

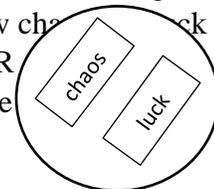
Virtual Reality makes us realize uncomfortable truths. Upon putting on the headset, our peripheral vision is blocked, but the screen projecting the image is close enough to our eyes that we don't mind it—it does require us to move our heads around to see what would normally only take a move of your eye. Flexible screens that curve will fix this dilemma. What we would have then is complete immersion, but what we currently have is enough. If you haven't experienced VR yet, it's difficult to explain the potency behind the realization of just how quickly your brain accepts a new reality. The world presented to you might have the graphics of a PlayStation 2 game, but by virtue of being or at least feeling that you are inside this room, rather than looking at it through the degree of separation provided by a TV screen, the brain accepts and understands, if only for a moment, that if this were the only reality you knew, it wouldn't be questioned.

Asking what is real is not a difficult question. But it does demand a difficult answer.

VR makes us come face to face with the thought that the matrix is not a farfetched idea.

And why would it be?

On an instinctual basis we understand creation. Whether we want to put a sentient being behind the design or say that everything we know is what happens when you throw chaos and luck in a cement mixer, it doesn't matter—though I do think our experiment with VR and artificial intelligence does make the atheists squirm a little. Even before VR, a quick study of history will show you how frequently we accept and reject social norms and acceptable behaviors that fall in and out of fashion.



We look back and laugh at what “they” used to do and how absurdly “they” used to live, and it's uncomfortable to think of how we will be perceived by our more enlightened grandchildren. We live in the best way we know, or at least in the best way we can manage in the present moment, given a litany of circumstances. But just a little foresight will make it clear that our present is as impermanent as our lives are short. And for those of us who long to see just where humanity ends up, we<sup>1</sup> sigh with not a negligible amount of despair that we won't experience it.

Our minds are clay. Ask a schizophrenic what his reality is and VR will help you understand it.

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<sup>1</sup> I initially wrote something that would suggest all of humanity has a hand in the further development of artificial intelligence, simulated reality, and any other futurist dream, when it, of course, does not. I think an interesting question is one that asks whether we human being who lack specialization are not much different from worker ants and drones, while those who have changed the way we fundamentally live our lives are not the ones to blame, or admire, for removing us more and more from the basic requirements of life. Asking whether life is better now, to me, is like covering a lie with another lie: The investment has come to dominate us, so it's our duty to keep it afloat—some of us certainly don't like it. Ask me how I feel about this when I'm in not such a pessimistic mood.