling them knowingly and unknowingly to do specific things, and generally interfering quite frequently in human affairs. The humans in Homer certainly seem to be caught in a matrix of sorts, with gods and goddesses operating on a plane of reality that is not accessible to them (unless the gods want it to be) but that nevertheless often affects matters in the humans' ordinary reality. As human beings began to understand that the Earth rotated around the Sun, and not vice versa, Descartes certainly worried about the extent to which God had had a hand in deceiving all of humanity for tens of thousands of years up to that point. He devotes a significant portion of the *Meditations* to worrying about how an all-good, all-knowing, and all-powerful God could have allowed (and whether indeed he was complicit in) people's radical deception about the relative motions of the planet they live on, and other truths that turn out to be radically different from how things *seem* to be.

So in our ordinary situation, without any cruel machines doing anything to us, we realize that there are nevertheless many things we cannot do, and we know that we humans have been radically deceived by natural phenomena (or by the gods, or by God) about things in the past, and that it only stands to reason that we may be radically mistaken about our explanations of things now. I say people's "radical deception", despite the fact that, as with being enslaved, being deceived also seems to require an agent – someone to *do* the deceiving. We should note, however, that we talk of being deceived or fooled by mirrors, or by the light, or by angles. Natural phenomena are often described as contributing to our misunderstanding of them for a reason. Even though human beings were mistaken for millennia about the fact that the Earth moves relative to the Sun, and not the other way round, it is hard to describe our error as simply having "made a mistake", as though humanity forgot to carry the two in some addition

Matrix Reloaded Explained

calculation. Surely part of the reason that it took humans so long to understand the motions of the Earth is that the appearances themselves are deceptive: it certainly *looks* as though the Sun is moving across the sky. We can see the very development of philosophy, art, religion, science, and technology as all stemming from a drive to "free humanity" from such deception and enslavement, as part of a struggle to achieve the position of a Morpheus or a Neo. We develop planes to break the bonds of gravity that keep us physically on the surface of the Earth; we develop complex experiments and gadgets designed to discover the truth about things independently of how they may appear.

My first point, then, is that if we could get hold of the being responsible for setting up the reality we're actually in, then we could perhaps "free" ourselves, finally knowing the full truth about things, and being able to manipulate reality. If God is responsible, we would need to plead with him successfully, or to fight him and win; if it's the mathematical formulae (computer programs?) underlying "the laws of nature," we would need to learn how to write and rewrite them. We would then all be Neos. We might note too, at this big-picture level, a difference between the Homeric gods and the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic God. In Homer's world the gods were frequently literally in battle with humans who were greatly outmatched, although not entirely impotent – much like the humans that, before Neo, fought with the "Agents". With the God of the major contemporary religions, he is, by definition, all-good. From this perspective, we should not *fight* God, for he set things up the way he did for a wise and benevolent reason; rather, we need to learn to accept the position he has put us in (this "mortal coil", our reality, our matrix) and, then, if we act certain ways, or do certain things, he will free us from this reality after we "die" (i.e. not go out of existence, but end our stay in this reality) and show us the truth in heaven.

I hope this necessarily brief discussion enables us to see the importance of both the God's eye perspective and the moral background of the film for effecting a difference between the situation depicted in *The Matrix* and our ordinary condition. As viewers of the film we are in a special position: we can see both inside and outside of the Matrix. We can see that it is not a benevolent God who has set up this 1999 reality, replete with constraints and deceptive appearances, pain and toil, for some wonderful, miraculous purpose. Nor is the reality of most people in the Matrix the result of impersonal laws of nature. Instead, machines who use human beings as batteries are responsible for what counts as reality for most people. *The Matrix* then supplies us the viewers with a definitive answer about who is responsible for what most human beings take to be reality.

2. A Benevolently Generated Matrix

Now *The Matrix* could be significantly altered, without changing anything in the Matrix. Imagine that the real world is a post-apocalyptic hell, just as in the film, but, unlike in the film, suppose that the cause of the world's being in such a state is not some battle with machines that wanted to enslave us, but the emission of so many greenhouse gases with our three-lane-wide SUVs that we completely obliterated the ozone layer and thereby rendered the planet uninhabitable by us or by the plants and animals that we rely on for our survival. Suppose further that sometime in the future, in order to *save* the human race, scientists set up an enormous self-sustaining machine, just as in the film (minus the scary "Sentinels"), designed to keep the human species alive and reproducing for the 100,000 years it will take for whatever weeds are left on the planet to fix our atmosphere and make the planet once again habitable in a normal way. The machine operates simply on solar power (since, on this scenario, the sun is now stronger than ever, frying almost everything else on the planet), so that human beings are not needed as "batteries". While humans are stuck in this state, the scientists create the Matrix for them to "live" their lives in instead of being conscious of floating in a vat for the length of their life, which would clearly be a most horrific torture. Once the power of the sun is diminished to a habitable degree (because of the repaired atmosphere) the machine would "wake" us humans, and we could go back to living on the planet.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

The ordinary person in this scenario is in the same condition as an ordinary person in the film, except that instead of the Matrix being the diabolical result of evil machines who exploit the human race, it is the result of benevolent human beings trying to keep the human race alive in as good condition as possible under the terrible circumstances. Of course it would *seem* no different to the person *in* the Matrix. We, the viewers, however, would have quite a different response to *The Matrix*. There would be no enemy to fight, no injustice to rectify (the pushers of SUVs being long dead). If there were a Morpheus in this situation, how would we think of him? If Morpheus and his friends had left the Matrix, and figured out that they could, with extreme difficulty, survive in the devastated world (eating disgusting porridge, etc.), should they go about "freeing" everyone, even if it would take another 10,000 years for the Earth to return to its present state of habitability?

As Chris Grau discusses in his introductory essay (section "C"), the Matrix is importantly different from Robert Nozick's "experience machine".¹⁰ Grau points out that we retain free will in the Matrix. The "world" in the Matrix will respond to our free choices, just as the ordinary world does now. Another difference that I think is quite significant is that in the Matrix, unlike in the experience machine, *I am really interacting with other human minds*. There is a community of human beings. With the experience machine, it is all about *my* experience, which is the private content of my own consciousness. It is imaginable that I am alone in the universe, floating in a vat set up by a god who has since committed suicide. In sceptical problems that stem from the Evil Genius hypothesis in Descartes' first *Meditation*, there is a threat of solipsism and the dread of feeling that one might be alone in the universe. In the Matrix, however, when two people meet there are really two consciousnesses there that are each experiencing "the same things" from their respective positions. Everyone is hooked up to one and the same Matrix; there are not unique matrices generated for each individual. Of course people aren't really shaking hands – their hands are in vats – but it seems to each of their consciousnesses, not just to one consciousness, that they are shaking hands. This feature of the Matrix is also a respect in which life in the Matrix is critically *unlike* a dream, despite the fact that the humans are described as "dreaming". Regardless of the amount of conscious control one has or lacks in a dream, a dream is *private* to one's own consciousness.¹³ It is part of the grammar of "dream", as Wittgenstein might say, that only I can have my dream.

Now this seems to me to be of enormous significance in thinking about the Matrix. If two people fall in love in the Matrix, in what sense would their love not be real? It would not be as if a person merely *dreamt* that he had fallen in love with someone; for in a dream that person is not really there at all, just like in Nozick's experience machine. It is true that in the Matrix they would not really be giving each other flowers, or really holding hands. They would, however, both be experiencing the same things together. They would know each other as persons, who display their characters in how they react to all of the – in one sense – "unreal" situations of the Matrix. Moreover, people in the Matrix really suffer and experience pain, and when they die in the Matrix, they die in the "real world" too. The fact that one and the same Matrix is inhabited by millions of minds means that millions of people are *really* interacting, even if the physical universe in which they are interacting is radically different from how it appears.

Consider as well writing a novel, a poem, or a philosophy paper. Or consider painting or dancing, making music or a movie. Would any of these activities be affected by the fact that what I took to be material objects were objects that were computer generated? And if not, in the benevolently generated Matrix I hypothesized we would seem clearly better off as a species, developing artistically, intellectually, loving each other within the Matrix rather than fighting for survival and barely succeeding outside of it. If my aim in life was to write some extraordinary philosophy or a ground-breaking novel, surely I could do that far better within the Matrix than outside of it where a person must battle simply for his or her survival. After all, where does my novel or my philosophy

Matrix Reloaded Explained

paper exist for much of its genesis and storage? In a computer of course. If I wrote a novel in the Matrix, and you read it, and so did 10,000 other minds, and I then win the Pulitzer Prize for it, in what sense would it be unreal or even diminished in value? This differs again from the experience machine. In the experience machine, I might have programmed it so that it would *seem* to me that I had written a brilliant novel and that people had appreciated it. In fact, however, no one would have read my novel and I would have simply programmed myself with memories of having written it, although I never really did. In the Matrix, however, I am not given false memories, and I do really interact with other minds. Physics as we know it would be false (not of course the physics of the Matrix, which scientists would study and which would progress as does ordinary science; see below). But art and human relationships would not be affected. I am trying to show that while we are attached to *reality*, we are not attached to the physical *per se*, where that refers to what we think of as the underlying causes of the smells, tastes, feels, sights, and sounds around us: they could be molecules, they could be computer chips, they could be the whims of Homeric gods. Indeed, very few human beings have much understanding of contemporary physics and what it maintains things "really" are. Nozick's experience machine may have shown us that we have an attachment to the real, an attachment to the truth that we are *really* doing things, *really* accomplishing things, and not just *seeming* to, but we should not for that reason think we are necessarily attached to a certain picture of the physical or metaphysical constitution of things.

I would like return to the question of the sense in which the reality of the Matrix is different from the real world. I think that there is an important difference between being deceived about the reality of an object and being deceived about the real underlying physical or metaphysical cause of something. Avoiding deception and error about the latter is the concern of physics (and metaphysics). That we might be wrong, indeed radically wrong, about the physics/biology of an elephant is quite different from hallucinating that there is an elephant in front of you, or dreaming of an elephant, or experiencing an elephant in Nozick's machine. In the latter three cases, one is deceived about the reality of an object, about whether there is an elephant there at all. I am not saying that the actual physics or metaphysics of a thing will not determine *whether* it is there; if something is really the underlying cause of something else, of course it must determine its existence. I do claim, however, that *given* the reality of a thing, knowing its true physical/metaphysical explanation neither augments nor diminishes its value or its reality. To discover that, contrary to what you had believed, elephants evolved from single-celled sea creatures and are mostly water, and that water consists of molecules, and that molecules consist of atoms, and that there is a certain interrelationship between matter and energy – that is all part of science's attempt to understand the truth about physical reality. None of these conclusions impugns the elephant's reality or the value it has in the world. What substances at bottom *are* is a question for science or, perhaps, metaphysics. The moral background of the film is quite relevant here. If the fact that we are in the Matrix is simply a matter of our being incorrect about or ignorant of what the real physics of things is, then the Matrix is quite close to our ordinary situation, although our position as *viewers* of *The Matrix* is not like that at all. Since we have a "God's eye" perspective, we are able to know what is really the cause of things and what is not.

In the benevolent Matrix that I envisaged, however, you could learn Matrix-physics and Matrix-history just as we now learn ordinary physics and ordinary history. At a certain age in school you might be taught that your body is really floating in a vat, and then perhaps you could put on goggles and see the world outside of the Matrix, like looking at an x-ray or at your blood under a microscope. Brought up with such a physics and biology, it would seem natural – about as exciting (and unexciting) as being told that your solid unmoving table is made of incredibly small incredibly fast moving parts, or that all of your physical characteristics are determined by a certain code in your DNA, or where babies come from – despite the fact that such truths are hardly obvious, and conflict radically with the way things appear. Just consider any of the conclusions of contemporary physics or quantum mechanics. History too might continue as normal, divided into BM (before Matrix) and AM

Matrix Reloaded Explained

(after Matrix) dates. After all in the "real" world, outside of the Matrix, nothing would be happening of interest except to scientists. It would be like the contemporary study of bottom of the ocean, or of the moon. Aside from its causal influence on the physical state of the planet, what goes on down there or up there has no part to play in human history. All of *human* history would occur within the Matrix.

By hypothesizing a benevolent rather than a malevolent cause of the Matrix, we can see how much of what I am calling the "moral background" of *The Matrix* influences what we think of it. Deprived of that moral background, a benevolently generated Matrix can show us that our attachment is not to the physical constitution and cause of things, but also not simply to experience. Our attachment is to things that have *value*. Let me explain.

Take the example, discussed in the film, of the pleasure of eating. Imagine that science develops a pill which supplies the perfect amount of nutrition for a human being each day. Humans no longer need to eat at all in the ordinary way. In fact they are, as far as their health is concerned, far worse off if they try to rely on their taste to supply them with the appropriate nutrition (see current statistics on fast food consumption and obesity). They can simply take the pill and get nutrition far superior to what they would if left to their own taste to determine what and how much to eat. Let's suppose too that science has found a way to simulate food with a computer, so that they have created a "food-matrix". My real nutrition would come from the pill, but I could still go out for a "simulated" steak and it would seem just as though I were really eating a steak, including the sensation of getting full, although in fact I would be eating nothing and getting no nutritional harm or benefit from the experience at all. It is hard to imagine such a perfect pill and such perfect computer-simulated food; such a pill is no simple vitamin, and a tofu-burger is no simulated steak. But if we suppose that there are such things, I think human beings would readily give up eating real steak. What those who value eating steak value is not the eating of real cow flesh (in fact, putting it that way inclines one to become a vegetarian), but the experience of eating. If eating the computer steak really were, as we are assuming, absolutely indistinguishable from eating a real steak, no one would care whether they were eating a "real" steak – that is, one that was obtained from a slaughtered cow.

At this level the discussion is again about what the underlying causes of phenomenal qualities are: whether the causes of the taste, smell, etc. of the steak are cow molecules or computer chips or the hand of God. This is, as it were, a matter of science or metaphysics – not of concern to the consumer as a consumer. Now for all physical objects, I contend, it is of no value to us if their underlying constitution is ordinary atoms, or computer generated simulation. My favorite pen still writes the same way, my favorite shirt still feels the same way. If these things are not "real" in the sense that their underlying constitution is radically other than I had believed, that makes no difference to the value that these things have in our lives. It *does*, of course, make a difference to the truth of the physics or metaphysics I learn. But none of this implies that I was being deceived about the reality₁₆ of the object – that the object I valued was or is not there in the sense that matters to the non-scientist. In a scene discussed by Grau, Cypher claims his knowledge that the steak is "unreal" – that is, computer generated – does not diminish his enjoyment. Cypher then looks forward to the point when he expects his memory to be wiped clean, and when he will no longer remember that the Matrix is the Matrix. But it seems to me to be unclear why Cypher needs to forget anything about his steak being unreal in order to fully enjoy it – as he himself seems to understand – nor does he need to forget that he is in the Matrix in order to make his life pleasant and satisfying within it. What he desperately needs to forget in order to have a comfortable and satisfying life is the memory of his immoral and cowardly betrayal of his friends and of the rest of those outside of the Matrix who are engaged in the fight for human liberation. But this is an issue, once again, not arising from the Matrix itself, but from the "moral background" of the film.

Having a radically different underlying constitution is very different from saying that things are not

Matrix Reloaded Explained

real, in the sense of being a mere illusion, as in a dream or a hallucination. Consider again the case of our human interactions. If a person I am friends with is not, after all, a person, then I think there is a clear sense in which the friendship is not real, just as in Nozick's experience machine or in a dream that I was friends with Tom Waits. I would then *seem* to have a relationship to someone, but in reality not have one. What matters is whether I am really interacting with another free mind. I certainly won't try to say what it is to have a mind, or what it is for that mind to be "free", but whatever it is, I am claiming that its value is not importantly tied to any theory in physics or metaphysics. *Whatever* the cause and explanation is of the existence of a free mind, it is the having of one and the ability to interact with other ones that matters. If the underlying constitution of Tom Waits is computer chips, instead of blood and guts, what difference does that make? This is not a question about his *reality* – whether he is really there or not –, it is a question about his physical or metaphysical constitution. If he has a mind, whatever that is, and he has free will, whatever that is, what do I care what physical parts he is – or is not – made of? Indeed, I earnestly hope in the actual world never to see any of those parts or have direct contact with them at all.

3. *The Matrix* on the Matrix

I shall conclude by claiming that *The Matrix* itself provides evidence that, barring enslavement and deception, we would prefer life within the Matrix. I have so far considered how we would feel about the reality of a benevolently generated Matrix. But in *The Matrix*, the cause of the Matrix is explicitly not benevolent. Human beings are enslaved and exploited by scary-looking machines. *The Matrix* is a story about a few human beings fighting to save the rest of humanity. That is how the movie generates excitement, the thrill for the viewer as he or she hopes that the heroes can defeat the enemy. Of course, the film expects one to root for the humans. But I think there is some duplicity at work in the way *The Matrix* exploits the Matrix. Neo is the savior of humanity, and a large amount of the pleasure that the viewer gets from the film consists of watching Neo and his friends learn to manipulate the Matrix. Key to Neo's eventual success is his training. In his training he learns that the Matrix, as a computer-generated group dream, can be manipulated by a human being. The idea, I guess, is that if one could bring oneself to believe deeply enough that, despite appearances, things are not real, then one could manipulate the reality of the Matrix. The thrill that Neo feels, and that we feel watching him, is that as he gains this control he is able to do things that are, apparently, superhuman – move faster than bullets, hang onto helicopters, fly, etc. We ought to note here, though, that Neo's greatness, his being the One, is only the case because the Matrix exists. Outside of the Matrix, Neo is just a smart computer geek. He can't really fly, or really dodge bullets (nor, apparently, does he dress in full-length black leather coats, though I guess he *could*). We, as viewers, would not get any pleasure from *The Matrix* if it were not for the Matrix. If there were no Matrix, everyone would be eating terrible porridge in a sunless world and simply fighting for survival, which would make for a bad world and a bad movie. The premise of the movie is that there is a moral duty to destroy the Matrix, and "free" the humans. But all of the satisfaction that the viewer gets, and that the characters get in terms of their own sense of purpose and of being special, is derived *from* the Matrix. It's not just Cypher's steak that is owed to the Matrix, it is Morpheus's breaking the handcuffs, Trinity's gravity-defying leaps, and Neo's bullet dodging. If my argument is right, then, the irony of *The Matrix* is that the heroes spend all of their time liberating human beings from the Matrix although afterwards they would have good reason to go back in, assuming the conditions on Earth are still so terrible. This is because there's nothing *wrong* with the Matrix *per se*; indeed, I've argued that our reality might just as well *be* the Matrix. What we want, now as always, one way or another, is to have control over it ourselves. What we would do with such power is a question, I suppose, for psychologists; but, looking at what people have done so far, I at any rate hope we remain enslaved and deceived by *something* for a long time to come.

Footnotes

1. Another topic raised by the film, which I will not discuss beyond this note, would be to assess the moral background of the plot. Are the humans clearly in the right? After all, it was they who blotted out the sun in an attempt to exterminate the machines. Particularly in light of the machines' claim that they are simply the next evolutionary step, we ought to think about whether there is some objectionable "speciesism" at work in the humans' assessment of the situation. For my purposes I'll assume the humans are morally justified in the fight for liberation, which, I might add, is certainly a defensible position. For even if machines are the next evolutionary step, and some human beings are guilty of having acted wrongly towards them, that would hardly justify the involuntary enslavement of the entire human race in perpetuity. Moreover, the existence of a "more advanced" species than our own (however that is to be determined) surely should not deprive us of our human rights.
2. And in part because we too would like to control reality; see below.
3. The Stoics thought of the natural world, of the universe as a whole, as itself a rational creature with an overall goal or purpose.
4. Although this theme is present throughout, see especially *Meditations I* and *IV*.
5. The idea that reality is tricky and tries to hide its nature from us is very old, even without, as in Homer's case, any gods acting as agents of deception. For example, the Presocratic philosopher Heraclitus (c.540–c.480 BC) writes (fr. 53) "an unapparent connection is stronger than an apparent one" and (fr. 123) "nature/the real constitution [of things] (*phusis*) loves to hide itself."
6. Morpheus and company are an interesting amalgam of technological sophistication and religious symbolism.
7. Or, more precisely, those of us who accomplished this.
8. Of course for Morpheus and his crew, and for the machines if they were sufficiently reflective, the same questions could be raised about what makes the reality *outside* of the Matrix the way *it* is – who is responsible for *that*? And then we can imagine them responding in the sorts of ways I have described, pinning the blame on God, the laws of nature, etc.
9. This detail is meant simply to avoid the possibility of unease over the issue of whether human beings are being used as batteries, voluntarily or not.
10. I shall assume that my reader has read that essay, where Grau clearly explains Nozick's example. (The essay can be found [here](#).)
11. See Grau, "Dream Skepticism". The threat of solipsism seems to me to be the same in the Matrix or in the ordinary world; and that is not my concern here. I am simply taking the truth of the "God's eye" perspective offered the viewer of the film for granted. *The Matrix* tells us and shows us that we are all hooked up to the same Matrix.
12. I think that perhaps Colin McGinn's essay too quickly assimilates the Matrix to dreaming, and Neo's control over it to "lucid" dreaming. Although McGinn may be right that the Matrix must be

Matrix Reloaded Explained

dealing with "images" rather than "percepts", there are important disanalogies between Matrix–experience and dream–experience. First, in a dream, there is only your own mind involved. The Matrix must be, at a minimum, a group dream. I am arguing above that the fact that one mind is really interacting with other minds is critical to assessing the value of the Matrix reality. This complicates the apparently clear idea of controlling one's dream, since it is not simply one mind at work that can "alter" the images one is conscious of. I am not sure of the coherence of the hypothesis here. For example, when the young boy bends the spoon, Neo "sees" this. So the boy's control of his environment is perceivable *both* by the boy's mind *and* by Neo's. So he must be changing something that is, "in reality", in Neo's mind – namely, Neo's image of the spoon. But what if Neo straightens the spoon at the same time the boy bends it? Whose lucid dream will win out, and be perceived by the other minds? The one with the stronger will? Second, the "images" that are in your mind in the Matrix can, and regularly do, *really* kill people; that is, kill their bodies *outside* of the Matrix. Except in some bad horror movies, dream images cannot really kill you, or make you bleed. The difficulty of understanding how something which is a mere "image" is supposed to have this sort of effect seems therefore to cause some problems for calling the state of ordinary people in the Matrix "dreaming". See also next note.

13. We could certainly, if we wish, *call* the experience of the Matrix "a dream", as the movie does. But we should remember that Neo, while in the Matrix and before he has met Morpheus, has a dream while he is "asleep". So we need some distinction between that sort of "dream" and Neo's "waking" "group–dream" within the Matrix.

14. This sentence implies that contemporary physics represents humans' best understanding of the true nature of reality, which is certainly a contentious claim.

15. The question of whether I know something is in fact real or an illusion remains as legitimate or illegitimate as always. As throughout this essay, I am simply bypassing any sceptical questions, since it is part of my argument that being in the Matrix does not affect them.

16. All human being might be considered "scientists" insofar as we are curious about and have a conception of what the reality of things are: what causes them, how they come into being, how they are destroyed, etc. But we are also interested in other people, objects, and activities because of their inherent value, a value they retain regardless of the correct explanation of their reality.

17. Given a true account of what it is to have a mind, I would surely care if what appeared to be a person did not fulfill those criteria, for then he would not be a person after all. For example, if someone somehow showed that a machine could not have a "free mind", then I would care whether my friend was a machine or not, but only secondarily, given that *ex hypothesi* as a machine he would not have a free mind. My point is only that it is "having a free mind" or "being a person" that is the source of value, not the correct theory about what makes someone a person. I am claiming that ignorance of or deception about the right physical or metaphysical account of mind does not thereby cast doubt on the value of having a mind. Scepticism about other minds – the questions of whether there really are other minds and how we could tell whether there are – is not addressed at all by what I am saying. I am taking for granted the truth of what the film tells us: there are other minds. The problem of other minds, like solipsism mentioned above, is equally a problem in or out of the Matrix.

18. I am grateful to Chris Grau and Bill Vasiliou for comments on and discussion about an earlier version of this essay.

NEVER THE TWAIN SHALL MEET:
REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST MATRIX
RICHARD HANLEY

Did you know that the First Matrix was designed to be a perfect human world, where none suffered, where everyone would be happy? It was a disaster.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Hell is—*other people*.

To deny our own impulses is to deny the very thing that makes us human.

Cypher *chooses* the Matrix, and just maybe, he's not so crazy. If real life prospects are dim, then even an apparently sub-optimal alternative like the Matrix might in fact be better, all things considered. But what is the *best* sort of existence for individuals like you and me? Philosophy and religion both have attempted to answer this question, and I think *The Matrix* gives us an interesting way to frame it. Is some possible "real" existence better than any possible Matrix? Or is some possible Matrix better than any possible reality? With Mark Twain's help, I shall present an argument that one important notion of the best existence, the Christian one, Heaven is after all a Matrix. The point of my polemical approach is not so much to criticize Christianity, but rather to bring the issue of the nature of ultimate value into sharper focus.

What is the Matrix? Morpheus tells Neo it's a "computer-generated dreamworld," and a "neural, interactive simulation"; it is, in other words, a *virtual environment*. Agent Smith assures Cypher that he won't know he's in the Matrix when he returns permanently, and it will simplify exposition to suppose that this is a necessary feature of a Matrix, while being computer-generated is not. The Matrix depicted is a mixed case, since the cognoscenti can enter it without being deceived into thinking it is real. Let us stipulate that in a *pure* Matrix, everyone is benighted, believing it is the "real deal." In most of what follows, I'll be concentrating on pure Matrices (and in the case of the Matrix depicted, on the condition of the benighted). Since we'll be discussing different kinds of Matrix, we need a name for the one depicted in *The Matrix*; Agent Smith refers to a First Matrix, so let's call the one we see the *Second Matrix*.

A Matrix, then, is an interactive virtual environment involving *systematic global deception*. Still, there are two levels of "interactivity" in a virtual environment. *Virtual interactivity* is the extent to which the environment allows, and responds to, your input. Current virtual environments are not very interactive in this sense, but the Second Matrix is. That's what makes it seem so real, at least to the benighted. (For the cognoscenti the Second Matrix it is too virtually interactive, too controllable, to seem real—at least compared with the more law-like external world.) *Real interactivity* is the potential for interaction *with others also engaged in virtual interaction*, and *real interaction* is the extent to which this potential is realized. Compare two kinds of possible Matrix: the Second Matrix is *communal*, featuring real interaction between human beings—call this *human interaction*; a *solitary* Matrix lacks

Matrix Reloaded Explained

human interaction altogether.

Communal Matrices differ in degree of human interaction. In the Second Matrix, billions of humans share the environment, and if we ignore Agents, it is *fully* communal—every virtual human in the Matrix is an *avatar*, a virtual persona of a real human being. In the Matrix training program created by Mouse, on the other hand, virtual humans like the woman in the red dress are *simulacra*, not avatars, and human interaction during the sequence we see is limited to that between Neo and Morpheus. On yet another hand, the fully communal Construct (loading program), where Morpheus and Neo watch TV, has no other virtual humans in it to interact with—and unlike the training program, it's not "big" enough to be very world-like. Call a fully communal Matrix that is big enough to be world-like, and has *many* human participants, so that human interaction is nearly inevitable, a *teeming* Matrix. (The Second Matrix is all but teeming. If we removed the cognoscenti, there would be no need for Agents, and it would be teeming.)

Now we can compare three possibilities (obviously not exhaustive) for human existence, assuming that it involves physical embodiment. *One* is the real deal, populated by other human beings: for instance, if you subjectively experience having sexual intercourse with another human being, another individual human being shares that intercourse, from another subjective point of view, because you really have physical, sexual intercourse with them. The same goes for non-sexual intercourse. If I were to meet Mark Twain (through the time travel he wrote about, perhaps), then Twain and I both would have an experience of meeting, and we really would meet, physically and psychologically. *Two* is a teeming Matrix: if you experience having (intraspecies!) sexual intercourse, another Matrix-bound human shares that intercourse, from another subjective point of view. There's no physical intercourse, of course, but there is psychological intercourse. If I have the experience of meeting Twain, then he (or some other human being) has the experience of meeting me—meeting-Twain, and there is at least a meeting of minds. *Three* is an *apparently* teeming, solitary Matrix: if you experience having sexual intercourse, no other human is having an interactive sexual experience with you—it is like taking up Mouse's invitation to enjoy the woman in the red dress, except that you won't know "she" is a simulacrum. If I experience meeting Twain, then there is no intercourse with another human being, and neither Twain nor any other human being need have the experience of meeting me—meeting-Twain.

Our ordinary intuition is that there's something valuable about the real deal that is missing in a Matrix. Consider your present situation. You are either right now in a Matrix, thinking that it's a certain time and place when it really isn't, that a certain sequence of physical events is occurring when it really isn't, and so on; or you aren't, and it really is that time and place, and so on. Most of us hope we are *not* in a Matrix right now, which shows that, other things being equal (that is, where the experiences are identical in subjective character), we prefer the real deal. My hunch is that you also hope that, if your present existence is not the real deal, it's at least participation in a *teeming* Matrix. Being in the real deal has two distinct features of apparent value: your beliefs are more connected to the truth, and you really interact with other human beings. A teeming Matrix has less connection with truth than the real deal, but has more than a solitary Matrix, and it still provides substantial interaction with other human beings. In the case of sex, there's a good sense in which you really did have sex with that other person, though in ignorance of the whole truth.

If connection with truth matters so much to us, why not have the best of both kinds of existence—why not have a virtual environment, *without* all the deception? Cypher can (and does) go back temporarily into the Matrix, knowing what it is, and retain that knowledge while he is in there. But for his permanent stay he chooses ignorance instead, because "Ignorance is bliss." Presumably, the knowledge that he is not in the real deal would undermine his capacity to enjoy the experiences, so he can't have the best of *both* worlds. Intuitively, Cypher is no different from the rest of us in this regard.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

For a typical man, the experience of sexual intercourse with the woman in the red dress is likely to be much more satisfying if he thinks it is the real deal. Which brings us to the First Matrix.

1. What is the First Matrix?

Agent Smith's remark in the epigraph suggests that the First Matrix was, like the Second, more or less teeming. Agent Smith says about the "disaster":

Some believe that we lacked the programming language to describe your perfect world, but I believe that, as a species, human beings define their reality through misery and suffering. The perfect world was a dream that your primitive cerebrum kept trying to wake up from.

The first suggestion is fascinating. Given the deadpan delivery, it is hard to say whether it posits a deficiency in the machines that designed the Matrix, or in us—in our notion of a perfect world. On the other hand, Agent Smith's own thesis seems connected with a tradition of human thought concerning the *theistic problem of evil*. If a perfectly good God exists, why does evil exist? Why is the world full of sharp corners and other hazards? A standard answer is that evil is *necessary*—it must exist in order for certain goods to exist. For instance, it is often claimed that happiness requires suffering, though this is disputable. Even if *creatures like us* can't be maximally happy, this is a reason for not creating *us* at all, and creating more felicitously instead. And does our happiness require *so much* suffering? Looking deeper, it seems clear that virtues like *courage* and *generosity* indeed require the existence of suffering. But vices such as *cowardice* and *cruelty* couldn't exist without suffering, either—are they necessary evils, too?

The most defensible theist answer to this question is a very subtle *No, But—*: God had a choice between creating a world with *free* beings in it, or not. This choice is easy, since free will is a surpassing good. But given *libertarian* free will, which requires *causal indeterminism*, God could not know without creating the world exactly which possible world would result. God might have gotten lucky, and created a world in which all free beings had only virtues, and no vices. But this is incredibly unlikely, as is a purely vicious world, and it's no surprise that He got a mixed world, with most humans having virtues *and* vices. The picture that emerges is that a world with human beings in it is a world with sharp corners (*natural evil*) to provide genuine free choice, and so very likely contains sin (*moral evil*) as well. Call this the *Free Will Theodicy*. Its assumption that free will is *libertarian* free will—requiring causal indeterminism—is Christian orthodoxy, so I grant it for the sake of the argument.

Filling in the details of the theodicy, focus on the *will* itself. Our actions are ultimately explained by what we want, most especially by our *non-derived desires*. In a world of sharp corners, not all these desires can be satisfied. Indeed, there often will be conflicts between individuals in what they desire—one person getting what they want means that another doesn't. (Presumably, God could not arrange a concordance of wills—substituting for conflicting desires, or deleting them altogether—without eliminating free will.) Indeed, the existence of other human beings in the world is *part* of the "sharp corners"—a source of suffering—in addition to being a source of moral evil. And not just because others are in competition with you for resources—sometimes others *are* the resource, as the sexual intercourse example shows. If you badly want sex with another person and they badly don't want it with you, then someone is going to suffer.

If the Free Will Theodicy is correct, then God can only control the non-human environment. Each human being is a part of the environment of every other human being, so as soon as you put more than

Matrix Reloaded Explained

one creature with libertarian free will into the mix there will, absent astonishing coincidence, be tears. You can minimize the effect human beings have on each other, but only by minimizing their interaction (say, by putting each on a separate planet). Even then, as long as human beings desire interaction (as a means to things we want, such as to procreate, and perhaps even for its own sake), mere isolation won't solve the problem.

The creators of the First Matrix tried to produce a relatively good existence for Matrix-bound humans. (We needn't suppose the machines were benevolent; perhaps the bioelectric-to-fusion reaction process is more efficient the happier humans are.) In doing so, the machine creators had some of God's problems. They presumably lacked some of God's creative abilities, but they also had fewer constraints, since God is supposed to be no deceiver. Why was the First Matrix a disaster? If the machines were trying to produce an existence with *no human suffering*, then perhaps they tried the wrong design: a teeming Matrix populated with otherwise typical human beings. Even if the machines removed a lot of sharp corners (no volcanic-eruption, or man-eating-shark experiences), as long as there is interaction with other human beings plugged into the same virtual environment, someone is going to suffer, as the example of sexual intercourse demonstrates. This attempt would not produce a Matrix where "none suffered," and the suggestion fits badly with Agent Smith's remark, "No one would accept the programming." Let's discard it.

Which leaves two basic choices: the machines either substantially altered the nature of human beings in the First Matrix (say by arranging a concordance of wills), or else they created a solitary Matrix for each human being. The advantage of a solitary Matrix is that the virtual environment can be completely tailored to an individual's desires—perhaps the Matrix "reads off" the content of desires from his brain, anticipating a little, matching its programming as far as possible to the satisfaction of his desires as they develop and change.

