

# Thinking Otherwise


Philosophy, Communication, Technology

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<http://thinkingotherwise.org>



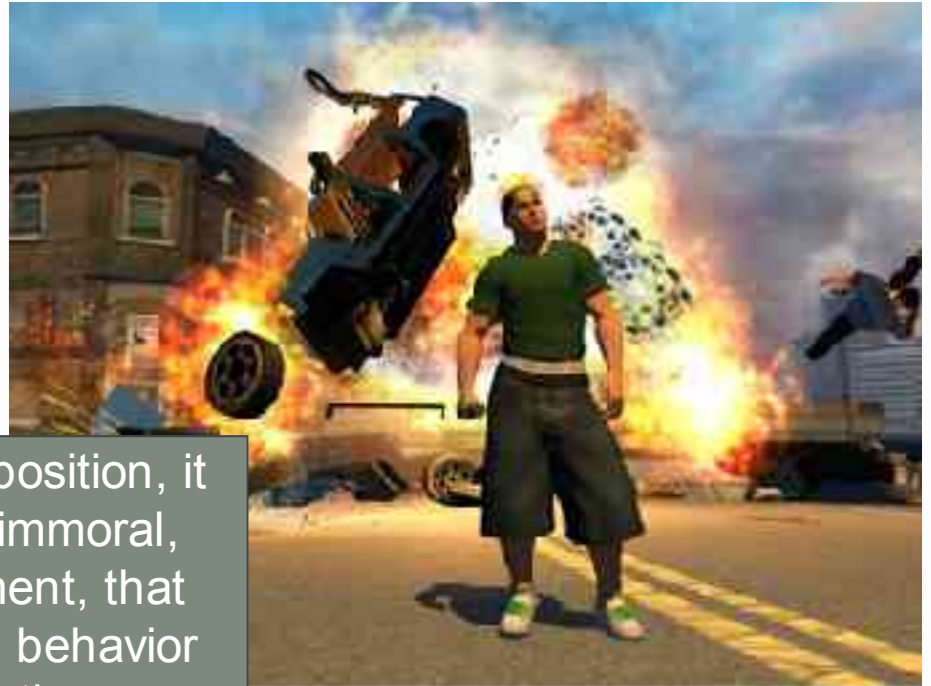
Everyone will readily agree that it is of the highest importance to know whether we are not duped by morality.

Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*

## Pro-Censorship Position

In the standard pro-censorship position, it is claimed that such games are immoral, that they hinder moral development, that they cause immoral or antisocial behavior in the real world, and that under these circumstances the state has the right to impose censorship.

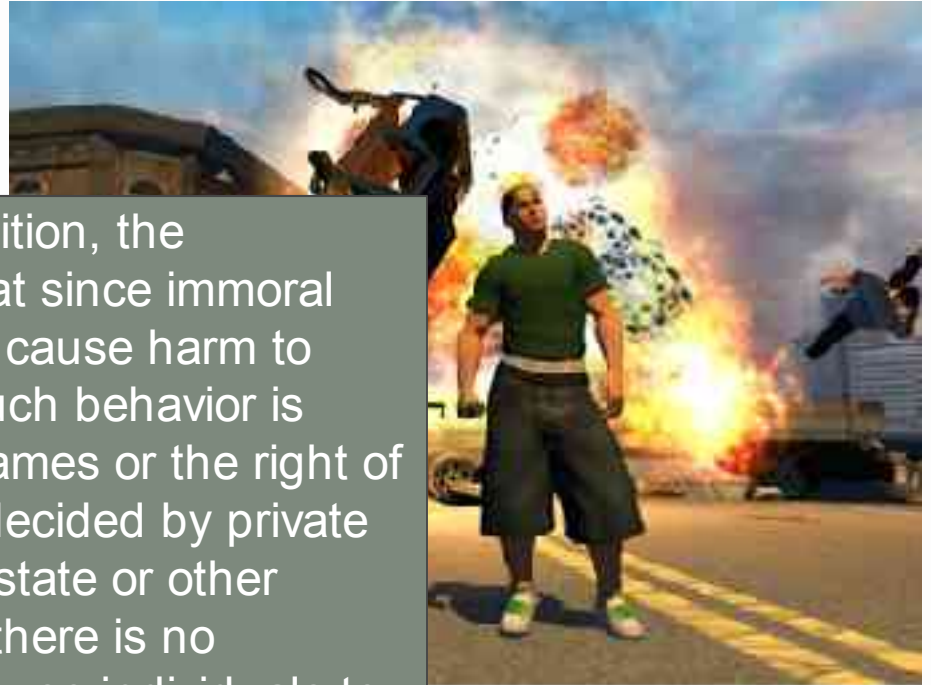
Philip Brey, 1999,



## Anti-Censorship Position

In the standard anti-censorship position, the libertarian viewpoint is defended that since immoral acts in a virtual environment do not cause harm to others, the decision to engage in such behavior is private, and the morality of these games or the right of individuals to use them should be decided by private citizens individually and not by the state or other acting body. It is often added that there is no evidence that such games would cause individuals to act immorally in the real world, and it is some-times claimed that such games may even be beneficial by allowing individuals to release pent-up frustrations and act out fantasies or desires that they might otherwise act out in the real world.

Philip Brey, 1999, p. 8







# PLAYING VIDEO GAMES



Motives, Responses

EDITED BY  
Peter Vorderer · Jörg

## Violent Video Game Effects on Children and Adolescents

**THE MYTH OF MEDIA VIOLENCE**  
A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

**DARIO TRENTI**

**The Effects of Violent Video Games on Aggression: A Meta-Analysis**

**DAVID A. ANDERSON**  
University of Texas at Dallas

Violent video games are a popular form of entertainment for children and adolescents. This meta-analysis examines the effects of violent video games on aggression. The results show that playing violent video games is associated with increased aggression, both in the short and long term. The effects are consistent across different studies and populations. The meta-analysis also found that the effects of violent video games on aggression are stronger for children and adolescents than for adults. The results suggest that violent video games may have a negative impact on children and adolescents, and that parents and educators should be aware of this risk.

**The effects of video games on aggression: A meta-analysis**

The purpose of this meta-analysis is to examine the effects of violent video games on aggression. The meta-analysis includes 21 studies on children and adolescents, and 10 studies on adults. The results show that playing violent video games is associated with increased aggression, both in the short and long term. The effects are consistent across different studies and populations. The meta-analysis also found that the effects of violent video games on aggression are stronger for children and adolescents than for adults. The results suggest that violent video games may have a negative impact on children and adolescents, and that parents and educators should be aware of this risk.

**DAVID A. ANDERSON**, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Texas at Dallas. He has published numerous articles on the effects of video games on aggression and has co-edited the book *Violent Video Games and Aggression* (2005). He is also the author of the book *The Effects of Video Games on Aggression* (2007).

