

Eric Madden

## *Perception and Uncertainty*

This paper's main purpose is to challenge a commonly socially accepted paradigm which is based in positivism while arguing the necessity for less a constrictive view which recognizes the full extent of uncertainty and the often underestimated role of the observer. An example of this positivist-birthed world view would be one which dismisses any pursuit of knowledge outside of math or science eg. "So you're a \_\_ major? What are you going to do with that? Get something in the sciences.". Another example would be a view in which one simply ignores the intangible, marking them as personal beliefs, meaning things like religion, philosophy or psychology would not be discussed for fear of offending others. Only a small fraction of our world lies within testable science however and people who follow this limiting mindset lose the ability to communicate important ideas, though they are aware of them.

Before I can make a strong argument for this change of perspective, there are a number of concepts which must be isolated and explained in their own context. I note this, because these isolated explanations may seem like wild tangents before they are woven together at the end. A paradigm is like a lens through which we observe our world, a model of thought which focuses observation onto what is believed and away from what has been discounted. I will attempt to isolate the colors which tint the positivist lens to expose the assumptions which reinforce its validity in the minds of those who have accepted it. My aim is to challenge this mindset with one which focuses on the observer instead of the observed.

A good place to begin is a philosophy which challenges assumptions, a philosophy which has the ability to loosen strangle-holds of assumption from one's mind, allowing us to continue unhindered by the seemingly natural views we will challenge. Perhaps you have heard of Rene Descartes, most recognized as that guy who said, "I think therefore I am" or "I am thinking therefore I exist". Like scientists, he was seeking a "Lens of Truth", meaning both Descartes and the scientists desired to separate what they knew into piles of what they can be sure of and what they can't. Descartes began by asking himself, "What is for certain?" At first it seemed a silly question and he found numerous things that he "knew". However as he began to question these things he began to see that facts in books could be lies, what one saw could be illusions, the patch of cement coming up on the sidewalk could be cleverly painted Jell-O and so on. After realizing that he could be a brain in a jar being fed information, he realized that the only thing he could be absolutely certain of was that he was doubting. He could doubt everything except the fact that he was doubting. Doubting is thinking which was proof of his consciousness. This shows that outside of our assurance of our own consciousness, everything is an assumption. Perhaps you are familiar with this concept, but it is important to keep in mind because it keeps the mind malleable and open, rescued from its own false sense of certainty.

Philosophy has been discredited over the years. Falsely grouped with religion and mysticism as something which is purely belief driven, having no basis or purpose in the real world. Science and psychology have replaced philosophy; but they have not proved

capable of truly filling its position. Philosophy does deal with religion and matters of the soul, but I'm not interested in talking about those things, because unlike its more rational and substantive branches, decisions regarding these things should be left for each individual to decide. The branch of philosophy I am interested in discussing is the one that analyzes the method of observation. One need not prove that we are observers, that is self-evident, and the rationales which can guide, restructure or change our ways of organizing our thoughts, do not need to be tested in a laboratory to be acknowledged as logical and effective means to see things more accurately. Science and psychology deal with the "real world" meaning matter, physics or chemicals which effect the brain. These branches of knowledge do not deal with real things which are un-testable. For example, science cannot explain consciousness. It can explain in detail the chemical and electrical happenings of your brain, but cannot explain consciousness itself. If a scientist didn't have a consciousness he probably wouldn't believe that they exist. There is a flaw in the way that positivists or science minded people look at the world. They want to build a base of facts from which they can construct a paradigm for themselves, a paradigm comprised of pure and tested facts. In other words scientists are seeking to see the world for what it really is, through a carefully constructed "lens of truth". However by discounting things that cannot be tested as insignificant, they are denied a means of seeing the whole picture, as well as losing the ability to discuss and explore certain topics without sounding mystic.

We need philosophy because it enables us to discuss intangible topics, especially our roles as observers. As observers we need to understand that we cannot see the world

clearly, because what goes on in the mind of another and what is around the corner are not within sight. We must understand the shortcomings of our limited mental and physical visibility, lest we find ourselves making costly assumptions or be impeded from seeing a better path because of reality mimicking ideas. I will explore three philosophic works in an attempt to bring some light and understanding upon these commonly overlooked problems of perception. My argument is based in idea and logic, not physically relatable things. As a result, I choose to argue by analogy. The analogies I've chosen are aimed at furnishing a clear explanation of the ideas involved in my argument. The analogies are not real things, but do not discount the ideas as useless anecdotes. Most of our world is idea, and to discount challenges to our accepted ideas makes our mental landscape as un-giving and certain as the physical landscape.

