

## **"THE MANY MEANINGS OF THE MATRIX"**

**with Larry Wachowski and Ken Wilber**

Ken: You yourself have not talked about your interpretation of The Matrix trilogy or what you were attempting to say, because you didn't want it to become dogma, in other words you wanted people to be free to interpret the movies the way they wanted to, and they have the freedom to do that, and as soon as the movie-maker gets up and says "This is the meaning of The Matrix, and this is the source", this really limits people, I think it's a very wise thing to do...

Larry: Yeah, I mean, you make a work of art, and you want it to be provocative, you want people to dialog about it, [Ken: Right.] you don't want them to rely on somebody to tell them what it is, or... it's like, the whole nature of the movie is exactly that... inspect it and pursue it yourself...

Ken: Right.

Larry: Yeah, it seems hypocritical for us to go out and tell everybody what it's supposed to be about, or what you're supposed to think about it, and even if I was to do it, or Andy was to do it, and in the gentlest of terms and try to contextualize it as what it means to us...

Ken: Right.

Larry: It... because, by the very nature of us being the creators of it, it becomes, you know, law...

Ken: Right.

Larry: ... it becomes THE interpretation, and anyone else's interpretation is just... some crazy individual that really doesn't get it.

Ken: Right, right.

Larry: I don't wanna devalue anybody's opinion of it, because they're all... that's, I don't know, I think that's one of the reasons that art is a worthwhile experience...

Ken: So, you decline to do the traditional director's commentary over the films, so, Warners then suggested, that...

Larry: They had a bunch of, like, typical DVD commentary ideas, and, you know, we found, you know, we found most commentary pretty mundane, pretty boring, pretty pleonastic, pretty shallow...

Ken: Right.

Larry: ...and, you know, I'm not very interested in most commentary, and so I started thinking about it and talked about it with Andy and we were like, oh, what would be interesting? And so, we had this idea that... trying to create tracks that reflected our hope for the movie, which would be that the the movie would inspire people to think about it...

Ken: Right.

Larry: ...and inspire dialog about everything... [they laugh] And so, we thought that basically demonstrating the range of dialogs that the movie has inspired would inspire its own dialog about not only The Matrix, but the way that we talk about art...

Ken: Right.

Larry: ...and so, suddenly, the commentary wouldn't be just about The Matrix, it would be about something bigger, something larger, it would have a larger scope to it, and er, so we told Warner Brothers that... "GREAT!" [Ken laughs] But, I mean, how we would go about doing it is getting two critics to talk about the movie, who hated the movie...

Ken: Right. [laughs]

Larry: ...and two philosophers who saw the movie and were inspired by the movie, and juxtapose those two different dialogs against each other, and Warner Brothers was like "You wanna put... let me get this straight..." [Ken starts laughing loudly] "...you wanna put two critics who hated the movie, talking about the movie for six hours?" "Yeah!" [Ken continues to laugh] And, you know, not only because I think it will be interesting, and, the dialog, the internal way that they've come to these opinions will be interesting...

Larry: ...it will be interesting to see how the critic talks about the movie, and, that they don't like, and they don't see anything in it, and then it'll be interesting seeing how two philosophers would talk about it, and see something in it, and see something that works in it...

Ken: Right.

Larry: ...and listening to those two perspectives, I think will be inherently interesting...

