



CROSSROADS Language Studio's Newsletter July, 2016

SIMULATION THEORY: IS REALITY REALLY REAL?

Recently, world-famous entrepreneur and CEO of the Tesla company Elon Musk put forward a startling argument: The odds are overwhelming that we are all playing a part in an advanced civilization's computer simulation.

Simulation theory argues that reality as we know it is in fact a simulation of which we are totally unaware. Bizarrely, such a hypothesis may not be as unusual as it first appears. There is a long scientific and philosophical history of the concept that reality is an illusion, going way back to Indian prehistory and the philosophy of *Maya* (illusion). In ancient Vedic literature, *Maya* meant extraordinary power and wisdom. In later Indian traditions, *Maya* suggests a "magic show, an illusion where things appear to be present but are not what they seem," or that the true power of reality is concealed from us.

Many credible technologists and futurologists predict that enormous amounts of computing power will be available in the future. This is the basis of Musk's argument, which in turn derives from the work of eminent Oxford University professor Nick Bostrom, who published a paper in 2003 arguing that at least one of the following propositions is true: (1) Virtually all civilizations at our pace of development will go extinct before they reach the technological capability of creating ultra-realistic video games; (2) Civilizations with such technological capabilities are uninterested in running such computer simulations; (3) we are almost certainly living in a computer simulation. It follows that the belief that there is a significant chance that we will one day become humans who run ancestor-simulations is false, unless we are currently living in a simulation.

In the darkness of our current ignorance, it seems reasonable to apportion one's belief roughly evenly between (1), (2), and (3). Unless we are now living in a simulation, our descendants will almost certainly never run an ancestor-simulation.

It's important to realize that it's not only in a metaphorical sense but also in a very literal sense that we're in a simulation. This means that we ourselves and everything around us exists in a computer built by some advanced civilization. This could be good news or bad news depending on what you think the motivations of the simulators are, and what will happen after the simulation ends.

Bostrom believes that even if it takes millions of years to create such a simulation, his theory still holds and that the same big questions about the universe are relevant whether it was created by God, the Big Bang or a teenager with a futuristic Xbox. Even Robert Rupert, philosophy of mind professor at the University of Colorado, says that the computer simulation hypothesis is "definitely worth taking seriously" and that if conscious, intelligent characters could be created inside a computer simulation, then it tallies with how many of us already think of our existence.



Article by Colm

Net News

NET LESSONS: Too busy to come to CROSSROADS?

.... Try our *lessons on the net!*

Here's a bio on Elon Musk:

www.biography.com/people/elon-musk-20837159

Some Thoughts for the Month



Joshua Says: Recently many new websites have become available for students to do some English self-study. Many of these sites are free while some are accessible for a small fee. Although these sites can never substitute for the care and attention a “live” teacher can provide, I think some of the better ones are quite useful as supplementary resources to help and support your studies between lessons with us. I recommend you have a look at some and tell me if you find any especially useful.

Junko Says: Recent weather forecasts say that Japan’s summer this year may be influenced by “La Nina”. I’m sure you’ve heard of El Nino. La Nina is the counterpart of El Nino and is characterized by unusually cold ocean temperatures in the Equatorial Pacific. In a La Nina year, we often have very hot and long summers. I also learnt that La Nina’s influence in summer usually causes a colder than usual winter. All this sounds like I can’t do without air-conditioning this year.



Mark Says: In New Zealand July 4 - 10 is Māori Language Week - *Te Wiki o te Reo Māori*. During this time, Kiwis are encouraged to use as much of our second official language as possible in our daily lives. Here are some useful phrases you can use if ever in New Zealand: *Kia ora* (Hello / Thank you), *Kei te pehea koe?* (How are you?), *Ke te pai* (I'm fine / good).

Colm Says: Brexit has sent shockwaves through Europe, with many people still in disbelief that the United Kingdom has chosen to leave the European Union. There are many arguments both for and against this development. But the good news for people in Japan is that the Yen has become stronger. It might be a good time to pay a visit to Ol’ Blighty.



