

EXERCISE SHEET

I'd like to start off with something a little bit different from my usual stuff.

You already know what my section is about, you've looked at our episode description – I know this, so I'm going to jump into it quickly with Philip K. Dick's *If You Find This World Bad, You Should See Some of The Others*¹.

Philip K. Dick is a prolific writer and many popular films/shows are derived from his work², and I'm sure you know them: *Blade Runner*, *The Man in the High Castle*, *Minority Report*, *Total Recall*, and so many others. Additionally, I think that mayhaps he is just like his last name: a dick³.

However, his speech is something I came across and fully listened to just for this piece and after this he's gone out of my mind.

If You Find This World Bad, You Should See Some of The Others was delivered at the second International Festival of Science-Fiction at Metz, France. It is written about concepts that are present in Dick's work, simulation theory, reality, and perception of the world around us.

Dick proposed the following in his speech about “Plural realities” and the world as created by a Programmer, and the world's actualities based on the Programmer's creations:

“I submit to you that such alterations (context: things that the programmer or whoever creates - whether it be problems, solutions, acts, etc.), the creation or selection of such so-called ‘alternate presents,’ is continually taking place. [...] But I doubt if we will ever be able in any real fashion to demonstrate, to scientifically prove, that such lateral change processes do occur. Probably all we would have to go on would be vestiges of memory, fleeting impressions, dreams, nebulous intuitions that somehow things had been different in some way – and not long ago but now. We might reflexively reach for a light switch in the bathroom only to discover that it was – always had been – in another place entirely.”⁴

¹ <https://archive.org/details/philip.k.dick-if.you.find.this.world.bad>

² <https://philipdick.com/pkd-and-me/new>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/23/books/23philip.html>

⁴

<https://archive.org/details/philip.k.dick-if.you.find.this.world.bad/page/n7/mode/2up?view=theater&q=plural+realities>

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Following this, he proposes several other instances. But to bring it back to the pod, here's an example from when I was in high-school: my family lived in a two bedroom apartment. My brother and I shared a room up until two years ago and our room had this huge window in front of it. I didn't really mind the area or think about it that much, but suddenly I had this strange memory that there *was* a tree in front of our bedroom window.

Since that strange awakening, I was completely convinced that there was a tree in front of our room and was confused as to why it was gone. My brother didn't remember a tree but why did *I* remember a tree? Why'd I remember a tree stump at one point, then a full tree at another? Why did I remember a tree, then see stages of that tree being taken down, but no one else did?

I later found a random video I filmed that was close to the time we first moved into that apartment and saw what I had wondered about and later freaked me out for the longest time – there was *never* a tree there.

There I was, in high school, experiencing my very first Glitch in the Matrix.

Although I mentioned a 1977 speech by Philip K. Dick as an instance of discussing 'glitches' in the programming of our world, the exact usage and phrasing we use today to describe these funky instances in our lives comes in around the 2000s and roughly 8-10 years ago.

I am using a very wonky ass timeline because *The Matrix* comes in at 1999 and the origin thread is from [10 years ago on an r/AskReddit thread](#) and Alexey Turchin, writer of *Glitch in the Matrix: Urban Legend or Evidence of the Simulation* says it's from [8 years ago on another different r/AskReddit thread](#). Another rough go at it is from Season 6, Episode 12 of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1993) where the episode focuses on a character from a previous plotline, that wants to live in reality – outside of the holodeck. Per reddit user JMW007 - this though, did not have any direct relation to the concept of GitM that we know and use now: "It was just technobabble to explain a plot device problem for the engineer to solve, not a philosophical concept to explain confusing or contradictory events in our universe"⁵.

You might say: JD, you should know! Do your research, right? God. I am but one man. I do not have all the answers, just a million Reddit threads. So, right now I'm gonna

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https://www.reddit.com/r/Glitch_in_the_Matrix/comments/5p6ty9/meta_the_term_glitch_in_the_matrix_was_not_first/dcqlrre/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=web2x&context=3

decide that we officially got the question on reddit 10 years ago, and also *The Matrix* came out in 1999.

Helpful note here is: You can read Turchin's paper - I did not yet because I wanted to do my own work on this and not like word for word rip Turchin's work. From the abstract and the index page, it goes more into tech and how the human body works in the technological space. I'm going at it in the meme/internet fiction sphere. He's probably got so many cool things to say.

