

Shifting realities:

Tron cyberspace and the “new” consciousness in 21st century technoscapes

"Hold fast to dreams for if dreams die, life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly."

Langston Hughes

ABSTRACT

The existing direction of the (mis)use of information technologies founded on the deceptively secular rationalised heritage of scientism, arguably spells the increasing proximity to a dystopian nightmare that is far from mere fiction and imbued with the eternal religious symbolic of the battle between good and evil, as depicted in the 2010 science fiction film *Tron: Legacy*. The historical contextualisation of events in the film reveals the promise of the unfolding of an advanced sensibility alongside these concerns, in which fantasy and science converge to liberate humanity from an increasingly limiting worldview, and information and images serve as conduits to the sacred. The critical role information stands to play in humanity's conscious evolution is outlined in the proposed development of a “dream systems theory”, where dreamscapes are defined as interconnected systems of imaginal data.

Introduction

In *Tron: Legacy* (2010) tech genius and IT mogul Kevin Flynn is the architect of a digital utopia, the Grid. This virtual reality/game surpasses all existing ones not only with its unprecedented user experience and humanoid computer programs, but its intrinsic capacity as a complex information system to generate superior artificial life forms – the Isomorphic Algorithms or ISOs – heralding new technologies as gateways to a charmed future and an advanced state of consciousness.

Undeniably, the prime position information and communication systems hold in the 21st century denotes a key consideration in any discussion of the conscious evolution of the human species. But not all responses to rapidly forming and expanding technological landscapes are equally exalting – these disenchanted sentiments echo the cries of a “panic postmodernism” looming at the cusp of a posthuman chapter of evolution (Balsamo 1996, cited in Hollinger 1997, p. 128). Accordingly, the realities of marginalisation in the information age and technological misuse feature as key thematic concerns in *Tron: Legacy*. This essay examines their potentially frightening repercussions both outside, and inside a digital world in the events following Kevin's entrapment

by his malevolent digital alter-ego, Clu, and his son's arrival in the Grid after being separated for 20 years.

Infoscapes gone wrong – hackers, freedom fighters and cyber-terror

The Information Revolution has spelt groundbreaking consequences not only for the technological dimension of day to day human life, but the very essence of our existence. In this brave new world all sentient and non-sentient beings are viewed as “dynamic information-processing systems” (Wiener 1964, cited in Bynum 2010, p. 429). Despite their accelerated high tech interface, however, these information-rich landscapes, or “infoscapes”, are subject to the same laws of spiritual degradation and elevation in the primordial battle between good and evil which has haunted humankind since time immemorial. Luciano Floridi (2005, cited in Bynum 2010, p. 434), one of the key thinkers of information philosophy, voiced in his theory of “entropy” that infoscapes and all life bound to them are exposed to caustic violations from the will of a pernicious “evil”. This endured suffering materialising with the abuse and misuse of information, be it intentional or unintentional, acts as an impediment to the universe's journey of conscious evolution and that of information entities within it – it results in the often irreversible damage to their unique data composition and the obstruction to their innate transformative properties. This is a reality that is not lost to the new millennium and the grand vision of its evolutionary progress.

Graham (2002, pp. 69-71) cautions on the potential dangers of technoromantic ideology and the political dimension in the use of advanced technologies, which can lead to novel forms of marginalisation and enslavement under a new a world order. The mixed perception of technology as both an instrument of doom and deliverance is a commonplace feature of science fiction, and this film is no exception (Goicoechea 2008, p. 3). *Tron: Legacy* highlights the growing censorship of free access to information in our network society. Kevin reflects on the carefree early stages of the Grid's creation: “we built the system where all information was *free* and *open*”. Conversely, the board that took over Kevin's company, ENCOM, after his disappearance aimed to return it to profitability – consumer capitalism and its voracious appetite is a major driver in shaping technological scientific advancements (Graham 2002, p. 77).