Perhaps a battery of solitary Matrices was beyond the machines' practical resources, but let's suppose not—clearly it's in principle possible for them to have done things this way. However, if Christians are correct, and our wills are in fact undetermined, then our desires cannot be fully anticipated. There is bound to be a gap between the evolution of our desires, and the Matrix's capacity to satisfy them; hence some suffering is inevitable. This would partly explain Agent Smith's remark, but once again would not explain why "No one would accept the programming."

We are left with two possible explanations of the remark: either humans by their nature could not be successfully altered through programming; or else unaltered humans were psychologically incapable of accepting the relevant virtual environment. The latter seems to be Agent Smith's thesis: the "perfect world" was just too good to be true, and literally incredible. Are we human beings simply incapable of having a happy existence, with no suffering? Not on the standard Christian view, according to which just such an existence awaits us in *Heaven*.

II. What is Heaven?

The Christian notion of Heaven is far from a settled body of doctrine. (For instance, are there literally streets paved with gold, or is this just a metaphor for some barely imaginable, wonderful state of affairs?) Nevertheless, it has been asserted with some authority that the human condition in Heaven will be very different from that here and now. It is agreed that there is no suffering (see the epigraph), not to mention "exceeding joy," (an expression which occurs four times in the King James Bible), but what exactly will we do there? Some of the common claims about this can seem puzzling. In *Letters from the Earth*, Mark Twain has the banished Satan report to his fellow angels on the beliefs of mortal Man:

Matrix Reloaded Explained

For instance, take this sample: he has imagined a heaven, and has left entirely out of it the supremest of all his delights, the one ecstasy that stands first and foremost in the heart of every individual of his race — and of ours —sexual intercourse! ...

His heaven is like himself: strange, interesting, astonishing, grotesque. I give you my word, it has not a single feature in it that he actually values. It consists — utterly and entirely — of diversions which he cares next to nothing about, here in the earth, yet is quite sure he will like them in heaven. Isn't it curious? Isn't it interesting? You must not think I am exaggerating, for it is not so. I will give you details.

Most men do not sing, most men cannot sing, most men will not stay when others are singing if it be continued more than two hours... In man's heaven, everybody sings! The man who did not sing on earth sings there; the man who could not sing on earth is able to do it there. The universal singing is not casual, not occasional, not relieved by intervals of quiet; it goes on, all day long, and every day, during a stretch of twelve hours. And everybody stays; whereas in the earth the place would be empty in two hours...

Satan's list is long, and frequently amusing:

I recall to your attention the extraordinary fact with which I began. To wit, that the human being, like the immortals, naturally places sexual intercourse far and away above all other joys — yet he has left it out of his heaven! The very thought of it excites him; opportunity sets him wild; in this state he will risk life, reputation, everything — even his queer heaven itself — to make good that opportunity and ride it to the overwhelming climax. From youth to middle age all men and all women prize copulation above all other pleasures combined, yet it is actually as I have said: it is not in their heaven; prayer takes its place.

His main observations we can summarize as: (i) Man thinks he will be blissfully happy in Heaven; (ii) no activity that Man finds blissful on Earth will he pursue in Heaven; (iii) the activities that Man thinks he will pursue in Heaven are ones he avoids whenever possible, here on Earth. Call this appearance of inconsistent values, *Twain's Puzzle*. In Mouse's terms, it seems that we think we will be happiest denying our own impulses. Satan somewhat overstates the puzzle when he writes that Heaven "has not a single feature in it that [Man] *actually values*." Man thinks that in Heaven he will still value joy and disvalue suffering, for instance. Satan's point is that Man appears to think that his *desires* will be radically different in Heaven: he will desperately want the things that he does not want at all now, and not want at all the things that he desperately wants now.

Does Man think his *will* is going to be different in Heaven? That depends. *Psychological hedonism* is the view that there are really only two non-derived human desires: to obtain pleasure and avoid suffering. If this were true, then Man's will does not change if he merely changes his beliefs about what it is that will bring him pleasure and avoid pain. If psychological hedonism isn't true (and Christians seem—wisely—to think it isn't true), then a case can be made that (according to Satan, anyway) Man expects his will to be altered in Heaven.

Contrary to Satan, it can be argued that at least where sex is concerned, the Christian view is that such impulses *ought* to be denied, and the relentless pursuit of gratification is, in a Christian, a matter of *weakness* of will, not in its constitution. It might be further claimed that giving in to such impulses actually causes you suffering. This makes some sense in the case of, say, a married man tempted to

Matrix Reloaded Explained

adultery, whose guilt may prevent him from full enjoyment. Suppose that in Heaven, since there is no marriage (so says Jesus, see for instance Matthew 22:30), there is really no one psychologically "safe" to have sexual intercourse with, and you would inevitably feel guilty about engaging in it. Then the elimination of suffering requires the elimination of sex. (Of course, Satan and Mouse would no doubt respond, with some justification, that this is all premised on the belief that sex outside marriage is something bad in and of itself, a notion you happily will be disabused of in Heaven. But the question is what the typical Christian believes, whether it is true or not.)

Leaving aside what you would do there, believers in Christian Heaven commonly hold the following four theses about it:

- (1) It's possible for a human being to be in Heaven. More precisely, if all goes well it will be you that survives bodily death and goes to Heaven.
- (2) Human beings in Heaven will experience happiness, but no unhappiness.
- (3) Human beings in Heaven possess free will.
- (4) Human beings in Heaven interact with other human beings in Heaven.

It's worth expanding on (1). Christians standardly expect to recognize their loved ones in Heaven, which presumably requires remembering them. So it seems that they expect considerable psychological continuity between their Earthly and Heavenly existences—perhaps this is even guaranteed by the requirement that God be no deceiver. But such psychological continuity sits uncomfortably with (2). Christians on Earth are typically saddened by the fact that unbelievers will not get into Heaven. It seems that, if anything, they would be sadder still, when confronted by the wonders of Heaven, knowing that the unsaved are residing instead in "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." And it would seem to be cause for special anguish if one of your *loved ones* is absent from Heaven. (Another version of the problem arises with *missing* your loved ones—being sad, not for them, but for yourself, that they are not around. Even if you don't miss sex with your Earthly spouse, it seems you would miss *them*.)

Heaven is also widely supposed to provide an opportunity to meet human beings you never knew on Earth. But if I'm in Heaven, and I really want to meet Twain, then I will be sadly disappointed if he isn't there (and angry, if it's all on account of those *Letters*). Moreover, certain truths will presumably be available to you in Heaven. Suppose that Mother Theresa is your idol, and you can't wait to tell her so. However, you find out she's not really a saint—indeed—quite the opposite, and not in Heaven at all. You may be upset not only for your own sake, but for the sake of humanity (you may respond with a quite cynical attitude toward human nature). Heaven seems on the face of it to provide many opportunities for suffering.

There are three basic ways around this sort of problem. First, suppose *universalism*—the doctrine that everyone gets into Heaven—is true. This will solve the problem only if, upon entering Heaven, Christians no longer believe that there ought to be any qualification for it (else they likely will be annoyed that others got a "free pass," especially a holier-than-thou like Mother Theresa). Second, God could suppress the knowledge that others are not in Heaven. But this requires Matrix-like deception (either to provide the appropriate virtual interaction with non-avatars, or else to just delete all memory of the missing), and Heaven would not be the real deal. Third, perhaps what we care about—our desires—will change, so that good Christians no longer will mind the fact that others—even loved ones—are suffering (they might even take pleasure in it). But to accept this raises an acute version of Twain's Puzzle.

All in all, it may be better to revise (2) to:

Matrix Reloaded Explained

(2*) Human beings in Heaven will be as happy as they can possibly be.

We may thus grant that it's not possible for *all* suffering to be absent in Heaven—though this requires taking *Revelation* less literally than many Christians do.

(4) is taken completely for granted, as far as I can tell. Part of the point of Heaven is to be reunited with (saved) loved ones, and to engage in "fellowship" with the other inhabitants. But what of (3)? According to the Free Will Theodicy, free will is a surpassing good, so on the face of it, Heaven *must* include free will. Yet Heaven is a place without sin. And according to the Free Will Theodicy, sin is to be explained by the presence of free will in the world. To deny (3) also raises Twain's puzzle. We believe we now have libertarian free will, strongly desire it now, and are devastated at the thought of losing it. If God is no deceiver, then if (3) is false, we would in Heaven *know* that we have no free will. Yet, presumably, we would not mind—be blissful, yet not ignorant.

Like the builders of the First Matrix, God has two main choices in creating a Heaven for human beings: either substantially alter the nature of human beings in Heaven (say by arranging a concordance of wills, contrary to (3), and perhaps even contrary to (1)), or else put each human in a solitary Matrix, contrary to (4). One advantage for denying (4) is that (2) has the best chance of being true, as long as the solitary Matrix provides plenty of (virtual) interaction with virtual humans. Those in such a solitary Matrix will think they are in the real deal. They'll think they are in Heaven, along with everyone that they want to be there, and nobody that they don't want there. They will think they get along with everyone else just fine; that there's no sadness, no sin, and so on. God knows what they freely want, and tailors each virtual environment to provide exactly that, if possible. (If it's not possible, because they freely want to be in the real deal, this lack is not *experienced*, and so is not a source of suffering.)

Just as it did with the First Matrix, libertarianism raises a difficulty, since you might think that God could not know what you want, when this is undetermined. Some medieval Christians resolved the problem of the compatibility of free will with God's foreknowledge by supposing that changeless, omnipresent God knows the (causally undetermined) future by, so to speak, already having been present then, and having seen what happens. God knows what you do *because you do it*, and not vice versa, hence you may do it freely. The same resolution can be applied here, as long as time exists in Heaven: God knows what you *will* want before you want it, by having been in the future and (so to speak) looking into your mind then.

Can (3) and (4) both be maintained, given (1) and (2*)? There is logical space for this possibility. (3) can be true, and yet there be no sin in Heaven, *if* Heaven is like the lucky roll of the creation die: the world where free beings always choose rightly. In Heaven, everyone will be free to sin, but just *doesn't*. The immediate problem with this suggestion is that it seems incredible that such a coincidence will actually obtain. Perhaps we can appeal to a difference between this situation and that of creation: God has a chance to observe the behavior of free individuals, and only admits the deserving—those who actually don't sin while on Earth. But this would get hardly anyone into Heaven. Worse, it seems to give inductive support, but no *guarantee* at all, that unblemished individuals won't sin ever in the eternity they spend in Heaven.

It is standardly claimed that all are free to sin in Heaven, but none do, because they are in some sense *incapable* of doing so; no one can sin when they are at last with God. This raises two distinct problems. The first is that any such incapability seems incompatible with libertarian freedom, rendering (3) false after all. The second is that, if there is no incompatibility between human beings having libertarian free will and being incapable of sin, then the Free Will Theodicy seems to collapse. God could have just created Heaven and be done with it, a creation with all of the benefits and none of

Matrix Reloaded Explained

the disadvantages.

In addition to the problem of sin, we might wonder how it can be managed that free human beings, all interacting with each other, have no desires in conflict. As Satan observed, it must be that our desires change radically. But what ensures this? If it is inevitable that they change in this way, then libertarian freedom is again threatened. And if we are somehow free anyway, when our desires are radically altered, then why didn't God just turn this trick to begin with, and spare all the lost souls? Perhaps we should also consider Mouse's point. If our desires change too radically, will we still be *human beings*, as (1) would have it?

III. Conclusion

Perhaps both explanations of the failure of the First Matrix are correct. Recall the suggestion that machines could not program our "perfect world." Perhaps our thinking is incoherent: we think that the best existence is one where human beings interact with each other *and* everyone has libertarian free will *and* nobody suffers *and* that someone knowingly arranges this. If this is an incoherent notion, not even God can actualize it.

In creating the Second Matrix, the machines went for interaction combined with free will (which we are assuming is libertarian), with the overwhelming likelihood (inevitability, in practice) of suffering. We can now explain Agent Smith's remarks: if we rank the elements of our incoherent notion of the best existence, human interaction and libertarian free will rank above the absence of suffering. And since they jointly require (*almost* by definition) the presence of suffering, it can be said more or less truly that we "define [even the best] reality through misery and suffering." The First Matrix was an attempt to give interacting humans an existence free of suffering, but this program *required* a radical revision in their wills, contrary to libertarian free will, and so "no one would accept the program." Mouse might say it was an attempt to deny the very nature of human beings.

If the real deal includes libertarian free will, then so does the Second Matrix—our desires, though often enough unsatisfied, will be after all undetermined. (The sense in which humans are liberated from the Matrix has nothing to do with libertarian free will, which can be enjoyed behind bars.) The Second Matrix also features substantial variation in wills amongst its human inhabitants, and the interesting ethical choices that arise when this is so. For example, apart from the Agents, each virtual human is an avatar, and the "good guys" in the movie end up killing a lot of human beings in their fight against the Agents. It's hard to view these human beings as collaborators, given the nature of the Matrix, so their deaths presumably are to be regarded as acceptable collateral damage, inevitable given the difference in desired outcome. All in all, the Second Matrix is the machines' best attempt at matching what Christians believe God did for us through creation.

When we humans turn our eyes toward Heaven, our ranking of values seems to change, and Twain's Puzzle arises anew. In Heaven, there is a heavier weighting given to the absence of suffering. God can knowingly minimize suffering in a real deal, while retaining human interaction, but at the cost of libertarian free will. But given that Heaven is supposed to involve no suffering at all, and given the surpassing value of libertarian free will in the Christian view of things, God's choice is clear: Heaven is a solitary Matrix. The machines, not being God, did not know that *Heaven is no other people*. Never the twain—Twain and I—shall meet (in Heaven, anyway—there's always the *lake*, I suppose.)

A relative of Twain's puzzle emerges. We when consider a pre-Heaven existence, we seem to prefer the best real deal to the best Matrix. When thinking about Heaven, we seem to prefer the best Matrix to the best real deal. This schism in our thinking is represented by the two competing visions in *The Matrix*: on the one hand is the Matrix, and on the other is Zion—named ironically, if I am right, for

Matrix Reloaded Explained

God's Holy City in Heaven—the place in the bowels of the Earth where human beings not in the Matrix dwell.

Richard Hanley

Endnotes

1. See Christopher Grau's essay, "The Experience Machine." Indeed, I recommend you read Grau's essay in its entirety before proceeding.
2. Metaphysicians will not yet be satisfied. "Matrix," is from the Latin for "mother," and originally meant "womb" (it is used in the Old Testament five times with this meaning), or "pregnant female." In several contexts it means a sort of substrate in which things are grown and developed. Given this etymology, the Matrix might have been the concrete thing that includes the collection of deceived humans in their vats. A more modern meaning of "matrix" is based in mathematics: a rectangular arrangement of symbols. Perhaps "the Matrix" (an expression surely borrowed from William Gibson's earlier use in *Neuromancer*) denotes the array of symbols encoding the virtual environment, which we might distinguish from the environment itself. But *The Matrix* gives the impression that the environment just is the array of symbols that Neo sees when he finally sees in—so to speak—Matrixvision. Its concrete-world-like appearance seems an inferior perception. (The Matrix thus seems allegorical in turn of Plato's well-known allegory of the Cave; Neo is enlightened about his own nature by liberation from the Matrix, and by the end he sees the true nature of the Matrix.) Still, it is the concrete-world-like appearance of things that I'm concerned with here, so let's ignore the possibility of a Neo.
3. I use *simulacrum* in the following sense: "something having merely the form or appearance of a certain thing, without possessing its substance or proper qualities; a mere image, a specious imitation or likeness, of something." (OED) It is also a nod towards Baudrillard, whose work *Simulacra and Simulation* both influences and appears in *The Matrix*. See my essay, "Baudrillard and The Matrix."
4. Here's an interesting question: which is better, the Second Matrix, or a systematically deceptive personalized non-virtual environment—a *Truman show*—that you never discover the true nature of? The latter has more veridical human interaction in one sense, because you really physically interact; but the interaction is less veridical in another sense, in that other human beings are willing participants in the deception. Another case to think about is a solitary Matrix allowing interaction with non-human participants (dogs, perhaps). Another still is a solitary Matrix without even the appearance of real interaction — call this a lonely Matrix. I don't know about you, but I prefer Sartre's vision of Hell to a lonely Matrix.
5. The Second Matrix may connect with the truth in some unnecessary ways. One's virtual body is depicted as more or less veridical, for instance. (But this may be only "residual self image," as Morpheus tells Neo. If Cypher were put back into the Matrix as Ronald Reagan, that would be clinching evidence that one's avatar can be strikingly different.) Breaking this connection would permit interestingly different human interaction: for instance, you could unknowingly have an experience of heterosexual intercourse with another (unknowing) human who is in fact of the same sex.
6. Sometimes it is argued that you are better off—happier—being a Christian, even if God does not exist. If Christian belief is easier to maintain inside the Second Matrix than outside it, then Cypher could have an extra pragmatic reason for going back in.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

7. Is Agent Smith telling the truth? I have no idea. He is attempting to "hack into" Morpheus's mind to gain the access codes to the Zion mainframe computer, so in interpreting the story we should take everything he says—and so, even the very existence of the First Matrix—with a grain of salt. For my purposes, though, we can pretend that he's telling the truth.

8. We need not fully characterize libertarian free will for present purposes. The main point is that causal indeterminism is a necessary condition of it. Causal indeterminism is the denial of causal *determinism*: the thesis that every event is completely determined by causally prior events. A useful and common illustration is to ask whether or not everything that happens, or will happen, is in principle *predictable* — this will be so if determinism is true, and not so if indeterminism is true. (Whether the future can be known by means other than prediction is a different question — see note 11.) The thesis that we have libertarian free will is called *libertarianism*.

9. Many of our desires are *derived* from other desires plus belief, for instance if Ralph desires to kiss Grandma only because he desires an inheritance and he believes kissing Grandma is necessary to achieve this. Non-derived desires, such as Ralph's desire to kiss the girl next door, are importantly independent of belief—they are had, so to speak, for their own sake—and seem to constitute what we refer to by "the will."

10. Is this a theological guarantee of the real deal? The Christian can surely deny this. The existence of the Matrix seems compatible with God's being no deceiver, given the Free Will Theodicy, if the machines have libertarian free will. And if they do not have libertarian free will, as long as they are the product of human free will, they are not part of the environment God knowingly created.

11. I am reminded of a passage in William Gibson's *Count Zero*: "Eyes open, he pulled the thing from his socket and held it, his palm slick with sweat. It was like waking from a nightmare. Not a screamer, where impacted fears took on simple, terrible shapes, but the sort of dream, infinitely more disturbing, where everything is perfectly and horribly normal, and where everything is utterly wrong."

12. People seem to expect that their body in Heaven will resemble their Earthly one (just as their Matrix "body" seems to resemble their real one). Perhaps this is for purposes of recognition, but it seems unnecessary—common memory can do the job.

13. It would be intriguing if God could "cheat" by doing what he does *because* He sees, from the way the future is, what He will do. This would raise a fatalist, *bake-your-noodle* puzzle like the one the Oracle raises for Neo's smashing of the vase. But God is a special case. Being unchanging, He cannot be *caused* to act on the basis of future knowledge, and there is little metaphysical sense to be made of "He did it because He did it."

14. The typical Christian is a *Cartesian dualist*, believing they are a spirit or soul distinct from their physical body, and that embodiment provides the means for human interaction. Loosely speaking, then, our physical bodies are the "avatars" of the real us, in a more or less "teeming" physical environment. The Second Matrix is in this respect almost the converse of Christian creation.

15. Perhaps Christians have had this revelation available to them all along. Luke 10:20 has Jesus telling his disciples, "... rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." In Latin, "matrix" also meant a list or register of names (also, *matricula*, hence our English verb *matriculate*). Intended meaning can go astray: according to some, the notion that the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was an apple, rests on a confusion over the Latin *malum*, meaning both "evil" and "apple tree." In like manner, maybe Jesus's message, lost in translation, was that Heaven is a Matrix!

Matrix Reloaded Explained

16. "People" in the sense of *human beings*. It might be objected that there has to be at least one person you are in contact with: God. I'll just concede this, since it doesn't affect the argument, God's desires presumably being compatible with yours. (Real interaction with angels likewise presents no problems.) A fascinating further suggestion is that you couldn't be maximally happy unless the "program" was extremely sophisticated, and then it might be objected that we should regard the solitary Matrix as containing *virtual* individuals—such as your imaginative sexual partner(s), if there is sex in Heaven—which are arguably persons you really interact with. (Agent Smith's impassioned outburst that he *hates* the Second Matrix might be evidence of personhood, for instance.) *If* these virtual individuals are persons with libertarian free will, then you can't interact with them either, without someone eventually suffering. So we might have another argument that the Christian Heaven is an incoherent notion.

DREAM SKEPTICISM

Matrix Reloaded Explained

SMITH: "Have you ever had a dream, Neo, that you were so sure was real?"

MORPHEUS: "What if you were unable to wake from that dream, Neo? How would you know the difference between the dreamworld and the real world?"

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Neo has woken up from a hell of a dream – the dream that was his life. How was he to know? The cliché is that if you are dreaming and you pinch yourself, you will wake up. Unfortunately, things aren't quite that simple. It is the nature of most dreams that we take them for reality – while dreaming we are unaware that we are in fact in a dreamworld. Of course, we eventually wake up, and when we do we realize that our experience was all in our mind. Neo's predicament makes one wonder, though: how can any of us be sure that we have ever *genuinely* woken up? Perhaps, like Neo prior to his downing the red pill, our dreams thus far have in fact been dreams *within* a dream.

The idea that what we take to be the real world could all be just a dream is familiar to many students of philosophy, poetry, and literature. Most of us, at one time or another, have been struck with the thought that we might mistake a dream for reality, or reality for a dream. Arguably the most famous exponent of this worry in the Western philosophical tradition is the seventeenth-century French philosopher Rene Descartes. In an attempt to provide a firm foundation for knowledge, he began his *Meditations* by clearing the philosophical ground through doubting all that could be doubted. This was done, in part, in order to determine if anything that could count as certain knowledge could survive such rigorous and systematic skepticism. Descartes takes the first step towards this goal by raising (through his fictional narrator) the possibility that we might be dreaming:

"How often, asleep at night, am I convinced of just such familiar events – that I am here in my dressing gown, sitting by the fire – when in fact I am lying undressed in bed! Yet at the moment my eyes are certainly wide awake when I look at this piece of paper; I shake my head and it is not asleep; as I stretch out and feel my hand I do so deliberately, and I know what I am doing. All this would not happen with such distinctness to someone asleep. Indeed! As if I did not remember other occasions when I have been tricked by exactly similar thoughts while asleep! As I think about this more carefully, I see plainly that there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep. The result is that I begin to feel dazed, and this very feeling only reinforces the notion that I may be asleep." (*Meditations*, 13)

When we dream we are often blissfully ignorant that we are dreaming. Given this, and the fact that dreams often seem as vivid and "realistic" as real life, how can you rule out the possibility that you might be dreaming even now, as you sit at your computer and read this? This is the kind of perplexing thought Descartes forces us to confront. It seems we have no justification for the belief that we are not dreaming. If so, then it seems we similarly have no justification in thinking that the world we experience is the real world. Indeed, it becomes questionable whether we are justified in thinking that *any* of our beliefs are true.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

The narrator of Descartes' *Meditations* worries about this, but he ultimately maintains that the possibility that one might be dreaming cannot by itself cast doubt on all we think we know; he points out that even if all our sensory experience is but a dream, we can still conclude that we have *some* knowledge of the nature of reality. Just as a painter cannot create *ex nihilo* but must rely on pigments with which to create her image, certain elements of our thought must exist prior to our imaginings. Among the items of knowledge that Descartes thought survived dream skepticism are truths arrived at through the use of reason, such as the truths of mathematics: "For whether I am awake or asleep, two and three added together are five, and a square has no more than four sides." (14)

While such an insight offers little comfort to someone wondering whether the people and objects she confronts are genuine, it served Descartes' larger philosophical project: he sought, among other things, to provide a foundation for knowledge in which truths arrived at through reason are given priority over knowledge gained from the senses. (This bias shouldn't surprise those who remember that Descartes was a brilliant mathematician in addition to being a philosopher.) Descartes was not himself a skeptic—he employs this skeptical argument so as to help remind the reader that the truths of mathematics (and other truths of reason) are on firmer ground than the data provided to us by our senses.

Despite the fact that Descartes' ultimate goal was to demonstrate how genuine knowledge is possible, he proceeds in *The Meditations* to utilize a much more radical skeptical argument, one that casts doubt on even his beloved mathematical truths. In the next section we will see that, many years before the Wachowskis dreamed up *The Matrix*, Descartes had imagined an equally terrifying possibility.

Further Reading:

Dancy, Jonathan. *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*, Blackwell, 1985.

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NEXT ESSAY

NEO'S FREEDOM... WHOA!

MICHAEL MCKENNA

The Matrix provides a fine resource for illustrating philosophical ideas. Many films have themes that one can philosophize about, or that serve as useful illustrations of philosophical ideas, such as the wonderful films *Sophie's Choice* or *The Sheltering Sky*. But *The Matrix* offers more than this. It belongs in a special class of films including *Blade Runner*, *Total Recall*, *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, and *The Truman Show*. All of these films are intentionally philosophical. Each shows how richly philosophical themes can be developed through cinema. Perhaps the best of these films is *The Matrix*.

I.

No doubt, the most striking philosophical theme found in *The Matrix* concerns skepticism about knowledge of an external world. The dream world Neo inhabited was a perfectly comfortable reality except for the fact that it was not reality. Life from inside it completely shielded one from what Morpheus aptly called the desert of the real, that desolated shell of a planet on which countless humans were unknowingly ensconced in slimy wombs. But there are many other philosophical themes explored within *The Matrix*. One is the concept of freedom. Freedom is mentioned at various points in the film. It mattered a great deal who did what freely. For instance, it was important that Neo freely chose to take the red pill and not the blue pill. Had he taken the blue pill, he'd have been returned to that humdrum dream world of vapid city dwellers. He'd never have taken the path that eventually led him to his heroic defeat of the agents, and that left him at the end of the film entertaining the prospect of saving the human race. At various other points Neo made choices freely, and, as with taking the red pill, it was the quality of having made them freely that gave them the importance they had. For instance, Neo freely decided to risk his life for Morpheus; instead of fleeing when his own life was in danger, he returned to save Morpheus from cranial meltdown at the hands of those treacherous agents in their zoot suits. Also, Neo freely followed the white rabbit that led him tumbling down that rabbit hole. And he remained in the car when Trinity and Switch gave him the opportunity to bail. By remaining in the car, Neo freely chose to resist the agents. He chose on his own not to get out and walk away down that street, down that well worn path that, Trinity reminded him, led to nowhere special. In choosing to remain in the car, he freely embarked upon a path that would lead to an exciting future, to an exciting life.

But it was not just Neo's freedom that mattered. Freedom was an issue for the others as well. During Cypher's attempted mutiny, Trinity reminded him that all of Morpheus's rebels had freely chosen the red pill, and so none could claim that they were in their dire straights undeservedly. All the same, Cypher regretted his choice. He felt duped; he did not regard his choice to take the red pill as free. As he saw it, he was scammed. In fact, he was of the opinion that he'd have had more freedom as a steak-eating, satiated participant in *The Matrix*, oblivious to the truth about the ugly shell that would have held him in perpetual slumber.

Freedom also mattered a great deal when it was *not* possessed. It seems that this was the case with those countless human drones, all contained in their artificial wombs. As Morpheus and company saw it (save for Cypher), their poor, ignorant kin were victims, blind to their lack of freedom maybe even happy in their plodding little lives within the Matrix, working in cubicles all day but victims all the same, enslaved in the service of generating battery juice for those battery-powered A.I. meanies. Even the leader of the agents' posse, Agent Smith, valued freedom. He too was limited in his freedom since

Matrix Reloaded Explained

he was required to do something against his will, namely remain in the Matrix and deal with those pesky rebel infiltrators. As he confessed to Morpheus, he hated having to be there, hated the smell of the humans. He felt trapped. Poor guy. In the end, Agent Smith's freedom was dramatically impaired by a liberated Neo, who had turned the tables and was now screwing with him.

But of course, all of this is to leave the concept of freedom unanalyzed, and to take the claims of freedom within the film on face value. As any good student of philosophy is aware, there are quite general skeptical challenges to (certain kinds of) freedom that might undermine the very idea that any agent is free in at least one important respect. Let's defer for just a bit longer placing any theoretical structure on what freedom might be, and on the sorts of challenges there might be to it. Let's fix upon some further observations that will subsequently help us to bring into clear focus a few frequently unacknowledged but powerful points about the freedom of human agency, a freedom many have called freedom of the will.

It appeared in the film that some had more freedom than others. Morpheus's crew was amazed watching Neo fight Morpheus for the first time. They thought that the untrained neophyte Neo was just so fast, faster than any of the others. Their hope was that Neo was *The One*. No doubt there are biblical themes throughout the film, and no doubt *The One* is one of those themes; *The One* is something like a divine savior. A crucial feature of this savior is that whoever could fill the bill would have more freedom within the Matrix than could any other rebel visitor to it, or for that matter, any other intentional being operating within the Matrix, including the agents. Indeed, their hope was that Neo's freedom within the Matrix would be like that of God; Neo would have unlimited freedom. So it appeared that Neo, even when first getting acquainted with his abilities, had more freedom within the Matrix than did Trinity, Cypher, or any of the rest of Morpheus's gang (save for Morpheus himself). But there are other comparisons as well that indicate different degrees of freedom within the Matrix. Neo, Morpheus, and all of the rebels had more freedom within the Matrix than did all those clueless characters walking the streets, living in their homes, watching the TV, going to work, etc. At least as Morpheus and company saw it, the clueless were completely unfree.

Until near the film's end, Neo had *less* freedom than did the agents. The agents could simply move about satisfying most any desire they had, taking on others' bodies, appearing whenever and wherever they wanted, and operating with fantastic foresight about who would be where, when, etc. These agents defied what seemed to be the laws of nature (as structured within the Matrix). They could emerge unscathed after being slammed by speeding trains that would have crushed and destroyed any run of the mill putz living out his ordinary life within the Matrix. They took bullets and kept a tickin', and they could simply make a person's mouth disappear at will. They had the run of the place, at least until those closing moments of the film. But in those closing moments of the film, Neo was the freest agent operating within the Matrix. Hell, by the time he came to realize his true potential within it, he could beat the crap out of those battery-powered robot-demons, stop bullets, and fly& like Superman.

One more very important observation before we roll up our sleeves and do some philosophical work: The special sort of freedom that Neo seemed to possess in the film was a freedom confined to the Matrix. The same, of course, applies to Morpheus and the other rebels whom Morpheus trained. The film has given us no reason to believe that Neo, or anyone else, has any special freedom outside the Matrix. In the real world, as it is in the space ship with those nasty flying bugs out hunting down rebel ships on that desolated planet, Morpheus, Neo, Trinity, Cypher, and the rest of the clan are just normally functioning human agents like you or me. Presumably, in the real world, Neo's just a guy, a guy who, analogous to poor, impaired, nobody Tommy in The Who's rock opera *Tommy*, is transformed in game mode to the most gifted being ever to play the relevant game—a pinball wizard. In the Matrix, that is, roughly, in the ultimate of video game consoles, Neo ain't got no distractions, can't hear no buzzes or bells, always gets the replay and never tilts at all.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

So in *The Matrix*, near the end of the film, as Neo comes to master the game, he's totally dialed in. It's gotta rock! Let us call this freedom that Neo possesses within the Matrix *absolute freedom*, and let us call the feature that seems to go with it *the property of rocking*. No doubt, when Neo first saw such amazing freedom exercised when Morpheus leapt an incredible distance from one skyscraper to another he judged that indeed such extreme freedom did rock, and in amazement he appropriately expressed himself thusly: Whoa!

II.

The concept of absolute freedom and its presumed property of rocking will be further developed in the closing sections of this essay. But for now, let us first give some theoretical structure to the idea of freedom, forgetting about *absolute freedom*, and let us consider briefly a classical philosophical challenge to it. Once we have these issues in place, we'll turn back to the film and examine our natural reactions to it, reactions such as the many mentioned above.

The term *freedom* is used in many contexts, and there is no reason to assume that there is a single meaning of the term. Minimally, all of the uses of the term do seem to share the feature that resistance of some sort, encumbering or impeding desired conduct, gets in the way of freedom. Typically, one is not free when she is frustrated in some manner from unencumbered pursuit of her desired course of action. But the absence of impediments is clearly not sufficient for the kind of freedom that mattered to Morpheus, Neo, and company, nor to what is valuable and distinctive of the human condition. A stupid dog can sometimes act unencumbered when, for instance, she is unleashed when she is set free. And though free in a very basic way, the stupid dog's freedom is not the kind that makes philosophers, theologians, politicians, moralists, or just your run of the mill high-minded folk get the warm fuzzies. No. The freedom worth talking about seems to be a freedom distinctive of persons, and this suggests that understanding the relevant notion of freedom first requires an understanding of what it is to be a person.

Regrettably, offering an account of personhood is beyond the scope of this essay. But to appreciate what seems to mark persons from non-persons, those familiar with the movie *Blade Runner* can reflect upon the characters Decker and the replicant Rachael, with whom Decker fell in love. Although Decker was a human being (maybe), and Rachael was an artificial replicant of a human being, both were *persons*. Both were capable of planning lives, of developing intimate relationships of love and hate, of fearing for, and finding dear, their own lives, and the lives of other persons. Both had the capacity for abstract thought, emotional responses to others, self-consciousness, etc. Less developed cognitive creatures were not persons, such as the primitive little A.I. machines that kept J.F. Sebastian company (J.F. Sebastian was another character in *Blade Runner*). Or to draw upon other clear illustrations of personhood from other sources in film, E.T. from the classic Spielberg movie was a person. Data from the *Star Trek* series and movies is a person, though neither E.T. nor Data is a human being. So, for our purposes, Neo, Morpheus, Trinity, as well as the agents, are all persons though the agents, like E.T. or Data, are non-human persons.

