

Part 1- MATRIX Philosophy and Cinematography

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Dear friend,

I just finished re-watching the MATRIX; and oh man, this movie is so epic-- not only in terms of the concept behind the film, but the 'pop philosophy' sayings are pretty good as well. And the cinematography is pretty solid as well.

So if you've never watched the MATRIX, please please please watch it. I recommend watching the first one -- the second two are good to watch if you're a Matrix fan, but not necessary.

Anyways, if you don't know the plot of the Matrix, it is simple: The 'real' world isn't real. Instead, machines (AI--artificial intelligence) has turned human beings into batteries. We are hooked up to this false reality called the 'matrix'.

Now to me the premise of this movie is fascinating, because it was one of the first movies to make philosophy more accessible to the masses (at least of people of my generation). A lot of philosophy is brought into question, like Plato's cave -- where prisoners are stuck in a cave, and only shown shadows of the real world, yet they think it is real. This similar scene is in the film 'El Topo' by the film-maker Alejandro Jodorowsky.

Anyways, here are some of my takeaways from the film, in terms of philosophy:

1. You can create your own reality. "There is no spoon" means that you can bend your own *perception* of reality.
2. We are special -- the rules don't apply to us.
3. If we lose self-belief (like how Neo says, "I can't do this") then we will lose.
4. Nobody likes that they don't have control over their lives.
5. A lot of modern society blinds us from our own inner-truth.
6. The truth: we are slaves to the system of 9-5 employment, in order to 'make a living', and we are also constantly suckered by

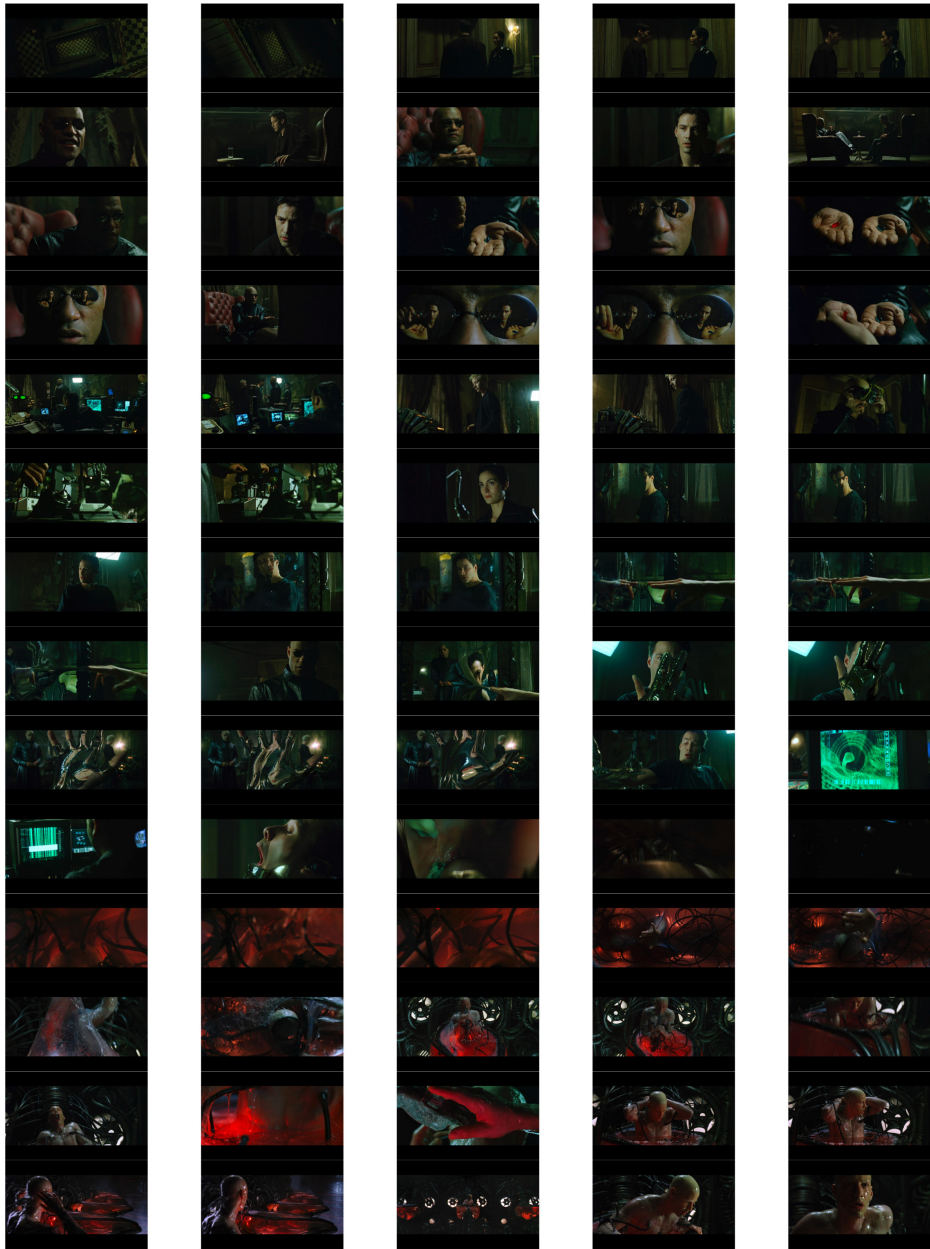
- advertising/marketing/consumerism to continue playing this capitalist game.
7. The true prison is the prison of our own minds; we create our own self-inflicted prisons, yet we don't know that we can break out of it, and that "there are no rules".
 8. Taking the red pill (true reality) is better than taking the blue pill (false reality). By taking the red pill, we are like Alice from Alice in Wonderland -- we discover "How deep the rabbit hole goes" (seeking truth).
 9. "Time is always against us": Life is of limited time; our lives is figuring out how to best effectively utilize our human metabolism before we die.
 10. Rebirth: Themes of rebirth are prevalent through the film -- like when Neo takes the red pill, and wakes up into the "real world".

