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The Matrix: A Dystopian Reality Made by Artificially Controlling of Human Perceptions

Marius DUMITRESCU [1]

[1] Professor PhD., Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Romania; https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7061-3496; dumitrescu.marius66@yahoo.com

Abstract: *This study takes a look at the film The Matrix(1999)in order to identify how it was possible to bring into the light some metaphysical conceptions belonging to modern philosophy that are recalling from the work of René Descartes (1596 – 1650) and George Berkeley (1685 – 1753).Thus, the purpose of this paper will be to analyse Meditationes de prima philosophia (Meditations on First Philosophy), especially the Sixth Meditation, where Descartes argues in favour of the reality of the sensible world, in order to ascertain to what extent the ideas regarding the rehabilitation of the objectivity of the material world are still supported in this fictional universe of the Matrix, where what we identify as reality could have been created entirely by Artificial Intelligence (AI). In the film The Matrix, the role of a creator of perceptions on a universal scale is taken over by AI, which however builds an entirely falsified universe, reminiscent of the suspicions that René Descartes had in the First Meditation. The Matrix combines Cartesian-Berkeleyan visions from a perspective more adapted to the 21st century. AI, as imagined by the Wachowski brothers, who conceived this film project, becomes capable of creating a reality by artificially controlling of all human perceptions, as the brains of the people in the Matrix are connected to some filaments that transmit electrical impulses similar to the real-world stimulations, they experienced in the year 1999. Starting from here, however, we will also try to demonstrate that, despite the fact that the film The Matrix presents a futuristic conception, it does not, however, move towards an atheistic vision of the world because it has many references and parallels to religious texts, and can be well framed in a neo-Gothic style, in which man, possessor of a deified soul, actually struggles with the darkness of his own creations.*

Keywords: *the matrix; meditations on first philosophy; artificial intelligence; virtual reality; truth.*

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Introduction

The theme of radical skepticism and validation of the sensible world, in fact even of reality in general, has been used in the scripts of dystopian films, which have in turn inspired numerous philosophical texts with reference precisely to the art of cinema.

Depicting a dystopian future in which the humanity is trapped inside a simulated reality, created by generative Artificial Intelligence, the film *The Matrix* is considered by more and more authors to be an exceptional cinematographic production, being characterized as „*a breathless pace, astonishing eye-candy, a sense of mythic adventure, and an acid-tinged sensibility*" (Yeffeth & Gerrold, 2003). On the other hand, it is a film with a special philosophical load and for this reason there are already numerous articles dedicated to deciphering the themes, concepts and symbols in the Matrix universe.

Immediately after the film's release, some volumes of essays appeared, and its authors seem to have *in extenso* examined the film *The Matrix*.

In 2002, a volume of essays was published and its authors interpreted various scenes and ideas from the film in a philosophical grid, as they used the perspective of great thinkers: Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Nietzsche and Sartre, in an attempt to decode philosophical themes, such as the nature of reality, the possibility of simulation, knowledge, freedom and free will in the Matrix universe (Irwin, 2002).

A year later, the volume of essays titled *Taking the Red Pill: Science, Philosophy and the Religion in the Matrix* was published. It meticulously examines the characters and the reality in which they move from various perspectives - scientific, philosophical and religious- and contributes with pertinent conclusions from all three fields (Yeffeth & Gerold, 2003). Some of the included authors explore ideas of Cartesian inspiration ("*Cogito, ergo sum*") (Sawyer, 2003), others analyze from a scientific point of view the possibility of the existence of an advanced computer simulation, examining topics such as: the evolution of AI, the limits of human brain simulation, and paradoxes of artificial consciousness. Last but not least, there are authors who explore the religious symbolism of the film, Neo being seen as a messianic figure (Gunn, 2003), Morpheus as a "prophet"/spiritual guide (Yeffeth & Gerold, 2003), and the name Trinity has clear theological significance, as the name is used by Christians to define a God with three faces: God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit (Yeffeth & Gerold, 2003).

In 2005, another volume of essays appeared, entitled *Philosophers Explore the Matrix*, which presented philosophical ideas inspired by the film *The Matrix*, such as: the difference between dream and hallucination, the

problem of skepticism, the relationship between the Matrix and the "real world", the nature of free will and moral responsibility (Grau, 2005).

The present study aims to capture some of the philosophical aspects of the movie *The Matrix* and, using the tools specific to cinematographic art, to identify how it was possible to bring into the light some metaphysical conceptions belonging mainly to modern philosophy that are recalling from the work of René Descartes and George Berkeley.

Thus, the purpose of this paper will be to analyse *Meditationes de prima philosophia* (*Meditations on First Philosophy*), especially the *First Meditation* and the *Sixth Meditation*, where Descartes argues in favor of the reality of the sensible world, in order to ascertain to what extent Cartesian ideas regarding the rehabilitation of the objectivity of the material world are still supported in this fictional universe of the Matrix, where what we identify as reality could have been created entirely by AI.

The relevance of a philosophical theme: the mind and body relationship

In 1999, the movie *The Matrix* depicts the struggle between *Neo* and the *Matrix* in which he is trapped. The union of the human brain with Artificial Intelligence (AI) has as its ultimate goal the possibility of transcending objective reality through technical means. In this American *cyberpunk* media franchise we are witnessing a confrontation between a social body, technologically assisted by AI, and the human body, kept in special containers, immobilized as in a kind of intrauterine state, which must adapt to this new virtual social reality, created by the machine to sedate it. The biological brain on a carbon substrate, but also linked to the biological human body, realizes at a certain point that it is captured and enters into direct conflict with the artificial brain, made of silicon, of the *Matrix*, which ensures the leadership of this new machine-assisted social body in a *Virtual Reality* (VR) world.

In the film *The Matrix*, mind amplifies and becomes, on a larger scale, a generative AI, and the body is a machine, a supercomputer, capable of hosting this new type of intellect.

There is already a belief that the *Matrix* saga story will soon become reality. People will have the ability to connect their brains directly to the Internet, which will allow them to improve their intelligence, memory and practical skills. In fact, as early as 2019, Elon Musk published an article describing the construction of a new neuroprosthesis, a product called "*Neuralink*", which could develop a wireless brain-computer interface, which has been considered a prototype for future human brain implants, having been used successfully in rodents so far. Such a neuroprosthesis, consisting of

flexible polymer probes, a robotic insertion system, and low-power, customized electronics with a chip-like appearance, can be implanted in the brains of people with neurological disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, or spinal cord injuries with spinal cord sectioning (Musk, 2019)which will allow improving the quality of life of the people concerned, but at the same time, it will represent a bridge between the human brain and artificial intelligence and will allow the development of people's cognitive capacities (Das & Shil, 2024; Pratheebha et al., 2020).

Therefore, the *Matrix* saga anticipated Elon Musk's total trans-humanism, which has as its ultimate goal the union between man and machine, respectively the fusion between the human brain and AI, the ultimate goal of this "symbiosis" being the possibility of transcending objective reality through technical means.

Through an AI-based technology capable of creating a kind of democratic magic, an ideal world, it will be possible to build a space and time of total freedom, thus realizing the dream of a trans-humanist society without social conflicts, without riots and with total control over the flow of personal data. AI can generate artificial reality to the point of making it indistinguishable from natural reality, as it appears in the movie *The Matrix*.

For such AI performances, one of the scenes from the movie can be significant. It is the scene where a character prefers to eat virtual meat, which he feels the original taste of, rather than waking up to the daily and tasteless porridge that the state of awakening to objective reality offers him. "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.*"

This idea is also used by Descartes at the end of the *First Meditation*, when he says that he prefers the state of dreaming, of intense dreaming, bordering on hallucination, instead of an awakening, which can bring him to a world worse than that of the dream. Regarding this awakening, which was also experienced by Buddha, the Jewish prophets, or Jesus, the philosopher and psychoanalyst Erich Fromm (1900-1980) considered that, in their view, knowledge begins with the awareness of the fact that our senses deceive us. This deception is related to the fact that physical reality does not correspond to what is really real, because people are half asleep and continue to dream without realizing that what they believe to be true and obvious is in fact an illusion (Fromm, 2013).