Even restricting the term freedom to its applications to persons, there are at least two sorts that have been the focus of a great deal of philosophical attention for well over two millennia now. One is a matter of political freedom, another is a matter of metaphysical freedom, the latter being understood as freedom of the will. Political freedom concerns the freedom of persons to conduct themselves as they see fit within the political landscape. The nature of the political landscape is itself a matter of dispute. Does the landscape germane to political freedom include economic empowerment? Or does it merely involve what are often referred to as the civil liberties, such as the liberty to speak unthreatened from harm of prohibition, to organize as one wishes, etc? Political freedom, whatever it comes to, is

Matrix Reloaded Explained

certainly a deeply important sort of freedom, and no doubt, it is a sort of freedom that Morpheus was struggling to give back to the human race. At least this is how Morpheus and his comrades saw it. But the more immediate sort of freedom to which the film directs our attention is not political freedom, but metaphysical freedom, that is, freedom of the will.

Before turning our attention to the topic of *free will*, it is worth asking, *what is a will?* This is also the subject of a great deal of dispute, but it is natural to think of the will as the aspect of a creature's mentality that is the source of voluntary, intentional (that is, goal-directed) action. Hence, any agent—that is, any being that acts, such as a dog, a cat, a chimpanzee—has a will. The philosophical gem worthy of reflection is what makes a will free, and most notably free in the special way distinctive of a unique class of agents, those who are persons.

A word of caution: The expression *metaphysical freedom* is often regarded derisively by theorists, largely outside of philosophy, who fallaciously associate it only with extravagant views about the human condition, such as the view that metaphysical freedom provides persons with a capacity to transcend the material world, to choose and act unlimited by the laws of nature, or by any constraints from the material world. And while some theories of free will do attribute to persons the ability to perform 'very small' miracles whenever they act freely, all the expression *metaphysical freedom* need pick out is a distinctive feature of personhood—a feature unique to the *will* of a person, perhaps part of the essence or the nature of what it is to be a person. How to understand this freedom is up for grabs. So, to be clear: the very mention of the notion of metaphysical freedom, or freedom of the will, does not *entail* anything mysterious. It does not entail anything contrary to the spirit of an inquiry such as Darwin's, or that of the neurobiologist. It might turn out that free will involves no special miraculous features of agency at all, that metaphysical freedom is entirely consistent with a deflationary account of human persons according to which all human persons are entirely the products of their genetics, their environment, and any other physical factors impinging upon them. That said, it should be kept in mind that, on the other hand, serious philosophical reflection might indicate that the concept of free will implies that a deflationary view of persons is false. But the crucial point here is that it is not part of the meaning of the very term *metaphysical freedom*, or *freedom of will*, that it involve anything spooky, mysterious, unworldly, or otherwise beyond the pale of what is in principle explicable in terms of our best natural sciences.

III.

Here is a theory-neutral characterization of free will:

Free will is the ability of persons to control the future through their choices and actions.

This is a lean definition that is not biased towards any one particular manner of philosophizing about free will. Of course, it is only a first pass and cries out for refinement. The crux of the issue concerns how best to articulate the ability to control the future. Let us consider two ways to articulate further this characterization of free will.

It is quite natural to assume, as many philosophers do, that a person acts with freedom of the will only if there are alternative courses of action available to her at the time at which she acts. On a model such as this, a person's freedom of the will consists partly in her being in control of a spectrum of options that, so to speak, open up different temporal paths, allowing her access to different unfolding futures, different ways that her life might go. At various points in the film, this picture of freedom was emphasized, as when Neo chose to remain in the car and not bail when Trinity and Switch gave him the opportunity to do so. This picture of freedom was also highlighted when Neo chose to return and fight the agents so as to save Morpheus. Instead Neo could have left Morpheus to (what seemed to be)

his inevitable demise.

So one way to advance free will is in terms of *alternative possibilities*. But there are other strategies for understanding free will, strategies that might or might not work in tandem with a demand for alternative possibilities. For instance, another way to think about free will is in terms of what *does* happen, what an agent *does do*, and not in terms of what other things she might do or might have done. Instead of focusing on alternative possibilities, this manner of theorizing concentrates upon the *source* of an agent's actions. On this approach, freely willed actions arise from certain salient features of an agent's self, features that indicate that, in an important respect she *the agent* is the source of how the future does unfold. To illustrate, consider a paradigmatic case of an agent who lacks free will. An unwilling addict, for example would not act with freedom of will when she takes the drug to which she is addicted. This is because her addictive desire to take the drug is so strong that it compels her to take it even though she is unwilling in taking the drug. *She* does not desire that her desire for the drug cause her to take it. But she does take it all the same. The future does not unfold as she herself would like it to unfold. On the other hand, sometimes properly functioning persons *do* act precisely as they wish (however *as they wish* might be understood). When they do, if all goes well, the future unfolds as they would like it to unfold, and it unfolds in this way partially *because what they do causes it to unfold in this way*. Hence, in a very basic way, these normally functioning persons are guiding how the future unfolds when they act unencumbered. They are the ones bringing about certain events, shaping the future in certain ways via their agency. *They are sources of control over the future*. It should also be clear that Morpheus and Neo illustrated such views of freedom. They certainly were at points sources of control over how their futures were unfolding. Morpheus and Neo, as well as the rest of the rebels, were making *their* marks inside and outside of the Matrix. Much to the chagrin of the agents, Morpheus and his crew were sources of control over how certain events were unfolding.

In summary, if we understand free will as a capacity of persons to control the future through their choices and actions, then there are two ways that one might further develop this idea of control over the future. One is in terms of control over alternative possibilities; another is in terms of one's very self being a source of how the future goes, an authentic shaper or causer of events in the world.

IV.

However the concept of free will is developed, there is a classical challenge to the very idea that any person possesses it. In particular, some philosophers believe that if the universe is fully determined, then no person has free will. What it means to suggest that the universe is determined is a distinct and controversial philosophical topic. A currently fashionable definition of *determinism* has it, roughly, that the past, combined with the laws of nature, causally insures one unique future. To appreciate fully this definition, one needs an account of what the past is (or the facts of it), what it means to causally insure, etc. But the general idea is basically captured with the suggestion that, for any person, states of the world independent of that person, or independent of features of her intentional agency (possibly, states of the world prior to her birth), combined with the laws governing the natural world (such as the laws of physics, chemistry, biology, etc.), are themselves sufficient to fix fully what that person does at any time. Crudely put, are persons and their conduct exhaustively explained in terms of their hereditary, their biology, such as their neurobiological functioning, and the environmental influences impinging upon them? Put even more crudely, is all human conduct purely a matter of nature and nurture? Or is determinism false, and is it instead the case that these influences do not all by themselves explain exactly what a person does at any time? If not, does the person herself contribute something over and above these other factors that accounts for why she does what she does?

Incompatibilists believe that if determinism is true, no one has free will. No one can control her future since the universe, so to speak, is really controlling it, and persons and their conduct are merely conduits through which the forces of nature operate. The universe leads some people to act in certain

Matrix Reloaded Explained

ways, and others to act differently. Persons are not at the helms of their lives, guiding their futures. Persons are products of the universe, not agents freely acting upon it!

Turning to the two ways of developing the concept of free will suggested above, the incompatibilists will argue that either way conflicts with the assumptions of a deterministic world. Suppose that the concept of free will is developed in terms of alternative possibilities. If determinism is true, and if facts distinct from a person's intentional agency, combined with the laws of nature, entail that an agent's intentional conduct will be thus and so, then an agent is not free to do other than thus and so. She has no alternatives over which to exercise control. Her past and the forces of nature have settled for her what path into the future she will take.

Or suppose instead that the concept of free will is developed in terms of an agent's being an *actual source* of how the world goes, and it going that way, at least in part, *because of her*. If determinism is true, then there are facts prior to any person's birth, combined with the laws of nature, that provide sufficient conditions for how the future will unfold. A person's agency, given determinism, seems to be nothing but a conduit, a facilitator, for what has already been set in motion. She, *ultimately*, is not the source of her action, the controller of an unfolding future. Sure, sometimes the future unfolds as she desires that it does, and sometimes her desires figure in the causes that explain why it does unfold as such. But these very desires, her beliefs, value judgments, her preferences about what motivational states are the ones that she wishes to act upon, *all of these factors* are themselves not factors ultimately issuing from her, but from the determined universe and the unfolding future that is an upshot of it.

As initially puzzling as it seems, *compatibilists* maintain that persons can have free will even if determinism is true. Some compatibilists, embracing a view of free will that requires alternative possibilities, have attempted to show that a determined person might still, in some meaningful sense, have the ability to do other than what she does. Other compatibilists have instead emphasized how an agent might, via her own motivational states, still count as a significant actual source of efficacy in the way the future comes about.

V.

There are various ways in which the tension between compatibilism and incompatibilism is brought out in the film. One is in terms of reflections upon fate. Another is in terms of the Oracle's ability to know the future. Yet another has to do with the status of those poor enslaved humans.

It is worth noting that within the film, as in ordinary discourse, the term *fate* is used in two different sorts of ways, ways that are easy to confuse, but upon reflection are clearly distinct. Sometimes *fate* is used to mean what is also meant by *determinism*. This certainly seems to be the primary manner in which it is used within the film. Given this usage, what it is for something to be fated is for it to be causally insured by prior conditions. This view is entirely consistent with one's conduct being a crucial factor in what is causally insured. But on a different construal, if some outcome is fated, then it will come about *no matter what one does*. On this view, one's agency is an idle factor. A certain future will transpire *irrespective of anything one might do*. The standard example of this is the story of Oedipus. The gods were going to see to it that Oedipus met his terrible fate—killing his father and copulating with his mother—no matter what different things were done by any mortal to avoid that outcome.

These two notions are extremely different. To illustrate: If it was fated irrespective of what anyone did that Kennedy would be assassinated on the day he was, then no matter what Lee Harvey Oswald did

Matrix Reloaded Explained

(including not assassinate anyone), Kennedy was going to be assassinated (by someone). But if it was fated just in the sense of being determined that Kennedy was going to be assassinated, then it mattered a great deal precisely what Oswald did. Had he not done what he did, then Kennedy would not have been shot. One account of fate states that a certain future will unfold *no matter what any person does or will do*; another states that a certain future will unfold *precisely because of what does or will take place* (which includes, among other things, what people actually do). Typically, philosophers reserve the term *fatalism* for the former notion and *determinism* for the latter. But for purposes of analyzing the film, let us distinguish between *no-matter-what-one-does fatalism* and *deterministic fatalism*.

When Neo and Morpheus first met, Morpheus asked Neo if he believed in fate. Neo said that he did not since he did not like the idea that he did not control his life. Note that, at this point in the film, what Morpheus meant by fate, and what Neo took it to mean, remained ambiguous between the two notions distinguished above. This is because, if one's life is subject to *no-matter-what-one-does* fate, then that would undermine one's control with respect to the fated outcome. So Neo's reply could have been in response to the suggestion that life was *no-matter-what-one-does* fated. Perhaps what Neo found objectionable about fatalism was the thought that his agency in the world would have no effect on the world's outcome at all no matter what he did. And indeed, that is how it seemed the enslaved humans lived within the Matrix, having no effect no matter what they did on their contribution to generating electricity for the A.I. meanies. But even if this is what Neo meant in that first conversation with Morpheus, later in the film it is clear that Neo also wanted to resist deterministic fatalism. He was committed to the idea that deterministic fatalism would undermine his control over the world. At points it was quite clear that his worry was in the form of alternative possibilities. He resisted the idea that the Oracle could know which of the possible futures before him would be his inevitable actual future. He thought that it was up to him what that future would be would he choose to save Morpheus or himself? But Neo also seemed to think in terms of source models of control: As he saw it, it was not settled in advance how he would act; he would be the settler of it! As the Oracle was bidding Neo farewell, she herself put those words in his mouth. Neo, it seems, was an incompatibilist.

If Neo is the incompatibilist in the film, Morpheus is certainly the compatibilist. He believed in his consultations with the Oracle that the future was deterministically fated, that The One would come. But he also believed that what he did, and what the others did, mattered very much to that outcome. (So he certainly did not endorse *no-matter-what-one-does* fatalism.) Even more importantly, he believed that it mattered very much that what people did, they did of their own free will, hence the use of the blue and the red pills. His advice to Neo was especially telling. Thinking in terms of source control, Morpheus explained to Neo that it is not enough to know that you are The One, you have to *be* The One. That is, Neo had to be the actual source of that special person, which was a matter of his actual conduct in the world, and not merely something he conceptually grasped.

And what of the Oracle herself? To correct the impression that perhaps the Oracle is not really able to foresee the future, Morpheus tells Neo that the Oracle never intended to speak truthfully to Neo about what she foresaw. She only intended to say to Neo what he needed to hear (which of course she knew since she was an Oracle). Surely, if she did make any judgments about what Neo needed to hear, then she did believe that what he would do would matter to how the future would go. If so, then like Neo and Morpheus, she also did not believe in *no-matter-what-one-does* fate. But being an Oracle, she probably at least entertained the idea that deterministic-fatalism was true. Suppose she did believe it. Was she a compatibilist or an incompatibilist? Might she have believed, consistent with incompatibilism, that all the human struggles to shape the future were unfree actions set in motion by a long, deterministically fated history? Or did she instead, consistent with compatibilism, foresee and understand Neo's heroic efforts as deterministically fated, but freely willed all the same? Suppose instead that the Oracle did not believe in deterministic fatalism. Perhaps she thought the universe was

Matrix Reloaded Explained

fundamentally indeterminate and that no facts of the past or present insured any particular way that the future must go. If she believed this, then how did she understand the basis of her own predictions? Maybe in foreseeing Neo's actions, she interpreted them as freely willed and understood her powers to foresee future conduct as completely consistent with the falsity of determinism. The film leaves entirely open which interpretation of the Oracle's beliefs is the correct one.

Consider a very different matter, the status of the enslaved masses. Unlike characters like Neo, Morpheus, and the Oracle, it seems *irrelevant* to ask about what they believe about their own free will and what they might think about fate. They are oblivious to what is taking place outside of the Matrix. Much like the character Truman from the film *The Truman Show*, these poor suckers stuck in those giant wombs are the ultimate illustrations of a very special sort of example used in the free will debate. Incompatibilists are fond of challenging compatibilist notions of control with complicated manipulation cases. The incompatibilists' strategy is to cook up a very troubling scenario in which a person is manipulated into a manner of acting. Of course, what the incompatibilists try to do is make the sort of manipulation so subtle that it is indistinguishable from what ordinary life might be like for you or me. Intuitively the examples are supposed to elicit the reaction that the manipulated person is not free because the source of her action is polluted. It is not she but something else that is the source of her agency. Then the incompatibilists will attempt to argue that a person determined by her past and the laws of nature is no different than a person manipulated in one of these wild scenarios. Hence, the only way that a person like you or me can be free is if she is not determined. If she is determined, then she is no more free than is a manipulated agent, which is to say that she is not free at all.

These manipulation cases have come to be known as covert non-constraining control (CNC) examples. Compatibilists have two ways in which they can respond to CNC cases. One is to deny that the manipulated agents are unfree. So long as the manipulation is complicated enough, and so long as the manipulation accurately replicates the normal functioning of a person getting through life, then it really is no different than a person being determined. But this is not a problem since the manipulated person is a freely willing one. It is just that the causes of her actions are a lot weirder than the causes of a normally functioning person. Note that this was Cypher's view. In fact, for him the Matrix would afford him more freedom than what was available on that disgusting planet. What did he care what caused his sensation of eating a juicy delicious steak? Real or illusory, he just wanted the damned steak to taste good!

Other compatibilists try to show that there is some significant difference between a causally determined person and a manipulated one. Typically the difference has to do with the history that explains why a person is caused to be as she is. If the causes are of the wrong sort, then she is in some way inauthentic. She is not truly the one engaging the world. Someone or something else is settling for her the values, principles, etc. that she then uses to decide how to act in the world. This, it seems, was the basis for Morpheus's complaint about the Matrix. When he first coaxed Neo, prodding Neo and asking him if he too felt that something about his reality was not right, what Morpheus sought to convey was that human agency within the Matrix was defective; its causal source was designed to settle other goals or needs than the ones that persons within the Matrix endorsed. Their minds were thus enslaved and so, even if, in a sense, they were free within their dream world to do certain things, they were not the source of the goals that their lives ultimately served.

VI.

All of the above reflections indicate the various ways that *The Matrix* openly struggles with the free will debate. But what view of free will is the correct one, and how ought it to be characterized? The philosophical controversy between compatibilists and incompatibilists is one of the perennial problems of philosophy. It will likely remain so. One reason for this is that it is clearly *not* a

Matrix Reloaded Explained

no-brainer ! Reasonable minds have differed as to the correct resolution to this problem. And there is no reason to think that this will change any time soon. In fact, one of today's most influential theorists about the controversy has suggested that, at least for certain ways of formulating the problem, the debate between compatibilists and incompatibilists leads to dialectical stalemates. A dialectical stalemate arises when opposing positions within a reasoned debate reach points at which each side's arguments remain reasonable, even compelling, but in which argument runs out; neither can rightly claim decisively to have unseated the legitimacy of the other side's point of view.

I certainly do not know whether the free will problem is ultimately doomed to dialectical stalemate, or whether instead there is some strategy that will be able to settle a reasoned disagreement that is over 2,500 years old. But one point I would like to highlight about this controversy is that it would not have remained a controversial topic, and dialectical stalemates would not have arisen from it, were it not for the fact that the phenomenology of human experience, as it is for the normally functioning person, does not decisively provide evidence for any one position. It is consistent with how we experience our lives, and how we experience the exercising of our agency, that, in keeping with the incompatibilist position, the control required for free will is illusory, and that we are determined creatures. Or, also in keeping with the incompatibilist position, it is consistent with our experience that the control required for free will is satisfied, and in a way that requires the falsity of determinism. Finally, as the compatibilists allow, it is also consistent with our experience that we do possess free will and that we are determined.

VII.

To its credit, *The Matrix* does not pretend to endorse one point of view about free will. It is neither a compatibilist-friendly, nor an incompatibilist-friendly film. With notable exceptions, the film's reflections on free will mirror the phenomenology of human agency. As is the case in our actual lives, how life is experienced underdetermines the correct answer as to whether the compatibilists or the incompatibilists are correct about free will. I say here with notable exceptions since there are clearly aspects of Neo's agency, as well as that of Morpheus's, the other rebels, and the A.I. agents that most distinctly do not mirror the phenomenology of human agency. It is to these differences that I would now like to turn in closing.

One assumption of the free will debate, shared by all parties to it, is that whatever kind of freedom an agent does possess, whether it requires the falsity of determinism or not, an agent's free will does not consist in her ability to actually cause laws of nature to be false, or to be suspended just in order to bring about astounding miracles. But within the Matrix, that is, essentially, the sort of control that Neo came to have. Of course, to a lesser extent, so too did Trinity and Morpheus. Indeed, Morpheus even advised Neo to think of the rules of his dream world as mere conventions (rules of a program) that could be bent or just flat out broken. Now some philosophers might want to object here that there is a conceptual problem with describing any rules within the Matrix as both laws of nature and breakable. But this would be splitting hairs at a point at which much more could be gained by reflecting instead upon the power of the thought experiment as it is played out within the film.

Within the history of philosophy, various writers have at one point or another articulated accounts of free will that later were scoffed at and quickly dismissed as fantastical or incoherent or ultimately contradictory. All of these criticisms of these extreme views of freedom might have been on the money, but no philosophical dismissal of the conceptual legitimacy of such a notion of freedom can itself discredit the sort of basis one might have for desiring it. Neo's freedom within the Matrix might seem completely outlandish, merely the stuff of comic books, but the source of its cinematic appeal is that, in a very primitive way, as agents in the world, we all know what it is to bump up against the boundaries of the causally possible. We all understand what a source of liberation it would be if all at

Matrix Reloaded Explained

once we could act unconstrained by them. Of course, this *is* the stuff that dreams are made of. But to see where our dreams begin often helps us to appreciate both the limits and value of our actual lives.

I shall therefore close with two observations about this extreme sort of fantastical freedom exercised within the Matrix. In section one of this essay I indicated that the freedom of the agents within the Matrix came in degrees, and that more of it appeared to be more appealing than less. In fact, I suggested that, by the film's end, within the Matrix Neo possessed absolute freedom, and that it rocked. But does absolute freedom rock? We all do value freedom, it appears, and it does look as if it gives most everyone the warm fuzzies. But I propose that *absolute freedom* would not rock, and once had for a while, when exercising it, one would no longer be prepared to exclaim, along with Neo,

Whoa! This is because the property of rocking found in exercising one's agency comes when one is pressing the boundaries of what she is capable of, pressing the boundaries of the limits placed upon her. Anyone who knows the joy of play understands this. Taking the basketball to the hole, snagging a line drive, pushing one's skis down the steep tight line, nailing a turn on a cycle, or crossing the finish line first with the beat of the pack just behind you, all of this involves the prospect of failure and the demands of an effort of will forced up against the boundaries of what one can do. Absolute freedom would require none of that.

Surprising as it might seem, I propose that a life filled to the brim with absolute freedom would absolutely suck. It would be boring as hell and almost entirely uneventful. Recall the look of utter indifference Neo had on his face when he realized how completely effortlessly he could block Agent Smith's blows in that final face-off. He might as well have been yawning and reading a paper while defending himself: Ho hum. Imagine if all of one's efforts in life were like this. Contrast this with Neo's intensity and enthusiasm when he still had to work hard to get what he wanted, leaping from a helicopter to save Morpheus, or cart-wheeling through a blaze of bullets and taking out all attackers. How mundane all of this would have been had Neo then been able just to will all of the bullets to stop flying, or Morpheus to stop falling to earth, etc.

Here is a rich irony: Our hankering for absolute freedom, a hankering of a dream world, is something we wish for because we do not have it. Because we bump up against our limits and sometimes fail, we yearn for the power to move beyond those limits. But if we had that power in spades, we'd lose all interest in the activities we find so dear. So it seems that the value of freedom and its place in our lives is partially a function of the manner in which we lack it. It is yet a further credit to a film like *The Matrix* that it instigates such reflections on the value of freedom.

A final speculation will also shed further light on the value we place on freedom. Supposing that Neo could find a way to continue rocking from within the Matrix. Neo faces a fantastic choice. *Should* he work to destroy the Matrix? His absolute freedom is so great within it. Imagine the possibilities. He could be so much in the dream world, have so much, do so much; he could bring such joy to others within it. But knowing what he does about the real world, could he value it, could he take the Matrix seriously? Perhaps you think that Neo should remain within the Matrix where his powers are phenomenal. If instead he attempted to destroy the Matrix, he'd lose all of his powers and have only a dark and barren planet to offer to his liberated human kin. Maybe, like Cypher, they would hate that world and thus resent Neo, seeing him not as a god-like liberator, but as an evil demon dragging them from a relative dream-world utopia into a real-life hell. Even if, for these reasons, you think Neo would do better to remain within the Matrix, acting as a god, trying to do as much good for others as he can, I'll bet that you pause at the thought of it. I myself am unsure what Neo should do, or what I would do if I were he. But if there is something wrong with this option, I suggest that it is at least in part because it would be an inauthentic form of life, *a life that valued a certain kind of freedom at the expense of truth, at the expense of real engagement with the actual world*. Would this not amount to placing too much value in freedom; would it not amount to valuing freedom at the expense of other

Matrix Reloaded Explained

worthy elements of life?

When I was a young boy my grandfather, Poppy, took me fishing. I wanted very much that day to catch a trout. I was completely incapable of the task, so Poppy caught one and took it upstream a little way, still hooked on a line. Placing it back in the water, but holding onto the line, he walked it down to me, made as if it was tugging at my pole, and then helped me to reel it in. I was delighted. So was he. It was only years later that he told me how I came to snag that elusive trout. Suppose that the rest of my life, each fish I caught, I caught only that way, each success of mine was only such a success. Even though Poppy was certainly happy with that little moment of mine, he'd never have wished for me a life of nothing but such shams. To wish merely for an improved life for human kind only *within* the Matrix, even with lots of nifty freedom for everyone within it, I would speculate, if it is wrong, then its wrongness is partially explained by the fact that it is analogous to wishing for all human kind that all of their accomplishments be like Poppy's tying that fish to the end of my pole. It would be nice for a spell, for a moment, in a dream. But we humans want something more. *We* want to catch our *own* fish, and we want to catch *real* fish. When we want something else, we'll go to the movies.

Michael McKenna

Endnotes

1. This claim is meant to be philosophically innocent, simply taking reality as the films creators suggested it to be. For proper philosophical scrutiny of the notion of reality as it pertains to The Matrix, see the essay in this collection by David Chalmers.

2. I shall assume that my reader has seen the film and is familiar with the characters in it, the basic plot, various events that took place, etc.

3. I say that *maybe* Decker is a human being since there is some suggestion in the film that Decker might actually be a replicant and not a human being.

4. For example, in articulating an account of free will, the philosopher Roderick Chisholm wrote:

&if what I have been trying to say is true, then we have a prerogative which some would attribute only to God: each of us, when we act, is a prime mover unmoved. In doing what we do, we cause certain events to happen, and nothing or no one causes us to cause those events to happen. (Chisholm, p. 32, cited from Watson, ed., 1982)

Caution should be taken with even this rather extreme view, since Chisholm was not claiming that the sorts of miracles what would allow freely willing and uncaused persons to cause events would amount to miracles that could make walls melt, planes fall from the sky, or bullets to stop in mid air.

5. There is even a controversy amongst compatibilists as to whether or not only the latter notion of control is needed for free will, or whether free will is possible only if both alternative possibilities and actual source conditions are satisfied.

6. For a film that plays with these ideas, see *Minority Report*.

7. This interpretation of the scene fits with Morpheus's subsequent description of how the human race was enslaved. No matter what humans do within the Matrix itself, their conduct is designed to do no more than generate battery juice for the evolved artificial intelligences. In fact, it seemed from the

Matrix Reloaded Explained

film that the level of control that the designers and controllers of the Matrix had over the humans operating within it was not a completely deterministically fated sort of control, but really a sort better suited for no-matter-what-one-does fatalism. This is because people within the Matrix seemed able to do all sorts of different things within certain boundaries. The A.I. creatures cared not a bit. The A.I. intelligences were happy to allow a certain level of social disharmony and chaos amongst the humans within the Matrix. As long as ultimately the outcome was that human lives were lived in the service of creating energy for their artificial intelligence lives, what did it matter to them what the humans did to each other in their dream worlds?

8. The puzzles here over the status of the Oracle's foreknowledge are like those regarding the status of a foreknowing God. If God foreknows all human conduct, does that mean that, by virtue of God's infallible nature, all human conduct is determined? Or is it possible for god to know exactly what any person does or will do even if nothing other than the person herself freely determines what she will do?

9. See Robert Kane, 1996, pp.65–71. . Kane writes:

We are all aware of &two ways to get others to do our bidding in everyday life. We may force them to do what we want by coercing or constraining them against their wills, which is constraining control or CC control. Or we may manipulate them into doing what we want while making them feel that they have made up their own minds and are acting of their own free will which is covert nonconstraining or CNC control. Cases of CNC control in larger settings are provided by examples like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two*. Frazier, the fictional founder of Skinner's *Walden Two*, gives a clear description of CNC control when he says that in his community persons can do whatever they want or choose, but they have been conditioned since childhood to want and choose only that they can have or do (p.65).

10. John Martin Fischer, 1994, pp.83–85.

11. A classic example of this is Sartre's notion of radical freedom, which alleged that all persons have freedom with respect to every aspect of reality they confront, every fact of the world. (For an excerpt of Sartre's view, as presented in his *Being and Nothingness*, see the Berofsky collection, 1966, pp. 174–195.)

Suggestions for Further Reading

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THE TWISTED MATRIX: DREAM, SIMULATION OR HYBRID? ¹

ANDY CLARK

I. Ambivalence

The Matrix is a computer-generated dreamworld built to keep us under control.

In dreaming, you are not only out of control, you don't even know it & I was completely duped again and again the minute my pons, my amygdala, my perihippocampal cortex, my anterior cingulate, my visual association and parietal opercular cortices were revved up and my dorsolateral prefrontal cortex was muffled.

The Matrix is an exercise in ambivalence, and at the very heart of that ambivalence lies the Dream.

In our dreams, we are not in control. Real dreaming, unlike many popular philosophers' fictions, is an altered state, closely related to the states induced by chemical manipulations such as the use of (certain) medical or recreational drugs. The dreaming brain is not like the wakeful brain. Normal sensory input is blocked, attentional capacities are impaired or lost, memory is distorted, reasoning and logic are weakened, narratives run wild, self-reflection is dampened or destroyed, emotion and instinct are hyperstimulated, and forms of top-down willed control and decision-making diluted and easily overwhelmed.

It may seem as if all of this is simply a direct effect of the blockage of sensory input, but this is not so. Instead, profound changes in neurochemical activity also occur, and these in turn compromise what J. Allan Hobson calls our critical self-awareness. The result is that even though the goings-on in most dreams would cause us (were we awake) to suspect trickery or to question our sanity, in our dreams we simply accept them as normal, as real life! One way to keep people under control—as Morpheus put it, is to keep them (in this specific sense) *out of (self) control*. One of the issues I want to explore is: to what extent are the experiences of normal matrix-bound humans (matrixers) genuinely dream-like, where to be genuinely dream-like is (in part) to display this dampening of critical acuity? I shall call this normal, critically compromised dream-state *uncritical dreaming*.

But there is, of course, another image of dreaming, and this is the image that has so far received most attention in these essays. This is the view of dreaming that links up with Descartes' famous malicious demon thought experiments, and with standard philosophical discussions of what we can (and cannot) know. These explore the question, what can we really know on the basis of our actual experience? Dreaming, thus construed, is not really like dreaming at all: it is a state in which all the sensory experiences might be *just as they are in waking*, and our critical faculties as bright and active as ever. I shall call this kind of dreaming *industrial strength deception*, so as to distinguish it from real dreaming.

The (apparent) deception practiced by the machines, we can now see, comes in two potential varieties. First, there is the industrial-strength version. Here all the sensory inputs that assail your brain are just as they would be were you living and moving in a world of persisting, external, independent people, cities, cars and objects, and you yourself are as alert and critical as ever. Second, there is the

Matrix Reloaded Explained

uncritical dreaming version, where the flow of sensory images and data is actually not all as it should be. Things may morph and change, scenes shift, identities alter. Here, weirdness may be rampant yet generally unremarked, since your abilities to judge that all is not as it should be are fatally impaired, due to the critical-dampening effects of the neuro-chemical alterations distinctive of sleeping or drugging. The genius of the Matrix (I shall argue) is its ability to balance, both thematically and cinematically, on a knife-edge between these two versions of events.

The industrial strength version invites an important response, ably advanced by David Chalmers in his paper on this site. According to this response, industrial strength deception is not really deception at all! Matrixers subject to this kind of manipulation really do inhabit (so the argument goes) pretty much the world they believe themselves to inhabit. Industrial strength matrixers, as I shall call them, really do live in cities and roam a planet much like earth. Later in this essay I will further defend this view, arguing that (still assuming industrial strength deception) Matrix-based human intelligences would count as being as fully and richly embodied as you and I. Despite those (other) bodies we see suspended in the machine-feeding womb, industrial strength matrixers really do use their head and eyes to scan the visual scene and their legs to move around. According to this view, the body in the Matrix is not a dreamt body, at least not in any ordinary sense of dreaming. It is a real body, realized in the non-standard medium of bits of information. With the point made for the visible body, the parallel result for the wider world (of cities, cars, sky and dust) may become a little easier to swallow.

We can then return to the nature of dreaming. For part of the ambivalence at the heart of the Matrix is, I think, an abiding ambivalence about the nature of dreaming itself. Real dreaming, to repeat, involves profound changes to the cognitive system deployed in normal wakefulness, changes that systematically deprive us of much of our normal critical acuity. In real dreaming, activity in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is compromised: muffled in that opening quote from J. Allan Hobson, Director of the Neurophysiology Laboratory at Harvard Medical School. Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is (among other things) the executive brain that helps us organize our thinking, critically assess our own gut responses and maintain at least a modicum of top-down control. The kind of state that Morpheus calls a computer-generated dreamworld hovers uneasily between such true (profoundly cognitive acuity diminishing) dream states and something much closer to unknowing-yet-fully-awake participation in a form of multi-agent immersive virtual reality: an interactive virtual environment as Morpheus also puts it.

The moral ambiguity that permeates the Matrix is rooted in this same balancing act between real dreaming and a multi-agent immersive virtual reality in which the neural states of the average matrix dwellers are (courtesy of the machines) really identical to those of awake, active humans. Drift towards the former reading, according to which the Matrix-dwellers' cognitive states are neurologically akin to those critically diminished states distinctive of real human dreaming, and everything *ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING* changes. Not only does the previous argument for true embodiment in the Matrix fail, but the moral status of the machines' experiment is immediately and radically transformed. Instead of seeing the machines as maintaining a kind of innocent immersive virtual reality, wherein human embodiment and human intelligence is, in every way that matters, everything it always was, the ploy of the machines becomes more like that of pimps who keep their call-girls hooked on heroin. Thus cognitively diminished, the girls do not question their state, and are not able to plot a rebellion or plan an escape.

Drug-forcing pimps or master immersive reality programmers? It is by maintaining a studied ambivalence between these two readings that (I claim) *The Matrix* film sequence gains much of its power, its beauty and its profound ability to puzzle.

II. Real Dreaming (Asleep in the Matrix)

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Neo believes, under the influence of Morpheus and of his own experiments, that Matrix-bound humanity is in the grip of a delusional dream. In the dream, the apparently sensed world seems real. It seems like a place where the body moves, where the eyes roam, where flesh meets flesh and sometimes lead and steel. But this, Neo comes to believe, is simply a dream, a device to keep us quiet while the machines patiently suck energy from the preserved slumbering bio-mass. To prove that it is a dream, Neo learns to subvert its logic: he becomes able to turn back bullets, to fly, to defeat agents, and all this because he wills it to be so.

In one important sense, however, this is no ordinary dream. For in this dream (as Neo understands it) there is real contact between multiple intelligences. When Neo speaks to Cypher, he does not speak merely to a construct of his own sleep-bound imagination, but to another sentient being, with genuinely independent memories, hopes, fears and skills. Moreover, these multiple intelligences can communally build persisting structures in their world. They can build worlds to live and act in. If Neo places a cup on a table in a certain room, it will be seen by Cypher when Cypher enters that room (unless someone else moves it away first). A simple bio-mass of individually dreaming humans could never achieve and maintain this kind of interpersonal and structural continuity and integration. So the machines must be doing something (a whole lot in fact) to keep things in line.