Ken: Yeah, yeah. So that's what were gonna do and as you know it's sort of, erm, it puts me in a somewhat awkward position because you and I have an agreement. We spent hours discussing what I think the films mean, what you yourself, your own interpretation of the film. We have an understanding that I'm not gonna discuss your interpretation of the film with anybody, that that's a private thing, and you and a few friends talk about it and we're keeping that, you know, to ourselves, so to speak. At the same time, I'm being asked to give my interpretation for public, but I've already done that and you already came up here with a film crew and shot three hours of me giving my blow by blow interpretation of all three. As you know, I think it's incredibly gutsy because the whole key to the Matrix trilogy, this is my interpretation, is given in really in the last fifteen, twenty minutes of the third film, that the rosetta stone is when Neo, for example, is saying of the machines, "If you could only see them like I see em...they're all light. They're made of light", and so on... That interpretation is the key to all three of the films, and it's incredibly gutsy, because film number one...that, so many people sort of relate to film number one because it makes sense -- you think it makes sense if you don't see the other two, it seems a very simple story if you look at just film one. It's very Manichean actually, which is, everything in the matrix is bad, everything outside of the matrix is good, everybody in the matrix is trapped, everybody outside of the matrix is free, and that very simple kinda dualistic thing, the machines are bad and they're trying to hurt freedom and so on...and so everybody goes wow that's great, and then you go and you watch part two, and you get in to about the part where Neo's talking to the Oracle and says "you're not human are you?", she goes "No." "You're a program aren't you?" "Yeah." And everybody starts scratching their head because now all of a sudden we're taken, and I've told you this, in months, in my opinion,

we're taken out of the realm of movie and into the realm of complex literature, because this is a very sophisticated plot now with a whole lot of pieces and a lot of the pieces of the puzzle aren't really given until that last part of the third film. And that's where you kind of, all of a sudden, things really start to fall into place. They start to fall into place with the speech from the Architect, they start to fall into place actually when the first speech from the Oracle, first talk with the Oracle, er, Smith is a real key to all of this, anyway, it's that overall interpretation which is really that body, mind and spirit appear in the Matrix trilogy both in their alienated forms and then in their resurrected or healed or more integrated forms, which happens towards the end of the third part. And that's why it's very confusing to some people if they don't get that overall big picture, that's why sorta part one makes sense and then they get lost a little bit in part two and part three. So, so I sorta stuck to that interpretation, as you know, when Josh was filming here at the La [?] but then I find myself every now and then, you know, having to kinda bite my lip and say, whoa, I happen to know that Larry agrees with me on this part, or something like that [Laughs], because I wanted to say...

Larry: That's what I was saying, it's like, it just becomes a natural validation.

Ken: I know. [laughs]

Larry: I'm here to say that your opinion is whacked! [both laugh]

Ken: "I don't know that tall skinny guy, he just came in off the street and started talking to Cornel, we have no bloody idea who he is." Um, we've talked about the nature of interpretation as well, and the sort of more integral a context you have, the more certain similar meanings can start to emerge for somebody, and, we, you know, you and I both are, you know, we're integrally informed. I mean, we share a passion for that sort of integral approach. So I think, without giving any of the things away, there's certain, certain areas of this, you know, overall production that you and I certainly see eye to eye on.

Larry: Yeah, and you know, I..., the third movie, is, it has its revelation moments, but they're all based on things that have been built up through all three movies...

Ken: Certainly.

Larry: The beginnings, the little tiny introductions to each film has kind of a reflection of what each movie is about... and, you know, we say, we sort of, in those little tiny prefaces to each film, we kind of tell the audience where we are in the journey of development...

Ken: Right.

Larry: I mean, the Matrix is an exploration of consciousness, those little tiny bits and pieces at the beginning of each of the films sort of, tries to help you map it out a little bit...

Ken: Right. That to me is what makes it, like I say, such rich literature, that there's just multiple levels of meaning and I think that the critics have missed it on that basis, when they don't stand back and see a bigger picture they are free to criticise it in any way they want for the same reason as anybody is free to interpret in anyway...

Larry: Yeah, I'm hoping that there will be some level of, that the problem will be somewhat self-evident, that, you know, in a way that you describe things as having an interior and an exterior, the way that the Matrix kinda is in a lot of ways about that, and the exterior tends to remain very obvious, very surface based, observation based. And I'm kind of hoping that these two dialogs that'll

be juxtaposed will be kind of about an exterior and an interior, and the critics will be essentially interested in surfaces, and philosophers will be interested in interiors.

Ken: Well let's certainly hope so, but, you know, we'll just go down there, and bash around...

Larry: Yeah.

Ken: Hmm, are you and your dad still reading SES? [Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution 1995]

Larry: Yeah.

Ken: Very cool.

Larry: We're about half way through it.

Ken: Very cool.