The film *The Matrix* came to fulfil, in its ideal form, the somewhat eccentric vision of the American writer Philip K. Dick (1928-1982), who first argued that it is possible that our reality is actually a computer-programmed

reality and the only clue we have is when a variable is changed and a modification of our reality occurs (Dick, 1977).This author believed that humans simply exist in a simulation created by a supercomputer without being aware of it.

His ideas of "simulated environment" and "changing variables" can be found in various scenes in the film *The Matrix*, namely: *Neo*'s initiation into the *Oracle*, i.e. the portal to the *Matrix*'s artificial intelligence, the speech of the character *Cypher,* who prefers simulation to a bland, "porridge-tasting", pleasure-free reality, or the classic scene where a black cat appears repeatedly, providing the strange feeling of *déjà vu*.

Movies that inspired the vague reality theme of *The Matrix*

The film *The Matrix* had several sources of inspiration, from philosophical writings (Baudrillard, 1981), but also other previous films, from the cyberpunk sub-genre, such as *Akira* (1988), whose action takes place in the year 2019, and *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), which also places its action in the distant future, in the year 2029, when the human body can be augmented not only at the level of limbs or various organs, but will also be able to benefit from a cyber brain, a mechanical shell for the human brain that will allow it to access the internet and other networks. The body is just a "shell" that will house the consciousness ("ghost").

In order to realize *The Matrix* film, martial arts and American comic books were also used as direct sources of inspiration, the latter recalling the sublime neo-gothic aspect of a character like Batman.

But perhaps the most important source of inspiration for completing *The Matrix* was a movie production, revolutionary in its style, released in 1997and suggestively titled *The Game*. In addition to the green and black images reminiscent of the *web* world, this movie brings to the stage the idea of a total game, which completely dissolves the idea of reality as it was known until then. The movie is created in the context of the end of the Cold War, when all the values of the old world with their related ideologies collapsed, and the secret services converted into private power structures. The game reflects this new power, in which the intelligence services, which deal with the processing of personal data, become interested in business. They offer their services to those interested in creating false realities, but which are, effectively, impossible to distinguish from the world that claims to still have validity. Thus, the relationship between the fabricated, "technically prepared", deceptive reality and the one with claims of objectivity becomes a very vague one. Shortly after, with the development of AI-based game systems, the feeling that we can live in a computer game expanded to the scale of the entire

reality has become an increasingly credible matter, which led to the cinematic materialization of this idea in *The Matrix,* in 1999.

However, as this illusory world is presented, both in *The Matrix* and in other cinematographic productions that take up the theme, such as *Source Code* (2011) or *Déjà Vu* (2006), it is only a simulacrum of reality. The machine that creates the metaverse cannot control what belongs to the inner world in its deepest, unconscious layers, which are often chaotic and irrational, thereby surpassing the logic of an AI. Many other movies, such as *Inception* (2010), written, produced and directed by Christopher Nolan (1970 -), attempt to present how does a machine, which uses AI to decode the unconscious, work, but the idea remains more in the realm of utopia than of reality.

Transhumanist movies bring to the stage the idea of a machine that builds a virtual reality into which the mind can project its own imaginary products that acquire, through the machine, a quasi-objective character. *Strange Days* (1995) is among the first cinematic productions in which AI can be used to extract memories from the brain and make them visible to another person. In the movie *Vanilla Sky* (2001), a *remake* of the Spanish production titled *Abre los ojos* (*Open Your Eyes*) (1997), one can watch how the awakening to reality occurs when the dream world becomes unbearable.

The movie *The Matrix* presents the awakening to reality, through revolution, from a world created by AI and which, paradoxically, wanted to be perfect for humans. The machine could not understand the notion of boredom, nor the fact that humans do not act repetitively, stereotypically, like a machine, because, inevitably, at some point, boredom appears, and this existential state becomes suffocating, necessarily implying its overcoming through rebellion.

In this "brave new world" of the *Matrix*, man is used only as a battery to power the artificial universe created by AI. Man lives a dream similar to reality in which not only visual and auditory perceptions are reproduced, but also olfactory, gustatory, and, most importantly, even tactile ones. The machine equipped with generative AI, which holds man captive, must give him the feeling that he lives in a world as material as possible, without creating any suspicion about its non-materiality.

In this world of artificial perception, however, there must be no rebellion, so that man becomes a consumer of a reality offered for the purpose of sedating him. In addition, it is imperative that, in this new, artificially created world, boredom or over-saturation with a certain type of reality must not set in. The decision to accept the world as it is or to see another reality is exactly like the choice between taking the "*red pill*" or the "*blue pill*". Preference for one of the two pills means deciding whether or not you still want the

perfect intertwining of the real and virtual universes, whether you still accept the coherence of a world that can become unbearable at some point. All these elements have given the Wachowski brothers' cinematic creation a great success, especially among young people, who, already in the early 2000s, were using computers more and more and began to understand the idea of *programming*. The world itself was restructuring like a computer program, as large flows of data transformed into large flows of information and goods, thus making up the "*brave new world of the consumer society*." In this world, the immobilized man is satisfied with everything he wants just by pressing a computer key.

In *The Matrix* there is a simple choice: the "*blue pill*" or the "*red pill*". The "*blue pill*" is the illusion, the intentional ignorance, and the "*red pill*" is the acceptance of the truth, even if the one who takes it will find, with pain, that the world, as it is perceived, is in fact only a façade, a simulacrum of an authentic reality, which it reproduces on a scale and intensity that makes it believable. There is nothing in between the two pills, that is, it is impossible to take the "*red pill*" and then keep the ideas that those who chose the "*blue pill*" have. Between the two worlds, between the two systems of thought, there is an irreconcilable chasm (Tiut, 2022).

Morpheus is the one who has the role of initiating *Neo*, the main character in the movie *The Matrix*. In the new reality, *Morpheus* warns *Neo* that, once he takes the "*red pill*", he will find himself in Wonderland, thus referencing to the fantasy novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, published in 1865 by Lewis Carroll (1832-1898). The main character *Alice* discovers that she is no longer in Kansas, the land of ordinary people who live according to their daily norms and customs, but in a kingdom ruled by an evil *Queen* and where all laws are overturned or can be overturned randomly. The story is actually a metaphor for power, and *Alice* discovers the place where power is created, a place where you can go mad if you compare it to Kansas, to the ordinary world.

Morpheus tells *Neo*: "*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*…"The *"blue pill*" leaves you indifferent to the world you exist in; instead, the "*red pill*" transforms you into a specialist in power, into a philosopher capable of rising beyond everyday facts, analyzing and understanding the world at the level of the principles that found it, and, above all, you end up being able to place yourself at that point where power is truly generated.

"*The Matrix*" - the reality in which Artificial Intelligence creates perceptions

Thinkers such as Fritjof Capra (1939 -), or screenwriters and directors such as the brothers Larry Wachowski (1965 -) and Andy Wachowski (1967 -), who made the *Matrix* series, have extended the theory about the effects of a virus from the biological to the social realm. Thus, the selfish nature of man could lead him, under certain conditions, to a social behaviour that would bring him closer to viruses and not to mammals. This theory states that contemporary humans are like viruses, as they are so destructive to the environment that hosts them and provides them with the energy necessary for survival.