If you are familiar w/ Turchin, you are aware that he's known for his work as a "life extensionist and transhumanist"⁶. He is working on furthering an individual's life span and it gets complex. For more information on topics that may relate to this, but not specifically with Turchin's work and beliefs in mind, I recommend watching *Hope Frozen: A Quest to Live Twice* and Atrocity Guide's *It's Embarrassing to Die: The Immortalist Story*. The latter I recommend for some absolutely buckwild stuff, the former for the intersection of Buddhism, living forever, and science.

To bring it back to *The Matrix* and the matrix, let's go over what GitM first means in the movie. In the scene where it comes about, Neo is with a group of people when he notices that a cat has walked by, maybe a couple of times already. He makes note of this outloud and it stops Trinity and the others in their path. She says, "déjà vu is usually a glitch in the Matrix, it happens when they change something"⁷.

From the Reddit page itself, the definition of a glitch is "eye-witness events that cannot be explained by ordinary means. Ghost stories are not glitches"⁸. This is an important distinction because over the years, the abundance of posts in the subreddit and stories everywhere else, there's been a need to define it to separate it more from other paranormal stories.

The reddit page notes the following:

1. "Technological glitches will be removed because they can usually be explained,"⁹
2. "Drunk/drugged/Intoxicated situations are caused by the intake of said product. Said products cause enough impairments to be unable to distinguish between, reality or glitch"¹⁰

⁶

<https://www.indiatimes.com/technology/science-and-future/alexey-turchin-scientist-immortal-plan-in-future-536169.html>

⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_KmNZNT5xw

⁸ https://www.reddit.com/r/Glitch_in_the_Matrix/

⁹ #8

¹⁰ #8

#1 is pretty easy to understand, usually if it's a tech glitch - it's just what it is, kind of like the *Star Trek* mention. You can explain it away as just a faulty piece of tech. #2 is also fairly understandable for the most part, being under the influence of possible hallucinogens or other mind altering substances can make you a little wonky when it comes to your memory or understanding of certain things. You become 'impaired' and somewhat unreliable when it comes to glitches.

Going back to the initial definition, the subreddit specifies also that "ghost stories are not glitches"¹¹. You might think, well duh! Well in my research, I did run into instances where it apparently wasn't clear. For example, an episode of *Stories with Sapphire*¹² specifically covering glitches seemed to take more on a paranormal spin, in my opinion. You could put the stories on this episode off as doppelgangers, apparitions, or Black Eyed Children – which are their own thing.

To better understand glitches, let me take you through an exercise. I've provided links in the script and for Ben, so we will have a talk through of these things together. Let's learn by example! These are some that I've really been into since I started reading GitM stories. There's one that I've been into since I started but I can't find it, which sucks.

PAUSE

1. Before we get into this further...
 - a. Have you ever experienced a glitch in the matrix?
 - b. Would your answer change if I asked you if you have ever experienced DJV?

OK, back to the story: After retelling - I would like you to put your tinfoil hat on, but also keep your head on your shoulders when I quiz you, okay?

Exercise:

1. "[Still freaks me out to this day, and I've never told anyone this except my girlfriend](#)"
 - a. Summary: OP gets into a 'fight' with his 'girlfriend', she dumps him and leaves. Roughly 5 seconds later, the actual GF comes back and he's like WTF. GF does not know anything about what he's saying.
 - i. Evidence: Security cameras checked and can see OP and a girl who is blurry faced, can not be seen clearly; OP and GF filed police report but only found evidence of him and GF in house

¹¹ #8

¹² <https://anchor.fm/storieswithsapphire/episodes/Glitch-in-the-Matrix-e1d0oqp>

- ii. Theories from Reddit:
 - 1. Ben, what's your theory?
 - 2. Mirror universe - two nearly identical timelines overlapping; disturbance causes a break and diverges (A: GF dumps him and leaves; B: GF never dumps him)
 - 3. User SINWARRIOR
 - a. Quantum suicide and immortality - infinite version of the self (when one dies, another exists; if one doesn't die, they go on and they still die, etc.)
 - b. Parallel Universe - just had a bit of a crossover event at the moment
 - c. Schrodinger's Cat
 - d. Chaos Theory - can circle back to option A
- iii. Questions
 - 1. What would have happened if GF1 didn't leave? Would GF2 show up at all?
 - 2. Does GF have a doppelganger?
- 2. ["Friend & I picked up our phones to call each other \(old landlines\), but we were already connected without dialling \(sic\)"](#) (not the same one I initially read, but similar re: phones)
 - a. Summary: OP picks up phone to call a friend but finds friend already on other end of the line
 - i. Theories
 - 1. Ben, what's your theory?
 - 2. Switchboard technology holdover - OP last called friend so the line was still 'open', requiring no move to call
 - ii. This is old, but could be considered violating the Technology rule in the subreddit.
- 3. ["Someone picked up my phone, Very Freaky story \(I have the recording\)"](#)
 - a. OP's mom was calling them - one one of the tries, someone picks up and makes weird noises into the phone. Mom thought it was a demon. OP has two voicemails from mom, 1 telling them to pick up and another that is basically a recording of whatever happened to the mom. It's garbled and weird.
 - i. Evidence: there's a recording link that I didn't listen to
 - ii. Theories from Reddit:
 - 1. Ben, what's your theory?
 - 2. Connections got crossed
 - 3. Terrible mobile carrier
 - 4. Bad digital connection

