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Alternative Realities/The Multiverse: A Metaphysical Conundrum

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fredawynn@yahoo.com

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ALTERNATIVE REALITIES/ THE MULTIVERSE: A METAPHYSICAL CONUNDRUM

By

FREDA A.WYNN

Under the Direction of Kay Beck

ABSTRACT

Films of every era have reflected the concerns and fears of Western society. The acceleration of technology, the loss of a concrete world, the uneasy relationship with humans and ever increasingly complex machines are inducing a fear of losing the ability to discern reality. The reality of ideas from science and the world around us are woven into the narratives that we use to explain and sustain life. The films we watch reflect our hopes and fears and as the fears increase so do films with a shared theme of alternative realities. To know reality and search for the true Self is the job of the hero/ protagonist in recent alternative reality films.

INDEX WORDS: Alternative Reality, Science Fiction Films, Multiverse, Parallel Universes

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FREDA A. WYNN

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment pf the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In the College of Arts and Science

Georgia State University

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ALTERNATIVE REALITIES/ THE MULTIVERSE: A METAPHYSICAL CONUNDRUM

By

FREDA A. WYNN

Major Professor: Kay Beck
Committee: Edward J. Friedman
Kathryn H. Fuller

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
December 2005

I dedicate this work to Kara (May 16, 1973- February 28, 2002) and Michael (May 21, 2003- June 21, 2003)

Kara

February is the cruelest month
Death that gives birth to life
Envelops our souls
Betwixt sorrow and hope
We are forever in limbo
Yearning for a simpler time
When spring meant
Beginning
Now the ice never melts

FA Wynn 2002

For Michael

June once gave me hope
That summer would always
Be.
But for some it is the end of time
And time is all we will ever have.

FA Wynn 2003

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My soul has not yet passed to the image…
Adolfo Bioy Casares[1]

Introduction

Just as the acceleration of technology has escalated, there has been an increasing plethora of films in the last decade that depict characters in alternative realties.[2] These realities are ones in which not only the characters, but the audience may be initially unaware that these realities are unreal. The realities range from virtual to games to media conceived to fantasy to science and science fiction. Yet they are all bound by the objective of breaking through a barrier that separates them from authentic reality. This loss of discernable reality is more than just a narrative theme, but also a theme of current and emergent philosophies as well the theorical concept on which this study is based; that the inability to discern reality is a deep seated collective fear of society in the 21st Century. We have truly reached the age of technology and our culture reflects this paradigm in time. Thus we find that in these films the fourth phrase of image that is characteristic of the era of simulation is reached. The films and philosophies mirror one another. Scott Bukatman in Terminal Identity explains:

> "First the image functions as a reflection of a basic reality. Clearly, until the hallucinations begin, the viewer trusts the cinematic image as the sign

of truth”[3]

The second phase of the simulacra masks and perverts a basic reality. In the third phase the images masks the absence of a basic reality and in the fourth phase the image bears no relation to any reality whatever, it is its own simulacra. These films have become a dominant “genre” of late capitalism, which implies that like the studies of films from other eras especially the fifties, there is an ideological message being conveyed. They have become automatized by the target audience. Through the dominant genre current films reflect the “uncertainty” that begins with the fear, anxiety and paranoia of not being able to distinguish between the real and the unreal. There are notable aspects of these films in which the oppressive social structure, media and the “government” are seen as the antithesis to an authentic life and this is possible in any age, but especially so in a volatile society. Being, in the ontological sense in society is a paradox, one cannot completely be one’s true Self in any society and without society there is not any need for rebellion.

One of the results of technological acceleration is the urging for optimal output is the need to upgrade to higher and higher processor speeds with greater memory capacity we have usurped the time needed to reflect and fly from one event to another frantically memorializing the past. Everything fits within the screen time of two or three hours and is of equal value whether it is a world war or the death of a celebrity. In our culture storytelling is now the job of film and these stories can be seen as a confluence of technology, religion, trauma, forgetfulness, aesthetic and structural forms (theater, film, graphic arts, television and computer games). The forgetfulness is paramount in some films as a loss of collective memory and the fear and paranoia of using technology and even film to be our memory banks. The films with a mythical story are designed to assuage

our fears about the intricate qualities of the web of technology. In these films the inability to deal with the present reality or the present technology is a problem that needs a solution. The alternate realities the characters find themselves in are closed worlds, imprisoning and limiting the human beings who must awaken and escape in their striving for freedom. In Plato's doctrine of recollection we can draw from the memory of eternal realities and by allowing our minds to go to a previous existence of the soul we are able to recollect all knowledge. This is the source of memory for the main characters in their search for freedom. The films of alternate realities hold a two fold solution. The reassuring myths and fantasies and those that are of nightmarish quality can either attempt to restore a prelapsarian time or provide a cathartic experience.[4] However, as Vivian Sobchack explains:

> "Television, video cassettes, video tape recorders/players, video games and personal computers all form an encompassing electronic *system* whose various forms 'interface' to constitute an alternative and absolute world that uniquely *incorporates* the spectator/user in a spatially decentered, weakly temporalized and quasi-disembodied state."[5]

The films used in this study ranged from alternate realities (*The MatrixTrilogy)* to parallel universes (*The One*) or Multiverse to simply a fabrication of reality (*The Truman Show*). *The Matrix* and its sequels are the quintessential illustration of film's quest to delineate a distinction between appearance and reality. There is a value in appearance of

reality normally dismissed until it equals a form of existence as depicted in the novel, Ubiq.[6]

Alternate realities can best be described as realities in which a character can exist but that are not a concrete reality (objects vs. images). The reality we believe we live in is one of concreteness, which has become increasing elusive.[7]

It is difficult if not impossible to distinguish totally between the terms alternative reality and parallel universe. If it were an altered state of consciousness there is the tendency to affix the experience to a delusion. Here too there is a hazy line between delusion, illusion and reality. A parallel universe is a universe that exists separately from our own. It is not as simple as that statement implies as further explanation will show. Alternate realities and Multiverse have become a probable entity according to physics. This is derived from a theory of quantum mechanics proposed by Hugh Everett III in 1956 and it is called the “many worlds” theory.[8]

Although fiction and science fiction, as well as television and films have dealt with this theme for decades, recently there has been a profusion of this theme in films. In essence what we may have here on a general level (which has filtered down from scientific paradigms to the vernacular) is the concept of multiple realities, or as physicists are fond of referring the Multiverse. Two criteria must be examined in order to assess the difference. One being that all realities are concrete in parallel universes (thus all are real worlds as opposed to stimulated or dream “unreal” worlds) and two, all characters, humans or conversely alter egos are simultaneously present in all universes at the same time. These Multiverses are causally isolated from each other (meaning that an event in one cannot have an effect on another)[9] and have different characteristics such as different numbers of

dimensions and different physical laws. As reality on screen is always one step removed from the natural world, the alternate reality (unreal) worlds take another step moving them even further away from the context of reality. It is a simulation and representation of reality and there can be two or more in which the character exists, e.g. *The Matrix* (in which there appears to be three: the computer life of the matrix, the Cartesian life of the pod/ energy source for the computer and the" real" concrete ruined and burnt world). Because of the phantasmatic nature of these realities there isn't any unassailable proof to evidence their existence.

The films *The Matrix, Matrix Reloaded, The Truman Show, Pleasantville, Contact, Dark City, Vanilla Sky*, e*XisteZ* , *The Thirteenth Floor* and *Waking Life* share similar characteristics or traits and express, the theory of the Simulacra[10] and the computer/electronic consciousness[11]as well as the theories of Existentialism and Postmodernity, which are the philosophical source for the concept of alternate realities. All these films have the theme of alternate realties (almost all are diverse, composed of differently constructed realities such as virtual, computer program and reality television show, which is indicative of the problem of distinguishing between them) and all films cited present dual or triple realities of which at least one is not real in concrete terms. Because the sources of their existence are different, their ontological status differs also. This difference renders the categories in which they exist irreducible, irreconcilable and mutually exclusive.[12] The primary source of anxiety regarding reality is that virtual reality as in a matrix configuration, parallel universes, virtual reality video games and the paranoid disillusion that the world is out to fool you, are legitimate concerns. This is

especially true when consciousness can be elucidated as quantum mechanical events created by microtubules in brain cells.

Although Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Voltaire were known to have mentioned the existence of many worlds,[13] it was popular literature in the 20th Century that gave this idea broad circulation. Previous scientific paradigm or revolutions in thought and activity were known only to a certain segment of the population. The rise of the media, the increasing number of literate people gave impetus to the knowledge of the scientific and furbished the imagination of the creators of novels and films. On of the earliest directors to develop this idea was George Mêlés.

Prior to the development of the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics scientific discoveries has not been a prolific source of fiction. Quantum physics changed the worldview of the most advanced technical and economical countries. The origin of the universe and splitting of an atom became part of the vernacular.[14]
The fiction literature depicting alternative worlds sprung into public awareness at the same time the beginning of relativity and quantum were being developed. Many writers either proceeded scientists in their discoveries or created worlds in their writing that echo the theories in quantum physics.[15] Quantum theory has an added advantage in writing fiction because the use of parallel worlds could work as a plot devise to isolate the protagonist as well as be the theme of the narrative.

Science as a public interest begins to increases in England at the turn of the 20th Century as scientific demonstrations and lectures became popular. Science fiction as a direct offspring of a new age began to depict scenarios that science has inspired.

Now physicists write science books for the average person to read and science has totally left the realm of isolation.

As more is discovered about quantum physics there has been an increase in films, books and video games that depict endless varieties of alternative worlds.
In the last century the technological progress of the world has increases almost exponentially. In the money market of late capitalism each advance or new invention means a fortune for the investors. Technology does lead the course of the free market and has since the beginning of the industrial age.

So the connection with alternative reality with films in a late capitalist society is one that first provides an answer to the dilemma of humans and machines. The films assuage the fear and concern that has grown with the progress of technology. In these films the hero as well as the audience works out solutions to deal with their anxiety.
A second reason for the popularity of these films is that they are a postmodern/posthuman escape. Alternative worlds offer endless variety and in video games a world under a person's control. The human desire for immortality previously feed by photography and then by film can be fuel by imagining ideas of other worlds.

A third reason that alternative realities are becoming profuse is that technology now drives the economy and the mise-en-scene of these films are both reflecting and inspiring the world of the future. Society is influenced by the knowledge of scientific theory. Science has been promoted by advertisement and we want to believe that "Science brings a better tomorrow." However, with the choice of milieus the alternative realities at least in their imaginary form are much safer than the atomic bomb.

Purpose/ Expected Results

This research is important because the more we understand the world we live in, not in retrospect as we have done with the fifties decade, but currently, the better we are able to make intelligent informed decisions. If the mass media is sending us subtle or not so subtle messages then consequently, we are able to function and progress at an elevated rate if we are aware of with what we are dealing. We need to examine critically everything that is broadcast, but especially "entertainment" because this plays an unsuspecting role in directing our thoughts. Research like this is necessary also to further stimulate thought and scholarship.

It is understood that in all film, ideology is inherent. Therefore, it is imperative to discover whether this is an unconscious reflection of a social dilemma or a conscious manipulative form of social control through film or both. It is important to find to what extent both occur. In Terminal Identity, Scott Bukatman expresses our fear succinctly,

> "Television, computers, and the hybrid forms of virtual reality having arisen to comprise Toffler's blip culture, the loss of the often unexamined, empirically accepted category of "the real" has instantiated a crisis throughout our hardwired cultural circuits."[16]

There are not few studies that have collectively gathered films of various genres which have the theme of alternate realities. In order to demonstrate that this concept is a trend in collective thought it must be shown that this theme is common across genre lines. With this theme, this research intends to show that the theme of alternate realities is a dominant ideological vehicle that is supported by the theory of Simulacra in which the hyperreal has replaced the real. This explosion of films constitutes a need for definitive philosophical and sociological implications which reflect the craving for the Real. The question may be whether a new genre or subgenre or multigenre is in play. This research sets out to show is that the theme of alternate realities is supported by the theory of Simulacra as well as Existentialism, Postmodernity and Transhuman philosophy.

What binds these films across genre lines is that there is an ideological message. Using the elements that Vivian Sobchak and Peter Biskind have employed to identify ideological ideas. This thesis establishes that the eleven films I have examined share the same ideological constructs.

The films selected reflect the concept of the hyperreal as delineated by Baudrillard's theory of simulacra. These films are constructed so that their respective alternative realities become a prevalent theme in which the protagonist must respond and confront the alternative realities and their destinies. Every one of the films in some aspect mirrors the world outside the cinema screen.

Focusing on a single genre such as science fiction films does not address how prevalent the techno-consciousness has become in our lives and has dominated our anxiety.

Methods, Material and Texts

The films that have been studied are the following: *The Matrix (1999), Matrix Reloaded (2003), Matrix Revolution (2003), eXisteZ (1999), Dark City (1998), Pleasantville (1999), the Truman Show, Contact(1998), The Thirteenth Floor (1998), Waking Life(2001)* and *Vanilla Sky (2001)* . These films were selected because they have become prevalent in the last decade and by their very plentitude are significant. They are all narrative embodiments of twentieth century philosophy regardless of their genre. Each film was chosen because the theme of the film is one of Master genre: Romance, Tragedy, Comedy or Irony that revolves around an issue of alternate reality. The alternate reality is the focal point of the film and the goal of the protagonist is to deal with the alternate reality in order to make the selection.

The films are not easily classified into genres. These films for the most part can be considered multigenre. *The Matrix* and *Matrix Reloaded* and *Matrix Revolution* are in the science fiction/film noir genre as is *Dark City*; however they are vastly different in their orientation and mise-en-scene. *Contact* is the only film of a true genre in the group, that of a science fiction film. *Vanilla Sky* and *The Thirteenth Floors* are psychological thrillers. *Pleasantville* and *The Truman Show* are a mixture of fantasy and comic drama. *Waking Life* is an animated philosophical and intellectual conversation. All the films connect through the search for reality or the Real.

The idea of compression of time, which is evident in many films[17] that depict modern life, is an important aspect of the electronic/ computer consciousness. Hence the need for faster and faster computers, communications and transportation that are

instantaneous instead of traveling in any kind of mechanical vehicle. This aspect shows up as one of the features in the films as well as a method used for the selection.

The limitations to textual analysis lie in the fact that it is not a scientific process and can't be held as proof, but this is also an advantage as it is necessary to provide information to the academic community in order to allow refutation and agreement. Insight is important in discerning hidden meaning and their effects which is an aspect of textual analysis. There is always the possibility of bias in studies like this one as well as epiphanies.

Most of the work of ideological messages in films has been examined eras from the fifties to the early nineties in single genres. In this sense the current film repertoire has been neglected. It does not take years of distance for a retrospective approach to understand or observe that current different film genres have taken on what was formerly reserved for single genres in the past and has transversed across genre lines. The reasons for this could certainly be that of the prevalence of technological mind consciousness sweeping across our culture.

In the past, almost all studies have concentrated on science fiction films with the exception of Peter Biskind in Seeing is Believing. This is not only a limitation to believe as many scholars do, including Vivian Sobchack, that science fiction is the only genre in which modern ideological intent is extrapolated; it is also a missed opportunity to understand the pervasiveness of the ideological thought in postmodern film.

The theories and methods I use will be textual analysis, philosophic and sociological analysis and the late capitalist postmodern theory of the simulacra as well as

Posthumanism and Transhumanism. I first establish a theoretical framework for discussing the ideological work of film with current theory. I then isolated the methods that other scholars have historically used to analyze and prove that films do ideological work. There is a need for some historical research into previous studies that are similar to form a historical framework. The films selected will be analyzed by genre theory and its set of codes and the theory of development. Utilizing the theory of the simulacra, I will do a textual analysis for ideological messages.

Guided by the writings of Jean Baudrillard and Slavoj Zizek I will examine the elements in these films that meet the criteria of hyperreal, simulation, simulacra and alternate reality. I will use these terms throughout this study of hyperreal, simulation, simulacra and alternate reality relying on the definitions agreed upon by the fore mentioned postmodern theorists. My method of textual analysis will involve the following six steps. I begin by researching scholarly writings pertaining to each category or elements of that, e.g. genre codes and religious symbolism. I then obtain a copy of each film (video recording or DVD). Next, I view each film and assess whether it meets the criteria of a certain genre, subgenre, multigenre or new genre. This will be the Roland Barthes' literary model and the fact that a number of factors have to be present, usually three out of eight, in order to classify a genre in film. The science fiction films are separated and then examined for the elements that they share with the other films. The codes will be decided on after repeated viewings of all the films. Analogous to Biskind's study, I outline the narrative of each film and observe the uses and meanings brought to the concept of reality. I then research scholarly and popular publications about the films. The films are then contrasted and compared to discover ideological constructs and how each film treats the issue of

reality. I look for a measurement although it cannot be a totally accurate one, of latent content in these films.