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## WHY VIDEO GAMES ARE GOOD FOR YOUR SOUL

**JAMES PAUL GEE**

## THE MYTH OF MEDIA VIOLENCE

A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

**DARIO TRENTI**

## GAME OVER

Gender, Race & Violence in Video Games

**mef**




Pro-Censorship

Anti-Censorship

Common Values and Assumptions







# Thinking Otherwise

Philosophy / Communication / Technology

David J. Gunkel

FUTURE INTELLIGENCE PRESS

## Chapter One

### Critique of Digital Reason

#### Toward a Method of Thinking Otherwise

It takes us, at the heart of life, to build out from the printing shop given the chance to build the ultimate machine, so based on zeros and ones. —Peter Lurie

Digital information is composed of two discrete variables, 0 and 1, which are continuously represented by the binary digits, or bits, 0 and 1. All information in digital form, whether alpha-numeric characters, images, audio, video, or computer-generated 3D models, consists of nothing more than a complex sequence of 0s and 1s. Inevitably, this digital structure not only defines the technical aspects of digital information but also of life. The ultimate discussion, and our technology have typically been defined by Michael Heim, for example, in terms of the computer, the internet, and cyberspace, by two different alternatives, or "false realism." For the "network ideal," technology is a new world of virtual and unmediated growth. The "true realism" is a world of mediated and mediated growth, and the tension of human life. While the network ideal celebrates the virtual presence of information and reality in general, character



Dualism lies at the heart of life. It should not then be surprising that given the chance to build the ultimate machine, we based it on zeros and ones.

Peter Lurie, 2004,

Chapter One

**Critique of Digital Reason**

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china, so based in

Digital information is composed of two discrete  
continuously represented by the binary digits in a  
digital form. Whether alpha-numeric characters  
purer general. It results, consists of nothing  
of discrete, irreversibly stable elements.

Aspects of digital information are also characterized by its critical recep-  
tion. The infinite discussion, and variations, involving digital media and  
technology have typically been defined by two different and opposed positions.  
Michael Heim, for example, has been a contemporary critic about the social impact  
of the computer. He defines analysis to be organized around and ana-  
lyzed by two different alternatives, which he terms "network idealism" and  
"naïve realism." For the "network idealist," the computer constitutes a virtual  
techno-utopia—a new world of distributed freedom, boundless opportunity,  
and unmeasured growth. The "naïve realist" opposes this overly optimistic  
assessment in favor of a more grounded view, emphasizing our security, loss of a  
sense of reality, and the erosion of human bonds, both real and face-to-face interac-  
tion. While the network idealist sees organic possibilities and virtual redemp-  
tion, the naïve realist presumes a limit to real human relations, real human  
nature, and reality in general. Characterized in this way, network idealism and

Methods are generally understood as roads (from *hodos*: 'way,' 'road') to knowledge. In the sciences, as well as in the philosophies that scientific thinking patronizes, method is an instrument for representing a given field, and it is applied to the field from the outside.

Rodolphe Gasché, 1986, p. 121

# “The paradox of a book”

One of the ironies of our culture’s fascination with virtual technologies is its fondness for consuming books and articles that proclaim the death of print culture—or its disappearance into the matrix.

Robert Markley, 1996, p. 1

## Chapter Two

### What’s the Matter with Books?

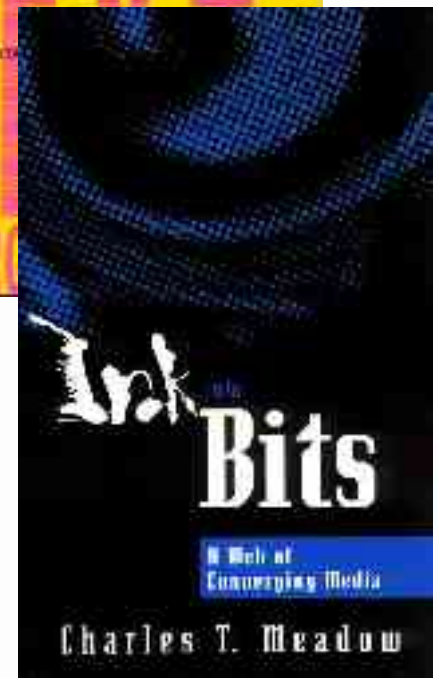
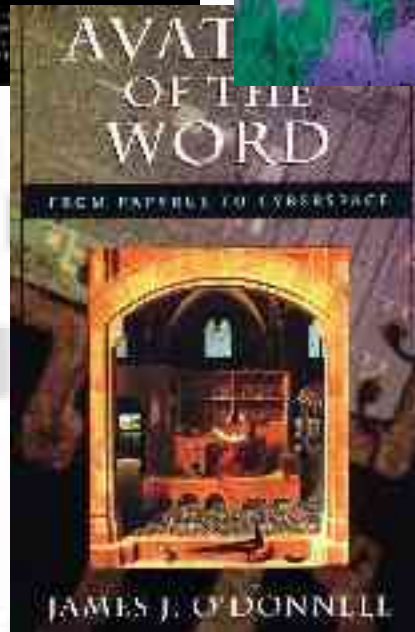
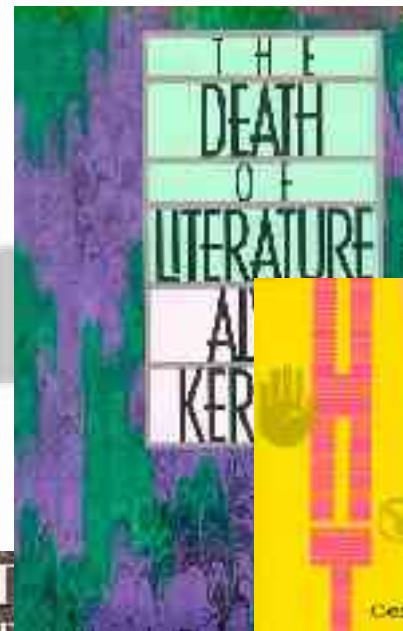
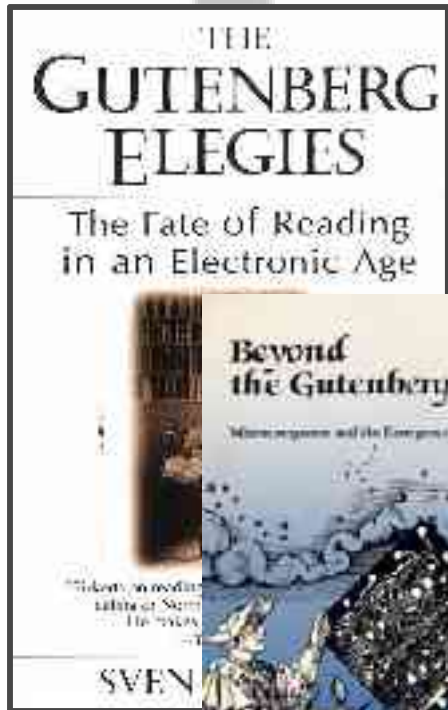
Cold war era—Victor Iliac

The question “what’s the matter with books?” may be understood on multiple registers. Taken colloquially, it asks about print technology and its product. Such a question might denote a worry or concern over something that has perhaps gone wrong, become a problem, or distanced from accepted practices or anticipated outcomes. At the same time, however, the question may also be understood in a

literary (printing) manner, the variability of the printed word, in particular its commonality called *typography*, the emergence and definition of *typography* at a time when we