At the board meeting convened for the launch of its latest software “ENCOM OS 12”, ENCOM's current CEO boasts that the past year was the most lucrative for the company to date. When Kevin's close business partner and friend (the man behind the digital incarnation of the program “Tron” in the first movie) questions what it has done to improve its products especially in light of the financial constraints its main users, namely students and schools, are faced with, the CEO

mocks: “This year we put a 12 on the box”. The head of the software design team adds that “the idea of sharing our software or giving it away for free disappeared with Kevin Flynn”. This statement reflects the increasing distrust towards corporations and the dangers of exclusion endemic to the information age. Most significantly, it illustrates how unfettered control of information can make its gatekeepers rise to the status of virtual Gods, allowing them in their omnipresence to observe and manipulate “inferior” social groups; Jolly (1999, cited in Graham 2002, p. 70) reports:

The United Nations Human Development Programme ... records that ... only 0.2% of all internet access ... [is left] to the poorest 20% of the world’s population ... New information and communication technologies are driving globalisation – but polarising the world into the connected and the isolated.

Growing concerns over human rights and other violations enacted by governments and multinational companies have thus fuelled anti-globalist and anti-capitalist sentiment, as social groups and organisations galvanise against the corporate machine (Chatterton 2010).

The recent controversy surrounding Julian Assange’s widely covered “WikiLeaks” project is a prime example of this moral endeavour, as noted in *The Economist* (“Julian Assange and the new wave” 2011, p. 12). Wikileaks (2011, p. 1 of 4) utilises “cutting-edge cryptographic information technologies” as a tool of “investigative journalism” to make leaked material electronically available to the masses. This organisation as well as other web-based groups such as “Anonymous”, an organised international network of “hacktivists” which exposes corruption across the board, have highlighted not only the vast amount of critical information that remains undisclosed to the “common” citizenry, but the reality of *misinformation* (Galbraith 2011, p. 1 of 1). By exposing these exclusionary boundaries, such projects foster the accountability of political officials, corporate giants and other heavyweights, returning the power to the public by allowing them the opportunity to formulate an informed opinion and take responsibility as global citizens. The depiction of ENCOM’s insatiable fiscal ambition in the movie and its blatant disregard for the growing inaccessibility of its products to its consumers, highlights the increasing division in the face of capitalist sentiment, drive for profit and the advent of an exclusive omniscient information “ ‘techno-elite’ ” (Graham 2002, p. 70).

Tron: Legacy and its prequel join other films such as *Hackers* (1995) and *The Matrix* (1999), in which the portrayal of the hacker as a renegade fighting for equality in the access to information and/or unravelling the system and its control is a central feature. In *The Matrix* Keanu Reeves’ character, Thomas Anderson, leads a double life as a regular computer programmer by day and an

elusive hacker by the alias of “Neo” outside work. He goes on to discover the truth about the illusory nature of 21st century reality, depicted as the harvesting of human bodies as fuel for self-aware machines in a post-apocalyptic world order. With their cyber-identities these characters discover that the given systemic order which is corrupt, or even detrimental to the human condition, must be brought to light and combated. They live on the outer limits of socially prescribed existence, breaking traditional rules and regulations as revolutionary information freedom fighters.

Accordingly, in *Tron: Legacy*’s prequel *Tron* (1982), Kevin’s journey into the digital world begins with him hacking into the ENCOM mainframe to find proof that his work has been unjustly appropriated by his former employer. In a case of history repeating itself, it is by the use of his hacking skills that his son, Sam, accidentally enters the Tron universe in the arcade, finally realising his childhood dream to be inside the Grid with his father. Like Kevin, Sam uses his IT savvy to keep his power-hungry company on its toes. The CEO panics when Sam hacks into the system during the meeting and realises ENCOM’s most prized operating system is freely available on the internet. Sam’s prank goes beyond a mere representation of a young adrenaline-seeking “junkie” – it is an act of defiance against an unjust system and its control over free people. When the guard catches him on the roof of the building and vehemently warns him that “stealing is wrong”, Sam exclaims: “You can’t steal something that was designed to be free”. Sam represents the contemporary crusade for the open access to information, not as a luxury or as a mere expression of an innate yearning for omniscience, but as a fundamental God-given right for all humans, establishing these fictional heroes as saviour-figures of an ailing society.