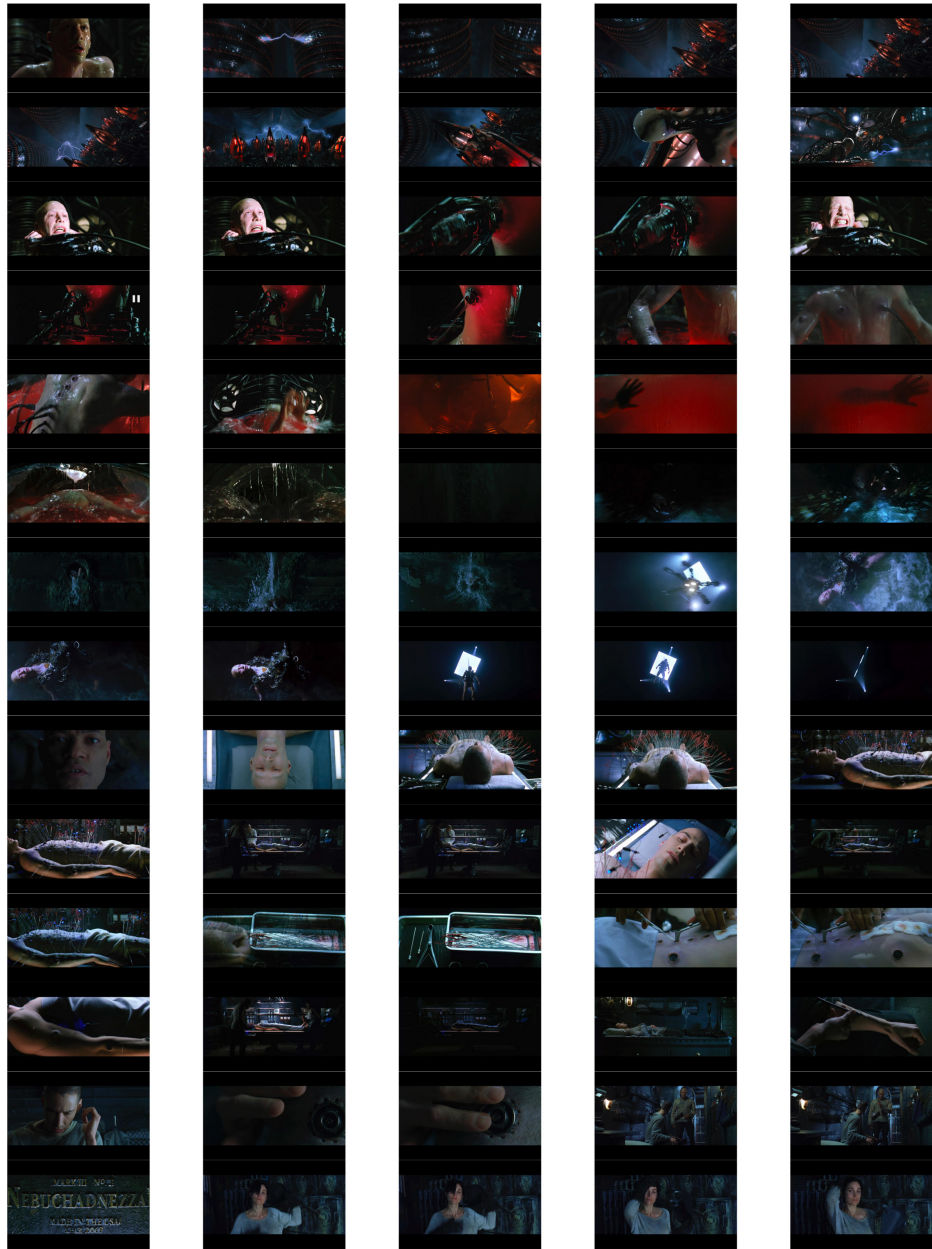
Anyways there are more themes to cover in the film, let us continue by talking about the cinematography:

