



The Beginning of Knowledge

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Inception

Are your experiences
just a dream?



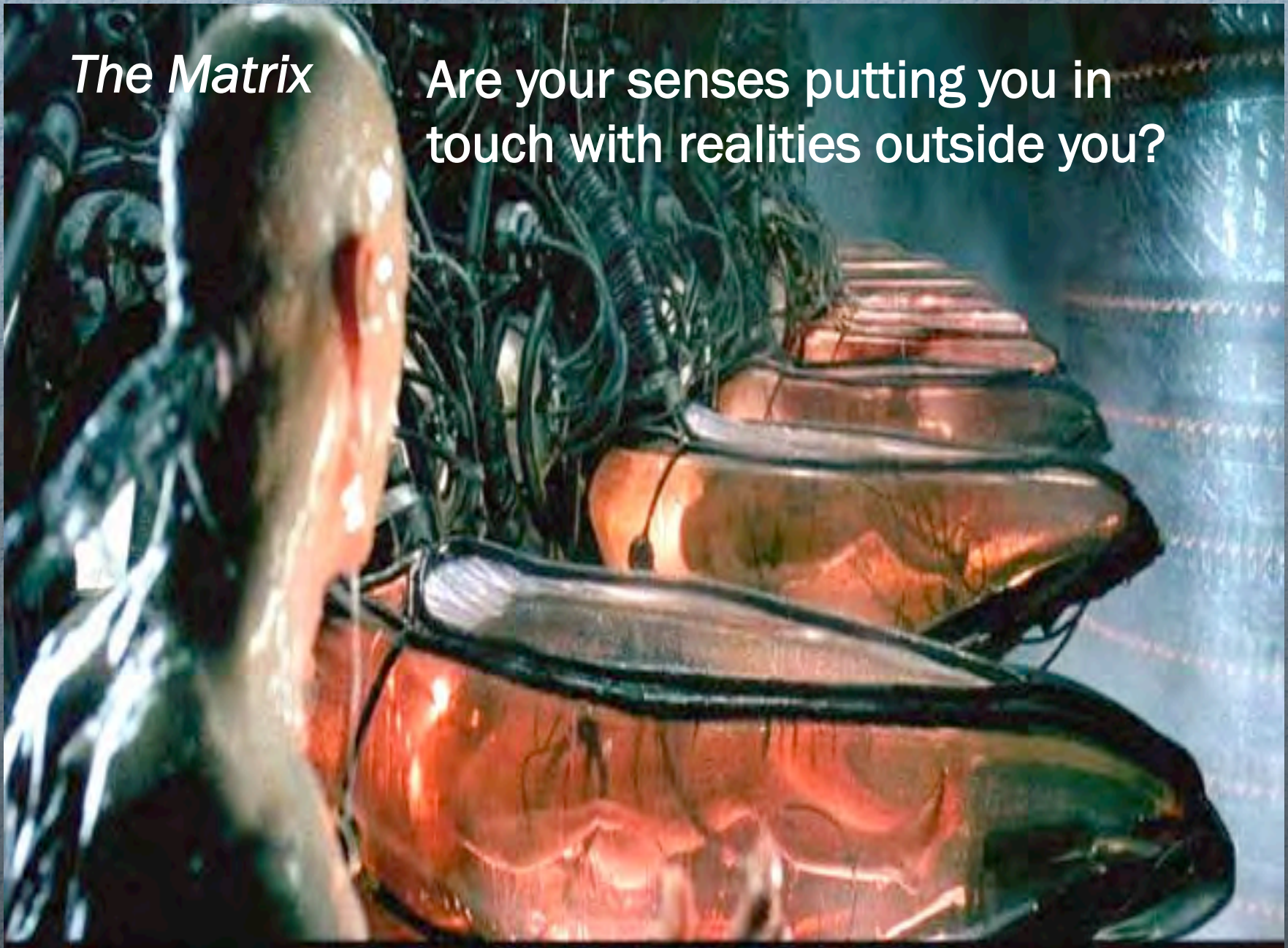
A man with a futuristic head-mounted device is seated in a complex, illuminated machine. The machine has a circular, metallic structure with glowing blue lights and various mechanical components. The man is looking upwards with a serious expression. The background is dark and industrial.

Total Recall

Are your
memories real?

The Matrix

Are your senses putting you in touch with realities outside you?





Does your mind
have ability to know
things outside it?



Is the world real and
does it have features
that are knowable.

Materialism/Naturalism

Intelligence? The mind is an accidental byproduct of a mindless process.

Intelligibility? The universe is random interactions of matter flying through space.

No basis for confidence that our minds are intelligent and the world is intelligible

Just atoms in a brain?

Materialism is the philosophy of the subject who forgets to take account of himself. (Arthur Schopenhauer)

If my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true... and hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms. (J.B.S. Haldane)

Marx's reductionism

Karl Marx claimed economic structures dictated all ideas about truth. If so, then Marx's own ideas were not actually truths but were accidental byproducts of his economic setting and had no basis in rationality or truth.

Freud's reductionism

Sigmund Freud claimed that unconscious primeval urges dominate our mind.

