



## Thread



**futon penguin** 🐧 (Masto: @preeya@bigleaf.city)  
@uberpreeya



OK, doing the same Matrix rewatch as everyone else.  
Have also not seen it in decades. Stand by for  
livethread

9:45 PM · Dec 22, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone



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Replying to @uberpreeya

Weird aging note that immediately hit me: I'm so used to seeing Japanese alphabets now compared to twenty years ago that it's hard to interpret the falling characters as cryptic static. Maybe just a function of how young I was when I first saw it



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Ahhhh, Hugo Weaving. Between The Matrix and LotR, I hope he made a buttload of money



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I can't believe I forgot about bullet time and the rotating kick shots!!! The

Matrix was so famous for these when it came out and now they're like, the eighth thing anyone thinks to associate with it

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In retrospect, opening with Trinity being pursued from a basement by the mind cops does kinda give transfem allegory, doesn't it

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OK, this transition to Neo's computer screen is making me feel Feelings about early '00s news site designs. They were so bad and yet, at the time, we were all just so amazed that they existed

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Neo has a Kinesis??!!

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The way I used to fantasize about my computer screen going black and receiving cool, cryptic, prophetic images. A fantasy bolstered by Philip Pullman too. These days it just means a Bitcoin ransomware gang found you

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I was not prepared for how nerd-contemporary Neo's room looks, even -- especially! -- with the CRT monitor

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Neo's company is called Metacortex. Maybe the CEO is Mark Zuckerverse?





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As an adult part of me is laughing so hard at the idea of a high speed chase through a cubicle farm. Unrelatedly, I suddenly desperately want to write a high speed chase through a WeWork



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"When I tell you, go to the end of the couch space, to the fruit pattern water cooler next to the espresso machine. Stay as distracted as you can"



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It's amazing how I so clearly remember being as baffled by Morpheus's knowledge as Neo when I first saw this, and now my first thought is "Actually I sort of expect the ransomware gang to grab security camera feeds and have a drone deployed, I mean, there's money to be made"



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The way my hands and feet tingled when Neo looked down the outside of the building, as though I was really there. I haven't felt this in a movie in a long time. Like, the MCU's entire tone is built around avoiding this kind of rawness



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And IMO it works because it works on two levels, story structure (the refusal part of the hero's journey) and allegory (stripping oneself of illusions can feel bone-chillingly existential)



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I'm starting to believe that the only part of this movie that aged badly is the idea of a software company caring what time you start work



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Now that I've been meaningfully on the receiving end of a toxic environment, holy shit, the interrogation scene is such a good allegory of how dissent results in stifling and monitoring



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Man, Denis Villeneuve could learn A LOT from the Wachowskis re: pacing in visual storytelling. Though if Dune had been this tightly edited, they wouldn't be able to double the ticket sales



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My God I hope they gave Lawrence Fishburne all the money. This is cinema



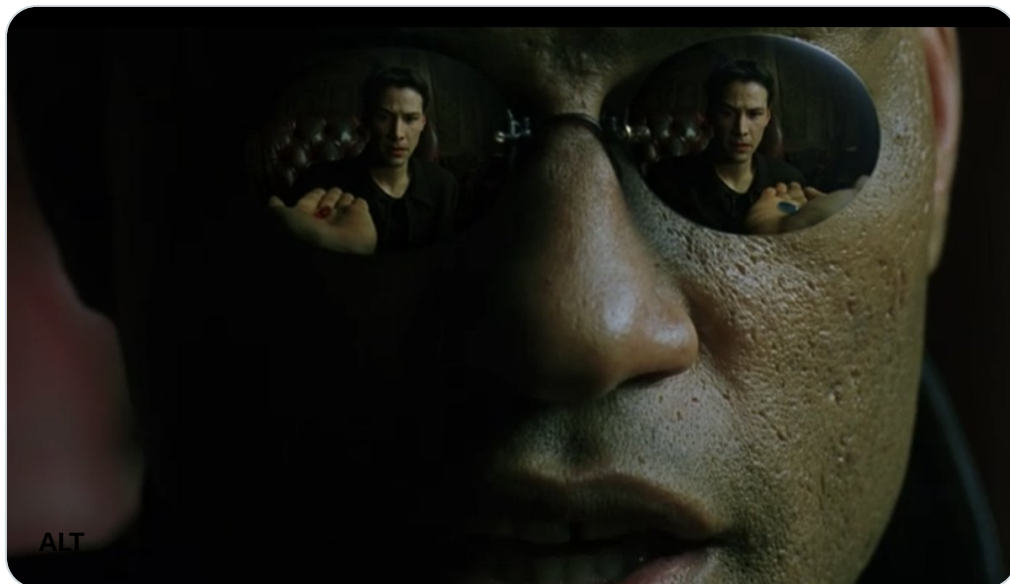
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Also, I feel corny for being so struck by this shot, but it's so stunningly compact and beautiful



