

Philosophy of Technology, Fall 2021

Midterm

Date Due: March 18, 1:30pm (Shanghai time)

Late Penalty: All files submitted after this time will receive an F

Submission Details:

- Files **must** include your full name and NetID.
- Files **must** be formatted as PDF.
- Files **must** be named as follows: <netid>midterm.pdf (so for example bw68midterm.pdf for NetID bw68).
- Files may be submitted by drag and drop through the course website, or by sending as an attachment to the email address:
ug.kthkdoo430fuahow@u.box.com

Part 1

Answer **4 of the following questions (20 points each)**. Each answer should be between 300–500 words.

- What is keeping the prisoners trapped in Plato's cave? What hope do they have of escape?
- How does Descartes arrive at the claim that "[The] proposition *I am, I exist*, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me" (*Second Meditation*), and what are the standards for knowledge that Descartes takes this proposition to exemplify?
- What does Leibniz mean when he says that "every monad is a mirror of the universe in its way" (*Monadology*, §63)?
- What does it mean to say that Kant is a transcendental idealist but an empirical realist?
- Kai-Yuan Cheng is critical of both epistemological and skeptical interpretations of Zhuangzi. How does he interpret Zhuangzi's dream of a butterfly?
- What are the two forms of argument that Vasubandhu uses to defend his claim that the world is perception only?

Part 2

Answer the following question in an essay between 750-1000 words **(20 points)**.

In his forthcoming book on the virtual and the real, NYU philosopher David Chalmers writes the following on the film *The Matrix*:

“The main character Neo lives an ordinary life until he takes a red pill and wakes up in another world where he is told that the world he knew was a simulation. If Neo had thought as deeply as Zhuangzi, he might have wondered: maybe my old life was the reality, and my new life is the simulation. That would be a perfectly reasonable thing for him to think. Where his old world was a world of drudgery, his new world is a world of battles and adventure where he is treated as a savior. Maybe the red pill knocked him out just long enough for him to be hooked up to this exciting simulation”

Draw on **exactly 2 philosophers** that we have read to reflect on the situation presented in *The Matrix*. You may—but are not required to—engage with the passage above from Chalmers.

The film is available here:

<https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/nyu305164/watch/DF7320A07CEA18B7>