On many levels the Grid is represented as a terrifying domain, transferring the uncertainty and fears of our times into cyberspace. The Grid cannot simply be viewed as a virtual utopia that disengages mind from body, plugging us into a superhuman digital alter ego; the threat of extinction is palpable throughout the film for all inhabitants of the Tron universe, programs and users alike, demonstrating the perils of the unconscious deployment of technologies and the rise of an info-dictatorship. This has significant implications for the dynamics of the Tron universe and its particular experience of technoculture. Contrary to the conventional perception of a virtual world, the Grid is profoundly real and so is the ecstasy, as well as the hazards that lie within it. Following Sam’s immediate apprehension upon arrival in the Grid he is fitted with a digital “identity disk” like all other programs – these are “vessels” of digital information and images of a program’s or user’s stored lived experience in the Grid. Armed with this disk, Sam is prepared for battle in a brutal life or death gladiatorial-like competition: “What am I supposed to do?” he asks –

“*Survive*”, responds one of the programs in the armory. *Tron: Legacy* reveals a world that is both treacherous and painful, creating the perfect conditions for the triumph of evil in a reality that mirrors our own – the Grid becomes a reflection of the current leanings of humanity in its irreverence of information, its use as a tool for control and punishment, and the futuristic dystopias that may arise from this disrepair.

The Tron universe may not strictly adhere to the physical laws of the terrestrial sphere, but the dynamics of relationships are entirely human; the anthropomorphisation of digital programs provides a unique opportunity to attribute psychological properties to otherwise lifeless concepts and explore the widespread ramifications of information technologies for humanity now, and into the future. The instinct to survive is not only a key driver for users in the Grid, but for human copies or programs. Their glass-like structure makes the threat of extinction in many respects far more pronounced. Like users, programs are susceptible to physical and emotional suffering; they despair, lust and dream, and can be paralysed by terror. This predisposition to malfunction or “disease” results in their regulation through their identity disks and persecution by Clu’s Recognisers, large vehicles operated by programs that patrol the Grid. The disk represents both one’s lifeblood and survival weapon in the Tron universe, revealing it as a signifier of Clu’s police state in this cyber-dystopia. When the Recogniser first captures Sam one of the enforcers ominously states: “This program has no disk – another stray”. This suggests a number of programs are attempting to break free from Clu’s dictatorship by removing, what is in effect, their tracking device – Clu is the pernicious evil of the Tron universe that degrades and destroys information organisms or “inforgs”, thrusting this technoscape into an endless nightmare of Floridian entropy and its needless suffering (Floridi 2007, cited in Bynum 2010, p. 438).

When Sam is in the armory and is fitted with his own disk, a voice in the background expounds:

Attention program: you will receive an identity disk. Everything you do or learn will be imprinted on this disk. If you lose your disk or fail to follow commands, you will be subject to immediate de-resolution.

This statement affirms the presence of mind-control in the Grid and cyberspace as an infoscape of horror ruled by a diabolical digital hand. The significance of the identity disk as an effective method of subjugation demonstrates how in a world “where information is the most valued good, it is difficult to have complete control over its sources unless one controls the very minds of the people that operate it” (Goicoechea 2008, p. 9). In this sense, the Grid represents the ultimate dystopian nightmare of not only being trapped in a world where we are mere animations of

ourselves, but information entities that are reduced to irreversible helplessness and perpetual surveillance.

***Tron: Legacy*, meet the *Mundus Imaginalis* – re-centralising the imagination and the crowning of imaginal data**

The origins of the dystopian propensity of digital narratives are located in the birth of the modern world – our postmodern age is rooted in the conflict between empirical doctrine and opposing discourses such as romanticism (Coyne 1999, p. 11). Under the vestige of Enlightenment thought and with the ascent of scientific instruction, the modern age saw a “progressive ... rationalization” of human consciousness and the acceptance of science and its disciplines as keepers of the dominant information flow (Coyne 1999, p. 5). “Data” derived from sources that could not be readily measured and observed, such as emotions and divine revelation, were undermined. The romantics and other groups offered a dissident voice to the stifling “dismemberment” of empiricism; they hailed a return to nature, creative thinking and the cosmic connection with all living things that oversteps the boundaries of reason (Von Schlegel 1860, cited in Coyne 1999, p. 5). Coyne (1999, p. 257) observes that “Empiricism and romanticism seem to collude” in technoromantic narratives, as the former sets the stage for the latter to flourish. Digital narratives and the virtual reality project provide a new avenue that reignites the interplay between reason and instinct, reality and fantasy, and science and religion in the interpretation of information.