Now the three works that I have chosen to help me explore perceptions and our role of observers are Hegel's "Master and Slave" dialectic, Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" and a popular movie from the 90's *The Matrix*. All of these works have an observer enslaved by their inability to perceive what is happening behind the veil of their assumptions, trapped by misconceptions about what they think is real, true or unchangeable. The narrative perspective allows us to examine the mistakes made by these trapped individuals so that we can be sure not to entrap ourselves in similar assumptions or illusions. An assumption in this context means believing in an idea or thing as if it is a universal truth, when one can not be certain. In these stories the ideas are only real in the mind of the entrapped, as apposed to being universally real. Illusion in this context means something which is, or gives, false information to the entrapped,

clouding their ability to see options or truths. Also in this process, we will challenge the concepts of reality and truth, trying to understand what they are outside of assumption.

Learning from the mistakes of the entrapped is not the only purpose for looking into these three works. The way to free oneself from misconception and assumption is also explained in all three works. This solution comes in the form of a mindset, a lens, a paradigm, which can be modeled and adopted by those who seek to test their perceptions or free themselves from assumption. Reading further one should keep in mind that the goal is not to explain away ones faith in perceptions, but to try a lens with which one can judge their conceptions of reality, truth and themselves.

### *Perception and Truth*

I will start with Plato's Allegory of the Cave. Imagine a man chained deep within a cave from birth. His head is shackled in such a way that his head can only look at a single wall which is opposite the entrance of the cave. Behind the prisoner is a fire and people who use puppets and other things to cast shadows on the wall. These puppeteers speak for the shadow puppets and conduct lives for the shadows with continuity for the enslaved. The prisoner being born in the cave and never having seen anything but the shadows on the wall, assumes the shadow world is reality, and when the puppeteers speak he assumes that the shadows are speaking. The shadows are his world and always have been. Now Plato asks us to imagine what would happen if one were to release the prisoner and bring him out of the cave. Would he be able to walk? What would he think if shown real men as apposed to the puppets who represented them? Would he not be

completely confused and unable to understand what he is seeing? Would he not try to re-assume the position from which he observed the wall so he could once again understand what he is seeing? He would try to revert into the only world which he understands. Now Plato asks us to imagine forcing the prisoner out of the cave and forcing him to re-learn reality, the world outside the cave. Plato then states that once the man came to understand our world, that if he was forced to re-enter his world of shadow, that it would hold less meaning for him, the culture and accolades within the illusionary world which use to encompass all of his desires and aspirations would now seem worthless. He would rather be a slave in our world than a King in the world of shadow. Now imagine that there were other prisoners shackled and born in the same way. If they observed the released prisoner who was now re-shackled into their world, they would mock his lost sense of purpose as well as his poor eyesight, dulled to the details in the darkness by his exposure to the sun. They would probably not want to be released, regardless of what the prisoner would tell them, fearing that they would loose the sharpness of their eyesight. They would likely be unable to understand the benefit of knowing truth which would not help them in their shadow world, because they define significance in the context of what aids them in the life that they know. They may be curious, but curiosity is often overshadowed by fear and cost (in this case eyesight).

Plato tells this story to demonstrate how he sees the world. The shadow world is the positivists view of the world and the real world is what he believes the truth to be. Plato's concept of the real world is a world of forms. "The so-called 'theory' of Forms or Ideas is the name given to a group of Platonic doctrines found in the *Republic* (c.380BC)

and elsewhere. The central notion is that, over and above the particular objects that are, for example, beautiful, there is a separate Form—‘the beautiful itself’. And in general, wherever a single term is applied to a group of particulars (e.g. beds, tables) there is a corresponding Form. Unlike particulars, which are subject to change and decay, the Forms are eternal and unchanging, and possess their properties in an absolute unqualified way. Plato argued that true knowledge or understanding relates to the Forms alone, and the Forms must be apprehended not by the senses but by the intellect. Hence, the mind must be drawn away from the senses if it is to apprehend ultimate reality”(Cottingham)

When we look at a table Plato would tell us that the table is just a shadow of the form of a table, the form being the eternal and unchanging idea. If one were to “escape from the cave” meaning, according to Plato, one learned to see the world in terms of universal forms.

