THE MATRIX AS A TURING TEST

– João Peneda
The Matrix as a Turing test

"Smith: [...] You can't win, it's pointless to keep fighting! Why, Mr. Anderson, why, why do you persist?

Neo: Because I choose to."

Matrix III.
Turing Test and the *Matrix*

Alan Turing is one of the pioneers of the area that we now know as Artificial Intelligence (AI), which he himself called "machine intelligence". In the 1950 paper *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*, the British mathematician tackles the problem of the difference and proximity between man and machine through the question whether machines can think? To avoid any confusion and misunderstanding about hardly consensual definitions like *machine* and *think*, Turing reformulates the question in a game that he calls "imitation game". The game serves as a test to determine whether we can speak of intelligence in light of the responses of the machines. If an outside observer would be unable to distinguish between the information generated by a computer and by a human, then the machine would pass the test, since no functional difference would be discernible between them. The computer would then be declared intelligent.

Curiously enough, the first version of the *imitation game* envisaged the sexual difference, gender identity, i.e. the ability to discern from the answers if they had been given by a man (A) or by a woman (B). The aim of both would be to deceive the interrogator (C). In this case, not to discern one from the other or to take one for the other would be inconsequential. But this initial version poses some problems, in particular, as indicated by Zizek: if we can determine gender identity only from the significant (from the given answers). In the 1950 paper, the machine, as a result of displacement, occupies the place of man (A) and is confronted with the human in general: 1. man/woman and 2. machine/man.

In the final version of the *imitation game*, the test proposed by Alan Turing is a drawing of an imaginary experience that would establish a criterion to assess the presence of "intelligence" in computers. A machine passes the test when an independent observer is unable to distinguish its responses from those of the human, when there occurs a certain blurring between the behavior of men and machines. When the machine ("electronic computer" or "digital computer") establishes a conversation with a human (judge), and the latter is unable to detect that he is in the presence of the machine, then, according to Turing, we can consider that machine to be "intelligent". In fact, what the Turing test evaluates is the ability of the computer to simulate the human mind with its responses, in such a way that the computer would
be a simulacrum of what we understand as human intelligence.\(^3\)
As we have seen, the Turing test establishes mainly (as a convention) the conditions in which the difference between human and machine intelligence would be indiscernible.\(^4\)

One of the questions that arise is knowing to what extent and how far can computation simulate the human reality and in its specificity. To what extent the cognitive capacity of the machine can be comparable to or even exceed human capabilities? With scientific progress and the advent of the industrial era, the development of machines introduced in culture various vertigos, and therefore fears and utopias, e.g. the possibility of machines becoming more powerful than their creators, escaping from our control (Frankenstein’s monster), creating another reality (technical/virtual), putting aside and replacing man, or enslaving and eliminating the entire human race.

Each one of these vertigos was exploited in various art works, particularly in literature and the cinema. The artistic activity, in equating these scenarios or postulates, allows for the probing of the limits of human reality, the possible and the impossible, the “inter-worlds.”\(^5\) In the imaginary register,\(^6\) the great works of art visit and inhabit this liminal space, giving body (image and significance) to the threshold of common experience.\(^7\)
We know that the emergence of technique and of art coincide with the advent of man, with the passage of nature (animal) to culture (man), with the detachment of man from nature (matter). If artifacts and technical devices are human creations, whose development has been exponential, the time has come to ask ourselves how far machines can go and to what extent they can approach or even surpass their creators.

Our purpose is to make a critical review of the Wachowski brothers’ exploration in the Matrix saga (1999-2003). This work is a powerful metaphor that illustrates the human condition and what distinguishes it, exploring the possible consequences of a vertiginous technical development. If each epoch creates the means to represent and exorcise its own ghosts, Matrix has that role with regard to artificial intelligence and virtual life. The work simulates an apocalyptic technological scenario and its consequences for humans. It shows us what would be a world where machines (AI) surpassed human intelligence, dominating and exploiting man for their own benefit.