Tron: Legacy is an attempt at a reconciliation of this historical scramble for human consciousness by reviving the notion of “*life ... [as] a dream*” through the platform of science (Lacan 1979, cited in Coyne 1999, p. 224). Kevin Flynn had a vision; he designed the Grid and actively conceptualised its architecture. “I kept dreaming ... dreaming of a world I thought I would never see; until one day ... I got in”, says Kevin to a young Sam. In the material sense, Kevin is physically transported into the digital world via a laser, his molecules split apart and recomposed perfectly on the other side. But there is one key component without which the materialisation of the Grid as a technoscape would not be possible. Contrary to the empiricist worldview, the romantics championed the “intangible world of the imagination” (Coyne 1999, p. 5). Kevin recalls: “I tried to picture clusters of information as they moved through the computer. What did they look like ... ships, motorcycles ... were the circuits like freeways?” – the primary access point then into this alternate universe, is “*the active imagination* [emphasis added]” (Corbin 1964, p. 8 of 16).

This is the “organ that permits penetration” into another realm and:

The migration that is the return *ab extra ad intra* (from the exterior to the interior), the topographical inversion ... It is neither the senses nor the faculties of the physical organism, nor is it the pure intellect, but it is that intermediate power whose function appears as the preeminent mediator ... It is the organ that permits the transmutation of internal spiritual states into external states, into vision-events symbolizing with those internal states. (Corbin 1964, pp. 7 & 8 of 16)

Technology provides an avenue for the materialisation of “celestial habitats” that have hitherto been the sole property of imaginative authority (Graham 2002, p. 72). The Grid did not emerge independent to the human imagination; it *needed* Kevin’s mind to be set up. On that account, the supremacy of creative cognitive faculties in the construction of the digital world, otherwise conceived of as a technological or digital information landscape, beckons the revisiting of the Grid as a dreamworld, or *dreamscape*. Indeed, when Kevin is accidentally transported into the Grid in the first movie he asks the digital program Ram – “Look, just so I can tell my friends what this dream is about, okay? ... Where am I?”. A reading of contemporary accounts of progress such as *Tron: Legacy* thus could not be complete without the consideration of the historical marginalisation of modes of thought which have stood in opposition to the conventional order, signalling a chance for the reinstatement of the sidelined world of fantasy as a valid measure of human consciousness and source of information.

The presence of antagonistic forces in humanity’s psychosocial history reverberates into its futuristic aspirations. An examination of any digital narrative as a result and the framing of the Grid as a dreamscape, necessarily involves an investigation of the “residency of the real” and the primordial evolutionary battle between “unity and multiplicity” (Coyne 1999, pp. 6 & 258). This abiding dichotomy has found expression in an array of ideologies throughout the ages; within the scope of Cartesian rationalism the existence of a dominant reality or truth revealed by the tools of scientific sensibility cast aside any notion of co-habitation, marking the advent of the modern world (Coyne 1999, p. 5). But computers and technoromantic narratives have become gateways to a multitude of universes and a mirror into the infinite forms and expressions of information, exposing the subjective nature of reality – Coyne (1999, p. 9) contends that:

Information technology is intimately bound to language, and hence interpretation ... If words correspond to things, then the words, codes, and symbol strings in a computer can represent the world and construct new worlds.

This capacity of the cyber-realm to become a portal into alternative information cosmos is a defining element of Kevin’s digital creation. The “mysterious place” that is Tron cyberspace “is by no means among those that empirical geography can verify; it cannot be situated on our maps. This place “outside a place”, nonetheless, has its own topography” (Corbin 1964, p. 12 of 16). The

very meaning of the word “grid” denotes “a network of horizontal ... and perpendicular lines ... for locating points on a map” (Dictionary.com Unabridged 2011, p. 3 of 5).

The Grid features as a navigation system – as a story of genesis, *Tron: Legacy* is the story of the creation and discovery of a new world. A user is likened to the explorers of the 16th century who ventured into unmarked continents. The creation and use of a map is a necessity to any such journey when travelling into undiscovered lands, in this case, the uncharted territories of an unprecedented technologically constructed information network. By the same token, the fantasy genre’s “transgressive indeterminacy against the Cartesian system” renders it completely accessible to this inversion of normality (Etxeberria 2008, p. 1). World-building is the cornerstone of all fantasy texts and the establishment of their cosmogonies, as the reader/viewer becomes immersed in alternate realities. The “privileged” status of images in the Tron universe as the only source of information materialises “a new vision of inner and outer reality”, thus lending digital narratives readily to a romantic enterprise for the union of “hard” science and the ethereal cognizance of the imagination in the evolution of consciousness within the cybernetic realm (Baudrillard 1981, cited in Etxeberria 2008, p. 7).