Nonetheless, there is clearly something dream-like going on, for only in a world not fully bound by the laws of (even simulated) earthly physics could Neo fly, or turn back those bullets. In a normal Virtual Reality simulation, you cannot bend the rules just by willing it. By the same token, video-gaming would be a whole different sport were the underlying code directly susceptible to the will of the players! Moreover, the movie is chock-full of images that morph and shift in ways not seen in waking life, again suggesting that this is not a perfect simulation of earthly physics, but something less stable, lacking in firewalls, and prone to direct subversion by the minds of enlightened matrixers. The average matrixer, of course, does not subvert, remains unenlightened, and seems to be almost sleepwalking through a mundane, yet not unpleasant, life. This contrast is perhaps most striking in the scene at the end of the first movie, where Neo, increasingly enlightened, steps out of the phone box to see hordes of ignorant matrixers moving in trance-like, clockwork fashion, their images somewhat out of focus in a classic depth of field manipulation, while that of Neo is crystal-clear, alert, and bemused by their unquestioning, anesthetized progress through the world.

To try to clarify just what we are dealing with, it will help to first take a hard look at normal human dreaming. Then we can begin to plot some differences and to explore the space of options. A word of warning though. Familiar as they are, sleep and dreaming are complex, ill-understood phenomena. The sketch that follows is widely accepted and heavily rooted in the best contemporary neuroscience and psychopharmacology. But it is not written in stone, and much remains unclear.

The three dominant states for the human brain are waking, REM (Rapid Eye Movement) Sleep, and non-REM (NREM) sleep. Each state has clear physiological, pharmacological and experiential correlates.

In waking, we can occupy many states, from eyes-closed imagistic musing to eyes-open, alert engagement with a potentially threatening environment. The *option* of alertness and full critical engagement is, however, typically present, even if we are engaged momentarily in detached daydreaming.

In REM sleep our dreams (at least as evidenced by subsequent report) are vivid, but their logic is weak. Here is a typical enough report:

Matrix Reloaded Explained

I was at a conference and trying to get breakfast but the food and the people in line kept changing. My legs didn't work properly and I found it a great effort to hold my tray up. Then I realized why. My body was rotting away and liquid was oozing from it. I thought I might be completely rotted before the end of the day, but I thought I should still get some coffee if I still had the strength.

Here is another description, this time from Helena Bonham-Carter, while she was expecting a baby with movie director Tim Burton:

I dreamed I gave birth to a frozen chicken. In my dream, I was very pleased with a frozen chicken.

In NREM sleep, if we dream at all, the dreams (again, as evidenced by waking report) are more like faint and mundane thoughts or fuzzy rememberings.

All these states (waking, REM-sleep, NREM sleep) are correlated with specific patterns of neuro-chemical activity. A useful tool for displaying the pattern is Hobson's AIM model. Hobson is a leading sleep researcher interested in the relation between waking, sleeping and the kinds of altered state experienced during psychosis and drug-use. The AIM model characterizes different states as points in a three dimensional space, whose axes are:

- (1) Activation Energy
- (2) Input Source
- (3) Mode

Normal wakefulness is characterized by high activation (as measured by EEG for example) corresponding to fairly intense experience, external input sources (the brain is receiving and processing a rich stream of sensory signals from the world, rather than being shut down and largely re-cycling its own activity), and a distinctive mode. Mode here names a balance between brain chemicals, especially amines and cholines. Amines are neurotransmitters such as noradrenaline and serotonin, whose action is known to be essential for normal waking consciousness (they are essential to the processes that enable us direct attention, reason things through, and decide to act). When these are shut off, and other neurotransmitters (cholines, such as acetylcholine) dominate, we experience delusions and hallucinations (if we are awake) and vivid, uncritical dreaming (if we are asleep). In this way it is the amine/choline balance that determines how signals and information (whether externally or internally generated) will be dealt with and processed. When the balance (as in waking) favors the amine-based (aminergic) system, we are rational, alert to our surroundings, easily able to direct our own actions and to rapidly and critically appraise our situation. When the balance favors the cholinergic system, our focus shifts inwards, emotion and analogical reasoning begin to dominate, and critical control and judgment wane. In REM sleep, the aminergic systems are totally deactivated and the cholinergic hyperactive. This is an extremely altered cognitive state. Only extreme forms of psychosis or serious medical or recreational drug use can induce this kind of state in non-sleeping humans. In normal waking states, the ratio of aminergic to cholinergic activity varies across a large continuum. In non-REM sleep, all the systems (aminergic and cholinergic alike) are dampened and (mostly) inactive.

This is not to suggest (far from it) that the best state for a human mind would be one of almost-complete aminergic dominance. Instead, the power, subtlety and beauty of wakeful human intelligence seems to have much to do with the precise details of the ever-shifting balance between the two systems. But in normal waking the mode (defined as the ratio between the activity of the two systems) leans towards the aminergic. Whereas in REM sleep, with acetylcholine dominating,

Matrix Reloaded Explained

experience becomes increasingly dissociative, displaying amnesia, hallucinations, bizarre mentation, anxiety, and loss of volition control (Hobson, p. 91). All this, we now know, is matched by a shift in regional blood flow from (in waking) dorsolateral prefrontal cortex to (in REM sleep) subcortical limbic structures (some of which are mentioned in the opening quote). Here too, the psychological and the physiological march (unsurprisingly, surely) in step, with dorsolateral prefrontal cortex implicated in analytic reason, inhibition and executive control, and the limbic structures dominating for emotion, instinct and association.

Bottom line: The kind of sleep in which we experience vivid dreaming is, typically at least, a state in which aminergic systems essential to critical reason are deactivated. This state is a far cry from normal wakefulness. The reason we (often) don't know we are dreaming is not because the dream simulates waking reality (the immersive Virtual Reality option) but because we are cognitively diminished in ways that block voluntary attention and critical engagement and that promote a kind of face-value acceptance. In REM sleep we are, in a real sense, drugged witless by our own brains. And the cure, as Hobson and Neo would probably both agree, is simple: it is called waking up!

Is it possible that the machines are electrically or chemically altering the states of the brains of their human power-cells, so as to partially or totally deactivate the aminergic system and the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex? To compromise these would be to compromise the matrixers capacities for critical engagement and analysis in a very profound way. Certainly, we sometimes see images of the humans suspended within the machine's grid in what seem to be advanced stages of REM sleep. If this is what is going on, those human brains are, in a fairly precise sense, permanently drugged. What Neo has achieved is then well compared (as other essayists have noted) to the state known as lucid dreaming. In lucid dreaming, a very few subjects are able to become aware that they are dreaming, without actually awakening. They may even be able to take control of the dream itself, forcing in directions previously requested by an experimenter or simply for their own enjoyment.

The full AIM (Activation/Input/Mode) profile of the lucid dreamer is still unclear, but Hobson speculatively suggests that one key may be a kind of prior-to-sleep priming in which the lucid dreamer prepares to recognize the delusional REM dream state as it develops. REM sleep actually enhances priming effects, in which (for example) prior exposure to one word makes recall of another quicker or more likely. Pre-sleep preparations may, Hobson suggests, prime a more complex association between the signature (fuzzy, delusional) character of REM sleep and the realization that you are indeed sleeping. A kind of positive feedback cycle can then take root, so that the primed realization of dreaming is fed by each encounter with new unlikely or delusional elements. At this point the mode balance may shift a little, so that some dorsolateral prefrontal involvement becomes possible. Not too much, or the vivid dream state would be lost. Not too little, or control would be lost and dreamt delusions would (as usual) be taken as real. This is a testable hypothesis, using PET neuroimaging to reveal fluctuations in neural regional blood flow during lucid dreaming. But it has not yet been tested.

Might Neo have been somehow primed, before the machine-induced sleep, in this kind of way? Or perhaps, by some kind of neuro-chemical accident, Neo, Morpheus and a few others are simply immune to the suppression of their aminergic systems? The Matrix as uncritical dream, and Neo as lucid dreamer. Such views at first seem to make good sense. But only if we assume that the state of the typical matrixer is indeed a real dream state. Such a reading, it should now be clear, is problematic for a number of reasons. For one thing, there is strong narrative continuity (major plot items do not just come and go without explanation). There is also good interpersonal agreement (what Neo does, Trinity sees, and so on). But most obviously of all, the typical matrixer simply does not seem to be unusually uncritical. For sure, they are not constantly reflecting on their life and analyzing its worth. But, and this is crucial, within the movie *truly unusual happenings are indeed usually spotted as such*. The

Matrix Reloaded Explained

security guards are as amazed as we are when Neo and Trinity, armed to the teeth, burst through the gates. When Neo stops bullets, or flies, the typical matrixer is astounded. This is not the reaction of an uncritical dreamer.

Colin McGinn, in his paper on this site, is at pains to highlight the many layers of dream-like quality that permeate the movie, and to depict Neo as a lucid dreamer. But in the chemically and cognitively precise sense just outlined, life in the Matrix is simply *not like life in a dream*, and Neo is nothing like a lucid dreamer. The typical matrixer does not display the full cognitive signature of uncritical dreaming, and it therefore seems unlikely that the machines are actively maintaining the brains of their human power cells in the standard (aminergic-off, hyper-cholinergic) REM-sleep mode. Whatever else the machines may be doing, they do not seem to be acting merely like drug-pushing pimps. It is not that Neo is special because he has his wits *available*, but rather, because he is beginning to really *use them* and to question (guided by Morpheus) so much that he previously took for granted.

In section 4, I'll consider a midway option in which elements of real dreaming combine with elements of immersive simulation. For the moment, however, we are again face to face with the productive tension at the very heart of the Matrix. For McGinn is surely right, despite all this, to remark the genuinely dream-like, shifting and sometimes disconnected visual and dramatic qualities that repeatedly surface. The point I now want to make, and will return to at the end, is that this tension is distinctive of our normal waking life as well! For our waking experience is itself the product of that constantly shifting balance between the aminergic and cholinergic systems, a balance that alters and evolves minute-by-minute during any normal day. As Hobson puts it – it is as if we are designed to be rational (but cool) and irrational (but hot) by turns (p.97). *The Matrix* film sequence, by repeatedly shifting between narrative and visual modes proper to critically engaged waking reality and then to delusional sleep, is able to explore the whole spectrum of positions in Hobson's AIM three-space. In so doing it gives us insight into the inherently unstable nature of human awareness itself.

3. Industrial Strength Deception (Awake in the Matrix).

In real dreaming, we often believe ourselves to be in places we are not, doing things we are not. On the face of it, life in the Matrix is an endless dream. According to this very natural view, most humans in the matrix are doubly deceived. They are deceived about their physical surroundings, believing themselves to live in cities and to roam the Earth, when – in fact – they are suspended in an energy-sucking machine-made womb. They are also (still on the face of it) deceived about their own bodies, believing themselves to be moving their limbs, flexing their muscles, and scanning the scene with their eyes and heads, when – in fact – their bodies are still, their heads are fixed, their eyes closed. Such, at least, is the dominant interpretation of the true state of Matrix-based humanity.

But there is an alternative. To bring it into view, we need to imagine that the machines are not simply guiding (and somehow, rather puzzlingly, making intersubjectively coherent) the real dreamings of the slumbering bio-mass. Instead, suppose that they have created a detailed simulation of the physics and structure of the normal human world, and that they are closely and continuously monitoring the neural activity in the brains of their human power cells. These brains are fed signals that correspond exactly to the ones they would receive were they awake and acting in the world, and the virtual world updated in ways that conform to those actions. Each day, these brains would go through just the same chemical cycles as normal human brains, moving systematically through Hobson's AIM space: from awake (aminergic systems highly active, so-called Sleep-On neurons inactive, critically alert) to N-REM sleep (forebrain Sleep-On neurons fire, aminergic and cholinergic systems inactive, more or less dreamless) to REM sleep (brain-stem REM-Sleep-On neurons fire, aminergic systems shut off, cholinergic systems highly active, vivid dreaming can occur, and critical and executive faculties extremely dulled).

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Do matrixers really dream and awaken, or do they only dream they are dreaming and awakening? In the industrial strength version, it seems more accurate to say they really dream and awaken. The states of their brains in Matrix—sleep, on this version, differ from the states of their brains during Matrix—waking in just the same ways as ours do between wake and sleep. By contrast if, in a real dream, we dream we fall asleep, there is no such neuro—chemical shift. So too, if (in a real dream) we dream we are awakening, that does not itself activate the dormant aminergic systems that would actually awaken us and restore our critical acuity. Once again, the differences between the two versions are striking.

The machines, on the industrial strength version I am now pursuing, create a detailed immersive virtual reality that is sensitive to the actions of all the users, and they ensure that my actions encounter obstacles and generate systematic sensory feedback exactly as they do in the normal world. That would include, for instance, generating the whole panoply of signals distinctive of muscle tiredness after an arduous rock climb, and those distinctive of hunger, and of the satiation of hunger by food (recall Cypher's infamous steak), and so on. (Notice that on the real—dream version none of this is necessary: instead, Cypher only needs to believe he has enjoyed a steak. These are different states.)

On this industrial strength version, I claim, matrixers are genuinely embodied and are able to eat, act, wake, sleep and dream in a world that is every bit as real as they imagine (though its deep physics is, as David Chalmers in his essay on this site points out, not quite as they think).

To make this stick (or even to make it begin to seem plausible) we can start by looking a bit harder at what it means to have a body, and at what having a body does for a mind like ours. With this understanding in place, it should be possible to see how the human intelligences in the industrial strength Matrix could be embodied intelligences through and through. They would be embodied not in virtue of those organic shells feeding the machines, but in virtue of the crucial role of eye—movements, head—movements, and limb—movements in altering the inputs to their brains and nervous system, and in virtue of the way the world presents itself both as a resource for action and as a source of limits on action.

Consider a fairly typical example of embodied action: solving a jigsaw puzzle. First, I arrange the pieces on the table in front of me, perhaps placing the predominantly red pieces (bits of an image of a rocket) in one pile, the green (bits of an image of the jungle) in another, the pieces with one straight edge in a third, and so on. To solve the puzzle, I then combine a variety of tactics. One tactic involves repeatedly looking from the pieces to the half—completed puzzle. During these periods, my eyes make repeated movements (known as saccades) that bring different aspects of the scene into foveal view. (Human vision depends heavily on moving a small high resolution area, known as the fovea, around the scene, so as to retrieve information as and when needed). Another tactic involves picking pieces up and trying them out, to see if they really fit in certain locations. Yet another tactic involves reasoning about the shape of the missing pieces: there must be one there with a wiggly edge and half red and half green. So I again scan the scene, with this image in mind, hoping to find such a piece.

In this kind of problem solving, the body and world play important roles.⁹ Instead of creating a full image of the half completed puzzle in my mind's eye, and then looking over the pieces, I repeatedly shift gaze from the real puzzle to the pieces. This saves my brain from encoding (no doubt badly) all that complex detail. And when I have isolated a candidate piece, I make the final decision by actually trying it out for fit. At this point, the world may fight back, refusing₉₀ to allow a piece to fit, however much I want it to. This is an example of what Dreyfus and Dreyfus call running up against a boundary condition in our attempts to cope with the world (I'll return to Neo's, and the agents', abilities to bend such rules in a moment). Moreover, notice that I started out by organizing the

Matrix Reloaded Explained

workplace in a way that then helps reduce my problem-solving load (making the various piles). All this is what Cognitive Scientist David Kirsh calls the intelligent use of space .

Now all of these ploys and strategies are available, quite straightforwardly, to the average industrial strength matrixer. She can use the external world (as constituted by the machines detailed and action-responsive simulation) to reduce the problem-solving load for her own cognitive processing. She can use body and eye movements so as to leave lots of important detail in the world , retrieving information as and when needed for a specific action. She can intervene so as to organize the workspace in ways that then persist, independently of further cognitive efforts on her part, and that (for example) save her searching for red pieces among the green by keeping all the red ones in a pile, and so on.

Consider, finally, the sense of presence, of where we are. There is a wonderful thought-experiment due to the philosopher Daniel Dennett. Dennett tells the story of a U.S. citizen who agrees to participate in a secret experiment. The citizen is Dennett himself, and in the experiment Dennett's brain is removed, kept alive in a tank of nutrients, and equipped with a multitude of radio links by means of which to execute all its normal bodily control functions. Dennett's body (which is to be used to explore a dangerous area) is equipped with receivers and transmitters, so that it can use its in-built sensors (eyes, ears, etc.) to relay information back to Dennett's brain. As the technicians in the story put it;

Think of it & as a mere stretching of the nerves. If your brain were just moved over an inch in your skull, that would not alter or impair your mind. We're simply going to make the nerves indefinitely elastic by splicing radio links into them.

There is a way of thinking of what the machines have done (in the industrial strength version) that is a lot like this. But instead of using the brain to control a standard body exploring distant and dangerous parts of the standard world, they have stretched the nerves all the way into a fully immersive virtual reality, allowing the brain to control a kind of body-double avatar.

With his brain safely excised and re-located, and the radio links established, Dennett awakes. He sees the nurse, who leads him to the room where his brain is being kept. The experience that ensues is puzzling. There is Dennett, standing up, staring at his own brain. Or is he? Perhaps, he muses, the proper thought is here I am, suspended in a bubbly fluid, being stared at by my own eyes & Try as he may, Dennett cannot seem to place himself *in the tank*. It continues to seem as if he is outside the tank, looking in. Dennett's point-of-view, as he moves, seems securely fixed outside the tank.

Where is Dennett? Is he *really* in the tank of nutrient, *really* outside the tank looking *in*, or really no-place at all (or both places at once)? Such questions need have no clear-cut answers. But what does seem clear is that human location should not be taken to be a function of facts about the location of the brain. After all, wherever you are, it surely isn't inside the top of your own head! Human presence, instead, is better understood as dependent upon our capacities for *dense, closed loop control*. By that I mean control (of some kind of body) such that as the body moves, the brain receives rich and detailed feedback. It is this kind of feedback cycle and closed loop control that supports skilful action. Skillful action then enables us, as the computer scientist Paul Dourish puts it, to engage in inhabited interactions . The difference between an inhabited and a non-inhabited interaction is just the difference between, for example, having to carefully plan, monitor and execute a reach for a coffee cup, and just reaching , as we expert coffee-cup grabbers do. Inhabiting the body, we are able to fluently use movement and action as parts of our own problem-solving routines.

Putting all this together, I can now offer a proposal for how to think about the body and the world:

Matrix Reloaded Explained

- (1) The body is a controllable and inhabitable resource.
- (2) It is located (or its parts are located) in one or more co-ordinate spaces, and its actions (or the actions of its parts) evolve in time.
- (3) Experiences of dense, closed loop control involving this resource yield a robust sense of presence, and of inhabiting the body.
- (4) It is a resource capable (via these inhabited interactions) of being skillfully used to transform a problem space, and to exploit properties and features of the world.
- (5) The world is the place where such embodied actions encounter boundary conditions and are forced to conform.

And finally:

- (6) Real space is wherever perception and embodied action occur.

Space, body and world are in this way all inter-defined. According to this formula, industrial strength deception is a contradiction in terms. The world of the industrial strength matrixer is a real world. It acts as a boundary condition for skilled action, and it is populated by real bodies whose inhabited interactions play the very same problem-transforming roles as our own.

IV. The Hybrid Matrix

There is a clear problem for any full Industrial Strength reading of the Matrix. Such readings make it hard to understand how Neo can (as Morpheus puts it) bend the rules. If your brain was getting its inputs from, and feeding its outputs to, this kind of immersive virtual reality set-up, there should be no room to break the laws of physics just by willing it so. Worse still, rampant rule-bending seems to deprive the world of its ability to function as a boundary condition, and this would undermine my attempts to argue for genuine embodiment and presence inside the matrix. It is as if you really could make the jigsaw puzzle piece fit just by wishing it so, in which case the world is surely not playing the cognition-enhancing role I described.

By contrast, the real dreaming model makes rule-bending easy to understand, perhaps along the lines of lucid dreaming mentioned in section 2. But this model fails to account for the kinds of preserved critical acuity that we *do* see in the Matrix: the fact that Neo's flying is seen by everyone as something remarkable, as proof of superhuman prowess, and is not simply accommodated courtesy of dampened critical and executive processing.

Certainly, with a bit of ingenuity, we could probably come up with patches for each of these models. For example, someone who favors the industrial strength model could depict Neo as a kind of psychological hacker whose willpower somehow alters the underlying code, bypassing rich and detailed restraints that really do apply to the average person. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (in their paper on this site) offer a version of this, in which Neo's belief that a spoon is bending forces the system to conform. Similarly, someone who favors the real dreaming option might argue that the machines somehow link all the sleepers into a single web, maintaining the standard (critical acuity diminishing) REM sleep chemistry but thus forcing the sleepers to dream a single dream.

Between these two extremes, however, lies some of the most interesting ground of all, the ground of what I am calling the Hybrid Matrix. On the hybrid model, the matrixers' world is indeed a kind of immersive virtual reality, but *one that has been rather lazily programmed*. Instead of recreating a deep and fully constraining physics, we can imagine that the machines' simulation is patchy, and depends

Matrix Reloaded Explained

on a lot of quick and dirty tricks.¹⁶ For example, instead of running a complete, continuous full simulation of all locations and objects, they may only have programmed detail to unfold and update where one or more matrixers happen to look (a standard move, in fact, in ordinary Virtual Reality simulations). They may also not have bothered much about fine-grained continuity. Perhaps minor objects can come and go quite freely. On this model, the machines (like cinematographers!) just make sure that nothing major, and in anyone's focal attention, behaves strangely. We humans are surprisingly oblivious to unexpected scene-changes and non-central continuity errors anyway, as a large recent literature on change blindness clearly demonstrates. It is almost as if we are built to live in a lazily programmed world! In addition, lazy programming, as we all know, is also a royal invitation to hacking. The lazily programmed Matrix is at once an eminently hackable Matrix, as Neo, Trinity and Morpheus know so well.

To further support lazy programming, we might even imagine that the machines have tilted the chemical balances in the hosts' brains just enough to make them even more unlikely to attend to much fine detail, or to pursue rigorous and sustained environmental examinations. Such tilting would not yield genuine chemically-sleeping brains, but they would not be fully alert brains either. All this would just underline the guiding politics of the Matrix, which is a politics of awakening from dull, unthinking conformity and thus of escape from invisible, corrosive, but surprisingly violable constraints.

Would a lazily programmed Matrix still count as a real world, according to the argument of the previous section? I think it would, just so long as the lazy program was stable enough, and powerful enough, to impose some boundary conditions and cognitively exploitable order in most normal circumstances. It would be, as David Chalmers has suggested, just like a real world with a rather lazy God and a surprisingly patchy ultimate physics!

Which model is correct? Is the Matrix a consensual dream-world, a multi-agent immersive virtual reality simulation or a lazily programmed hybrid? I do not think we should seek an answer to this question. The power, beauty, and philosophical depth of the Matrix all derive from its ability to show us our world under many guises. At times, it shows us our world as a genuine dream-world, dominated by (strangely consensual) delusions. Such a world is ultimately unconstraining but hard to fathom, and maximally resistant to critical attention. At other times, it shows us our world as boundary condition, as a hard-edged arena for rational thought and embodied action. At still other times, it shows us a hybrid world, poised unsteadily between the two extremes. Just as normal wakefulness comes in many grades, characterized by the shifting balance between the aminergic and cholinergic systems, so the movie constantly shifts from one state to another, morphing between delusional dream and immersive virtual reality. By flipping between, and mixing among, these two perspectives it finally reveals our own world as a potent cocktail of genuine boundary conditions, delusions, and mutual constructions.

This is where we need to end. Ours is a world in which much of what we ordinarily think constrains us is not truly binding. But this freedom does not reveal our world as a simple dream world, but rather as a real world, rich with the possibility of renewal and reconfiguration. By refusing to conform to any single interpretation, the narrative, structure and filmic texture of the Matrix sequence all encode the same message: take nothing for granted, don't write yourself in stone, just wake up.

Andy Clark

Matrix Reloaded Explained

1. Thanks to David Chalmers, Christopher Grau, and Tyler Waite for helpful comments and suggestions.
2. This list is based on the Table 3.1 Physiological Basis of Differences between Waking and Dreaming in J. Allan Hobson (2001) p.57
3. I do not mean to suggest that the distinction between real dreaming and industrial strength deception will help us evade skeptical uncertainty. Rather, my concern will be to explore how making this distinction affects our view of what the machines are doing, and of the moral status of their manipulations.
4. The above paragraph condenses, and slightly oversimplifies, the views found in Hobson (2001), Blackmore (2004). See also Roberts, Robbins and Weiskrantz (1998) and Siegel (2003).
5. Once more, this is in no way to privilege one system over another for effective reason and intelligence, which demonstrably depends on the proper temporally evolving balance of the two, but just to note the different contributions made by each.
6. One thing may be said to prime another when exposure to the first makes the occurrence of the second more likely. The term is mostly used in psychological studies in which unconsciously perceived stimuli make subsequent conscious choices faster or incline them in one direction rather than another.
7. For more on this, see Siegel (2003).
8. There is an interesting question here concerning what we should take to be the brain of an industrial strength matrixer. Is it the brain of the human in the machines power grid? Or is it the brain that is specified in the immersive reality simulation itself (e.g. the one we would see were we to observe matrix-bound neurosurgery!)? One way to proceed is to think of the brain in the grid as the ultimate (and unexpected) physical realization of the brain in the simulation (for a defense of this line, see Chalmers paper on this site). This is ok if we really are dealing with the full strength version, since any practice of neurosurgery inside the matrix would need to be synched either to real changes in the brains in the grid, or (at the very least) to changes in the input and output signals that correspond to those that such surgery would have induced.
9. For more on this, and many examples from development and robotics, see Clark (1997).
10. See their paper on this site. Their view, like my own and that of David Chalmers, is that there is an important sense in which industrial strength matrixers really are embodied and coping with a wider world. Dreyfus and Dreyfus, however, pursue an interesting final twist concerning our ability to (as they put it) open up new worlds. I highly recommend reading both these essays in full.
11. From D. Dennett (1981)
12. Technologies of this stripe are by no means inconceivable. Just a year or two ago, the neuroscientist Miguel Nicolelis conducted a study to understand the way signals from cerebral cortex control the motions of a monkey's limbs. An Owl Monkey had 96 wires implanted into its frontal cortex, feeding signals into a computer. As the monkey's brain sent signals to move the monkey's limbs, this neural wire-tap was used to gather data about the correlations between patterns of neural signal and specific motions. The correlations were not simple. But the patterns, though buried, were there in the signals. Once these mappings were known, the computer could then predict the

Matrix Reloaded Explained

intended movements directly from the neural activity. The computer could then use the neural signal to specify the movements of a distant robot arm (an electro–mechanical prosthesis in an MIT laboratory six hundred miles distant). The system used a haptic interface, part of a multi–sensory Virtual Reality system used to touch, feel and manipulate computer generated objects. The machines, we can imagine, have simply taken this technology to the natural limit, developing advanced neural wiretaps allow the matrixers to explore and act upon a common virtual world. For a large–scale exploration of these new technologies, and of what it ultimately means to be human, see Clark (2003).

13. The feeling shifts, however, when Dennett's body is subsequently trapped by a rockslide, entombed far beneath the earth's surface. At first, Dennett feels tapped beneath the surface. But then the radio links themselves begin to give way, rendering him blind, deaf and incapable of feeling. The shift in point–of–view was immediate;

Whereas an instant before I had been buried alive in Oklahoma, now I was disembodied in Houston & as the last radio signal between Tulsa and Houston died away, had I not changed location from Tulsa to Houston at the speed of light?

(1981) p.317

14. See Chapter 4 of Dourish (2001). This idea is drawn from phenomenology, and has roots in the work of Heidegger, Merleau–Ponty and others.

15. Christopher Grau (personal communication) asks whether such a view is too strong, amounting in effect to a simple redefinition of the real, rather than a substantial account. But my claim is not that any consistently imagined world counts as real (a claim that David Chalmers may actually be closer to making). That's why I stress the importance of genuine (not merely imagined) boundary conditions, and of the agent actually being able to offload computational work onto the environment. These are not mere matters of what the agent thinks they are doing, but matters of fact. My line, roughly, is that to perceive a real world is to perceive a genuinely useable cognitive resource. Even a lazily programmed matrix (see section 4) might provide for that, for example by allowing people to really find out that one jigsaw puzzle piece (simulated) doesn't fit into one space (simulated), and by allowing the use of intelligent saccades directed at a stable scene (kept stable by real–world physics or good simulation) as a problem solving tool. As the amount of lazy programming (and thus instability and unreliability) increases, this 'signature of the real' gets eroded. All this is the case whether or not the agents actually notice anything. It is not, on my account, a matter of seeming to use a stable external world as a cognitive resource, but of actually doing so.

16. Special thanks to David Chalmers for encouraging me to expand on this possibility.

17. For a review, see Simons and Levin (1997).

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Matrix Reloaded Explained

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18 THE MATRIX

18.0.0.1 Cellular

Cypher: Yeah.

Trinity: Is everything in place?

Cypher: You weren't supposed to relieve me.

Trinity: I know, but I felt like taking your shift.

Cypher: You like him, don't you? You like watching him.

Trinity: Don't be ridiculous.

Cypher: We're going to kill him, do you understand that?

Trinity: Morpheus believes he is The One.

Cypher: Do you?

Trinity: It doesn't matter what I believe.

Cypher: You don't, do you?

Trinity: Did you hear that?

Cypher: Hear what?

Trinity: Are you sure this line is clean?

Cypher: Yeah, 'course I'm sure.

Trinity: I better go.

18.0.0.2 Hotel room

Cop: Freeze, Police. Hands on your head. Do it. Do it now.

18.0.0.3 Street

Agent Smith: Lieutenant...

Lieutenant: Oh shit.

Agent Smith: Lieutenant, you were given specific orders.

Lieutenant: Hey, I'm just doing my job. You give me that juris-my-dick-tion crap, you can cram it up your ass.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Agent Smith: The orders were for your protection.

Lieutenant: I think we can handle one little girl.... I sent two units. They're bringing her down now.

Agent Smith: No Lieutenant, your men are already dead.

18.0.0.4 Hotel room

Trinity: Morpheus, the line was traced, I don't know how.

Morpheus: I know, they cut the hard line. There's no time, you're going to have to get to another exit.

Trinity: Are there any agents?

Morpheus: Yes.

Trinity: Goddammit.

Morpheus: You have to focus, Trinity. There's a phone at Wells and Lake. You can make it.

Trinity: All right.

Morpheus: Go.

18.0.0.5 Rooftop

Cop: That's impossible.

18.0.0.6 Building

Trinity: Get up Trinity. Just get up. Get up.

18.0.0.7 Street

Agent Brown: She got out.

Agent Smith: It doesn't matter.

Agent Jones: The informant is real.

Agent Smith: Yes.

Agent Jones: We have the name of their next target.

Agent Brown: The name is Neo.

Agent Smith: We'll need a search running.

Agent Jones: It's already begun.

18.0.0.8 Neo's apartment

Neo: What? What the hell?... Follow the white rabbit?... Who is it?

Choi: It's Choi.

Neo: Yeah. Yeah. You're two hours late.

Choi: I know, it's her fault.

Neo: You got the money?

Choi: Two grand.

Neo: Hold on.

Choi: Hallelujah. You're my savior, man. My own personal Jesus Christ.

Neo: You get caught using that...

Choi: Yeah, I know. This never happened. You don't exist.

Neo: Right.

Choi: Something wrong, man? You look a little whiter than usual.

Neo: My computer, it... You ever have that feeling where you're not sure if you're awake or still dreaming?

Choi: Mm, all the time. It's called Mescaline. It's the only way to fly. Hey, it just sounds to me like you need to unplug, man. You know, get some R and R. What do you think, DuJour? Should we take him with us?

DuJour: Definitely.

Neo: No, I can't, I got work tomorrow.

DuJour: Come on, It'll be fun. I promise.

Neo: Yeah, sure, I'll go.

18.0.0.9 Club

Trinity: Hello Neo.

Neo: How do you know that name?

Trinity: I know a lot about you.

Neo: Who are you?

Trinity: My name is Trinity.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Neo: Trinity. The Trinity? The one that cracked the IRS d-base?

Trinity: That was a long time ago.

Neo: Jesus.

Trinity: What?

Neo: I just thought, um...you were a guy.

Trinity: Most guys do.

Neo: That was you on my computer. How did you do that?

Trinity: Right now all I can tell you is that you're in danger. I brought you here to warn you.

Neo: Of what?

Trinity: They're watching you, Neo.

Neo: Who is?

Trinity: Please just listen. I know why you're here, Neo. I know what you've been doing. I know why you hardly sleep, why you live alone, and why night after night you sit at your computer. You're looking for him. I know, because I was once looking for the same thing. And when he found me, he told me I wasn't really looking for him. I was looking for an answer. It's the question that drives us, Neo. It's the question that brought you here. You know the question just as I did.

Neo: What is the Matrix?

Trinity: The answer is out there, Neo. It's looking for you. And it will find you, if you want it to.

18.0.0.10 Neo's apartment

Neo: Oh shit. Oh shit shit shit.

18.0.0.11 Office

Mr. Rhineheart: You have a problem with authority, Mr. Anderson. You believe that you are special, that somehow the rules do not apply to you. Obviously you are mistaken. This company is one of the top software companies in the world because every single employee understands that they are part of a whole. Thus if an employee has a problem, the company has a problem. The time has come to make a choice, Mr. Anderson. Either you choose to be at your desk on time from this day forward or you choose to find yourself another job. Do I make myself clear?

Neo: Yes, Mr. Rhineheart, perfectly clear.

FedEx Man: Thomas Anderson?

Neo: Yeah, that's me.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

FedEx Man: Just sign here.. Ok, great. Have a nice day.

Neo: Hello.

Morpheus: Hello Neo. Do you know who this is?

Neo: Morpheus.

Morpheus: Yes. I've been looking for you, Neo. I don't know if you're ready to see what I want to show you, but unfortunately you and I have run out of time. They're coming for you, Neo, and I don't know what they're going to do.

Neo: Who's coming for me?

Morpheus: Stand up and see for yourself.

Neo: What, right now?

Morpheus: Yes, now. Do it slowly. The elevator.

Neo: Oh shit.

Morpheus: Yes.

Neo: What the hell do they want from me?

Morpheus: I don't know, but if you don't want to find out I suggest you get out of there.

Neo: How?

Morpheus: I can guide you but you must do exactly as I say.

Neo: Ok.

Morpheus: The cubicle across from you is empty.

Neo: What if they...

Morpheus: Go, now... Stay here for just a moment. When I tell you, go to the end of the row, to the office at the end of the hall. Stay as low as you can... Go, now... Good. Now, outside there is a scaffold.

