

MATRIX(1999) : A CRITICAL REVIEW

CINEMA AND PHILOSOPHY ASSIGNMENT

RAVI SANKAR HOSKOTE

SE22UCSE106

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Note : This review might be a little abstract, as I try to explain the themes I found interesting and give my personal opinion about the execution of the themes.

“I see it in your eyes. You have the look of a man who accepts what he sees because he is expecting to wake up. Ironically, that's not far from the truth. Do you believe in fate, Neo?”

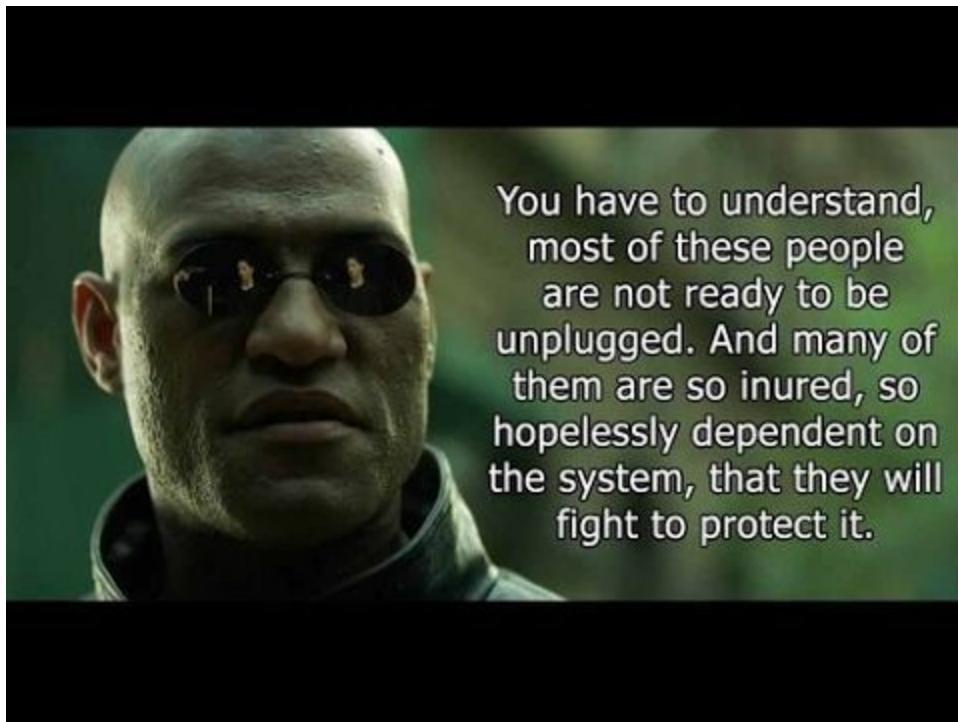
This line is said by the man who apparently knows a lot more than you can even comprehend, as stated in the movie, to the protagonist, Neo, who he seems to believe is the “One”. This line in itself has a lot to unpack. What do we mean by the One? Who is Morpheus? What does he know

about that is beyond comprehension? Matrix is a movie that answers all these questions like any other movie, but what makes it special is it asks YOU, i.e the person that consumes art these same questions.

Matrix(1999) is an action/sci-fi movie that is based on a world where AI (artificial intelligence) has taken over the world in the year 2199, and the machines produce humans unnaturally and use them for energy. The world order has completely collapsed, with humans living in a simulation that resembles the 21st century while their real bodies are in a vessel that sucks the energy out of them for the robots to use.

Morpheus and his crew are people who know what is actually happening in the real world, hence making them targets and “Known terrorists” to the matrix simulation. Ironically, the people he is trying to save are his own enemies, since they are part of the simulation themselves.

“The Matrix is a system, Neo. That system is our enemy. But when you're inside, you look around, what do you see? Businessmen, teachers, lawyers, carpenters. The very minds of the people we are trying to save. But until we do, these people are still a part of that system and that makes them our enemy.”