The Matrix Trilogy

The best film to start with is *The Matrix (1999)* and its sequels, *Matrix Reloaded(2003)* and *Matrix Revolution (2003).* Unlike other films with exceptional special effects and similar themes of machines, controlling the world in a malevolent way such as *The Terminator* and its sequels, *The Matrix Trilogy* has spawned books, journal articles and a cult following that eclipses these other films. *The Matrix Trilogy* explores the search for truth and knowledge, the cost of knowing the truth and acquiring knowledge, the quest for understanding our lives and the sacrifices we choose to make to live an authentic life. The filmmakers, the Wachowski Brothers see the films as an integration of finite knowledge and infinite beliefs as well as a story of the evolution of the relationships of humans and machines.[18] The philosophers most referred to by writers on alternative reality films such as *The Matrix Trilogy* are Jean Baudrillard, Plato and Rene Descartes. In Plato's philosophy there is the well known allegory of the cave and the theory of a priori knowledge. The allegory of the cave could be seen as a theme in several alternative reality films. The fundamental story is that of a person (prisoner) with other prisoners who are chained with their backs to the fire. These people only see shadows and thus their knowledge of the real world is limited to the shadows. One day one of the prisoners is unchained and taken outside. Once he/she is used to the sunlight, the world is seen as totally different. He/she now sees the shadows on the wall as dark forms of sentient beings blocking the light. He/she comes back in the cave and tries to tell the others what the world is really like and they refuse to believe him/her. Neo, the protagonist of *The Matrix Trilogy*

is one who realizes the truth of the world, but cannot yet convey it to the others, who still reside in the energy pods.

What is also true is that a form of enlightened knowledge is knowing one's self. In *The Truman Show, Pleasantville,* and *Dark City* the protagonists are saved by their ability to learn about themselves and grow. This is also true for a few characters in most of the other films. This ability to examine one's self is as much a part of current climate in films as it could have been in the past, even though it has known for two and one half thousand years ago originating from Socrates; as he was to have said, the unexamined life is not worth living (A sign over the door in the Oracle's apartment says Know Thy Self). Plato's concept of a priori knowledge was explained by him as knowledge known in a previous lifetime. In *Matrix Reloaded,* it is revealed in the scene where Neo meets the Architect that there have been six prior reincarnations of himself. Neo is astonished by this revelation. These six former versions of Neo have always followed the plot created for them. This is where the cave allegory has entered the picture. This time Neo has seen the world outside of the cave.

It is in Descartes' skeptical search for the basis of ontology that defines the very core of indeterminate existence. Are we "brains in a vat, " is there a demon commanding our lives (although one could interpret this now as the evil super computer) or is this all a dream?

For Neo the matrix is essentially a dream world that he experiences while simultaneously providing energy for the dominant culture of computer machines as a "body in a vat/pod". He is really a human hatched in a high tech womb into a false

paradise. Cogito ergo sum may parallel the observer effect, we see ,we think, therefore all we are and all there is, and are made possible by the thinking or observation of it .[19]

Of all alternative reality films *The Matrix* has the most symbolic and the most metaphoric correlation with religion. Neo is the single savior; his girlfriend is Trinity, a name which also refers to the three entities of Christian belief; the Son, the Father and the Holy Ghost. Neo has his own Judas who wants to go back to the simulated world and its pleasures. It is Cypher (Joe Pantolino), who betrays the whole crew. Neo is reborn from the pod world and resurrected from death by love. Whereas the conversion in *The Matrix* is from the stimulated world to the real concrete one, in contemporary religion, mainly forms of Christianity, the conversion is from the real world to that of myths and symbols. Morpheus, originally the Greek god of sleep or dreams is the modern version of John the Baptist whose role is that of a prophet. This is an entertainment culture and the parallel occurrence of the template of our comptemporary collective moral community has coalesced with the growth of the entertainment industry, thus it follows that, films and information about them are everywhere, in newspapers, magazines, television, radios and games. This leads people to see everyday significance and relevance in films which provide a system of symbols that serve as form of communication in our society. “May the force be with you”, if uttered would greatly surprise the speaker if he/she were not understood. We attach philosophical meaning correlates to our lives to dialogue from films, e.g. “Make my day”.[20] It is possible that the world of simulation extends the religious experience to new dimension.[21] The contention of Richard Jones, who is a professor of anthropology and an ordained minister, is that the replacement of religious services in church, temples, mosques and synagogues with the film culture is simply a

sign of the changes of modern society. Video games replace liturgies and rituals as an interaction with our moral myth.

To begin with *The Matrix* is to explain the story of a computer hacker/computer worker (Neo/Thomas Anderson) who dwells in the matrix (a computer simulation program) and although he thinks he is in 1999, it is "really" 2199. Neo is contacted by people he soon learns are free, unlike him. He is unaware of his oppressed state until he is brought aboard the Nebuchadnezzar, the spaceship that houses the humans. Morpheus (Lawrence Fishboure) the leader of the group of freed humans that "rescue" him offers him a choice of pills, red or blue.[22] If he takes the blue, he returns to the life he has always known and lives without the knowledge of the Real. However, he has already been exposed to the harshness of the real and has been seeking an answer.[23] He decides to take the red pill and it changes his life forever. He is rescued from his womb/pod and comes to live on the ship Nebuchadnezzar with the others who are free. His initial rescuer is Trinity, a famed computer hacker, (Carrie-Anne Moss) to whom he is immediately attracted. He is informed by Morpheus that he is the One which coincidentally is an anagram for his hacker name of Neo. The One will lead all the rest out of their inert pod existence and save the last remaining vestige of civilization located in the underground city of Zion. The Oracle (Gloria Foster) has predicted the arrival of Neo. Morpheus is completely convinced that she knows and speaks the truth. Neo is revitalized and taught the skills needed to defeat the warriors in the machine army, the Agents. These Agents, computer programs who look like a gang of FBI agents, and who have the job of keeping people from escaping the pods and depleting the energy source for the machines. Mr. Smith (Hugo Weaving) of the agents is especially vicious toward the humans; he fails to understand them and regards

them with contempt.[24] The first film ends with the defeat of Mr. Smith and the death and resurrection of Neo who is saved by Trinity's love.

Matrix Reloaded begins with Neo having seventy two hours in which to penetrate the source of the matrix in order to save Zion before the 250, 000 Sentinel drilling machines can reach and destroy the entire colony. Neo has powers that have developed since he joined his co-conspirators. He can see the matrix in computer code (revealed at the end of the first *Matrix* film) as well as having flight and super strength and agility, according to the Oracle. Neo must first locate the Keymaker, (Randall Duk Kim) according to the Oracle, but it is revealed that the Oracle is a computer program (a fact that raises doubt and anxiety in the minds of Neo and Morpheus and their followers.) After a hazardous journey in which Neo, Morpheus and Trinity confront the Merovingian (Lambert Wilson) who is another complex computer program and programmer and his wife Persephone (Monica Bellucci), rescue the Keymaker and elude the Merovingian's bodyguards, the Twins (Adrian and Neil Rayment) with a hair-raising chase on the Los Angeles freeway, Neo is able to escape with the Keymaker and with him find the Architect. The Architect tells Neo he is the sixth version of the matrix savior, which has similarities to the timing of the creation of the world in Genesis (the world and all that is in it was created in six days).[25] The Architect gives Neo a choice of saving Zion by choosing twenty three people to carry on the human race or face total annihilation of the human world. Neo sets out to save everyone including the crew of the Nebuchadnezzar and Zion's total population, especially Trinity. Neo now believes he has the power through love to oppose the machines that control the matrix and having accepted the immense responsibility of the task before him, he is prepared to save his world. At the last moments

of the film, Agent Smith who is now able to duplicate himself endlessly (as in a computer virus)[26] has managed to infiltrate the free Zionists and cause a destructive explosion in whose the body Smith has entered, of a Zionist Banes (Ian Bliss) is the only one to survive. Both Neo and Smith are left unconscious in the final moments of the film.

The Matrix Revolutions, the third and last of the *Matrix* series brings an ending to this saga. Neo because of the heroic and extreme use of his powers to battle the Sentinel machines, is comatose at the beginning of the third film. The inhabitants of Zion are preparing to fight for their lives and the future of humanity. Niobe, (Jada Pinkett Smith) Morpheus's ex-girlfriend and spaceship pilot) is working to help the Zionists. Morpheus is grappling with the realization that he has spent his whole lifetime believing in the salvation the One and Neo may just part of the system of control that has been invented by the designers of the matrix to govern the lives of the humans. Agent Smith is within the stronghold of the battleship in the guise of Banes, a member of the hovercraft fleet that was destroyed. Smith, a program gone rogue that has become powerful enough to challenge Neo, the Zionists and the Machines. The Oracle (Mary Alice) gives Neo her final words of advice and he realizes that even if the Oracle is a program that could be a trap he must try to win the fight. He still must take a spaceship and try to free the humans and save Zion. Neo and Trinity set out on the last journey to reach Machine City and stop Smith. Before reaching their destination Trinity will die as the spaceship crashes. Neo must proceed alone to the Deus Ex Machina and strike a bargain for peace by stopping Smith and saving both the Zionists and the Machines, something Neo alone can do. In a Christ like sacrifice, Neo wins by losing, and an era of peace begins

eXisteZ

The story of *eXisteZ* is a revision of corporeal and existential realities. Jennifer Jason Leigh is Allegra Geller, a “mad” female scientist. Geller is a celebrated virtual reality game designer, we think as the film begins, whose games are played thorough a bioport (that resembles an umbilical cord) which is inserted into a vaginal type opening at the base of the spine. The eXisteZ game itself is composed of a fleshy organic pod that delivers the game directly to the nervous system. It is a film like many of David Cronenberg’s films that explores the concept of bypassing evolution through science and technology which is the seminal idea of the posthuman movement. It starts in what seems to be a rural church or community meeting hall. There is a gathering of virtual reality game groupies to test Geller’s latest game, eXisteZ, before it goes on the market. Ted Pikul (Jude Law) a naïve marketing assistant from the company Antenna Research, saves Geller from an assassination (it becomes unclear whether the assassin is a radical antigames “Realists” fanatic or a hired gun from a rival game company) as she starts the download to demonstrate the game. The two (Geller and Pikul) begin an odyssey in which they must enter the game in order to judge the damage to the game with the advantage of being able to flee their enemies. Ted lacks a bioport and has a phobia about being penetrated, but Geller is insistent and a dirt covered service station mechanic, Gas (Willem Defoe) inserts one. The bioport is infected in an attempt to destroy the game. Ted and Allegra kill Gas and escape to an unused ski resort in which they meet up with Kiri Vinokur (Ian Holm) who has worked with Allegra on the game’s production. Vinokur replaces the infected bioport and the two refugees can plug in and play the game. The game involves a guerilla war between the enemies of video games, the Realists and the video game defenders. In a

violent and bloody series of confrontations neither side gains the upper hand. Characters that seem to be in alliance are really double agents. When he is the enemy Allegra kills Ted by detonating his bioport. The film then returns to the community hall and it appears that everyone was actually playing a game of transCendenZ created by Yevgeny Nourish (a worker in a mutant reptile factory in the game eXisteZ). Ted and Allegra immediately kill Nourish and it is revealed that they are Realists. They then turn their guns on another character who was a Chinese waiter who was killed by Ted in the eXisteZ game. He asks them if they are still in the game and the screen goes black. *eXisteZ is* a film in which boundaries between fantasy and reality shift and alter. The unity of the film works so to blur the distinction between the game and the film. The game is teeming with bizarre sexual imagery and swarms with dangerous and fascinating implications. The journey finally brings them back to where they started and the ending is as ambiguous as the rest of the film. You might think you know what is going on, but you don't.

eXisteZ is a film that has been compared often to *The Matrix*. The main themes, of lives lived in the real and the unreal worlds with the added features of download into the virtual world and of knowledge basically are what connects the two films. *The Matrix*, *eXisteZ* and *The Thirteenth Floor* deal with the unreliable distinction between appearance and reality and the possibility that there are different levels or versions of reality. *The Matrix* and *The Thirteenth Floor* assumes a differentiated "real" reality that if we ever come across we can identity it and it should function as a reality that we would want to strive to obtain or realize, however *eXisteZ* does not. The idea of the matrix suggests that the "real" reality we live in is much worse than the illusion we live in although we haven't reached a level of enlightenment in which we are aware of this fact. *The Thirteenth Floor*

and *eXisteZ* delve into different kinds of questions about different levels of virtual reality and whether we can ever know that the reality we are in at any given moment is the real one. One could hypothesize that the society shown in *eXisteZ* is one that is pacified by mind altering devices and could be construed as one of our possible futures. There is an inability to comprehend where things come from in *eXisteZ.* The characters appear and disappear as if moved by some mysterious agent which remains incomprehensible. The most dramatized point in the film is that if the virtual reality is our future than we will never be able to discern what is reality and what is a game, or even more frightening, we will never be able to get out of a game because we would begin and finish games within games and thus be into so many layers of virtual reality that we may never regain our hold on actual reality or if we were able to we couldn't prove it. By the end of *eXisteZ,* there is a question of whether the idea that there is a firm way to differentiate between reality, virtual realties and fiction. In *eXisteZ* more than any other film studied there are several actions that duplicate players in video games, feedback loop actions, trigger words, personalities established rapidly, the sparsely populated world , and other physical proximities of locations.[27] It is true that in the paradox of fiction we do enjoy experiences that we know are not real.[28] David Cronenberg set the tone by subtraction of things that are usually in this type of film, thus there are not any computers, monitor screens, televisions, telephones, running shoes or suit and ties. It is high-tech in a low-tech world. By subtracting technological things that are expected in a science fiction film or story, the audience's reaction is one of dislocation exacerbated by the claustrophobia of being trapped in the game of *eXisteZ.* Cronenberg's goal was to immerse the audience as totally as possible into the film or game. The download cord fits into the lower spine instead of

the neck as in *The Matrix* and this is of significance. In *The Matrix* the download at the neck, which is indicative of brain functions and is an intellectual approach to the question, of what is the nature of reality. Whereas in *eXisteZ,* this metaphysical question is entwined with an organic and sexual perspective. There is a sexual component to the attachment of the cord (that strongly resembles an umbilical cord) as it is inserted at the level of the genitals and the characters sporadically act on this concept. There is a resemblance between the male and female protagonists in both films, mainly the strong female with the confused male. There is much blurring in *eXisteZ* of the boundaries of appearance and reality. In *The Matrix* there is no doubt (after Neo comes aboard the Nebuchadnezzar) which is the virtual world and which is the real, but in *eXisteZ,* Pikul becomes concerned about his body: "I'm really worried about my body. Our real bodies, are they all right?" he comes out of the game and is not sure if he is in reality or the game,"[29] as the game seems more real than reality".[30] Granted that the level of technology seems to differ, there is discernment in *The Matrix* of a distinguishing of what is reality that cannot be achieved in *eXisteZ.* Both *the Matrix* and *eXisteZ* raise questions about being deceived or seduced by artificial versions of reality. The illusions of reality in *Matrix* are an abhorrent kind. Neo is able to escape from the horrors of the matrix at the end of the first film. In *eXisteZ* there is not any way to tell reality from the illusion especially in the ending in an unanticipated coda that the entire film was itself an illusion, it seems to be the testing of a virtual video game. The confusion is epitomized when one of the characters (Oscar Hsu) after chaos and gunfire break out asks "Tell me, are we still in the game." There is in the anarchist sense that the game mirrors our known world when Pikul in the scene, as in the postmodern theory reverberates in the conversation outside the restaurant /mutant reptile farm:

Ted: I don’t want to be here.

Allegra: Pikul, you’re just having a

bad case of first time user anxiety.

Ted: I don’t like it here. I don’t know

what is going on. We’re both

stumbling around together in this unformed

world whose rules and objectives

are largely unknown, seemingly

indecipherable even possibly nonexistent,

always on the verge of being

killed by forces we don’t understand.

Allegra: That sounds like my game alright.

Ted: That sounds like a game that‘s not going

to be easy to market.

Allegra: But it’s a game everybody’s already playing.

This is a popularization of a Heideggerian subtext applied in a fashion designed to support a deconstructionist’s viewpoint. The quandary that these characters are in is the question of if it is possible to leave behind the angst and the ambiguity of a postmodern society and decide that uncertainty is certain, without deluding ourselves.