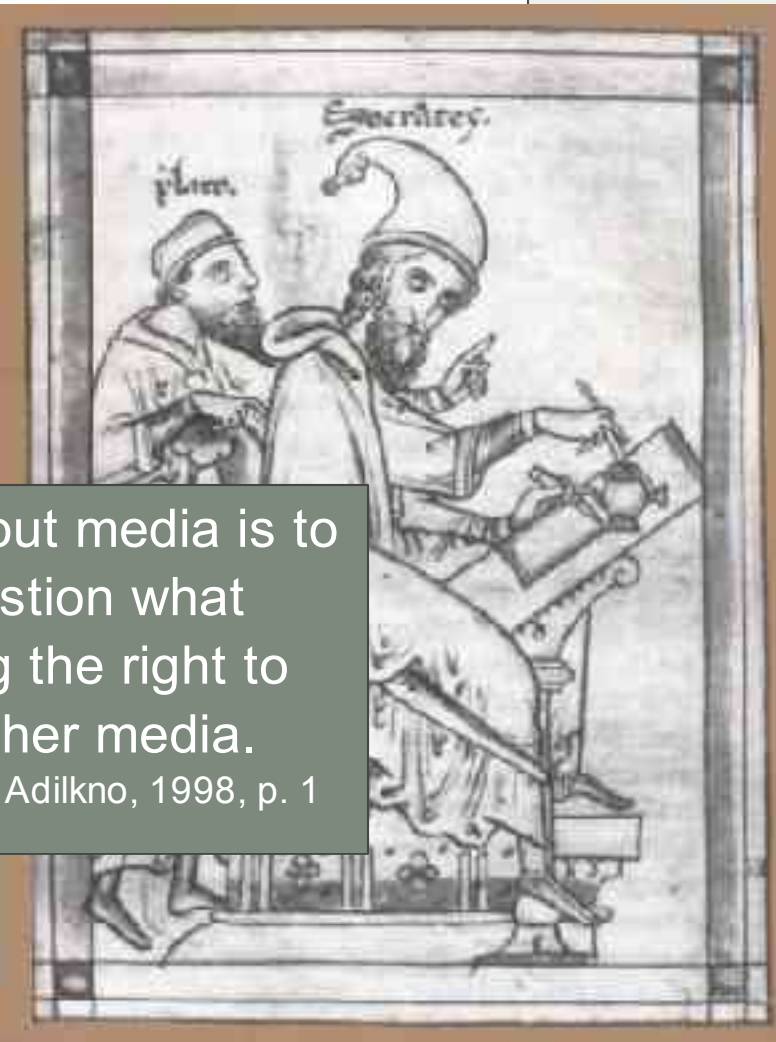
answer to the question: for this inquiry to exist, as the poet would say, is by engaging a customer.

that].<sup>16</sup> The statement is voiced by the archdeacon Troilo and constitutes his assessment of the impact of Gutenberg’s technological innovation. Looking up from a printed book on his table to the stone edifice of the gothic cathedral visible through the window of his cell, Troilo laments, “alas, this will destroy that.” The anecdote has been recounted several times in constitutions of the history



To write about media is to ask the question what gives writing the right to speak for other media.

Adilkno, 1998, p. 1



## ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ

(Η ΠΕΡΙ ΚΑΛΟΥ ΗΘΟΥΣ)

ΤΟΥ ΔΙΔΑΚΤΟΥ ΠΡΟΪΩΝΙΑ

ΣΑΚΡΑΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ

ΣΤ. Ὁ φίλε Φαῖδρε, τοῖ δὴ καὶ πεθεῖ:  
Παρά Λυσίοι, ὃ Σόκρατες, τοῦ  
τορνεύουμι ἐξ πρὸς περίτατον ἔβου  
χρην γὰρ ἐκεί διέτοιμα χρίνοι καθή-  
θιμου· τῆ δὲ σὴ καὶ ἐμῆ ἐπιμῶ  
Λεουμανὴν κατὰ τὰς ὁδοὺς ποιούμαι  
ἴποιε· φησὶ γὰρ ἀκαπαιτέρονε εἶναι  
δύμωι.

Καλῶς γάρ, ὃ εἰπίρε, λέγει. ἀνὰρ  
ἐν τοικου, ἐν ἀσ-ει.

Ναί, παπ' Ἐτικρίντοι, ἐν τῆδε τῆ  
Ἄουμπιου οἰκίᾳ τῆ Μορυχίᾳ.

Τίς οὖν δὴ ἦν ἡ διατρεβί; ἡ δὲλευ  
ἐν ἡμῶς Λυσίας εἰστία;

Πεύσει, εἰ σοι σχολὴ προῖάντι

Τί δέ; οὐκ ἂν οἶε με κατὰ Πιρ-



## Chapter Three

### Second Thoughts

#### Toward a Critique of the Digital Divide

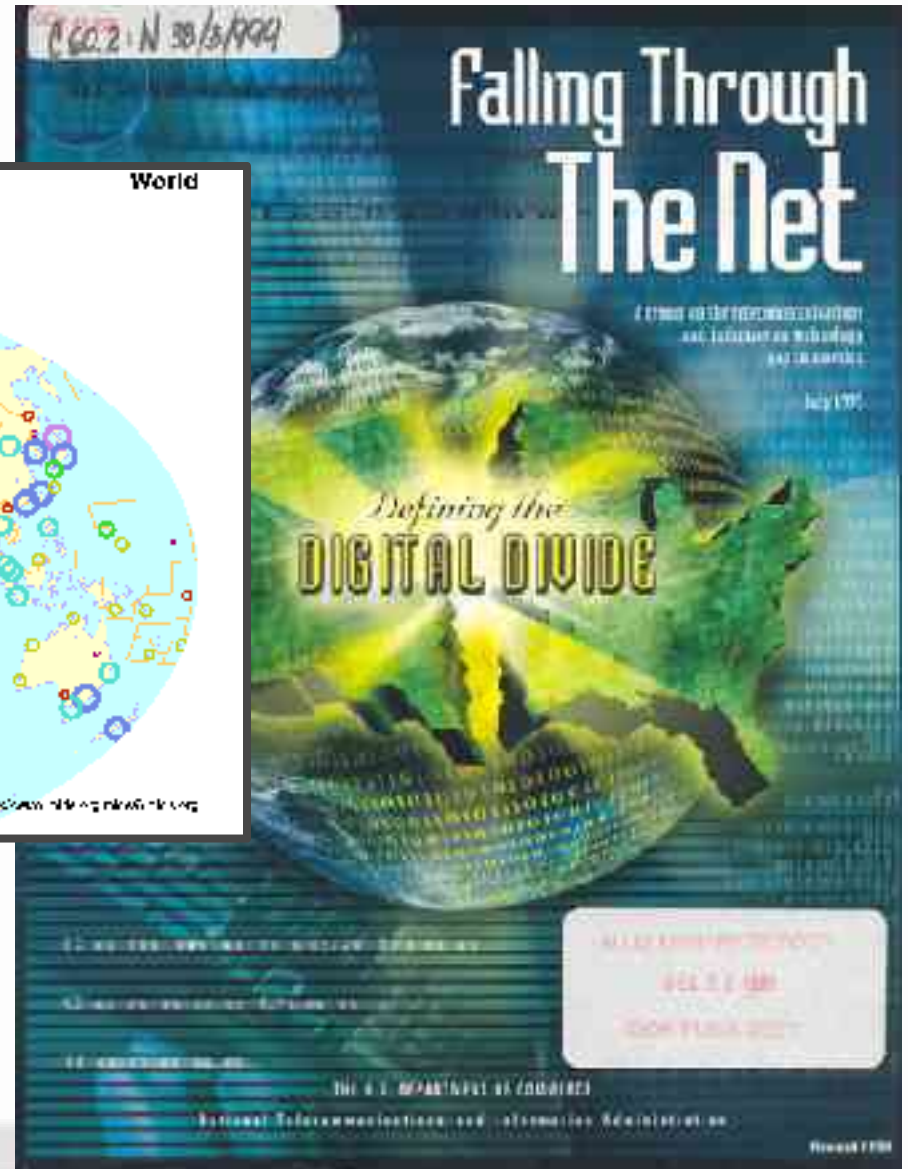
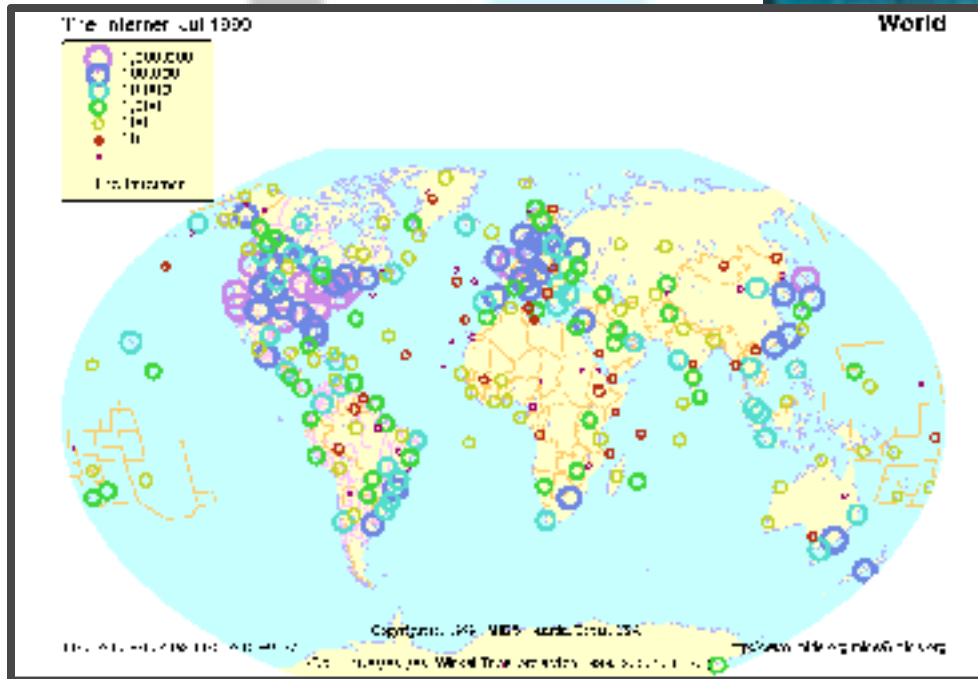
Significant differences among social groups within nations and the access to and utilization of new ICTs, understood as the "digital divide," has quickly become so popular that being disparately associated