Larry: It's very good, sorta very good, very interesting sort of discussion about you and what I perceive to be, er, your relationship to Hegel, which could be completely wrong [Ken laughs], I kinda went on the riff [?] with him about it.

Ken: Does he have an interest in that?

Larry: Did he?

Ken: Yeah.

Larry: Yeah, of course, we talked about it, and, er, it's definitely, I would say, the book that has the most in it [Ken: Yeah.], that I got the most out of and that has kind of, I think, the clearest... developed the clearest, book...

Ken: Yeah. Yeah, I think what happened with SES, it was the first, really the first book... that, all of the books leading up to that were in a sense dealing with a particular piece of what that book pulls together, to kinda integrate them all, and something sorta changed for me at that point because, seeing that more, kind of comprehensive picture brought just a really great deal of clarity [Larry: Yeah.] ... that, my god, there's just so much of it, and sometimes people get, by the time they get to chapter five or six they've forgotten chapter one or two, three...

Larry: Oh you're pretty good about going back, I mean that, this solid tradition of I think good writers that write in these veins, they remind you when you have to be reminded [Ken: Yeah.] They create their own language and they remind you of the definitions of the language when you need to have a reminder [Ken: Right.] I don't think many people [laughs] well I love that in this book you can struggle with very difficult concepts, and then there'll be a sentence where you'll use a word like SUPERSPECIALLY [They laugh] as a technical defining term... [More laughter]

Ken: But your interest goes back to all of these, I mean the people that are dealt with in that book like Hegel and Nietzsche and Plotinus and all that, this is a love of yours, I mean this is something you've been interested in, in really ages like I was, I mean, it's all kind of coming together in a certain sense...

Larry: Yeah, well I mean, I've been looking, looking for a reason [They laugh] which is,...I was talking to my father about it, it's like with the four quadrants, what still holds the quadrants together is still that zero, that omega point, that center of the x-y axis, right? There's not four Big Bangs, there's only one [Ken: Right.], and it sits there exactly in the center, but it's interesting in some ways that's the only, I mean, that's why Schopenhauer is so dead on, is like that point is the only point worth talking about in some regards, 'cause it's the beginning of it all, it unites all four quadrants, it pulls everything together. If you don't have it, then they're all separate again [Ken: Exactly.] and it's all nothing. But, you can't... if you make it entirely about that then you are making it about nothing, because you can't know.

Ken: Right, and that sort of, that empty ground is the same as that original point [Larry: Yeah.], which is your original face...

Larry: Yeah. So it's interesting that you talk like he does, like Schopenhauer does, you can talk so well about the quadrants [besides: "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung" has also four parts and there's some correlation with Wilber's terminology] and yet, when you talk about the thing that holds them all together it becomes difficult to talk about.

Ken: Yeah. Well, and that's the thing that holds them all together is, it's not something, you know, it's not another quadrant in addition to those, it's not something outside of it. I sometimes say that it's the page on which the diagram is written, or something like that, but that's just another...

Larry: I think it's the origin point of them, the thing that pulls, the thing that allows you to say that they're all, these four quadrants relate to each other, and are not just separate things...

Ken: I agree.

Larry: ...holding up by themselves. The thing that holds them is that zero point...

Ken: Exactly, and that zero point...

Larry: That was the... in the beginning of the third movie when there's like... we're like: "How do we start the third movie?" ...which is gonna talk about the things that are so hard to talk about [Ken: Right.] it's like: Ok, you go to black and then you have to have a moment of Big Bang and that's the origin of everything, the origin of thought, the origin of consciousness, whatever it is, in that moment it's like 'from that nothing to everything' is everything... [Ken laughs]

Ken: And that's the same origin point...

Larry: Yeah.

Ken: Absolutely, I agree, yeah. There's a great line, that, everybody knows ontogeny and phylogeny, but there's also microgeny, which means the moment to moment movement through the sequence, and so, for example if I see an apple, the microgenetic movement is, there's an impulse, there's an impression, there's a simple sensation, then I form an image, that I might think about an apple as a concept and then I can have my personal reactions to it, et cetera.

Larry: Yeah.