- iii. This is old, but could be considered violating the Technology rule in the subreddit.
- 4. [Chinese Restaurant Mix-up](#): simple example
 - a. OP and a friend were at a Chinese restaurant - they found that their orders were mixed up, after opening both and finding them incorrect. As friend re-opens the first box that they saw was incorrect, they're both shocked to find that the order was *correct*.
 - i. Theories
 - 1. Ben, what's your theory?
 - 2. Misremembering? - two people misremembering the same thing?
 - 3. Someone compared it to plugging in a USB
 - 4. Switching up the boxes? - OP says they didn't as they were pretty separate
 - 5. Seeing your expectations - you expect to get the wrong thing and you see it, but you look again and it's not
 - a. When I 'see' something where I last left it, when I am looking for things - but it isn't there, etc.

Now that we've walked through some examples of glitches. Let's talk about why they *happen* and why people *believe* in them.

Let's get something out of the way because one of the things that people keep referencing when it comes to some of the more bizarre glitches is CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING. You might be wondering why! Let's get into it by starting off with this 'GLITCH' example from the subreddit itself.

["Glitch in the Monoxide Matrix"](#)

- 1. "I've noticed that many redditors here suggest that it might be carbon monoxide poisoning that is causing hallucinations and the perception of glitches occurring. Is this a very prevalent thing? How many glitches are actually due to carbon monoxide and where would that insane concentration come from?"
(zoneoftheende, 5 years ago)

If you're familiar with the post that triggered this ask, you may already know where I'm heading to, but if not... let's talk:

["I think someone is breaking into my apartment while I'm away but they never take anything. The only thing that I notice is the changes that happen to the door."](#)

- 1. OP believes that someone is breaking into their apartment while they are away. They keep finding weird holes, strange marks in the apartment.

- a. Theories from Reddit:
 - i. Your landlord is breaking into your apartment, my friend
 - ii. You are experiencing carbon monoxide poisoning - [reference to a popular Reddit post on r/legaladvice](#)
 1. “I have had really bad headaches... And I actually already do have a CO detector, guess I should probably take that out of it's box and plug it in.” (OP)
 2. OP is finding things in their house that they didn't do/make
 - a. Post-it notes left around the house with ‘weird’ sayings ("Our landlord isn't letting me talk to you, but it's important we do.")
 3. [Verified Carbon Monoxide poisoning](#) - “because when I plugged one in in the bedroom, it read at 100ppm.”
 - a. “The WHO recommended limits are: 9-10 ppm for no more than 8 hours. 25-35 ppm for no more than 1 hour” ([Carbon Monoxide Levels Chart](#))
 - b. According to the NHS...¹³
 - i. Symptoms: dizziness, feeling and being sick, tiredness and **confusion**, stomach pain, shortness of breath and difficulty breathing
 - ii. Long term exposure symptoms: difficulty thinking or concentrating; frequent emotional changes (becoming easily irritated, depressed, or making impulsive/irrational decisions); impaired mental state and personality changes

Although this doesn't solve all of the cases on the subreddit, as you have read/looked at some with me, most people seem to think that this is one of the first things you can check when it comes to glitches that may manifest in strange sightings or anything else.

If we visit Rodney Ascher's *Glitch in the Matrix* documentary - we briefly get an understanding of why some folks might believe in glitches. According to D. Hardawar of Engadget, the documentary features folks from all over stating their glitches and some reason as to why, though Hardawar points out that Ascher doesn't really *push* for anything beyond sharing their experiences – nothing to challenge the believer (Hardawar supposes though that it could be compared to attempt to reason with a Flat

¹³ <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/carbon-monoxide-poisoning/>

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Earther and how difficult it could be to convince someone who is already incredibly *convinced* of something they believe in)¹⁴.

People might believe and experience glitches in the Matrix due to their belief in the Simulation Theory.