The Matrix saga is a grand film production,\(^8\) involving unprecedented technological means and special effects, new filming techniques such as “bullet-time,” “virtual cinematography,” “virtual effects” (John Gaeta).\(^9\) It was also a film that was very demanding for the actors, requiring a diversified training in the martial arts, risk management and further reading (Baudrillard). The saga became a cult work, in a “matrixmania”, giving rise to other products such as animated short films (Animatrix), video games (Enter the Matrix, The Matrix Online and The Matrix: Path
of Neo), comic books (The Matrix Comics), websites and blogs, advertisements, etc.\textsuperscript{10} Divided in three episodes, this work is a semantic and holistic machine, performing a vast mixture of references and matching a variety of codes: mythological, religious, esoteric, philosophical, literary, cultural and technological; at the same time, it follow the dramatic and narrative alignment found in the Hollywood movies: initial adversity, appearance of the hero and his beautiful companion and helpers, fight against evil, culminating in the triumph of the hero and the salvation of mankind.

The word matrix (\textit{matri})\textsuperscript{11} refers to what provides the basis for the development of a vital (uterus) or technological (grill, netting, mesh, system) process with an equitable distribution in space. In the saga, the Matrix is an almost perfect hallucination device, an artificial system that mimics the natural and human system, but which humans accept as being reality itself. If Alan Turing announced the possibility of artificial intelligence not being distinguishable from human intelligence, the concern of the Architect of the Matrix was to produce a world (virtual reality) that would meet the human nature. The Matrix is therefore an imitation of human reality, a prosthesis of the real (post-apocalyptic Earth),\textsuperscript{12} exploiting the fear present in Turing’s second objection («Heads in the Sand») in his 1950 paper: “The consequences of machines thinking would be too dreadful. Let us hope and believe they cannot do so.”

There are many are backgrounds to this metaphor of human conditioning and of the difference between illusion and reality. This question, which is lost in the hearsays of times, has been formulated in very different ways: \textit{Māyā} in Hinduism, Samsara, the goddess Māra in Buddhism, as well as other demonic and misleading entities; the veils of Isis, the separation from God (heaven/sin) in Judaism, Christianity and Islam; in Philosophy, the allegory of Plato’s cave, the Metaphysical Meditations of Descartes and the idealism of Berkeley, for example; in Art, the realms of science fiction literature and cinema.

Thus, the \textit{Matrix’s} narrative is the successor of an old irony: when the spell turns against

\textsuperscript{10} Several films were influenced by the Matrix saga, such as, for example, Inception (2010), which resorts to dreams and their parallel worlds.

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Matri} is the Indo-European root of mother.

\textsuperscript{12} “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 BTU’s 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.” Matrix I.
the sorcerer or when the creator is at the mercy of the whims of his own creature.\textsuperscript{13} The film explores the consequences of the following singularity: When the artificial intelligence created by humans reaches such a state of refinement it matches the conscious condition\textsuperscript{14} and competes with humans for its survival.\textsuperscript{15} The expression “technological singularity,” popularized by Vernor Vinge, Stanislaw Ulam and, more recently, Raymond Kurzweil, points out, basically, a kind of turning point for civilization, in which the relationship between man and technology is irrevocably changed. Besides, Alan Turing himself made a similar prediction: “For it seems probable that once the machine thinking method had started, it would not take long to outstrip our feeble powers. There would be no question of the machines dying, and they would be able to converse with each other to sharpen their wits. At some stage therefore we should have to expect the machines to take control […].”\textsuperscript{16}

The \textit{Matrix} is a kind of Turing test for all reality, exploring the possibility of replacing the real and devastated Earth (2199) by another artificial one (1999). It tells us that several versions were built, all failed attempts to simulate reality. The narrative shows us the result of a relentless war between humans and machines. The technical development and progress reached a point where the initial relationship between man and machine was reversed. If before, the machine was to there to serve us, under our control, now humans were reduced to the status of batteries to power the machinery, becoming a mere energy source, i.e. \textit{machines of the machines}. If before, man was an end in itself and the technique a means to prolong his capabilities, now the machines survive at humans’ expense. In short, man becomes subjected to non-human purposes, i.e. ironically serving the survival and progress of the technique (AI).