"The term 'digital divide' has come to signify a perceived divide about the Internet, computer technology, and access to it. It has surfaced, in one way or another, in celebrity-endorsed professional meetings or conferences, political speeches, and the popular press and media.<sup>2</sup> This attention to disparity in information technology appears to be an obvious addition to a cyberbook that champions much of the rhetoric of e-commerce since the mid-1990s. In these initial explanations and interpretations offered for creating a new world of limitless opportunities from progressive and technical developments, the digital divide supplies a much needed critique of these often unexamined assumptions, showing that this adoptionist narrative is limited by specific circumstances and should not be construed as universal or unconditionally optimistic.

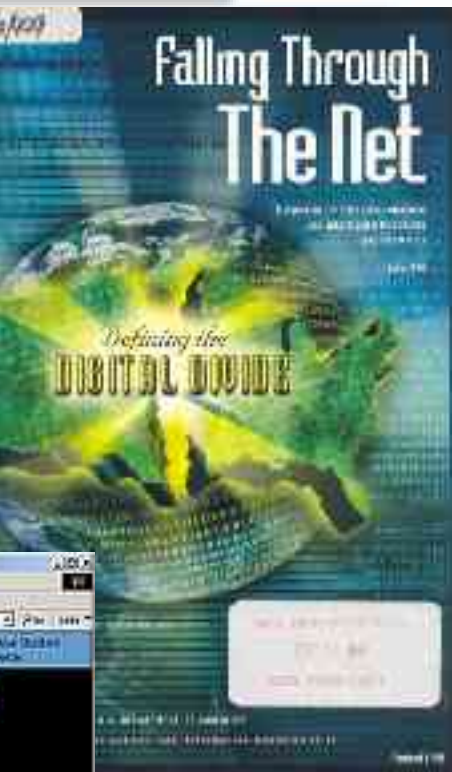
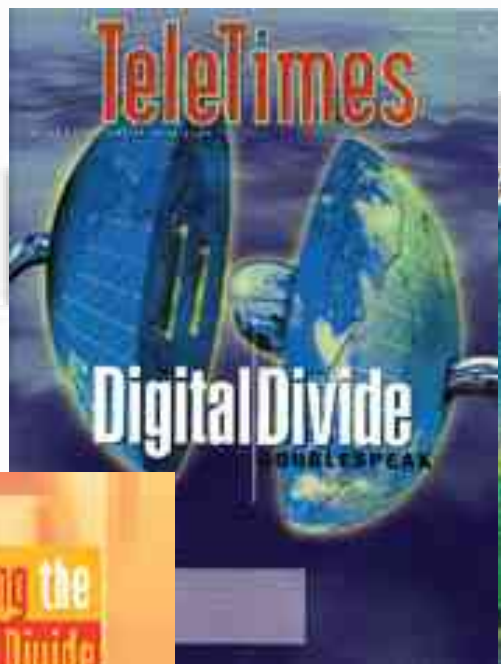
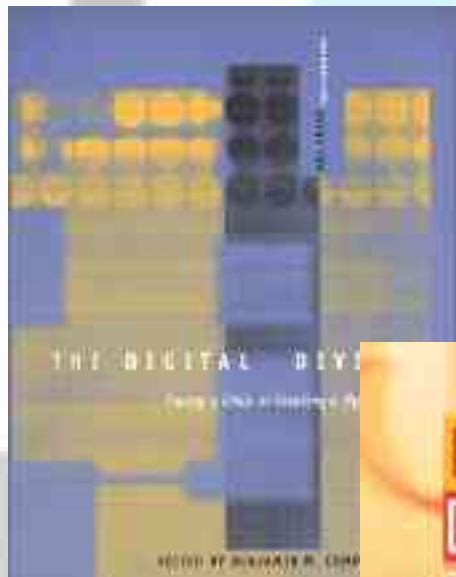
As the critical standpoint invoked by the digital divide, examining these informative issues, studied through antiquity, it also has a perspective and

Significant differences seem to prevail among social groups within nations and among nations in the access to and utilization of new ICTs. This is generally understood as the 'digital divide' and the term has quickly become so popular as to serve as a shorthand for any disparity associated with digital networks.

Sinikka Sassi, 2005, p. 685.