Real quickly, let's get into Simulation Theory. Which according to wikipedia "proposes that all of existence might be a simulated reality, such as a computer simulation which convinces its inhabitants that the simulation is 'real'"¹⁵.

Now, while I *do* work in tech and my background is in Art History, Sociology, and Cultural Anthropology – there might be some wires crossed due to the fact that I read this following article at 9pm after a day of work but here is what I understand of the biggest papers people use regarding the possibility of ST being real: Nick Bostrom's paper *Are You Living in a Computer Simulation*, which is one of The Papers of All Time, when it comes to The Matrix and Simulation Theory.

The paper argues that following: (1) we will all go extinct before we can reach touch the possibility of high computation capability and we will never run simulations b/c of this (2) it's unlikely that posthuman era will ever care enough to run a simulation on 'ancestors' and (3) we're fucked and we're already living in a simulation.

Then interprets a whole bunch of cool theories and data and formulas that I swear you should check out, as such: If ST is true – then we have at some point in the future reached posthuman, meaning we have high computing capabilities, meaning we can start running sims like we're a college student on three seasons of *Stranger Things*.

If not true, then at one point – humanity ceases to exist and there is nothing else beyond us.

If we reach posthuman though it doesn't necessarily mean that we will end up running simulations. They could just not have any benefactors willing to run sims or ultimately, not give a single shit.

Also, if they do run sims it doesn't mean they'll always be running 'intelligent' sims like us. Human simulations or whatever. Bostrom points out that "one may also consider the possibility of more selective simulations that include only a small group of humans or a

¹⁴

<https://www.engadget.com/a-glitch-in-the-matrix-review-sundance-simulation-theory-150015472.html>

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simulation_hypothesis

single individual”. Also, what if they just run a sim of like... just some dudes in front of a TV only knowing beers and pizza? What if they act like you and I on Sims and all we want to do is build a sick house and drown someone in a swimming pool with no ladders?

If you’re listening to this you might as well just check out Nick Bostrom’s full paper¹⁶. It’s so cool and neat and also - just gives it to you better than me. I’ll miss you though.

Another reason though, something we touch on in Philip K. Dick’s speech and *The Matrix* itself is the good ole *déjà vu*.

We all know what DJV is in the chat right? Even Craig.

PAUSE: Ben, what’s your knowledge on DJV? I DO NOT WANT EXPERIENCES YET THOUGH!

RESUME: Awesome! So, there’s two types: Associative and Biological. Associative is the one everyone experiences the most and biological has to do with folks who experience temporal lobe epilepsy. If you are someone who gets seizures, you are familiar with getting *déjà vu* or some sort of aura prior to an episode¹⁷.

Shoutout seizure havers, I love you. I am you. We are us.

There is not a lot of study that you can do for Associative DJV due to the fact that it’s for the most part, random as hell. However, biological DJV can be studied! Unfortunately, researchers say that it’s completely different from associative, so.

How does DJV work? Let me run through some theories very quickly¹⁸:

1. *Cellphone theory* - divided attention, you experience a thing as you are coming into it w/ divided attention but once you are fully paying attention you ‘seem’ to already know the place, but it’s actually b/c you took it into prior to fully paying attention to it
2. *Hologram theory* - (Hermon Sno) you can create a picture out of a small picture and imagine that
3. *Dual processing* - “. Because information enters the processing centers of the brain via more than one path, it is possible that occasionally that blending of information might not synchronize correctly.”

¹⁶ <https://www.simulation-argument.com/simulation>

¹⁷ <https://science.howstuffworks.com/science-vs-myth/deja-vu.htm>

¹⁸ <https://science.howstuffworks.com/science-vs-myth/deja-vu.htm>

4. *Memories* - you experienced this before elsewhere but b/c it's so familiar (whether it be by film, book, story from someone else, etc)
5. *Precognitive dreams* - people dreaming something and it nearly predicting something or being extremely close to a thing

Now what does this have to do with Glitches in the Matrix? Let's go back to the not-so-homie Philip's speech ¹⁹:

“Such an impression is a clue that at some past time point a variable was changed [...] and that because of this, an alternate world branched off, became actualised instead of the prior one, and that in fact, in literal fact we are once more living this particular segment of linear time.”

[...]

“Evidently such an alteration would have a peculiar effect on those persons involved; they would, so to speak, be moved back one square or several squares on the board game that constitutes our reality.”


If you combine this and Bostrom's article - you can glean that DJV can be seen/is *evidence* of the matrix glitching and fucking up, rewinding you cos you fucked up somewhere - said a line wrong, touched the wrong switch, spoke to the same person. DJV is *evidence* that is “leftover from a previous present”.