Ken: And microgeny recapitulates ontogeny which recapitulates phylogeny which recapitulates cosmology. So from the Big Bang up to this moment is all that same sequence of the unfolding of

the four quadrants but it's also repeated moment to moment out of that empty origin, right now, moment to moment. And that's the interesting thing about it because when you discover your original face, the face you had before the Big Bang, then you've discovered that moment as well - that's the satori moment, that's realising this radical self that's all-embracing and all-encompassing - out of that moment to moment all that thing's emerged, all the quadrants emerged, all the levels, all the lines, that same origin point that you're talking about, and that is what holds the quadrants together, because the quadrants are just dimensions or aspects of that origin, moment to moment, this very moment now.

Larry: Yeah.

Ken: And you gave a pictorial representation of that at the beginning of the third...

Larry: Well, we tried to. [Ken laughs]

Ken. But you've been interested in this as long as I have, in terms of, you know, the span of your adult life. When you and I first talked on the phone, when we first connected, as you know, we spent three and a half hours, and it was just non-stop talking about all these things, and it's so, um...

Larry: Couple of chatty cabbies [?] [Laughter] Well you know, it was like one of those great moments where you meet someone, and you talk, and you have a confirmation or a validation about, about the world [Ken: Right.] It's like you have connection, you have instantly a feeling of fellowship or community, [Ken: Right.] and, it was nice, nice feeling, it's a nice feeling...

Ken: On going...

Larry: Yeah. It's interesting too, that, I was talking to my friend Jeff, artist on the Matrix, and talking about how human beings have this, you know, we're social, we're social animals, it's like, so much of our reality is our construction based on communication. We have a point of view about the world and we validate it through finding another human being that has a similar point of view, and thus we say ahhh! [Ken laughs] You know, it's like, because we can't really know anything, [Ken: Yeah, yeah.] so if we just get enough people together, we can believe in castles in the sky...

Ken: Right.

Larry: Until I get this tape back... [Ken laughs loudly] I realise that I sound like a dork! [Ken laughs] Reciprocity is what it is -- it's what friendships are based on, you help me with this DVD, I talk to you, I don't talk to people, you don't talk to people...

Ken: That's right.

Larry: We're showing how much we care...

Ken: [laughing] Mutual extortion!

Larry: Yeah! Mutual extortion... Mutual exploitation!

Ken: But I think, I think this is very sweet though, is that, seriously, I don't think either one of us would be doing this if we hadn't really struck up an almost immediate resonance, because, as you know, I've turned down doing anything public at all, whatsoever for over twenty-five years, and

doing an interview on tape, on film for you and Josh was the first time I've done this, and you don't talk about this stuff to anybody, which is well known, and so I...

Larry: Well, we have a very similar outlook on the nature of celebrity and public [Ken: Right.] experience of it - that it's not such a great thing... [Ken laughs]

Ken: But, I mean, what's so amazing is how... well, I mean, it's pretty easy to understand how an academic philosopher can avoid the limelight, but, how, you know, the codirector and writer of the most astonishing movie experience of the last several decades can avoid the limelight... You were talking about when you were over in Japan for one of the openings and [laughs] they're like [laughs]... you know every body else is...

Larry: Yeah we're actually standing next to press row...

Ken: Exactly...

Larry: Like the entire row of like cameras and video cameras and all these reporters are standing there and we're like standing right next to 'em...

Ken: Right... [laughs]

Larry: And everyone's like and... this woman is watching as Carrie-Anne and Keanu come down the aisle and they're all taking pictures and very excited and, then Joel Silver comes down the aisle and she's like...

Ken: The producer...

Larry: you know gets very excited who's standing next to me this Japanese woman she's like [Japanese accent impersonation, breathes hard] "It's Joel Silver! Joel Silver! Joel Silver!" \*Ken and Larry laugh\* I'm like "Ohhh... who's he?" She's like... [laughter]

Ken: She's elbowing \*you\* and saying "look! look! There's the producer!" Oh God! And you're sitting there... you're, you're appropriately excited of course? [Ken continues laughing]

Larry: Oh of course, well I had to find out who he was first... "Who is he? Ohhh... \*he's\* responsible for the Matrix... Ohhh." [Ken continues laughing] No, I mean, not, not to say anything bad about Joel...