Dark City

Dark City is a film noir /science fiction film shot in color. The colors are muted, somber and the haunting mise-en-scene echoes the world of Edward Hopper (one of his paintings of the city and its people at night that is a tromp l’oeil for a narrative). The

time period is that of the forties or fifties, recapturing and creating nostalgia for the science fiction of that era. It's a film that takes some absorption in order to grasp the story. It unfolds as a modern German Expressionistic film with a Kafkaesque narrative and a Hollywood ending. *Dark City* is a city of humans that wake up every day with a different memory, scenario and environment. The protagonist, John Murdoch's (Rufus Seward) problem as the film begins is that he wakes up without any memory of who he is at all. In his first scene he is in a bathtub which is both amniotic and baptismal; the opaque water resembles the gelatin fluid filling Neo's pod and his own rebirth. There is blood on Murdock and a dead prostitute in the bed in the next room. As he rises from the tub and searches the room, in a suitcase he finds a postcard of Shell Beach. The telephone then rings and a mysterious caller tells him to flee. Before he does he knocks over a fishbowl and stops to rescue a fish flapping on the floor and delivers it to the bathtub, thus giving us an inkling of his true personality. John escapes the Strangers (aliens wearing all black attire who uses human dead for hosts) who arrive at his room seconds after he leaves. Before he has left the building, the room clerk informs him that he has left his wallet at an automat. His "wife " Emma Murdoch (Jennifer Connolly) a nightclub singer is summoned to meet with psychiatrist Dr. Schreber (Kiefer Sutherland). Schreber who is the anonymous caller that warns Murdock, tells Emma that her missing husband has had a violent, psychotic break. Meanwhile John has gone to the automat to collect his identity and it is there that he first realizes his unusual power. It is a form of telekinesis called "tuning" the aliens who control the city and the people in it use to reorganize (retune) the city's population, while having Dr. Schreber implant the humans with new memories. By doing so, the aliens hope to discover a way

for their collective alien mind to survive. The aliens are unaware that humans are different because of the ability to be individuals; this is something a group mind is incapable of understanding. Still reeling from the trauma of waking without memory, John is rescued from the police by a prostitute, May (Melissa George), but when they reach her apartment he runs away. John has the classic butterfly dilemma.[31] John has in a real sense returned to his self, but is unable to grasp this fact. However, Eddie Walenski, a police detective (Colin Friels) epitomizes the alienation and loneliness of a life of "uncertainly":

> "I've been trying to remember things, clearly
> remember things, from my past. But the more
> I try to think back, the more it all starts to
> unravel. "None of this seems real. It's like
> I've just been dreaming this life and when
> I finally wake up; I'll be somebody else,
> somebody totally different".[32]

Murdock is attracted by a billboard depicting Shell Beach, when some of the Strangers catch up with him. In defending himself he kills two of them. He then finds newspaper clippings in his pocket about the serial killer. Emma goes to file a missing person report and an Inspector Bumstead (William Hurt) reveals that John is the prime suspect in the serial killing case. John sees Emma and says he is innocent. Emma wants him to see Dr. Schreber, and instead he starts following the doctor and discovers that

Schreber is working for the Strangers by switching memories and identities between people. This happens every midnight as all the people fall into unconsciousness. The Strangers create and destroy matter by thinking in conjunction with an underground machine. Buildings rise and fall and change their appearance. John finds his Uncle Karl and is convinced that his identity of Murdock is false. Emma and Bumstead save John from the Strangers who have found him once again. Bumstead tries to interrogate John and John asks him why it's always night in the city? A question Bumstead cannot answer. The Strangers come to the police station but Bumstead who is now convinced of John's innocence, allows him to escape. The Strangers (whose appearance is hideously gothic, very reminiscent of Count Orlock in *Nosferatu)* kidnap Emma. John and Bumstead kidnap Dr. Schreber and force him to take them to Shell Beach. However, Shell Beach is merely a billboard on a brick wall and the city is revealed to be a part of a star ship. Dr. Schreber explains that the city dwellers have all been kidnapped by the Strangers who are a dying alien race. The Strangers mix and match memories in the human's minds in order to find the individual soul which they think will save them. The Strangers follow and attack the three; Bumstead is blown out to the stars and outer space. The Strangers threaten to kill Emma, so John surrenders. They make Schreber inject John to change his memory, but Schreber imprints him with the knowledge needed to destroy the Strangers by controlling the underground machine that powers the city. In an intense battle, John frees Schreber and in a pyrotechnic battle kills the Strangers by taking control of their machine. He then uses it to create a sun, a sea and Shell Beach. As the city dwellers awake, with their last new identity including Emma who is now Anna, John searches for his wife and in the end they are together.

Dark City is analogous to *The Matrix* in that the protagonist gains supernatural powers. It is a combination of detective story and the amnesiac hero's search for identity in a noir universe, elements of which are in *The Matrix* as well. The protagonist is developing mental powers (tuning, a power to make time stop and alter reality) that are equalizing him with his enemies. The enemies are a race of aliens (instead of machines) who manipulate people and their lives for their amusement under guise of research. As in *Matrix* there is an awakening to the real world such as it is or seems to be, but only the protagonist and the psychiatrist, Dr. Schreber who is working with the aliens under protest, is completely aware of reality. The protagonist's wife, Emma Murdoch begins to understand gradually the implications of reality before the ending of the film (even though her identity is changed) she is processing though this until the end of the film. It is much more of a rapid shifting of reality than, *The Matrix and eXisteZ.*

The Truman Show

The film is set in a hypothetical world, a total fabrication, where an entire town is dedicated to a continuously (twenty four/seven) running television soap opera and reality show in which everyone but Truman Burbank (Jim Carrey) is an are actor. Truman's alternative reality is a television show within a film. It is difficult for the viewer to discern between the "television show" and the film in the beginning. The film begins with a pattern of identifying information that is familiar to the viewers of television who see comparable scenes at beginning of episodic television shows. The credits for "The Truman Burbank Show" roll across the screen with the director and actors listed as in television. Truman 's greeting to his neighbors, "Good morning, good evening, and good night "is a stylized salutation more suited to the world of entertainment than the real world. It is not

until the flashback scenes begin that the film and the television show can be differentiated.[33] However, the central character of Truman Burbank and him alone, is unaware of the fact that he lives in a constructed reality, all for the entertainment of television viewers of the world.

Truman was chosen from of five other unwanted babies to be the first to be adopted by a corporation. His existence from birth to the present of film time (around thirty years) has been recorded virtually every moment of his life. Truman lives in the world's biggest studio, a domed construction that contains an entire town and is able to create its own weather. Truman goes though his daily routine, kissing his wife Meryl (Laura Linney) in the morning, exchanging greetings with the neighbors, driving to work, living his whole life in one little town on the island of Seahaven. To generate revenues the actors perform rather blatant product placements that will later in the film will further fuel Truman's perception of incongruity in his situation. Then on day 10,909 of The Truman Show (Truman is on the verge of turning thirty) odd things begin to happen that slowly convince Truman that the world around him is not the way it seems. A studio lamp suddenly falls from the sky in front of his house. A homeless man resembling his late father (Brian Delate), who supposedly drowned in a boating accident when Truman was a child, tries to make contact but is forcibly removed from the set. Truman's car radio picks up the communications traffic between the backstage people. He starts devising tests which further reveal the mechanism behind his environment. Despite the attempts of his "friends and family" to convince him that he is just imagining things, Truman decides that there really is something wrong with his world and decides to act on his secret yearning to be an explorer. However, his efforts to leave Seahaven are blocked at every turn by

mysterious mechanical difficulties, natural disasters and sudden traffic jams, all placed in his way by the “omnipotent “ producer of the show, Christof (Ed Harris).

The role of Christof is itself a story. He has “imprisoned” Truman in Seahaven under the premise that this is the only way to evoke honest behavior.[34] He controls his creation with cold technology, calculation and disrespect for Truman‘s autonomy. He thwarts any desire Truman has of controlling his own life and manipulates him for his own purposes saying “We accept the reality of the world we live in”. Christof has fooled himself into thinking he is doing the best thing for Truman declaring, that he has given Truman a chance to live a normal life without being in a sick, dangerous world. At this point Truman has to decide whether to marshal his resolve and overcome the obstacles before him or continue to live an “idealized” existence. This places Truman in the position of hero, the triumph of the human spirit in the determination to live an authentic life. Truman is the epitome of the nice guy, with a harmonious personality, but the anomalies in his life create a desire to experience and see more. Truman Burbank is a man who has lived in a structured world his whole life. He, like Neo, has been born into a womb (Seahaven) that he has to leave to join the real world. It is controlled, monitored and contrived. In essence it is a totalitarian life although initially Truman appears to be living a safe, clean innocuous existence. His friends and family are all professional actors. He has been manipulated into staying in his “hometown” using various means (inducing phobias, dismissing actors who speak of the real world) by the director of the television show, Christoff and not allowed the freedom of living his own life or even knowing the reality of his situation. He is as trapped by forces he is as scarcely aware as is Neo, Ted Pikul or David Aames and it is as confusing and frightening for the characters as the other

situations of these other characters. His plight is similar to that of the book by Phillip K. Dick, Time out of Joint in which a man living an ordinary life in an Arcadian California town (placed in the fifties era) who gradually discovers that the entire town is a fake staged to keep him satisfied. There are certainly similarities with the television show *The Prisoner*, however the spy in that town knew he was a captive and his every attempt to escape was thwarted as is Truman's. This scenario smacks of a disillusion of a narcissist, a megalomaniac or a solipsist, however, in *The Truman Show*; however in the late twentieth century public life has changed. The media has become theatrical in execution and socially dominating in action. The position Truman finds himself in is not only feasible, but unfortunately quite possible given our proclivity for reality shows. *The Truman Show* is a late capitalistic media as entertainment and primary source of information, a mythical ironic depiction of life as we know it and don't really perceive it. The conundrum is whether these protagonists in these unreal worlds can break though the fabric of the individual environment and its duplicity and settle the question of can we live an authentic life and no longer wonder if we are Descartes' "brain in vat" or a butterfly dreaming we are human. Even though *The Truman Show* is the closest film within this analysis to life as we know it, it is still invested with what all the films share, a narrative of a person or people trying to break free from an oppressive social system in the guise of an alternative reality. Both *The Truman Show* and *The Matrix* series give us a new myth of escape from society's substitutes for reality and the abuse of power. Truman's false heaven or paradise (the island of Seahaven) is manipulated by a false God with a symbolic name. Christof lives in the sky (in what is apparently a space station that resembles a moon) and speaks from above to Truman with a booming bodiless voice. Because he can control the weather

he is able to demand, “Cue the Sun”. It is reminiscent of theme park environments and Christof can be likened to Walt Disney, a filmmaker whose desire for control was immense. Like Neo, Truman is convinced by a glitch in the system. In Truman’s case it happens when he accidentally runs into an off stage setup.

In the fifties, as Biskind[35] says the era’s films collectively promoted the social constrictions of consensus and there was little dissension. Burbank Truman in the fifties decade may never have questioned his surroundings. He would never have thought to question his fragile and temporally stable, secure life.

Vanilla Sky

Tom Cruise is the character David Aames in this dystopia masquerading as a contemporary drama of a film. Unlike almost all of the other films in this paper, the protagonist is unlikable, quite possibility psychotic and the film is uncomfortably depressing. *Vanilla Sky* is a remake of *Abre los ojos (Open Your Eyes*), a Spanish film in which the character of Sofia was also played by Penelope Cruz. The truth of David’s reality is as hidden to us the audience as it is to the protagonist, until it is revealed in the ending like a punch in the face. David’s downfall into a false world is caused by his hubris. When the story begins David Aames is at the peak of life, thirty three, and a handsome, very wealthy, dilettante. He is the son of a Manhattan publisher who dies in a fatal car accident and leaves his empire to a son who is ill suited to take over the reins. He lives a bachelor life to the fullest and has (in his mind) a casual affair with Julianne “Julie” Gianni (Cameron Diaz). At his birthday party he meets Sofia Serrano (Penelope Cruz), who has arrived with his best friend Brian Shelby (Jason Lee). Sofia is a woman who is unaffected by his charm and not impressed by his social status or attractiveness. He is mesmerized by

Sofia and determined to date her. His striving for this woman breaks the sane façade of Julie and she persuades him to take a ride in her car and commits suicide by driving off a bridge. David is horribly injured and disfigured. David eventually has plastic surgery that successfully restores his looks and resumes his relationship with Sofia. However, he repeatedly sees Julie everywhere he goes and has episodes of looking in the mirror and seeing his self as disfigured again. He becomes convinced that Sofia is really Julie despite the assurance of everyone else, he kills her. The rest of the film is a journey though David‘s psyche as he reviews in his memory the events that have led to his arrest for murder, through the sessions with a psychiatrist (Kurt Russell). David is a desperately lonely person who only realizes this when he is no longer attractive. In this film the protagonist lives in his mind while his body is in storage. He is really in a lucid type dream or nightmare in which he is fixated upon his loss of beauty. David has become psychotic which his injury has triggered and has lost his ability to see the real world. However, it is possible that what David sees in the mirror is really his soul and he can’t accept that fact. This is one of the greatest fears of all, that the world one is in is all in one’s mind and there isn’t any way to discern the difference or even know anything except a life in hell.

Contact

Contact is worth studying alone for its female protagonist, Ellie Arroway (Jody Foster), an actor of singular intelligence. Ellie Arroway is a woman who life has always wanted to communicate with the universe outside our solar system. From ham radios as a child to giant satellite dishes aimed toward the rest of the universe she has patiently and somewhat obsessively listened for the extraterrestrial life in which she is far more interested in than other people or her career. She is an astronomer engaged in SETI

research, the search for extraterrestrial intelligence in the form of decipherable radio waves. Ellie is the director of Project Argus which receives the first confirmed communication from an extraterrestrial source just right before the government tries to close it down. It is from Vega and is in the form, of repeating series of prime numbers, one through one hundred and one. This plot devise works because mathematics is considered to be the universal language. When the message is decoded, it contains instructions for building a star craft or gate. Only one person can fit in this machine and Ellie is desperate to go, but she is rejected in favor of a man. The machine is sabotaged by a religion fanatic and blows up with the chosen astronaut inside. Another spacecraft however has been built in secret on an island off the coast of Japan. This time Ellie is chosen to go. In a flight lasting eighteen hours she goes though a series of wormholes to a mystical encounter with a being who presents its self in the form of her father, Ted Arroway (David Morse). This being tells her that there are many intelligent races in the Universe and in all their searching the only thing that makes the emptiness bearable is each other. The "alternative reality" that Ellie encounters is only experienced by her (and us the audience,) not the remainder of the cast in this film. Unlike the other films in this analysis the alternative reality that Ellie experiences to is unspeakably beautiful. She suddenly sees a star system being born and she is awed;

> "Some celestial event,
>
> No Words,
>
> No words to describe it,
>
> Poetry,

They should have sent a poet".

It's so beautiful, so beautiful,

I had no idea."[36]

When Ellie returns, her flight has only taken a fraction of a second in Earth time. There is no evidence for what she has seen and the data recorder has only recorded static. Although she clings to the knowledge of her journey, she is not really believed. In the end the government keeps secret that there is static for eighteen hours on tape and there is reason to believe Ellie's story.

This film is based on Carl Sagan's only fictional novel in which several changes were made to the narrative for the reason of dramatic license.[37] Sagan, the world leading expert on extraterrestrial life had a problem with any religion that could not be proved. However, the filmmakers decided that the film needed a religious representative to propagate the Puritan ethic. This also occurs in the film *Jurassic Park* when the scientist Dr. Ian Malcolm (Jeff Goldbloom) explains the genetic theory in such a way it appears that utilizing the knowledge could lead to punishment from God instead of the secular approach.

The One

Jet Li's film *The One* is a Roger Corman approach to parallel universes. Yu Law (Jet Li) is a fugitive from the ultimate prison, the Stygian Penal Colony in the Hades Universe. He is able to travel among the various universes (a painful process in which the traveler is torn apart and reassembled) that comprise the Multiverse. He has discovered that if he kills his counterparts in other universes then each successive victim's life energy

is absorbed and distributed among the surviving “Laws” in their respective realities. They become faster, stronger and smarter. With delusions of becoming a god fueling his murderous raving for more and more power, he sets out to kill all of his counterparts and become” The One”, the only Yulaw in all of existence with unimaginable power. In this film unlike *The Matrix*, “The One” is not the savior of the earth, but the ultimate bad guy. Unlike the theory in quantum physics there are a finite number of universes in this film, one hundred and twenty five. Law is pursued by two Multiverse Authority agents (Delroy Lindo and Jason Statham) who are trying to stop him before he kills his final victim, Gabriel Law (also Jet Li), a young police officer living in Los Angeles. The agents have orders to kill Gabriel too if he is the only one remaining and develops super powers. The real problem is that no one knows what will happen when it gets down to “one,” but there is a fear that it will destroy the Multiverse. Obviously, there are flaws in this film with contradicting scientific explanations. It is like the paradox of time travel a person could enter different universes, but changing events within them causes an imbalance of a universal force. Meanwhile the quintessential doppelganger is rapidly eliminating all other duplicates of himself in order to gain power, not unlike the premise of cannibalism, the acquisition of power by ingesting one's enemies. If all are him then it is true as Pogo said, “I have seen the enemy and it is us.” This is not a movie that even pretends to be good, but the premise has notable implications that are worth reflecting upon. It also is the closest film treatment to the actual scientific definition of the quantum theory of parallel universes. In the end Yulaw is sent back to Hades and Gabriel (sharing the Biblical name) is sent to another parallel universe.