Interacting with people and the world around us gives us the impression that we are directly interacting with them, however in actuality we never directly interact with anyone or anything. Plato's theory of forms implies that there is one correct set of ideas and thoughts that everyone would could see, that is if everybody was enlightened by Plato's terms. Communication is deceptively interactive, when talking to someone else it appears as if they are actually hearing the world that you are saying. However everyone is connected to interaction through a string of interpretation. What you say to someone will always be heard as something else. Plato's theory of forms relies on the sharing of understanding, yet I don't believe two people could ever share a single idea\form. If two people sat down and discussed something simple, like the form of dog, for several days

and eventually came to agree as to what they thought the form was, every word they would use in their agreement would be perceived differently. They would have to take every word in the agreement of the form and come to agree on definitions for each of these words. Then they would have to define each of the words of the definitions used in the definitions, and so on, until every word in their entire vocabulary brought the same thoughts and drew the same connections within both of their minds. But even then the emotions and significance of each word would have to be identical in each person. This is impossible. Also individuals are constantly changing. The form that came to mind when looking at a dog one day would differ when looking at one another day, varying by the mood of the individual as well and the thoughts which preceded the thoughts of the dog. I believe in forms and see the theory as an early attempt to try to explain the significance of the mind of the observer when relating to the world, but rather than universal forms I believe in individually defined forms.

Communication is left to interpretation, but so are all interactions with the world. How do we see? Do I look at something and see what it is? Would another person see the same thing if they looked at it? No. Our eyes do NOT give us a direct and accurate connection to the world. Information which is limited by the amount of light comes to our eyes and is then interpreted. We have all seen optical illusions, these illusions would not be possible if the information which our minds receive was truly a direct picture of reality. There is simply too much sensory information flooding through our sensory organs to process; our minds must take short cuts by determining what information is valuable and what is not, editing things out of our awareness which are there, but that we

will not see, taste or hear. For example if one is listening to someone, then stops paying attention, the other person is still talking, but that information is not entering the mind. Is there a taste in your mouth now? If so were you aware of it a moment ago? When walking down the street one chooses to look at one thing while simultaneously choosing to ignore another, see the path ahead and ignore the sounds behind. All of this happens before the information hits your mind. Then the thing which is holding ones attention, which is being seen, is interpreted by the mind. When the slave was released from his shackles, if he looked at a real human for the first time, he would not see them. He would see colors shapes and depths, but because he could not understand what he was looking at, the form and shapes would be meaningless. Observe this paper. What is it? In my mind I am remembering many things and more things will come to mind the longer I think about it. The smell and taste of wood pulp, pain of paper cuts, made from trees, need for recycling, that time I made a paper boat for a friend, white sometimes with horizontal lines, etcetera. We do not see all that is in front of us and we see far more with our minds than we do with our eyes. Sight is not the only sense which is so heavily influenced by our thoughts, all of our senses are this way, almost completely sensed by our minds. How connected are we to the world around us? Have we ever even seen it? Or have we only seen our minds interpretation of it? Like the shadows on the wall mimicking reality, we live in a world of interpretation, our ideas/forms painted upon our cave walls(physical world). If you were given the ability to truly sense or interact with the world in a raw and un-interpretation-based way, being able to see everything at once, shape, thought, idea, in their true and raw forms, would it be anything like what you perceive now? In this way are we not like those prisoners in the world of shadow, limited

by our senses and perspectives as to what we truly see?

Aside from the way that we interpret our reality, our minds must also give it meaning and significance. Before the prisoner was released from the cave he was content busying himself with the goals and challenges that he faced within his world. When one looks at another who does not desire what appears in ones eyes to be of obvious importance, it is usually just assumed that the other is foolish or blind. In the world of shadow the other prisoners could not recognize the value of the experience which the released one explained to them. But given the context, did the experience have any value? How did the released prisoner choose to proceed in his mind, did he choose to forget and ignore his experience, did he choose to live his normal life of shadow, unhindered by unquenchable desires of freedom which he knows he will never again have, allowing himself to enjoy the illusion and company of others? Or perhaps he would choose to see the shadow world as pointless, in which case he would neglect relationships with his friends and hate his world. Meaning and significance are strange things, everything is both meaningless and of the utmost significance. Each individual chooses how important any given thing is, and each individual is correct, because there is no right way to think. To the prisoner and his happiness it would be more important how he chose to see the world than what world he was presented with. In the shadow world or the real world a choice to perceive it as something full of meaning, would lead to similarly happy lives, while in either world a negative view would lead to lives full of depression. Interpretation defines what we see and what meaning we give something is more significant than what is there.

