

Welcome to the Machine



"...the entire universe you call reality, has been fed to you by a machine"—New York Times

by Lev Tsitrin

If the *New York Times* considers this a possibility, then it may indeed be worth a thought. Needless to say, cosmology is the ultimate grand thing, with its picture of the tiny prime atom that exploded during the Big Bang and instantly ballooned into what became our Universe, engendering stars, galaxies, and everything else we know and observe. Speculations and theories abound – I read about the expanding universe, the contracting universe, the pulsating universe, the dark matter, the black holes, the alternative universes – but never before did I read a suggestion that everything we perceive may have no actual existence, being beamed into our minds by someone using a powerful computer processor, using our minds as mere movie-theater screens.

Well, the *New York Times* did lend its opinion pages recently

to a discussion of that theory. "[We Might Be in a Simulation. How Much Should That Worry Us?](#)" is ostensibly an opinion piece but in fact a breathless review of NYU professor David Chalmers' book that caused Farhad Manjoo, the opinion's author, to become "a hard-core simulationist" and "to believe that the coming world of virtual reality might one day be regarded as every bit as real as real reality" and that, moreover, it is "not just possible that our world is one of the many simulations but likely."

Do we live in a simulation? Like Mr. Manjoo and professor Chalmers, I think we do – but unlike them, I see no need for sci-fi machines to generate it. Our "real reality" offers daily instances of us living in a "simulation" – as evidenced by the *New York Times'* own news coverage. .

Consider ISIS, and Iran of the ayatollahs, whose bloody exploits fill the Middle East section of the news. Do their Islamist adherents live in "real reality," or in a "simulation"? Professor Chalmers who, as we are informed, is known for "coining the phrase 'the hard problem of consciousness,' which, roughly, is a description of the difficulty of explaining why a certain experience feels like that experience to the being experiencing it" will, I hope, find no difficulty agreeing that those Islamist live in a "reality" in which some fourteen centuries ago God spoke to Mohammed, the Koran being a transcript of His will for humanity.

The question – and it not at all a "hard" question to answer, is: is that Islamist "reality" "real" or is it a "simulation?" Does an Islamist's "experience feels like" living by God's word because they actually live by God's word, or because they live in culture-induced "simulation" that – without any help of "groundbreaking new gadget, the world's first fully immersive virtual-reality system," so enticingly described by Mr. Manjoo – immersed them into Islamism by forbidding exposure to alternative thinking? If Islamists ventured

outside of their “simulation,” they would have instantly realized that in “real reality” there is absolutely no way for anyone (Islamists including) to know whether God talked to Mohammed or whether He didn’t, it being as impossible to know that, as it is impossible to square a circle, Islamism being, in “real reality,” idol-worship (to use a religious term for “simulation.”) If not for that self-imposed “simulation,” the Islamists would have quickly quit Islamism, realizing that it turns them into idolaters – the very thing they hate the most.

So clearly, much of the Middle East lives in a self-induced “simulation” – without the use of any “stylish headband stuffed with electrodes that somehow tapped directly into the human brain’s perceptual system, replacing whatever a wearer saw, heard, felt, smelled and even tasted with new sensations” that Mr. Manjoo imagines, the mere attendance of a madrasa being just as good for the purpose of replacing “reality” with a “simulation” – “simulation” that is vivid enough for the 9/11 hijackers to believe that in killing themselves and thousands of Americans they earned the eternal bliss in the bordello section of the Islamist’s paradise – a belief shared by their fellows, the suicide bombers.

Or how about places like North Korea or China? Their citizens live in a Communist “simulation,” the imagined perfect society designed by the followers of a different “prophet,” Marx, who are kept there, just as Islamists are, by constant indoctrination, by being cut off from alternative information, by prohibition on individual thinking, and on sharing one’s thoughts – lest one realizes how faulty, flimsy, far-fetched, and simply irrelevant the Marxist argument really is.

Closer to home, places like the *New York Times* and NYU are bound hand and foot by the tenets of political correctness that forbids their employees from seeing the “real reality” – or at least, from reporting it. Aren’t our academe and the press living in their own “simulations”? Can professor Chalmers freely investigate Islamist ideology, openly

discussing in faculty debates and in academic articles the factual and logical flaws that underpin Islamism and render it idolatrous? Or would that be politically incorrect, and thus outside of the bounds of allowed academic research – or, shall we say, “simulation” thereof?

Can Mr. Manjoo write on that topic, exposing the idolatrous nature of Islamism on a *New York Times*’ opinion pages? Or would that be outside of the “simulation” line that guards the *New York Times*’ permitted discourse – with the result that academe and the press weave their own “simulations”?

Can race be discussed by the press and academe in accordance to “real reality” – or can it only be examined and commented on within the bounds of “simulation” called “systemic racism”?

How many other topics are taboo subjects, excluded entirely from the “simulation” that the press builds to keep us in line (the judicial decision-making process that in “real reality” is utterly arbitrary, but in the “simulation” of our public discourse is treated as conforming to the “due process of the law,” comes readily to mind)?

Mr. Manjoo does not speculate in his piece on the purposes of the makers of the “simulation” machine (perhaps professor Chalmers does in his book, I do not know) – but the “simulation” that controls the *New York Times*, and our academe – and, needless to say, the promoters of Islamism and Communism – clearly serves the purpose of manipulating the masses – and turning them, as the saying goes, into “asses” who are being herded into conformity by “simulation”.

Put simply, there is no need for some futuristic, super-hyper-high-tech “machine” to trap us into “simulation.” We live in it day in and day out, whenever the social pressure causes us to pretend that something is so when we know full well that it isn’t. The proverbial calling of black white, and of white black, the common prevarications for the sake of survival, the

“going along to get along” that make us swerve from the “real reality” into “simulation” are as old as humanity itself. “Simulation” is not the potential feature of the science-fiction future. We live in the self-imposed “simulation” right here, right now, in our daily, “real reality.”

Lev Tsitrin is the author of [“The Pitfall of Truth: Holy War, its Rationale and Folly”](#)