This is a powerful metaphor that retrieves, in other terms, not only the Hegelian allegory of master and slave, but also the essence of Marx’s critique of the capitalist system: the fact that the latter feeds on our vital energy, particularly through work in the industrial era. Deceived by scarcity, the basic principle of any economics handbook, our life would be alienated to a system that extracts from us the same life force which, in turn, sets in motion that same system (society). The trilogy stages a post-human civilization subject to a total alienation, a proletarianization of all mankind for the benefit of the means of production (machines). In the film, we have the powerful image of a gigantic plantation of human bodies, from which is extracted the energy that powers the machines and the Matrix in general. Man would thus have become the involuntary slave of the infrastructure that once served him, the latter having gained consciousness and \textit{life}.

The film explores this reversal of the terms plastically and presents the resulting vertigo: man becomes so alienated in his slave status (as a mere energy source) that he reaches the point
of actually preferring this condition, not even wanting to know about the real (Cypher). Therefore Matrix has an evil purpose: to control human beings and extract their life energy, with which to nourish the artificial system. 17 A contemporary version of Descartes’ hypothesis of the “malin génie” 18 and of certain gnostic versions of a lesser god. As a Manichean exploration, presented in black and white, the work eventually nullifies an entire set of nuances of the human reality. Clearly there is no absolute and radical separation between the real and the Matrix, or even between human and machine. In fact, our reality is already full of virtual effects: idealizations, fantasies, symbols, art, concepts, ideas, ideology, etc. 19

Human uniqueness

The exploration work conducted by the Wachowski brothers raises the following questions: What would happen if we were to take from man that which can be simulated by artificial intelligence? Using the Matrix saga, if we were to take away from Neo everything that could be simulated by Agent Smith, which would be the rest of this operation? In other words: Could all reality, including the human condition, be artificially generated? If not, what does irretrievably escape this calculation? In short, what is the specific difference or uniqueness of the human in relation to what we can artificially generate? Following the Turing test, which measures the proximity of the machine (computer) to man, the work of the Wachowski brothers allows us to distill, in a radical way, that which makes us unique or which transcends any calculation made and hence cannot be artificially simulated.

When discussing the limits of computation (AI), consciousness is presented as its very limit. It is claimed that the hardware and software of a machine can simulate everything except consciousness. While the whole appearance and behavior of an android can mimic human life, we would not be able to make it conscious. It would always function according to what its software prescribes and not from any source of consciousness. The difference between the information present in the machine and in human consciousness would be equivalent to that between 0 and 1. If there is a “false consciousness” (Marx), we would still not be able to fake or artificially produce consciousness. However, in the Matrix this question does not arise, because the narrative acknowledges that this threshold has been reached, that the machines have become conscious.

If the existence of the Turing test is already a proof of the abyssal difference between the human and the artificial, the Matrix does produce a reversal of the terms of this equation, representing a kind of Turing test of the world of machines to determine their specific differences when compared with human beings. Indeed, the purpose of the Architect of the Matrix

17 » Morpheus: [...] 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 [battery]. [...]” Matrix I.

18 » Méditations métaphysiques (Première méditation), 1641.

19 » As Zizek showed, the access to the other is already mediated by an idealized image (virtual), which allows one to suspend what is real in him: smell, transpiration, flavor, physiological waste, etc. See the documentary: The Reality of the Virtual (2004).
was to create a device that would most approximate human reality. Despite the improvements introduced, the sixth and final version of this vast simulacrum of total reality also collapsed. There are in the saga several phenomena that denounce what would be a perfect simulation: *déjà vu* (interference in the Matrix code), the presence of agents, certain characters (Oracle and its accompanying exiled programs), the rebels and, in particular, their super powers. If the Turing test sought to establish whether computers behave intelligently or not, the Matrix saga would seem to prove the impossibility of AI simulating and fully satisfying the human race. The result points to a set of particular singularities of human nature that escape the most elaborate computation. Therefore, the Architect of the Matrix talks of Neo as an anomaly in the system.²⁰

In the film, human uniqueness is based principally in belief, in the ability to generate dynamics and overcome constraints. The power of believing would allow human nature itself to be transcended, accomplish the impossible (Neo) and, accordingly, push the boundaries of computing itself (Matrix).²¹ In other words, human belief would go beyond what can be computed, introducing a law that transcends all existing laws, allowing a child to bent a spoon and Neo flying like a superhero. Since the power of belief is infinite, it becomes unpredictable. Accordingly, belief would point towards a background of hope,²² expansion, transcendence, etc.²³ We can also speculate whether machines themselves might not one day find the algorithm that would finally simulate human uniqueness.