The Thirteenth Floor

The film *The Thirteenth Floor* was released in 1999, the same year as *The Matrix* and *eXisteZ.* It too is a film about virtual reality with its own version of deciphering between the real and the unreal. The story is about an advanced virtual reality machine that is set up to allow people to visit Los Angeles in 1937. Upon logging on, a person in this alternate reality has their mind taken over by the person in the present real world and can remember nothing they do until the person in their mind/body leaves. The man who created the project, a scientist Hannon Fuller (Armin Mueller-Stahl) discovers that the "present" real world is another virtual reality and leaves a message for his employee, Douglas Hall (Craig Bierko) in the simulation of the 1937 world. Fuller is murdered and Hall is the main suspect because he wakes with blood on his shirt and he has inherited the corporation that was Fuller's. Hall goes into the simulation, finds the message for him has been read by a bartender and they both think it refers to the 1937 world. The bartender flips out and tries to kill Hall, but a co-worker Jason Whitney (Vincent D'Onofrio) logs him off. Hall becomes involved with Fuller's daughter Jane (Gretchen Mol) who tells him that many such virtual realities exist, but his is the only one which has managed to create others. Hall's user is the husband of Jane, (Jeremy Roberts) who has become power crazy. Jason logs on and dies in the simulation. Jane's husband logs on and attempts to kill his wife and is killed himself. Hall wakes up in what he assumes is the real world. The film begins with a murder mystery in which the protagonist does not know whether he is guilty or not and goes into a world or worlds in which all may be virtual realities. The character of Jane is a product of the 1937 virtual reality and doesn't exist in the other reality that originally Hall thought was real. In fact, the most interesting segment of this film is when the characters in the virtual reality simulation become self-aware and discover the limitations of their artificial existence. The idea of a character waking up to the discovery that

his/her world is a virtual simulation has been done earlier in *The Big Goodbye* and *Shadowplay,* but the difference in *The Thirteenth Floor* is that there are not any discernable answers. If the source of all the worlds cannot be found, then how will questions be answered? The characters are trapped and don't have a clue as to where to turn. This is the existentialism postmodern dilemma,[38] that there aren't any answers except those we create ourselves and of which we may not have any idea what is right or wrong.

Pleasantville

In the universe of *Pleasantville, a* black and white fifties sitcom, life is, well, pleasant. It is a town where the bad never happens, there aren't any fires, the basketball team never misses a shot and everything is in varying shades of gray. For David (Tobey Maguire) a shy teenager who is not popular in school, it is a perfect world, an escape from the harsh realities of his less than perfect life. It is both an escape and addiction. It is a town with white picket fences, wholesome family values and stability. To David it is a world that is a more civilized alternative to the real one of economic upheaval, environmental turmoil, single parent families and a future that is bleak. One night David and his twin sister Jennifer (Reese Witherspoon) have a fight over the remote and it is irreparably broken. Then a menacing television repairman (Don Knotts) shows up at their door with an out of the blue offer of a high tech remote. David and Jennifer realize it is not a regular remote when they are suddenly transported to the world of Pleasantville. After their initial disorientation they realize that not only are they in black and white but they have assumed the identities of Bud and Mary Sue, the teenage children of the featured family. For David/Bud it is a dream come true, but it is really a backward look at the fifties and what was wrong and/or right about the decade. The dichotomy of the society was that

it was more rigid, yet on the other hand one did not have to wonder what do. There were known expectations and life appeared to be simple at least on the surface. On the other hand if one was different then it was hidden out of the shame of not being like everyone else. David and his sister Jennifer are worlds apart. He is obsessed with a fifties television program, Pleasantville and is not hip or liberal in the social sense. Jennifer is a popular girl with only boys, clothes and fun on her mind. Jennifer thinks serious study is for nerds and her philosophy of life is flip and superficial while David is ultra conservative and nostalgic. Their new parents, George (William Macy) and Betty (Joan Allen) are seemingly oblivious to the fact that their children are from another world. It is a wonderful life for David/Bud, but Jennifer/ Mary Sue finds the banality of the life in Pleasantville too dull for words. So Jennifer/Mary Sue aggressively liberates the virginity of the captain of the basketball team, Skip (Paul Walker) and like splitting an atom it starts a chain reaction with color. First it is a flower or two in color, and then as more teens discover sex, they too begin to appear in color. David/Bud tries hard at first to preserve "Pleasantville" the way it was. But then he too begins to observe that things aren't as good as he thought they were. People like his boss at the soda shop Mr. Johnson (Jeff Daniels) are stifled by his scripted and stagnant role in life. The families abide by traditional values, but these don't include quality lives for women. Women are not independent and are mainly servants for their husbands and children. All the books in the library are blank. David/ Bud begins to understand that the world he left behind has some merit after all. At this point, this alternative reality has become an educational experience. One of the roads that previously could not be taken has been transversed and the enlightenment of the "grass isn't greener" ensues. The town residents especially the men become alarmed over the changes and

organize into a vigilante group who use oppression to suppress the transformation. The passion invoked by their outrage causes colors to burst all over everywhere and everyone and ruins the attack.

What *Pleasantville* is striving to convey much like *The Truman Show*, is the necessity of a conscious individual‘s exploration and journey toward finding self-fulfillment in a stifling environment where conformity is its highest value. One of the issues that *Pleasantville* brings to the surface is the constant of change in our present day lives and the strength that is required to deal with costs of life “Writ Fast”. In the concluding moments of the film, David decides to return to the real world and Jennifer decides to stay in Pleasantville, both having the opportunity to examine undiscovered facets of their character and having found a path to follow. This is truly the perfect example of Richard Jones contention, that films are replacing religion as a system of symbols, a purveyor of values as well as a force for social-cultural change[39]

Waking Life

Waking Life is a computer animated film in which the protagonist (the character Wiley Wiggins from *Dazed and Confused*) wanders through a series of philosophical discussions and ethereal moments encountering a motley cast of characters along the path. It can be said to be a surreal exploration of existential questions. The protagonist wanders though levels of his subconscious searching for meaning within life, death and dreams, collecting along the way many different perspectives. Existential philosophy is explicitly addressed and is connected with scientific fields such as quantum physics, neoevolution and psychology as well as alternative realities, social outrage and political disillusionment.

The film was shot live action and then rotoscoped and the final results are amazing as the actors can be easily recognized. Shot from a hot air balloon to achieve the floating flow of a dream, the characters drift within it. By the end Wiley realizes he is in a lucid dream. Lucid dreaming also called dream consciousness or conscious dreaming is the act of consciously perceiving and recognizing that one is dreaming. While such experience befalls one during sleep, one gains a more cogent (lucid) control over the content and quality of the experience. This occurrence from start to finish is a lucid dream, in other words dreaming while knowing you are dreaming. The animation gives the *Waking Life* that other world ethereal quality. There is research that indicates that some insights into the working of the brain can be found by lucid dreaming. One feature that is found in lucid dreaming is that the dreamer will be walking around in the dream world, knowing he/she is dreaming retaining a full sense of identity and waking memories yet at the same time believing that the door can be opened with a fish not a key (almost all lucid dreams contain this kind of phenomenon). This is contrary to the normal experience of brain malfunctions which are more general, such as wholesale memory loss or broad emotional imbalance. Yet this is applicable to David Aames' experience in *Vanilla Sky*. Everything appears to be logical except his inability to see his own face or the face of his girlfriend (this is assuming that psychosis can be manifested in lucid dreaming).

Background

Slovoj Zezik asseverates the idea that many of today's films, in particular *The Matrix* and *The Truman Show*, are not the original films with their individual concepts, but are late capitalist versions of these concepts.

Books such as Time Out of Joint (1959)[40] and Urik (1969) preceded them with similar themes. The concept is that of a hero who comes to realize that he is in a completely false, artificially constructed and manipulated universe. Zezik muses that the ultimate American paranoia fantasy is to find that the entire world in which one is living is counterfeit. Zizek says this ideology may spring from the belief that outside the closure of the finite universe there is some "true reality" to be entered.[41] *The Matrix*, for Zizek, presents a paranoid fantasy that serves the function of keeping our ideology, the world we take for granted, in place. The matrix itself is an evil enclosure programmed by another (the Architect) to keep everyone and everything under absolute control. The inside is controlled by the outside and if we choose the right pill we are able to get to the truth of the outside, to break out of the illusion and into the freedom of the real. The world outside is not a utopia, but the desert of the real. The strength of the film, for Zizek, is that it shows us our "horrible realization of this enclosure." We are free agents but only in the sense that we must sacrifice some of our pleasure for social coherence. Zizek says:

> "The "totalitarian" notion of the "administered world" in which the very experience of subjective freedom is the form of appearance of subjection to disciplinary, mechanism, is ultimately the obscene fantasmatic underside of the "official" public ideology (and practice) of individual autonomy and freedom.[42]

The paranoid fantasy depends on the "fantasmatic underside" of a rule–bound society. There isn't any realm of pure freedom; we are a society that in order to have freedom we must have the laws.

Another older film that explores a different facet of an alternative reality is *Last Year at Marienbad.*[43] It is a movie mentioned when the incomprehensibility of film is discussed. The story is about an unnamed man at a baroque resort who tries to convince an unnamed woman that they had met the previous year there and had planned to run away together the following year and leave her current paramour. The woman seems not to remember him at all, but he tells her that he has the power to create a past for her and to blend it into her present (he is able to alter the scenarios through the power of suggestion). In the film the characters behave as if they were somnambulists in a hermetically sealed world that seems totally surreal. Primarily the film consists of the man's persistence in awakening the woman to the recollection of the decision to leave with him. The film is black and white, formal, repetitive and monotonous. It had been considered a cinematic mediation on the themes of time and memory. It has recently been found to be based on a book by Aldofo Bioy Casares, The Invention of Morel.[44] In the novel a fugitive, Morel, is hiding alone on a deserted island. One day he awakens to a large group of anachronistically attired people strolling about, dancing and behaving like vacationers at a summer resort that he compares to Los Toques or Marienbad. Morel's invention is a diabolical machine that is a holographic recording device that captures all of the senses in three dimensions. The machine is diabolical because it converts flesh-and-blood people by rotting the skin and flesh off of their bones to reduce them to mere filmic representations. So the people in the film are actually film creatures caught in an endless loop of repetitious dialogue and

action within an architectural encasement that can be described as a matrix in which the beings are unaware of their own existence and the world around them. Partially aware of this horrifying truth, one man seeks to leave the matrix and take a woman with him who is steeped in forgetfulness and oblivious to her dream like state. He tries to remind her of the past of the world beyond the illusion.[45] There is a marked similarity between the world of illusion and that of film. Film is composed of frames of images and actions which ran though a projector allowing the viewer to become engrossed in the film like a video game which too can lead to a momentary loss of self.

Acceleration of Technology

To understand the philosophy of Jean Baudrillard and Slovoj Zizek, as well the application of philosophical schools of thought, it is necessary to review the recent history of technological "progress". Although the industrial revolution has shown a progressive compression of time as it marches into the future, the rapidity of technical progression is tied to the inception of the computer and its compositional parts. Moore's Law is an observation or prediction made in 1965 by Gordon Moore, co-founder of Intel, that the number of transistors per square inch on integrated circuits will double every year after the integrated circuit was invented (1959). In reality data density has doubled approximately every eighteen months. The general consensus is that this observation will only be applicable for another decade or two as the computer industry is presently running into physical limitations on size and power. There is a common assumption that Moore's Law covers the doubling of computer processing power. This is not the case, although Moore also predicted shrinking costs for the microchip, another fact of life.[46] Whether or not Moore's prediction continues, the scientific community is

anticipating a quantum computer using magnetic quanta instead of transistors. The development of this type of computer promises the kind of power that would provide machines with the momentum to achieve self awareness. In *The Lawnmower Man*, the arrival of computer awareness is the sound of all the telephones in the world ringing simultaneously. This is symbolic of a paradigmatic moment that hails the birth of the self awareness of machines/computers.

An intriguing theory is the one that a civilization has to be a Type I or Type II in order to reach that measure of Technological attainment. A system of classifying advanced technological civilizations by their energy outputs was proposed by N. S. Kardasjev in 1964. A Type I civilization would be able to marshal energy resources for communications on a planet-wide scale equivalent to the entire present power consumption of the human race or about 10·16 watts as well as control all planetary energy sources such as weather, volcanoes, oceans, hurricanes, etc. A Type II would be stellar, able to use solar flares and ignite stars. Its communication ability would surpass Type I by ten billion to 10·29 watts by exploiting the total energy of its central star. Type III would be galactic and able to tap the energy resources of an entire galaxy or star system. They would use star clusters and black holes fro energy sources and consequently have an increase of energy available by another ten billion watts or 10·36 watts.[47] On this scale our present civilization would rate as a 0.7.

Robert J. Sawyer hypothesizes the idea or possibility of whether intelligence can just “pop” into existence. The question is whether intelligence is an emergent property that would naturally come about from a sufficiently complex system. Sawyer‘s analogy is the case of “The Great Leap Forward.” This, as anthropologists see it, is the case with

humanity. Although humans who had the same brain capacity as ours today emerged about one hundred thousand years ago, for sixty thousand years people went along just doing what they needed to do to survive. Then about forty thousand years ago intelligence and consciousness leaped; art, fashion and religion appeared simultaneously.[48] This would be the same for machines and computers.

Anticipating the further acceleration of technology, Ray Kurzweil says at the present rate of change the next ten years will be like twenty, the following ten years will be like forty, thus the 21st century at today's rate would like twenty thousand years' progress in a hundred years.[49]

The other anticipated aspect of machines vs. humans is what can be called a symbiosis of humans and machines starting with the ability to download information that has the potential of expanding our brains substantially or even exponentially. The crossover point in which the human's mental and physical process will be a hybrid of biological and electronic thinking processes working intimately together is estimated to be in the 2030s and it is called the Singularity.[50] Obviously we are tremendously affected by rapid change and this forms the basis for the Baurillard's theory.

However, in expectation of the crossover, Posthuman theory emerges in which classic humanism and science conjoin to describe a human who is a participant in an evolution in which machines (computers/artificial intelligence) and the human body/brain will unite. This can be done though uploads/downloads of knowledge or augmentation to the biological status of human physiology as we know it. Nanotechnology, genetic engineering, wearable computers and neural interfaces and other technology to be

developed will be predominant in this transformation. In the concept of transhuman the term “homo excelsior” (Latin for higher man) is the designation given to the state of humans before transhumanation is reached.

One of the anxiety provoking aspects of technology is that while technology produces exhilaration because of the augmenting of human power, at the same time there is also panic because technology appears to have a life of its own. Concurrently we are expecting more from technology than convenience, comfort or survival. As we desire freedom from mundane labor, enhancement of the body as well as better prosthetic devices we even entertain the idea of immortality. We demand deliverance whether it is from a hero, a savior, religion or technology.

Parallel Universes, The Scientific Basis

To understand present day, physics conception of parallel universes it is useful to trace scientific thought.[51] Premodern scientific thought was that the universe was a giant clock and the world was structured in a mechanical model. Light’s velocity was infinite as was the size of the universe. In the twentieth century the theories of relativity and quantum mechanics revolutionized prior concepts of the world. Now those theories teach us that the universe was not infinite and space-time is a dimension. Matter produced by the universe as a knot in the fabric of space-time could curve both and light travels at a finite rate of 186, 000 miles per second. The collective view of the universe went from a clock with gears that produced a single outcome to a world that is a solid existence characterized by an undirected path from the past to the future. Although these two major theories solved problems, answered questions and closed gaps, the dilemma of uniting relativity (macro) and quantum physics (micro) is still with us.

The concept of parallel universes or the Multiverse comes from quantum mechanics and was first uttered by Hugh Everett III, in 1956 when he was a student at Princeton. He named the theory the relative-state metrotheory or the theory of universal wavefunction. It meets the first of two assumptions; that the wave function has an observer-independence objective existence and the other is that the observer plays no special role and the wave does not collapse (the Copenhagen Interpretation). In the former explanation the wavefunction instead of collapsing at the moment of observation carries on evolving in a deterministic fashion embracing all possibilities embedded within it. Thus all outcomes exist simultaneously but do not "affect" each other. The observer affect is clarified by the analogy of Schrödinger's Cat. A cat is placed in a sealed box with an instrument that dispenses lethal doses of cyanide gas if a certain radioactive decay is detected. According to the Copenhagen interpretation, the cat is neither alive nor dead until the box is open and then it is one or the other. In the many worlds theory the cyanide or no cyanide (each a separate possibility) interacts and the cat is both alive and dead, each one occupying a different world. In opening the box the observer is split in two and either sees the cat dead or alive, but not both. The observer effect is translated into an explanation that becomes logical by way of parallel universes. Matter can exist as particle and a wave at the same time. In Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle the tenet is that the velocity and position cannot simultaneously be observed of a wave/particle. Quantum physics has shown that a single particle of matter exists not just in one position, but in several places simultaneous. Consequently, because everything in the world is made up of these particles including ourselves, we may exist in several places at once.[52] Since to exist in other universes would mean living in different dimensions,[53] we just may be multidimensional beings (one of the

many realities of life of which we are ignorant). David Dutsche, an English physicist believes there are four parallel universes; other scientists put forth the theory of an infinite number in which every possibility is happening.

One of the curious posits of the observer effect is that everything is in a state of inertia or inactivity until it is observed. The beginning of the universe, aka the Big Bang is consequently only true from present observation of the past. The observed world becomes the "real" one. To wit the parallel world as defined by physics is a region of space and time containing matter, galaxies, stars, planets and living beings, similar and possibility a duplicate of our universe with a single molecule, atom or proton difference between each other. Just as mathematics can only describe possibilities of reality, never reality itself, we are presently in the state of being in which we can only experience one world consciously. However, if there is a higher dimension of space on an atomic level (superspace) then parallel worlds may be closer than we think. Neuroscience in studying altered states of consciousness or awareness; schizophrenia, lucid dreaming, and hallucinogenic states may be describing our connections to another universe.[54]

Review of Theories and Literature

The most prevalent theory of current times is the postmodern theory of simulacra. It is one of the theories which we use to understand and comprehend the transition of society from the modern and concrete to postmodern and hyperreal. Douglas Kellner in The Oxford Guide to Film Studies, remarks that:

> "Films take the raw material of social history and of
>
> social discourses and process them into products

> which are themselves historical events and social forces. Films, therefore, can provide information about the 'psychology' of an era and its tensions, conflicts fears, and fantasies, but they do so not as a simple representation or mirroring of an extra cinematic social reality. Rather films refract social discourses and content into specifically cinematic forms, which engage audiences in an active process of constructing meaning".[55]

It is the constructing of meaning that is the issue here because we must understand the presentation of material that is our mindset, never fully realizing that we are both guided through our lives and are enacting those concepts within them.