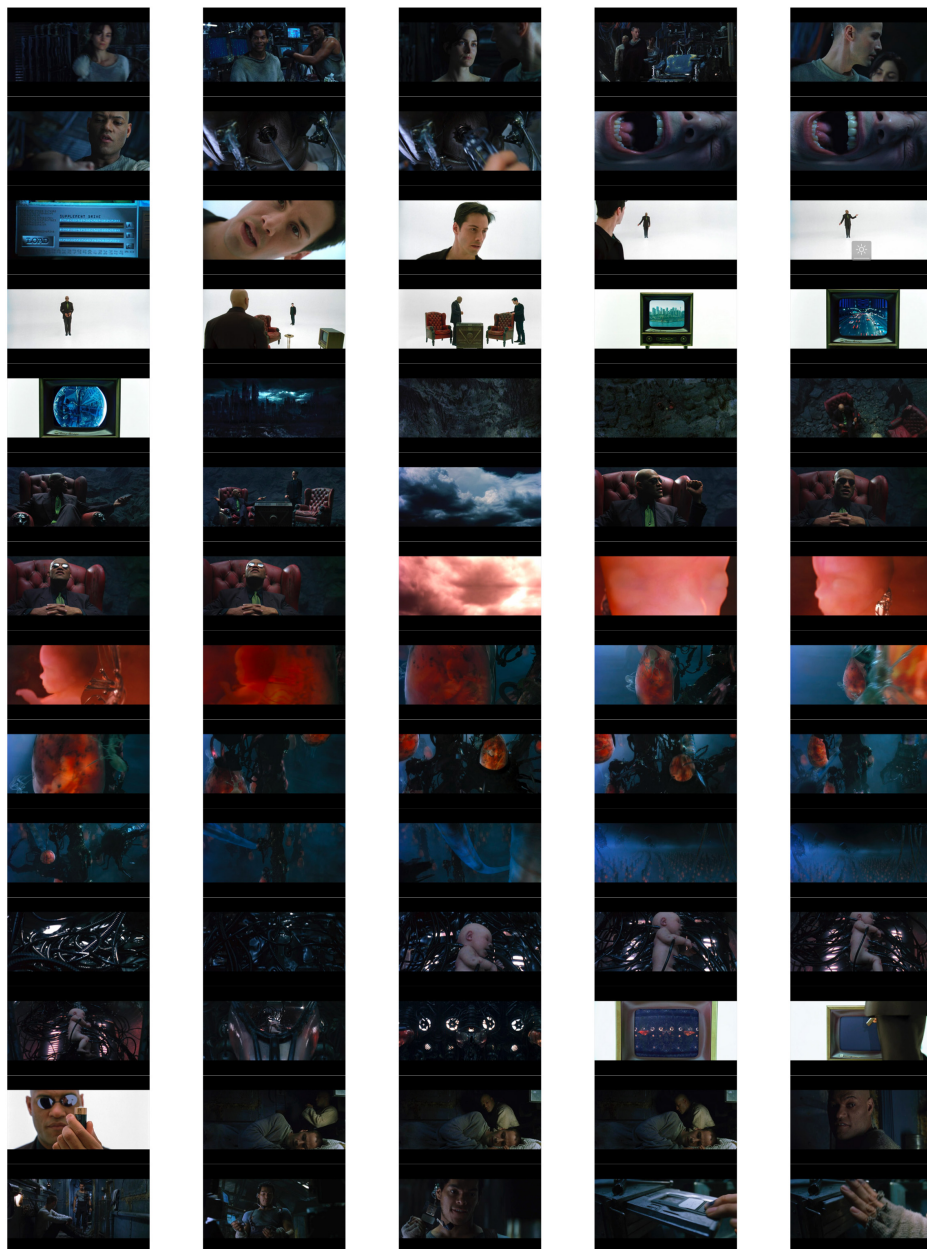
Contact Sheets

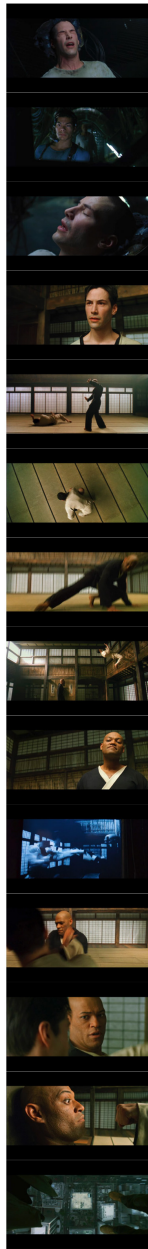
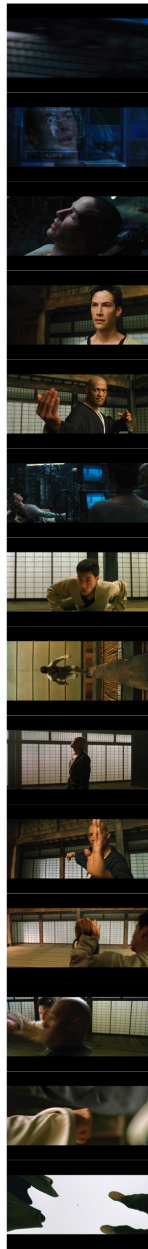
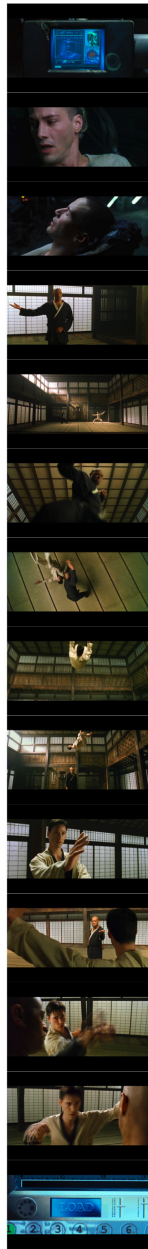
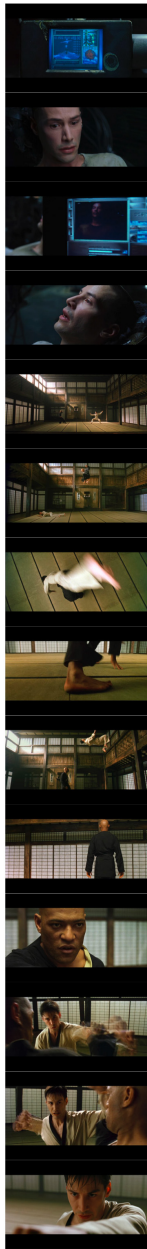
To start off, here are the contact sheets from the film. Note the prevalent green tones in terms of the