Truth, we know that the shadow world is not truth. We know that we are limited in what we see in our world by interpretation. And thanks to Descartes we know that we can't really be sure of anything but ourselves. Then outside of our belief in ourselves are there truths? Yes, the problem isn't that truths don't exist, it is simply that we cannot distinguish them from things that are not true in a way in which we can be absolutely certain. It doesn't matter that there are truths because we lack the means to ever be certain of what they are. In a world that we cannot truly interact with (we interact with our interpretation of the world) we cannot hope to ever know what it is outside of our interpretation. But not all is lost. There is another way to perceive truth and reality. I will call them pseudo-truth and pseudo-reality. Laws of physics and gravity, my belief in another's existence, the world travels around the sun, Washington was the first president of the U.S., etcetera. All of these things are pseudo-truths; I believe them and think them highly likely. Remember Descartes, I cannot be certain of any of these things, but my belief alone grants them a type of permanence. Can truth and pseudo-truth be the same thing? Sure, it's likely. But it is also important that one recognizes the difference. We each define our own pseudo-realities and pseudo-truths and this is as far as we can go without risking assumption. Given the uncertainty inherent in beliefs of anything, even gravity, it is foolish and abusive to expect anyone else to accept our pseudo-truths if they are resistant and set on another belief. We are quick to define truths for ourselves. If one flips a coin 100 times and it lands on heads each time, assuming he had never seen a coin before, that person would probably take it as a truth that if a coin is flipped it will land on heads. But if he carried the assurance that this double sided coin gave him into a

different context, his truth could fail him. Drop a rock as many times as you like and it will keep falling down, but in a centrifuge or in space one would get a different result. The danger in truths is that they ignore context. Our world is constantly changing and our context also changes in unpredictable ways. It is necessary to recognize patterns and use our educated guesses to guide all of our decisions. However truth is an end point. When someone believes they have the truth they stop looking, and if they aren't looking when the context changes they could be in for a surprise. By all means move forward through life by guessing, just recognize that everything is just a calculated guess, with truth being an unattainable concept outside of our means to perceive it.

### *Enslavement by Misrecognition*

Now to Hegel's Master and Slave Dialectic. There is a consciousness. This consciousness comes across another entity which resembles itself. The consciousness fears and tests the other entity. In an ideal situation both beings would recognize themselves in the other and in that way would bring the other into existence within their minds, meaning that consciousness2 does not exist in the mind of consciousness1 until consciousness2 is recognized by consciousness1 and vice versa. (If you think that wording was confusing try reading a translation of Hegel, bleh) OK, I'll try it in English: Bob doesn't exist in my mind until I meet Bob and then remember him as a human like me; until I do Bob is just a name or obstacle in my mind. Now in an un-ideal situation one of the consciousnesses does not recognize the other. But the other consciousness recognizes the first. The one who is refusing to recognize the other is the master (CM) while the one who recognizes the master, but is not recognized is the slave (CS). CM uses CS like he

would an item, resource, tool. CS is chained by his belief that he is inferior to CM and does not see that he is equal, the same as CM. CS assumes that the social order that places CM above him is reality(not a pseudo-reality) and that he is somehow detained by a kind of universal order to be under CM. CS does his work diligently, doing the will of CM to the best of his ability. While he works he observes CM and slowly comes to realize that he has been itemized, ignored as a thinking being, he realizes that he is the same as the CM. CS now recognizes himself as well as CM and refuses to recognize CM as his superior. CS simply walks out of the illusion of control and superiority and CM must stop being the master. Even though Hegel writes this in a way which is much harder to understand than it needs to be, there are some very good points.

The first thing that one notices when reading Hegel is that he goes to great lengths to ignore the medium of interaction. What I mean by a medium is that there is no setting, no bodies, no shapes, just minds. For taking this approach Hegel became a prime target for positivists who considered his approach to be opposite of their views. By ignoring the physical world and working completely in thought, it could be implied that Hegel took a position which placed significance wholly in the mind. Positivists placed all significance in the observable world. These two contrasting philosophies are both extremes which try by means of defining what is significant to justify ignoring the other. In my opinion one should never deny oneself, by allying oneself completely to an ideal, the ability to observe and question the views of an opposite ideal. When two extremes vie for dominance in any venue, be it ideals, taste, opinion, governments or anything else, the most enlightening paths almost always lie somewhere in the middle. Positivists build on

the reliability of the predictable continuity-based nature of the physical world, while studying interaction of minds gives a better understanding of the other and the self.

I have gone over how much of what one perceives is left to the minds interpretation. However ideas which are reinforced by culture have such a direct effect on us that they seem real. Cultural ideas are real like any other idea, in that they exist in our minds. Money has no real value, but we agree that it does, our collective faith in it gives it value. When people loose faith in money it becomes worthless(depreciation). The authority of a police officer or the president of the U.S. are also examples of this illusion. They don't have a magic wand or the ability to do anything, the power they have comes from all of the people that think they hold power, and listen. These illusions are helpful and necessary, but they are only illusions. If you are driving down a road and a car is driving towards you, then one should cross the yellow line to avoid the oncoming car. The yellow line is not a brick wall, it is another idea based in practicality which serves a purpose, but like all other ideas, it CAN be ignored. I am not advising anyone to ignore all laws and street signs, although the thought of driving down the sidewalk is sometimes tempting. If one sees flashing lights from a police car one should pull over. But do not forget that that in each of these situations they only become real when you choose to acknowledge them. Like the slave consciousness who chose to ignore the abusive, imaginary control of his would-be master. We have an option, an ability, to see past the illusion if we so choose.