Ken: No, understood.

Larry: Our... leader...

Ken: Or ah, or the Japanese woman for that matter.

Larry: No, no she was, she was sweet, she was very nice but I, I felt very... happy with the fact that they didn't know who we were. \*laughs\*

Ken: Yeah..\*laughs\* Um, incidentally I, well wait, you're, now, but you're not just, you know, for ah, things that I believe are public knowledge, you're not planning on going back and, and filming anymore Matrix things for the foreseeable future right now. Ah you, you filmed the three of those

you know in one long, intense five-ish year period and you've sort of taken a break from that right now, yeah?

Larry: Yeah, the actual full span is probably ten years...

Ken: Yeah.

Larry: ...that we've been working on it...

Ken: Yeah.

Larry: and it's just you know that's, that's the story, I don't know, we'll see...

Ken: Yeah.

Larry: Down the line I'm hoping that I, I recover enough to even wanna make another movie.

Ken: Yeah. Yeah. So you'll just sorta wait and see what unfolds?

Larry: Yeah, yeah...

Ken: Yeah?

Larry: can't say that... I don't know, I used to love movies. \*Ken laughs loudly\* I used to go to movies all the time, I used to, you know, watch hundreds of them, hundreds a year and... now I can't stand them. \*laughter\* Somebody asked me what did the Matrix, you know, do to us in terms of watching other movies, and probably the most distorting aspect of having made these films is looking at movies and just feeling such a lack of ambition on the part of people who are making them...

Ken: Yeah.

Larry: That I kind, I kind of think like -- why bother?

Ken: Yeah. Yeah.

Larry: It's like, if they can't generate ambition and energy, why should I be interested?

Ken: Yeah. Yeah. Well I you know look, I think that's an occupational hazard of anytime you try to bring some sort of quality or excellence to anything, I mean, frankly I feel the same way about writers, you know, I mean I bust my ass on these things and I pick up books and read through it, I go, "Jesus, this person you know, I could do this... between stoplights. I mean, this is, this is just horrible!"

Larry: Yeah, which is interesting, because at the same time, that is the thing that really enables you in the beginning. It's like, Kubrick used to talk about how when you know when he first started he would go to the movies and he'd say "Christ, that was crap. I could do that standing on my head."

Ken: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Larry: And it's like, and you know you forget that crap is there before and after you do it. But in, before you do it it's like "Whoa!" it's inspiring. \*laughs\* And then after you do it, it's just...

Ken: Still there.

Larry: Yeah. It's kinda like ah, defeating in a way.

Ken: Yeah. Yeah. Ah, so, before I forget, what was your take on Hegel?

Larry: Oh, we were talking about how... this is very complicated, but essentially the ah, the Hegelian idea that the development of everything is leading towards the singularity of the individual, right?

Ken: Yep.

Larry: It's the whole process, that mystical, that eros that you talk about that's underneath everything has been bringing us toward the development of self-awareness and consciousness. Well I guess consciousness, and then self-awareness.

Ken: Yeah.

Larry: And how that development, that ah, I guess in your terms it would be the holonic development...

Ken: Yeah.

Larry: ...leads towards the singularity, it's like, the base leading towards the singularity of the individual. Right?

Ken: Ah, ah well, but not, but... individuality's not, not an omega for me, it's sort of er...on...

Larry: Correct, that is, but I mean, I mean, you see the development, well, you see that progression as a development.

Ken: I think so, from what you've said so far I think so, yeah.

Larry: But then whereas he arrives, you know, he basically says "Here I am, I'm Hegel, I'm self-awareness, I'm the omega point incarnate"... you then turn around and reverse out of that pyramid.

Ken: ...through further development.

Larry: Yes.

Ken: Yeah.

Larry: Which is, which is an interesting shape, I guess, that was the nature of our discussion, because generally people want to be describing things that, you know, reach a pinnacle and not then turn around and get out of the pinnacle.