The ideological message of the monster and science fiction films of the fifties has been studied so extensively, that there is a consensus in film schools and among film scholars of what those messages were, why they were communicated and what were the methods that used to obtain these messages. Although other decades have been examined for continuing ideological statements as Joe Abbott remarks in "They Came From Beyond the Center,"[56] there seems to be a continuing theme of paranoia and powerlessness from the fifties until today that is reflected in different ways across decades.

Peter Biskind posits in Seeing is Believing that films of a certain decade or era can be shown to have a dominant ideological message that ties the films of all genres together. It is his contention that in the fifties this dominant message was social consensus. [57] This dominant ideological concept overrode all others, which mainly were concentrated within the science fiction and horror genres, depicting fears of the Cold War, the nuclear and the "Other" (the unknowable enemy). Biskind used a textual analysis of each film analyzing the protagonists, the reoccurring stereotyped characters and the similar endings among different types of narratives and genres. He explains that in order to support social ideals, characters in a film must act in certain ways or else the film becomes disturbing and critical of social mores.[58] The fifties was not an era in which this was tolerated. What the fifties expressed in film is analogous to the 21st century, but just the locus of the fear has changed. According to Peter Lev,[59] science fiction film is a perfect vehicle for the examination of ideological messages. Lev attempts to prove in his article, "Whose Future, *Star Wars, Alien* and *Blade Runner,"* that film and filmmakers do reflect social concerns and fears and does it in a way that is that interprets social change (positive or negative) conveying this idea. Lev says George Lucas produced the film *Star Wars* with the intent of returning to the ideology of the fifties, a particularly comforting time for Lucas after the tumultuous era of the sixties and seventies.[60] It is Fredric Jameson who has written of a postmodern aesthetic "that reflects obsessively on the idyllic past, forming an abiding and arching nostalgia in its cultural and textual practices". Jameson cites *Star Wars, America Graffiti*[61] and *Chinatown,* among others as examples of postmodern pastiche, imitations of dead styles and the longing to experience them again.[62] The fifties ideology demanded a simple and optimistic film with a clear line between good and evil. However, there is a

progression in *Alien* and *Blade Runner* that reveals a change in genre roles (*Alien)* and a difference in attitude toward the "Other" (*Blade Runner).*

Vivian Sobchack in Screening Space, The America Science Fiction Film, give a detailed history of the science fiction film and how the properties of the pretext and text of film changes across time philosophically and socially to reflect differences in society and ideology. She uses the all the elements contained in science fiction film that change; robots, rockets, space, time, locations, relationship of characters, gender roles and music. Sobchack notes a gradual compressing of space and time.[63] By the eighties, there is also a beginning of films that create whole new worlds, previously only seen in science fiction literature. Another element that Sobchack addresses is the use of language. She posits that by the very ordinariness of the language used, the alienness of science fiction is rendered familiar and not as disturbing or frightening.[64] Sobchack writes the history of science fiction in two golden ages: the fifties, when technology was new, novel and fearful and from the seventies to today, in which technology is familiar and the consumer electronic society in which we live is reflected. In her last chapter, "Postfuturism," Sobchack discusses the radical change of the last ten years.[65] She refers to Jean Baudrillard's theory of the Simulacra to explain how the film has become quite like a video game in which the screen is flat and space has lost its three dimensional character. Sobchak claims that the Self has broken down as we lose a concrete perception of reality and that changes in technology have led to the "radical alternative of our culture's temporal and spatial consciousness."[66] She believes that it is the job of science fiction film to expound upon these changes and the way we perceive reality and our relationship to it and society. However, like Peter Biskind,[67] concerning the fifties, this current loss of a concrete

perception of reality transcends genre and is pervasive in and across society. To leave science fiction film with the job of delineating these changes would be denying how insidious these concepts are in our lives. I feel that we can discover evidence of the breaking of Self, but more importantly the craving for a reality that is meaningful. Only by studying the media that influences us will we be able to answer the questions of how that same media reflects our ideas.

Erving Goffman‘s sociological theory is exemplified by the film *The Truman Show*. Goffman deconstructed the social world in his book The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. In developing his theory, Goffman was trying to change the view of the world of mendaciousness of people, institutions and authority because they play roles into something more honest. He believed we don’t have any choice but to perform in society because of the need to preserve society. The human experience is that of performance. As actors /players in society we demand that others play roles and follow the rules of those roles or pay a social penalty. Goffman used the dramaturgical perspective as a model for human behavior to study how humans establish meaning in their lives. In a dramaturgical model, social is analyzed as if it were part of a theatrical performance. However, the main problem is the search for authenticity. If one is self conscious about one’s role then it will make other people aware of the role playing, ultimately paralyzing any chance of social spontaneity. The primary philosophic tale of the search for authenticity is Plato’s allegory of the cave. While this is necessary in Plato’s philosophy for growth of the individual, Goffman thought that striving for authenticity in society was self defeating because of the knowledge of role playing breeds artificial behavior.[68] *The Truman Show* as well as *Dark City* and The M*atrix Trilogy* reflect a distrust of reality. When we can unravel everybody’s

motives, in essence question their authenticity, then the next step is radical skepticism of everything around us. Nothing authentic exists save the pure entity we think of as our Self. Thus, we can conclude that this pure untainted Self exists and would exist more luminously and happily had not the social dialogue eroded and corrupted it. Our heroes are struggling to free themselves from a corrupt world, have real experiences and gain their true Selves. If Murdock was still under the influence of the Strangers , then he like Trumann and Neo would be faced with the concept and allure of a utopia without personal freedom.

Ludology[69]

Roland Barthes‘s post-structural literary theory is articulated in Thomas Elsaesser and Warren Buckland‘s book, Studying Contemporary American Film. It is composed of five codes which are: the proairetic, the hermeneutic, the semic, the symbolic and the cultural/ referential.[70] Barthes devised this system to analyze texts. Barthes divides texts into readerly (a text that positions the readers as the passive consumer of a pre-existing meaning) and writerly (the reader is an active contributor to the text’s meaning).[71] The theory can be applied to hypertext (text composed of images linked electronically by multiple paths, chains or trails in an open-ended perpetually unfinished textuality described by the terms link, node, network, web and path).[72] An additional relationship of hypertext and video games is that hypertext is interactive. Studies of computer game research and theory have grown out of this work on digital texts. While Barthes‘ methods are effective for the breaking down of text into its smallest parts, the same method used in examining cinema (which is rarely done)[73] although able to analyze narrative quite well, takes

tremendous time and paper to do even a two hour film. This makes it unwieldy and tedious for common use.

Video game theory has been chiefly analyzed through narrative theory (cyberdrama) focusing on how those stories are narrated and how the activity and dimensions of the narrated event give rise to the story process. This presents the problem that makes games different, namely is the interactive aspect. (According to Lev Manovich, cinema and computer are in the process of merging), with the exception of a few films, e.g. Moulin Rouge,[74] interactivity is not yet feasible or popular enough to be uniformly used.[75] The video game theory is composed of reliable rules as well as excessive visual and aural stimulation. The rules are not limited or hampered by the concepts of compassion and morality. The act of mastering these games (digital narratives) is the source of the addictive aspect of this activity. This can lead to an absorption that can alter the game player's state of consciousness and lead to a momentary loss of self.[76] Richard Jones argues for the influence of video games to be even greater than film in replacing religion because it enters the private sphere as does religion, it takes the world of simulation one step further into a new dimension as the player can become the One and the identification and immersion in to the games is much stronger.[77]

The most common rules of video games are: serialized repetition of actions (to accumulate points and master the rules), multiple levels of adventure, space-time warps (an alterative way to reach another level similar to a hypertext link), magical transformations and disguises, immediate rewards and punishments (the accumulation of points acts as a feedback loop[78] in the process of mastering the rules as it provide rewards for playing a good game), pace (the player synchronizes with the pace of the game and confers upon the

player the feeling of control), and interactivity. The central organizing assumption of video games is violence.[79] Without a doubt the amount of violence in video games perpetuates Western ideological myths and with the addition of antisocial behavior foster by solitary playing.

According to Jean Buadrillard, our current era of simulation is emblematized by "a liquidation of all referentials. This is to say that reality has become such that we cannot distinguish it from the way that the media has constructed it. Viewing violence in this way Baudrillard argues that it is "infinitely more dangerous "than actual violence, since stimulated violence "always leaves open to supposition that above and beyond its object, law and order themselves might be nothing but simulation."[80] In other words viewing acts of violence without consequences may translate to the concrete world the idea that this is possible. The collapse of a clear distinction between the real and the simulation causes confusion "between the sender and the receiver, thus sealing the disappearance of all dual, polar structures that formed the discursive organization of language".[81] The discourse becomes circuit and the system is an "uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference." The postmodern awareness of this process Baudrillard calls "an anti-Copernican revolution" because it is characterized by "no transcendental instance either of the sun or of the luminous sources of power and knowledge-everything comes from the people and returns to them."[82]

If films like *The Matrix Trilogy* does inhabit a Baudrillard universe the there isn't any realm in which there is truth or divinity and even the glimpse of the sun for Neo and Trinity was a false sign.[83] Even the clothes in *The Matrix* promote and symbolize this media generated concept of violence as they are also from a world of fetish (leather coats

boots and muscle shirts) and symbolize the personal power that the weapons (guns, guns and more guns) of destruction holds in this society. Video games are basically about personal power. This is what is understood by video gamers as well as viewers of film and television. While much semiotic pleasure can be gained from video games as well as the ability to utilize computer and electronic devices, one ability that has been noted is the pronounced development of the skill of shooting weapons.[84]

Genre Theory

If alterative reality films contain a new genre it is in the thematic sense. Thus it becomes an exploration as to whether these films constitute a new genre, a subgenre or a multigenre. Richard Corliss considers these films a subgenre and names them fantasies of displacement. Although Lisa Schwartzbaum wants to revamp this subgenre into what she terms magical comedy, many of the films that have this theme are not comedies.[85] In Susan Doll and Gary Faller's article "*Blade Runner* and Genre: Film Noir and Science Fiction", they builds a case for a new classification of genre, the multigenre film. The multigenre film is one composed of more than one genre in which there isn't a dominant genre and the expectations that surround a genre are usually not met.[86] A genre functions through a set of codes that are recognized by both the filmmaker and the spectator through a common cultural agreement or collective cultural expression. The codes or traits are pretext; (subject matter, content and theme) and text (style, setting, décor, lighting, mise-en-scene, editing and music). Genre also functions semantically (as an autonomous system of conventions) and by syntax (narrative systems). When the spectator recognizes these conventions as belonging to a certain genre then expectations arise of narrative patterns, character behavior and ultimately specific meanings. These meanings are connected quite

often to deep-rooted human and social concerns and fears. Roland Barthes‘ literary model of a signification and Christian Metz’s theory have been used to classify genres and show that genre passes through stages of development such as experimental, classical, parody and deconstruction or revisionist. All these systems are foundational for examining the elements that films share. Normally, a film must have three to eight traits of a genre in order to be classified in a particular genre. The popular genres have a social subtext while their iconography decorates lunchboxes, clothes and toys, although this develops into an uncertainty about fundamental beliefs about the world and our place in it. To classify these films it is necessary to find similar conventions. The different between a genre and non genre film are: first the genre films focus on a story and not about anything that matters outside the film, second the genre films always let us know who the hero is and who villains are, third genre films are identifiable by their plot or compact sense of shape, fourth, genre films are mimetic and Northrop Fry says they imitate other films and not real life, fifth, characterization in genre films is always done by a known narrative shorthand such the type of clothes they wear.[87] The problem is that these films relate a social message collectively though out the complex of different genres. All have the theme of alternative realties, yet the message is clarified and stronger because it can transcend genre.

One classification system of genre is the categories set out in Northrop Fry’s The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. [88] These the master genres and are labeled Tragedy, Romance, Comedy and Irony/Satire. The characteristics of these genres are abstractions that form a wide range of narratives. Tragedies concern protagonists who are superior in skill and knowledge to the normal populace. The Romance is a quest story in which the hero tries to discover his/her essential identity or save his/her society from a failing

existence if not complete failure. Comedy concerns the integration of an outside figure into a community and involves the redemption of the qualities that initially marked the hero as the "Other." Irony/ Satire is a genre in which the audience is in the superior position in relationship to the protagonist. *The Matrix, The Truman Show, Dark City, Pleasantville, Contact* and *The One* are in the Romance genre. They are quest narratives and have the three classic themes: the discovery of the true hero, the threat to the community and the eventual romantic union of the hero and heroine which symbolizes the triumph of the community over the forces that have been the threat. The American monomyth genre, the Western works from the Romance genre (the shootouts in *Matrix* are definitely from the Western genre) in that the hero must discover his ability to act for the broader social good of a community in order to defend it against forces of evil.[89] There are at least three double coded movies: *The Matrix* (a computer program within a computer generated film), *eXisteZ* (a video game within a game) and *The Truman Show* (a television show within a film), there is in fact elements of double coding in all the films studied. It has become an age in which pure genres are rare and most like *The Matrix* are of a mixed or multi genre.[90] Genre is a type of cultural ritual or collective expression and in films with combinations of genres there is the implication that the world is not as homogenous any more.

Philosophical Underpinnings

What is the Matrix?

A college student might describe the matrix as a computer simulated world created by machines who want to enslave humans. He/she would not ask him/herself the question, what is appearance? and what is reality? What is reality is a metaphysical question. How can we know what is real and what is unreal is an epistemological one.

There are eight subcategories of the unreal world or as it is sometimes referred to as "dream" world according to Gracia and Sanford: simulation (neuro-interactive), image (of the self), digital entity (a self), appearance, mental projection, matrixes of which the Matrix is an example, and computer programs that are a part of virtual reality.[91] There are three categories of mind (human minds), non-mind (machines, weapons, human bodies and organs, the earth, buildings, electrical signals) composites of no-mind and mind (human beings) Metaphysics is a view of the ultimate nature of reality. In the films of alternative realities the metaphysical classification is that of dualism. This means that these worlds are composed of two incompatible things, in fact mutually exclusive, irreconcilable and irreducible. There are two main ways to distinguish between the real world and unreal world. One is to determine the source of the real and the unreal. The second way is to determine the ontological status of the two (the nature of existence). The real world is one in which it is difficult or even impossible to discover the source. Using the example of the matrix, it is a very complex computer program made by artificially intelligent machines. It is entirely dependent on the real world for existence. Therefore, it can be surmised that the real and the unreal have different causes. To distinguish between the real and unreal in their ontological status, or the way things exist, we can think in terms of dependence. The real world does not depend on anything to exist, however the matrix depends on the real world to exist and it exists only as long as machines that run it and supply it with energy allow it. Thus, the real and the unreal can be distinguished by their source and their ontological status.

The Theory of the Simulacra

The theory of the simulacra was formulated by Jean Baudrillard and discussed in his book Simulacra and Simulation. Baudrillard argues that postmodern culture is a world of signs that have made a fundamental break from referring to reality. A simulacrum means the existence of copies without originals. Baudrillard's theory divides simulacra into three categories. The first category is the natural, which means those founded on an image, on imitation and counterfeit that are harmonious, optimistic and that aim for the restitution or the ideal institution of nature made in God's image. The second category is the productive, those founded on energy, force and its materialization by the machine and in the whole system of production. The third category is the simulacra of simulation founded on information, the model, and the cybernetic game and is the operationality, the hyperreality and the aim of total control.[92] The concept of simulation is that of the creation of the real through conceptual or mythological models that have no connection to its origin in reality. The model becomes the determinant of perception of reality called the Real. The ideal models are presented through the media and dictate all relationships, homes, art, music and fashion. The boundary between the image or simulation and reality implodes. Thus is created a world of hyperreality where the distinction between the real and the unreal is blurred.[93] The culture industry blurs the lines between the facts and information, between information and entertainment, between entertainment and politics. This is reflected in news programs and celebrities in political office. Because simulations and simulacra have referents then society begins to implode. Social institutions and belief systems begin to disintegrate and destruct. The masses become cynical when they are bombarded with these images in order to control their behavior, e.g. buy, vote, and work.

This process of social entropy leads to the collapse of all boundaries between meaning, the media and the social. Simulation and simulacra become the Real so that there are no stable structures in which to base or ground theory or politics. Culture and society become a flux of undifferentiated images and signs.