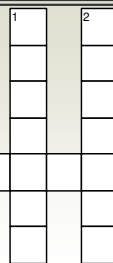
Danielle dit: Dès le début du mois de juillet, il a commencé à faire très chaud. Et j’ai bien peur que cela continue pendant tout l’été. Il paraîtrait que l’été va être long et chaud. Même si c’est l’été, la chaleur m’empêche de profiter des journées. Je préfère rester à l’intérieur au frais. Quoiqu’il en soit, pensez à protéger votre tête et hydratez-vous bien quand vous sortez au milieu de la journée !

ACROSS

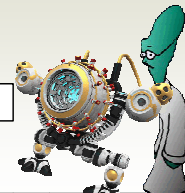
- 5 a result achieved by reasoning
- 6 lack of knowledge or education
- 8 an idea presented for consideration
- 10 allocate or distribute
- 11 something that appears to be true but is not
- 12 a concept that is not yet probed to be true
- 13 hidden from view
- 14 being greatly unusual or unconventional
- 15 having ability
- 16 no longer in existence

DOWN

- 1 a position higher than others
- 2 adds up to
- 3 surprisingly different
- 4 expressing one thing in terms of another
- 7 a technique of representing the real world
- 9 worthy of belief



Play A Game!



(print version [here](#))

NOTICE BOARD

On a warm and peaceful day around 400BC, the Chinese Philosopher Chuang Chou was dozing under a tree. He felt so relaxed that he soon slipped into a deep sleep. When he awoke, he realized that he had been dreaming, or had he? His dream was so real that he was uncertain as to just who was the dreamer and who, or what, was the "dreamt". He pondered on this for a while then went off to relate the events of his dream to his friend, another wise old Sage who lived in the next valley. He started the account of his "dream" somewhat embarrassedly, "some people my think I'm crazy....." His dream, as it has been recorded down through the ages goes like this:



"I, Chuang Chou, dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of my happiness as a butterfly, unaware that I was Chou. Soon I awoke, and there I was, veritably myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly, dreaming I am a man".

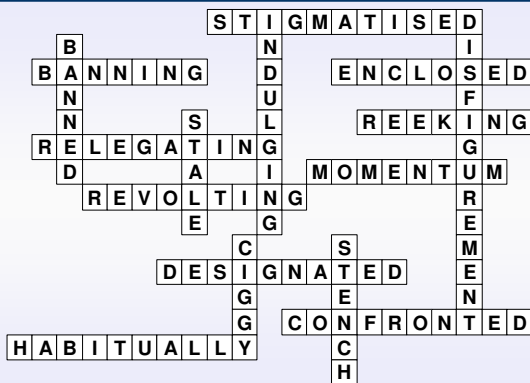
While his friend was thinking about this paradox, he noticed a butterfly flittering around some flowers off to their left. He pointed to this with his folded up fan (all the Sages of the time carried one) and with these words asked Chuang to observe the butterfly:

"You see that butterfly fluttering from flower to flower, Chuang? It is the same as millions upon millions of other butterflies all over the world. You ask, are they the dreamers, or are they being dreamt by us? It would seem to me that neither species would continue to exist if the other, whichever group are the dreamers, stopped dreaming....."



.....Speaking of Paradoxes.....

During my travels in India, I met a wandering Sadhu (a holy man) who said to me the following: "Every person at birth is allocated a certain number of breaths during his or her lifetime. That number can never be changed and when a person has used up the last of their allotted breaths their life ceases, they die". He then said, "Therefore, if one wishes to live a long life, one must control the rate at which one breathes by slowing down their inhaling and exhaling cycle. And," he said, "if one stops breathing altogether, one will live forever!"



Last Month's puzzle Solution

ACROSS

- 1 accused and classified as disgraceful
- 5 officially prohibiting something
- 6 closed in or surrounded
- 8 giving off a strong, unpleasant smell
- 9 assigning to a lower position or rank
- 10 a forward moving force or power
- 11 greatly offensive, disgusting
- 14 assigned a task or job to someone
- 15 opposed in a hostile way
- 16 by habit or custom

DOWN

- 2 enjoying to excess
- 3 damaged or spoiled appearance
- 4 forbidden by law
- 7 not fresh
- 12 short for cigarette
- 13 an unpleasant odor, smell



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