Ken: Right. Yeah I know, it's just an occupational hazard when people get into evolutionary developmental thinking, they sort of find themselves perched miraculously on top of the heap, and I

find ourselves miraculously about half way up the heap and more than that, the heap is unending in a manifest domain. You get off of the evolutionary spiral, which is very important to come to terms with, but you find freedom from it by finding that origin point we were talking about, that underlies all of it. And that doesn't exist in time, that doesn't pop out at the top, in time, that's the timeless ground of all of it, and so, you know...

Larry: Right, but the path there, is a development of an ever re-expanding path...

Ken: In a sense, sure...

Larry: Whereas you start off, and, you know, we're going from base matter, atoms, molecules, cells, living organisms, up to the triune brain, and you know, that is a progression, a developmental progression which kind of suggests a value statement there, leading towards this, this entity, this... leading towards Hegel [Ken laughs] leads to Hegel's family, then leads to Hegel's tribe [Ken: Oh God!], Hegel's nation state, and then... the world, and then, you know, the non-dual awareness, which brings you back to the superbase element -- the non-dual awareness.

Ken: One of the main differences between anybody writing now and somebody writing in the time of Schopenhauer is just, you know, science keeps progressing, to the extent that we make the assumption that science finds something out about some sort of relatively objective world. Then, you know, it's... there's... god, we've got so much more science we know about now, starting with the evolutionary sequence itself, astonishing things that those developmentalists up to Hegel still had no conception, of the geographical spans of time and all of the studies that have been done on the, you know... Darwin was taking their ideas and applying it to biology, it would be another century before...

Larry: Yeah, it's totally intuitive work.

Ken: It's amazing they got as far as they did...

Larry: Yeah.

Ken: We can be certain of that...

Larry: No, it is amazing, it's just, it's uhh, it's staggering... [Ken laughs]

Ken: Is your dad, did your dad, was he, obviously he's very bright about all these things, but had he studied any of the idealists or just sort of knew in general what some of them had talked about?

Larry: Ah yeah, he's read a lot...

Ken: Yeah.

Larry: He kind of got into Schopenhauer more because I was so into him.

Ken: Yeah.

Larry ...forced it down his throat!

Larry: Yeah, and he's probably more of a marxist than I am [Ken laughs], in terms of these ideas affecting and informing history...

Ken: Right. Well ok, we'll give him the lower right quadrant then... [laughs]

Larry: [mumbling]...social systems...

Ken: Yeah, um, ok, alright, so is Karen, is Karen coming down, are we going to see her?

Larry: Yeah, she's going to be there.

Ken: Oh Cool...

Larry: She's going to be there, that should be fun, she's looking forward to seeing you again.

Ken: When are, where are you guys staying?

Larry: Um, well, probably either stay at the Viceroy or we'll stay at um, we may bring our dog...

Ken: Oh, sure you've got a dog? [Ken laughs]

Larry: Yeah the dog died and we got one, this is the balance of the universe...

Ken: [laughs] And the Viceroy doesn't allow dogs, so you might stay someplace else?

Larry: Yeah, it does not, we might stay somewhere else, where are you guys staying?

Ken: I might stay at the Standard, I'm just going down by myself, I going to stay at the Standard...

Larry: The Standard?

Ken: Yeah.

Larry: The one in West Hollywood?

Ken: I think so.

Larry: That's a hipster place...

Ken: You bet.

Larry: For a hipster dude!

Ken: Absolutely! Me and West Hollywood, made for each other...

Larry: Metrosexual that you are!

Ken: I'm metrosexual, exactly...

Larry: I was going to try to arrange a dinner with Joel, I think it could be [Ken: that'd be great] ...fun

Ken: That'd be great...

Larry: If you actually are flying over the Getty center you can see Joel's House, it's pretty cool...

Ken: Wow.

Larry: The red box!

Ken: So ok, I'm free, I'm free that Friday evening and then all Saturday and Saturday evening and Sunday and Sunday evening, so...

Larry: Doing some socialising?

Ken: Well I thought since I'm down there, you know, might as well... I don't get out much.