The “Oracle” is a guide who Morpheus deeply believes in. She is a guide that prophesied the birth of a person who can change the world, show the people the reality of the world, and break the matrix. THE “ONE”. She prophesied that Morpheus would be the one to find the “One”. And Morpheus believed that the person who would break this chain of illusion is Neo, alias Thomas Anderson. A software engineer in a respectable company by day, and a hacker who has committed every cyber crime there is a law for, who goes by the name Neo. When the matrix “Agents” know that Morpheus has taken an interest in Neo, they try to take him into custody. Morpheus tries to stop this by helping him escape from his office before they take him away. In order to escape his office, he is required to make a choice. He needed to believe in himself to walk outside the window, on the window pane. He doesn’t believe that he could walk on it, and chooses to go with the Matrix agents.



This scene is important to notice the development of Neo as a character. As the plot progresses, Neo meets Morpheus, and everyone on the crew. Trinity, a close associate of Morpheus, and Cipher, and many other people who exist in the real world. Upon meeting Morpheus, Neo is asked to make a choice. The Red Pill, or The Blue pill? The red pill means him knowing the rabbit hole, and exposing himself to the real world. Whereas the blue pill means him waking up in his bed the next day pretending nothing has happened, and continuing with his life.

Obviously, Neo chooses the Red pill. He has known all his life that there is something that is slightly off-putting in the world. While eating, drinking, sleeping, walking, every moment since his birth, he has known there is something off. Hence, his awakening starts, and he is transported to the real world.



Neo : "Why do my eyes hurt?"

Morpheus : "You've never used them before."

Hence, the rebirth of Neo starts at this moment.

Philosophical undertones to signify the sequence of events:

Everyone who has been on the internet long enough has seen the meme of Keanu Reeves being Jesus. This movie signifies the rebirth of Jesus, the savior.



“You were more than a leader to us, Morpheus, you were a father.”

The father, the son, and the holy spirit. I don't believe it's a coincidence that the female lead is named “Trinity”.

Everyone who has seen Neo in the crew, is excited, as they believe he is exceptional, he is special, he is the ONE.