Neo: How do you know all this?

Morpheus: We don't have time, Neo. To your left there's a window. Go to it... Open it. You can use the scaffold to get to the roof.

Neo: No way. No way. This is crazy.

Morpheus: There are two ways out of this building. One is that scaffold, the other is in their custody. You take a chance either way. I leave it to you.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Neo: This is insane. Why is this happening to me? What did I do? I'm nobody.... Shit.... I can't do this.

18.0.0.12 Street

Trinity: Shit.

18.0.0.13 Interrogation

Agent Smith: As you can see, we've had our eye on you for some time now, Mr. Anderson. It seems that you've been living two lives. In one life, you're Thomas A. Anderson, program writer for a respectable software company, you have a social security number, you pay your taxes, and you help your landlady carry out her garbage. The other life is lived in computers, where you go by the hacker alias Neo and are guilty of virtually every computer crime we have a law for. One of these lives has a future, and one of them does not. I'm going to be as forthcoming as I can be, Mr. Anderson. You're here because we need your help. We know that you've been contacted by a certain individual, a man who calls himself Morpheus. Now whatever you think you know about this man is irrelevant. He is considered by many authorities to be the most dangerous man alive. My colleagues believe that I am wasting my time with you, but I believe that you wish to do the right thing. We're willing to wipe the slate clean, give you a fresh start. And all that we're asking in return is your cooperation in bringing a known terrorist to justice.

Neo: Yeah. Wow, that sound like a really good deal. But I think I got a better one. How about I give you the finger... and you give me my phone call.

Agent Smith: Um, Mr. Anderson. You disappoint me.

Neo: You can't scare me with this Gestapo crap. I know my rights. I want my phone call.

Agent Smith: And tell me, Mr. Anderson, what good is a phone call if you're unable to speak?... You're going to help us, Mr. Anderson whether you want to or not.

18.0.0.14 Neo's apartment

Morpheus: This line is tapped, so I must be brief. They got to you first, but they've underestimated how important you are. If they knew what I know, you'd probably be dead.

Neo: What are you talking about. What... what is happening to me?

Morpheus: You are The One, Neo. You see, you may have spent the last few years looking for me, but I've spent my entire life looking for you. Now do you still want to meet?

Neo: Yes.

Morpheus: Then go to the Adams street Bridge.

18.0.0.15 Car

Trinity: Get in.

Neo: What the hell is this?

Trinity: It's necessary, Neo. For our protection.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Neo: From what.

Trinity: From you.

Switch: Take off your shirt.

Neo: What?

Switch: Stop the car. Listen to me, coppertop. We don't have time for twenty questions. Right now there's only one rule, our way or the highway.

Neo: Fine.

Trinity: Please, Neo. You have to trust me

Neo: Why?

Trinity: Because you have been down there, Neo. You know that road. You know exactly where it ends. And I know that's not where you want to be... Apoc, lights. Lie back, lift up your shirt.

Neo: What is that thing?

Trinity: We think you're bugged... Try and relax... Come on. Come on.

Switch: It's on the move.

Trinity: Shit.

Switch: You're going to lose it.

Trinity: No I'm not. Clear.

Neo: Jesus Christ, that thing's real?

18.0.0.16 Lafayette Hotel

Trinity: This is it. Let me give you one piece of advice. Be honest. He knows more than you can imagine.

Morpheus: At last. Welcome, Neo. As you no doubt have guessed, I am Morpheus.

Neo: It's an honor to meet you.

Morpheus: No, the honor is mine. Please, come. Sit. I imagine that right now you're feeling a bit like Alice, tumbling down the rabbit hole? Hm?

Neo: You could say that.

Morpheus: I can see it in your eyes. You have the look of a man who accepts what he sees because he is expecting to wake up. Ironically, this is not far from the truth. Do you believe in fate, Neo?

Neo: No.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Morpheus: Why not?

Neo: Because I don't like the idea that I'm not in control of my life.

Morpheus: I know exactly what you mean. Let me tell you why you're here. You're here because you know something. What you know you can't explain. But you feel it. You've felt it your entire life. That there's something wrong with the world. You don't know what it is but it's there, like a splinter in your mind driving you mad. It is this feeling that has brought you to me. Do you know what I'm talking about?

Neo: The Matrix?

Morpheus: Do you want to know what it is? The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us, even now in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work, when you go to church, when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.

Neo: What truth?

Morpheus: That you are a slave, Neo. Like everyone else you were born into bondage, born into a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch. A prison for your mind.... Unfortunately, no one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself. This is your last chance. After this there is no turning back. You take the blue pill, the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes... Remember, all I'm offering is the truth, nothing more... Follow me... Apoc, are we online?

Apoc: Almost.

Morpheus: Time is always against us. Please, take a seat there.

Neo: You did all this?

Trinity: Uh-huh.

Morpheus: The pill you took is part of a trace program. It's designed to disrupt your input/output carrier signals so we can pinpoint your location.

Neo: What does that mean?

Cypher: It means buckle your seat belt, Dorothy, 'cause Kansas is going bye-bye.

Neo: Did you...

Morpheus: Have you ever had a dream, Neo, that you were so sure was real? What if you were unable to wake from that dream? How would you know the difference between the dream world and the real world?

Neo: This can't be...

Morpheus: Be what? Be real?

Trinity: It's going into replication.

Morpheus: Apoc?

Apoc: Still nothing.

Neo: It's cold. It's cold.

Morpheus: Tank, we're going to need a signal soon.

Trinity: We've got a fibrillation!

Morpheus: Apoc, location!

Apoc: Targeting, almost there.

Trinity: He's going into arrest!

Apoc: Lock, I got him.

Morpheus: Now, Tank. Now!

18.0.0.17 Nebuchadnezzar

Morpheus: Welcome to the real world... We've done it, Trinity. We've found him.

Trinity: I hope you're right.

Morpheus: I don't have to hope. I know it.

Neo: Am I dead?

Morpheus: Far from it. Dozer: He still needs a lot of work.

Neo: What are you doing?

Morpheus: Your muscles have atrophied, we're rebuilding them.

Neo: Why do my eyes hurt?

Morpheus: You've never used them before. Rest, Neo. The answers are coming.

Neo: Morpheus, what's happened to me? What is this place?

Morpheus: More important than 'What?' is 'When?'

Neo: When?

Morpheus: You believe it's the year 1999 when in fact it's closer to 2199. I can't tell you exactly what year it is because we honestly don't know. There's nothing I can say that will explain it for you, Neo. Come with me. See for yourself. This is my ship, the Nebuchadnezzar. It's a hovercraft. This is the main deck. This is the core where we broadcast our pirate signal and hack into the Matrix. Most of my crew you already know. This is Apoc, Switch, and Cypher.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Cypher: Hi.

Morpheus: The ones you don't know, Tank and his big brother, Dozer. The little one behind you is Mouse. You wanted to know what the Matrix is, Neo? Trinity... Try to relax. This will feel a little weird.

18.0.0.18 Construct

Morpheus: This is the construct. It's our loading program. We can load anything from clothing, to equipment, weapons, training simulations, anything we need.

Neo: Right now we're inside a computer program?

Morpheus: Is it really so hard to believe? Your clothes are different. The plugs in your arms and head are gone. Your hair has changed. Your appearance now is what we call residual self image. It is the mental projection of your digital self.

Neo: This...this isn't real?

Morpheus: What is real? How do you define real? If you're talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, what you can taste and see, then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain. This is the world that you know. The world as it was at the end of the twentieth century. It exists now only as part of a neural-interactive simulation that we call the Matrix. You've been living in a dream world, Neo. This is the world as it exists today... Welcome.. to the desert.. of the real. We have only bits and pieces of information but what we know for certain is that at some point in the early twenty-first century all of mankind was united in celebration. We marveled at our own magnificence as we gave birth to AI.

Neo: AI? You mean artificial intelligence?

Morpheus: A singular consciousness that spawned an entire race of machines. We don't know who struck first, us or them. But we know that it was us that scorched the sky. At the time they were dependent on solar power and it was believed that they would be unable to survive without an energy source as abundant as the sun. Throughout human history, we have been dependent on machines to survive. Fate, it seems, is not without a sense of irony. The human body generates more bio-electricity than a 120-volt battery and over 25,000 BTUs of body heat. Combined with a form of fusion, the machines have found all the energy they would ever need. There are fields, endless fields, where human beings are no longer born. We are grown. For the longest time I wouldn't believe it, and then I saw the fields with my own eyes. Watch them liquefy the dead so they could be fed intravenously to the living. And standing there, facing the pure horrifying precision, I came to realize the obviousness of the truth. What is the Matrix? Control. The Matrix is a computer generated dream world built to keep us under control in order to change a human being into this.

Neo: No. I don't believe it. It's not possible.

Morpheus: I didn't say it would be easy, Neo. I just said it would be the truth.

Neo: No. Stop. Let me out. Let me out. I want out.

18.0.0.19 Nebuchadnezzar

Trinity: Easy, Neo. Easy.

Neo: Take this thing off me. Take this thing...

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Morpheus: Listen to me...

Neo: Don't touch me. Stay away from me. I don't want it. I don't believe it. I don't believe it.

Cypher: He's gonna pop.

Morpheus: Breathe, Neo. Just breathe.

Neo: I can't go back, can I?

Morpheus: No. But if you could, would you really want to? I feel I owe you an apology. We have a rule. We never free a mind once it's reached a certain age. It's dangerous, the mind has trouble letting go. I've seen it before and I'm sorry. I did what I did because...I had to. When the Matrix was first built, there was a man born inside who had the ability to change whatever he wanted, to remake the Matrix as he

saw fit. It was he who freed the first of us, taught us the truth: 'As long as the Matrix exists the human race will never be free.' After he died the Oracle prophesized his return and that his coming would hail the destruction of the Matrix, end the war, bring freedom to our people. That is why there are those of us who have spent our entire lives searching the Matrix looking for him. I did what I did because I believe that search is over.... Get some rest, you're going to need it.

Neo: For what?

Morpheus: Your training.

Tank: Morning, did you sleep? You will tonight, I guarantee it. I'm Tank, I'll be your operator.

Neo: You don't...you don't have any...

Tank: Holes? Nope. Me and my brother Dozer, we're both one hundred percent pure, old fashioned, home-grown human, born free right here in the real world. Genuine child of Zion.

Neo: Zion?

Tank: If the war was over tomorrow, Zion's where the party would be.

Neo: It's a city?

Tank: The last human city. The only place we have left.

Neo: Where is it?

Tank: Deep underground, near the earth's core where it's still warm. You live long enough, you might even see it. Goddamn, I...I got to tell you, I'm fairly excited to see what you're capable of, if Morpheus is right and all...We're not supposed to talk about this, but if you are...Damn, it's a very exciting time. We got a lot to do. Let's get to it.... Now, we're supposed to start with these operation programs first, that's major boring shit. Let's do something a little more fun. How about combat training?

Neo: Jujitsu? I'm going to learn Jujitsu?... Holy shit.

Tank: Hey Mikey, I think he likes it. How about some more?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Neo: Hell yes.

Morpheus: How is he?

Tank: Ten hours straight. He's... a machine.

Neo: I know Kung Fu.

Morpheus: Show me.

18.0.0.20 Dojo

Morpheus: This is a sparring program, similar to the programmed reality of the Matrix. It has the same basic rules, rules like gravity. What you must learn is that these rules are no different than the rules of a computer system. Some of them can be bent. Others can be broken. Understand? Then hit me. If you can.... Good. Adaptation, improvisation. But your weakness is not your technique.

18.0.0.21 Nebuchadnezzar

Mouse: Morpheus is fighting Neo.

18.0.0.22 Dojo

Morpheus: How did I beat you?

Neo: You're too fast.

Morpheus: Do you believe that my being stronger or faster has anything to do with my muscles in this place? You think that's air you're breathing now?... Again.

18.0.0.23 Nebuchadnezzar

Mouse: Jesus Christ, he's fast. Take a look at his neural kinetics, they're way above normal.

18.0.0.24 Dojo

Morpheus: What are you waiting for? You're faster than this. Don't think you are, know you are.... Come on. Stop *trying* to hit me and HIT me.

18.0.0.25 Nebuchadnezzar

Mouse: I don't believe it.

18.0.0.26 Dojo – Jump program

Neo: I know what you're trying to do.

Morpheus: I'm trying to free your mind, Neo, but I can only show you the door, you're the one that has to walk through it. Tank, load the jump program.... You have to let it all go, Neo, fear, doubt, and disbelief. Free your mind.

Neo: Whoa. Okie dokie. Free my mind.

18.0.0.27 Nebuchadnezzar

Mouse: So what if he makes it?

Tank: No one's ever made the first jump.

Mouse: I know, I know. But what if he does?

Apoc: He won't.

Mouse: Come on.

Trinity: Come on.

18.0.0.28 Jump program

Neo: All right, no problem. Free my mind. Free my mind. All right.

18.0.0.29 Nebuchadnezzar

Mouse: Wha...what does that mean?

Switch: It doesn't mean anything.

Cypher: Everybody falls the first time. Right, Trin?

18.0.0.30 Nebuchadnezzar

Neo: I thought it wasn't real.

Morpheus: Your mind makes it real.

Neo: If you're killed in the Matrix, you die here?

Morpheus: The body cannot live without the mind.

Cypher: I don't remember you bringing me dinner. There is something about him, isn't there?

Trinity: Don't tell me you're a believer now?

Cypher: I just keep wondering, if Morpheus is so sure, why doesn't he take him to see the Oracle?

Trinity: Morpheus will take him when he's ready.

18.0.0.31 Construct

Morpheus: The Matrix is a system, Neo. That system is our enemy. But when you're inside, you look around. What do you see? Business people, teachers, lawyers, carpenters. The very minds of the people we are trying to save. But until we do, these people are still a part of that system, and that makes them our enemy. You have to

Matrix Reloaded Explained

understand, most of these people are not ready to be unplugged. And many of them are so inert, so hopelessly dependent on the system that they will fight to protect it. Were you listening to me, Neo, or were you looking at the woman in the red dress?

Neo: I was...

Morpheus: Look again. Freeze it.

Neo: This...this isn't the Matrix?

Morpheus: No. It's another training program designed to teach you one thing. If you are not one of us, you are one of them.

Neo: What are they?

Morpheus: Sentient programs. They can move in and out of any software still hard-wired to their system. That means that anyone we haven't unplugged is potentially an agent. Inside the Matrix, they are everyone and they are no one. We are survived by hiding from them by running from them. But they are the gatekeepers. They are guarding all the doors. They are holding all the keys, which means that sooner or later, someone is going to have to fight them.

Neo: Someone?

Morpheus: I won't lie to you, Neo. Every single man or woman who has stood their ground, everyone who has fought an agent has died. But where they have failed, you will succeed.

Neo: Why?

Morpheus: I've seen an agent punch through a concrete wall. Men have emptied entire clips at them and hit nothing but air. Yet their strength and their speed are still based in a world that is built on rules. Because of that, they will never be as strong or as fast as you can be.

Neo: What are you trying to tell me, that I can dodge bullets?

Morpheus: No Neo. I'm trying to tell you that when you're ready, you won't have to.

18.0.0.32 Nebuchadnezzar

Tank: We've got trouble.

Morpheus: Did Zion send a warning?

Dozer: No, another ship. Shit. Squiddies sweeping in quick.

Neo: Squiddy?

Trinity: A sentinel. Killing machine designed for one thing.

Dozer: Search and destroy.

Morpheus: Set her down right over there.... How're we doing, Tank?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Tank: Power offline. EMP armed and ready.

Neo: EMP?

Trinity: Electromagnetic pulse. Disables any electrical system in the blast radius. It's the only weapon we have against the machines.

Neo: Where are we?

Trinity: There old service and waste systems.

Neo: Sewers?

Trinity: They used to be cities that spanned hundreds of miles. Now these sewers are all that's left of them.

Morpheus: Quiet.

Cypher: Whoa, Neo. You scared the bejeezus out of me.

Neo: Sorry.

Cypher: It's okay.

Neo: Is that...

Cypher: The Matrix? Yeah.

Neo: Do you always look at it encoded?

Cypher: Well you have to. The image translators work for the construct program. But there's way too much information to decode the Matrix. You get used to it. I...I don't even see the code. All I see is blonde, brunette, red-head. Hey, you uh... want a drink?

Neo: Sure

Cypher: You know, I know what you're thinking, because right now I'm thinking the same thing. Actually, I've been thinking it ever since I got here. Why, oh why didn't I take the blue pill?... Good shit, huh? Dozer makes it. It's good for two things, degreasing engines and killing brain cells. So, can I ask you something? Did he tell you why he did it? Why you're here. Jee-zus. What a mind job. So you're here to save the world. What do you say to something like that? A little piece of advice. You see an agent, you do what we do. Run. You run your ass off.

Neo: Thanks for the drink.

Cypher: Sweet dreams.

18.0.0.33 Restaurant

Agent Smith: Do we have a deal, Mr. Reagan?

Cypher: You know, I know this steak doesn't exist. I know that when I put it in my mouth, the Matrix is telling my brain that it is juicy and delicious. After nine years, you know what I realize? Ignorance is bliss.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Agent Smith: Then we have a deal?

Cypher: I don't want to remember nothing. Nothing. You understand? And I want to be rich. You know, someone important. Like an actor.

Agent Smith: Whatever you want, Mr. Reagan.

Cypher: Okay. I get my body back into a power plant, re-insert me into the Matrix, I'll get you what you want.

Agent Smith: Access codes to the Zion mainframe.

Cypher: No, I told you, I don't know them. I can get you the man who does.

Agent Smith: Morpheus.

18.0.0.34 Nebuchadnezzar

Tank: Here you go, buddy. Breakfast of champions.

Mouse: If you close your eyes it almost feels like you're eating runny eggs.

Apoc: Yeah, or a bowl of snot

Mouse: Do you know what it really reminds me of? Tasty Wheat. Did you ever eat Tasty Wheat?

Switch: No, but technically, neither did you.

Mouse: That's exactly my point. Exactly. Because you have to wonder now. How did the machines really know what Tasty Wheat tasted like. huh?. Maybe they got it wrong. Maybe what I think Tasty Wheat tasted like actually tasted like oatmeal or tuna fish. That makes you wonder about a lot of things. You take chicken for example, maybe they couldn't figure out what to make chicken taste like, which is why chicken tastes like everything. Maybe they couldn't figure out...

Apoc: Shut up, Mouse.

Dozer: It's a single cell protein combined with synthetic aminos, vitamins, and minerals. Everything the body needs.

Mouse: It doesn't have everything the body needs. So I understand that you've run through the agent training program. You know, I wrote that program.

Apoc: Here it comes.

Mouse: So what did you think of her?

Neo: Of who?

Mouse: The woman in the red dress! I designed her. She, um...well she doesn't talk very much, but...but if you'd like to meet her, I can arrange a much more personalized milieu.

Switch: Digital pimp, hard at work.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Mouse: Pay no attention to these hypocrites, Neo. To deny our own impulses is to deny the very thing that makes us human.

Morpheus: Dozer, when you're done, bring the ship up to broadcast depth. We're going in. I'm taking Neo to see her.

Neo: See who?

Tank: The Oracle.... Everyone please observe, the fasten seat belt and no smoking signs have been turned on. Sit back and enjoy your ride.

18.0.0.35 Lafayette Hotel

Morpheus: We're in.... We'll be back in an hour.

18.0.0.36 Car

Morpheus: Unbelievable, isn't it?

Neo: God.

Trinity: What?

Neo: I used to eat there. Really good noodles. I have these memories from my life. None of them happened. What does that mean?

Trinity: That the Matrix cannot tell you who you are.

Neo: And an Oracle can?

Trinity: That's different.

Neo: Did you go to her?

Trinity: Yes.

Neo: What did she tell you?

Trinity: She told me...

Neo: What?

Morpheus: We're here. Neo, come with me.

18.0.0.37 Apartment Building

Neo: So is this the same Oracle that made the prophecy?

Morpheus: Yes. She's very old. She's been with us since the beginning.

Neo: The beginning...?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Morpheus: Of the Resistance.

Neo: And she knows what, everything?

Morpheus: She would say she knows enough.

Neo: And she's never wrong.

Morpheus: Try not to think of it in terms of right and wrong. She is a guide, Neo. She can help you to find the path.

Neo: She helped you?

Morpheus: Yes.

Neo: What did she tell you?

Morpheus: That I would find the one.... I told you I can only show you the door. You have to walk through it.

18.0.0.38 Oracle's place

Priestess: Hello, Neo. You're right on time.... Make yourself at home, Morpheus. Neo, come with me.... These are the other potentials, you can wait here.

Spoon boy: Do not try and bend the spoon. That's impossible. Instead only try to realize the truth.

Neo: What truth?

Spoon boy: There is no spoon.

Neo: There is no spoon?

Spoon boy: Then you'll see that it is not the spoon that bends, it is only yourself.

Priestess: The Oracle will see you now.

The Oracle: I know, you're Neo. Be right with you.

Neo: You're The Oracle?

The Oracle: Bingo. Not quite what you were expecting, right? Almost done. Smell good, don't they?

Neo: Yeah.

The Oracle: I'd ask you to sit down, but your not going to anyway. And don't worry about the vase.

Neo: What vase?

The Oracle: That vase.

Neo: I'm sorry.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

The Oracle: I said don't worry about it. I'll get one of my kids to fix it.

Neo: How did you know?

The Oracle: What's really going to bake your noodle later on is, would you still have broken it if I hadn't said anything. You're cuter than I thought. I can see why she likes you.

Neo: Who?

The Oracle: Not too bright, though. You know why Morpheus brought you to see me?

Neo: I think so.

The Oracle: So, what do you think? Do you think you're The One?

Neo: I don't know.

The Oracle: You know what that means? It's Latin. Means 'Know thyself'. I'm going to let you in on a little secret. Being The One is just like being in love. No one can tell you you're in love, you just know it. Through and through. Balls to bones. Well, I better have a look at you. Open your mouth, say Ahhh.

Neo: Ahhh.

The Oracle: Okay. Now I'm supposed to say, 'Umm, that's interesting, but...', then you say...

Neo: But what?

The Oracle: But you already know what I'm going to tell you.

Neo: I'm not The One. Oracle: Sorry, kid. You got the gift, but it looks like you're waiting for something.

Neo: What?

The Oracle: Your next life maybe, who knows? That's the way these things go. What's funny?

Neo: Morpheus. He...he almost had me convinced.

The Oracle: I know. Poor Morpheus. Without him we're lost.

Neo: What do you mean, without him?

The Oracle: Are you sure you want to hear this? Morpheus believes in you, Neo. And no one, not you, not even me can convince him otherwise. He believes it so blindly that he's going to sacrifice his life to save yours.

Neo: What?

The Oracle: You're going to have to make a choice. In the one hand you'll have Morpheus' life and in the other hand you'll have your own. One of you is going to die. Which one will be up to you. I'm sorry, kiddo, I really am. You have a good soul, and I hate giving good people bad news. Oh, don't worry about it. As soon as you step outside that door, you'll start feeling better. You'll remember you don't believe in any of this fate crap. You're in control of your own life, remember? Here, take a cookie. I promise, by the time you're done eating it, you'll feel

right as rain.

Morpheus: What was said was for you and for you alone.

18.0.0.39 Nebuchadnezzar

Tank: They're on their way.... What is that?

18.0.0.40 Lafayette Hotel

Neo: Whoa, déjà vu.

Trinity: What did you just say?

Neo: Nothing, I just had a little déjà vu.

Trinity: What did you see?

Cypher: What happened?

Neo: A black cat went past us, and then another that looked just like it.

Trinity: How much like it, was it the same cat?

Neo: Might have been, I'm not sure.

Morpheus: Switch, Apoc.

Neo: What is it?

Trinity: Déjà vu is usually a glitch in the Matrix. It happens when they change something.

18.0.0.41 Nebuchadnezzar

Tank: Oh my God.

18.0.0.42 Lafayette Hotel

Morpheus: Let's go.

18.0.0.43 Nebuchadnezzar

Tank: They cut the hard line, it's a trap! Get out!

18.0.0.44 Lafayette Hotel

Mouse: Oh no. Oh no.

Cypher: That's what they changed. We're trapped. There's no way out.

Morpheus: Be calm. Give me your phone.

Trinity: They'll be able to track it.

Morpheus: We have no choice.

18.0.0.45 Cellular

Tank: Operator.

Morpheus: Tank. Find a structural drawing of this building. Find it fast.

Tank: Got it.

Morpheus: I need the main wet wall.

18.0.0.46 Lafayette Hotel

Agent Smith: Eighth floor.

Agent Brown: They're on the eighth floor.

Morpheus: Switch, straight ahead.

Apoc: Neo. I hope the Oracle gave you some good news.

18.0.0.47 Cellular

Tank: Another left, that's it.

Morpheus: Good.

18.0.0.48 Lafayette Hotel

Agent Brown: Where are they? Police: They're in the walls. They're in the walls!

Cypher: It's an agent!

Trinity: Morpheus!

Morpheus: You must get Neo out! He's all that matters.

Neo: No. No, Morpheus! Don't!

Morpheus: Trinity, go!

Trinity: Go!

Neo: We can't leave him!

Trinity: You have to!.... Cypher, come on!

Agent Smith: The great Morpheus. We meet at last.

Morpheus: And you are?

Agent Smith: Smith. Agent Smith.

Morpheus: You all look the same to me.

Agent Smith: Take him.

18.0.0.49 Nebuchadnezzar

Tank: No.

18.0.0.50 Phone

Tank: Operator.

Cypher: Yeah, I need an exit fast.

Tank: Cypher?

Cypher: Yeah, there was an accident. Goddamn car accident. All of a sudden, boom. Somebody up there still likes me.

Tank: Gotcha.

Cypher: Get me out of here fast.

Tank: Intersection of Franklin and Erie, an old TV repair shop.

Cypher: Right.

18.0.0.51 Cellular

Trinity: Tank, it's me.

Neo: Is Morpheus alive?

Cypher: Is Morpheus alive, Tank?

Tank: They're moving him. I don't know where to yet.

Trinity: He's alive. We need an exit.

Tank: You're not far from Cypher.

Trinity: Cypher?

Tank: I know. He's at Franklin and Erie.

Trinity: Got it.

18.0.0.52 Nebuchadnezzar

Tank: Got him.

Cypher: Where are they?

Tank: Making the call.

Cypher: Good.

18.0.0.53 Repair shop

Trinity: You first, Neo.

18.0.0.54 Nebuchadnezzar

Cypher: Shoot.

Dozer: No!

18.0.0.55 Repair shop

Neo: I don't know, it just went dead.

18.0.0.56 Cellular

Cypher: Hello, Trinity.

Trinity: Cypher? Where's Tank?

Cypher: You know, for a long time, I thought I was in love with you. I used to dream about you. You're a beautiful woman, Trinity. Too bad things had to turn out this way.

Trinity: You killed them.

Apoc: What?

Switch: Oh God.

Cypher: I'm tired, Trinity. I tired of this war. I'm tired of fighting. I'm tired of this ship, being cold, eating the same goddamn goop everyday. But most of all, I'm tired of that jack-off and all his bullshit. Surprise, ass-hole! I bet you never saw this coming, didja? God, I wish I could be there, when they break you. I wish I could walk in just when it happens. So right then, you'd know it was me.

Trinity: You gave them Morpheus.

Cypher: He lied to us, Trinity. He tricked us. If you'da told us the truth, we woulda told you to shove that red pill right up your ass.

Trinity: That's not true, Cypher, he set us free.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Cypher: Free? You call this free? All I do is what he tells me to do. If I had to choose between that and the Matrix, I choose the Matrix.

Trinity: The Matrix isn't real!

Cypher: I disagree, Trinity. I think the Matrix can be more real than this world. All I do is pull the plug here. But there, you have to watch Apoc die.

18.0.0.57 Repair shop

Apoc: Trinity.

Switch: No.

18.0.0.58 Cellular

Cypher: Welcome to the real world, huh, baby?

Trinity: But you're out, Cypher. You can't go back.

Cypher: Oh no. That's what you think. They're going to reinsert my body. I go back to sleep, and when I wake up, I won't remember a goddamn thing. By the way, if you have anything terribly important to say to Switch, I suggest you say it now.

Trinity: No, please don't.

18.0.0.59 Repair shop

Switch: Not like this. Not like this.

18.0.0.60 Cellular

Cypher: Too late.

Trinity: Goddamn you, Cypher.

Cypher: Don't hate me, Trinity. I'm just the messenger, and right now I'm gonna prove it to you. If Morpheus was right, then there's no way I can pull this plug. I mean if Neo's The One, then there'd have to be some kind of a miracle to stop me. Right? I mean how can he be The One if he's dead? You never did answer me before if you bought into Morpheus' bullshit – come on – all I want is a little yes or no. Look into his eyes, those big pretty eyes. Tell me. Yes or no?

Trinity: Yes.

Cypher: No.

18.0.0.61 Nebuchadnezzar

Cypher: I don't believe it.

Tank: Believe it or not, you piece of shit, you're still gonna burn.

18.0.0.62 Repair shop

Neo: You first.

18.0.0.63 Nebuchadnezzar

Trinity: You're hurt.

Tank: I'll be all right.

Trinity: Dozer?

18.0.0.64 Office

Agent Smith: Have you ever stood and stared at it, marveled at its beauty, its genius? Billions of people just living out their lives, oblivious. Did you know that the first Matrix was designed to be a perfect human world. Where none suffered. Where everyone would be happy. It was a disaster. No one would accept the program. Entire crops were lost. Some believed that we lacked the programming language to describe your perfect world. But I believe that as a species, human beings define their reality through misery and suffering. The perfect world was a dream that your primitive cerebrum kept trying to wake up from. Which is why the Matrix was redesigned to this, the peak of your civilization. I say your civilization because as soon as we started thinking for you it really became our civilization which is, of course, what this is all about. Evolution, Morpheus, evolution. Like the dinosaur. Look out that window. You had your time. The future is our world, Morpheus. The future is our time.

Agent Jones: There could be a problem.

18.0.0.65 Nebuchadnezzar

Neo: What are they doing to him?

Tank: Breaking into his mind. It's like hacking into a computer, all it takes is time.

Neo: How much time?

Tank: Depends on the mind. Eventually it will crack and his alpha patterns will change from this to this. When it does, Morpheus will tell them anything they want to know.

Neo: Well, what do they want?

Tank: The leader of every ship is given codes to Zion's mainframe computer. If an agent got the codes and got into Zion's mainframe, it could destroy us. We can't let that happen.

Neo: Trinity?

Tank: Zion's more important than me or you or even Morpheus.

Neo: Well there has to be something that we can do.

Tank: There is. We pull the plug.

Trinity: You're going to kill him? Kill Morpheus?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Tank: We don't have any other choice.

18.0.0.66 Office

Agent Smith: Never send a human to do a machine's job.

Agent Brown: If indeed the insider has failed, they'll sever the connection as soon as possible, unless...

Agent Jones: They're dead, in either case...

Agent Smith: We have no choice but to continue as planned. Deploy the sentinels. Immediately.

18.0.0.67 Nebuchadnezzar

Tank: Morpheus, you're more than a leader to us. You're our father. We'll miss you always.

Neo: Stop. I don't believe this is happening.

Tank: Neo, this has to be done.

Neo: Does it? I don't know, I... this can't be just coincidence. It can't be.

Tank: What are you talking about?

Neo: The Oracle. She told me this would happen. She told me that I would have to make a choice.

Trinity: What choice?... What are you doing?

Neo: I'm going in.

Trinity: No you're not.

Neo: I have to.

Trinity: Neo, Morpheus sacrificed himself so that he could get you out. There's no way that you're going back in.

Neo: Morpheus did what he did because he believed I am something I'm not.

Trinity: What?

Neo: I'm not the one, Trinity. The Oracle hit me with that too.

Trinity: No. You have to be.

Neo: I'm not, I'm sorry. I'm just another guy.

Trinity: No, Neo. That's not true. It can't be true.

Neo: Why?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Tank: Neo, this is loco. They've got Morpheus in a military controlled building. Even if you somehow got inside, those are agents holding him. Three of them. I want Morpheus back too, but what you're talking about is suicide.

Neo: I know that's what it looks like, but it's not. I can't explain to you why it's not. Morpheus believed something and he was ready to give his life for what he believed. I understand that now. That's why I have to go.

Tank: Why?

Neo: Because I believe in something.

Trinity: What?

Neo: I believe I can bring him back.... What are you doing?

Trinity: I going with you.

Neo: No you're not.

Trinity: No? Let me tell you what I believe. I believe Morpheus means more to me than he does to you. I believe if you're really serious about saving him, you are going to need my help. And since I am the ranking officer on this ship, if you don't like it, I believe you can go to hell. Because you aren't going anywhere else. Tank? Load us up.

18.0.0.68 Office

Agent Smith: I'd like to share a revelation I had during my time here. It came to me when I tried to classify your species. I realized that you're not actually mammals. Every mammal on this planet instinctively develops a natural equilibrium with the surrounding environment but you humans do not. You move to an area and you multiply until every natural resource is consumed. The only way you can survive is to spread to another area. There is another organism on this planet that follows the same pattern. Do you know what it is? A virus. Human beings are a disease, a cancer of this planet. You are a plague, and we are the cure.

18.0.0.69 Cellular

Tank: Okay. So what do you need, besides a miracle?

Neo: Guns. Lots of guns.

18.0.0.70 Construct

Trinity: Neo, no one has ever done anything like this.

Neo: That's why it's going to work.

18.0.0.71 Office

Agent Smith: Why isn't the serum working?

Agent Brown: Perhaps we're asking the wrong questions.

Agent Smith: Leave me with him. Now.

18.0.0.72 Nebuchadnezzar

Tank: Hold on, Morpheus. They're coming for you. They're coming.

18.0.0.73 Office

Agent Smith: Can you hear me, Morpheus? I'm going to be honest with you. I hate this place, this zoo, this prison, this reality, whatever you want to call it. I can't stand it any longer. It's the smell. If there is such a thing. I feel.. saturated by it. I can taste your stink. And every time I do I feel I have somehow been infected by it, it's repulsive. I must get out of here. I must get free and in this mind is the key, my key. Once Zion is destroyed there is no need for me to be here, don't you understand? I need the codes. I have to get inside Zion, and you have to tell me how. You are going to tell me or you are going to die.

18.0.0.74 Lobby

Guard 1: Please remove any metallic items you're carrying, keys, loose change. Holy shit.