Remember how I said it was hard to study? Let's break from that for a second and look into something more recent, as that info was sourced from stuff in the early 2000s.

Let's go to 2016! Recall that I mentioned it was hard to study b/c DJV is so random. In an experiment, Akira O'Connor (School of Psychology and Neuroscience at the University of St. Andrews in the UK) and a partner attempted to recreate/trigger DJV by “using a technique for eliciting false memories²⁰.”

For example, I could give you “green”, “grass”, and “nature” and ask you whether you heard the word “tree” at one point – you could say, yeah! And then I would ask some other things and then this would give you a feeling of DJV.

O'Connor states that DJV is having “false sensation of familiarity” with something and the feeling that, hold on, that doesn't seem right at all.

¹⁹  Philip K. Dick - If You Find This World Bad, You Should See Some of the Others

²⁰ <https://www.digitaltrends.com/cool-tech/deja-vu-study-fmri/>

O'Connor and team found that DJV might be, rather than random memories connecting to random things, "What it actually is is that the cognitive control, error-monitoring conflict-checking frontal brain regions are the ones which show greater activity in people reporting the experience."²¹

If you connect that back to the experience of GitM, a reasoning for its existence could be the same as why you experience DJV. Your glitches are connections you are making to a set of ideas/experiences based on another set of ideas/experiences.

There, we solved it! For the most part – I will not argue about the physical shit such as: people reporting to time travel for a second; seeing a person pop into mid-air; 10,000 pigeons disappearing (Thank you Rhys Darby); a door being to the toilet changing to a door into a bathroom full of 70s ghosts (Thank you Wellington Paranormal). I won't say anything!

Now, usually, we get to the part where you wonder – Is there harm in believing in glitches/simulation theory?

Some might say no, I would hazard to say that most would say no – but let's think about this point mentioned by Stephen Johnson: "If you believe you're in a simulation, you might also think that some people in the simulation are less real than you."²²

You start to think – if this is all a game and I'm the star of the show, no one else is as real as me. I can do, say, think, act however I want and no one will feel anything. Everyone around you is computer generated and not real, the way that you're real – this makes them less than you.

But who is to say that you *are* real?

There is a loss of personhood, once you start to believe that you're in a simulation. Not just of the people around you or the believer, but for that person as well. Everything you experience is predetermined and programmed by someone else, all of this is fucked and you have no choice.

When it comes to physical harm, we know of the Matrix Defense, likened to an Insanity defense – where the aim is to say that a person who perpetrated a crime was "unable to distinguish reality from simulation when they committed a crime". Several others have used this defense, however some end up falling flat once cross-examined.

²¹ <https://www.digitaltrends.com/cool-tech/deja-vu-study-fmri/>

²² <https://bigthink.com/high-culture/glitch-in-the-matrix/>

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I won't be discussing a real crime, I am exhausted by real crime, so I will just pose an example for you: someone using the argument that they believed that they were in a video game at the time of committing a crime, they sped through it like it was Call of Duty or PUBG, and nothing was real to them at the moment.

If then coupled with the person being into video games, being into the Matrix or anything like it, you've got the 'perfect' storm for a defense like this.

Think of this as a potential scapegoat as well – Blame the Matrix (the movie or the actual matrix) – you were programmed to do this, so it is beyond you.

All is beyond you and now what?

Think of the loss that Truman experiences once he realises that his whole life was a show. The way he questioned everything around him and desired an escape, to be in the real world. Like, sincerely – what did everyone else watching the Truman Show think of the things they were doing to this person? Did they think of him as a real person b/c everything he's experiencing is a simulation, an act, and nothing real at all? Is there no harm in that?

I guess, if we *are* in a simulation, this is my act of asking our posthuman creators – is there no feeling of harm or regret that you have created us and we are now living in a sense of pain and agony all of the time? That you made us so and now some of us are realising that you made us this way, only to play around with us?

Also – what's up with the person who was like – aye, capitalism!

Ending Questions

I borrowed some questions from Stephen Johnson's article, the same ones he asked the Glitch documentary maker and I wanted to close out on them.

1. What would you do if you found out you were in a simulation?
2. Would you run a simulation? Why
3. How did your views on simulation theory/glitches change after hearing me talk about it?

Resources

1. [Understanding Depersonalization and Derealization Disorder](#)
2. [How do you help someone who is dissociating/depersonalizing?](#)

3. [10 Ways to Relieve Depersonalization](#)
4. [How To Cope With Depersonalization](#)
5. [How to Support Someone Going through Depersonalization](#)
6. [Derealization](#)

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