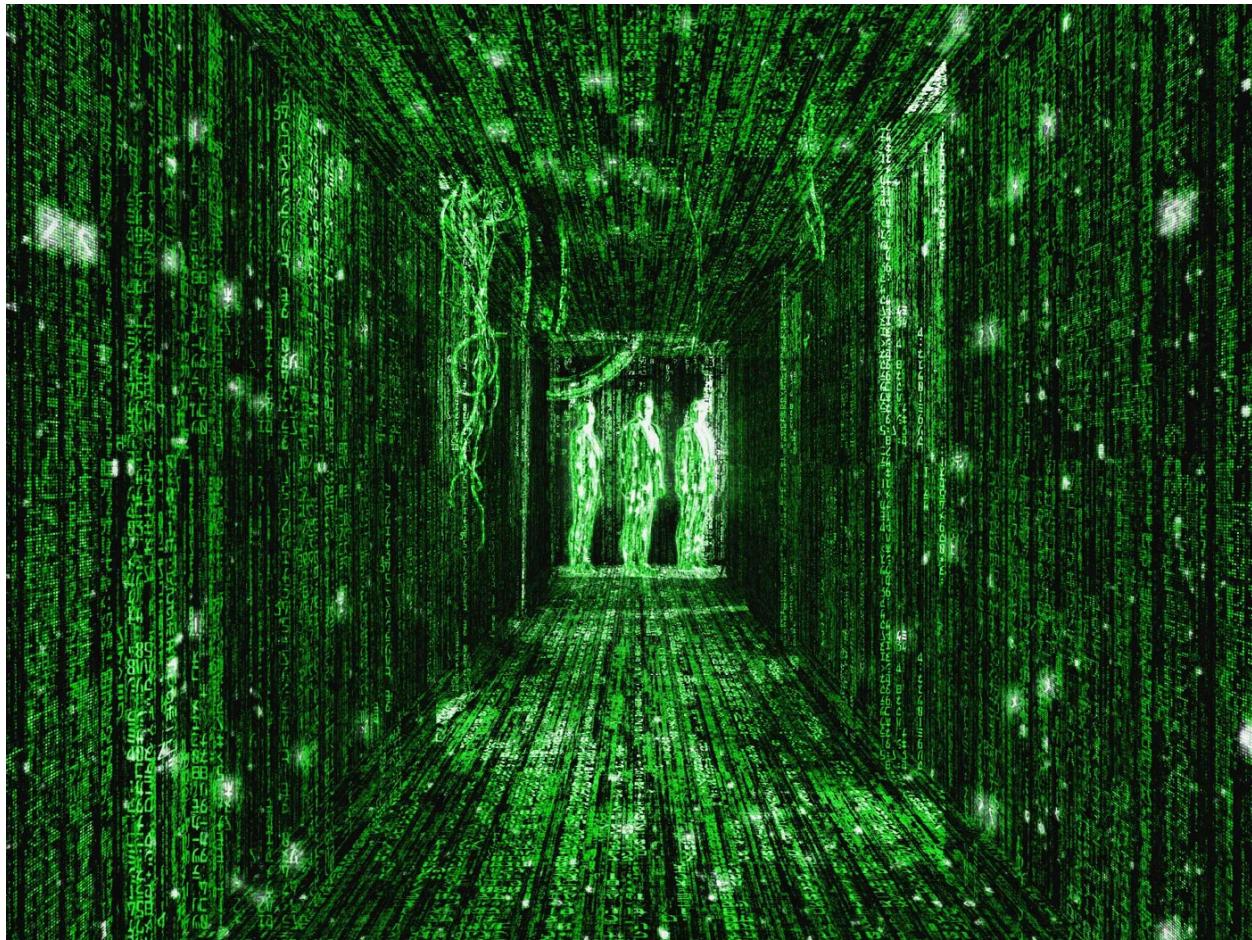


When Neo is taken to train with Morpheus, everyone has a small expectation that Neo will make his first jump from a building to another without failing. Unfortunately, like everyone else, he fails,

A man named Cipher is somehow more inclined to see Neo fail, and always asks Trinity if she believes he is the one. He is revealed to be a traitor, and has made a deal with the matrix agents to give Morpheus to them.

Interesting enough, NEO in Greek means “new” or “One/first”, which has to do a lot with the number “1”.

Whereas, Cipher, an anagram for Cypher, means “0”.



The world of The Matrix is a simulation, which is all code. And code is nothing but when broken down to its core, a bunch of 0s and 1s. The binary language.

This shows a lot about the nature of Cipher and Neo. Cipher is a man who is tired of the real world, and who does NOT want to come out of the Matrix. He finds solace in the fact that he can be an important person in the simulated world, rather than be an actual person in the real world. A man who truly embodies the quote, "***IGNORANCE IS BLISS***".

Neo is soon taken to the Oracle, the all knowing guide, who gives people a path. Neo asks her if he is the One, like everyone around him has been hoping. She gives him a cookie, and tells him that **he knows what the answer is gonna be**. He replies that he is not the One, and she agrees. She tells him that he will have to make a choice in the future, where he needs to choose between his life and Morpheus' life.

He attempts to convey this to Morpheus, and Morpheus interrupts him by saying whatever the Oracle has told him, was for him. As Cipher betrays the crew, Morpheus is abducted by the Matrix. Neo decides he will go back to save Morpheus, proclaiming that even if he is not the One, he believes he could save Morpheus. This is the first time he believes in himself, and we can see that. They are successful in saving Morpheus, but before Neo can escape, the exit is broken by a matrix agent.

Instead of making a run for it, we see Neo taking the matrix agent head on, solidifying the observation that he has finally started to believe in himself.



While he takes on the agent, the agent repeatedly refers to him as “Mr. Anderson”. Neo finally accepts his identity as the One, by proclaiming himself as NEO, and not anything the matrix wants him to believe.

“*Goodbye, Mr. Anderson*”

“*My name... is.... NEO.*”

As he throws the agent onto a running train and makes a run for it before they take the form of another human, they chase him. Before he makes it out the escape gate, they shoot him dead.

Trinity then reveals to him that he needs to wake up, since the Oracle has told her that she would be in love with the One, and she is in love with him. Since Neo now can see the reality, he can separate the mind from the matrix simulation, and is now invincible. He can finally see that everything is just code, and he is the all knowing ONE, finally. He doesn’t need to dodge bullets, as anything that is within the matrix is just code in his eyes.