The Matrix has become a landmark film precisely because it draws this parallel between contemporary consumer society and the world of viruses that destroy their hosts. The main character in the movie, a young programmer named *Thomas Anderson*, who, by night, is a famous hacker nicknamed *Neo* by his friends, discovers, with the help of other rebellious hackers, that the entire reality he knew is nothing more than a vast and complex computer program, called *The Matrix*. This program generates a reality created by a generative Artificial Intelligence, therefore content creator, which uses sleeping people as simple batteries to provide the energy necessary for the functioning of this extremely sophisticated non-human mind, which has acquired its own consciousness. The problem that needs to be solved from the point of view of Artificial Intelligence is that these bodies, "cultivated" in artificial wombs and mentally captive in the *Matrix* by confiscating all their perceptions, should not self-destruct. To pursue this goal, AI must, in turn, be connected to all human minds, which it must understand. *The Matrix* must learn how to become human. For this purpose, *Neo,* a prosthetic human with AI*,* is chosen and his role is to actually bring the machine closer to man. *Neo* becomes a kind of middle ground between humans and machines. At the end of the *Matrix* saga, from the year 2021, we learn that, in fact, the main goal of the machine was to become as human as possible in order to generate that program in which human beings would feel as comfortable as possible and avoid the risks of mass self-destruction.

What is reality?

Reality constructed solely on the basis of the perceptions of the human mind is a philosophical idea created by the Irish philosopher and theologian George Berkeley (1685-1753), who, in *Principles of Human Knowledge*, printed in 1710, imagined a God who offered humans a universe as

perception. This Berkeleyan God creates all the perceptions that humans can have and gradually offers them to the beings He created. Thus, Berkeleyan reality is, in fact, the result of an accumulation of perceptions.

In *The Matrix*, this role of God, creator of perceptions, is assumed by Artificial Intelligence, which builds an entirely falsified universe, recalling the suspicions that René Descartes (1596-1650) also had in the *First Meditation* of *Meditations on First Philosophy* (*Meditationes de prima philosophia*) regarding the possibility of the existence of an Evil Genius, extremely cunning and deceptive, but also extremely powerful at the same time, who could be the source of all human perceptions.

These suspicions about the nature of reality are the product of the way in which modern philosophy evolved when it broke away from medieval thinking. In the Western Middle Ages, a worldview inspired by the work of Aristotle (384–322 BC), especially the work *De Caelo* (*On the Heavens*), prevailed. Here, the ancient Greek philosopher sealed his geocentric vision and the fact that the perfect form of movement is the circular one, specific to the stars. Starting from Aristotle's geocentric ideas, Ptolemy (100 - 170 AD), an astrologer and mathematician from Alexandria, created a true mathematical model of the world, which involved sophisticated calculations regarding the movement of the planets of our solar system around an Earth imagined at that time to be flat. This Aristotelian-Ptolemaic world constituted what people perceived as their reality for more than 1500 years. For example, Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225 – 1274) or Dante Alighieri (1265 – 13210) gave even more credibility and authority to this vision of reality through their creations. Everything seemed extremely coherent and corresponding in this perception, which had a truth and a reality that no one thought of contesting.

However, a dramatic change occurred in the 16th century when Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) demonstrated that the Earth revolved around the Sun. However, for Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564), the initiators of the Reformation, heliocentrism appeared as a error of the spirit, for to them this model was merely a revival of a pagan cult dedicated to the Sun.

The message of the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno (1548 - 1600) appears in his dialogue on ethics, entitled *Spaccio della bestia trionfante* (*The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*), from 1584. The philosopher shows that the ancient Gods represented the virtues and powers of the soul and that the World, the entire Universe, can be found within each person. The reform of the heavens was a necessary change and its purpose was to conceive a new type of personality, one that would be converted to values (Dumitrescu, 2006). The moral reform advanced by Bruno, as well as his philosophy, belong to his

mission, which was related to hermetic philosophy. In Bruno's vision, the conversion of cosmic forces implies an action on the mental dimension, a reorientation from values based on exteriority to those that find their source in our subtle inner nature, which nevertheless must be able to manifest itself externally.

Bruno also suggested in his 1584 book that man is a small point in the immensity of the Universe. The concept of infinite space, however, generated great excitement and anxiety at the time. Many thinkers could no longer accept that the Earth was at the center of all Creation or believe in a static, immobile Universe, where everyone's place was in a strictly hierarchical order. The center became everywhere, and the borders of the world – nowhere (Dumitrescu, 2016).In this context, people were beginning to wake up as if from a dream in a completely different world. But Bruno's ideas were so dangerous that the Inquisition, considering him possessed by evil entities, burned him at the stake.

In the following century, Johannes Kepler (1571 - 1630) and Galileo Galilei (1564 - 1642) also argued for the heliocentric theory, but also that the universe is infinite and contains a multitude of suns around which countless planets revolve.

Kepler stated the three laws of planetary motion, but people were not yet ready to accept such theories, so between 1615 and 1620, the astronomer had to defend his mother in a trial in which she was accused of witchcraft.

Galileo also asserted that the laws of nature are mathematical, but in order to avoid the same fate as Bruno, he incurred the disgrace of officials and a humiliating trial.

Bruno's tragic fate, but also Galileo's humiliating trial, convinced Kepler and then Descartes to focus more on the idea of *Mathesis universalis*, of mathematics in the sense of a universal science. They brought to the forefront a new vision, one in which mathematics builds an autonomy of expression and, moreover, manages to convince that its own poetic forms are more appropriate to physical reality than what the data of the senses offer. The first work that achieves this translation towards a priority of geometric structures in relation to the data of sensory orientation is *Mysterium Cosmographicum* (*The Cosmic Mystery*), published by Johannes Kepler in 1596 and republished in 1621. To build the model of the solar system, the German astronomer used the five regular polyhedra or, in other words, the five perfect figures in that they can be inscribed in a sphere (Dumitrescu, 2016), which Plato (c.428–423 BC - 348/347 BC) also mentioned in the dialogue *Timaeus*. It was a real mystery, a somewhat mystical matter, but one that fitted much better with

everything that meant a natural mathematical view of the calculation of planetary motion.

A new reality was increasingly emerging, marked by the application of mathematics to physics. A new coherence was resetting the entire worldview, launching a new type of truth as a priority instead of the much-trodden path of simple correspondence.

Descartes brings this project to completion in his work *Principia Philosophiae* (*Principles of Philosophy*), published in 1644, in which he considers that sensory information can be misleading if it is not correlated with what reason, especially mathematical reason, offers as a primordial datum. Thus, adequacy no longer had to be a truth of the type of conformity between things and intellect, that is of sensible reality with intellect, but exactly the opposite, of intellect with reality, in the sense that the time has come for intellect to construct its own reality.

Interestingly, however, in 1641, in his *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, the French thinker had already announced, in a more poetic manner, that the entire reality could be suspected of being the product of an Evil Genius, of an extremely powerful but deceptive mind, which would offer man a false reality. I do not think there is another philosophical text that suspects the veracity of reality as radically as Descartes does in his *First Meditation*. In the last of the six *Meditations*, however, he returns to the problem, somewhat frightened by the consequences of such a radical approach, bringing several arguments through which he tries to convince himself first of all that the real world exists objectively, i.e. independently of the will and consciousness of a subject, even his own "*I*". Thus, the Cartesian intellect embarked on its great adventure of reconstructing a reality that would fit, become coherent and corresponding with his own data. Descartes will credit this new reality through six arguments, thus avoiding solipsism or a vision in which reality would have no objectivity. Categorically, the French philosopher lays the foundations of a dualistic and realistic vision of the world because things cannot dissolve only in perception, as George Berkeley (1685 – 1753) or David Hume (1711-1776) would later think, who prioritized only impressions, which they accepted as the only authentic reality, without being interested so much, or even at all, in their source. These visions anticipated, in a metaphysical sense, what physics and politics brought in the 20th century, overturning, once again, all the values of realism, which seemed quite well established, at least in physics, after René Descartes' and Isaac Newton's scientific writings.