*Information haves*  
*Information have-nots*





## Chapter Four

### VRx: Media Technology, Drugs, and Codependency

Drug and media are equal partners —Adrian

The debates and decisions surrounding “new media technology” (i.e., virtual reality, cyberspace, the Internet, and other forms of ICT) have been, like so much reasoning within the Western tradition, organized around antinomies. One of the principal concerns involves a tension between the real world and the computer-generated representations that appear in it (see, e.g., *Avatars*). Heidegger described it, the question is “whether the essential characteristics of virtual reality as a reality in which the frustrations and disappointments of the actual world do not exist, will inevitably lead to a diminishing desire to live in the actual world. So, instead of knowing the disciplines of living with or changing one’s individual or communal environment, one finds it easier to escape into a reality where these practicalities do not exist.” This concern, despite the terms used here is employed by Heidegger, is not just some speculative possibility, it is in fact already happening. In his empirical investigation of virtual worlds, economist Edward Castronova found that “Second Step,” a computer-generated virtual reality situated in the massive multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) environment, provides a gross national product (GNP) per capita that “rival[s] exceeds that of dozens of countries, including India and China,” supports an hourly wage of approximately USD 242, and has been identified as “the principal place of residence for some 12,000 individuals.” According to Castronova’s findings, MMORPGs are not just fun and games, but represent a real alternative and challenge to what used to be called reality.

This conflict, and the numerous ontological and ethical considerations



ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ

[ΣΕ ΠΑΡΕ ΚΑΛΩΣ ΜΕΙΝΕΙΣ]

ΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΔΙΑΛΟΓΟΥ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ.

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΛΙΑΧΟΣ

α. 111.  
1. 327

Α. Ἰ. ΠΡΟΣΩΠΟΙ. Ὁ φίλος Φαίδρου,  
ΚΑΛΙΑΧΟΣ. Περὶ δὲ τούτων, ὁ  
Κεφάλου ποσειδῶν, ὃ ἐπι-  
τίχεται, ἀρχὴν γὰρ ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν  
ἄλλων ἐξ ἐπιπέδου. τὸ δὲ ἐπὶ  
παύσειεν Ἀπομύσει ἄλλο τὸ  
τὸν ἰσχυρῶς φωνὴ γὰρ ὁ  
ἢ τὸν ἐν τῷ ἄλλοι.  
ΚΑΛΙΑΧΟΣ. Περὶ γὰρ ὁ δὲ  
Ἀναίτιος ἦν, ὃς τούτων, ὃς ἄλλοι.  
ΚΑΛΙΑΧΟΣ. Ναι, καὶ ἔστι  
ἐπιπέδου τῶν ἰσχυρῶς ἄλλοι. τὸ  
τῶν ἄλλοι. Τὸ ὅτι ὁ δὲ ἦν ὁ  
ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλοι ἄλλοι Ἀναίτιος ἄλλοι  
ΚΑΛΙΑΧΟΣ. Πῶς, εἰ ἄλλοι  
ἄλλοι.  
ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ. Τὸ δὲ ὁ δὲ ἄλλοι  
419

**Socrates:** "You see, I am fond of learning. Now the country places and the trees won't teach me anything, and the people in the city do. But you seem to have found a drug [φάρμακον] to bring me out. For as people lead hungry animals by shaking in front of them a branch of leaves or some fruit, just so, I think, you, by holding before me discourse in books, will lead me all over Attica and wherever else you please." (230d)

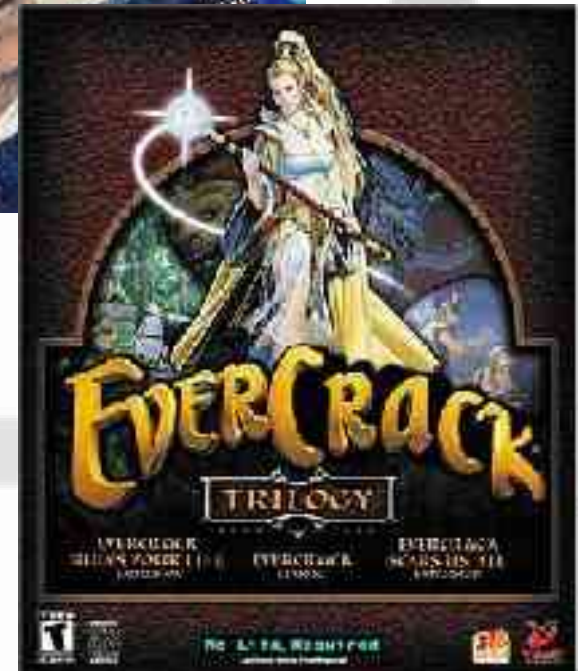
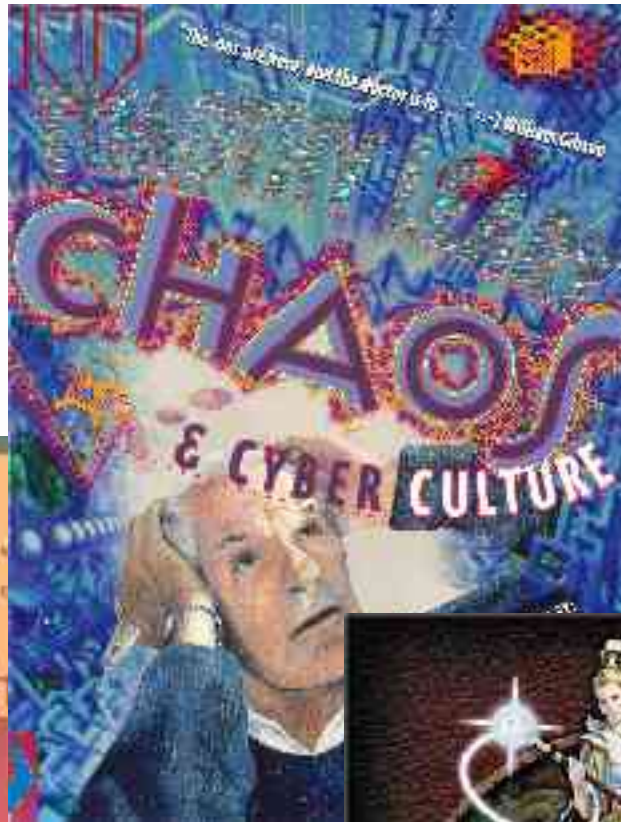
## ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ

[ΣΕ ΗΛΙΑΣ ΚΑΝΟΥΣ ΜΕΤΡΗΣ]

ΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΔΙΑΛΟΓΟΥ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ  
ΣΥΜΒΑΣΕΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΙΡΟΣ

α. 111.  
1. 327

Α. 1. ΠΡΟΣΩΠΟΝ. Ὁ φίλος Φαίδρος, ποῖ ἐξ ἐσέων ἐστὶν ἡ ἀρετὴ ἡ ἀληθὴς. Περὶ αὐτοῦ, ὁ Ζεῦσενος τοῦ Κριόλου ποιεῖται. Ἐν ποίᾳ μετέπειτα τῆς τέχνης, ἀρχαῖοι γὰρ ἄνευ ἐξ ἑσθίου τοῦτο μὲν ἄριστον τὸν κριόεντα γὰρ ἔτι οὐκ ἐπίσταται. Ἡ γὰρ ἐν τῷ ἄριστῳ ἀληθινὰ καὶ ἄνευ ἐξ ἑσθίου ἀρετὴ ἐστὶν, ἀλλὰ ἄνευ ἐξ ἑσθίου ἀρετὴ ἐστὶν, ἀλλὰ ἄνευ ἐξ ἑσθίου ἀρετὴ ἐστὶν. Νῦν, ὁ ἀρχαῖος τῆς τέχνης ποιεῖται. Τὸ δὲ ἐν τῷ ἀριστῷ ἀρετὴ ἐστὶν, ἀλλὰ ἄνευ ἐξ ἑσθίου ἀρετὴ ἐστὶν. Τὸ δὲ





## Chapter Five

### The Virtual Dialectic

#### Re-thinking The Matrix and its Significance

Enter the world of the choice between  
my version of reality or yours, or  
good and evil or rules dictated. —

As we have seen, Neo is asked to select between two dialectical  
methods which his pupils, the 5th and 6th, will take to liberate  
the form of his own reality. Neo's decision to walk the  
matrix within the computer-generated domain-world of the 5th  
morning of his existence is an "Should he decide to walk the  
matrix a process that is called the "awakening" and eventually  
escape the "real world" that exists outside the virtual reality he  
is sustained by the computers. Consequently, Neo's decision to  
the form of his own reality is a choice between two dialectical  
methods: Western metaphysics (methods, description, history, app  
or reality, and authenticity vs. Inauthenticity. In the face of the  
culture's collapse, Neo's choice was not only to appear to be the  
decision to swallow the red pill and live in the real and true w  
matrix for the film, but also to select and critics of computer systems, and to  
understanding of the world's positive and important (1).