He destroys the agents, and comes back to the real world. The movie ends with him declaring that he is the One, and he will be the one to free this world.

Now, was the Oracle wrong in telling Neo that he was not the One? The answer to this question is, No. The Oracle told Neo that he already knew the answer to the question. If Neo knew he was the One, he would have been the one.

There is no one, and no one in the world that must believe in oneself before he himself does.

Even if the whole world was rooting for Neo to be the one, it didn’t matter until he himself

believed it. He needed to know that he was the one. Even if every person in the world thought he was the one, Unless he KNEW he was the one, he wouldn't be the one.

This leaves us with a powerful message to ourselves. Neo was not particularly a stand-out guy. He was just another man in that world. Such as you and me, he was an ordinary man who did not change anything. The moment where he started to make an impact was when he believed in himself. When he knew he was the One, he was the One.

It might be easy to argue by using this point's vice-versa, but I would ask you to ponder over the difficulty of making yourself believe that you are the one to change the world in a state where the whole race of humanity is a simulation.

I believe Neo to be the one BECAUSE he believed in himself against all odds, and knew the reality of the world, and not the latter happening due to him being the One.

This is a message to the viewer. There is a “One” among all of us, waiting to be discovered. You could have the power to change the history of the world, but it wouldn't matter if you believe the world around you when it tells you that you can't be whatever you want to be. Only when you KNOW that you have what it takes despite all the odds stacked against you, only then will you discover the One within yourself.

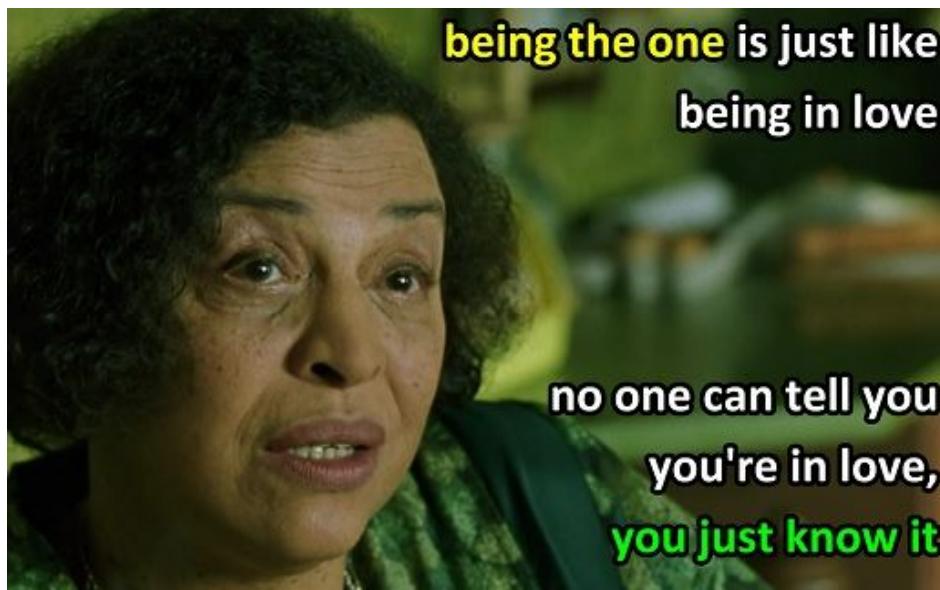
The Oracle said it better than anyone in the movie. She did not tell Neo that he was the one like everyone around him did. She told him that he would have to choose between him or Morpheus, as a test to see if he would blindly believe her or challenge his fate by defying her.



No... I don't like the idea that
I'm not in control of my life.

She always knew he was the one, as she told Morpheus that he was the one who would find the One, and that Trinity would be in love with the man who was the One. But until Neo knew it himself, he was not the One. Once he knew, he was the One.

As she herself said,



Matrix(1999) is a modern classic that is still popular in pop culture, and still relevant to this day. It is a cultural landmark, and rightfully so. The unique ideas, and near flawless execution makes this film evergreen. Whether you watch this movie for pure entertainment or a take on how far knowing yourself and believing in yourself can take you, this movie is a must watch for everyone from the casuals to the critics... leaving us all with a question, Red pill or Blue pill?

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