Thinking Otherwise:
Philosophy, Technology & *The Matrix*

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A book of philosophy should be in part a very particular species of detective novel, in part a kind of science fiction. (Gilles Deleuze)
There is something inherently stupid and naïve in taking the *philosophical* underpinnings of the *Matrix* trilogy seriously and discussing its implications. The Wachowski brothers are obviously *not* philosophers. They are just two guys who superficially flirt with and exploit in a confused way some postmodern and New Age notions (Slavoj Žižek)
The two pills that are cradled in Morpheus's hands constitute the material in which all forms of information technology have been understood, developed, and evaluated.
The red pill is a new symbol of bold choice, and most people insist they would take it if they were in Neo’s shoes. (William Irwin)
Question the logical structure and philosophical repercussions of the binary opposition that is represented by the red and blue pills.
Taking the Red Pill

The Matrix is, at its core, a film with a moral plot (Iakovos Vasiliou, 2002, p. 1).
ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑ
ΠΕΡΙ ΔΗΜΑΡΧΩΝ, ΠΟΛΙΤΩΝ
ΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΔΙΑΛΟΓΟΥ ἍΡΩΜΑΤΑ
ΚΡΙΤΙΚΗ, ΠΛΑΙΚΑΟΣ, ΠΟΛΕΜΙΚΟΣ, ΣΕΡΒΙΜΑΤΟΣ,
ΑΞΙΟΜΑΝΤΟΣ, ΚΕΦΑΛΟΣ

Καταβὰν χθές έν τῇ Περαπι μετὰ Γλαύκωνος
Ἀριστοτέλους, προσημάδις τοῦ θεοῦ και δια
ορίων βουλεύοντο θεώτα συν τῶν πρῶτων ποιή
νων, ἁτι τῶν πρῶτων ἀγαθών, καὶ τῶν ἀριστοκράτω
τῶν ἔθεσι, καὶ θεοφραστῶν ἐπιμελεῖς τὸ ἄνθρωπον, καταβὰν οὖν πίσωθεν ἤδη
καὶ οἱ ἀριστοκράτες οὐκ ἔφτασαν Ἡρακλέους 
οὐκ ἕδραν δὲ καὶ θεοφραστῶν ἐπιμελεῖς 
τὸ ἄνθρωπον ὑπολόγισαν καὶ ἔφτασαν Ἡρακλέους.
What do you suppose his answer would be if someone told him that what he had seen before was all a cheat and an illusion, but that now, being nearer to reality and turned toward real things, he saw more truly?

“Yes,” he said, “I think that he would choose to endure anything rather than such a life.” (516e)
The Blue Pill and Beyond

It is less a matter of being pro- or anti-technology, but of developing a critical perspective on the ethics of virtuality.

(Kroker & Weinstein, 1994, p. 5)
There are no rational grounds for making the decision because epistemologically, the worlds are the same (Robin Beck)
What happens if we reshuffle the deck. What if the machines had fed their human batteries a nice organically grown algae broth or what if, instead of rejecting the virtual paradise that the machines originally provided them, the humans had accepted it and flourished? What if they had consciously agreed to live their lives in the simulated reality of the matrix? Morpheus's moral crusade to wake everyone up would be at least slightly compromised, no?
Of course the whole plot of the film is driven by the noble battle for liberation from the tyranny of the machines and their evil Matrix. But the film, despite itself, presents us with two worlds in a way that shows us that Cypher is the one who is right. I believe that the only sensible path is to choose the simulated world over the real one. (David Weberman)
The Matrix does not just offer sensual pleasures. It really encompasses much more, in fact, it gives us just about everything we could want from the shallowest to the deepest gratifications. Assuming that the machines haven't made things unnecessarily impoverished, the virtual world gives us the opportunity to visit museums and concerts, read Shakespeare and Stephen King, fall in love, make love, raise children, form deep friendships, and so on....The real world, on the other hand, is a wasteland. The libraries and theatres have been destroyed and the skies are always gray. In fact, you'd have to be out of your mind or at least seriously out to lunch to choose the real world (is that why Keanu Reeves seems so well cast in the role?). We're not talking base hedonism now, we're talking about, to use John Stuart Mill's words, "the higher faculties" and the deep and diverse types of gratifications derived from them. Such gratification is to be found more easily in the Matrix than in the “desert of the real.” (David Weberman)
Exchange Rate
1 Platinum Piece = $0.01072; better exchange rate than the Yen or Lira

Gross National Product
$135 million or $2,266 per capita

*EverQuest* is the 77th richest country in the world

Hourly Wage
Average avatar makes 319 PP per hour or $3.42/hour (assuming an exchange rate of 0.01072 PP per dollar).
This unconditional will to truth—what is it? Is it the will not to allow oneself to be deceived? Or is it the will not to deceive? For the will to truth could be interpreted in the second way, too—if only the special case 'I do not want to deceive myself' is subsummed under the generalization 'I do not want to deceive.' But why not deceive? (Friedrich Nietzsche)
Why do you not want to deceive especially if it should seem--and it does seem!--as if all of life aimed at semblance, meaning error, deception, simulation, delusion, self-delusion, and when the great sweep of life has actually always shown itself to be on the side of the most unscrupulous polytropoi. (Friedrich Nietzsche)
The true world—we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one. (Friedrich Nietzsche)
It is less a matter of being pro- or anti-matrix, but of developing a critical perspective on the ethics of virtuality.
Conclusions

Rather than designating the choice between good and evil, my Either/Or designates the choice by which one chooses good and evil or rules them out. (Søren Kierkegaard)
1) Binary Thinking is not optional. The computer organizes data in terms of 0s and 1s. We organize our understanding of the world employing conceptual oppositions.
2) Binary Thinking is not neutral. In organizing things into binary pairs, we impose value judgments that are often presumptuous and unjustified.
3) Revolution is not Sufficient. Opposing binary opposition is just one more binary opposition. Critical intervention requires an alternative path.
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