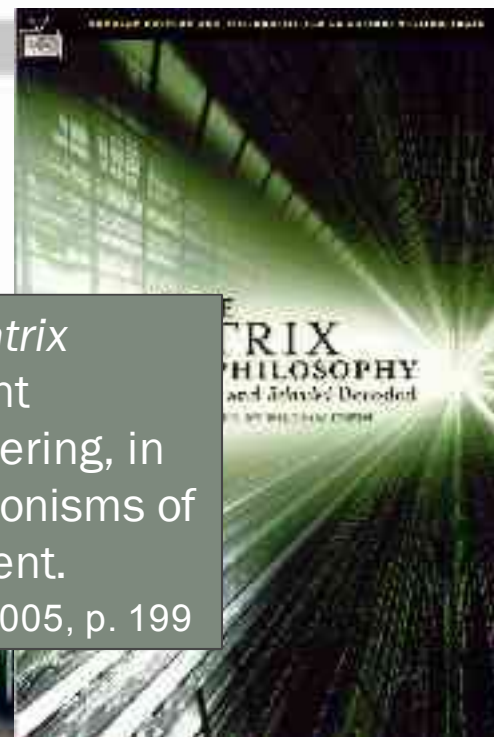
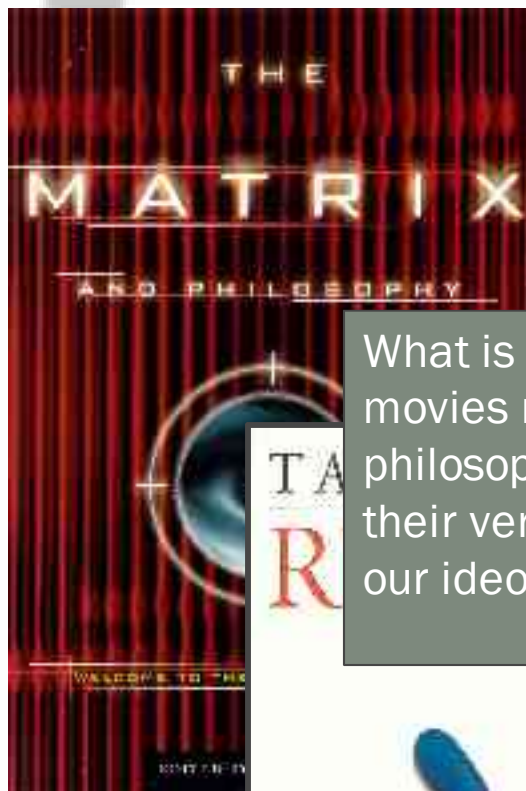
In addressing this matter, I do not want to replay the familiar evaluations  
and arguments that have been published about the particular decision. Texts  
like William Irwin's *The Matrix and Philosophy* and *More Matrix and Philosophy*,  
*Chris Wolfe's Taking the Red Pill*, *Christophers' Great Awakening*, *Explosive The*  
*Matrix*, Karen Fisher's *Re-thinking the Matrix*, *Mark Lussier's* *Like a Soldier in*



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.

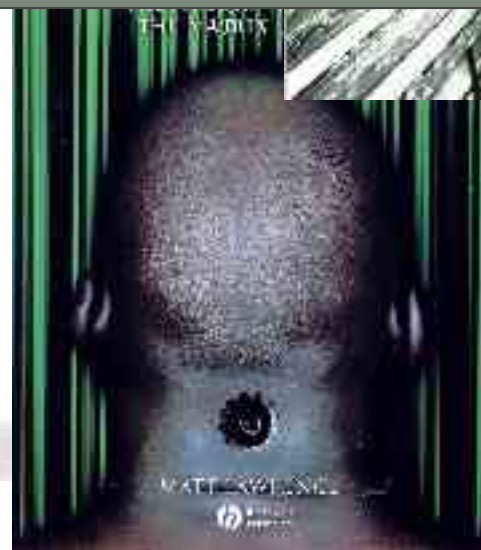
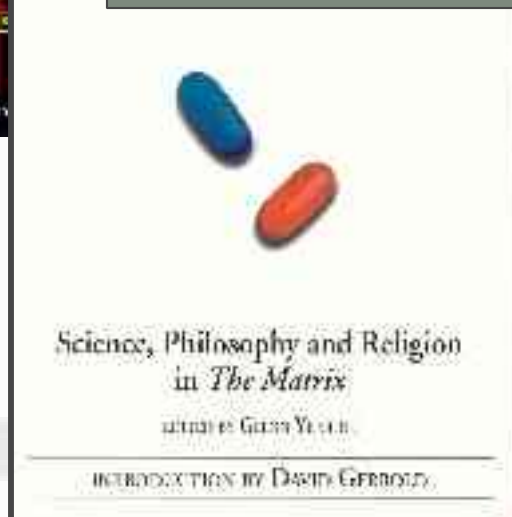
Slavoj Žižek, 2005, p. 198

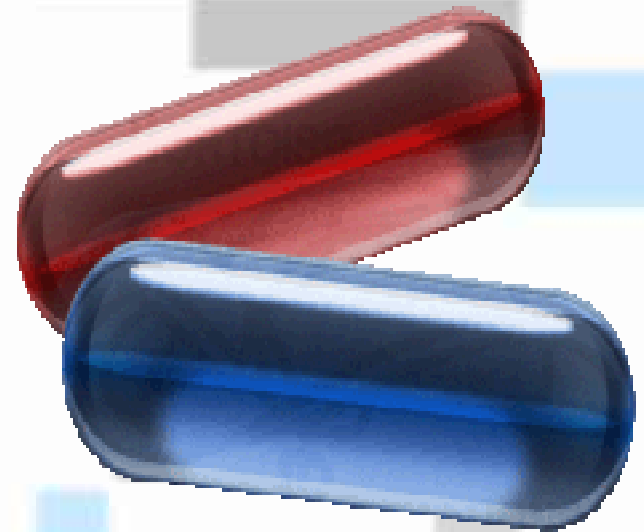
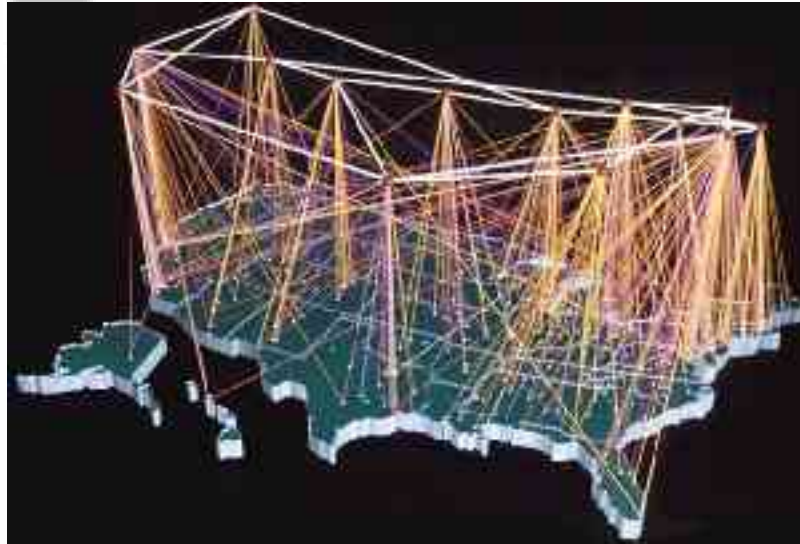