I have a story for you that illustrates how one can use the concepts in the Master

and Slave dialectic for benefit. Our main character, Bob, is a freshman at the UW who studies philosophy and just learned about the Master/Slave dialectic. He's not a very social person(philosopher) so the draw of the frat houses was especially strong for him. While walking home from class one day he stopped by a frat booth and decided to join. He wasn't aware of hazing or any of those types of things, he thought that he was simply getting an easy batch of friends. A week later, after being introduced to his pledge brothers they were brought, blindfolded, to a hill out in the middle of nowhere. The frat boys came out with bats and flashlights and the pledges were not allowed to look at them. On the cold dark hill Bob and the group was told a truckload of information about the frat, their motto and a bunch of other stuff. One of the things that Bob was told was that the frat was looking for people who were bold leaders who thought outside of the box. After a quick run through of several pages-fulls of useless, trivial information, the group was lined up, put in a specific formation and told to recite all of the information, word for word, simultaneously. Whenever the pledge class messed up, or at least one of them did, they were punished by having to jump in water or eat something gross or whatever. Bob started to realize that all of the staged aggression, the bats, not being allowed to look up, having to follow orders, were all means of creating an illusionary control over the pledges and that the frat boys held no real authority. Bob stepped out of the group looked up and laughed; he had allowed himself to become the slave in the dialectic he had just read about, he was not being acknowledged. "What are you doing getting out of line maggot, do you want you pledge class to pay for your mistake?" asked the frat boy. Bob answered "If they choose to listen to the punishment you give them they deserve it. This is an interesting mind trip you laid on me, but I'm done playing. I want to be in your frat,

I like hanging out with you guys, but this is all nonsense. The authority you are using to make us jump through these useless hoops is an illusion. You realize that don't you? For it to work I have to believe in your authority, but now I choose not to. You say that you are looking for bold outside the box types. My way of proving my creativity to this frat is by calling your bluff. My way of proving my boldness is by speaking up against your false authority. Do you expect me to go back to pretending that you are some kind of drill sergeant? What do you say, I'm done with these games. Let me in your frat or I'll just go home, and you will have punished the very qualities you claim to value." The frat boys were stunned and the pledges who were in push-up position got to their feet. Some of the frat boys were confused and were wondering how to deal with the situation. Then the frat president said laughing "This is the best pledge class we have ever had. If all of our pledges could spot B.S. like that we wouldn't need to go through all of this mental preparation. What the heck y'all get a special pass in." Bob enjoyed being in the frat for a day or two, then decided that he didn't and left. The End.

The master(frat boys) was only the master by the acceptance and faith of the slave(Bob). Bob recognized that he was being used and not recognized. He then imagined himself as the frat leader and could imagine himself playing that role. He stopped recognizing the frat boys as masters and the frat boys had to stop being the masters. This is just one example of the usefulness of being able to see through illusionary ideas, such as hierarchy. However the detrimental effects of illusion based hierarchy are not limited to strange circumstances such as this. There are mini Master/Slave dialectics going on almost every day. When one walks to school as a student, teachers are a few rungs above

on the social ladder, the checker at the store is below while you are a customer. Usual interaction within our inherited social system sets a pair of roles, one usually being higher than the other. Rather than recognizing the other, a teacher or checker, as another person, it is more common to play the role of student or customer and not do anything except what is expected. In this way a person can go through a day, week or more not interacting with anyone who they have not already recognized. This is why some people can be surrounded in a bustling city and still feel lonely and ignored. In our culture it has become the norm that we should not truly try to meet new people, except on our “free time”. If a friend introduces a person to one there is often an attempt to recognize the other, however it is uncommon to meet new people or to even be oneself outside of leisure time. I do not believe that this is the way that things should work. However society and its rules, through the collective faith and misconceptions of the masses, has itself become a master in this dialectic. What is real, true and normal all have assumed answers within the culture. The truly horrid part of this circumstance, is that through subtle assumptions and role enforcements, we have enslaved ourselves within an illusionary system in which we are suppressing our individual natures. How much of what we do, do we do, because we are assumed to do it? How much are we limited by what is assumed upon us?