It is as if humans were governed by a strange rule that escapes all the other laws. But in trying to articulate this rule, we are opening the doors to the possibility of its explanation. There are some proposals. MD Magno, a Brazilian contemporary psychoanalyst, called it “revirão”, “the catoptria principle”; in other words, the fact that our condition as significant subject allows always the reverse (“enantiomorfism”), by symmetry, of any situation.²⁴ This proposal seeks to give account of human uniqueness in the register of language, in the rational register. Aligned also with the think-

20 "The Architect: Your life is the sum of a remainder of an unbalanced equation inherent to the programming of the matrix. You are the eventually 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." Matrix II.

21 "Smith: 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." Matrix III. The strangeness and misunderstanding of the sinister machine itself (Smith) before man's persistence in fighting for liberation, and in believing in a better world.

22 "The Architect: Hope, it is the quintessential human delusion, simultaneously the source of your greatest strength and your greatest weakness." Matrix II.

23 According to some metaphysicists, it remains then to determine whether such alleged human uniqueness is not itself an expression, a fractal of the uniqueness of the Universe or of God.

24 In the words of its author: "Having the desire of not-Having (A → ʌ)" would be the "Ale!" that can best give account of human uniqueness.

25 "What if, however, the solution to this enigma is much more simple and radical? What if sexual difference is not simply a biological fact, but the Real of an antagonism that defines humanity, so that once sexual difference is abolished, a human being effectively becomes indistinguishable from a machine." ZIZEK, Slavoj, "Masturbation, or Sexuality in the Atonal World" in Lacan.com, 2008. http://www.egs.edu/faculty/slavoj-zizek/articles/masturbation-or-sexuality-in-the-atonal-world/

26 In Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalysis, love does not go much beyond a selfish gratification. Freud even said that love is "somewhat unreal", an illusion that analysis allows to dismiss. This perspective is opposite to that of religious and spiritual traditions, where love appears as the most real, thus in Christianity: God is precisely love (άγαθος). See I John 4:8.
ing of Lacan, Slavoj Zizek points out that what distinguishes the human from the machine is the significant chain (machine) itself and its effects upon the body, particularly in the register that Lacan called real (réel).26 In this sense, as a talking being, in essence man already behaves as what later will result in the machine and in computation in general. Basically, the principle of computing (1/0) coincides with the principle of significant difference (S/S).

However, in the Matrix film, it is love that appears as the most real.28 The power of love achieves the impossible, saves and resurrects. At the end of the first film, the belief and love of Trinity, her declaration of love, end up in resurrecting Neo, making him indestructible (overcoming death), endowing him with more super powers and electing him as “the One.” Although we are faced here with romantic love, according to the Hollywood’s clichés, it is worth noticing that this concerns a relationship between two beings and not just between people and objects. By contrast, for the machines, love is a chemical illusion (Architect of the Matrix)29 or an insipid invention (Smith).20 But the film highlights that the power of believing and the power of love would be the basis to achieve precisely the impossible, that which cannot be the object of computing (AI): “a world where anything is possible,”29 a world not controlled by the Matrix. The third and final episode also ends with belief as the best way out. A way out that is beyond all expectations, that nobody could foresee, neither the Oracle nor the creator of the Matrix.30

That which is unconditioned in the human being would then be of the order of concern, suspicion, amazement, free will, freedom, and originality. In the Matrix saga that dimension is characterized mainly by the following: to do what no one ever did,31 so that everything would be possible,32 through belief,33 purpose, choice34 of each and every one, which implies providence,35 fate, destiny,36 meaning37 and hope.38 That which remains an anomaly for the machines’ computing power.39 As if that which makes us human could not be fully simulated, because it cannot in the first place be understood. The human being would have an unfathomable depth, something that cannot be captured entirely by the linguistic ap-

27 “The Architect: Already I can see the chain reaction, the chemical precursors that signal the onset of 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 that you can do to stop it.” Matrix II.

28 “Smith: Although, only a human mind could invent something as insipid as love.” Matrix III.

29 “Neo: [...] I’ll 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.” Matrix I


31 “Trinity: Neo, no one has ever done anything like this. Neo: That’s why it’s going to work.” Matrix I

32 “The One: [...] 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.” Matrix I

33 “Trinity: Run, Neo, Run! What is he doing? Morpheus: He’s beginning to believe.” Matrix I.