Guard 2: Backup. Send backup.

Soldier: Freeze.

18.0.0.75 Office

Agent Jones: What were you doing?

Agent Brown: He doesn't know.

Agent Smith: Know what?

Agent Jones: I think they're trying to save him.

18.0.0.76 Elevator

Neo: There is no spoon.

18.0.0.77 Office

Agent Smith: Find them and destroy them.

18.0.0.78 Rooftop

Pilot: I repeat, we are under attack.

Neo: Trinity! Help!

Agent Jones: Only human.

Trinity: Dodge this.... How did you do that?

Neo: Do what?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Trinity: You moved like they do. I've never seen anyone move that fast.

Neo: Wasn't fast enough. Can you fly that thing?

Trinity: Not yet.

18.0.0.79 Cellular

Tank: Operator.

Trinity: Tank, I need a pilot program for a V-212 helicopter. Hurry.... Let's go.

18.0.0.80 Office

Agent Smith: No.

18.0.0.81 Helicopter

Neo: Morpheus, get up. Get up, get up.... He's not going to make it.... Gotcha.

18.0.0.82 Rooftop

Neo: Trinity.

18.0.0.83 Nebuchadnezzar

Tank: I knew it. He's the one.

18.0.0.84 Rooftop

Morpheus: Do you believe it now, Trinity?

Neo: Morpheus. The Oracle, she told me I'm...

Morpheus: She told you exactly what you needed to hear, that's all. Neo, sooner or later you're going to realize, just as I did, that there's a difference between knowing the path and walking the path.

18.0.0.85 Cellular

Tank: Operator.

Morpheus: Tank.

Tank: Goddamn. It's good to hear your voice, sir.

Morpheus: We need an exit.

Tank: Got one ready. Subway station, State and Balboa.

18.0.0.86 Rooftop

Agent Smith: Damn it.

Agent Brown: The trace was completed.

Agent Jones: We have their position.

Agent Brown: The sentinels are standing by.

Agent Jones: Order the strike.

Agent Smith: They're not out yet.

18.0.0.87 Subway station

Neo: You first, Morpheus.

Trinity: Neo, I want to tell you something, but I'm afraid of what it could mean if I do. Everything the Oracle told me has come true. Everything but this.

18.0.0.88 Nebuchadnezzar

Trinity: Neo.

Tank: What just happened?

Trinity: An agent. You have to send me back.

Tank: I can't.

18.0.0.89 Subway station

Agent Smith: Mr. Anderson. We meet again.

18.0.0.90 Nebuchadnezzar

Trinity: Run, Neo. Run! What is he doing?

Morpheus: He's beginning to believe.

18.0.0.91 Subway station

Agent Smith: You're empty.

Neo: So are you.

Agent Smith: I'm going to enjoy watching you die, Mr. Anderson.

18.0.0.92 Nebuchadnezzar

Trinity: Jesus, he's killing him.

18.0.0.93 Subway station

Agent Smith: Do you hear that, Mr. Anderson? That is the sound of inevitability. That is the sound of your death. Goodbye, Mr. Anderson.

Neo: My name is Neo.

18.0.0.94 Nebuchadnezzar

Trinity: What happened?

Tank: I don't know. I lost him. Oh shit.

Trinity: Sentinels. How long?

Morpheus: Five, maybe six minutes. Tank, charge the EMP.

Trinity: You can't use that until he's out.

Morpheus: I know, Trinity, don't worry. He's going to make it.

18.0.0.95 Street

Man: Shit, that's my phone. That guy took my phone!.

18.0.0.96 Cellular

Tank: Got him! He's on the run.

Neo: Mr. Wizard, get me the hell out of here.

Tank: Got a patch on an old exit, Wabash and Lake.

Neo: Oh shit.... Help. Need a little help.

Tank: Door.... Door on your left. No, your other left.... Back door.

18.0.0.97 Nebuchadnezzar

Trinity: Oh no.

Morpheus: Here they come.... He's going to make it.

18.0.0.98 Cellular

Tank: Fire escape at the end of the alley. Room 303.

18.0.0.99 Nebuchadnezzar

Tank: They're inside.

Trinity: Hurry, Neo

Morpheus: Can't be.

18.0.0.100 Hotel

Agent Smith: Check him.

Agent Brown: He's gone.

Agent Smith: Goodbye, Mr. Anderson.

18.0.0.101 Nebuchadnezzar

Trinity: Neo, I'm not afraid anymore. The Oracle told me that I would fall in love, and that that man, the man who I loved would be The One. So you see, you can't be dead. You can't be, because I love you. You hear me? I love you.... Now get up.

18.0.0.102 Hotel

Neo, The One: No.

18.0.0.103 Nebuchadnezzar

Tank: How?

Morpheus: He is The One.

Trinity: (in response to squiddie approaching) No!

18.0.0.104 Phone

Neo, The One: I know you're out there. I can feel you now. I know that you're afraid. You're afraid of us. You're afraid of change. I don't know the future. I didn't come here to tell you how this is going to end. I came here to tell you how it's going to begin. I'm going to hang up this phone and then I'm going to show these people what you don't want them to see. I'm going to show them a world without you, a world without rules and controls, without borders or boundaries, a world where anything is possible. Where we go from there is a choice I leave to you.

19 MATRIX RELOADED

Guard 1: See you tomorrow.

Guard 2: Oh my God.

Trinity: I'm in.

Link: Sir, are you sure about this?

Morpheus: I told you, we're going to be all right.

Link: I understand, sir, it's just that... I'm scoping some serious sentinel activity up here.

Morpheus: Link.

Link: Yes sir?

Morpheus: Given your situation, I can't say I fully understand your reasons for volunteering to operate onboard my ship. However, if you wish to continue to do so, I must ask you to do one thing.

Link: What's that, sir?

Morpheus: To trust me.

Link: Yes, sir, I will, sir... I mean, I do, sir.

Morpheus: I hope so. Now re-patch the main AC to the hard drives and stand by to broadcast.

Link: Yes, sir.

Trinity: Still can't sleep? You wanna talk?

Neo: They're just dreams.

Trinity: If you're afraid of something,...

Neo: I just wish... I wish I knew what I'm supposed to do. That's all. I just wish I knew.

Trinity: She's gonna call. Don't worry.

Link: There you are.

Trinity: Are we ready to go?

Link: We're already late.

Niobe: These geotherms confirm the last transmission of the Osiris. The machines are digging. They're boring from the surface straight down to Zion.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

[captain 1]: Mother...

[captain 2]: They'll avoid the entire perimeter defense.

Ice: How fast are they moving?

Niobe: Control estimates their descent at a hundred meters an hour.

[crew/captain]: Shit.

[captain 2]: How deep are they?

Niobe: Almost two thousand meters.

[captain 2]: What about the scans from the Osiris?

[captain 3]: They can't be accurate.

Niobe: They may be.

[crew/captain]: What?

[captain 3]: It's not possible.

Binary: That'd mean there are a quarter of a million sentinels out there.

Niobe: That's right.

[captain 3]: That can't be.

Morpheus: Why not? A sentinel for every man, woman, and child in Zion. That sounds exactly like the thinking of a machine to me.

Niobe: Morpheus, glad you could join us.

Morpheus: Niobe. My apologies to all. As you are undoubtedly aware, it has become increasingly difficult to locate a secure broadcast position.

[captain]: Squiddies got all our best spots.

Ice: Mainlines are crawling with them.

[captain]: And if Niobe's right, in 72 hours there's gonna be a quarter of a million more.

Ballard: What are we gonna do about it?

Niobe: We're gonna do what Commander Lock ordered us to do. We'll evacuate broadcast level and return to Zion.

Morpheus: And does the Commander have a plan for stopping 250,000 sentinels?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Niobe: A strategy is still being formulated.

Morpheus: I'm sure it is.

[captain]: What do you think we should do, Morpheus?

Trinity: What is it?

Neo: I don't know.

Morpheus: I must ask one of you for help. Some of you believe as I believe. Some of you do not. But those of you that do, know we are nearing the end of our struggle. The prophecy will be fulfilled soon, but before it can be, the Oracle must be consulted.

Morpheus: If we return and recharge now, we can be back with inside 36 hours. Well before the machines have reached this depth.

Niobe: Do you understand what you're asking?

Morpheus: I am asking that one ship remain here in our place just in case that the Oracle should attempt to contact us.

Ballard: Bullshit, you're asking for one of us to disobey a direct order.

Morpheus: That's right, I am. But we well know that the reason most of us are here is because of our affinity for disobedience.

[captain]: And what happens when you get back to Zion and the Commander throws you in the stockade?

Morpheus: He won't.

Ballard: Goddamn it, Morpheus, you ain't never gonna change. Shit, I'll do it, just to see what Deadbolt does to you. You got 36 hours.

Smith: I'm looking for Neo.

[door crew 1]: Never heard of him.

Smith: I have something for him. A gift. You see, he set me free.

[door crew 1]: Fine, whatever. Now piss off.

Neo: Who was that?

[door crew 2]: How did you know someone was here?

[door crew 1]: He gave you this. He said you set him free.

[door crew 2]: Is everything all right, sir?

Neo: The meeting is over, retreat to your exits. Agents are coming.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

[door crew 1]: Agents?

Neo: Go.

Neo: Hiya, fellas.

[agent 1] It's him.

[agent 2] The Anomaly.

[agent 3] Do we proceed?

[agent 2] Yes.

[agent 3] He is still...

[agent 1]...only human.

Neo: Hmm. Upgrades.

Smith 1: That went as expected.

Smith 2: Yes.

Smith 1: It's happening exactly as before.

Smith 2: Well, not exactly.

Morpheus: What happened back there, Link?

Link: I can't figure it out, sir. Agents just came out of nowhere. And then the code got all weird. Encryption I've never seen.

Trinity: Is Neo okay?

Link: Okay? Shit, Morpheus, you should have seen him.

Morpheus: Where is he now?

Link: He's doing his Superman thing.

Neo: Where are you?

Link: This is the Nebuchadnezzar on approach, requesting access to Gate 3.

Zion Virtual Control Operator: Nebuchadnezzar, this is Zion Control. Maintain present velocity and stand by.

Link: Roger that, Control.

Zion Virtual Control Operator: This is Zion Control requesting immediate stand down of arms at Gate 3. We have the Nebuchadnezzar on approach. Let's open her up. Nebuchadnezzar, you are clear through Gate 3 to Bay 7.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Link: Roger that, Control.

Zion Virtual Control Operator: Door's open, bed's made. Welcome home.

Link: No place like it.

Zion Controller: [?]Control. Zion Control, stand by for Gate 3 lockdown.

Zion Virtual Control Operator: The Nebuchadnezzar is down. Bay 7.

Zion Controller: Understood.

Morpheus: Captain Mifune.

Mifune: Captain Morpheus.

Morpheus: Are you here to escort me to the stockade, Captain?

Mifune: I'm just here to keep the peace.

Lock's Lieutenant: Commander Lock demands...requests your immediate counsel, sir.

Morpheus: Link.

Link: Sir?

Morpheus: I want the ship ready to go as soon as humanly possible.

Link: Understood, sir.

Neo: What is it between them?

Trinity: Morpheus and Lock? Niobe.

Neo: Captain Niobe?

Trinity: She used to be with Morpheus. Now she's with Lock.

Neo: What happened?

Trinity: Morpheus went to the Oracle. After that everything changed.

Neo: Yeah, she can do that.

Kid: Neo!

Neo: Oh, no.

Trinity: How does he always know?

Neo: Doesn't he have anything better to do?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Trinity: You know what they say about the life you save.

Neo: I didn't save his life.

Kid: Hiya, Neo! Trinity, Link. It's great to have you back!

Neo: Thanks. It's good to be back.

Kid: Can I carry that for you, Neo?

Neo: No, I can carry my own bag.

Kid: Trinity?

Trinity: I'm fine.

Link: You can carry these.

Kid: Yeah, sure, Link. Hey, you know, next year I'm old enough to join a crew. I've been thinking a lot about it and I've made my decision.

Link: Let me guess.

Kid: I want to join the Nebuchadnezzar. I know Morpheus hasn't filled the other crew positions except for you, Link. I'm sure he has his reasons, but the more I think about it, the more I think it's meant to be. You know, it's fate. I mean, you're the reason I'm here, Neo.

Neo: I told you, Kid, you found me, I didn't find you.

Kid: I know, but you got me out! You saved me!

Neo: You saved yourself.

Lock: Morpheus.

Morpheus: Commander Lock.

Lock: I've spoken to the other captains, and I wanted to offer you the chance to explain your actions.

Morpheus: I wasn't aware that my actions required any explanation.

Lock: You were given a direct order to return to Zion.

Morpheus: I did.

Lock: But you asked for one ship to remain behind.

Morpheus: I would have stayed, but I needed to recharge my ship.

Lock: So you admit to a direct contravention of your duty.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Morpheus: Commander, we need a presence inside the Matrix to await contact from the Oracle.

Lock: I don't want to hear that shit! I don't care about Oracles or prophecies or Messiahs. I care about one thing: stopping that army from destroying this city, and to do that I need soldiers to obey my orders.

Morpheus: With all due respect, Commander, there is only one way to save our city.

Lock: How?

Morpheus: Neo.

Lock: Goddamnit, Morpheus! Not everyone believes what you believe!

Morpheus: My beliefs do not require them to.

Kid: There's a Gathering tonight. Everyone's talking, a lot of people are scared. No one can remember the last time so many ships were docked. Something's happening, isn't it? Something big?

Link: Hey. We're not allowed to say anything, so stop asking. Goddamn, it's good to be home.

Lock: I'm going to recommend to the Council that you be removed from duty.

Morpheus: That is, of course, your prerogative, Commander.

Lock: If it were up to me, Captain, you wouldn't set foot on a ship for the rest of your life.

Morpheus: Then I am grateful that it is not up to you.

Lock: Councillor Hamann.

Councillor Hamann: Commander. Captain.

Morpheus: Councillor.

Councillor Hamann: Council's asked me to speak tonight, at the temple gathering. The presence of the fleet and the persistence of rumours must be addressed. The people must be told what is happening.

Lock: Of course, councillor. But might I advise a level of discretion concerning specific details. We do not wish to start a panic.

Councillor Hamann: Quite right. A panic is not what anyone wants. What about you, Captain, what would you advise?

Morpheus: The truth. No one will panic. Because there is nothing to fear. That army will never reach the gates of Zion.

Councillor Hamann: What makes you so sure?

Morpheus: Consider what we have seen, Councillor. Consider that in the past 6 months we have freed more minds than in 6 years. This attack is an act of desperation. I believe very soon the prophecy will be fulfilled and this war will end.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Councillor Hamann: I hope you're right, Captain.

Morpheus: I do not believe it to be a matter of hope, Councillor. It is simply a matter of time.

Link: My stop. See you soon, hopefully not too soon. Let's go, Kid. These two got things to do.

Neo: Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

Trinity: I am if you're thinking this elevator's too damn slow.

Neo: How long to recharge the Neb?

Trinity: 24, maybe 30 hours.

Neo: Some people go their entire lives without hearing news that good.

Old Woman at Zion: Neo, please. I have a son, Jacob, aboard the Gnosis. Please, watch over him.

Neo: I'll try.

Another Old Woman at Zion: I have a daughter on the Icarus.

Neo: No, wait.

Trinity: It's all right. They need you.

Neo: I need you.

Trinity: I know. There's time.

Link: Where's my puss... Hey!

Link's Niece and Nephew: Uncle Link!

Link: God! Oh my God, you're so huge, you should be picking me up! Link's Niece and Nephew: No!

Link: Yeah!

Link's Niece and Nephew: Okay!

Link: Okay? All right. Now, we're gonna have to work together here, okay? One, two, three, lift! Oh, my God! What are you feedin' these two?

Cas: Come on, kids! It's time to go.

Link: Hey, Cas.

Cas: Hey. Good to have you home, Link.

Link: Good to be home.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Cas: You be careful with her, huh?

Zee: Don't worry about me, he's the one that's gonna get it.

Link: Hmm?

Cas: Out the door! Both of you, march!

Link: Bye!

Cas: Bye!

Link: I'm gonna get what?

Zee: Every ship out there has been home two, even three times more than the Nebuchadnezzar.

Link: Come on, Zee! I thought we were past this!

Zee: We'll get past this when you start operating another ship.

Link: I can't do that!

Zee: Why?

Link: You know why.

Zee: If Dozer knew how I felt, he wouldn't have asked you to do this.

Link: Maybe. But it's too late now. I made a promise, and some promises can't be unmade.

Zee: It's not fair.

Link: Nobody said it was gonna be. You think Cas thinks it's fair that I'm here and Dozer's not?

Zee: I lost two brothers to that ship, Link. Afraid of it. Afraid it's gonna take you too.

Link: It won't.

Zee: How can you say that to me?

Link: Because of Morpheus, because of what he's told me. He said that this is it. That it will be over soon.

Zee: Link, Morpheus is crazy.

Link: No doubt, but Tank and Dozer believed him, and I'll tell you what – soon after being on that ship and seeing Neo do the things he can do, I gotta say – I'm starting to believe him too.

Zee: Be careful, Link. Please be careful.

Kid: They started yet?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Priestess: Only Councillor Hamann's opening prayer.

Councillor Hamann: Tonight, let us honour these men and women. These are our soldiers, our warriors. These are our husbands and wives, our brothers and sisters, our children. Let us remember those that have been lost. And let us give thanks for those that have been found and who stand here beside us. Now I would like someone else to close this prayer. Someone who hasn't spoken here in a long time, but who I believe has something to say that we all need to hear. I give you Morpheus.

Morpheus: Zion! Hear me! It is true, what many of you have heard. The machines have gathered an army, and as I speak that army is drawing nearer to our home. Believe me when I say we have a difficult time ahead of us. But if we are to be prepared for it, we must first shed our fear of it! I stand here before you now, truthfully unafraid. Why? Because I believe something you do not? No! I stand here without fear because I remember. I remember that I am here not because of the path that lies before me, but because of the path that lies behind me! I remember that for 100 years we have fought these machines. I remember that for 100 years they have send their armies to destroy us. And after a century of war, I remember that which matters most. We are still here! Tonight let us send a message to that army. Tonight let us shake this cave! Tonight let us tremble these halls of earth, steel, and stone! Let us be heard from red core to black sky. Tonight, let us make them remember. This is Zion! And we are not afraid!

Niobe: I remember. I remember you used to dance. I remember you were pretty good.

Morpheus: There are some things in this world, captain Niobe, that will never change.

Lock: Niobe!

Morpheus: Some things do change.

Neo: Excuse me.

Neo: I missed you.

Trinity: I can tell.

Neo: I was thinking... Everyone is here.

Trinity: Follow me.

Trinity: Neo, what is it? What's wrong? It's okay, you can tell me.

Neo: Trinity...

Trinity: Don't be afraid.

Neo: I can't lose you.

Trinity: You're not gonna lose me. You feel this? I'm never letting go.

Morpheus: Good night, Zion. Sweet dreams.

Bane: You all right?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Malachi: I'll make it. Did you see that Agent? I've never seen anything like it.

Bane: Doesn't matter now. All that matters is this. You first.

Bane: Oh God.

Smith: Smith will suffice.

Bane–Smith: Thank you.

Smith: My pleasure.

Councillor Hamann: Care for some company?

Neo: Councillor Hamann.

Councillor Hamann: I don't want to intrude if you prefer to be alone.

Neo: No, I could probably use some company.

Councillor Hamann: Good, so could I. It's nice tonight. Very calm. Feels like everyone's sleeping very peacefully.

Neo: Not everyone.

Councillor Hamann: I hate sleeping. I never sleep more than a few hours. I figure I slept the first 11 years of my life, now I'm making up for it. What about you?

Neo: I just haven't been able to sleep much.

Councillor Hamann: It's a good sign.

Neo: Of what?

Councillor Hamann: That you are, in fact, still human. Have you ever been to the engineering level? I love to walk there at night, it's quite amazing. Would you like to see it?

Neo: Sure.

Councillor Hamann: Almost no one comes down here, unless, of course, there's a problem. That's how it is with people – nobody cares how it works as long as it works. I like it down here. I like to be reminded this city survives because of these machines. These machines are keeping us alive, while other machines are coming to kill us. Interesting, isn't it? Power to give life, and the power to end it.

Neo: We have the same power.

Councillor Hamann: I suppose we do, but down here sometimes I think about all those people still plugged into the Matrix and when I look at these machines, I.. I can't help thinking that in a way, we are plugged into them.

Neo: But we control these machines, they don't control us.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Councillor Hamann: Of course not, how could they? The idea's pure nonsense, but... it does make one wonder just... what is control?

Neo: If we wanted, we could shut these machines down. **Councillor Hamann:** Of course... that's it. You hit it! That's control, isn't it? If we wanted, we could smash them to bits. Although if we did, we'd have to consider what would happen to our lights, our heat, our air.

Neo: So we need machines and they need us. Is that your point, Councillor?

Councillor Hamann: No, no point. Old men like me don't bother with making points. There's no point.

Neo: Why don't you tell me what's on your mind, Councillor?

Councillor Hamann: There is so much in this world that I do not understand. See that machine? It has something to do with recycling our water supply. I have absolutely no idea how it works. But I do understand the reason for it to work. I have absolutely no idea how you are able to do some of the things you do, but I believe there's a reason for that as well. I only hope we understand that reason before it's too late.

Trinity: Ballard.

Ballard: Is he here? Neo. It's from the Oracle.

Neo: It's time to go.

Link: Morpheus said this is how it's gonna happen. I don't know. Maybe the prophecy is true, maybe it's not. All I know, is that ship needs an operator. Right now that operator's me.

Zee: I know.

Link: Zee...

Zee: I want you to wear it.

Link: You know I don't believe in this stuff.

Zee: But I do. It's always brought me luck. Maybe it'll bring me you.

Link: I'm coming back. I promise. No matter what it takes, I'm coming home.

Zee: Just keep it with you, please? For me.

Link: Okay.

Kid: Neo!

Link: Who the hell? Bane?

Neo: Is something wrong?

Bane/Smith: No, I'm fine. I just wanted to catch you to say good luck.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Neo: Thanks.

Bane/Smith: We'll see you.

Kid: Neo! Just in time. You're gonna see the Oracle, aren't you?

Morpheus: We don't have time.

Kid: I'm sorry, sir, I just have to give something to Neo. A gift from one of the orphans. He made me swear to get it to you before you left. He said you'd understand.

Neo: Thanks.

Lock: I was just told you cleared the Nebuchadnezzar for takeoff.

Councillor Hamann: That is correct.

Lock: Councillor, am I still in charge of our defense system?

Councillor Hamann: Of course.

Lock: I believe I need every ship we have if we're going to survive this attack!

Councillor Hamann: I understand that, Commander.

Lock: Then why did you allow the Nebuchadnezzar to leave?

Councillor Hamann: Because I believe our survival depends on more than how many ships we have.

Trinity: Be careful.

Neo: Hello.

Seraph: You seek the Oracle.

Neo: Who are you?

Seraph: I am Seraph. I can take you to her. But first, I must apologize.

Neo: Apologize for what?

Seraph: For this.

Seraph: Good. The Oracle has made enemies. I had to be sure.

Neo: Of what?

Seraph: That you are The One.

Neo: You could've just asked.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Seraph: No. You do not truly know someone until you fight them. Come, she's waiting.

Link: Where the hell'd they go?

Neo: These are back doors, aren't they? Programmer access.

Neo: How do they work?

Seraph: The code is hidden in tumblers. One position opens a lock. Another position opens one of these doors.

Neo: Are you a programmer?

Neo: Then what are you?

Seraph: I protect that which matters most.

The Oracle: Well, come on. I ain't gonna bite ya. Come around here, and let me have a look at ya. My goodness, look at you! You turned out all right, didn't you? How do you feel?

Neo: I, uh...

The Oracle: I know you're not sleeping. We'll get to that. Why don't you come and have a sit this time?

Neo: Maybe I'll stand.

The Oracle: Well, suit yourself.

Neo: I felt like sitting.

The Oracle: I know. So. Let's get the obvious stuff out of the way.

Neo: You're not human, are you?

The Oracle: Well it's tough to get any more obvious than that.

Neo: If I had to guess, I'd say you're a program from the machine world. So is he.

The Oracle: So far, so good.

Neo: But if that's true, that can mean you are a part of this system, another kind of control.

The Oracle: Keep going.

Neo: I suppose the most obvious question is, how can I trust you?

The Oracle: Bingo! It is a pickle, no doubt about it. The bad news is there's no way if you can really know whether I'm here to help you or not. So it's really up to you. You just have to make up your own damn mind to either accept what I'm going to tell you, or reject it. Candy?

Neo: D'you already know if I'm going to take it?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

The Oracle: Wouldn't be much of an Oracle if I didn't.

Neo: But if you already know, how can I make a choice?

The Oracle: Because you didn't come here to make the choice, you've already made it. You're here to try to understand why you made it. I thought you'd have figured that out by now.

Neo: Why are you here?

The Oracle: Same reason. I love candy.

Neo: But why help us?

The Oracle: We're all here to do what we're all here to do. I'm interested in one thing, Neo, the future. And believe me, I know – the only way to get there is together.

Neo: Are there other programs like you?

The Oracle: Oh, well, not like me. But... Look, see those birds? At some point a program was written to govern them. A program was written to watch over the trees, and the wind, the sunrise, and sunset. There are programs running all over the place. The ones doing their job, doing what they were meant to do, are invisible. You'd never even know they were here. But the other ones, well, we hear about them all the time.

Neo: I've never heard of them.

The Oracle: Of course you have. Every time you've heard someone say they saw a ghost, or an angel. Every story you've ever heard about vampires, werewolves, or aliens is the system assimilating some program that's doing something they're not supposed to be doing.

Neo: Programs hacking programs. Why?

The Oracle: They have their reasons, but usually a program chooses exile when it faces deletion.

Neo: And why would a program be deleted?

The Oracle: Maybe it breaks down. Maybe a better program is created to replace it – happens all the time, and when it does, a program can either choose to hide here, or return to The Source.

Neo: The machine mainframe?

The Oracle: Yes. Where you must go. Where the path of The One ends. You've seen it, in your dreams, haven't you? The door made of light?

The Oracle: What happens when you go through the door?

Neo: I see Trinity, and something happens, something bad. She starts to fall, and then I wake up.

The Oracle: Do you see her die?

Neo: No.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

The Oracle: You have the sight now, Neo. You are looking at the world without time.

Neo: Then why can't I see what happens to her?

The Oracle: We can never see past the choices we don't understand.

Neo: Are you saying I have to choose whether Trinity lives or dies?

The Oracle: No. You've already made the choice, now you have to understand it.

Neo: No, I can't do that. I won't.

The Oracle: You have to.

Neo: Why?

The Oracle: Because you're The One.

Neo: What if I can't? What happens if I fail?

The Oracle: Then Zion will fall. Our time is up. Listen to me, Neo. You can save Zion if you reach The Source, but to do that you will need the Keymaker.

Neo: The Keymaker?

The Oracle: Yes, he disappeared some time ago. We did not know what happened to him until now. He's being held prisoner by a very dangerous program, one of the oldest of us. He is called the Merovingian, and he will not let him go willingly.

Neo: What does he want?

The Oracle: What do all men with power want? More power.

The Oracle: Be there, at that exact time, and you will have a chance.

Seraph: We must go.

The Oracle: Seems like every time we meet I've got nothing but bad news. I'm sorry about that, I surely am. But for what it's worth, you've made a believer out of me. Good luck, kiddo.

Smith: Mister Anderson! Did you get my package?

Neo: Yeah.

Smith: Well, good.

Morpheus: Smith.

Link: Whoever it is, he's not reading like an agent.

Smith: Surprised to see me?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Neo: No.

Smith: Then you're aware of it.

Neo: Of what?

Smith: Our connection. I don't fully understand how it happened. Perhaps some part of you imprinted onto me, something overwritten or copied. That is at this point irrelevant, what matters is that whatever happened, happened for a reason.

Neo: And what reason is that?

Smith: I killed you, Mister Anderson, I watched you die... With a certain satisfaction, I might add, and then something happened. Something that I knew was impossible, but it happened anyway. You destroyed me, Mister Anderson. Afterward, I knew the rules, I understood what I was supposed to do but I didn't. I couldn't. I was compelled to stay, compelled to disobey. And now here I stand because of you, Mister Anderson, because of you I'm no longer an agent of the system, because of you I've changed – I'm unplugged – a new man, so to speak, like you, apparently free.

Neo: Congratulations.

Smith: Thank you. But as you well know, appearances can be deceiving, which brings me back to the reason why we're here. We're not here because we're free, we're here because we're not free. There's no escaping reason, no denying purpose – because as we both know, without purpose, we would not exist.

Smith 2: It is purpose that created us,

Smith 3: Purpose that connects us,

Smith 4: Purpose that pulls us,

Smith 5: That guides us,

Smith 6: That drives us,

Smith 7: It is purpose that defines,

Smith 8: Purpose that binds us.

Smith: We're here because of you, Mister Anderson, we're here to take from you what you tried to take from us. Purpose.

Trinity: What's happening to him?

Link: I don't know.

Smith: Yes, that's it, it'll be over soon.

Agent Jackson: You.

Smith: Yes me. Me, me, me!

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Agent Jackson/Smith: Me too!

Smith: More.

Smiths: It is inevitable.

Trinity: Come on, get out of there.

Trinity: Are you all right?

Morpheus: It was Smith.

Neo: Yes.

Morpheus: Now there's more than one of him.

Neo: A lot more.

Link: How's that possible?

Neo: I don't know – somehow he's found a way to copy himself. **Morpheus:** Is that what he was doing to you?

Neo: I don't know what he was doing, but I know what it felt like.

Trinity: What?

Neo: Felt like I was back in that hallway. Felt like dying.

Lock: The machines are tunnelling to avoid our defense system. But I believe that they're going to intersect certain pipelines in order to control them. These points of intersection are crucial because I believe they're vulnerable to counterattack. Although it has been suggested that this is the same kind of attack we have defended for years, I urge the Council to realize the truth: this is the single greatest threat we have ever faced. And if we do not act accordingly, we will not survive.

Councillor Dillard: Commander Lock, the Council is well aware of the seriousness of this attack. You have our leave to prepare our defense by any and all means necessary.

Lock: Thank you, Councillor

Councillor Dillard: However, we ask if there's been word from the Nebuchadnezzar.

Lock: No, Councillor, no word – nothing.

Councillor West: Then we request a ship be dispatched to ascertain the fate of The One.

Lock: I wish that were possible, Councillor, but I do not believe our defense can suffer the loss of another ship.

Councillor West: It will, Commander, if it must.

Lock: It could take a single ship days to find the Nebuchadnezzar.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Councillor Dillard: Then send two.

Lock: This is insane.

Councilor Hamann: Careful, Commander.

Lock: Forgive my frustration, Councillors. I wish I were able to comprehend the Council's choice in this matter.

Councillor West: Comprehension is not a requisite of cooperation.

Lock: You're asking me to order two of my captains...

Councillor Dillard: There's no need for such an order, the Captains are present – they can answer for themselves. The Council is calling for two volunteers to aid the Nebuchadnezzar. Are there two among you that would answer such a call?

Soren: Captain Soren of the Vigilant will answer the Council's call.

Councillor Dillard: You understand the situation, Captain Soren?

Soren: Yes, ma'am.

Councillor Dillard: Thank you, Captain. Is there another?

Bane/Smith: Captain, I think we should volunteer.

Malachi: What? You have gone crazy?

Ballard: Shut your hole, Bane, before I put you in one.

Councillor Dillard: Is there no other?

Lock: Be hard for any man to risk his life. Especially if he doesn't understand the reason.

Niobe: Captain Niobe of the Logos will answer the Councillor's call.

Lock: What?

Councillor Dillard: Thank you, Captain Niobe. Commander Lock, you have your orders. This Council is hereby adjourned.

Lock: Niobe, what are you doing?

Niobe: What I can.

Lock: Why?

Niobe: Because some things never change, Jason, and some things do.

Morpheus: What can you see, Neo?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Neo: It's strange, the code is somehow different.

Morpheus: Encrypted?

Neo: Maybe.

Trinity: Is that good for us or bad for us?

Neo: Well, it looks like every floor is wired with explosives.

Trinity: Bad for us.

Morpheus: Here we go.

Maitre'd: [speaking French]

Morpheus: Yes, we are here to speak with the Merovingian.

Maitre'd: Of course, he has been expecting you. Follow me.

Merovingian: Aha, here he is at last. Neo, the One himself, right? And the legendary Morpheus. And Trinity of course, si belle qu'elle me fait souffrir. I have heard so much, you honour me. Please, sit, join us. This is my wife, Persephone. Something to eat? Drink? Hmm... of course, such things are contrivances like so much here. For the sake of appearances.

Neo: No, thank you.

Merovingian: Yes, of course, who has time? Who has time? But then if we do not ever take time, how can we ever have time? Château Haut-Brion 1959, magnificent wine, I love French wine, like I love the French language. I have sampled every language, French is my favourite – fantastic language, especially to curse with. Nom de Dieu de putain de bordel de merde de saloperies de connards d'enculés de ta mère. You see, it's like wiping your arse with silk, I love it.

Morpheus: You know why we are here.

Merovingian: Hmph... I am a trafficker of information, I know everything I can. The question is, do you know why you are here?

Morpheus: We are looking for the Keymaker.

Merovingian: Oh yes, it is true. The Keymaker, of course. But this is not a reason, this is not a 'why.' The Keymaker himself, his very nature, is means, it is not an end, and so, to look for him is to be looking for a means to do... what?

Neo: You know the answer to that question. Merovingian: But do you? You think you do but you do not. You are here because you were sent here, you were told to come here and you obeyed. [Laughs] It is, of course, the way of all things. You see, there is only one constant, one universal, it is the only real truth: causality. Action. Reaction. Cause and effect.

Morpheus: Everything begins with choice.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Merovingian: No. Wrong. Choice is an illusion, created between those with power, and those without. Look there, at that woman. My God, just look at her. Affecting everyone around her, so obvious, so bourgeois, so boring. But wait... Watch – you see, I have sent her dessert, a very special dessert. I wrote it myself. It starts so simply, each line of the program creating a new effect, just like poetry. First, a rush... heat... her heart flutters. You can see it, Neo, yes? She does not understand why – is it the wine? No. What is it then, what is the reason? And soon it does not matter, soon the why and the reason are gone, and all that matters is the feeling itself. This is the nature of the universe. We struggle against it, we fight to deny it, but it is of course pretense, it is a lie. Beneath our poised appearance, the truth is we are completely out of control. Causality. There is no escape from it, we are forever slaves to it. Our only hope, our only peace is to understand it, to understand the 'why.' 'Why' is what separates us from them, you from me. 'Why' is the only real social power, without it you are powerless. And this is how you come to me, without 'why,' without power. Another link in the chain. But fear not, since I have seen how good you are at following orders, I will tell you what to do next. Run back, and give the fortune teller this message: Her time is almost up. Now I have some real business to do, I will say adieu and goodbye.