What is interesting is to read the *Matrix* movies not as containing a consistent philosophical discourse, but as rendering, in their very inconsistencies, the antagonisms of our ideological and social predicament.

Slavoj Žižek, 2005, p. 199









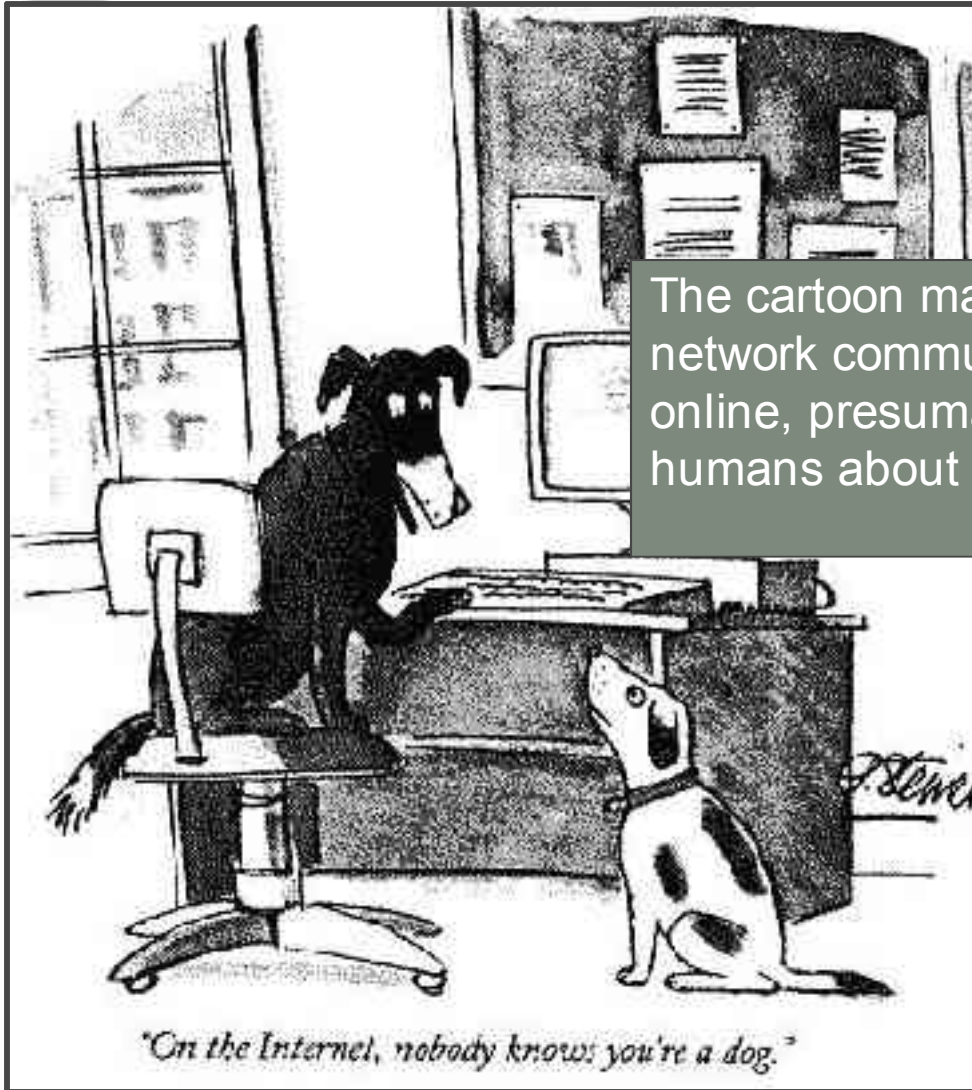
## Chapter Six

### The Machine Question

#### *ethics, Alterity, and Technology*

In addition, we might ask about those ethical  
calls of the future from "beings" that we can  
not now even imagine!  
—Jeffrey J. Nealon

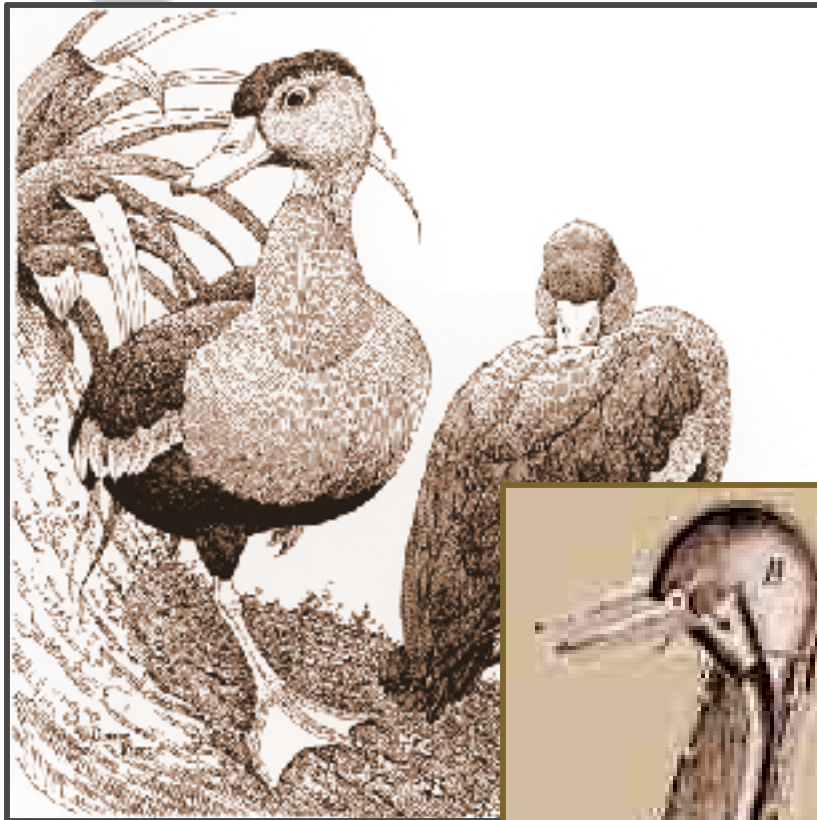
In the Matrix trilogy, as in many contemporary science-fiction narratives, the machine is situated outside of and in opposition to what is defined as properly and uniquely human? This decision, like the other binary oppositions that have organized thinking, is not without ethical implications and consequences. The intriguing, therefore, raises up the question of ethics. And the reach of the contemporary work on this subject matter, if it is traced to its call from, our responsibility, and our responsibility for others. However, as for the capital "O" other, who has taken center stage in recent moral thinking largely due to the influence of Emmanuel Levinas and others, this question is directed otherwise. If I, as an ethics who remains, for reasons that will need to be explored, outside the contemporary and essentially anthropocentric understandings of identity that have pervaded in and been definitive of the Western tradition, it is, therefore, a question that is not concerned with or limited to the present and the presence of these somewhat familiar Others. It is a question that is oriented to the future, toward other "beings" whom we may not now even be able to imagine and who call to us and appear from elsewhere. It is, in short, a question about the future of ethics. And it involves and addresses itself to the possibility of an other who remains fundamentally and eternally other to us.