In recognising this multiplicity of social universes and webs of information, Jungians such as Adams (2004) pronounce the pivotal role of the interminable ebb and flow of human fantasies in their construction. Adams (2004, p. 5) offers an alternative to the empiricist and arguably autocratic rule of the Freudian “reality principle” to which reason obeys and serves; under its guise fantasy is a disease to be eradicated, or at best, a declaration of repressed unfulfilled wishful thinking. But a re-examination of the place of the imagination and information in society alludes to a radical interpretation of human consciousness. Contrary to the less ambitious comprehension of the imagination and its application in dreaming, fantasy for Jung (1953, cited in Adams 2004, p. 5) in volume 18 of his *Collected Works* is not perceived of as a state *outside* normality which needs to be brought in line or even cured – rather fantasy, both conscious and unconscious, is upheld as “a natural expression of life”.

If the psyche is the source of creation of reality and “image is psyche”, then imagination and fantasy are the building blocks of life itself (Jung 1967, cited in Adams 2004, p. 5). In essence, Adams (2004, p. 6) interprets that “For Jung, the image is not secondary and derivative from external reality but is primary and constitutive of it”. In this primacy of the image lies the foundation of Adams’ (2004, p. 16) “*fantasy principle*” as a potent remedy to the reality principle’s stronghold:

... the conviction that fantasy is logically prior to reality, that the psyche, or the imagination, constructs reality, and that the image says what it means and means what it says.

Herein lies the vital link between image and information. Seife (2006, cited in Bynum 2010, p. 425), like other information philosophers, contends that “everything in the universe must obey the laws of information, because everything in the universe is shaped by the information it contains” – *as with fantasy then, information also is primary and constitutive of reality*. The exchange and transmutation of information flows is an irrevocable process, making the energy emanating from information entities and the configuration of the material world fluid and highly malleable. These “*quantum bits*” may simultaneously be “extended *and* discrete, positive *and* negative” (Wheeler 1990, cited in Bynum 2010, p. 425). Contrary to Enlightenment heritage, this reality is in perpetual motion, whether it is apparent or not – this creative state of informational flux is guided by and immersed in the energy shifts vibrating from data feedback and its dissemination from our very molecular structure, embedded in this vast knowledge network and all its inter-connected parts. Hence understanding the roots of our information era in the legacy of the hyper-rational Cartesian subject highlights the difficulty that we face in redefining the place of fantasy and its correlates in our lives, such as myth and narrative, and ultimately the historical trajectory of the development of our consciousness.

The implications of the fantasy principle and information theory are momentous, signalling that “the “real” was never *real*” as observed by Jung (1953, cited in Adams 2004, p. 6) in volume 11 of his *Collected Works*, and the disruption of the clearly demarcated boundaries between fact and fiction. Corbin’s (1964, p. 1 of 16) work on the interpretation of Arabic and Persian texts led him to reconceptualise our understanding of the domain of the extra-ordinary beyond the “*imaginary*”. The absence of a term in the English language that illuminates the meaning of a world which transcends the normative gave rise to the coining of Corbin’s (1964, cited in Samuels 2003, p. 1 of 15) “*mundus imaginalis*”, or the “*imaginal world* [emphasis added]”. Corbin (1964, p. 1 of 16) is quick to draw a distinction between the imaginary and the imaginal; the former relates to the culturally constructed Western perception of the fictitious “utopian” property of the unconventional. In contrast, the *mundus imaginalis* refers to a “precise order of reality corresponding to a precise mode of perception” (Corbin 1964, p. 1 of 16). For Adams (2004, p. 7), as for Jungians, “the imaginal is real”. The simultaneous presence of the external and the digital worlds does not render one more authentic than the other; indeed, the former is not uniform, but divided into many sub-realities. All are equally valid, comprising their own unique points of access, specific modes of awareness and information content – in “Jungian analysis there is no

criterion of “imaginal correctness” ” (Adams 2004, p. 7). There may be one “external” reality but multiple imaginal worlds – the Grid then is but one of these, as is our concept of the “real” world as we perceive it.