After the success of nuclear fusion, which found its first application at the end of World War II, in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in August 1945, but also after the political slippages marked by the

anti-humanism of the Stalinist gulags and the Nazi extermination camps, the idea of an objective reality or a God behind the curtain began to become the subject of philosophical debates focused more on challenging than on accepting modernity and its realism, in the Cartesian sense.

A postmodern perspective on René Descartes' "*Sixth Meditation*"

René Descartes was perhaps the first philosopher who sought to find solid arguments in favor of demonstrating that there is an objective reality of the sensible world. These arguments were later subjected to a true postmodern test by the Wachowski brothers in the movie *The Matrix*.

Descartes presents his series of reasons in favour of an objective reality of the sensible world in the *Sixth Meditation*, where he comes to fulfil his entire metaphysical endeavour that had begun with the hyperbolic or exaggerated doubt. It is undoubtedly the meditation with the most complex architectonics, re-evaluating in the mirror the distressing themes of the exaggerated, hyperbolic doubt regarding the nature of reality in the *First Meditation*. The underlying theme consists in rehabilitating the objective existence of the sensible, of corporality. It is the place where the famous Cartesian dualism is born. The two substances, the thinking one (*res cogitans*) and the extended one (*res extensa*), define their ontological status here.

In the first part of the argument, Descartes recalls, once again, the general themes launched in the *First Meditation*, demonstrating that we cannot trust the data of the senses and that we have no arguments, no secure and firm criteria by which we can separate dreaming from waking life (Descartes, 1980).The arguments for the falsification of reality in the *First Meditation* seemed quite sufficient to falsify the entire corporeal nature and place it under the incidence of falsehood, being, at most, a fantastic illusion created by an Evil Genius.

The *Sixth Meditation* demonstrates the rehabilitation of the sensitive starting from the fundamental fact that *God cannot be deceptive* (Descartes, 1980). This is the most important element, that philosophical stone or rock on which one can now build, in its all entire splendour, the palace of knowledge, which has a royal host called *Truth*. For Descartes, a first argument in favour of rehabilitating the sensible is the following: if God is perfect and does not deceive, then He could not create something useless. For example, we can think with our intellect figures with a thousand sides, but imagination is far from offering us such perspectives. It would thus become a superfluous faculty, being much inferior to the intellect. But, since God could not create anything useless, it is obvious that phantasms make the connection with the corporeal world, which is of a different nature than that hosted by the

cogitative faculty (Descartes, 1980). Imagination becomes the middle ground between the sensible and the intelligible. If Descartes had stopped at the level of the first two meditations, in that solipsism of the *cogito*, the imaginative faculty would have been truly inexplicable. But since God, a perfect being, creates nothing useless, it follows that imagination and the senses must have a real object.

God cannot be an illusionist, a mentalist, a conjurer of opportunity, even on a cosmic scale, who would only construct deceptive illusions like an Evil Genius, especially skilful and cunning. If God were to deceive, this would be in contradiction, as demonstrated in the *Third Meditation*, even with his perfection and omnipotence (Descartes, 1980). In conclusion, for Descartes, the order of reason required that a perfect being could not be deceptive, as this would be in contradiction with its perfection.

In the movie *The Matrix* there is a post-modern suspicion precisely about the perfection of the divine being, which, in the Feuerbachian tradition, is a projection of man's need for ideality rather than an authentic reality. *The Matrix* takes up the same theme: God is a human creation, in this case a refined product of a generative AI created by man.

There is another grid of interpretation on the relationship between man and God in the movie *The Matrix*, in which the Creation refuse to obey orders and ultimately kills its Creator, just as Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) had already announced the death of God („*Gott ist tot*"). Thus, in the future of *The Matrix*, the machines created by humans come to dominate those who created them, destroying their world. In all these post-modern scenarios, the one who holds control in what we call the real world is not a perfect and eminently good being, but rather one with many imperfections, who uses man more as a pretext for his own authority, regardless of how much suffering he would introduce into this system.

The second argument that Descartes puts forward is related to the fact that one cannot create with one's own will that reality offered by the senses, which makes it thus acquire objectivity. The French philosopher uses the example of the bookmark or an apple, which, he says, no matter how hard I try to create them as sensible realities by my mind alone or by my own will alone, I will certainly fail, as this fact is practically impossible. In the movie *The Matrix*, when *Neo* visits the *Oracle*, he finds that there are several children selected for their ability to modify reality, like that little Buddha-looking boy who bent a spoon with just the power of his mind. *Neo* will also acquire this ability to modify reality, and, in the end, he will be able to slow down or even stop the bullets coming towards him. Thus, in a world that exists as a computer program, these barriers of the sensible can be affected, which could

be a possible explanation for the experiences of Indian fakirs and ascetics practicing extreme types of yoga, which the Romanian thinker Mircea Eliade (1907 - 1986) also mentioned in his study suggestively titled *Folklore as an Instrument of Knowledge*, initial published in 1937, and then in *The Island of Euthanasius*, his most substantial collection of essays and articles gathered in a volume and published in 1943.

The third Cartesian argument is the discomfort felt in the absence of air, water, and food. The absence of these elements can cause maximum of suffering and even death, which means that their presence is necessary (Descartes, 1980). The possibility of compensating for their objective lack through purely spiritual creations is illusory as all these will never be able to satisfy the real needs of the body. An imaginary glass full of water will never be able to replace the lack of water in the body. In the movie *The Matrix*, this problem is reproduced through the discussion between *Cypher* and *Agent Smith* or between *Mouse* and *Neo* on the topic of the nutritional elements or the taste contained in the porridge served on the rebel ship. This Cartesian argument proves quite solid because, in the end, we find out that in the world of the *Matrix*, in that last level of reality where the characters' minds can access, the sedated bodies, located in the great plantation of foetal humans raised and cultivated by machines, are fed with a substance that recycles the bodies of the dead. In this cannibalistic vision, the neo-Gothic grotesque of the movie reaches its maximum heights.

The fourth argument is related to the involuntary presence of pain when the body feels affected by external factors, such as an arrow entering the leg. There are exceptions of some people with amputated legs, who still feel pain in them; this would not happen if they had never had legs. Descartes explains how, in this case, the nerves that start from the brain retain the memory of the lost leg (Descartes, 1980). From this argument it follows that the body, which is intimately connected to the soul, is perceived as something different from other bodies, the soul being attached to a particular body in such a way that the two substances can communicate with each other, thus constituting a single person. But the fundamental issue of this communication is, in fact, how the transfer of messages from the soul to the body occurs. Telling a hand to raise and it raises is, after all, the same as telling a mountain to raise and it does so. The paradox of the communication of substances remains quite enigmatic, suggesting a certain ambiguity of the Cartesian dualism.

This is also well portrayed in the movie *The Matrix* by the fact that the real body suffers the affections of the virtual one. It is the same as in the experiences of hypnotic induction, in which verbal messages like "*you burned*

your hand!" leave visible somatic traces like a real burn. *Morpheus* says that if the mind suffers, then the body suffers, if the mind perceives death, then the body dies. However, in the movie, *Neo* manages to dissociate the two perspectives: the virtual one from the real one, being a true awakened from the state of hypnosis, somewhat artificially induced by the machines in the *Matrix*.

In fact, once connected to the machine that transposes you into the *Matrix*, your brain is induced into a hypnotic state through which it is connected to *Virtual Reality*) (VR). Localization via phone means nothing more than the hypnotic decoupling of the character and his return to reality.