In the use of simulation, Baudrillard believes that we have obtained a computer/electronic consciousness that is still emerging.[94] In this consciousness its inhibiters are obsessed with timelessness, perfection and objectification of self. For Baudrillard these images are indifferent and desert-like, hence his quote reflecting that sentiment, "Welcome to the Desert of the Real."[95]

This phrase is also spoken by the character of Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) to Neo (Keanu Reeves) in the film *The* Matrix in which Slovoj Zezik compares the scene of (Neo seeing the ruined real world for the first time) to the horrifying event of 9/11.[96] The citizens of New York were introduced to the same spectacle of the desert of the real[97] when they witnessed that horrific event. [98]

The Matrix, according to the directors, the Wachowski Brothers, is based on the theory of the Simulacra, with references to Baudrillard throughout the film. In one scene Neo actually picks up a copy of Baudrillard's Simulacra and Simulation, which is hollowed out to hold his contraband tapes. This book becomes representative of the simulacra idea of the hyperreal even more so because it is not really a book.[99] It has the appearance of a book but the meaning of it as a book is lost with the lack of material inside. In *Matrix Reloaded*, the second of a trilogy, reality or the Real becomes even more sublimely hyperreal, as the characters that up until this film were considered human are

found to be creations of the computer matrix. What is the reality of the world of the Matrix is what we are compelled to ask. The themes of alternate reality are all hyperrealties because the boundaries of what seem to be real are not concrete or seemingly knowable. The protagonists in these films go from "one " reality to another without an understanding of a real division. In a world in which electronics has taken the place of contact with real people and objects, the longing for the real brings us films such as *Pleasantville* where a craving for the simplicity of an uncomplicated time is reflected in the hyperreality of a hybrid representation of a fifties' television program. *The Truman Show* evokes the underlying fear we all have that we have lived our whole lives in a hyperreality. *Vanilla Sky* explores the idea that our identity is hyperreal. In *eXisteZ* the term cyberspace takes on the meaning of the hyperreal.[100] This fear permeates society today and finds a residence in the films that we go to see and remember. For Baudrillard the cinema has become synonymous with his theory:

> "Concurrently with this effort toward an
> absolute correspondence with itself and
> this not contradictory: it is the very definition
> of the hyperreal. Hypotyposis and specularity.
> Cinema plagiarizes itself, recopies itself,
> remakes its classics, retroactivates its original
> myths, remakes silent film more perfectly than
> the original, etc.: all of this is logical, the
> cinema if fascinated by itself as a lost object

> as much as it (and we) are fascinated by the real
> as a lost referent".[101]

The lost referent is the essence of the meaning of alternate reality. What is important is to define this change in our reality conception to understand the world in which we live.

Religion and Its Portrayal

Only certain stories become myths because we need the stories of people (archetypes) who succeed over insurmountable odds or who fail because of an adverse universal human trait that is understood by all. We use these myths to sustain our lives. Truman, Neo, Ellie and Trinity are the latest in the history of heroes with a thousand faces. Technology has changed nothing in the concept of what a hero does. Whether the conjoining of human and machines gives us new myths remains to be seen.

Religion plays an integral part in all heroic journeys as well as those in which the characters explores their reality in search of a way to live a better life. It is a subject that comes under fire in *Contact*. As Ellie, the protagonist says:

> "Which is more likely? That an all-powerful God created the Universe and then decided not to give any proof of His existence, or that He simply does not exist at all? Or that we created him so we wouldn't have to feel so small and alone."[102]

Like in an Eisenstein film, religion in *Contact* is cast in a negative light. The terrorists who blow up the first spacecraft were religious fanatics. People in this film use religion for gain or to mask lack of knowledge, as in the case of the selection committee in which Ellie is honest and doesn't answer the question of does she believe in God. The selected astronaut, Dr. David Drumlin (Tom Skerritt) talks in religious terms, even though but the audience isn't aware that he doesn't believe what he says. As a child Ellie went to Sunday School but she was kicked out for asking too many questions. This action sets a tone for the whole concept of faith and only faith without doubt, a difficult if not impossible task for the intelligent human being. There is a subplot of a romance in the film that is not in the book, Contact. Joss Palmer (Mathew McConaughey) a theologian and mystic shows up at the Mexican location of Ellie's project is and is introduced as a journalist and dropout theological student studying the harmful impact of technology on third world people. He is as attracted to Ellie as she is to him, but when she runs into him again, Palmer is a spiritual counselor to the White House and "God's diplomat". He is partly responsible for Ellie not being chosen for the first flight which is fortunate as it was blown up. In the end he is the one who supports Ellie when no one else believes her about her journey to the stars. This stance has undoubtedly offended the Christians but it is important to express honestly different belief systems with impunity, particularly as this is Carl Sagan's take on religion.[103]

None of the other films are as blatant about religion as *Contact.* *The Matrix* presents symbolism and dialogue that applies to many religions, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and Islam. There are not any overt references, yet Neo seems to embody the Christian savior in a more technologically secular sense as he elucidates the spiritual

philosophy of the East. Actually the idea of a computer hacker being a Christ figure is linked to the concept of technology as religion which has frightening implications for the computer amateur.

There are elements of theology and ontology present in *The Truman Show*. In one way this can also be seen as an allegory for the journey of the spiritual life. The essence of religion is the belief that there is something more to reality than just the world around us. The essence of the spiritual life is the determination to know it. Truman sets out to discover "things as they really are" with the courage to search and find regardless of the cost or the consequences. There are elements of Gnosticism in this film. Gnosticism teaches that the world we live in is essentially false, and it describes the creation of an evil and twisted god called the Demiurge and his archons, who in a technically oriented world are modernized to deploy ersatz spectacle, surveillance devices and a control over media and information that allows them to manipulative society and keep individuals " asleep", whether figurively or literally.

Another religious allegory is from the Book of Job in which Satan in a wager with God puts Job through a series of hardships (tests) to see if he will renounce God's name. Still another allegory is the story of the beginning from Genesis when Adam was in the Garden of Eden and ate of the fruit from the tree of knowledge (discovering the unreality he was living in) and leaves Eden (not a place, but a state of mind) as Truman leaves the perfect town he lives in. In the concept of what is referred to as Christian anarchism this film is an analogy of an individual's path to enlightenment, (this also has Buddhistic aspects) the search for the truth and the quest for freedom from earthly authority. Once Truman discovers that the world he lives in, which everything happens in

perfect order, is illusionary he has to overcome his own personal fears and insecurities in order to escape. He finds that he must disregard the views of skeptical friends and family who would prefer things stayed the same rather than upset the status quo. In the last few frames Truman steps through a door and reaches the Kingdom of Heaven or Nirvana. The boat Truman uses to escape is 139, the number of a Psalm in which the Psalmist talks about God knowing his/her every movement and thought, "Surely darkness shall hide me, and night shall be my light"[104] when Truman confronts the stormy weather that is created by Christof because Truman is trying to leave. These are elements in all the films of parables or fables teaching the human audience that faith, love and possibly technology will conquer all obstacles.

One of the themes that The *Matrix* and *The Truman Show* share is the possible deliberate meaning of names. Neo is an anagram; when spelled backwards it is One. A name that is carried in the title of film with Jet Li and is the metaphoric designation of the lead protagonists in the others of the films. Neo in Greek means new. Thomas Anderson, Neo's name in the matrix has implications too. Thomas may be thought of as the harking back to "doubting Thomas" the disciple who expresses skepticism about Jesus rising from the dead. Neo too is plagued by doubts of his abilities, the unreality of the matrix and his identity as the One. Anderson (Swedish for Andrew's son) derives from the Greek root andr, meaning man. Etymologically, Anderson means son of man, a name Jesus often applied to himself. Early in the film Neo is even called Jesus Christ by his buyer Choi (Marc Gray) of his illegal software. Neo's rescue from the pod has vestiges of a rebirth; the cables come off and are similar to umbilical cords. Then he slides down a tube that could symbolize the birth canal. He is also brought back to life like Jesus who rose on the

third day. Neo is the sleeping beauty who returns to life after he has died by being kissed by Trinity in room 303.[105] Another curious reference is a metal plate on the Nebuchadnezzar that reads "Mark III, No. 11." This likely could be a reference to Mark 3:11.[106] "And whenever unclean spirits beheld him, they fell down before him and cried out, You are the Son of God." Similarly, Truman could be True Man (his quest is for his true self) and Christof is an aberrant version of Christ. There is also Trinity, the word used to describe a religion concept of three deities that preside over all entities, present in both Christianity and Hinduism. The three Neo, Morpheus and Trinity form an unconventional Christian trinity: Morpheus as the Father, Neo as the Son and Trinity as the Holy Spirit. The use of the name Nebuchadnezzar (the Babylonian king who could not remember his dream and was guided by Daniel to Yahweh) is direct biblical reference as is Zion which is the name of the final home of the Israelites as well as an idealized utopia or the spiritual home of the faithful. Morpheus is a Greek god of sleep or dreams, invoking the realm that we understand as not real. Cypher (a Mephistophelian character) is basically the Judas of *The Matrix*, and his name is half of a 20th century coined phrase used originally by William Gibson as cyberspace, cyber meaning the zero in the binary system in which all computer programs are written. This story in which this word appears, Neuromancer also anticipates the Singularity of the conjoining of human and machine. There is also Tank (Marcus Chong) and Dozer (Anthony Ray), two of the crew of the Nebuchadnezzar, whose names are actually physical descriptions of their bodies. Persephone is the Greek goddess of the underworld, appropriately married to the Merovingian in the film whose life is all control, sensation and pleasure.

The most important task present day religion has in front of it is to synthesize a cosmological and moral system that will appeal to a large enough group of people so that it finds meaning in everyone's everyday life. Religion has traditionally been a system of symbols and purveyor of values and an agent of socio-cultural change. These are the forces in action that unite the community into a moral connected group. In religion there is a conversion from the real world to the world of myths and symbols. In these films it is just the opposite; the conversion is from the world of stimulation to the world of the real.[107] When films generate a set of values then, is when they replace religion as a purveyor. The appeal of films like *The Matrix, Dark City and The Truman* S*how* is that they reduce the religious themes to general schemas. By doing so many more people can feel the connectiveness of a system of values that is nondenominational and speaks a fresh version of what we like to call the truth. This is necessary in America especially because of our history, myths, politics, and philosophy that have emphasized individual rights and freedoms.

Another factor in entertainment elucidating a value system is that religion has adopted consumer methods and techniques. When both are marketed the lines of separation become blurred, e.g. the Vatican sells religious jewelry in department stores. In a society with almost unlimited diversity and choice, groups of people becomes fragmented which counterproductive to a common shared culture. We are faced with cultural dissonance. In the matrix, Neo is living in 1999 and he faces the same conflicts and dissatisfactions that we do. He too is full of doubts and concerns. When Neo is faced with a choice of the red or blue pill, it is understood that the red pill is the way to real life, a change for redemption. Many people feel like Neo that something is wrong but they can't quite conceptualize it.

We look for answers on the computers just as Neo did. If we believe our salvation is dependent on someone who is enlightened then we can really invest in the myth of *The Matrix*. The myth and religious symbolism and story line are pluralistic or it can be said is a syncretistic vision of religion or spirituality.

Where Christianity and these films differ is that to Christians the fundamental human problem is alienation from God that results from human sinfulness. In these films the fundamental human problem is not sin, but ignorance and illusion. Films like religion provide a system of symbols, moods, myths and that motivates and unites groups of people.[108] The fact that film and the media cut across religious, ethnic, social; political, economic, and geographic boundaries is the impetus that empowers their influence. We can establish new rituals which stave off the ontological terror of a future without meaning. We are an entertainment culture as is reflected in our news programs and religious gatherings. Everything has to entertain to maintain the attention of the populace. What films like *The Matrix Trilogy, The Truman Show, Contact, Dark City, Pleasantville, Waking Life* and *The One* teach us is that there are modern myths that can instill a sense of awe and wonder. These myths teach us that good will triumph over evil, that we are connected and dependent on one another, that one must believe to achieve, that a person's actions do matter, that treachery is always punished, and that courage and persistence wins the day. In *Vanilla Sky, eXisteZ* and *The Thirteenth Floor* that lack of the very same values teaches the horror of life lived without them.[109] In none of the films are the alternative realties destroyed. In fact in *Matrix Revolution* a compromise is reached, a peaceful resolution is brokered. A new vision of the world and time (time takes on many forms in

these films and is flexible as well as changeable, e.g. Bullet time) is created by transformation of the unreal.

Existentialism

Existentialism is a philosophical movement that views the individual, the self, and the individual‘s experience and uniqueness as a basis for understanding the nature of human existence.[110] Existentialism addresses human existence as a set of underlying themes and characteristics; such as anxiety, angst, absurdity, dread, and freedom, awareness of death and consciousness of existing. Thus the experiences of Neo, John Murdock and Truman Burbank amount to an existential jolt when they are confronted with an entire life in which their memories or in John’s case lack of memories, are supplied by the entity in control of their lives, “these memories from my life –none of them happened”.[111] Even death has its advantage because at least for the ones that grasp it memory will cease and the conflict is resolved.[112] The truth as we know it is that the reality of life is death. The matrix, the cities (Dark City and Seahaven), the video games, the television show, the Multiverse have trapped the protagonists in a world that is unreal and uncomfortable once awareness is reached. The meaning of the word matrix is womb from Latin, yet all the before mentioned environments have the effect of a womb for their protagonists. The protagonists in these films are in an existential quagmire/crisis. Most will have to make a decision between honesty and ignorance or truth and illusion. The existential terms for this choice are the authenticity vs. inauthenticity. The existential view of “reality” is that existence is without any inherent purpose or underlying design. Thus, the implication is that the individual is completely free and completely responsible for all that happens to them. It is the human that invests the world with order and meaning. One

aspect of Existentialism is that it espouses free will to the zenith of its meaning. Determinism is not applicable in this philosophy, it is existence before essence. In existential philosophy our ontological boundaries are self imposed and in believing one has a choice and making that choice lays the freedom to be authentic. Neo is certainly one who is completely responsible for his fate. Truman Burbank is also another hero is must take control of his own life regardless of opposition. It is in fact these and the other films such as *Contact* and *Pleasantville* that illustrate both the unpleasant consequences of authenticity and the appeal of inauthenticity. For instance, Cypher, a human that was liberated from the energy pods at a young age is aware of the true nature of the human condition and decides to change it. After years of living in harsh conditions underground, in a constant of terror of annihilation and with very little hope for an improvement in the near future, he can't deal with it anymore. So he sells out, betrays his fellow rebels and opts for life back in the matrix Cypher explains his choice:

> "I know this steak doesn't exist. I know
> That when I put it in my mouth the
> matrix tells my brain it is juicy and
> delicious. After nine years, you know
> what I realized – ignorance is bliss"[113]

With his choice Cypher invokes both our scorn and our sympathy. However, the path to authenticity is filled with agony. It is a physically painful emancipation and still the mental angst is far worse. The seeker suffers a cognitive shock. The truth is difficult to handle because inauthenticity is the norm, most people are inauthentic. This can be attributed to both psychological resistance and social indoctrination. Most people do not

want to experience the true nature of reality, preferring to stay in a dream world of their own or someone else's design. People are unwilling to go against the majority because of their thorough conditioning. They are resistant to change the way they have been taught to see the world thinking that change is a move toward alienation and madness. Thus the person who moves toward authenticity loses the support of others. This is usually sufficient to keep people inauthentic. Knowing that one is totally responsible for choices and actions and the feeling of estrangement and insanity, it is obvious why individuals prefer to remain inauthentic. Arthur Kroker understands the allure of virtual reality after the nine years of Hobbesian existence that has trapped Cypher:

> "The electronic body of the recombinant
> sign is a wonderful space of illusion: filtered
> images, displaces sounds, morphed faces,
> aliased eyes, time-stretched nervous system,
> and cut and paste sexuality. Knowing no
> real, the electronic body is always ready
> to travel across the galactic space of the
> hyperreal. Having no vestigial memory
> of nature, the body electronic thinks of
> itself as sub-nature, a world of sub-reality
> that creates its own laws of motion on
> the virtual go" [114]

It may well be the end of corporeal reality in which the physical is a simulacrum and exists in a realm where actions are devoid of effort, smells and fluids.

While living inauthentically may alleviate anxiety it can only by eradicated by death. This is not optimal considering that we would be unaware that our anxiety was finite. This is our "splinter in the mind" as Morpheus says; it is part of the nature of the beast or human. If we deny that our anxiety and insecurity is ontological then we try to give it a cause, a source and lead ourselves to the concept that if we can control this source we can alleviate the anxiety. We establish ontological boundaries and lose much of our freedom and our autonomy. It does not necessarily lead to madness making the journey to authenticity; it can bring serenity and an appreciation of being alive.[115]

The posit of Existentialism of retaining authenticity in a mechanical and apathetic world finds its expression especially in *The Truman Show*. To a certain extent all the films studied deal with existential and experimental issues. It is the stories of heroes that stand between us and the existential terror of life and death.