This “*imaginal relativity*” of reality to fantasy has significant relevance at the historical level (Adams 2004, p. 8). Adams (2004, p. 6) contends that “*the imaginal deconstruction of reality is just as important as the imaginal construction of it*” – in the auspices of the digital dreamscape of the Tron universe the “arbitrarily privileged” world of empiricist rationalism is dismantled (Adams 2004, p. 8). The presence of Clu’s Recognisers and their principal role as surveyors of the information flow in the Tron universe and reformers of stray programs whose identity disks are deemed to be flawed, is a representation of empiricism’s obedience to a single authority. Programs that dare to venture from the imposed order become subjected to an imaginal rectification; this is exposed and resisted with the arrival of Sam who, as a user, represents an ideal of freedom in his capacity to make and break the rules of the game and thus the data stream of this technoscape. The notion of relativity implies that much of what we take for granted as rational, may in fact be *irrational*. This indicates that, as information organisms, perhaps *we* are the programs controlled through our identity disks, policed and punished, erased, or re-programmed if we stray. The moment we reject these conditions and embark on actively imagining and working towards an alternate world we begin to create its landscape, as in the case of the Grid. Cyberspace therefore becomes an ideal playground for the “dethroning of “Mr. Reality” ” and the crowning of the imaginal and its creative data, highlighting the impact of advanced technologies not only in their making and remaking of realities, but information flows and consciousness (Adams 2004, p. 4).

The destabilisation of the supremacy of a single reality as the only valid mode of perception facilitates the re-evaluation of seemingly disparate information networks and their composition on a level field. Both the Grid as a dreamscape and the material world are constructs – following Wiener’s (1948, cited in Goicoechea 2008, p. 4) “cybernetic theory” they are similar in the sense that they contain their own distinct frameworks within the “boundaries” of their respective “culturally constructed” locales. Extending our understanding of the Grid beyond a simple reading of it as virtual space but as an evolving construct, calls for the theorising of dreamscapes as concrete attainable realms of information and experience. Dreams are arguably not abstract concepts – they are like living breathing organisms and continually expanding intricate systems of information and consciousness.

When Sam asks his father how he created such a vast universe, Kevin replies that he merely set up the framework; the rest unfolded independently. Kevin was the architect of this particular dreamscape – but as all elaborate structures it evolved on its own, developing forms of (artificial) life, such as the ISOs. Cyber-dreamscapes can be analogised to “The way biological organisms organize themselves”, as in the case of the behaviour of ant colonies which are “able to construct complex ... mounds” in the absence of any discernible consolidated direction (Coyne 1999, p. 3). Like a single ant, each cluster of information within the digital universe “operates locally with no apparent plan for the whole, and yet the whole [Grid] ... is able to construct complex” artificial life forms without “the need for centralized, hierarchical, and autocratic” systems of control, unlike Clu’s model of dictatorship and information censorship (Coyne 1999, p. 3). Their manifestation is evidence of the imaginal world’s expression of the psyche’s spontaneous inherent ability to generate images with definitive intent and direction.

This renders the dreaming space a self-sufficient and self-driven entity. At the same time, however, it is specific to an individual vision and subject to its creator’s “*imaginative power*” (Corbin 1964, p. 8 of 16). Hence, maker and dream are bound to each other – both Kevin’s destiny and that of the Grid’s are interchangeable. The Grid would not be possible without Kevin’s active will and imagining of this technoworld into existence. Concurrently, through the evolution of Kevin’s digital copy into its own personality Kevin’s fate was equally impacted, as was the Grid’s landscape by the unplanned appearance of the ISOs. As a self-replicating network with both information and images forming the interchangeable foundations of its primary constitution, the Grid thus reveals its instrumentality by becoming a paradigm for all consciousness building, from which lessons can be learnt on the imagining of informational utopias both past and future.

Dreaming the Information Evolution – “new” science and new possibilities

Could information theory and the fantasy principle be the solution to escaping the barren wasteland of an information impoverished landscape and reversing the bleak foretelling of humanity’s destiny inherited by the 20th century world (Adams 2004)? The historical battle between dual forces has illuminated the postmodern Western mind’s rudimentary inability to comprehend the concept of the imaginal world, the informational essence of its structure and our very being as a manifestation of the sacred in the everyday, as well as the undeveloped associated cognitive abilities essential to such a mode of perception. The imaginal world’s repression resulting from the advent of instrumental rationality and the suppression of contradictory modes of thought, has rendered imaginative cognition in its daily application latent in humans. The

examination of what might lie beyond postmodernism then is a project which necessarily involves the *re-organisation of space, time and resources*, whether mental or physical, towards the affirmation and acknowledgment of specific identities. Digital narratives may play an integral role in this exercise; indeed, Graham (2002, p. 72) argues that “Cyberspace ... is indeterminate, in that it ‘suspends ‘normal’ conventions of body, space, time and place”. *Tron: Legacy* as a science fiction text and cultural critique therefore calls for the championing of a new mode of perception founded on both sophisticated creative faculties and a distilled scientific sensibility, and their adaptation in the imaginal consciousness.