34 “Smith: [...] You can’t win, it’s pointless to keep fighting! Why, Mr. Anderson, why, why do you persist? Neo: Because I choose to.” Matrix III.

35 “Morpheus: When I see three objectives, three captains, three ships, I do not see coincidence. I see providence.” Matrix II.

36 “Morpheus: I believe it is our fate to be here. It is our destiny.” Matrix II.

37 “Morpheus: I believe this night holds for each and every one of us the very meaning of our lives.” Matrix II.

38 “The Architect: Humph. Hope, it is the quintessential human delusion, simultaneously the source of your greatest strength, and of your greatest weakness.” Matrix II.

39 “The Architect: [...] 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.” Matrix II.
The character knows and has experienced life on both sides (inside and outside the Matrix). He chooses the blue capsule (illusion), because he does not believe that Neo and the rebels might one day conquer the all-powerful Matrix, this apart from his being tired of fighting and wanting to enjoy the pleasures of life. Interestingly, the fundamental condition for Cypher to return to the Matrix is his completely forgetting that there is a real world: “Cypher: I don’t want to remember anything, anything. You understand?” Matrix I.

“Suppose there were an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Superduper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain. Should you plug into this machine for life, reprogramming your life’s experiences? [...] What else can matter to us, other than how our lives feel from the inside? [...] What does matter to us in addition to our experiences?” NOZICK, Robert (1974), Anarchy, State, and Utopia, New York, Basic Books, pp. 42-45.

In fact, the human body, connected to sensors, would be floating in a barrel in a very similar manner to the tanks that appear in the Matrix.

In the saga’s sequel, there were still those who came to the stage defending the contrary: a well-intentioned, positive and even divine Matrix.

“Morpheus: [...] Do you believe in fate. Neo? Neo: No. Morpheus: Why not? Neo: Because I don’t like the idea that I’m not in control of my life.” Matrix I.

Deconstruction of the Matrix

The Matrix film confronts us with a post-human dystopia, a control system, staged by the Wachowski brothers, with a set of traits: paranoia, tragic, conspiratorial, violent, technological, new age; including specific sources such as martial arts, cyberpunk, manga, video games, comic books, superheroes, rave parties, and electronic music. The film’s rhetoric does not go much beyond a psychotic delusion, closely aligned with religious messianic eschatology. The Wachowskis’ Matrix is negative and malevolent, a conspiracy, not in our favor, but with the sole purpose of exploiting the human completely. In the classical Greek way, the search for truth (“awakening”) is seen as tragic, i.e. we must pay a high price for accessing to the reality of things, although the Wachowskis brothers argue against fate, praising individual liberty and the value of each individual’s choice.

Though the film exposes a certain notion of the way we humans may be conditioned, at the same time it is in itself highly conditioning, because it represents the human world in general as totalitarian and fateful. The escape from this calamitous fate would be via the superhuman hero. The route is a paradoxical
combat of the perverse effects of the technique through the hyperbolic use of that same technique (Matrix). The entire trilogy is thus captive to a certain technological Manichean delirium and the characters are hostage to a dual and simplistic vicious cycle: aggressor/victim, good/evil, human/machine, real/simulacrum, plugged/unplugged, etc. Hollywood promoters accustomed us to vibrate with a certain aesthetic prescription (matrix): speed (rhythm), drama, war, violence. Manichaeanism, salvation through the superhero and a happy end.

This Matrix work is the expression of the Wachowski brothers’ mental grid (or matrix) and of their constraints (Hollywood), fueling the idea that what constrains and limits us would be mainly external and evil (blame it on the other). This perspective is illusory and simultaneously does not contribute to promote responsibility, since it includes many misconceptions. To start with, it is an enormous simplification of what conditions us to a single factor. On the other hand, it suggest that the cause of our problems lies not within us but rather in a malevolent Other (blame it on the Matrix, on the agents and on the Architect); in turn, we would be unable to solve our own adversity, but have to rely on someone outside and far superior (Neo, Morpheus, Trinity). Thus it is held that the resolution of the problem, the “salvation,” will come from outside through a superhuman individual, someone extraordinary. The narrative of the trilogy is well aligned with our Jewish-Christian tradition, the idea of waiting for the messiah (the One), with the coming down to earth of an extraordinary being who will rescue us: the superhero in the version of the comics and of Hollywood. In this sense, the Matrix can be seen as another declination of the old control matrixes, at the same time wanting us to believe the contrary.