In the frat story Bob believed that he had to jump through hoops, such as doing push-ups. In our lives there are far more hoops which are even more strictly enforced. To be punished all that one need do is something unexpected or which draws attention to oneself. The action could be subtle and harmless. Walking down a busy sidewalk, what if

one felt the desire to sit and rest? If one decided to sit on the curb and take off his or her shoes, an un-merited amount of attention would be paid by all of the people walking by. The onlookers probably wouldn't say anything, however the punishment is direct. The onlookers would observe negatively, and make a subtle note in their minds that this person is slightly less social savvy. That's it, but do not underestimate the power of this punishment.

We play the master and the slave in society, forcing ourselves to jump through unnecessary hoops, while mocking those who dare another path. Enough looks and a negative thought can lead to social destruction. Someone who constantly does little things out of character would eventually be seen as "a bit off" or just plain "weird". A person unabated by these social taboos would almost constantly be the center of attention, negative attention. The expectations only begin in actions, what we wear, how and to whom we speak, how we walk, the list goes on. If someone lacked the social sense to avoid wearing a pink suit with swim suit trunks to work, would he deserve the life shattering penalty he would receive. The culmination of negative looks and attention would come to a point which would label the person a social outcast, a position which would deny him happiness, acceptance and recognition. In a way one may feel that he deserved his punishment by being so foolish and unaware of his circumstances, but is it right that we as a society expect so much from everyone within society, and are willing to ruin those who do not comply. These small things may seem trivial but by the cumulative power of countless negligible expectations, we are left with very few options. Strictly confined in narrow roles at the gunpoint of social suicide.

The other prime social illusion used for enslavement is the concept of good and evil. Like the illusion of hierarchy, the illusion of a universal good and evil is bolstered by an unchallengeable master. Society cannot be challenged by an individual. Individuals also cannot hope to challenge the core beliefs, like religion, or assumptions about the nature of the universe held by an incommunicable group. If two groups of people have conflicting ideas about what is right or wrong and they are unwilling to discuss the possibility that they may be mistaken in their unshakable faith in beliefs, then we have a recipe for disaster. Both sides assume that they are correct and that the other is supporting evil through their ignorance. Good and Evil are ideas which serve a needed function. When two or more people are in proximity of one and other, there is a need for an assurance of safety. A basic agreement is that "I won't club you if you don't club me". Good and Evil are basically evolved versions of this simple golden rule "do not do to others, what you would not have them do to you". Unfortunately not all actions are as black and white as the desire not to be clubbed. Some things which are desired by some are feared by others. If Bob, being a man, is afraid of being admired by another man because of the social repercussions of being different, then he would likely connect his fear for the thing, to a fear for a clubbing, and would call the thing evil. Now a strange phenomenon occurs when another person wants to be gay, despite the social penalties. Bob, by deciding that gayness is bad for him and therefore bad for everyone, decided that he was sure that gayness was evil. Now Bob may assume that gay people are also evil and with the title or role of an evil person, the gay individual is now dehumanized into a simple negative labeled role. Is homosexuality evil? This question is similar to the

inquiry about truth. There may or may not be a universal good and evil(for example if there is a god or an inherent judgment within the system). But since we cannot know or find out, we can only define them for ourselves, or, choose not to altogether. Whatever one decides is good or evil; I would caution one not to quickly label another person as evil. By calling someone else evil you are enslaving him or her into an inaccurate role which devalues and demonizes them. By choosing not to recognize an “evil” person one is choosing to close communication, which will likely lead to increased misunderstandings and further demonization. Society not only gives us nonsensical and unnecessary hoops to jump through(society/group enslaves itself), it also expects us to buy into a universal conception of good and evil from which a group can demonize another group(group enslaves another group).

### *Realities and The Mindset*

Now we will move to our final work *The Matrix*. *The Matrix* is basically a rip off of Plato's Allegory of the Cave, only instead of being shackled in a cave, the prisoner is being kept asleep in a vat of goo. Instead of shadows being cast on a wall, a computer program world is hardwired through the back of Neo's(the prisoner) skull. Instead of living from birth in a world of shadow, Neo grows up having a normal 1990's life exactly like ours, except for the fact that all of the information his mind perceives comes from a computer instead of a matter based medium. One day he is contacted by a fugitive who gives him a choice: Take a blue pill and fall asleep, waking up to his normal life, or take a red pill which offers answers and nothing more. Neo chooses the red pill and is unplugged from the matrix(the computer program). Neo awakens to a post apocalyptic

world where machines have conquered humanity. That's enough, this story goes on beyond my purposes for it. Like Plato's allegory and Hegel's dialectic Neo is enslaved by his presumptions of what is real, but unlike the other two examples, the fake world is more desirable than the real world. It also is the best context to explore reality.