What does this advanced state of perception mean for the re-mapping of the human condition in light of the digital landscape’s innate transgressive properties? The historical contextualisation of the creation of the Grid is the expression of cyberspace as a technological medium in which information can unify humankind beyond conventional boundaries of time, place and culture, thus featuring as a type of divine space. McTaggart (2009) supports that 21st century science is slowly but surely dismantling our pre-conceptions; a growing body of evidence is now amassing, awakening us to a universe that is far more complex yet inter-connected than hitherto thought. Our understanding of quantum theory only recently limited to the study of tiny particles is now applicable to the cosmos in its totality, leading the way to the discovery of a primordial world-view (McTaggart 2009, pp. 1 & 2 of 3). Modern science had led us to perceive the universe as “bits of matter moving about following the classical laws of mechanistic cause and effect in otherwise empty and passive space” (László 2009, p. 1 of 2). But a growing body of evidence reveals that “all matter exists in a vast quantum web of connection and that an information transfer constantly carries on between living things and their environment” – and so emerges an “intelligent and purposeful” universe (McTaggart 2009, pp. 1 & 2 of 3).

This “paradigm shift” stretches far beyond a “divisive, God-denying matter-based science” (Goswami 2009, p. 1). In such a spectrum of knowledge, DNA and the human brain figure not as the “body’s central conductors” as previously accepted, but as conduits of “quantum information picked up from ‘The Field’ ”, which is actively and effectively “configuring and evolving in space and time” (McTaggart 2009, p. 1 of 3; László 2009, p. 1 of 2). This emerging narrative of scientific promise is mending the historical divide between science and religion by proving the existence of God. Such research offers a voice of resistance to the intransigent type of science which has predominated since Enlightenment thinking, and has monopolised the shape of humanity for over three centuries (McTaggart 2009, pp. 2 & 3 of 3). In these “miraculous terms” information fields are sacred fields – the universal door is open to all and the language of

information is the language of the Spirit in constant conversation with us (McTaggart 2009, p. 2 of 3).

The connection between this new informational perspective and imaginal consciousness is undeniable – it is a call to “*imagine* ... an entirely new way to ‘be’ [emphasis added]” (McTaggart 2009, p. 3 of 3). Chopra (2007, p. 6 of 6) contends that “Survival of the wisest means a shift in consciousness” – given the centrality of both information and image to the configuration of the universe and dreamscapes, the capacity to form and interpret images, both internal and external, is critical to a posthuman sensibility in a new age. As the highest level of awareness, the reintegrated soul is the arch creator of all realities and data networks – Chopra (2005, p. 4 of 5) identifies the soul as a “Field of infinite possibilities” it is “Omniscient”, “Embraces uncertainty”, is an “Infinite source of creativity” and “Co-creates with God”. This inherent human capacity for co-creation with Spirit – the source of universal architecture and intelligent design of our data wiring – and our creative active responsibility as information agents lies at the heart of the philosophy of conscious evolution (Hubbard n.d., p. 1 of 1).

These five core elements could provide the foundations for the development of a *dream systems theory* that would detail the mechanisms of active dreaming as a tangible system of knowledge, and a methodical yet creative information-gathering mission and form of human action. Firstly, the dream-maker must actively envision and construct their personal fantasy; hard work, research and diligence are essential to the shaping of dreamscapes. Further, fantasies are driven by the dream-maker’s divine inspiration, indicative of the soul’s natural conspiring with Spirit. Operating on instinct is a key element to this process, as is allowing their consciousness to be open to the infinite possibilities as a small conduit in the vast field of interconnected webs of information. Finally, the image-maker must be willing and prepared to accommodate chaos as an inevitability. If they do not, the dreamscape’s full materialisation and their own survival as an information organism is at stake.