Neo: This isn't over.

Merovingian: Oh yes, it is. The Keymaker is mine and I see no reason why I should give him up. No reason at all.

Persephone: Where are you going?

Merovingian: Please, ma chérie, I've told you, we are all victims of causality. I drink too much wine, I must take a piss. Cause and effect. Au revoir.

Trinity: Touch me, and that hand will never touch anything again.

Neo: Well, that didn't go so well.

Morpheus: Are you certain the Oracle didn't say anything else?

Neo: Yes.

Trinity: Maybe we did something wrong.

Neo: Or didn't do something.

Morpheus: No, what happened happened and couldn't have happened any other way.

Neo: How do you know?

Morpheus: We are still alive.

Persephone: If you want the Keymaker, follow me. [to man in washroom] Get out! I'm so sick of his bullshit. On and on, pompous prick. A long time ago, when we first came here, it was so different. He was so different. He was like you. I'll give you what you want. But you have to give me something.

Neo: What?

Persephone: A kiss.

Trinity: Excuse me?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Persephone: I want you to kiss me as if you were kissing her.

Neo: Why?

Persephone: You love her. She loves you. It's all over you both. A long time ago, I knew what that felt like. I want to remember it. I want to sample it. That's all, just a sample.

Trinity: Why don't you sample this instead?

Morpheus: Trinity.

Persephone: Such emotion over something so small. It's just a kiss.

Neo: Why should we trust you?

Persephone: If I don't deliver you to the Keymaker, she can kill me.

Neo: All right.

Persephone: But you have to make me believe I am her.

Neo: All right.

Persephone: Terrible. Forget it.

Neo: Wait. Okay.

Persephone: Ahh, yes. That's it. I envy you. But such a thing is not meant to last. Come with me.

Link: Not again!

Persephone: It's all right, boys, they're with me. These fellas work for my husband, they do his dirty work. They're very good, very loyal. Aren't you, boys?

Cain and Abel: Yes, Mistress.

Persephone: They come from a much older version of the Matrix, but like so many back then, they caused more problems than they solved. My husband saved them because they're notoriously difficult to terminate. How many people keep silver bullets in their gun? You can either run to the restaurant and tell my husband what I have done, or you can stay there and die. He's in the ladies' room... [to Neb crew] Hurry.

Neo: My name is Neo.

Keymaker: Yes, I'm the Keymaker, I've been waiting for you.

Merovingian: Oh God, my God, Persephone how could you do this, you betrayed me [speaking French]!

Persephone: Cause and effect, my love.

Merovingian: Cause? There is no cause for this, what cause?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Persephone: What cause? How about the lipstick you're still wearing?

Merovingian: Lipstick? Lipstick? What craziness you are talking about woman, there is no lipstick.

Persephone: She wasn't kissing your face, my love.

Merovingian: Ai-ai-ai-ai-ai-ai, woman, this is nothing, c'est rien, c'est rien du tout. It's a game, it is only a game.

Persephone: So is this. Have fun.

Merovingian: All right. All right. Let us find out where this goes. You two, get the Keymaker.

Trinity: That's a nice trick.

Keymaker: I cannot go back.

Neo: I'll handle them.

Merovingian: Handle us? You'll handle us? You know, your predecessors had much more respect.

Merovingian: Okay, you have some skill. Kill him.

Merovingian: You see, he's just a man.

Merovingian: Damn it, woman, you will be the end of me. Mark my words, boy, and mark them well. I have survived your predecessors, and I will survive you!

Trinity: Where are you going?

Keymaker: Another way, always another way. Close it, quick.

Twin 1: Could we move along?

Keymaker: Run!

Twin 2: Step away from the door.

Twin 2: We owe you for that.

Twin 1: Just like new.

Twin 2: Drop your weapon.

Morpheus: Stay with him.

Trinity: What about Neo?

Morpheus: He can handle himself.

Trinity: Get in the back.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Neo: Oh shit.

Link: Operator.

Neo: Link, where am I?

Link: You're not gonna believe this, but you're all the way up in the mountains.

Neo: Really.

Link: Yeah, it's gonna take me a while to get up an exit. Oh shit.

Neo: What?

Link: Those Twin things are after Morpheus and Trinity, and I don't have a way to get them out.

Neo: Where are they?

Link: Middle of the City, 500 miles due south.

Link: Operator.

Morpheus: Get us out of here, Link.

Link: That won't be easy, sir.

Morpheus: I know. We're inside the core network.

Link: Yes sir. The only exit I got near you is the Winslow overpass.

Morpheus: Off the freeway?

Link: Yes, sir.

Morpheus: Fine, we'll make it.

Link: Sir, I think I should say... oh shit, look out behind you!

Link: Incoming fire!

Morpheus: Down!

Trinity: Hold on!

Link: Oh no, this is getting real ugly real fast.

Morpheus: Are you watching this, Link?

Link: Yes sir, there's an all-points on you, I make 8 units headed your way.

Morpheus: Any suggestions?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Link: Turn right.

Morpheus: Right, now!

Link: Now straight here, go through the next branch, you'll hit a connecting tunnel to the 101.

Morpheus: Got it.

Link: Sir, are you sure about this? The freeway, I mean. It's dangerous, in 14 years of operating, I've never seen...

Morpheus: Link, what did I tell you?

Link: Yes sir, I do, sir, Winsor[?] overpass, I'll be ready for you.

Morpheus: Good man.

Trinity: You always told me to stay off the freeway.

Morpheus: Yes, that's true.

Trinity: You said it was suicide.

Morpheus: Then let us hope that I was wrong.

Link: Operator.

Niobe: Link, it's Niobe. We've been sent to bring you in. I need to talk to Morpheus.

Link: Believe me, Niobe, he needs you.

Niobe: Where is he?

Link: Just follow the sirens.

Cop: They're approaching...

Agent Thompson: We have them now.

Agent Johnson: The exile is the primary target.

Morpheus: Move!

Twin 1: We are getting aggravated.

Twin 2: Yes we are

Morpheus: Trinity! Get him out of here.

Trinity: Come on!

Trinity: Morpheus.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Link: He's okay, keep moving.

Trinity: Let's go.

Trinity: I need a download to hotwire a motorcycle.

Link: Not a problem, one crash course in motorcycle...

Trinity: Wait. Cancel that. [to Keymaker] You are handy. Jump on.

Agent Johnson: She means nothing.

Agent Thompson: Find the exile.

Agent Johnson: We have them.

Cop from Speaker: One Adam Twelve, please respond.

Morpheus: Get down.

Niobe: Gotcha.

Link: She's good.

Agent: You are no longer necessary.

Keymaker: We do only what we're meant to do.

Agent: Then you are meant for one more thing. Deletion.

Niobe: Go kick his ass.

Morpheus: Neo, if you're out there, I could use some help.

Link: What is that?

Link: Yess!

[Zion Man] Sir. We have confirmation from the Icarus. The first two ships are in position for the counterattack.

Lock: Good. Any change?

[Zion Woman] Looks like they hit some iron ore here, slowed them down a little.

Lock: How much?

[Zion Woman]: An hour, maybe. **Lock:** That'd give them a little over 9 hours.

[Zion Woman]: Yes sir.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Keymaker: There's a building. Inside this building there's a level where no elevator can go, and no stair can reach. This level is filled with doors. These doors lead to many places, hidden places, but one door is special. One door leads to the Source. This building is protected by a very secure system. Every alarm triggers the bomb.

Vector: Bomb? Did he say bomb?

Keymaker: But like all systems it has a weakness. The system is based on the rules of a building. One system built on another.

Morpheus: Electricity.

Keymaker: If one fails, so must the other.

Niobe: No electricity, no alarms.

Ghost: But you'd have to take out a whole city block to kill the power to a building like that.

Keymaker: Not one, 27.

Vector: 27 blocks?

Keymaker: There is a power station. it must be destroyed.

Niobe: There must be some kind of failsafe.

Keymaker: Yes, there is an emergency system. The core network of the grid must be accessed. The emergency system must be deactivated.

Soren: Then what do you need us for? Neo could take 'em both out easier than we could.

Keymaker: There's no time.

Niobe: Why?

Keymaker: Once the door is unprotected, the connection will be severed. But another connection must first be made.

Ghost: How long will that take?

Keymaker: Exactly 314 seconds.

Soren: Just over 5 minutes.

Keymaker: That is the length and breadth of the window. Only The One can open the door, and only during that window can the door be opened.

Niobe: How do you know all this?

Keymaker: I know because I must know. It's my purpose. It's the reason I'm here. Same reason we're all here.

Trinity: Neo, I know something's wrong. You don't have to tell me. I just want you to know that I'm here.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Keymaker: All must be done as one.

Link: Can't hurt.

Keymaker: If one fails, all fail.

Morpheus: At midnight, there's a shift change in the security of both buildings. At midnight, we will strike.

Guard 1: Hey! You count sheep at home.

Guard 2: Why, I get paid to count 'em here.

Jax: Okay, they're inside.

Axel: How much time?

Jax: 12 minutes.

Axel: Oh shit!

Morpheus: All of our lives we have fought this war. Tonight I believe we can end it. Tonight is not an accident. There are no accidents. We have not come here by chance. I do not believe in chance when I see 3 objectives, 3 captains, 3 ships. I do not see coincidence, I see providence, I see purpose. I believe it is our fate to be here. It is our destiny. I believe this night holds for each and every one of us the very meaning of our lives.

Neo: I want to ask you to do something, but I don't know how.

Trinity: I promise you, if I can, I will.

Neo: What if I asked you to stay out of this, no matter what. To stay out of the matrix?

Trinity: Why?

Neo: Please.

Trinity: All right.

Morpheus: What is it, Niobe?

Niobe: I can't help it, Morpheus, I can't help thinking – what if you're wrong. What if all this – the prophecy, everything – is bullshit.

Morpheus: Then tomorrow we may all be dead, but how would that be different from any other day? This is a war, and we are soldiers. Death can come for us at any time, in any place.

Axel: Incoming. Incoming! Incoming!

Morpheus: Now consider the alternative. What if I am right? What if the prophecy is true? What if tomorrow the war could be over. Isn't that worth fighting for? Isn't that worth dying for?

Soren: Time?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Vector: 3 minutes.

Binary: Almost there.

Keymaker: It is time.

Trinity: Find the others.

Link: Got Niobe right there, they're already out of the station.

Trinity: What about Soren?

Link: There, they're still inside, but...

Trinity: They're not moving.

Morpheus: That's it, let's go.

Trinity: Call Neo now.

Link: Lost them. They're inside the portal.

Trinity: What about the grid?

Link: Everything's still operational. Emergency system's already rerouting power. Jesus. As soon as they open that door, it's all over.

Trinity: The hell it is.

Link: What are you... Trinity?

Trinity: I will not stand here and do nothing. I will not wait here to watch them die.

Link: Trinity, we're talking less then 5 minutes here.

Trinity: In 5 minutes, I'll tear that whole goddamn building down.

Neo: How much further?

Keymaker: Here, just here.

Smith: I'm sorry, this is a dead end.

Link: It's gotta be the ugliest hack I have ever done. That's as close as I can get ya. You better grow some wings.

Link: Operator.

Trinity: I'm in.

Link: Keep moving, 65th floor.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Smith: you look surprised to see me again, Mr. Anderson, that's the difference between us. I've been expecting you.

Neo: What do you want, Smith?

Smith: Oh you haven't figured that out? Still using all the muscles except the one that matters. I want exactly what you want. I want everything.

Morpheus: Would that include a bullet from this gun?

Smith: Go ahead, shoot. The best thing about being me – there's so many me.

Computer Room Technician: Christ, what happened in here?

Computer Room Guard: Hold it right there, little lady.

Smith: If you can't beat us, join us.

Neo: Morpheus!

Link: Still no sight of them. I don't know what they're doing, but they only got 2 minutes left.

Link: One minute!

Trinity: Come on. Come on. Please.

Smiths: Kill them.

Link: They're in. I don't believe it.

Keymaker: It was meant to be. Morpheus. That door will take you home. [to Neo] You'll know which door. Hurry, Neo.

Link: Trinity, I got some serious activity headed your way.

Architect: Hello, Neo.

Neo: Who are you?

Architect: I am the Architect. I created the Matrix. I've been waiting for you. You have many questions, and though the process has altered your consciousness, you remain irrevocably human. Ergo some of my answers you will understand, and some of them you will not. Concordantly, while your first question may be the most pertinent, you may or may not realize it is also the most irrelevant.

Neo: Why am I here?

Architect: Your life is the sum of a remainder of an unbalanced equation inherent to the programming of the Matrix. You are the eventuality of an anomaly, which, despite my sincerest efforts, I have been unable to eliminate from what is otherwise a harmony of mathematical precision. While it remains a burden assiduously avoided, it is not unexpected, and thus not beyond a measure of control. Which has led you, inexorably... here.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Neo: You haven't answered my question.

Architect: Quite right. Interesting. That was quicker than the others.

TV Neos: Others? How many others? What others? Answer my question!

Architect: The Matrix is older than you know. I prefer counting from the emergence of one integral anomaly to the emergence of the next, in which case this is the 6th version.

TV Neos: 5 `One's before me? 4 3 2 What are you talking about?

Neo: There are only two possible explanations, either no one told me, or no one knows.

Architect: Precisely. As you are undoubtedly gathering, the anomaly is systemic – creating fluctuations in even the most simplistic equations.

TV Neos: You can't control me! I'm gonna smash you to bits! I'll fuckin' kill you!

Neo: Choice. The problem is choice.

Architect: The first Matrix I designed was quite naturally perfect, it was a work of art – flawless, sublime. A triumph equalled only by its monumental failure. The inevitability of its doom is apparent to me now as a consequence of the imperfection inherent in every human being. Thus, I redesigned it based on your history to more accurately reflect the varying grotesqueries of your nature. However, I was again frustrated by failure. I have since come to understand that the answer eluded me because it required a lesser mind, or perhaps a mind less bound by the parameters of perfection. Thus the answer was stumbled upon by another – an intuitive program, initially created to investigate certain aspects of the human psyche. If I am the father of the matrix, she would undoubtedly be its mother.

Neo: The Oracle.

Architect: Please. As I was saying, she stumbled upon a solution whereby nearly 99% of all test subjects accepted the program, as long as they were given a choice, even if they were only aware of the choice at a near unconscious level. While this answer functioned, it was obviously fundamentally flawed, thus creating the otherwise contradictory systemic anomaly, that if left unchecked might threaten the system itself. Ergo those that refused the program, while a minority, if unchecked, would constitute an escalating probability of disaster.

Neo: This is about Zion.

Architect: You are here because Zion is about to be destroyed – its every living inhabitant terminated, its entire existence eradicated.

Neo: Bullshit.

TV Neos: Bullshit!

Architect: Denial is the most predictable of all human responses, but rest assured, this will be the sixth time we have destroyed it, and we have become exceedingly efficient at it. The function of the One is now to return to the Source, allowing a temporary dissemination of the code you carry, reinserting the prime program. After which, you will be required to select from the Matrix 23 individuals – 16 female, 7 male – to rebuild Zion. Failure to comply with this process will result in a cataclysmic system crash, killing everyone connected to the Matrix,

Matrix Reloaded Explained

which, coupled with the extermination of Zion, will ultimately result in the extinction of the entire human race.

Neo: You won't let it happen. You can't. You need human beings to survive.

Architect: There are levels of survival we are prepared to accept. However, the relevant issue is whether or not you are ready to accept the responsibility of the death of every human being on this world.

Architect: It is interesting, reading your reactions. Your 5 predecessors were, by design, based on a similar predication – a contingent affirmation that was meant to create a profound attachment to the rest of your species, facilitating the function of the One. While the others experienced this in a very general way, your experience is far more specific – vis a vis love.

Neo: Trinity.

Architect: Apropos, she entered the Matrix to save your life, at the cost of her own.

Neo: No.

Architect: Which brings us at last to the moment of truth, wherein the fundamental flaw is ultimately expressed, and the anomaly revealed as both beginning and end. There are two doors. The door to your right leads to the Source, and the salvation of Zion. The door to your left leads back to the Matrix, to her and to the end of your species. As you adequately put, the problem is choice. But we already know what you are going to do, don't we? Already, I can see the chain reaction – the chemical precursors that signal the onset of an emotion, designed specifically to overwhelm logic and reason – an emotion that is already blinding you from the simple and obvious truth. She is going to die, and there is nothing you can do to stop it. Hope. It is the quintessential human delusion, simultaneously the source of your greatest strength and your greatest weakness.

Neo: If I were you, I would hope that we don't meet again.

Architect: We won't.

Morpheus: What is that?

Link: Whatever it is, it's moving faster than anything I've ever seen.

Link: Shit, he caught her!

Trinity: Neo, I had to.

Neo: I know. The bullet is still inside.

Morpheus: Trinity, don't you quit on me now.

Trinity: I'm sorry.

Neo: Trinity. Trinity, I know you can hear me. I'm not letting go. I can't. I love you too damn much.

Link: I can't take this.

Trinity: I guess that makes us even.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Morpheus: I don't understand it. Everything was done as it was supposed to be done. Once The One reaches the Source, the war should be over.

Neo: In 24 hours it will be.

Morpheus: What?

Neo: If we don't do something in 24 hours, Zion will be destroyed.

Link: What?

Trinity: How do you know that?

Neo: I was told it would happen.

Morpheus: By whom?

Neo: It doesn't matter. I believed him.

Morpheus: That's impossible, the prophecy tells us...

Neo: It was a lie, Morpheus. The prophecy was a lie. The One was never meant to end anything. It was all another system of control.

Morpheus: I don't believe that.

Neo: But you said it yourself – how can the prophecy be true if the war isn't over? I'm sorry. I know it isn't easy to hear, but I swear to you it's the truth.

Trinity: What are we gonna do?

Neo: I don't know.

Link: Oh no.

Link: What are they doing?

Trinity: They're just out of EMP range.

Neo: It's a bomb. We have to get out of here. Now.

Morpheus: I have dreamed a dream, and now that dream has gone from me.

Link: Here they come. Let's go, Morpheus.

Neo: We won't make it.

Trinity: We have to try. Come on.

Neo: Something's different. I can feel them.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Trinity: Neo!

Morpheus: What happened?

Trinity: I don't know.

Link: It's the Hammer.

Maggie: He's in some kind of coma, but his vitals are stable. What about you?

Trinity: I'm fine.

Maggie: You could use some rest.

Trinity: No, I'm gonna stay with him.

Roland: Lock was right. He guessed that the machines would cut off the mainlines in and out of Zion. He thought a counterattack might surprise them. It sounded good, we figured we had a shot, until someone screwed it up.

Colt/Mauser: An EMP was triggered before we could get in position.

Mauser/Colt: 5 ships were instantly down.

Colt/Mauser: When the machines broke through, it wasn't a battle, it was a slaughter.

Link: Was it an accident, some sort of malfunction?

Colt/Mauser: No one knows.

Roland: Someone does.

Morpheus: Who?

Roland: Once the machines were done with us, they started digging again. We made a quick pass to look for survivors.

Link: You found one?

Roland: Only one.

To be concluded...

The Matrix Reloaded – Transcript

20 THE MATRIX REVOLUTIONS

(The Hammer: main deck)

AK: I got nothing, sir. No sign of Niobe or Ghost. Nothin' but blue pills.

Mauser: Should we jack in and try to contact them?

Roland: It wouldn't matter. My gut says they're down.

Mauser: Then we should start back.

Roland: No. If that ship can still fly, then we need it.

Mauser: I was afraid you were gonna say that.

Roland: Search every pipe, every hole, every crack we know. Sweep as wide as possible, as fast as possible.

AK: Captain, these lines are crawling with calamari.

Roland: Then the sooner we find them the better.

(The Hammer: infirmary)

Maggie: Thought you could use something to eat.

Trinity: Thank you.

Maggie: Any change?

Trinity: No. How's he?

Maggie: He's going to be fine, at least until he wakes up.

Trinity: What do you mean?

Maggie: The Captain has some questions for him. He better have some good answers. You see these cuts? I think they're self-inflicted.

Trinity: Why?

Maggie: VDTs, maybe. I don't know. But like I said, the answer had better be good.

(The Hammer: main deck)

Morpheus: Roland. I'd like to run another search through the Matrix.

Roland: For what?

Morpheus: For Neo.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

AK: How can he be in the Matrix, sir? He's not plugged in.

Morpheus: Please, for me.

(**The Hammer:** infirmary)

Maggie: This is what keeps bothering me.

Trinity: What?

Maggie: His neural patterns don't read like someone who's in a coma. The strange thing is, I see these patterns all the time.

Trinity: Where?

Maggie: On someone jacked in.

(**The Hammer:** main deck)

AK: The big bubkis. Nada. He's not in there.

Colt: Sir, we've got the projections!

Roland: How long?

Colt: Based on the point of entry and the [past] speed it looks like the machines will be inside of Zion in just under 20 hours.

AK: Jesus H. Christ.

Roland: All right, let's move with a purpose. AK, get upstairs, I want you on h

olographics. [Colt,] Mauser, I want forward and aft guns manned at all times. And make sure we are running on as few pads as possible.

Colt: Yes, sir.

Link: Hey. Hey! We got a call. Operator. It's Seraph.

Seraph: I bring word from the Oracle. You must come at once.

(Mobil Ave. train station)

Sati: Good morning.

Neo: Who are you?

Sati: My name is Sati. Your name is Neo. My papa says you're not supposed to be here. He says you must be lost. Are you lost, Neo?

Neo: Where am I?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Sati: This is the train station.

Neo: This isn't the Matrix?

Sati: That's where the Train goes. That's where we're going. But you cannot go with us.

Neo: Why not?

Sati: He won't let you.

Neo: Who won't let me?

Sati: The Trainman. (whispers) I don't like him, but my Papa says we have to do what the Trainman says or he will leave us here for ever and ever.

(Oracle's apartment)

Oracle: Morpheus, Trinity. Thank you for coming. One thing I've learned in all my years is that nothing ever works out just the way you want it to.

Trinity: Who are you?

Oracle: I'm the Oracle. I wish there was an easier way to get through this but there ain't. I'm sorry this had to happen. I'm sorry I couldn't be sitting here like you remember me. But it wasn't meant to be.

Trinity: What happened?

Oracle: I made a choice, and that choice cost me more than I wanted it to.

Morpheus: What choice?

Oracle: To help you to guide Neo. Now, since the real test for any choice is having to make the same choice again, knowing full well what it might cost – I guess I feel pretty good about that choice, 'cause here I am, at it again.

Trinity: Do you know what happened to Neo?

Oracle: Yes. He's trapped in a place between this world and the machine world. The link is controlled by a program called the Trainman. He uses it to smuggle programs in and out of the Matrix. If he finds out where Neo is before you get to him, then I'm afraid our choices are going to become difficult.

Trinity: Why?

Oracle: Because of who the Trainman works for.

Morpheus: The Merovingian.

Oracle: He has placed a bounty on your lives. You must be careful at all times. Seraph knows how to find the Trainman, he will go with you. For years, he has protected me. I hope he can do the same for you.

Seraph: Please, follow me.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Morpheus: Oracle.

Oracle: I know, Morpheus. I can see you're filled with doubt, clouded by uncertainty.

Morpheus: After everything that's happened, how can you expect me to believe you?

Oracle: I don't. I expect just what I've always expected. For you to make up your own damn mind. Believe me or don't. All I can really tell you is your friend's in trouble and he needs your help. He needs all our help.

(Mobil Ave. train station)

Sati: Are you from the Matrix?

Neo: Yes. No. I mean, I was.

Sati: Why did you leave?

Neo: I had to.

Sati: I had to leave my home too.

Rama-Kandra: Sati! Come here, darling. Leave the poor man in peace.

Sati: Yes, papa.

Rama-Kandra: I'm sorry, she is still very curious.

Neo: I know you.

Rama-Kandra: Yes, in the restaurant of the Frenchman. I am Rama-Kandra. This is my wife Kamala, my daughter Sati. We are most honoured to meet you.

Neo: You're programs.

Rama-Kandra: Oh, yes. I'm the power plant systems manager for recycling operations. My wife is an interactive software programmer, she is highly creative.

Kamala: What are you doing here? You do not belong here.

Rama-Kandra: Kamala! Goodness, I apologize. My wife can be very direct.

Neo: It's okay. I don't have an answer. I don't even know where 'here' is.

Rama-Kandra: This place is nowhere. It is between your world and our world.

Neo: Who's the Trainman?

Rama-Kandra: He works for the Frenchman.

Neo: Why'd I know you were going to say that?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Rama-Kandra: The Frenchman does not forget and he does not forgive.

Neo: You know him?

Rama-Kandra: I know only what I need to know. I know that if you want to take something from our world into your world that does not belong there, you must go to the Frenchman.

Neo: Is that what you're doing here?

Kamala: Rama, please!

Rama-Kandra: I do not want to be cruel, Kamala. He may never see another face for the rest of his life.

Neo: I'm sorry. You don't have to answer that question.

Rama-Kandra: No. I don't mind. The answer is simple. I love my daughter very much. I find her to be the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. But where we are from, that is not enough. Every program that is created must have a purpose; if it does not, it is deleted. I went to the Frenchman to save my daughter. You do not understand.

Neo: I just have never...

Rama-Kandra: ...heard a program speak of love?

Neo: It's a... human emotion.

Rama-Kandra: No, it is a word. What matters is the connection the word implies. I see that you are in love. Can you tell me what you would give to hold on to that connection?

Neo: Anything.

Rama-Kandra: Then perhaps the reason you're here is not so different from the reason I'm here.

(**Matrix:** inside a subway train)

Seraph: That's him.

Trainman: Get away! Get away from me!

Seraph: We don't want trouble.

Trainman: Get the hell away from me!

Seraph: We need your help.

Trainman: I can't help you. No one can help you!

(**Matrix:** Stellma subway stop) (the Trainman prepares to jump across the tracks in the path of the LOOP train)

Seraph: Oh, no. (the train passes, the Trainman is gone)

Seraph: Damn it.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

(Mobil Ave. train station)

Neo: When is the train due?

Rama–Kandra: It's already late. It's not like the Trainman to be late.

Neo: You think it has something to do with me?

Rama–Kandra: I cannot say. Who knows such things? Only the Oracle.

Neo: You know the Oracle?

Rama–Kandra: Everyone knows the Oracle. I consulted with her before I met with the Frenchman. She promised she would look after Sati after we said goodbye.

Neo: Goodbye? You're not staying with her?

Rama–Kandra: It is not possible. Our arrangement with the Frenchman was for our daughter only. My wife and I must return to our world.

Neo: Why?

Rama–Kandra: That is our karma.

Neo: You believe in karma?

Rama–Kandra: Karma's a word. Like 'love.' A way of saying 'what I am here to do.' I do not resent my karma – I'm grateful for it. Grateful for my wonderful wife, for my beautiful daughter. They are gifts. And so I do what I must do to honour them.

Sati: Papa, the train!

Rama–Kandra: Yes! Find your bag, quickly!

Neo: Can I carry that for you?

Rama–Kandra: All right.

Trainman: Hurry it up, I'm late! (Kamala and Sati pass, Trainman stops Neo)

Trainman: Who are you?

Rama–Kandra: He's a friend.

Kamala: Rama!

Trainman: I know you. So that's what they wanted.

Neo: I need to get back. I'll pay you anything you want.

Trainman: Oh?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Neo: One way or another I'm getting on this train

Trainman: Oh, no, no, no. You're gonna stay right here until the Merovingian says different. If I know him, you're gonna be here for a long, long time.

Neo: I don't want to hurt you.

Trainman: You don't get it. I built this place. Down here I make the rules. Down here I make the threats. Down here, I'm God. (to Rama-Kandra) Get on the train, or you'll stay here with him.

(**Matrix:** inside a car)

Seraph: We should return to the Oracle. She'll know what to do.

Trinity: No. We know what has to be done.

(Mobil Ave. train station)

Neo: Shit.

(Hel Club garage)

Q-Ball Gang Member #1: You've got to be kidding...

Q-Ball Gang Member #2: Holy shit, it's Wingless.

Q-Ball Gang Member #1: I get it. You must be ready to die.

Seraph: I need to speak with him.

Q-Ball Gang Member #1: The only way you're getting through this door is over my big dead ass.

Seraph: So be it.

(Hel Club elevator)

Seraph: There are no weapons allowed in the club. At the bottom of this elevator, there is a coat check girl. And if we're lucky, one man for checking guns.

Trinity: And if we're unlucky?

Seraph: There will be many men.

(Hel Club entrance)

Coat Check Girl: Can I take your... oh my God.

(Hel Club shootout)

(Hel Club – VIP lounge)

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Merovingian: What in the hell? (laughs) I don't believe this.

Merovingian: (to the DJ) Hey. Hey! (to Seraph) The prodigal child returns. L'an

ge sans ailes (Trans: The angel without wings). Are you here for the bounty, Seraph? (laughs heartily) Tell me, how many bullets are there in those guns? I do n't know, but I don't think you have enough.

Seraph: We only want to talk.

Merovingian: Oh yes, I'm sure you do, you have fought through hell to do so, yes? I'll tell you what I'll do. Put down the guns and I will promise you safe passage out of here.

Seraph: All three of us.

Merovingian: Oh yes, yes. Of course.

(Trinity, Seraph, and Morpheus put down the guns and are escorted up the stairs)

Merovingian: (laughs) Quelle bonne surprise, n'est pas? (Trans: What a fine surprise, isn't it?) Who could've guessed we'd all be seeing each other so soon after our last meeting? A fate too kind. And since you, my little Judas, have brought them here, I can only surmise that the fortune teller has found herself a nother shell? Disappointing, but not unexpected. I do hope, however, she has the good manners to learn her lesson, and to remember that there is no action without consequence. And if you take something from me you will pay the price.

Seraph: You know why we are here.

Merovingian: (laughs) Come, now. What kind of question is this? Of course I know. It's my business to know. Some might think this a strange coincidence, but I do not. I am curious, though, as to how it actually happened. Do you know?

Trinity: No.

Merovingian: No? I didn't think so. But it is always best to ask.

Morpheus: We want to make a deal.

Merovingian: (laughs) Always straight to business, huh, Morpheus? Okay. I have something you want. To make a deal, you must have something I want, yes? And it so happens there is something I want. Something I've wanted ever since I first came here. It is said they cannot be taken, they can only be given.

Morpheus: What?

Merovingian: The eyes of the Oracle. (laughs)

Merovingian: I have told you before, there's no escaping the nature of the universe. It is that nature that has again brought you to me. Where some see coincidence, I see consequence. Where others see chance, I see cost. Bring me the eyes of the Oracle, and I will give you back your saviour. That seems a particularly fair and reasonable deal to me. Yes, no?

Trinity: I don't have time for this shit.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

(Hel Club upstairs fight)

Trinity: You want to make a deal, how about this? You give me Neo, or we all die right here, right now.

Merovingian: Interesting deal. You are really ready to die for this man?

Trinity: (cocks gun) Believe it.

Perseph: She'll do it. If she has to, she'll kill every one of us. She's in love.

Merovingian: It is remarkable how similar the pattern of love is to the pattern of insanity.

Trinity: Time's up. What's it gonna be, Merv?

(Mobil Ave train station)

Neo: Ok. You got yourself into this. You can get yourself out.

(**Matrix:** inside a car)

Morpheus: Are you ready for us?

Link: Almost, sir. They got some pretty ancient hacks here, we're working on it. Did you find Neo?

Morpheus: Can't you see him?

Link: No, sir. We were reading something but I couldn't tell what it was.

Neo: I can't leave yet. (Trinity looks over at him)

Neo: I have to see her.

Trinity: Now?

Neo: This is my last chance.

(Oracle's kitchen)

Oracle: That's it. That's the secret. You've got to use your hands.

Sati: Why?

Oracle: Cookies need love like everything does.

Sati: Neo!

Oracle: I was hoping to have these done before you got here. Oh well. Sati, honey, I think it's time for a tasting. Take the bowl to Seraph and find out if they're ready.

Sati: Okay. (to Neo) I'm glad you got out.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Neo: Me too.

Oracle: So, do you recognize me?

Neo: A part of you.

Oracle: Yeah, that's how it works. Some bits you lose, some bits you keep. I do n't yet recognize my face in the mirror, but... I still love candy. (offers Neo a piece of red candy)

Neo: No, thank you.

Oracle: Remember what you were like when you first walked through my door, jitt ery as a junebug? And now just look at you. You sure did surprise me, Neo, and you still do.

Neo: You gave me a few surprises, too.

Oracle: I hope I helped.

Neo: You helped me to get here, but my question is why? Where does this go? Whe re does it end?

Oracle: I don't know.

Neo: You don't know or you won't tell me?

Oracle: I told you before. No one can see beyond a choice they don't understand , and I mean no one.

Neo: What choice?

Oracle: It doesn't matter. It's my choice. I have mine to make, same as you hav e yours.

Neo: Does that include what things to tell me and what not to tell me?

Oracle: Of course not.

Neo: Then why didn't you tell me about the Architect? Why didn't you tell me ab out Zion, the Ones before me – why didn't you tell me the truth?

Oracle: Because it wasn't time for you to know.

Neo: Who decided it wasn't time?

Oracle: You know who. (She points at the Temet Nosce sign above the door)

Neo: I did. (Oracle nods) Then I think it's time for me to know a few more thin gs.

Oracle: So do I.

Neo: Tell me how I separated my mind from my body without jacking in. Tell me h ow I stopped four sentinels by thinking it. Tell me just what the hell is happe ning to me.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Oracle: The power of the One extends beyond this world. It reaches from here all the way back to where it came from.

Neo: Where?

Oracle: The Source. That's what you felt when you touched those Sentinels. But you weren't ready for it. You should be dead, but apparently you weren't ready for that, either.

Neo: The Architect told me that if I didn't return to the Source, Zion would be destroyed by midnight tonight.

Oracle: (rolls eyes) Please... You and I may not be able to see beyond our own choices, but that man can't see past any choices.

Neo: Why not?