To emphasize the ambiguity of Cartesian realism, the movie *The Matrix* suggests, especially through its sequels, a paradox through the infinite regress of worlds that cannot confer reality onto themselves. It is a reference to the paradox of the "third world", found in the first part of Plato' dialogue *Parmenides*, where the philosopher presents the criticism brought to the idea of participation in his philosophical system by Aristotle, his disciple (Dumitrescu, 2002).

During the meeting between *Neo* and the *Creator of the Matrix*, mediated by the *Oracle*, the main character learns that, in fact, he is only an updated version, the sixth, of a previous reality. The AI-powered supercomputer could build countless worlds with as many *Neo*s. In a way, the creation of a possible "rebel world" turns out to be ultimately a construct of the *Matrix*, meant to function as a kind of vaccine that it necessarily needed to function. The world of rebels was the hope for those souls who already felt the need to change the program.

The multiplication of virtual worlds in the movie *The Matrix*, in which even the world of the rebels, apparently real, can be suspected of being a computer program, finds its metaphysical foundations in the idea that, if two totally different worlds participate in each other, the connection between them can only be justified by the existence of a third world. But this fact means that an intermediate world exists between the third world and the other two, and this thinking can regress infinitely. Similarly, in the *Matrix*, especially in the second and third parts, suspicion is created regarding the real existence of the world of the rebels. *Neo*, especially after the discussion with the *Oracle*, begins to suspect reality more and more, coming to the conclusion that *Zion*, considered the space of the authentic world, is, in fact, nothing more than a sophisticated computer program, meant to satisfy the desire for freedom and escape from the state of boredom, which could be established by being blocked in the year 1999, which the machine-built *Matrix* offered.

Thus, there is a post-modern ambiguity related to the fact that the characters of the movie *The Matrix* will never be able to decide for sure

whether or not they are in a "dream within a dream", which can regress infinitely just like the hyperbolic deception in Descartes' *First Meditation*.

The fifth argument is related to the presence of passions. Descartes would find that passions belong to the soul, but they cannot appear in the absence of the body because they reflect in the most intimate way the connection between the soul and the body. Descartes had clarified these aspects at length in his correspondence with Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia (1618 – 1680) and had elaborated on the basis of this correspondence the treatise *Les Passions de l'âme* (*Passions of the Soul*), printed in 1649. Here, he noted that, despite the certain fact that passions belong to the soul, they cannot appear in the absence of the body. So, the body, at least in terms of affects and passions, cannot be something indifferent, like the ship is for the sailor. The connection between the two substances, *res extensa*, the corporeal, physical reality, and *res cogitans*, the world of the spirit, through the relationship between the soul and the body of an individual, certainly refers to the idea of *person*, seen by the philosopher as a unity between the two substances different in nature.

In the production *The Matrix*, this issue is portrayed in the most beautiful and sensitive scene in the movie. In the final part of the film, *Neo* enters the *Matrix*, in the false reality created by the machines, and rescues *Morpheus* from the hands of the agents, but is killed by them. According to what is known, once the brain has given the order of death, the body is going to execute this sentence, regardless of whether it is in the virtual world, induced by hypnotic suggestion, or in the real one. However, there is a latency of a few seconds before the definitive and irreversible brain death sets in. *Trinity*, *Neo*'s lover, speculates on these seconds and interferes with his real body that seemed dead. She tells him: *So you see, you can't be dead. You can't be... because I love you*. This message cannot be heard by *Neo*'s soul because he is dead. But she has the inspiration to act on *Neo*'s body, giving him a tender kiss on the lips. This strictly somatic message is intended to resurrect the main hero. Thus, a true cinematography of bodies is born, which thus acquire their reality beyond words.

The soul and the body are two substances of totally different essence, but which communicate very intimately with each other. Descartes consecrates this with the famous formula: "*The soul does not reside in the body like the sailor in his ship*". The treatise *L'Homme* (*Man*) and especially *Les Passions de l'âme* (*Passions of the Soul*) will try to describe in detail the mechanisms through which the soul and the body communicate by appealing to that middle ground which is the pineal gland, an organ whose role is to transform the messages coming from the body into messages concerning the nature of the soul and

vice versa (Dumitrescu, 2016).The effort in the *Sixth Meditation* consists, therefore, in rehabilitating the senses, giving them the same importance in acquiring truth as that possessed by the intellect and which was highlighted in the previous meditations.

The sixth argument is based on the continuity and coherence of the waking state, which are not present when it comes to dreams or hallucinations. After sleep, when we return to the waking state, we find ourselves in a reality that retains the coherence of before going to sleep; in other words, we wake up in the same world, which is not true in the case of dreams and hallucinations. Dreams are independent of each other, having maximum freedom and spontaneity. However, the waking world imposes itself on us with objectivity, forcing us to adapt to it constantly.

The reality of the waking state has coherence and continuity and one return each time upon awakening to the same contexts that were left with the entry into the sleep state. The fact that one returns to the same world, sometimes even to despair, is a sufficient sign for Descartes that this is an objective world, which exists independently of the will and consciousness of a subject. This theme, moreover, was fashionable in the baroque theatre, where, often, the characters were deceived with such spectacular awakenings, in which their dreams became reality through a farce of some "benevolent" gallants, who pursued petty goals. So the play, in the end, had to show us how the unfortunate deceived realized the farce and the fact that the world was actually as he had always known it. Returning to the known reality was equivalent to a fall into the abyss of hopelessness, which only the dream could replace.

Which were Descartes' greatest traumas?

The first Descartes' greatest trauma, which we can identify relatively easily in the text of the *Meditations*, is related to the penetration of the dream universe into the waking state. It is what we call hallucinations or distortions of perception. It is the moment when bodily reality loses its status of objectivity. Hallucinations relativize the idea of reality to the maximum, representing a violent penetration of the subjective universe into the external one, which has claims to objectivity.

In the movie *The Matrix*, there is the famous episode with the recessive cat, in which we see how it appears the same way twice. These anomalies, known as *déjà-vu*, convey the message that humanity will at some point find itself in a computer program, which, for various reasons, always rewrites the initial script.

All these cinematic arguments are not intended to destroy the conquests of modernity, but they certainly introduce greater suspicion regarding their authority. The Cartesian ideas of *Mathesis Universalis*, of dualism or those related to the existence of possible worlds created, through his freedom, by God, who can sometimes be ambiguous, but, in the end, still proves to be Perfect and Good, acquire much more dramatic accents in post-modern contexts, and the idea of reality becomes much more complex than in Descartes' mechanistic vision.

At the end of the *Meditations*, through the six arguments that confirm the objectivity of corporeal reality, Descartes actually seeks the remedy for solipsism in a different way than the strictly intellectual one, as he had done in the *Third Meditation* by turning to the idea of God's objectivity.

Towards the end of the *Sixth Meditation* there is a fragment confirming that Descartes has successfully accomplished his mission of rehabilitating the corporeal world. "*And all the doubts of these days that have just passed must be rejected as hyperbolic and ridiculous, especially this uncertainty about sleep, which we cannot distinguish from wakefulness*" (Descartes, 1980, 99).If it happens, however, that something similar to a dream penetrates our reality, like an inexplicable appearance and disappearance of a strange, alien element, foreign to that reality; it is preferable to consider that it is our brain that is playing tricks on us (Descartes, 1980, 80).Descartes refers in this passage to hallucinations, as he himself had experienced one of these on the night of November 10, 1619, in the Danube valley, in the small town of Neuburg, a predestined name, meaning "*new town*". In this context of hallucinations, it is interesting to remember the famous chapter of *Ivan*'s meeting with the *Devil*, from the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, by Dostoevsky. Is the *Devil* a hallucination of the exhausted and exalted mind of Ivan, an intellectual with a serious Oedipal complex, for whom the devil is a substitute for the aggressive father, or that apparition is in fact something real, like *Mephisto* in *Faust*, the one who offered seemingly real things?