In Plato's allegory we questioned what truth is, with *The Matrix* I will ask, what is reality? While living in the matrix he had a life, with friends and family. Outside of the matrix he had a different life, in which he fought against the machines. Does the existence of matter determine what is and is not real? What is the role of the physical world and our minds within it? When we are dreaming is that not a type of reality? These questions are completely dependent on how one chooses to define reality. If I run into a brick wall and another person runs into a brick wall, the same thing is likely to happen regardless of what either of us are thinking about it. Is reality this un-giving, predictable and structured nature of the world which limits our action by laws of physics, matter and so on. Or is it more like our dreams, created from within our minds. I think that both ways of looking at it are needed to see the full picture. Therefore I will define two types of realities, the physical world without thought, and our mental projections. Outside of dreams these two types of realities work in tandem.

One time as a child, my brother was trying to wake me up. He grabbed my arm and shook it; in the dream I was having, a monster also grabbed my arm. I think this is a strong indication as to what our mind does. We dream. Asleep or awake we are dreaming, our minds are wired to incorporate sensory information into dreams. The sensory

information which our minds interpret is derived from a medium, be it a material world, computer program or shadow it offers continuity and rules. This world of continuity is the first reality(R1), a canvas if you will. R1 acts as a medium for consciousnesses to interact and is the portion of reality which we cannot change, meaning that although we can manipulate matter, we cannot change the way that it has always functioned as matter. R1 is the matrix, the machine ruled world, the shadow world, the world outside the cave and our world. R1 is what cannot be changed and by its un-ignorable permanence becomes a medium on which positivists base their entire realities. R2 is the world as it is perceived and projected in the mind. All thought and the world as we all know it(since we cannot truly interact with R1 directly) is R2. When Plato's prisoner left the cave, the world as it functioned in the cave remained in his mind, he brought the cave with him as a part of his being and used all his memories and expectations of what cave reality is perceive the world. The prisoner could not recognize a human by sight, even though he had seen shadows of humans before, because the R2, the portable reality we take with us, did not have a reference to give the information entering his mind meaning. The thoughts that come into my mind, the feelings I have, memories that come to mind and most importantly, the meaning that I apply to any given formation of matter will be different than anyone else's. In this way reality is defined by each individual. R1 is a structured medium for interactions of minds, but R2 is the reality that we know, our interpretation of it. R1 is a frame on which each individual dreams their own reality. Forgive my language, the terms that I am using makes this concept sound mystic; however the common definition of reality ignores the majority of our world. A reality(R1) based paradigm such as positivism, relies on a definition of which is clunky and flawed, meaning it overlooks

the overwhelming significance of the observer and the way that the observer reacts with the world. Where Hegel ignores R1, positivists ignore R2.

In *The Matrix*, the decision between the red pill and the blue pill represents an age old question. Is ignorance bliss and if so is truth worth it? The blue pill offered blissful ignorance in a decent world. The red pill tore Neo out of his world and showed him a different world, a less likable world. In several scenes within the movie characters in the real world complained about the tastelessness of the food, the danger and uncomfortable conditions. In one scene a character agrees to betray the humans who have been freed from the matrix in exchange for being re-plugged into the matrix. During his meeting with the computer program antagonist he says, while biting into a piece of program steak “ignorance is bliss”. This is similar to the other prisoners in Plato's allegory, who didn't want to see the outside world. What is so enticing about truth that makes it worth such sacrifice. A horrible world of truth or a blissful world of illusion? In Plato's allegory, he assumed that once shown the world outside the cave that the prisoner would rather be a slave than go back into the shadow world; but I'm not so sure, because in the cave there are other consciousnesses with whom he can interact. The entire shadow world would seem without purpose, except for the interaction with the other prisoners. Would I rather be a slave in the real world or a king in my dreams? I could not interact or be recognized in my dreams because there is no other. But as a slave I could interact and choose a positive perception which highlighted the relationships with the other slaves as the only thing which holds meaning. I propose to you that R1 holds no significance on its own, through our choice of perception we can create misery or bliss from any

circumstance. Red pill or Blue pill, Cave or Outside world, they are all mediums in which there is another person to interact with, to recognize us. There is nothing wrong with choosing the blue pill(ignorance) so long as it isn't hurting anyone. But lets assume now that by staying in the Matrix others will suffer. The problem with the blue pill is that one doesn't know if the decision being made is selfish or hurtful, and never will, so the blue pill represents a blind gamble. The red pill is just information, and the only punishment is in the knowing. For example if the prisoner in the cave were told that there were no other prisoners, and that he had been alone all his life, the knowing would drain the meaning from his life. Assuming he had no way to change his circumstance would he probably rather forget what he had been told and try to live in a world of lies rather than a world without meaning. Interaction and recognition by the other gives life meaning, but without the medium for interaction there is no recognition. By asking an unanswerable question, "is ignorance bliss?", we have stumbled upon the illusive allure of reality, the other.