Psychologically speaking, the narrative of the Wachowski brothers promotes the symptom lure: the cause of the problem lies not in the subject (castration, ignorance, plugged), but was generated by a malicious Other (Oedipal Father, Father of enjoyment, Architect, etc.) and finally, the problem solving (salvation) would be a task so great that only someone su-

45 » The traces of human uniqueness are hostages of this technological delirium: for example, free “choice” means choosing to be more capable (faster, stronger) than machines.

46 » In the Matrix, the trivialization of violence even reaches an aesthetic beauty that touches on the sublime, mainly due to the new filming features like “bullet-time”.

47 » Contardo Calligaris’ expression in the book Hypothèse sur le Fantasme (1963) to name the father figure in psychosis, especially in paranoia.
Freud claimed that the psychoanalytist profession was impossible, while Lacan saw it as an inhuman task.

In neurosis it would be the mechanism of repression, in perversion it would be denial and in psychosis rejection or preclusion.

Some esoteric traditions have long been claiming that we create our own reality. In the nineteenth century, the New Thought movement arose and, in the twentieth century, a whole set of references that we have come to describe as New Age.

As some martial arts masters would suggest, the real fight is with ourselves.

Idea launched by the entity Seth, through Jane Roberts, in 1963.

Some, inspired by the quantum theory, where the presence of the observer changes the nature of the photon as a wave or particle, argue that our external reality would be the result of the collapse of our inner reality (thoughts).


perhuman could complete it (psychoanalyst, Neo and his team). The way out for this psychic minority would imply a subversion of these conditions through self-accountability. If, in ordinary life, we are held accountable for what we know, psychoanalysis has extended the concept to the point where the subject in question must also be held accountable for what he does not want to know, i.e. the unconscious truth. If we should wish to take the concept further, and now in a transpersonal viewpoint, we could propose that we are generally responsible for what happens to us, i.e. we are the focus that attracts and creates our own reality.

Thus it would be possible to imagine another version of the film where multiple matrices coexist, according to the perspective of each one, a reading perhaps more to the taste of the recent New Age culture. We go from a unique Matrix to a variable-geometry Matrix, a plural and multidimensional one, according to the frequency and evolutionary stage of each being. Indeed, this Matrix is constantly being created and reinvented by each one of us. Thus, all of us do not share the same reality, the same Matrix. We can argue that various matrices coexist for one same reality. In this sense, the Matrix would represent the limitation of each one of us as creators of our own reality. The Matrix, whether from the positive or negative viewpoint, would ultimately be our mental reality. In this version, we are held doubly responsible: for what is problematic in us, generating unease, and for changing for the better our current living conditions.

Conclusions

In contemporary culture, the Wachowski brothers’ Matrix is presented as one of the more powerful versions of the old allegory of Plato’s cave, here transformed into dojo. The aim is to denounce the illusory nature of our reality, suggesting a way out (philosopher/superhero). But the film is at the same time both more and less than that. It brings together a set of very broad cultural references, from the major religions and esoteric traditions to the current technological domain. The cinema is today
the language (technique) that allows the myths (mythological Machine) to be brought together and reinvented, and at the same time articulates certain spiritual “truths”.

As we saw, the Matrix saga claims that we would be almost totally hamstrung by the wicked intentions of AI. The human would be distinguishable from this almost perfect replica of our world by his ability to believe and transcend the ordinary laws and, with that, do something impossible, i.e. something that no calculation (AI) could foresee. The machines, notably through one of their exiled programs (Merovingian), argue that everything in the Universe is the result of mere causality (cause and effect), thus escaping our control.55 Humans, on the other hand, through Morpheus and Neo, believe that everything begins with a choice,56 that we control our own destiny (free will). From the perspective of the creator of the Matrix and its agents (Smith), human uniqueness stems merely from his minority (imperfection and inconsistency)57 as a species. Besides, the Architect of the Matrix even claimed that the awakening (wake up), rebellion (Zion) and the existence of a chosen one (the One/Neo) were part and parcel of the simulacrum system of the Matrix itself. We would thus have an endless artificial game, since this would be able to integrate any human uniqueness,58 even inspired by Oracle, the female counterpart of the creator of the Matrix.59