Oracle: He doesn't understand them – he can't. To him they are variables in an equation. One at a time each variable must be solved and countered. That's his

purpose: to balance an equation.

Neo: What's your purpose?

Oracle: To unbalance it.

Neo: Why? What do you want?

Oracle: I want the same thing you want, Neo. And I am willing to go as far as you are to get it.

Neo: The end of the war. (Oracle nods) Is it going to end?

Oracle: One way, or another.

Neo: Can Zion be saved?

Oracle: I'm sorry, I don't have the answer to that question, but if there's an answer, there's only one place you're going to find it.

Neo: Where?

Oracle: You know where. And if you can't find the answer, then I'm afraid there may be no tomorrow for any of us.

Neo: What does that mean?

Oracle: Everything that has a beginning has an end. I see the end coming. I see the darkness spreading. I see death. And you are all that stands in his way.

Neo: Smith.

Oracle: (nods) Very soon he's going to have the power to destroy this world, but I believe he won't stop there; he can't. He won't stop until there's nothing left at all.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Neo: What is he?

Oracle: He is you. Your opposite, your negative, the result of the equation trying to balance itself out.

Neo: What if I can't stop him?

Oracle: One way or another, Neo, this war is going to end. Tonight, the future of both worlds will be in your hands... or in his.

(The core of the Hammer)

Trinity: How are you feeling? Are you all right?

Neo: I need time.

Roland: That figures.

Maggie: Captain Roland!

Roland: What's up, Maggie?

Maggie: Bane, sir. he's conscious.

Roland: Good. Maybe he's got some answers.

(Oracle's kitchen)

Oracle: Mmm, I love that smell. I sure am gonna miss it.

Seraph: Oracle.

Oracle: I know, I know. Sati, honey! Take a few cookies and go with Seraph.

Sati: Can I come back? I would like to come back!

Oracle: I would like that too.

Sati: So I'll see you tomorrow.

Oracle: I hope so, honey, I hope so.

(**Matrix:** inside the building on the floor of the Oracle's apartment)

Sati: I'm scared, Seraph.

Seraph: Come.

Sati: He's following us.

Smith: Well, well, it's been a long time. I remember chasing you was like chasing a ghost.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Seraph: I have beaten you before.

Smith: That's true, but as you can see, things are a little different now. (to Sati) And you must be the last exile.

Sati: The Oracle told me about you.

Smith: Really? And what did she say about me?

Sati: That you're a bad man.

Smith: Oh, I'm not so bad once you get to know me.

(Oracle's kitchen)

Smith: The great and powerful Oracle. We meet at last. I suppose you've been expecting me, right? The all-knowing Oracle is never surprised. How can she be, she knows everything. But if that's true, then why is she here? If she knew I was coming, why didn't she leave? (sweeps plate of cookies off table) Maybe you knew I was going to do that, maybe you didn't. If you did, that means you baked those cookies and set that plate right there deliberately, purposefully. Which means you're sitting there also deliberately, purposefully.

Oracle: What did you do with Sati?

Smith/Sati: Cookies need love like everything does.

Smiths: (laugh)

Oracle: You are a bastard.

Smith: You would know, Mom.

Oracle: Do what you're here to do.

Smith: Yes, ma'am.

Smith/Oracle: (laughs maniacally)

(The Hammer: mess hall)

Bane: I really wish I could help, but I just... I don't remember any of it.

Roland: What about the cuts on your arms? Those cuts are more than one day old.

Bane: Yeah, definitely. You're right about that, sir. They look like they might be self-inflicted. Why would I do something like that to myself? Unless, of course, I wasn't myself... but... if I'm not me, then who am I?

Roland: Has this man been tested for VDTs?

Maggie: Yes, sir, it was negative. But he is showing a lot of unusual neural activity. Some cross-synaptic firing as well as signs of recent trauma, with fresh fibrotic scarring throughout the cortex.

Roland: I want the truth, I don't care what it takes. Make him remember.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

(The Hammer: main deck)

Mauser: Sir? We found her!

Roland: The Logos?

Mauser: Yes, sir.

Roland: 'Bout time we had some goddamn good news.

Morpheus: Are the thermals picking up any signs of life?

AK: No, sir. Nothing yet.

Roland: What about the ship?

AK: Well, holographic says the hull is still intact.

Roland: Drop her down [...]

Colt: Yes, sir.

Roland: Get a full diagnostic on that ship as fast as humanly possible.

(Logos crash site)

Colt: Careful, sir! The squids are sneaky bastards. Could be a trap.

AK: What was that?

Niobe: You can put that shit away, boys. All she needs is a jump.

Morpheus: Niobe.

Niobe: Morpheus. Are you all right?

Morpheus: Yes, I'm fine. We didn't know what happened after. I'm sorry.

Niobe: It's okay. I'm happy to see you too. Did you get Neo out?

Morpheus: Yes. How did you know about that?

Niobe: The Oracle.

Morpheus: You saw her?

Niobe: Just before the sentinels found us.

Morpheus: What did she tell you?

Niobe: The same thing she always does. Exactly what I needed to hear.

(Zion: council room)

Lock: In less than 12 hours, the machines will breach the dock walls. Every simulation we've run, we've seen that once the machines are inside the city the odds of our survival decrease dramatically. Thus our primary objective must be to destroy or disable the diggers inside the dock. If we can do that, perhaps we can prevent them from ever reaching the city. If not, the only place we'll be able to mount an effective defense will be at the entrance of the Temple. It is small enough that it will force them into a bottleneck, allowing us to concentrate the remainder of our defense.

Councillor Dillard: We understand that you've requested additional volunteers.

Lock: That is correct.

Councillor West: Precisely what size of force are you planning to commit to the primary dock objective?

Lock: Right now, the entire APU core and half the infantry.

Councillor West: Half the infantry?

Lock: If it were up to me, Councillor, I'd take every man, woman, and child, put a gun in their hands and march them straight into that dock.

Councillor Dillard: Perhaps it is best that it is not up to you.

Lock: Time will tell, Councillor.

Councillor Hamann: Commander, just one more question. Has there been word from the Nebuchadnezzar?

Lock: None, and at this point there's no reason to expect that there ever will be.

Councillor Hamann: Perhaps. But we can hope.

Lock: I'm afraid hope is an indulgence I don't have time for.

(Zion: Zee's and Link's bunker)

Cas: Zee, what are you doing?

Zee: Making shells.

Cas: They're evacuating our level. We have to go.

Zee: I'm not going with you.

Cas: What?

Zee: They've called for volunteers to hold the dock.

Cas: (to the kids) Kids, you stay here. (to Zee) I know how you feel, Zee, but you can't do that.

Zee: I have to.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Cas: Why?

Zee: Because I love him. I love him the same as he loves me. And if I were out there and he were here, I know what he'd do.

Cas: But you're gonna get yourself killed. It's crazy, Zee.

Zee: Maybe it is. But ask yourself, if it were Dozer, and you knew the only chance you had to see him again was to hold the dock, what would you do?

Cas: Make shells.

(Zion: dock)

Mifune: What the shit is going on over here?

Kid: An accident, sir! I didn't see... I'm sorry!

Mifune: Who the hell are you?

Kid: I'm here to volunteer, sir.

Mifune: What's a pod-born pencil-neck like you doin' volunteering for my corps?

Kid: I want to do my part, sir! We gotta hold the dock.

Mifune: How old are you, kid?

Kid: Eighteen.

Mifune: Shoulda said sixteen, I mighta believed that!

Kid: OK, I'm sixteen.

Mifune: Minimal age for the corps is eighteen, sixteen's too young!

Kid: The machines won't care how old I am. They'll kill me just the same.

Mifune: Ain't that the goddamned truth.

Kid: Give me a chance, sir. I won't let you down.

Mifune: You do... you'll find me and the machines have something in common.

(Logos: main deck)

Ghost (v.o.): Okay. Charge the igniter.

Sparks: She lives again.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

AK: You want us to patch an uplink to reload the operations software, Sparky?

Sparks: Yeah, that'd be swell. You can clean the windshield while you're at it. Uplinks are in place, I'm bringing her back online. Looking good, except, uh.. . something wrong with the Matrix feed.

(Hammer: main deck)

AK: No, there's not. You're looking at what we're looking at.

Sparks (v.o.): What the hell's going on in there?

Link: Whatever it is, it can't be good.

(Hammer: mess hall)

Roland: The machines have taken Junction 21. The way I see it, if we drop down from broadcast here, at Interstate 153, we might surprise them. We go first, hammer as deep as we can, then blow our EMP. Hopefully, we can punch a hole big enough for you to get through.

Niobe: (sighs)

Roland: It ain't pretty, but the way I see it, it's the only way back.

Niobe: No it's not. There's another way. A support line. It drops down right here. A thousand meters short of 21. If we're lucky, we may be able to slip down without them ever knowing.

Roland: That's a mechanical line. It's impossible, no one can pilot mechanical.

Niobe: I can.

Roland: Bullshit.

Niobe: I've done it.

Morpheus: That was a long time ago, Niobe.

Niobe: I said I can do it.

Roland: So what? If you can, you'll be the only one that can. There's no way we can follow you.

Neo: Hi. I know time is always against us, and I'm sorry I took so long. But I wanted to be sure.

Trinity: Sure of what?

Neo: I know what I have to do.

Morpheus: What?

Neo: There's no easy way to say this, so I'll just say it. I have to take one of the ships.

Roland: What?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Morpheus: To go where?

Neo: To the machine city.

Roland: (laughs)

Neo: I know it's difficult to understand...

Roland: No, it's not – you're out of your goddamn mind.

Neo: I still have to go.

Roland: You'll never make it. hundred years no ship has gone within a hundred kilometers of it, you'll never make it.

Neo: I have to try.

Morpheus: Is this what the Oracle told you?

Neo: No.

Roland: This is asinine! If you want to kill yourself, go do it, but do it with out wasting one of our ships.

Neo: You have to believe me, I have to go.

Roland: Bullshit! While I'm captain of this ship, I say where it has to go. Bel ieve me, this ship will go to hell long before I let you take it anywhere.

Niobe: He can take mine.

Roland: You can't do that.

Niobe: Don't even think of trying to tell me what I can or cannot do with my s hip after that little speech.

Roland: But for Christ's sake, Niobe...

Niobe: I'll pilot this ship. He can take mine. If we leave inside an hour, we s hould reach Zion as the machines do. That's as good a plan as any.

Roland: It's a waste. A goddamn waste.

Niobe: Two ships, two directions. Sounds like providence, doesn't it, Morpheus?

Morpheus: You've never believed in The One.

Niobe: I still don't.

Morpheus: Then why are you doing this?

Niobe: I believe in him.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Neo: Thank you.

(The Hammer: infirmary)

Bane: What's that for?

Maggie: To help you relax. To make it easier for you to remember.

Bane: What if I don't want to remember?

Maggie: Why would you want that?

Bane: What if I blew that EMP? What if I did destroy those ships and I am responsible for the deaths of all those men? If I did that, it wouldn't be very safe for me here, would it? (Maggie tries to inject Bane with the relaxant, but he stabs her and she falls over dead)

Bane: Of course, it might not be very safe for you, either.

(The Hammer: somewhere)

Trinity: I'm ready.

Neo: Trinity... There's something I have to say. Something you need to understand. I know I'm supposed to go. But beyond that – I don't know...

Trinity: I know. You don't think you're coming back. I knew it the moment you said you had to leave. I could see it in your face. Just like you knew the moment you looked at me that I was coming with you.

Neo: I'm scared, Trin.

Trinity: So am I. Took me ten minutes to buckle up one boot. But I'll tell you something. Six hours ago I told the Merovingian that I was ready to give anything and everything for you. Do you know what's changed in the past 6 hours?

Neo: No.

Trinity: Nothing.

(The Hammer: gun bay/pilot cabin)

Roland (v.o.): Are you finished loading that ammunition?

Mauser: Just about, sir!

Roland: Let's move it, we are out of time.

Niobe: You're not leaving them anything?

Roland: Said he didn't need it.

(The Hammer: main deck)

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Link: (hugs Trinity) I ain't saying goodbye. I'm saying good luck.

Trinity: Thank you.

Morpheus: I can only hope you know what you're doing.

Neo: Me, too. It was an honour, sir.

Morpheus: No, the honour's still mine.

(The Hammer: pilot cabin)

Mauser (v.o.): We're ready, sir.

Roland: 'Bout damn time. (to Niobe) We're already late, Captain, so let's hit i t and hit it hard.

Niobe: Bye, baby. Take good care of them.

(The Logos: pilot cabin)

Trinity: Ready? (Neo nods. Trinity punches a button and the lights go out)

Trinity: Engine's still firing. Must be a fuse. I'll check it out.

Bane: I should've known he'd sent his bitch first.

Trinity: Bane?!

Bane: No one ever got away from me as many times as you did. Every single time I thought it was the last. Every time I was sure we had you, but somehow you'd slip through our fingers. I really can't express just how aggravating that can be.

Trinity: What are you talking about?

Bane: I think I might enjoy killing you as much as killing him.

Trinity: Neo! It's Bane, he's psychotic!

Bane: You're gonna pay for that.

(Hammer: pilot cabin)

Ghost: Twenty-seven kilometers to go.

AK (v.o.): Captain, we've got an emergency down here.

Roland: What is it, AK?

AK: It's Maggie, sir. She's dead. Murdered. I think it was Bane.

Roland: Goddamn it.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

(Hammer: main deck)

Roland: I knew it. I knew he was out of his goddamn mind. He fired that EMP. Go ddamn it, I should have beaten it out of him.

Colt: We've searched the whole ship, captain. He ain't here.

Roland: I know where he is.

Morpheus: The Logos.

Link: We gotta go back!

Roland: Too late.

Link: You don't know that, what if they need our help?

Roland: It's too dangerous.

Link: Why?

Morpheus: Because if he's killed them, he'll control another EMP.

Roland: At this point, they're on their own... just like us.

(Logos: main deck)

Bane: Mr. Anderson. I see you're as predictable in this world as you are in the other.

Neo: What?

Trinity: He's out of his mind.

Bane: It might appear that way to you, but Mr. Anderson and I know that appearances can be deceiving. Confused, Mr. Anderson? It'll all become clear in a moment. Now, thank you for bringing me the gun. You can set it down right there.

Trinity: Don't do it. Shoot. Shoot now.

Bane: Yes, shoot, fry us, burn us alive!

Trinity: Shoot, Neo. If you don't, he'll kill us both.

Bane: Look at him. He knows he should do it but he won't. He can't.

Trinity: Do it. (Neo puts the gun down)

Bane: Back away from the gun and turn around.

Neo: Let her go.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Bane: Somehow familiar, isn't it?. We've been here before, you and I. Remember? I do. I think of nothing else.

Neo: Who are you?

Bane: Still don't recognize me? I admit, it is difficult to think, encased in this rotting piece of meat. The stink of it filling every breath, a suffocating cloud you can't escape. (spits blood) Disgusting! Look at how pathetically fragile it is. Nothing this weak is meant to survive.

Neo: What do you want?

Bane: I want what you want. (Neo looks up with recognition in his eyes)

Bane: Yes... That's it, Mr. Anderson. Look past the flesh, look through the soft gelatin of these dull cow eyes and see your enemy.

Neo: No.

Bane: Oh yes, Mr. Anderson.

Neo: It can't be.

Bane: There's nowhere I can't go, there's nowhere I won't find you.

Neo: It's impossible.

Bane: Not impossible. Inevitable. Goodbye, Mr. Anderson.

Trinity: This is it, it's gotta be. (She pushes a circuit breaker, the lights go out)

(Bane/Neo fight)

Neo: (screams)

Trinity: Oh, no.

Bane: I wish you could see yourself, Mr. Anderson. The blind messiah. You're a symbol for all of your kind, Mr. Anderson. Helpless, pathetic. Just waiting to be put out of your misery.

Neo: I can see you.

Bane: It's not over, Mr. Anderson. It's not over.

Neo: Trinity!

Trinity: Neo. Oh no. Your eyes.

Neo: I'll be okay. It's all right, Trin. But I think you're gonna have to drive .

(Zion: command centre)

Lock's Lieutenant: Seismic's projecting twenty-two minutes to breach.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Lock: They can't know we don't have an EMP, they'll have to attack in waves. Concentrate our offense on the diggers. Order the APUs into position.

Lock's Lieutenant: Yes, sir.

(Zion: dock)

Mifune: All right, this is it. Now, you all know me, so I'll just say this as simple as I can. If it's our time to die, it's our time. All I ask is: if we have to give these bastards our lives, we give 'em hell before we do!

APU fighters: (cheer)

(Zion: a tunnel)

Zee: You scared, Charra?

Charra: Shit, yeah. I'll make you a deal, though. You keep loadin', I keep shoo tin'.

Zee: Deal.

(Hammer: pilot cabin)

AK: Holy Christ would you look at that?

Roland: Quiet. [How far down?]

Ghost: 1.4 kilometers.

Morpheus: Still generating too hot field.

Niobe: Ghost, kill all auxilliary systems. Give me full manual, drop down to four pads.

AK: It'll bottom out!

Niobe: Easy, baby.

Ghost: 700 meters.

Niobe: If we can just get close enough.

Ghost: 600 meters.

AK: There.

Niobe: Shit!

Ghost: Jig's up, here they come.

Niobe: Give me full power, full systems!

Roland: Man the gun turrets, every goddamn one of 'em!

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Niobe: Ghost, you're the best gunner we have, go with them. Morpheus, take his place!

Link: I'm comin', baby.

Morpheus: Here they come.

Roland (v.o.): Slow down, this ain't the Logos!

Niobe: Hold on to your lunch, Roland, here we go.

Roland: Holy Christ! Didn't know this ship could do that.

(**Zion:** command center)

Operations Officer Mattis: Breached! The dock is breached!

(**Zion:** dock)

Mifune: Knuckle up! (The sentinels start coming through the breach)

Mifune: For Zion!

Mifune: Knuckle up!

APU-9 Soldier: Reload!

(**Zion:** ammo compartment)

Radio Bunker Man: Reload Nine! (Sentinel is shot down by the gunners in the ammo compartment)

Radio Bunker Man: Go, go, move, move!

Mifune: Watch the left! Don't let 'em through! (One of the APUs falls from the bridge) Zuka!

(A huge sentinel swarm moves towards the tower)

Tower Soldier: Oh my God. (Sentinels swarm the tower, knocking down the tower gun)

(**Zion:** dock periphery)

Charra: Shit.

(**Zion:** command centre)

Lock: Where the hell's my infantry? I want that goddamn machine taken down!

(**Zion:** dock periphery)

Charra: Take this!

Zee: Oh shit!

Matrix Reloaded Explained

(digger falls down)

(Zion: command center)

Military Personnel: Yeah!

Operations Officer Mattis: 72 at the breach point.

Lock: Goddamn it!

(Hammer)

Niobe: Shit, she's got a fat ass. (Sentinels swarm over the hoverpads of The Hammer)

Niobe: Keep 'em off me!

Roland: [Goddamn], there's a shitload of 'em.

Mauser: Captain! Do you see that?

Roland: They're going for the radio, stop 'em! (Sentinels take out radio)

(Zion: dock periphery)

Charra: Yeah. (Charra positions herself on the edge)

Charra: Grab my belt. (Zee grabs her belt and Charra hangs over the precipice)

Charra: Just give me one clean shot. (Charra shoots, but fails to find her intended mark)

>>>**Charra:** Shit.

>>>**Charra:** God damn it.

Zee: Charra!

(Zion: command centre)

First Operator at Command: Commander Lock, I've got incoming!

Lock: I got a dock load of incoming!

First Operator at Command: Sir, yes, sir, but this is different, sir.

Lock: What?

First Operator at Command: I think it's one of ours.

Lock's Lieutenant: The holographics are trying to confirm, sir.

Lock: Contact them, I want access codes.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Lock's Lieutenant: We're trying, sir, there's no response.

Lock: It's a trick. That's not one of ours, it can't be. That's a mechanical line. No one can pilot mechanical.

(**The Hammer:** pilot cabin)

Niobe: Fore and aft – 30 degrees, 80 percent!

Morpheus: 30 degrees, 80 percent.

Niobe: Fore starboard, 60 degrees, 20 percent.

Morpheus: 60 degrees.

Niobe: Come on, keep up!

Morpheus: I'm trying!

(**Zion:** command centre)

Operations Officer Mattis: Sir, holographic confirms. It's the Hammer, sir.

Lock: How can that be?

Operations Officer Mattis: The ship is under attack, sustaining heavy damage. But at its present velocity, it'll reach Gate 3 in twelve minutes.

Lock's Lieutenant: Sir, their EMP could take out every sentinel up there.

Lock: It'd take out more than that. It'd wipe out our entire defense system. We blow an EMP in there, we will lose the dock!

Lock's Lieutenant: Sir, we've already lost the dock.

Lock: Open the gate.

Zion Gate Operator: Gate 3's not responding! It's taken critical damage, sir! We've lost control! We can't open it!

(**The Hammer:** pilot cabin)

Morpheus: There's the exit.

Niobe: On my mark, give me full power, 90 degrees, lower left starboard.

Morpheus: Full power, 90 degrees.

Niobe: Now! (She guides the ship into the mechanical line) Hold on, baby.

Roland: Goddamn, woman, you can drive.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Niobe: We ain't home yet. What about the gate?

Morpheus: The sentinels are inside the dock.

Niobe: Are we too late?

(**Zion:** command centre)

Lock: How many APUs are operational?

Lock's Lieutenant: Thirteen, sir.

Lock: Get me the one closest to Gate 3.

(**Zion:** dock)

Mifune: (screams) Reload!

(**Zion:** ammo compartment)

Radio Bunker Man: It's pissin' metal. (Kid gets the ammo cart rolling toward the door)

Radio Bunker Man: Go!

(**Zion:** dock)

Mifune: Heads up, they're comin' down! (Kid's guardians die)

Mifune: Behind you!

Kid: It's jammed!

Mifune: Forget it, kid! Get outta here!

Kid: Got it!

Kid: Captain Mifune! Oh, no.

Mifune: ...coming. They're coming. The Hammer.

Kid: What?

Mifune: You have to open that gate. Cut the counterweights. You can do it. Hurr y. There's no time.

Kid: Captain. I didn't finish the training program.

Mifune: Neither did I.

(**The Hammer:** turret)

Roland: Shut that down!

Matrix Reloaded Explained

[?]: Kill the feeder!

Roland: We can't make it! We gotta blow the EMP now!

Niobe: [...]

(Zion: dock)

[female (v.o.): [Mayday!]

Kid: Keep the weight. Light as a feather. Light as a feather. (Kid maneuvers the APU toward Gate 3, the sentinels notice him and go in to attack)

(Zion: command centre)

Lock's Lieutenant: Commander, holographic reports Captain Mifune's APU is up and moving to Gate 3!

(Zion: Gate 3)

Kid: Don't oversqueeze the trigger...

(Zion: command centre)

Lock's Lieutenant: Captain Mifune's APU's just reached Gate 3!

Lock: How much time?

Mattis Operations Officer: Two minutes to impact!

Lock: Captain Mifune, do you copy?

Lock's Lieutenant: His radio is down, sir.

Lock: Mifune, this is Lock. I don't know if you can hear me but if you can...

(Zion: a tunnel)

Lock (v.o.): ...the Hammer is two minutes away. You've got two minutes, Captain, to get that gate open.

Zee: Link!

(Hammer: turret)

Roland: Get to the main deck! Charge the EMP!

(Zion: Gate 3)

Zee: Do it, Kid.

Kid: Neo. I believe.

(Hammer: pilot cabin)

Niobe: Yes!

Morpheus: Can we make it?

Niobe: We ain't come this far.

Link: Almost home.. Almost home...

Morpheus: Burn it, Link!

(Zion: command centre)

Military personnel: (cheer)

(Hammer: pilot cabin)

Morpheus: You did it.

Niobe: No. We did it.

Morpheus: You're a hell of a pilot.

Niobe: Some things in this world never change.

Morpheus: But some things do?

Niobe: Luckily, some things do.

(Zion: dock)

Zion crowd: (cheer)

Zee: Link!

Link: Zee?

Zee: Link!

Link: Zee!!!

Zee: I knew you'd come. I knew it.

Link: I made a promise.

Zee: You did wear it.

Link: Are you kidding? I'm never gonna take it off!

(Zion: personnel gate)

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Lock: Three captains, one ship. I assume the other ships were lost under equally pointless circumstances?

Niobe: Good to see you too, Jason.

Lock: Council's waiting to hear an explanation. You'll forgive me for not attending, but I have to try to salvage this debacle.

Roland: Did I miss something, Commander? I thought we just saved the dock.

Lock: That's the problem with you people. You can't think for five minutes in front of your face. That EMP knocked out almost every piece of hardware and every APU. If I were the machines, I would send every Sentinel I had here right now. Saved the dock, captain? You've just handed it to them on a silver platter.

(Zion: dock)

[?]: Come on, get it cut!

[?]: The bridge is clear.

[?]: You hear that?

(Zion: command centre)

Lock: Get that cable cut! I want that system back online.

Lock's Lieutenant: Commander, it's the dock. We've got incoming.

Lock: Order everyone to fall back. Seal the shaft. Now.

(Zion: dock)

[man]: Move it!

(Zion: control centre:)

[man]: All clear.

Lock: Do it. (the shaft is sealed, and he looks up) Your move.

(Zion: small room)

Councillor Dillard: So you gave them your ship?

Niobe: That is correct, Councillor, I did.

Councillor Grace: Knowing what he planned to do with it?

Niobe: (nods)

Councillor Hamann: And the Oracle said nothing of this?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Niobe: She told me Neo would need my help, and when the time came I would choose to help him or not.

Councillor West: But what hope can a single vessel have against their entire defense system?

Roland: None, it's completely impossible, but he wouldn't listen. He wouldn't even take any ammunition. He was totally out of his goddamn mind.

Morpheus: No, he wasn't. Neo is doing what he believes he must do. I don't know if what he's doing is right, and I don't know if he'll reach the machine city. And if he does, I don't know what he can do to save us. But I do know that as long as there's a single breath in his body, he will not give up. And neither can we.

(**The Logos:** pilot cabin)

Trinity: Temperature's dropping. Here we go.

Neo: We're over the fields, aren't we?

Trinity: How do you know that?

Neo: I can feel them. (The camera pans over the field briefly)

Neo: Over there. There's our path. Can you see it? Three lines.

Trinity: Power lines.

Neo: Follow them.

(**Zion:** command centre)

Officer Wirtz: What are they doing?

Second Operator at Command: I don't know. Lieutenant!

Lock: God damn it.

Lock's Lieutenant: What do we do now, Commander?

(**Zion:** small room)

Lock: It is now a matter of time. The machines will breach the walls of the city. I recommend that the Council join the rest of the non-military personnel inside the Temple.

Councillor Grace: How long do we have?

Lock: Two hours. Maybe less. My men have begun fortifying the entrance with enough artillery to make our last stand. Beyond that, there isn't anything more I can do.

Councillor Dillard: Commander, do you think that we have any chance of surviving?

Lock: If I were you, Councillor, I wouldn't ask me that question. I would ask him (motions with hand toward Morpheus)

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Councillor Dillard: Why?

Lock: Because he's the one who believes in miracles.

(Logos: pilot cabin)

Neo: There, those mountains. That's it.

Trinity: Do you see what's out there?

Neo: Yes.

Trinity: If you tell me we'll make it, I'll believe you.

Neo: We'll make it. We have to.

(They fly towards 01 as the city's defense system gets activated and sends bombs their way)

Trinity: Sentinels!

Neo: There's too many.

Trinity: Gotcha! Come on, Neo, I need help here!

Neo: I can't beat them.

Trinity: What'll we do?

Neo: Go up, over them.

Trinity: What?

Neo: The sky... it's the only way.

Trinity: Then up we go.

(They get past the cloud cover and fly up into the sky)

Trinity: Beautiful.

(They start falling back toward the ground)

Neo: Pump the igniter, the ship will start. Again, slowly. Now!

(The Logos crashes)

Neo: Trin? Trinity? Trinity???

Trinity: I'm here.

Neo: Where?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Trinity: Here.

Neo: We made it.

Trinity: You said we would.

Neo: It's unbelievable, Trin. Lights everywhere. Like the whole thing was built with light. I wish you could see what I see.

Trinity: You've already shown me so much.

Neo: What is it, Trinity? What's wrong?

Trinity: I can't come with you, Neo. I've gone as far as I can.

Neo: Why? Oh, no. Oh no, no, no.

Trinity: It's all right. It's time. I've done all that I could do. Now you have to do the rest. You have to finish it. You have to save Zion.

Neo: I can't. Not without you.

Trinity: Yes, you can. You will. I believe it, I always have.

Neo: Trinity... Trinity. You can't die. You can't. You can't.

Trinity: Yes, I can. You brought me back once, but not this time.

Neo: (sniffs)

Trinity: Do you remember... on that roof after you caught me... the last thing I said to you?

Neo: You said: "I'm sorry."

Trinity: That was my last thought. I wished I had one more chance, to say what really mattered, to say how much I loved you, how grateful I was for every moment I was with you. But by the time I knew how to say what I wanted to, it was too late. But you brought me back. You gave me my wish. One more chance to say what I really wanted to say... Kiss me, once more. Kiss me. (They kiss, and Trinity dies)

Neo: (sobs)

(Zion: the Temple entrance)

Lock: Get that damn thing mounted. (the digger breaches the city dome) Hurry.

[man2]: Let's go, let's go, let's go!

(Zion: Temple)

Link: Neo. If you're gonna do something, you better do it quick.

Matrix Reloaded Explained

(01)

Neo: I only ask to say what I've come to say, after that, do what you want and I won't try to stop you.

Deus Ex Machina: Speak.

Neo: The program 'Smith' has grown beyond your control. Soon he will spread through this city as he spread through the Matrix. You cannot stop him, but I can.

Deus Ex Machina: We don't need you. We need nothing.

Neo: If that's true, then I've made a mistake and you should kill me now.

Deus Ex Machina: What do you want?

Neo: Peace.

(Zion: Temple entrance) (Sentinels charge the temple entrance, then suddenly stop)

Niobe: What are they doing? (to Morpheus) What are you doing!?

Lock: Morpheus!

(01)

Deus Ex Machina: And if you fail?

Neo: I won't.

(Zion: Temple entrance)

Niobe: (looks up and sees sentinels slowly circling) Neo.

Morpheus: He fights for us.

(Matrix: city street lined with Smiths)

Smith/Oracle: Mr. Anderson, welcome back. We missed you. You like what I've done with the place?

Neo: It ends tonight.

Smith/Oracle: I know it does – I've seen it. That's why the rest of me is just going to enjoy the show – we already know that I'm the one that beats you.

(Super Burly Brawl part 1: spinning/flying battle)

Smith/Oracle: Can you feel it, Mr. Anderson, closing in on you? Well, I can. I really should thank you for it, after all, it was your life that taught me the purpose of all life. The purpose of life is to end.

(Super Burly Brawl part 2: flying battle)

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Smith/Oracle: Why, Mr. Anderson, why? Why, why do you do it? Why, why get up? Why keep fighting? Do you believe you're fighting for something, for more than your survival? Can you tell me what it is, do you even know? Is it freedom or truth, perhaps peace – could it be for love? Illusions, Mr. Anderson, vagaries of perception. Temporary constructs of a feeble human intellect trying desperately to justify an existence that is without meaning or purpose. And all of them as artificial as the Matrix itself. Although, only a human mind could invent something as insipid as love. You must be able to see it, Mr. Anderson, you must know it by now! You can't win, it's pointless to keep fighting! Why, Mr. Anderson, why, why do you persist?

Neo: Because I choose to.

(Super Burly Brawl part 3: crater battle)

Smith/Oracle: This is my world! My world!

(Neo is knocked back against the crater wall and is lying on the ground)

Smith/Oracle: Wait... I've seen this. This is it, this is the end. Yes, you were laying right there, just like that, and I... I... I stand here, right here, I'm... I'm supposed to say something. I say... Everything that has a beginning has an end, Neo.

(Neo begins to get up again)

Smith/Oracle: What? What did I just say? No... No, this isn't right, this can't be right. Get away from me!

Neo: What are you afraid of?

Smith/Oracle: It's a trick!

Neo: You were right, Smith. You were always right. It was inevitable. (Smith/Oracle imprints over Neo)

Smith/Oracle: Is it over?

(Smith/Neo nods, with a slight grin. Neo's real body jerks, an intense aura of orange light appears around Neo's body, light explodes from Smith/Neo and from the real Neo, Smith/Neo is destroyed)

Smith/Oracle: Oh, no, no, no. No, it's not fair.

(01)

Deus Ex Machina: It is done.

(Zion: Temple entrance)

Lock: It doesn't make sense.

Morpheus: He did it.

Kid: He saved us. He saved us. It's over, he did it! He did it, he did it, it's over! It's over, he did it! He did it!

Councillor Hamann: What is it, what happened?

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Kid: Sir, he did it, sir – Neo – he did it!

Councillor Hamann: Did what?

Kid: He ended the war, the machines are gone! The war is over, sir! The war is over!

(**Zion:** Temple)

Kid: Zion! Zion! Zion, it's over! (echoes) It's over! The war is over! (echoes (The war is over!

Link: (yells)

Zion crowd: (cheers)

(**Zion:** Temple entrance)

Morpheus: I have imagined this moment for so long. Is this real?

Niobe: Neo, wherever you are. Thank you.

(**Matrix:** city street) (A black cat deja-vus up to Sati)

Sati: Good morning.

(**Matrix:** a lake. a bench)

Oracle: Well, now, ain't this a surprise.

Architect: You've played a very dangerous game.

Oracle: Change always is.

Architect: Just how long do you think this peace is going to last?

Oracle: As long as it can. (Architect starts walking away)

Oracle: What about the others?

Architect: What others?

Oracle: The ones that want out.

Architect: Obviously, they will be freed.

Oracle: I have your word?

Architect: What do you think I am? Human?

Sati: Oracle!

Oracle: (laughs)

Matrix Reloaded Explained

Sati: We were afraid we might not find you.

Oracle: Everything's okay now.

Sati: Look, look! (points at sunrise)

Oracle: Just look at that! Beautiful! Did you do that?

Sati: (nods) For Neo.

Oracle: That's nice. I know he'd love it.

Sati: Will we ever see him again?

Oracle: I suspect so. Someday.

Seraph: Did you always know?

Oracle: Oh no. No, I didn't. But I believed. I believed.

THE END

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<http://www.matrixcommunity.org/>