Myths, Modernity and Postmodernity

It is difficult if not impossible to designate any of the films as primarily postmodern. Rather inherent in the films are themes from the classic mythological distant past (world explained by divine laws and tradition), the recent modern past (science and reason can explain everything) and a postmodern present. In the second of the *Matrix Trilogy*, *Matrix Reloaded*, the Architect (Helmut Bakaitis) explains the age of the matrix by telling Neo, "I prefer counting from the emergence of one integral anomaly to the emergence of the next." The Architect goes on to tell Neo that he is not the first but the sixth. This is an example of the idiosyncratic ways of considering time in these films. This time is not based on a constant unit based on the number six. It is based on the return of The One to the Source which indicates that the Architect tells time by rituals that govern

renewal, a mythological concept of time.[116] It is a time that is qualitative and concrete not quantitative and abstract. When the architect tells Neo to choose twenty three individuals to rebuild Zion, it harkens back to Eliade's understanding of mythic time as time in which "a new regenerated humanity is born, usually from a mythical ancestor who escaped the catastrophe."[117] One must examine the characters of Morpheus and the Oracle. Morpheus is guided by faith and what he has been told by the Oracle who is a mythological figure. In the words of Cornel West (a well known Princeton philosopher who plays the character Councilor West in the *Matrix Reloaded* and *Revolution)* the motivation behind Morpheus'actions is a tradition, that, may serve as a stimulus rather than a stumbling block.[118]

Modernity is best exhibited by the machine world in *The Matrix*. The machine consciousness understands the ideals of efficiency derived from science, reason and technology. The end is control and the means is fields of growing humans in pods, using energy from the people to run their world and the matrix construct itself to pacify the crop. One definition of postmodernism is the "random cannibalization of all the styles of the past and the plays of random stylistic allusion" in the works of history and the arts is also referred to by Frederic Jameson as pastiche.[119] *The Matrix Trilogy* certainly contains a variety of styles such as Hong Kong martial arts cinema, old American and Italian Westerns, Japanese anime, romantic dramas, science fiction, virtual video games and cyberpunk works. In fact if one defines as Jameson does the postmodern by pastiche then what the film may say in that it has all been done before, that there is nothing new under the sun. Another of Jameson's contentions is the depthlessness of society in which the surface of objects and people are all that remain.[120] The border and boundaries between

aesthetic forms of representation are collapsed by the wide range of cultural materials and literary styles. Whereas in times past our certainty about reality was based on either religious truths or observation, postmodernists would say that these are cultural constructs. The idea of metanarratives and reality that are central to the modernist are rejected in postmodernism.[121] *The Matrix Trilogy* is a grand narrative that is the very concept of modernity, the story of enslavement and liberation. Bukatman says on narrative:

> "In both spatial and temporal terms, then, the bodily experience of the human is absented from the new reality, recipitating a legitimate cultural crisis which has some precedent in the upheavals of the late nineteenth century. In this context the productions of postmodernism become comprehensible, even sensible: the labyrinthine and decentered forms, respond to the loss of a readable cartography and the displacement of lived space: the withdrawal into an empty historicism, a simulacrum of the past, during a period in which the data bank had usurped memory; the waning of ethical principles (indeed of subjectivity itself) as

> the possibilities of a moral center and the human as an agency of change seem to devolve to nothing; and the simultaneous over-and undervaluation of sign systems at a time when the sign is everything but stands for nothing. Particularly important, and intimately connected, are two frequently noted phenomena: the decline of the master-narratives which structure our understanding of the social structure and the rise of simulation as a prevalent form."[122]

Yet the postmodern ideas of the internal models of transformation though the return of the unsuccessfully repressed and the view of contemporary capitalism that it is an all inclusive order from which nothing can escape are the main points of the stories of *The Matrix*, *Dark City* and the *Truman Show*. Postmodernists believe the idea of reality or the real is unknowable which appears to be the tenet of *eXisteZ.* The characters in the Matrix spend much time trying to uncover the "truth, " this is not a postmodern viewpoint as that would be that there isn't any objective truth. Jean Baudrillard whose ideas are central to the hermeneutic concept of the film as postmodern, says himself in an interview:

> "The brand-new problem of the simulation is mistaken with the very classic problem of the illusion, already mentioned by Plato. Here lies

> the mistake. The world as a complete illusion
> is the problem that faced all great cultures and
> they solved it thanks to art and symbolization.
> What we did invent in order to put up with this
> pain is a simulated real, a virtual universe
> cleansed of everything dangerous or negative
> and which now overrides …,
> Now the Matrix is totally that![123]

To label these films, especially T*he Matrix* as classical, modern or postmodern is to miss entirely the complexity of the film and the conditions themselves. The different theories may originate in different epochs, but they are not diametrically opposed nor are separated ideas. The first M*atrix* does end on a hopeful note, what Cornel West calls prophetic pragmatism which projects a future in which the potential of everyone can flourish. Upon Neo's resurrection, he tells the Deux Ex Machina:

> I know you're out there, I can feel you now.
> I know that you're afraid of change. I don't
> know the future. I didn't come here to tell
> you how this is going to end. I came here
> to tell you how it's going to begin. I'm going
> to hang this phone and then I'm going to show
> these people what you don't want them to see.
> I'm going to show them a world without you.
> A world without rules and controls, without

> borders or boundaries. A world where anything is possible.[124]

The hopefulness about the future that is at the end of most of these films is back to existentialism and the willingness to learn from errors of the past and not reject that which the good of each age.

The goal of studying these films is to illuminate the ideological and philosophical concepts that are hidden and pervasive and show that they do reflect a change in society as a result of technology. By isolating the factors that these films share and applying an analysis using theories and methods conductive to this task, then what I have done is to illustrate that these films reveal both our fear and the craving for the real as our society ‘s reality becomes less and less concrete. Everything is now “uncertainty” and as we pass from the postmodern era to posthuman most of the films within this paper hold forth on an optimistic future, one that conflicts with Postmodernity and relative views of the world.

Posthumanism/Transhumanism[125]

Being that Transhumanism is a recent (approximately of the last ten years) wave of thought, it is probable that its application will be much more pervasive in the future.[126] The word posthuman has been defined as “our historical moment in which the organic and its other are crossing over each other domains.”[127] However, our culture has had much exploration of this concept, just without a planned and approval direction of synthesis with technology. The posthuman is a hypothothetical future being whose basic capacities so radically exceed those of current humans as to be not human in the way we regard or define human.[128] Cyborgs (a hybrid “thing” that thinks and speaks), bionic implants and

aids (these include protesgests as well as glasses, hearing aids) are the future of humanity according to the people who study these areas and this will greatly enhanced our intelligence, quality of life and longevity. Certainly if this is at all true, it will produce a being that at present is difficult to fathom. There are likely to be many problems because unless intelligent and emotional maturity is increased for the general population, then the same old story of difference equaling witch hunts will commence.[129] The posthuman view of alterative reality worlds and their portrayal on film is that this is an example of defragmentation of consciousness. Posthuman theory disavowed the "brain in a vat" scenario saying it is literally impossible or it has never been proved possible for a brain to carry on consciousness without a body attached, hence consciousness resides in the entire body. Culture and its expressions, art, music cinema, philosophy and literature have the ability to connect differing concepts and perceptions of reality to form a more unified expression that is in the process of becoming defragmentized. The state in which we live of in anxieties, oppositions, isolations, conflicts and contradictions that linguistic consciousness produces is transcended in some manner and at some level. The destiny is the ideal, fragmented state called "Pure Existence", bliss-like state that we experience before birth and the acquisition of language.[130] In our electronic/ technological worldview, we use the computers and video games to produce the cultural unity that our (we want it instantaneously) condition demands. We must remember that in some of these films we already have two types of humans, whose who can form a symbiosis relationship with technology and the others who do not. These humans who form these relationships may just represent a new stage in human evolution.

The *Animatrix* is an animated film that elaborates on the matrix story, The

Second Renaissance, Parts I and II from the Zion Archives there is a creation story of the machines and the fall of the human machine relationship. There is a rape of a female machine, a Million Machine March , the founding of Machine City, Zero One (the binary city) and the failed effort by the machines to get their rights recognized by the United Nations. So we see that power and freedom is what both humans and machines seek.[131] There is that story there seems to be evidence that the matrix story is not technophobia, but the story tells you that "then man made the machine in his own image. Thus would man become the architect of his own demise."[132] Although not all see it that way as Laura Bartlett and Thomas Byers argue, " *The Matrix* places posthuman subjects at the center of its action and flirts with a theoretical postmodernism only to reject the posthumanist configuration of subjectivity in favor of resurrecting a new romantic version of the liberal-humanist subject."[133]

Conclusion

As the century mark is passed we can look backwards and see at least some of the reasons we have arrived at the junction we are presenting exploring. Each decade can be examined and seen to exhibit certain social attitudes and behaviors. In the fifties the social climate was one of compliance. The negativity of common habits, cigarettes and consumption of gasoline were not widely known.

Conspicuous consumption was a goal for a large segment of the population. The words romance and guilelessness are the linguist denotation of the collective atmosphere of the times. The innocence and economic elevation of the fifties was the impetus for the next generation to explore the unknown. The films were concerned with a world taken over by monstrous creatures (Communists) and human life subjugated to their power and

control. Many films depicted a world beset by nuclear war and mutations that could drastically affect the future of civilization. Still others portrayed a world of totalitarianism with “big brother” in charge.

Revolutions have always been peppered with student leadership and the sixties was no exception. There were films exploring the aftermath of war and dystopia in a technologically dehumanized and phlegmatic society. The “Baby Boomers” born of a generation that had known acute poverty and world wide war wanted a humane and salubrious world and thought they could liberate the unconscious others of their erroneous perception of the world. Different clothes, habits, lifestyles and values were the new standard and they must be opposite or radically different than the prior generation especially one’s parents. This decade changed the world and brought awareness, but not the total change the hippie’s generation wanted.

By the seventies making a living brought a rude awakening and disillusion for this idealistic, but naïve generation. Drugs were no longer mind expanding. They were a vice that had become a habit, an expensive one. The first film school directors invaded the cinema. George Lucas in his nostalgia for the fifties attempted to provide a myth of modernity to replace those guiding stories whose application to society is limited. The Baby Boomers comprised the largest section of the population decided if they had to work hard, they would play hard too. Films even the *Star Wars* series depicted robots that could interact with humans. While *Manchurian Candidate* (1961) revealed the dangers of brain washing, a decade later *Clockwork Orange* (1971) insisted that it wouldn’t work.

The eighties brought a spending of wealth in excessive amounts, with lifestyle (drugs, parties, shopping and traveling) in the fast lane the desirable attainment. By the end of the eighties, a certain realization was obtained by some (primarily those who had not forgotten the ideals of the sixties) that money really doesn't buy happiness. By eighties and nineties technology and computer knowledge had developed enough to much more accurately represent the possible worlds of the future, including destruction of the earth, a world in constant conflict and genetic manipulation.

The nineties begin with an optimistic perception. The Boomers had finally convinced their selves that they had not sold out, but had brought into the system This was the decade where almost everyone had access to electronic devises; computers, cell phones, and video games. The world is now left all remnants of the fifties behind except memory. The world leaves the concrete though the unbiquitousness of an electronic revolution and reality becomes questionable. The films of late nineties and early 21st century reflect this growing fear.

The vox popili of the early 21st Century is that of "uncertainty". This is not only due only to the fact that the line between reality and the unreal is blurred, but it harkens back to Heisenberg, the Principle of Uncertainty as applied to quantum mechanics, the fear of nuclear annihilation and the inability of social institutions to provide enough support for modern life. Postmodern theory prevalent since the seventies had been found to breed a despairing nihilism. It is in the changes of the media culture, exchange value, industrialization and urbanization that have prompted Baurillard to postulate that we have lost all sense of reality. As Bruce Sterling says, "The idea that there are sacred limits to

human actions is simply a delusion. There are no sacred boundaries that protect us from ourselves".[134]

The change in media culture is not a concern with relaying information and stories, but the increasing move toward interpreting these stories and our private selves. The media culture is now entertainment in the worse way and it is harbinger of our consumption. We consume because we are told to do so, not out of active individual choice. In exchange value we have lose the meaning of goods and their use value. Everything is translated into how much it is worth in a monetary sense and money becomes a universal equivalent against which everything in our lives is measured. We even think in those terms, e.g. how much is my time worth? As what we use is becomes ever more a product of complex industrial processes we lose touch with the underlying reality of the goods we consume. We lost the ability for the most part to recognize the source of the products we consume. We are losing touch with the natural world and urbanization with its signs that are our standard instructions for living.[135] The world is now really for a sign of hope and we transverse into the age of Posthuman, a state of thinking in which anything and everything is possible just as all possible scenarios are depicted by the parallel worlds theory.

Modern ideology involves a clash of many competing world-views. Unlike the premodern world, ideology now must reply on political reasoning instead of transcendental, ancestral or orthodox arguments. Political argument itself must be justified by the nature of human character, the attributes of human social and economic life, and the logic of human history and the vision of a human future.[136]

It is the vision of a human future that consumes us in alternate reality films. Films are not necessarily prescient, but as a matter of interpretation reflecting our vision may mean also that we are viewing the next step in human development. The examination of this theme could possibly in a Lilliputian way delineating where we are and where we are going

Ideology has come to mean a collection of beliefs or values held by an individual or a group for other than epistemic reasons. Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels argued that the dominant ideas in any epoch not only reflect the experience of the dominant class but also serve its interests. The way this is done is by reifying the historically contingent and class-bound as necessary and universal or reversing the role of cause and effect in thinking about economic activity or human nature in ways that make the social order seem natural, inevitable or just.[137] For a dominant ideology to prevail in a film, it must work this same way. Slavoj Zizek says in Mapping Ideology, "that the facts never speak for themselves, but are made to speak by a network of discursive devices".[138] A film, he writes, always has a discursively pre-constructive space. The film in its constructive space carries hidden as well as explicit ideological information.

We can surmise that the message of hyperreality may the one Guy Debord refers to in The Society of the Spectacle;

> "The Spectacle is a permanent opium war
> waged to make it impossible to distinguish
> goods from commodities or true satisfaction
> from survival that increasing according to

its own logic."[139]

In fact, the goal of late capitalism seems to be to turn the planet into a single world market. In a theme of the simulacra as the dominant ideology emerging from these films is one that tells us there is a foundation of discursive devices that is conveying this idea.

One of the knowable traits of these films studied is the fact that although they have the collective themes of alternate reality, there are various genres, psychological thriller, science fiction, horror, animation and film noir. The ubiquitous fact is that all the heroes or protagonists decide to "take the red pill", in other words they act and strive toward reality and authenticity.

Memory has become the constitutive of self in our life as well as alternate reality films. In many of these films memory is questioned. The lead characters opt for the realness of personally initiated experience and not the appearance of such as in Ubiq where the appearance of reality suffices. In an era of bodily transformation, change and dissolution, the mere "fact" of physical existence is no longer a guarantee of truth or selfhood[140]. In this, memory implies a type of immorality, in which the concrete reality can become irrelevant.[141] Bukatman states:

> "The computer and its entroupe of effects begins
> in juxtaposition to the human, then it is superimposed
> and finally it supersedes the human as in *The Matrix.*
> The Luddites who fear the technological future are
> simply extreme version of the average person who

> becomes more nervous as machines prolificate. The ideal of these films of alternative reality is in the face of the present to reconstruct meaning within a different perceptive of space and time. It is the task of culture to ameliorate the terrors of the world into a manageable reality. The stories of resistance and triumph help relive the pressures of anxieties of the world that changing around. We as humans are finally in control of frightening forces by the end of most of the alternative films and actually achieve in some a primal desire to control time."[142]

Alternate reality films blur the line of demarcation between what it is to be human and how humanness is defined. More frightening than the "Other" depicted in the fifties and sixties films is the fear that we are not who we think we are and are not in a real world.

In living with technology and its ability to create images, the world takes on an illusionary quality. Our films for decades have explored a growing antagonism between the human and the machine, one in which the human ultimately triumphs at an astronomical cost. Alternate reality films reflect not only a growing synthesis with machines but also the inability to separate or define whom we are in relation to the technological world created by machines. This can be construed as preparation for the Singularity.

This growing confusion of our relationship to reality will need to be explored far beyond where this paper can go because we need some type of demarcation for where

reality begins and where it ends if possible and what constitutes reality and whether this has true value for our existence.

Other ages and epochs were defined by their myths, religion and literature. Our concept of the world is the media, especially films because they are now our oral stories that teach us about the world. Even in a pure intellectual sense we cannot stay still and not examine our lives and how we are told to live them.

The phenomenon of simulacra can be said to be analogous to a dream like state in which we are in a dream or nightmare from which we cannot awake. Knowledge is both freedom and a burden. Only by studying what we take our concepts from do we have any hope of understanding the present and the future.

Will knowledge of how we perceive reality help us? I think it can if it is assimilated. It can certainly help the scholar think with clarity and understand the system that proposes to take away real choice. Knowing frees us from tyranny and it is what cannot be taken away from us.

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[1] Bioy-Casares, Adolfo. The Invention of Morel and Other Stories. trans. Ruth L.C. Simms. Austin: University of Texas, 1964.(org. 1940)

[2] Beltzer, Thomas. "Last Year at Marienbad, An Intertextual Meditation". Senses of Cinema. 5/15/2000 http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/00/10/marienbad.html 10/20/2005.

[3] Bukatman, Scott. Terminal Identity, The Virtual Subject in Post-Modern Science. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

[4] Blackmore, Tim. "High on Technology- Low on Memory: Cultural Crisis in *Dark City* and *The Matrix*. Canadian Review of American Studies vol. 34 no. 1, 2004.

[5] Sobchack, Vivian. "The Scene of the Screen: Toward a Phenomenology of Cinematic and Electronic Presence" Post-Script 10, 1990.

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[6] Ubiq, a novel by Philip K. Dick depicts a world in which there is a half-life after death and because of an aberrate spirit the reality for the half-lifers deteriorates and the product Ubiq provide the appearance of reality so they can function.