The confrontation between Neo and the Architect enabled us to understand that, beyond the purely rational side (left brain), another factor was introduced, represented by the character Oracle (right brain), indicating that mere calculation is not able to fully simulate human nature. The Wachowski brothers talk of a “lesser mind,” an “intuitive program”. The Architect,60 itself refers to the human emotional side in a derogatory way,61 a chemical device that blurs our reasoning and logical choice.62 The mother of the matrix would in this way symbolize the “not-all” rational side of the human.63

But the Matrix also goes further, because it alludes to two navigation systems. An emotional guidance system, internal, guiding the correct choice: love, compassion, empathy, etc. But also a system of extra-sensory perception64 to

55 “Merovingian: You see, there is only one constant one universal. It is the only real truth. Causality, Action, reaction. Cause and effect.”

56 “Merovingian: Choice is an illusion created between those with power and those without.”

57 “The Architect: [...] The inevitability of its doom is as 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. [...]” Matrix II.

58 “The Architect: 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.” Matrix II.

59 “The Architect: You played a very dangerous game. Oracle: Change always is.” Matrix III.

60 In the Matrix, the Architect is the ultimate representation of the “universal Turing machine” (UTM), of the “démon de Laplace”, i.e. the idea of a radical determinism.

61 Some argue precisely the opposite, considering that emotions and feelings constitute a real GPS, a secure system of orientation for life, it so often being the purely rational part that compromises the best choices.

62 It is indeed ironic that the creator of the Matrix, which has the power to read the minds of others, should state: “Already I can see the chain reaction, the chemical precursors that signal the onset of 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 that you can do to stop it.” Matrix II.

63 Lacan tells us of feminine enjoyment (jouissance) as being “not-all-phallic.” Seminar XX.

64 “Oracle: You have the sight now, Neo. You are looking at the world without time.” Matrix II.
In his 1950 paper, Alan Turing did not rule out the possibility of extra-sensory perception (ESP); he even says about "telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition and psycho-kinesis" that: "These disturbing phenomena seem to deny all our usual scientific ideas. How we should like to discredit them! Unfortunately the statistical evidence, at least for telepathy, is overwhelming."

Heidegger talks of modern technology as the culmination of the Western metaphysics project.

"The 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. [...]" Matrix II.

which Neo will be progressively activated (through initiations). It is interesting to note that technology in general, besides being an extension of human capabilities, nevertheless fulfills the dream of the existence of powers considered as supernatural: to communicate and act with remote control, to fly, to move at high speed, to beat disease and death, etc. From this point of view, technology would be an imitation of those powers or even a simulacrum of the human passing from one state to another. Although the three films do not make it explicit, the work of the Wachowski brothers leaves the door open to a Matrix of the Matrix, to an original or divine Matrix. A Matrix that provides the conditions for man (Neo) to rise above the control Matrix (AI), even transcending himself and becoming divine (a super-hero). In this case, we would have artificial intelligence (AI) as a prosthesis between human intelligence and divine intelligence.

The film, like the question of AI, gives us back in mirror form the mystery of the human condition. As if this resisted all attempts of understanding it, as if persistently there were a dimension that escaped all and any calculations, a "systemic anomaly" that Neo embodies in the film. The film thus argues towards the impossibility of transforming the human being into an algorithm. The difference between the human and the machine would be not only in the degree of complexity. If up till now no machine has passed the Turing test, in the film none of the Matrix versions resisted the uniqueness of humans. Indeed, in both cases we are faced with the impossibility of the machine (AI) producing a completely convincing simulacrum of human nature. If the Turing test questioned the possibility of creating a simulacrum of human behavior, in the Matrix trilogy, that simulacrum is generalized to the point where only some (Neo, Morpheus, Trinity, etc.) are aware of that simulation. In this sense, the Matrix is a kind of Turing test that is more comprehensive and radical, where the virtual world becomes almost indistinguishable from reality, so radical that it even goes out of control (Smith and his replicas), requiring human sacrifice (Neo) for their own rescue.