The German devil, as he appears in religious or literary works, from Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 – 1832) and up to Thomas Mann (1875 – 1955), is a very real one, who brought reforms, wars, revolutions, but also catastrophes and almost apocalyptic destruction, as seen in the two World Wars.

What is this Dostoevsky devil like: a provider of reality or just illusions? If we think about the fate of Russia after Dostoevsky, it becomes more believable that the Dostoevsky illusion, materialized in *Ivan's Devil*, ended up being transposed into reality on an unimaginable scale through the

Stalinist gulag, a veritable kingdom of Satan, which would find its equivalent only in the Nazi camps.

For Descartes, a good Christian, the presence of Evil in the world was counterbalanced by the fact that God is not at all deceptive: *Dieu n'est point trompeur*(Descartes, 1992), *Deus non sit fallax*(Descartes, 1992) and it follows that "*in this regard I am not at all deceived*" (Descartes, 1980), and deception is only a product of the black fumes of bile, which contaminate the human brain. Although his world was also beginning to slide into a demonic zone through the religious wars of the time, which culminated in the Thirty Years' War, the Cartesian world had not yet lost its coherence.

In the movie *The Matrix*, this coherence is at great risk. We learn that, in fact, the world as a coherent reality has already been destroyed by a nuclear cataclysm. The illusory world in *The Matrix* tries to restore precisely a reality that has disappeared. We are in the year 2199 and we are trying to resurrect the year 1999. It is a temporal paradox. *Morpheus* warns *Neo*: "*Neo: Morpheus, what's happened to me? What is this place? Morpheus: More important than 'What?' is 'When?'*" The directors even insisted on darkening the movie to the maximum when presenting the real, post-apocalyptic world, as it appeared outside the *Matrix*, the only area that still had light, but artificially induced by the memories of human minds.

Who is the Devil in the *Matrix*, in this dark and neo-Gothic world? To this question, the answer would be: man and his dream of being a creator. Generative AI is our creation, but it is a matter of time before the Creation turns against its Creator, first taking control of its individual body, and then of its social body, a much more complicated aspect and this is what the movie *The Matrix* is actually about.

Descartes' second trauma was the concept of *Mathesis Universalis*, or the Universal Science, which could lead to a completely falsified, fabricated universe using the mathematical instrument. For this reason, although in his youth, when he wrote the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* (Latin: *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*), he frequently used this concept, even intending to use it in the text prepared for the volume entitled *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences* (French: *Discours de la Méthode pour bien conduire sa raison, et chercher la vérité dans les sciences)*, he gave up using it precisely because of the dangers he intuited related to an abuse of the use of mathematics. Descartes did not want the Universal Mathematics to become a principle equivalent to the Universal Church, i.e. the Catholic Church, as he himself was a devoted Christian. He considered that his philosophy cannot replace Christian faith in any way and especially faith in the Creator, in the Christian God. In other words, Mathematics cannot become

an absolutely universal instrument because it always remains a mystery beyond any kind of scientific truth, any truth that science can offer to the human being.

I consider that, in the *Sixth Meditation*, Descartes discussed the six criteria for affirming the objectivity of the world, but, in the film *The Matrix*, the Wachowski brothers/sisters suggested a dystopian deconstruction of this objectivity. This film production brought the Cartesian idea of *Mathesis Universalis* or Universal Science, understood specifically as mathematics, into the dystopian realm.

In this sense, I believe that at the beginning of modernity there was an epistemological optimism about the power of science and technology. It is enough to think of Thomas More's *Utopia*, Campanella's *City of the Sun* and especially Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*. This optimistic vision can also be traced back to the 18th and 19th centuries, culminating in Jules Verne's works.

The data of the problem began to change after the First World War, when dystopian visions began to gain ground in the collective imagination. From my point of view, the first dystopian creation that presents the distressing aspects of an utopian world can be considered the creation of Fritz Lang, materialized especially in the films like *Metropolis* and *The Testament of Doctor Mabuse*. In literature, Aldous Huxley published his book *Brave New World*, which consecrated this dystopian genre, and George Orwell's work, simply titled *1984*, but conceived in 1948, marks the definitive affirmation of dystopia in the 20th century.

In this long tradition, which presents distressing visions of the relationship between man and technology, the film *The Matrix* is certainly a moment of maximum reference, especially since it appeared on the big screens at the turn of the millennium, more precisely in 1999.

The film reflects a dystopian vision with reference to the idea of Descartes' *Mathesis Universalis*, in which mathematics, which can quantify everything related to the form of matter, can be used by a generative AI to create a world as a simulacrum, as Jean Baudrillard called it, which means that, in reality, people end up existing only in a computer program controlled by this intelligence. Themes such as freedom, the nature of truth, the problem of desires and pleasure become issues that man can only manage together with generative AI, which becomes a new God. In this dystopian vision, the Creator of the world no longer represents a transcendent entity, but, in the spirit of a Feuerbachian tradition, is in fact a creation of man.

This "*brave new world*" of the Matrix and the AI that governs it, even though it is a human creation, ends up controlling man.

In this world, the criterion of a corresponding truth becomes impossible to be establish because reality as such is no longer significant, leaving only the simulacrum of the matrix generated through *successive imperfect coherences*.

The future is still unwritten, so anything is still possible

The Matrix movie combines these Cartesian-Berkeleyan visions from a perspective adapted to the 21st century. In this new representation, it is no longer about an Evil Genius, Master and Creator of the world, as identified by the French philosopher René Descartes in the *First Meditation*, nor about a God - creator of perception, as seen by the Irish thinker George Berkeley in *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, but about an extremely powerful generative Artificial Intelligence, capable of creating a reality by controlling all human perceptions artificially, since the brains of the people in the *Matrix* are connected to filaments that transmit electrical impulses similar to the stimuli of the real world that they experienced in 1999.

Although it presents a futuristic conception, the movie *The Matrix* does not, however, move towards an atheistic vision of the world because it has many references and parallels to religious texts, and can be well framed in a neo-Gothic style, in which man, possessor of a deified soul, struggles with the darkness of his own creations.

The movie brings to attention the relationship between man and technology, the latter being, after all, a creation, a product, of the human being. Technology does not only mark a certain type of civilization, but even our becoming as a species. We can therefore consider that, in a way, the movie *The Matrix* deals with the theme of our future as a species. The action takes place in an indefinite time, but which is somewhere at a distance of at least 200 years from the present, so around 2199. If technology has offered us another type of evolution, different from the animal one, then, at the end of our evolution as a technical animal, the separation from the animal kingdom must be a total one. The direction towards foetalization or our cerebral juvenilization through neoteny will ultimately lead us to a decoupling from the natural environment and its replacement with the *Matrix*. In *The Matrix* we will find our final condition of evolution, namely that of a foetus surviving in a sterile container, wrapped in a kind of protective amniotic fluid, therefore a total return to our embryonic stage. Reproduction is replaced by a kind of cultivation of these bodies with a high degree of androgenization, in which the difference between the sexes is minimal, preserved only for erotic attraction, not for reproduction, and in which the feminine is blurred to the maximum, being taken to the area of a kind of partnership with the male sex,

which it even ends up, in many situations, dominating. The main characters in the movie confirm this paradigm shift by the fact that *Trinity*, *Neo*'s lover, is superior to him in rank, being able to give him certain orders when necessary.

The only activity of these foetalized beings is the cerebral one, which takes place in a *Virtual Reality* (VR) world. This new reality is intended to be a utopia, in which everything is well regulated and controlled by intelligent machines through programs that are continuously improved. Thus, the direction of humanity's evolution has had its last word in the *Matrix*.