An extension of Chopra’s (2005) description of the soul as a perpetuation and acceptance of uncertainty, chaos is central to the conscious evolution of the Grid. The ISOs were unplanned – an element of disorder in a structured, planned Tron universe. They are described as “flowers in a wasteland” by Kevin, an embodiment of multi-dimensionalism as “profoundly native [yet] ... unimaginably wise”, and a perfect expression of the miracle of divine creation. So too was the transport of Sam into the Grid; it threw order into chaos, creating a domino effect as all the pieces of the game were cast into disarray, disturbing Clu’s impulse for control and forcing him and all

players to adapt. When Kevin is finally ready to come out of his seclusion following Sam's arrival he remarks to Quorra, the last surviving ISO: "Chaos ... a good thing". As a harbinger of change, chaos is the very definition of the field of infinite possibilities; however, its purpose is defined by the reinstatement of order and vice versa, as both inescapably co-exist. This paradigm which incorporates the ISO's childlike wonder and inclusivity of the world with the grounded reasoning of realist thinking and adult sensibility, therefore demonstrates how imaginal consciousness and the fantasy principle are instrumental to the conscious evolution of information organisms, as the image-maker regains control and takes their place next to Godliness.

The application of the fantasy principle as a way of life and its translation into a "dream systems theory" with image-information as its guiding light, can be instrumental to this personal rebirth. Ricoeur (1981, cited in Adams 2004, p. 179) asserts that stories allow us to enter "*a proposed world* which I could inhabit and wherein I could project one of my ownmost possibilities". It is likely that only through a futuristic mindset, the detailed imaginative construction of alternative scenarios of existence and the specific composition of their data via the creative application of the fantasy principle, that we can attain an informed refined level of posthumanity. One must compare against various versions of oneself to keep growing, rather than being complacent in one's present being. This should not imply being non-accepting of oneself and succumbing to the trappings of greed, but rather, envisioning a better future with a sense of humility before the sacred unknown, whilst infusing a sense of wonder into the present moment. Nostalgia for the past is a likely barrier to transition; hence, a romanticised notion of the past must be replaced with a romanticised notion of the future as a means of letting go and *allowing* ourselves to move forward. *Tron: Legacy* joins other landmark science fiction narratives such as *Dune* (1984) which champion the pioneering imaginative spirit, creative chaos and the role of new information as the backbone to the enrichment of the spirit, notwithstanding the dangers involved: "A person needs new experiences ... they draw something deep inside, allowing him [sic] to grow ... Without change, something sleeps inside us ... and seldom awakens... *The Sleeper must awaken*".

Hillman (1938, cited in Adams 2004, p. 179) has observed that "the person with a sense of story built in from childhood is in better shape than one who has not had stories"; the child "can imagine life, and not only think, feel, perceive or learn it". Sam was immersed in the story of the Tron universe as a child by his father. It is in this instilling of his imaginal consciousness from which his rebellious, adventurous spirit and the capacity to not only dream for a better world but to fight for it stem. The guard that catches Sam on the rooftop in this respect depicts the status quo with his conservatism and fear of life outside the boundaries of the known. Sam, like his father, is a

visionary who possesses a revolutionary ethos that is arguably sorely lacking as a way of life. Perhaps by tapping into this, beginning to use our imaginal cognitive faculties and applying the fantasy principle in the here and now, we may be revived from our deep sleep and become active information agents in an all-encompassing creative field of consciousness.

Conclusion

The absence of dreams is arguably dangerous – it is these internal vision events and their narration of the journey of human consciousness that provide a reference point for what is truly important. If life is a dream, and dream is life, our dreams are the very heartbeat of our soul and the cosmos. Our survival as a species could be at stake if we do not awaken to the shifting reality that is taking place at this very moment, no matter how sobering that process may be. We are “creature(s)” of the “earth”, “creature(s) of information”; and we are creatures of the eternal dream (Seife 2006, cited in Bynum 2010, p. 425). Yet the tremendous gift we stand to inherit from this renewed way of life does not come lightly. As quantum science indicates, we must choose responsibly the direction we take as information agents; for there is a fine thread separating good and evil informational flow and its energy, as the cyber-terror of science fiction texts such as *Tron: Legacy* indicate. Accordingly, information and its abuse can serve as a precursor to the descent of humanity into the depths of the abyss – or, its reverence as a means to come together for the achievement of a higher sensibility. As this strange new world comes into view information is sanctified and incarnated into imaginal data, permeating all life, and becoming an access point to God.

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