7 We have changed the way we communicate from in person to telephone to computer. Bills are paid online as well as shopping. Money is now electronic and never touched hands in this scenario.

[8] Quantum theory says that nature is discrete, so the visible universe we inhabit is characterized by a finite amount of information: if space is infinite, this informational pattern is bound to repeat at vast enough distances, approximately 10 to the 28th power.

[9] This fact is ignored in the *The One*, in which the main reason to capture Jet Li‘s character is to stop him from assuming a connected power.

[10] The simulacra is the existence of copies without originals. The image does not have any relationship to reality.

[11] The electronic/computer consciousness can best be illustrated by the fact that most of the generation under the age of than twenty have mastered and adapted to video games and computers with skills that eludes the generation before them.

[12] Garcia and Sanford, “The Metaphysics of the Matrix”, The Matrix and Philosophy, Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company 2002.

[13] Leibniz in Theodicee and Voltaire in Candide.

[14] The Big Bang

[15] “The Garden of Forking Points”, a short story by Jorge Luis Borges, is an example in that it presents a parallel universe theory of time that is consistent with the many-worlds interpretation which Borges could not have known as the story was written in 1941 and the many-worlds theory was proposed in 1956.

[16] Bukatman, Scott. Terminal Identity, The Virtual Subject in Post-Modern Science Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

[17] Friedman, Edward J.. “*Cast Away* and the Contradictions of Product Placement”.

[18] Wachowski Bros., Production Notes, *Matrix Revolution* , The Final Chapter

[19] The original translation is I am, I exist. The Oxford companion to Philosophy

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[20] Both The series of Clint Eastwood's Dirty Harry character and Lucas's Star wars have had some of the most repeated quotes of all films.

[21] Jones, Richard R.. "Religion, Community, and Revitalization: Why Cinematic Myth Resonates." Jacking in the Matrix Franchise, cultural Reception and Interpretation. New York: Continuum. 2004.

[22] Morpheus informs Neo, "This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill-the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill-you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit-hole goes.

[23] Trinity speaking to Neo, I know why you are here, Neo. I know what you've been doing…why you hardly sleep, why you live alone and why night after night, you sit by your computer. You're looking for him. I know because I was once looking for the same thing. And when he found me, he told me I wasn't really looking for him. I was looking for an answer. It's the question that drives us, Neo. It's the question that brought you here. You know the question just as I did. Neo to Trinity, What is the Matrix? Trinity, The answer is out there, Neo, and it's looking for you, and it will find you if you want it to.

[24] I hate this place. This zoo. This prison This reality, whatever you want to call it. I can't stand it any longer. It's the smell. if there is such a thing. I feel saturated by it. Can taste your stink and every time I do, I fear that I've somehow been infected by it.

[25] Genesis, King James Version, Chapter 1, verse 31, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day". Chapter 2, verse 1, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them."

[26] Agent Smith has accomplished what he accuses the humans of doing, "I'd like to share a revelation that I've had during my time here. It came to me when I tried to classify your species. I realized that you're not actually mammals. Every mammal on this planet instinctively develops a natural equilibrium with the surrounding environment, but you humans do not. You move to an area, and you multiply, 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. A virus. Human beings are a disease, a cancer of this planet, you are a plague, and we are the cure"

[27] In more than one scene Pikul and Geller find that the game does not advance until their character follows it programmed script and actions which they must discover through trial and error.

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[28] Worth, Sarah E. "The Paradox of Real Response to Neo-Fiction". The Matrix and Philosophy, Welcome to the Desert of the Real. Chicago: Open Court, 2002.

[29]"Ted: I want to put the game on pause. The game can be paused, can't it? I mean all games can be paused, right? Allegro: Yeah, I'm sure. But why? What's wrong? Aren't you dying to see what so special about the special? Ted: I'm feeling a little disconnected form my real life. I'm kinds losing touch with the texture of it. You know what I mean? I actually think there is an element of psychosis involved here."

[30] Allegra: "So how does it feel? Ted: What? Allegra: Your real life. The one you came back for. Ted: It feels completely unreal. Allegra: You're stuck now, aren't ya? You want to go back to the Chinese restaurant because there's nothing happening here. We're safe. It's boring. Ted: It's worse than that. I'm not sure…I'm not sure here, where we are, is real at all. This feels like a game to me. And you, you're beginning to feel a bit like a game character."

[31] Am I a man dreaming I am a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming I am a man?

[32] *Dark City* (28:31)

[33] Kafalenos, Emma. "The Power of Double Coding to Represent New forms of Representation: *The Truman Show, Dorian,* "Blow Up" and Whistler's *Caprice in Purple and Gold".* St. Louis: Poetics Today 24:1 (Spring 2003). Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics.

[34] "We've become bored with watching actors give us phony emotions. We've tired of pyrotechnics and special effects. While the world he lives in some respects counterfeit, there is nothing fake about Truman himself. No scripts, no cue cards; It isn't always Shakespeare, but it's genuine. It's a life.

[35] Biskind, Peter. Seeing is Believing, How Hollywood Taught us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties. New York: Henry Holt and company. 1983

[36] Contact, the film

[37] Sagan, Carl .Contact. New York: Pocket Books, 1985.

[38] All these films studies express some of the existential philosophy and some of the postmodern theory, the existential philosophy emphasizes, one retaining authenticity in a mechanical and apathetic world, in postmodernity this is objectable as authenticity relate to a reality that doe not exist. Two, the consciousness of death, it was Kierkegaard contention that we are most alive when we face the reality of our morality. Three, the feeling of alienation and loneliness that come about from being unique in a world of many a Four, the concept of everydayness (Heidegger, Being and Time).

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[39] Jones, Richard R. . Ibid

[40] A man, Ragle Gumm lives in a quiet American town in the 1960s. His job is repeatively winning the prize in a local newspaper competition called "Where will the little green man be next". Just like Truman in Seahaven, Gumm has a series of unexplainable events. When Gumm finally discover the truth, which is the town was built to both protect and exploit him. Gumm really lives in a future Earth that is embroiled in a nuclear war with the colonized Moon. Gumm's job is really pinpointing the places where nuclear strikes are aimed. The town feared that this talent would not be effective if he understood the important of his predications. The title is a reference to a line form Hamlet.

[41] Zezik, "The Matrix or, The Two Sides of Perversion", The Matrix and Philosophy, (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company 2002) 242.

[42] Zizek, Slavoj. Welcome the Desert of the Real! Five Essays on September 11 and Related dates New York: Verso, 2002.

[43] *Last Year at Marienbad*. Dir. Alain Resnais. Starring Delphine Seyrig, Giorgio Albertazzi, Sacha Pitoeff, Francoise Bertin. Fox Lorner, 1961.

[44] Beltzer, Thomas. "*Last Year at Marienbad*, An Intertexual Meditation" Senses of Cinema. 5/15/2000. http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/00/10/marienbad.html10/20/2005.

[45] Bioy-Casarses, Adolfo. The Invention of Morel and Other Stories . trans. Ruth L. C. Simms. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964 (org. 1940).

[46] Tuomi, Ilkka. "The Lives and Death of Moore's Law". http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue7_11/tuomi . November 2002. September 6, 2005

[47] Kardashev, N. S. "Transmission of Information by Extraterrestrial Civilizations", Soviet Astronomy Moscow: Academy of Sciences of USSR Press, 1964.

[48] Sawyer, Robert J. "Artificial Intelligence, Science Fiction and *The Matrix*". Taking the Red Pill, Science , Philosophy and Religion in *The Matrix*. Ed. Glenn Yeffeth Dallas: Benbella Books. 2003.

[49] Kurzweil, Ray. "The Human Machine Merger: Are We Headed for the Matrix". Taking the Red Pill, Science, Philosophy and Religion in *The Matrix.* Dallas: Benbella books, 2003.

[50] Kevin Warwick, professor of cybernetics at the University of Reading in the United Kingdom has outlined a plan in his book, Cyborg 1.1, in which he plans to become one

with his computer through surgery, chiefly implants. He plans too tray out a whole new range of senses to record his experiences and also plans to have cybersex with his wife whom he has talked into implants as well as his friends. It may eventually be what he construes as a "cyborg community".

[51] Kaku, Michio. Hyperspace, A Scientific Odyssey Through Parallel Universes, Time Warps, and the !0th Dimension. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

[52] Ibid

[53] In the string theory there are ten spatial dimensions and one of time/space. The most popular string theory is the M theory. .

[54] Wolf, Fred Alan. Taking the Quantum Leap, The new Physics for the nonscientist. New York: Harper. 1989.

[55] Kellner, Douglas, ""Hollywood Film and Society" The Oxford Guide to Film Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998).

[56] Abbott, Joe, "They came from the Center, Ideology and Political Textuality In the Radical Science of James Cameron (Literature Film Quarterly 22.1 1994) 23.

[57] Biskind, Pete Seeing is Believing, How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties (New York: Henry Holt and Company 1983) 20.

[58] Ibid
[59] Lev, Peter, "Whose Future> *Star Wars, Alien* and *Blade* Runner (Literature Film Quarterly 26.1 1998) 30.

[60] Ibid

[61] Both *Star Wars* and *American Graffiti* are films by George Lucas.

[62] Jameson, Fredric. The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998. London: Verso, 1998.

[63] Sobchack, Vivian, Screening Space, The American Science Fiction Film (Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 2001) 255.

[64] Ibid

[65] Ibid

[66] Ibid

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[67] Biskind, foreword, ix

[68] Goffman, Erving . The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life . Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Social Science Research Centre, 1956.

[69] From ludus, Latin for game

[70] The proairetic code (ACT) designates action in two steps (1) the action is reduced to a static key word such as a verb or noun and (2) the key world is expanded into a phrase and numbered in indicating the stage of action. The hermeneutic code (HER) names an enigma that the text establishes and holds in suspense (by the means of snares, partial answers, suspended answers, and jamming) and eventually reveals. This may be the meaning of the title, resources and origins of characters. The semic code (SEM) establishes specific connotative meanings in a text, the meanings of which are attributes of settings and characters. The symbolic code (SYM) operates on several levels because each culture organizes experience according to a multitude of basic, general and abstract categories such as opposition (inside and outside, male and female). The referential/ culture code (REF) references to particular types of knowledge to which a film uses to authenticate and validate itself.

[71] Barthes, Roland. S/Z . trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974.

[72] Landow, George P. Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997.

[73] The exception is Julia Lesage's analysis (1986) of *Rules of the Game* (Jean Renoir, 1939) and a short example by Elsaesser and Buckland of *The Fifth Element* in Studying Contemporary American Film, A Guide to Movie Analysis. (Oxford University Press, 2002).

[74] An interactive version of the film Moulin Rouge where the viewer can click on the Green Fairy and see scène specific features on minutia such as set design, blue screen a effects and the planning behind the love song montage. As well are the full version of the dances, Can-Can, tango, Hindi, and coup d'Etat numbers in which the viewer can choose variety of camera angles and oppositions.

[75] Manovich, Lev ."Cinema as a Cultural Interface" http://wwwmanovich.net/TEXT/cinema-cultural.html. 10/19/2005.

[76] Fiske, John. Reading the Popular. London: Routledge. 1989.

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[77] Jones, Richard R. . "Religion, community, and Revitalization: Why cinematic Myth Resonates" jacking into the matrix Franchise, cultural reception and Interpretation. New York: Continuum, 2004.

[78] The feedback loop is what is prominent in eXisteZ in the video game parallel it is demonstrated by the characters when they repeat an action until they provide trigger phrase that their character has been programmed to say to progress through the game.

[79] Elsaesser, Thomas & Warren Buckland .Studying Contemporary American Film, A Guide to Movie Analysis. London: Arnold. 2002.

[80] Baudrillard, Jean . Simulacra and Stimulation. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid

[83] Flannery-Dailey, Frances and Rachel L. Wagner. "Stopping Bullets: constructions of Bliss and Problems of violence". Jacking into the Matrix franchise, Cultural Reception and Interpretation. New York: Continuum, 2004.

[84] Grossman, Dave and Gloria Degaetano. Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill: A Call to Action Against TV, Movie and Video Game Violence. New York: Crown, 1999.

[85] Bordwell David & Kristin Thompson. Film Art, An Introduction. 7th ed. Boston: McGraw –Hill. 2004. 115

[86] Doll, Susan and Greg Faller, "Blade Runner and Genre, Film Noir and Science" Literature Film Quarterly 14.2, 1986.

[87] Knight, Deborah and George McKnight. "Real Genre and Virtual Philosophy". The Matrix and Philosophy, Welcome to the Desert of the Real. Chicago: Open Court, 2002.
[88] Fry, Northrop. The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

[89] Knight, Deborah and George McKnight. "Real Genre and Virtual Philosophy". The Matrix and Philosophy, Welcome to the Desert of the Real. Chicago: Open Court, 2002.

[90] Kafaenos, Emma. "The Power of Double coding to Represent New Forms of Representation: The Truman Show, Dorian Gray, "Blow Up" and Whistler Caprice in Purple and Gold" .porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics. Poetics Today 24:1 (Spring 2003)

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[91] Gracia, Jorge J. E. & Jonathan J. Sanford. "The Metaphysics of The *Matrix*. *The Matrix* and Philosophy, Welcome the Desert of the Real. Chicago and La Salle: Open Court. 2002

[92] Baudrillard, Jean. Simulacra and Simulation, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press 1994) 121.

[93] Ibid

[94] Ibid

[95] Felluga, Dino, "The Matrix: Paradigm of Postmodernism or Intellectual Poser?" Taking the Red Pill, Science, Philosophy and Religion in *The Matrix*. Dallas: Benbella Books, p. 72, 2003.

[96] Zezek, Slovij Welcome to the Desert of the Real, Five Essays on September 11 and related Dates. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995.

[97] Desert of the Real comes from a fable told by Jorge Luis Borges in his essay "Of Exactitude in his own Work", Baudrillard takes the sentence from the fable "Cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up covering the territory exactly" The map frays over time until all that is left are the shreds that are discernible only of the deserts.

[98] Zizek, Welcome to the Desert of the Real Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates (Boston: Allyn and Bacon 1995).

[99] Barnett, P. Chad "Recycling Cyberpunk, (Re) Constructing the Subject and Mapping Cyberspace in the Wachowski Brothers' Film, The Matrix "Extrapolation 28.4, 2002.

[100] Lavery, David, "From Cinespace to Cyberspace" Journal of Popular Studies 28.4 2001.

[101] Baudrillard

[102] *Contact*, the film.

[103] Sagan reportedly said before he died that it wasn't that he didn't believe, he simply wanted proof.

[104] The Bible, King James's Version, Book of Psalms

[105] Bassham, Gregory. "The Religion of *The Matrix* and the Problems of Pluralism". The Matrix and Philosophy, Welcome to the Desert of the Real. Chicago: Open Court. 2002

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[106] Ibid.

[107] Jones, Richard R. "Religion, Community, and Revitalization: Why Cinematic Myth Resonates" Jacking into the Matrix Franchise, Cultural Reception and Interpretation. New York: Continuum, 2004.

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[109] Ibid.

[110] The most of existentialist propositions is Sartre's dictum, "existence precedes and rules essence". This means that there isn't any preordained path., other than the one we made for ourselves.

[111] Neo. *The Matrix* (1:08:00)

[112] Eddie Walenski (Colin Friels) a detective is haunted by seeing too much and realizing the truth throws himself in front of train.

[113] *The Matrix*, 1999

[114] Kroker, Arthur and Michael Weinstien. Data Trash: the Theory of the Virtual Class. New York: St. Martin's, 1994.

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[122] Bukatman

[123] Baudrillard, Jean. Interview. Le Nouvel Observateur

[124] *The Matrix*, Neo

[125] The etymology of the term transhuman goes back to the philosopher, F. M. Esandiary who while teaching new concepts of the human at New School University in 1966 introduced it as shorthand for "transitional human". Calling transhumans the earliest manifestation of new evolutionary beings , Esfandiary argued that signs of transhumanity included prostheses, plastic surgery, intensive use of telecommunications, a cosmopolitans outlook and a globetrotting lifestyle, androgyny, mediated reproduction (such as in vitro fertilization), absence of religion beliefs, and a rejection of traditional family values.

[126] The Transhuman Association's first conference was held at Yale University in June of 2003.

[127] Kochhar-Lindgren, Gray. "Biomorph: The Posthuman Thing". Jacking into the Matrix Franchise, Cultural Reception and Interpretation. New York: Continuum, 2004.

[128] "Posthuman". Wekipedia, the free encyclopedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poathuamn , 9/19/2005.

[129] In 1996, John Paul II in his speech to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences called an ontological discontinuity, a distinct separation between types of beings; humans, things, premier human and primates. The human and the thing are stateless by God as separate forever. This makes a posthuman impossible and even a moral travesty.

[130] Pepperell, Robert. "The Posthuman Conception of Consciousness: A 10-point Guide.

[131] *Animatrix*, Warner Films, 2003.

[132] Aminatrix, Warner films, 2003

[133] Bartlett, Laura and Thomas B. Byers. "Back to the Future: the Humanist *Matrix*" Cultural Critique (Winter 2003): 28-46.

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[138] Zizek, Mapping Ideology, (London: Verso 2000) 11.

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[140] Bukatman

[141] Ibid

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