ALT



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Although, now that I have pretensions towards being a media critic, I'm kind of struck by how, although the pill scene is technically the threshold of Neo's hero journey, emotionally it feels like the threshold was when he stayed in the car because Trinity asked him to trust her



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Splitting the threshold up makes the plot much more relatable, because it subtly alters the story to be about how fully embracing vulnerability makes you less susceptible to fantasy. Plus, it gets the emotional choice out of the way so the pill scene isn't broken by dithering



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I always forget about how technically The Matrix is set 200 years in the future. It's so associated with the entire world being a sham that the whole notion of time feels irrelevant and even mundane. And yet that makes it worth including somehow



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OH MAN the AESTHETIC of the all-white computer world that stuff appears in. There's a straight line from The Matrix to Janet's void



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In a way The Matrix is almost like a prophecy, like a premonition of how gritty and real things were about to get over the next two decades. Twitter keeps telling me trans people in indigenous cultures are traditionally considered priests or prophets, and I'm starting to see why





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Like, it feels very tuned in to the late '90s feeling that some kind of peak was being achieved, even though at the time everyone would've scoffed at the idea. But it's what animates these montages of stultifying success



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Sometimes I kind of wonder if pregnant people should be routinely waking up from the Matrix during childbirth. Like, how does breastfeeding work in this arrangement



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Oh, right, I guess no one actually gets pregnant, there's just vat people. Wait, so are people being cloned, or do the machines actually take the time to mix sperm with ovum?



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The city of Zion is "near the earth's core where it's still warm"? In practical terms, I assume, near enough magma to be warm. Seems dangerous???



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Is my chronic fatigue because my body naturally doesn't produce much electricity beyond what the machines harvest from me? 😂😂😂 Maybe that could be a reason to actually breed people, to get the most "electrical"?



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The Matrix SO would not work without Lawrence Fishburne's gravitas and precision. Truly incredible, he is by far the MVP of the movie





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I almost get the feeling Cypher would have rethought his choices if Neo had made the jump the first time. I'm still glad they had him fail though, it focuses the theme on belief in underlying rather than apparent truth



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Headcanon: the music during the woman in the red dress scene is part of the in-universe training program, pre-timed to Morpheus's speech patterns



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OK, I'm going to get some sleep and pick this up tomorrow. Good night Twitter!



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Picking this back up with the realization that the reason The Matrix aged so well is because it's a pitch-perfect depiction of what it's like to realize that, as Terry Pratchett put it, 90% of the world as we experience and interpret it exists only in our heads.



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As humans we overlay everything with social constructs to the point that the world literally doesn't make sense without them. Which is why it's so mind-blowing to realize they're just stuff we made up, and why that realization feels like existing outside the rules.



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The spoon is gender, but it's also social presentation in a bajillion different ways. The point is that once you know and trust yourself, you can "do the

impossible" by not having to follow the strict dictates of artificial social constructs.

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I know this is literally the most obvious point of the whole movie but it took me a good 36 hours to fully articulate, so 🤔 Anyway, my point is, that's why The Matrix will continue to resonate. Social construction is maybe the most intrinsically human activity

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Also, now that I'm an adult, I really like the oracle scene. As a kid I was like, why would you take the momentum out of the plot like that? But now I see how it connects thematically. The One isn't an intrinsic state but a relational one.