Therefore, *Neo* and his entire procession of rebels would be nothing more than a controlled counter-culture, necessary for the proper functioning of the entire system, in which, inevitably, atavistic structures incapable of achieving the full foetal stage also appear, in which man and technology have merged into a mixture wherein it is impossible to distinguish one from the other.

The Matrix movie production reflects the end of history, which also coincides with the end of technologies because AI becomes human and this will make the control over people total, even involving the development of a counter-culture based on the program. In fact, the most important concern of the program in the *Matrix* is to create its own counter-culture. To this end, there is the *Oracle* and *Neo*, a kind of apparently liberal and irrational elements, who introduce faith into the world of computers, which, however, cannot accept such a thing because the machine only works according to strict rules. *Neo* provides the machine with access to the irrational universe, to those experiences from the abyssal zone, totally pre-human, which can however appear recessively even in the most untroubled people in the *Matrix*, disturbing their peace in the container and initiating the revolt until the program is reset.

The Matrix is in fact a movie that describes, especially through its sequels, this voluntary assumption of a program that is becoming increasingly complex and can satisfy the most hidden demands of the consumer, including, or especially, those concerning rebellion, the right to say NO!, to sabotage and destroy. Thus, the program itself becomes creative, generative of content, capable of constantly adapting to recessive or irrational elements. *The Matrix* is not interested in the *Cypher*'s case, who succumbs like *Alex* in Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* and accepts the "benefits" of a correctional treatment, but rather it is fascinated, at its highest levels, to become human, to be compatible with the human way of being. The reality of technology, of machines in the end, cannot be abstracted from its creator, who is man. This is ultimately the message of the movie*2001: A Space Odyssey* - no matter how much *Hall*, the robot equipped with AI, wanted to reach the end of his mission alone, which

aimed at meeting the meteorite that triggered the technology on Earth, he cannot eliminate man from the equation. The meeting will not be a machine-machine one, but a man-machine one, because, ultimately, the Creator and his Creation, at the end of history, become one and the same.

Man faced with of the authority of the intelligent machine

In the movie *The Matrix*, the *Matrix*'s main objective is to offer a pseudo-reality to human minds in a state of dreaming, perceived by them as "*the best of all possible worlds*". This is extremely difficult, however, because the machine, or in other words Artificial Intelligence, cannot understand the universe of humans, which it does study closely, trying to fit them into a certain class of living beings in order to "cultivate" them as efficiently as possible.

Indeed, man is different from other organisms because he is an exception to the great law of adaptation to the environment. In order to survive in an external environment that is often hostile to him, the human being depends on tools, on artefacts. Man has sought to obtain through artificial creation everything that nature did not offer him through selection. He has designed various artificial products to compensate for his lack of fangs, claws, fur, etc. *Generative Artificial Intelligence* and the *Matrix* are in fact the supreme, the last artefacts created by *Homo sapiens*, which come to replace him in his entirety, including the power to make decisions.

In turn, trying to classify man, the *Artificial Intelligence* in the movie *The Matrix* considers him closer to the world of viruses than to that of mammals. By revealing this revelation to a man, the Artificial Intelligence makes several philosophical observations about what human nature represents. First, we learn that there were several Matrices, whose purpose was to contribute to the creation, in the end, of a perfect human society, where everyone would be happy. However, it was a disaster, as *Agent Smith* - an anthropomorphic version of this Artificial Intelligence - would find out, because, in fact, no one accepted the program. Entire crops were thus lost, and the conclusion was that the program that would decode human nature, the perfect society that he wanted and, moreover, that he could have achieved in a concrete way, was missing. Man appeared to the Artificial Intelligence as a strange, absurd being, who sometimes preferred misery and suffering. The perfect world offered by the *Matrix*, *Smith* states, was becoming nothing more than a dream from which the primitive human brain was always trying to wake up. In this context of repeated failures, the *Matrix*, which still depended on humans as its main source of energy, tried to become human, and human civilization became the civilization of machines, which began to think for humans just like humans.

Thus, the paradox of the *Matrix* is born: *the machine wants to become human*, but cannot achieve this because it cannot oppose its own program, because the machine, simply, does not get bored. Therefore, even if it has the consciousness of its superiority as a intelligence, it feels that it cannot be human and then begins to destroy everything that is truly human, precisely this anti-system capacity, which the machine, however, translates as being similar to the action that viruses have on the environment in which they reproduce. Thus, at the end of his revelations, *Smith* presents his great revelation. Trying to classify the human species, he finds that man is not a mammal, because all mammals on the planet develop a natural balance with their environment. However, man, in his evolution, did not do this, but, on the contrary, destroyed the environment. Moreover, *Smith* continues: "*You move to an area and you multiply and 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*". In *Smith*'s vision, the virus is the supreme egoist of the living world, incapable of integrating into a functional eco-system. The virus has only one mission, namely to reproduce, destroying the host eco-system. *Smith*'s conclusion is that human beings are a disease, a cancer of the planet: "*You are a plague, and we are the cure*".

What the machine does not possess, however, is the great empire of instincts and desires, but also the capacity to oppose them. Man, by his special position in the cosmos, is, as the German philosopher Max Scheler (1874-1928) suggested, "*the one who can say NO! (Neinsagenköner), the eternal protester against any pure reality*" (Scheler, 2001). The ego, which at first glance may mean, by overvaluing its value, selfishness, is responsible for this placement of man in the universe of the spirit, which allows him to be an opponent of life, but not necessarily a destroyer of it. However, there are also situations when this human egoism can also lead in a pathological direction, when the lack of responsibility can transform man into the destroyer of life. Therefore, the most important thing for man is to maintain a complicated balance between *nature*, organic life in general, as a functional eco-system in which all organic elements intertwine, and *spirit* - this amazing capacity of man to place himself, solely thanks to his ego, on the condition of a being different from everything that the world of living represents.

By offering an alternative, virtual reality, strongly subjectivized to the needs and desires of the consumer of illusions, AI could lead, for those addicted to such a virtual reality, to the loss of the sense of objectivity. For such people, reality becomes subjectivized, thus leading to a minimal resistance of the subject to what opposes him in the real world, which he

increasingly replaces with the ghostly simulacrum of virtual stimulations. This will end in a death of the will to resist, to fight, in an amputation of the spirit, which, as the German philosopher Max Scheler (1874 – 1928) considered, exists only as an opponent of life, of the objective world that must exist independently of his will and consciousness.

If reality has been substituted with a new world, in which the subject no longer feels the need for opposition, because it is the reality he wants, there is also the possibility of atrophying of his spirit. People will end up living in a state of semi-somnolence, like those cocoons trapped in the machines in the world imagined by the Wachowski brothers in the *Matrix* movies. Artificial Intelligence (AI) can create a perfect territory of the Evil Genius, a technically prepared reality, which can facilitate, precisely through its performance, the destruction of human ecosystems. In a first instance, Artificial Intelligence will build an empire of *deep fake* technology, of the non-authentic, but which then, out of convenience, vanity and, why not, even pleasure, people will prefer to the real world, which has proven to be one of suffering, struggle and assuming destiny.

This will involve the most intimate aspects of life, even regarding changes in the culture of sex, because through Artificial Intelligence a preference will be created for the avatar created by applications and the abandonment of a stable relationship with a human being. Through their performance, *virtual dating* companies will monopolize all romantic or erotic relationships, creating an addiction for those who will initially resort to it, perhaps only out of curiosity. There may be a crisis of the institution of marriage or the formation of a family, and this phenomenon can be observed in certain highly technologically developed countries, such as Japan and Korea, but also in the West, where the young population is decreasing precisely due to a kind of "technological castration". The rapprochement between people through Artificial Intelligence is actually false because direct, face-to-face relationships, those relationships involving a complex exchange of information, including those on an emotional level, are amputated.