Wishes can be a factor, but if thinking is nothing but mental states prompted by wishes, then Freud's own theory would have to be wishful thinking.

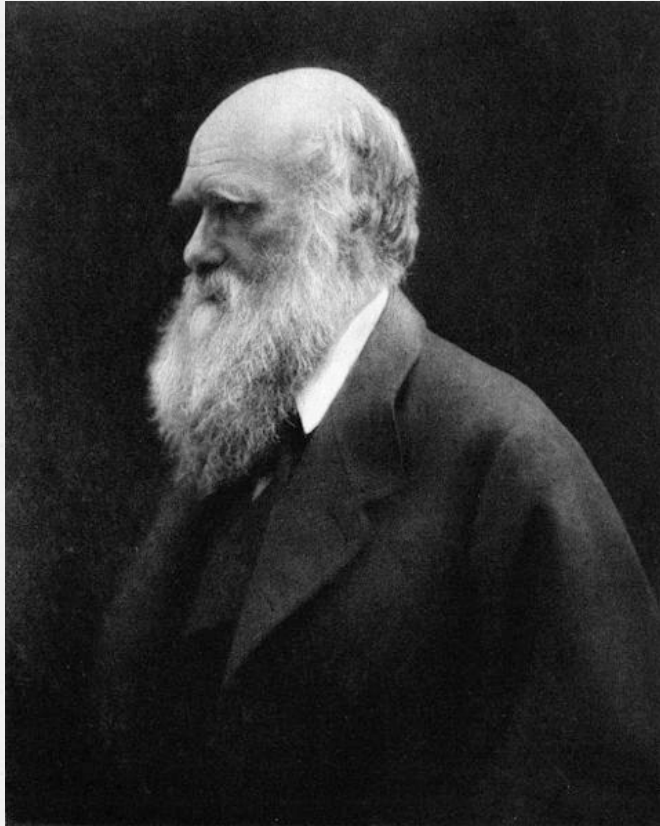
Nietzsche's reductionism

Friedrich Nietzsche said that claims about truth or morality are just expressions of someone's agenda, their desire to control things outside themselves. Human thinking does not aim not for truth but merely expresses this will to power.

Darwin's reductionism

The human brain is an accidental byproduct of a mindless process. It is a randomly evolved piece of meat with various electrical impulses within it.

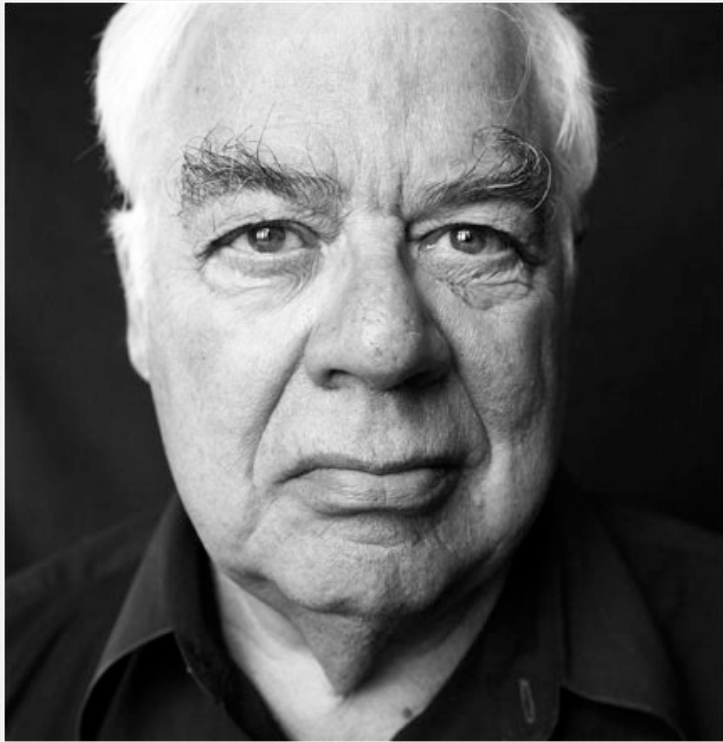
Can any thinking be trusted?



With me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of a man's mind... are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would anyone trust in the convictions of a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?

(Charles Darwin)

Not made for truth or goodness?



The idea that one species of organism is, unlike all the others, oriented not just toward its own increased prosperity but toward Truth, is as un-Darwinian as the idea that every human being has a built-in moral compass—a conscience.
(Richard Rorty)

A bewildered ape?

It is idle to talk always of the alternative of reason and faith. It is an act of faith to assert that our thoughts have any relation to reality at all. If you are merely a skeptic, you must sooner or later ask yourself the question, “Why should *anything* go right; even observation and deduction? Why should not good logic be as misleading as bad logic?” They are both movements in the brain of a bewildered ape. (G. K. Chesterton)

Wind in the trees?

If minds are wholly dependent on brains, and brains on biochemistry, and biochemistry (in the long run) on the meaningless flux of the atoms, I cannot understand how the thought of those minds should have any more significance than the sound of the wind in the trees.

(C. S. Lewis)

By-product of mindless matter?