The cartoon makes fun of the anonymity of network communications by showing a dog online, presumably fooling some credulous humans about its true identity.

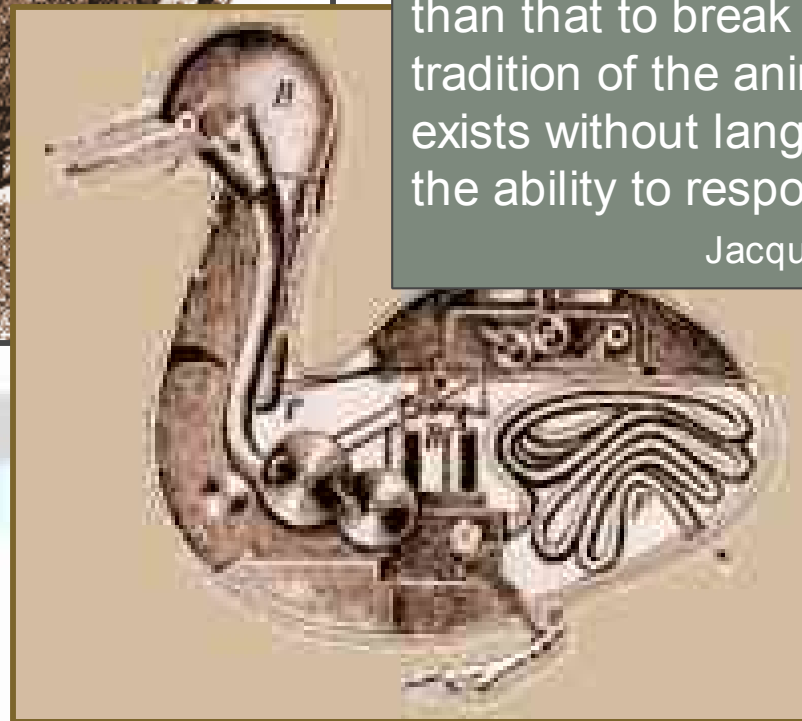
Richard Holeton, 1998, p. 111





Would an ethics be sufficient, as Levinas maintains, to remind the subject of its being-subject, its being-guest, host or hostage, that is to say its being-subjected-to-the-other, to the Wholly Other or to every single other? I don't think so. It takes more than that to break with the Cartesian tradition of the animal-machine that exists without language and without the ability to respond.

Jacques Derrida, 2003, p. 121



1. Binary opposition is not optional

Chapter Seven

Concluding Otherwise

... I agree with you that the project of a philosophy of the subject is not a project of a philosophy of the subject. ... I would like to think with as much precision as the possibility of a conclusion or a closure of the philosophical discourse? ...  
— Jacques Derrida

G.W.F. Hegel, it is well known, had trouble at the beginning. He wanted to write his published writings but at least needed a considerable concern with introductions, prefaces, forewords, and all forms of what Derrida was called the textual *how it's done*.<sup>2</sup> The cause of the problem was simple: how could one legitimately say anything about the science of philosophy outside of and in advance of the science itself? Hegel himself described this in that often quoted passage from his preface to the *Phenomenology*: "Wherever can be properly said of philosophy in a preface—a historical statement of trends and points of view, its general contents and results, a string of random assertions and assertions about truth—cannot be accepted as the manner and way by which to present philosophical truth."<sup>3</sup> The converse, however, did not appear to be a problem. So, what you like about Hegel's solution, something you do not like, it was not a problem or was concerned with the end. It always comes, for better or worse,<sup>4</sup> where it was going, how it was going to get there, and what would be its contents. Hegel had to write about it in one's English, "expressed," "making it clear, or exposed to the charge of being a "reason, have."

Unlike Hegelian philosophy, Heidegger's has trouble with a end at the end, which should be no big surprise given the fact that the investigation takes place and seeks to measure in all forms of idealized thinking. This is not, it

2. Binary opposition is not neutral

1. Binary opposition is not optional

Chapter Seven

Concluding Otherwise

...  
the project of a p  
...  
think with as much precision or the possibility of a  
conclusion or a closure of the philosophical discourse?

2. Binary opposition is not neutral

3. Resistance is Futile

G.W.F. Hegel, it is well known, had trouble  
with published writings but at least with  
translations, postcards, forecasts, and all  
that. How did he do it? The cause of the problem was simple: how could one  
possibly say anything about the essence of philosophy outside of and in ad-  
vance of the work itself? (Hegel himself knew this in that often quoted  
passage from his preface to the *Phenomenology*: "Wherever one can be properly said  
of philosophy in a preface—a historical statement of trends and points of view,  
its general contents and results, a string of random assertions and assurances  
about truth—cannot be accepted as the manner and way by which to present  
philosophical truth.") The converse, however, did not appear to be a problem.  
So, what you like about Hegel and others, something you endorse, it seems, you  
did not see or was concerned with the end. It always comes, for better or worse,<sup>1</sup>  
where it was going, how it was going to get there, and what would be its contents.  
Hegel had no choice, as one says in English, "spontaneous," lacking choice, or  
exposed to the charge of being a "missionary."

Unlike Hegelian philosophy, Slavoj Žižek's has trouble with not at  
the end, which should be no big surprise given the fact that the investigation takes  
aim at and seeks to intervene in all forms of idealized thinking. This is not, it

1. Binary opposition is not optional

Chapter Seven

Concluding Otherwise

2. Binary opposition is not neutral

...  
the project of a p  
...  
think with as much precision on the possibility of a  
conclusion or a closure of the philosophical discourse?

3. Resistance is Futile

G.W.F. Hegel, it is well known, had trouble  
in his published writings (not at least in con-  
tractions, postures, formulas, and all the  
trivial how-it-comes? The cause of the problem was simple: how could one in-  
side say anything about the essence of philosophy—outside of and in ad-  
vance of the work itself? Hegel himself knew this: that after repeated  
passage from his preface to the *Phenomenology*  
of philosophy in a preface—a historical or  
its general content and results, a string of  
about truth—cannot be accepted as the  
philosophical truth.<sup>9</sup> The converse, how-  
say, what you like about Hegel's solution  
and about or was concerned with the end. It always leaves, for better or worse,<sup>10</sup>  
where it was going, how it was going to get there, and what would be its concerns.  
Hegel had no choice, as one says in English, "spontaneous," lacking choice, or  
exposed to the charge of being a "missionary."

Unlike Hegelian philosophy, Heidegger's has trouble with and at  
the end, which should be no big surprise given the fact that the investigation of the  
aim and seeks to intervene in all forms of idealized thinking. This is not, it

4. There is no finality



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