

# Are we living in an alien's computer game?



By [Louise Marsland](#)

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So, South Africa's most brilliant export, Elon Musk, just 'blew up' the interwebs with his hypothesis that our world may be an elaborate computer simulation initiated by our more brilliant future selves. Musk was being interviewed at San Francisco's Code Conference last week.



In fact, he says it's a one in a billion chance that we are NOT a computer simulation. Because otherwise it means that mankind wiped itself out in a catastrophic event sometime in the future. Happy days.

This is what Musk said, according to the UK's [Telegraph](#): "Given that we're clearly on a trajectory to have games that are indistinguishable from reality, and those games could be played on any set-top box or on a PC or whatever, and there would probably be billions of such computers or set-top boxes, it would seem to follow that the odds that we're in base reality is one in billions.

"Arguably we should hope that that's true," he continued, "because if civilization stops advancing, that may be due to some calamitous event that erases civilization. So maybe we should be hopeful this is a simulation, because otherwise we are going to create simulations indistinguishable from reality or civilization ceases to exist. We're unlikely to go into some multimillion-year stasis," Musk postulated.

Various scientists have debated this 'Matrix-theory' before. [The New Scientist](#) actually debates whether Musk is right or not.

It's quite a bit to get your head around. And given our utter disregard for the planet that sustains us, our petty wars and brutality, as well as Donald Trump, it is quite conceivable that mankind will wipe itself out pretty soon.

In fact, less likely, given the current gene pool (especially Donald Trump), is the scenario that we have somehow evolved enough to create a massive world simulation with conscious beings playing out their mediocre lives for the amusement of superior beings or for sophisticated inter-planetary scenario planning.

Of course, those of us who saw the seminal movies, *The Matrix* trilogy, featuring the equally enigmatic Keanu Reeves, have always wondered if our reality is true. Gamers who build in SIMS also know what is possible. And apparently almost all of Silicon Valley thinks it's a credible theory.

Naturally, there are sceptics.

“ @ElonMusk you were right. It's all a simulation. <https://t.co/TYJScwz1s8> [pic.twitter.com/Fg2C1GhCoR](https://pic.twitter.com/Fg2C1GhCoR)— Product Hunt (@ProductHunt) [June 4, 2016](#) ”

“ @elonmusk start talking about the reptile people from space— Roberto Baldwin (@strmgwys) [June 4, 2016](#) ”

“ @elonmusk if a simulation generates the current presidential candidates then they need to improve the coding— James Howe (@james\_howe) [June 4, 2016](#) ”

“ @elonmusk You could give us the cheat code to this game— Ham (@HamTornado) [June 4, 2016](#) ”

## Playing games

Although given that Musk is considered a rocket scientist, serious media are actually debating the theory. [Mashable](#) reports that Musk's theory is “wrong and dangerous”, with senior journalist Chris Taylor writing that “this simulation notion is of a piece with that detestable nihilist hashtag, #LOLnothingmatters. It's shruggie culture, where we expend a lot of emoji-related effort to show how little we care.”

[Vox](#) asks, “Elon Musk thinks we all live in a video game. So what if we do? If the answer cannot matter, the question must be meaningless...” They take the theory all the way back to the philosopher Descartes, who wrote about feeling as if he was being controlled. “Because we can't rule out the possibility of such deception, we can't know for certain that our world is the real world. We could all just be suckers,” Vox reports.

And Hollywood actor [Matt Damon](#) asks the important question: “If the world is a computer simulation, why are we stuck in the one with Trump?”

Some sites went with the obvious parody route attached to this theory, listing all the crazy reasons in the world that this is definitely true – because how could this actually be our reality? We must be a computer simulation, because, well... Donald Trump. Mashable came up with a list of [21 things](#) so crazy that there is no doubt we must be in a computer game. There is some truth in that.

“ At this point, I'm really running out of crazy things to say. Any suggestions?<https://t.co/dGVJBcSZn2>— Elon Musk (@elonmusk) [June 4, 2016](#) ”

Thank goodness for that, it was turning into a ‘Tom Cruise couch-jumping moment’ for a second there.

And I must admit, while I was writing this story, my computer screen went dark without warning and part of me, that teeny tiny doubting part, did wonder whether my personal computer simulation was being reset... And then I made a note to call my computer guy, because clearly, my laptop needs to be defragged or something needs updating!

But if we are just bots, then who do I WhatsApp to change my programme and tweak it here and there for some more personal software and hardware upgrades?

## ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

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