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I just love that they compare being The One to \*being\* in love. Just because you're not in love now doesn't mean you haven't been before or won't be later.

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Similarly, being The One in The Matrix means not just existing, but achieving the most emotionally true connection between you and yourself, which due to the nature of the human brain can only be done by radically rethinking your connection to the social constructs you live in.

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Someday I would like to be 1% as cool as Morpheus when he puts on his sunglasses

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Oh right, following up on the idea that The One is about achieving a specific internal state. That's why the real test of Neo being The One is that he doesn't die in real life when killed in the Matrix. I.e., he's aware of social constructs without being defined by them.



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Noticing that the Oracle told Neo that he would make the decision on whether to save his life or Morpheus's, but in fact Trinity seems to be making that decision. So...



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I know de-transitioners are generally abused rather than incel'd into it, so without trying to compare them as people to Cypher, I would like to argue that The Matrix is drawing an (absolutely true) epistemological equivalency between incels, detrans advocates, and Joe Manchin.



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Oh, and racist reactionaries! That seems pretty clear with Cypher's revenge fantasies against Morpheus. "All I do is what he tells me to do" "The Matrix can be more real than this world" Tell me this isn't a COVID denialist!



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There's a way to solve the dilemma that Agent Smith mentions about humans rejecting the perfect world, which is that for everyone to be \*perfectly\* happy would require as many Matrixes as human beings.



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That's because for an unfortunately nonzero part of the population,

perfection is specifically incompatible with other people's agency. So a technically perfect world would be so internally inconsistent that of course human minds would reject it.



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Oh wow Agent Smith specifically says "the peak of your civilization." Well there you go, that's what I was talking about upthread! The Wachowskis tapped into that idea, including that civilizational optimism means believing it to be a local rather than global maximum.



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Ahhhh, now Neo is finally making a decision! OK! Here we go! Chills!!!



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Ohhh. So there's another aspect of the Oracle scene that I didn't pick up on. The Matrix is saying you can't be The One if your objective is to be seen as The One, as opposed to doing all the things The One would do without being acknowledged.



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It ties right back to that little detail about breaking the vase and the Oracle laughing about, would that have happened if she didn't say anything? Part of Neo becoming The One has to be both accepting and rebelling against being definitively told that he isn't.



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Which goes back to that whole thing about relational vs intrinsic knowledge -- part of being The One is being willing to alter those "definitive" relationships.

OK! Mind is being blown! Yes! This is why we all love this movie!!!!



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Ahhhhh and then Trinity is the first to follow Neo's lead by going "Well, OK, then I am also going to throw out the rules by telling YOU to go to hell!" It's so amazing how her reaction feels like it has equal thematic weight with Neo's decision.



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It boosts the transfem allegory, the relational allegory, the religious allegory...The whole point is to show that Neo is "saving" humanity by causing people to make better choices of their own free will, rather than imposing it on them.



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Oh shit Agent Smith's entire speech about human populations being able to grow outside of normal carrying-capacity models is actually exactly some thoughts I've been having around the mathematical definition of sentence at a population level 😂😂😂😂😂



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TFW you rewatch the Matrix and realize every interesting thought you've had over the past twenty years is already present in it 🤔



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Yes, the whole chain of everyone saving each other is about how we transcend ourselves by trusting ourselves enough to trust \*each other\* enough to form equal and authentic relationships.



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Which gets right back to Cypher betraying everyone because he couldn't trust Morpheus and Neo enough to believe Neo was The One after failing the jump on the first try. Oh, the humanity!!



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Also, uh...the whole symbolism of Cypher hating Morpheus, then Agent Smith imprisoning him in a room and telling him he stinks and "his kind" should be eliminated, and then Morpheus literally breaking the handcuffs as they subvert the "Black guy dies" trope...



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Honestly I want to give The Matrix a Preeya's Choice Award for the sheer genius of putting all these disparate social justice plots into a thematically coherent and watchable narrative. Other recipients include Chambers and Midnight Mass



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OK I am laughing hysterically at Morpheus sliding in behind Trinity and Neo embracing on the rooftop, stand by for gifs



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OK this is the best I can do right now





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Ohhh, Morpheus says "The Oracle told you what you needed to hear" Well, I'm glad I picked up on that...twenty years later >.>



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Two thoughts on this subway scene. One, love that the machines find the group not via algorithmic facial detection but by picking up on the emotions of the people who happen to be nearby. Another quick but thematically resonant detail!