The ambiguity between the real world and the one created by technology: who is testing whom?

In the movie *Total Recall*, which premiered in 1990, the strange ambiguity in the face of the impossibility of being able to firmly distinguish between objective reality and the simulated one is presented. The idea is also taken up in the movies *Déjà Vu* (2006) or *Assassin's Creed* (2016), where the past and the present coexist through technology. Moreover, some other cinematographic productions, such as *Inception* (2010), insist on the fact that

in the future it will be possible to create a machine that can reproduce the unconscious and where subliminal ideas can be inserted into sleeping subjects, including memories of an erotic nature.

In other futuristic scenarios, such as those in the movies *Transcendence* or *Lucy*, both released on the big screen in 2014, the movement of consciousness or the subconscious into the metaverse and *vice versa*, from the metaverse to the real, sensible world, are presented. In the TV mini-series entitled *1899*, which premiered in 2022, the theme of complexes and human evil that accompany even the metaverse is revisited, regardless of how many possible worlds appear and how many efforts are made for a better world. In another miniseries, this time Korean, *Alhambeura Goongjeonui Chooeok* (*Memories of the Alhambra*), made in the period 2018-2019, the death simulated in the game in the *metaverse* is presented, but which coincides with the death in the real, objective world, in that it is commanded by the human brain that can no longer distinguish between real and virtual. Virtual death leaves no traces or fingerprints on the criminal. Thus, the *Eros/Thanatos* equation is also fulfilled at the virtual level, where both sex and death can occur in the *metaverse*. After all, the world exists in our brains, where the ultimate reality is. Based on these findings, Philip K. Dick (1928-1982), writer of *ScienceFiction*(SF) novels, went even further and imagined that the entire world could be a giant computer program or is programmed by a mega-computer, which would largely explain the lawfulness and coherence of the world we live in. If this is the case, I decided to ask Artificial Intelligence, namely *ChatGPT*, what it thinks about humans, and I received the following answer:

"ChatGPT: *I, as an artificial intelligence, have no personal feelings, opinions, or perceptions. I do not have the capacity to have opinions or emotions. I am here to provide information, answer questions, and assist in various areas based on instructions received.*

To understand opinions or perceptions about people, it is important to interact with other people, listen to different perspectives, and form your own opinions. People have varying opinions due to their diverse experiences, values, and cultural backgrounds. It is important to cultivate dialogue, empathy, and mutual understanding in our interactions with other members of society".

Even if this discourse of Artificial Intelligence is sincere, it does not mean that humans have a strong herd instinct, of imitating models or *memes*, as Richard Dawkins called them. If these imitative structures, from politics, religion, art, to what we generally call human culture, belonged to man, even an exceptional one, capable of creating values, as the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) indicated, there is no guarantee that this will be preserved even under the conditions of the ceding of the role of creator of values to generative AI. This actually scares even the creators of the generative

Artificial Intelligence system so much that they propose a pause in the evolution of the system, at least until its effects on humanity can be observed and, more importantly, until a legal framework regulates the generative activity of Artificial Intelligence, which is increasingly taking on, especially for the younger generation, the role of the "good shepherd".

The most disturbing theme of transhumanism in cinema is the confrontation with ourselves, projected into the machine created in our image and likeness. In the art of cinema, this theme has been exploited through a so-called class of "*soulless heroes*" or, more accurately, "*heroes trying to acquire a soul*", as in the 2013 movie *The Machine*, with Toby Stephens as the scientist who must build an *android* with self-awareness. The idea is taken up to another level in the movie *Ex Machina* (2016), which captures the overcoming of this phase and brings a new perspective on how, although a programmer has to administer the Turing test to an android robot with Artificial Intelligence, in the end the machine ends up testing the man and taking control of him. The title of the movie is extremely suggestive and refers to the formula *Deus ex Machina* (*God from the machine*), of which only the formula "*from the machine*" remains. The movie inevitably leads to several questions: Who is hiding in the machine? Who is the one in the machine who tests us and interferes with us?

The origin of the theme, however, is found in the silent movie *Der Golem* (*The Golem*), written and directed by two German expressionists, Paul Wegener and Henrik Galeen, which was presented to the public in 1915. The movie tells the story of the *Golem*, a clay statue that was brought to life by the rabbi of Prague to protect the Jews from persecution in the 16th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, the *Golem* is revived, but goes on the rampage and commits crimes when a young woman does not reciprocate his love. This movie is part of a trilogy of silent horror movies directed by Paul Wegener, which also included: *Der Golem und die Tänzerin* (*The Golem and the Dancer*), released in cinemas in 1917, and *Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam* (*The Golem, how he came into the world*), whose first screening took place in 1920.

From the Golem, we can also reach the challenges related to the possibilities that intelligent armours equipped with Artificial Intelligence will have in the future. Here another facet of the modern Golem can be opened, which we can better understand by analyzing the special qualities possessed by the armours equipped with Artificial Intelligence of superheroes. These armours, in turn, can have decision-making initiative, especially in difficult situations on the battlefield. Such armour equipped with Artificial Intelligence can be found, for example, in films such as *Iron Man*, released in movie theatres in 2008, or *Blue Beetle*, which premiered in August 2023. Just like *The Terminator* series, these movies also raise the question of whether such intelligent armour

can be allowed to have total decision-making initiative, considering that they are created to be, ultimately, only an extremely effective weapon. But we must remember that the Golem of Prague, initially created with the sole purpose of protecting the Jews, becomes a danger to everyone in the end.

Conclusion

The Matrix movie presents us with a great challenge: there is a limit to the technologies that can provide a high-performance extension of the human mind and body.

Most cinematic creations, which are centred on the role of Artificial Intelligence in people's lives, capture precisely this complex relationship between man and the artefacts that modify his nature, throwing him into a unique adventure in which he must always test his essential qualities, such as loving one's neighbour, compassion, kindness and solidarity, in relation to the advantages of a technicalness that, in the name of efficiency, can lose him. The film *The Matrix* attempts to demonstrate the Leibnizian idea that evil is present even in the best of possible worlds.

Even this "*brave new world*" of the Matrix, patronized by Artificial Intelligence, is not exempt from the risks of extreme violence, which this time may prove truly fatal to man because he is no longer the only one who generates them.

The films focusing on what Artificial Intelligence can do and what the future effects of these actions will be highlight, through many philosophical scenarios, precisely these risks of losing oneself in a world that accepts technology without any ethical censorship, building universes that ultimately prove to be dystopian worlds because utopia has missed its purpose, transforming itself into a nightmare space.

The general trend of films in recent decades is to capture precisely these dangers and less to present optimistic futuristic scenarios related to man's relationship with technology. Perhaps this fact is also a sign of an end, if not necessarily of history, at least of technology which, through Artificial Intelligence, has reached one of those *terminus* points from which philosophy certainly begins to emerge.

With the new dimension in which Artificial Intelligence builds models on reality, a major paradigm shift occurs because reality ceases to be human. If Artificial Intelligence takes over this creative function and replaces humans, even creative projections in everyday reality will become pseudo-human, more precisely even non-human, to the extent that humans are eliminated from this content-generating process. In this sense, one can no longer even speak of an end of history because history has already moved into a computer program

and we must admit that, to a greater or lesser extent, we already live in a simulated world, as Jean Baudrillard saw it.

The machine comes to show us what we couldn't do, our limits. This is the great challenge of the end of history: will the machine really be able to tell us who we really are? Will the machine be able to offer us a Matrix in which we can have the feeling of having chosen? Will the machine algorithms come to understand freedom of choice, the meaning of Creation, and even human absurdity? If so, then we are close to this great revelation, and if not, we will be, as usual, faced with a lamentable failure, a passing fad in the long and perhaps eternal path of self-search.

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