We are beings who can be sure of almost nothing and that can be a very discomfoting thought. The need we feel as humans for answers draw us to religion or the sciences, providing comfort at the cost of allowing for false assurance. A scientist may grow tired of living in a world of total uncertainty, and decide to brainwash himself completely that the big-bang does explain it all, without a doubt. It is comforting to think certain things, therefore I cannot say it is wrong. We all have to decide how certain we need to feel about something before we completely believe. We all define our own tolerance for fallibility. On one side of the sliding scale there is a man who sits immobilized by his inability to risk that the ground he sees in front of him is solid, to

survive in this world one cannot be completely guided by certainties, because there aren't any. On the other end of the scale we have an individual who believes everything he or she is told, and is constantly being deceived and taken advantage of, a puppet for anyone to manipulate. Both ends are ridiculously self-destructive. Finding a balance that offers a healthy skepticism as well as a degree of comfort which enables necessary risks is a challenge and choice left to each individual. The danger comes when a person has accepted a degree of uncertainty which allows for a belief which threatens to cancel out another person's will. For example if a person assumes that they know the truth they may feel inclined to force another person to recognize it as a truth. Capitalism vs. Communism, Christianity vs. Islam, all of these beliefs can in their radical forms demand the destruction of the other. In cases like these it is difficult to stop the collision, because to stop them they must be reminded that they are not completely certain. People can allow their ego and sense of self to be tied into a core belief which demands certainty. In this case even questioning the belief becomes an attack on the person. Nothing should be unquestionable and in our world communication is the best defense against violence. By making issues incommunicable and making the act of questioning a type of dangerous taboo, we allow ego to be the cause for violence. This can all be avoided if we never allow ourselves to believe we are 100% certain.

### *Conclusion*

Of course a person who discredits things outside of science is also aware of things outside of science. Positivists and people who follow, unwittingly, in the nearly unnoticeable cultural permeations, are not idiots who completely deny things that are not

testable, but they do belittle them as less tangible. In a positivist system the terms significant and real are reserved for things completely within R1. The allure of ignoring R2 comes from R2s ego-connected and confrontational nature. R2 is created within each individuals mind and is therefore mistaken as a representation of the person. People are not likely to admit a flaw in their characters in a public setting and in the same way religion, philosophy and other ego-strong facets of R2 become incommunicable. However, though it may be awkward and at times humbling open communication is always necessary. It may be easy to discard R2 socially, limiting conversation to only a fraction of what we think about, out of fear of uncomfortable confrontations. But I take the level of uncomfot in a conversation to be a good indicator, showing the necessity of the topic. For example race topics are the most taboo when racism is rampant. Religion becomes unspeakable when tensions between two religions are highest. For progress to take place people must communicate their beliefs to one another until they are respected and become less alien.

Positivism is a paradigm of comfort, resting on all that they know about R1 they feel assurance and deny R2 for its unassurable nature. In this way Positivist thought is like the blue pill, it provides comfort at the cost of progress. It denies progress in two ways: by limiting communication to topics within R1 and by quelling revolution. How does it quell revolution? One might ask. The answer comes in the confusion of R1 and R2. Money, Hierarchy, Social Roles, Governments and other R2 ideas can be mistaken for unchangeable constants R1. For revolutions to take place one must first understand that Governments are not R1, they are ideas and can be changed through thought. For a

person to have an unrestricting way of forming all of the information that comes into and from their head into a world(complete R2), they must perceive both R1 and R2 with the ability to distinguish one from the other. Our language makes such necessary distinctions sound like worthless babbling, speaking about perceptions, ideas and calling things like governments illusions makes one sound like a quack far removed from the structured world. Philosophers tend to further the language gap by using words like positivism, dialectic, hermeneutics and phenomenology. Philosophy deals with the real world and is not dismissively mystic, even though the language may sometimes make it seem that way.

Being observers, unable to directly interact with the world or those around us, it is imperative that we carefully construct the thoughts which we use as lenses to view the world, as apposed to just keeping whatever views we are taught or come upon by chance. This paper contains multiple examples of paradigms(R2) and their faults, exposed by changing their mediums(R1). These faults were mostly assumptions that things which seemed certain or unchallengeable were in fact only ideas, and being ideas, were only constraining through the belief that they are unchallengeable. My closing thought is that nothing is for certain and to ignore this makes one susceptible to mental traps. Most of what one assumes is probably correct, but the one in a thousand times that one may overlook the fallibility of an idea, it could be such an idea that denies the individual a critical option which may be the only way out of a self-entrapping circumstance. An open and humble mind is the best defense against assumption.

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