The whole picture professes to depend on inferences from observed facts. Unless inference is valid, the whole picture disappears. Unless Reason is an absolute, all is in ruins. Yet those who ask me to believe this world picture also ask me to believe that Reason is simply the unforeseen and unintended by-product of mindless matter at one stage of its endless and aimless becoming. (C. S. Lewis)

How can I trust my thinking?

Supposing there was no intelligence behind the universe, no creative mind. In that case, nobody designed my brain for the purpose of thinking. It is merely that when the atoms inside my skull happen, for physical or chemical reasons, to arrange themselves in a certain way, this gives me, as a by-product, the sensation I call thought. But, if so, how can I trust my own thinking to be true? (C. S. Lewis)

Believe in thought?

It's like upsetting a milk jug and hoping that the way it splashes itself will give you a map of London. But if I can't trust my own thinking, of course I can't trust the arguments leading to Atheism, and therefore have no reason to be an Atheist, or anything else. **Unless I believe in God, I cannot believe in thought: so I can never use thought to disbelieve in God.** (C. S. Lewis)

Open mind?

An open mind, in questions that are not ultimate, is useful. But an open mind about the ultimate foundations either of Theoretical or of Practical Reason is idiocy. If a man's mind is open on these things, let his mouth at least be shut. (C. S. Lewis)



Your mind must have ability to know things outside it.



The world must be real and must have features that are knowable.

Knowing reality outside us

Intelligence: People have faculties that enable us to know things outside ourselves. We are intelligent: capable of knowing reality.

Intelligibility: the world and other persons are real and can be known. Reality is intelligible (knowable).

How can we be confident that our minds are intelligent and the world is intelligible?

Mystery of the world



The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility. How can it be that mathematics ... is so admirably appropriate to the objects of reality?

(Albert Einstein)

Before science

Science cannot stand alone. We cannot believe its propositions without first believing in a great many other startling things, such as the existence of the external world, the reliability of our senses, memory and informants, and the validity of logic. If we do believe these things, we already have a world far wider than that of science. (Mary Midgley).

Matter penetrated by mind

Acknowledging matter as somehow akin to and penetrated by mind is not adding a new, extravagant assumption to our existing thought-system. It is becoming aware of something we are doing already. The humbug of pretending that we could carry on intellectual life in an intrinsically unintelligible world is akin to the humbug of pretending that we could live without depending on other people. (Mary Midgley).

Universe saturated with rationality

Unless all that we take to be knowledge is an illusion, we must hold that in thinking we are not reading rationality into an irrational universe but responding to a rationality with which the universe has always been saturated. (C. S. Lewis)

Source of the world

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens. (Jeremiah 10:12, 51:15)

Source of understanding

For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:6)

He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding (Daniel 2:21)

God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure. (1 Kings 4:29)

The beginning of knowledge

- Who has put wisdom in the inward parts or given understanding to the mind? (Job 38:36)
- It is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand. (Job 32:8)
- The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)



God gives your mind
the ability to know
things outside it.



God made a real world
with features that are
knowable.

Faculties for knowing

Senses: see, hear, smell, taste, touch

Memory: recalling events and experiences

Introspection: knowing things about my inner state

Sympathy: awareness of what others think, feel, and believe

Credulity: believing what others tell us

Induction: expecting the future to be like the past in some sense; learning from experience

Faculties for knowing

- **Reason:** grasping truths that are prior to, or independent, of experience
 - a. Basic arithmetic ($2+1=3$)
 - b. Simple logic: If all cats have whiskers, and Princess is a cat, Princess has whiskers.
 - c. Seeing logical relationships and deductions
- **Conscience:** sense of right and wrong
- **God-sense:** awe at divine reality

The God sense

- God created man in his own image.
(Genesis 1:27)
- He has put eternity into man's heart.
(Ecclesiastes 3:11)
- The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all his innermost parts.
(Proverbs 20:27)
- ... having the eyes of your hearts enlightened (Ephesians 1:18)

God's reality can be sensed

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. (Romans 1:19-20)

Suppressing the God sense

Men... by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools. (Romans 1:18-22)

Becoming fools

- Suppressing the God sense distorts our other faculties and destroys the real basis for confidence that we know anything.
- The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” (Psalm 14:1, 53:1)
- There is no fear of God before his eyes... he has ceased to be wise and to do good... For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. (Psalm 36)

Logic participates in *Logos*

Unless I were to admit an unbelievable alternative, I must admit that mind was no late-come epiphenomenon; that the whole universe was, in the last resort, mental; that our logic was participation in a cosmic *Logos*" (C. S. Lewis)

Logos and Light

In the beginning was the Word [*Logos*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men... The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.... the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:1-14)

Original Image of God

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created... all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:15-17)

Jesus is the eternal Logos, the logic of the world and the light of human intellect.

Beginning of Knowledge

- The realities we know about begin with God: He is the Source of all realities, their patterns, and their purposes.
- Our ability to know begins with God: He is Source of our mental faculties.
- Jesus is the eternal Logos, the logic of the world and the light of human intellect.
- Ignoring God darkens and distorts knowledge.
- Taking God seriously enlightens our minds and sheds light on realities around us.