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Two, it's very very interesting to me that Trinity's reasoning for Neo being The One is that everything else The Oracle told her has come true. Because this creates a very interesting twist in the allegorical progression.



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Specifically, what we've learned up until Trinity starts talking is that The Oracle, while necessary to consult, should not always be believed literally. In fact sometimes you should decide you don't even care what she said. Great, we've got a nice lil free will metaphor here.



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But Trinity asserting that Neo is The One because the Oracle told \*her\* so, that she knows the Oracle told her the truth and lied to Neo, and being right about it -- that's a statement about power.



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Trinity isn't just saying she believes Neo is The One. She's simultaneously saying that her belief has the weight of moral authority, that her knowledge that he is, is more important than his knowledge that he isn't.



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It ties back into the theme of transcendence through relationships built up through self-knowledge, that maybe the ultimate form of both is knowing when and when not to trust others.



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Neo's flip out of the train tracks is very Sailor Moon



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OK, finished it. The ending is so satisfying thematically -- by learning exactly when to trust others and himself, Neo can transcend himself to battle social constructs on their level, which is of course the only way to truly nullify them.



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Which shakes out in the trans allegory as, to fully transition is to defeat transphobia by loving transness more.



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It also occurs to me that it's no accident that the toxic subculture that

picked up the Matrix was incels. With all the power commentary flying around, I can see why a certain kind of person would read Trinity's arc as submission.

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They are of course wrong, because as The Matrix makes clear by constantly including Trinity in Neo's decision-making, her arc isn't submission. It's consent.

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But the ways in which it's consent, although IMO quite obvious, aren't specifically called out in the Neo-Trinity dynamic the way that, e.g., Morpheus is explicitly consenting to his mentor dynamic with Neo.

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So it makes sense that people who want to see justification for male sexual dominance in everything have latched onto the Matrix. It doesn't actually endorse that reading, but on the surface it doesn't reject it as hard as it rejects other misreads.

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I'm also kind of understanding why the sequels flopped so hard. Building up Neo being The One via being an average person who makes transcendent choices implies that everyone can be The One. Which is of course the entire point! But this leads to an unintended side effect.

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The thing is, if it's all about trusting yourself and making transcendent choices, well, Morpheus and Trinity and everyone in that group is already doing that. Has been doing that the whole time.

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That's underscored for us by Neo's transformation into a member of their group. Becoming The One is shown visually by fully joining the trenchcoat and sunglasses and swagger aesthetic, indistinguishable from the rest.



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To me that implies that they should all be The One. Like, it kinda seems like talking new recruits through the process of being The One is their standard onboarding procedure.



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So the sequels should have proceeded with that in mind. Instead they doubled down too hard on the idea of Neo being the only One (albeit with many lives).



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IMO a better and more thematically resonant plot would have been to discover that a) everyone has the ability to be The One, simultaneously with b) that the agents and other "machine" programs are actually being influenced by other Ones trying to perpetuate the Matrix.



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And then achieve the human-machine consent-based peace by teaching enough people to be a One inside the Matrix that agents and machines can't have full control anymore.



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Basically I think The Matrix did such a good job using the chosen-one narrative to explode social constructs, but then the next logical step would



be to explode the social construct of the chosen-one narrative, and the sequels never got there.



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Oh, also, I totally see the Orientalism and appropriation that people always talk about with the Wachowskis. IMO it's even worse in the Matrix than in Cloud Atlas, which at least acknowledged on some level that the aesthetic actually came from real Asian people.



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I'm extremely not a fan of Sens8 in large part because the writing was so atrocious that it served to double down on that unthinking impulse. In fact it seems like the Wachowskis never quite hit Matrix level thoughtfulness again. No idea why.



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Anyway, that's all my thoughts on The Matrix. I won't be watching the sequels now that I've reminded myself why I don't like them, but very happy to have provided content for the Twitters!



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