color palette, highlighted with touches of red. Later on in the film, the scenes which are predominately red symbolize danger:

























System-Green Kanji Computer Code

One of the most visually-iconic things from the film is the iconic System-Green Kanji Computer Code:

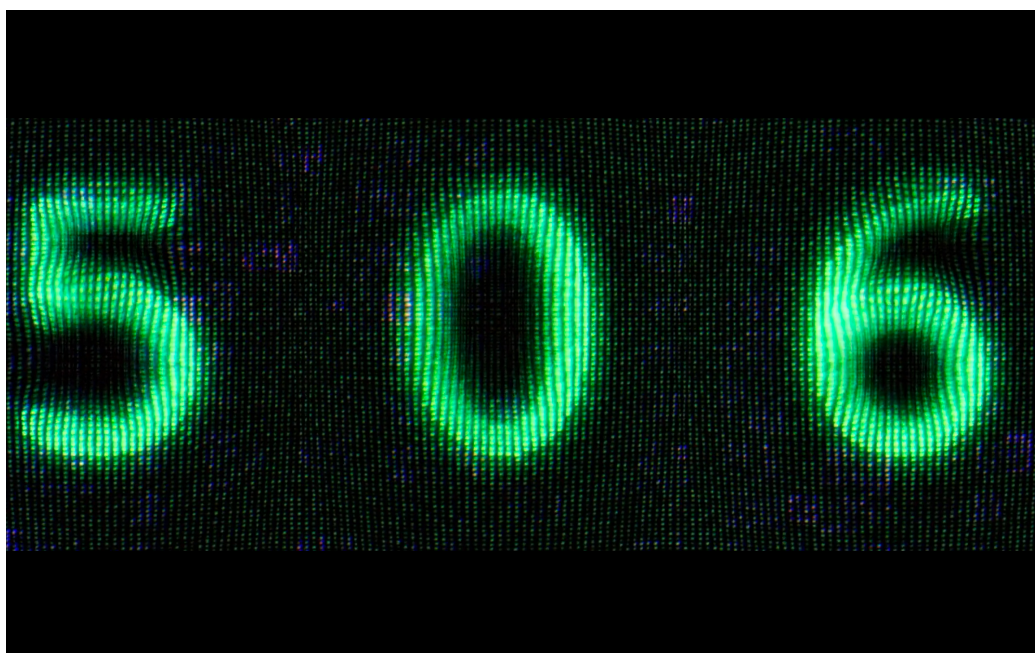


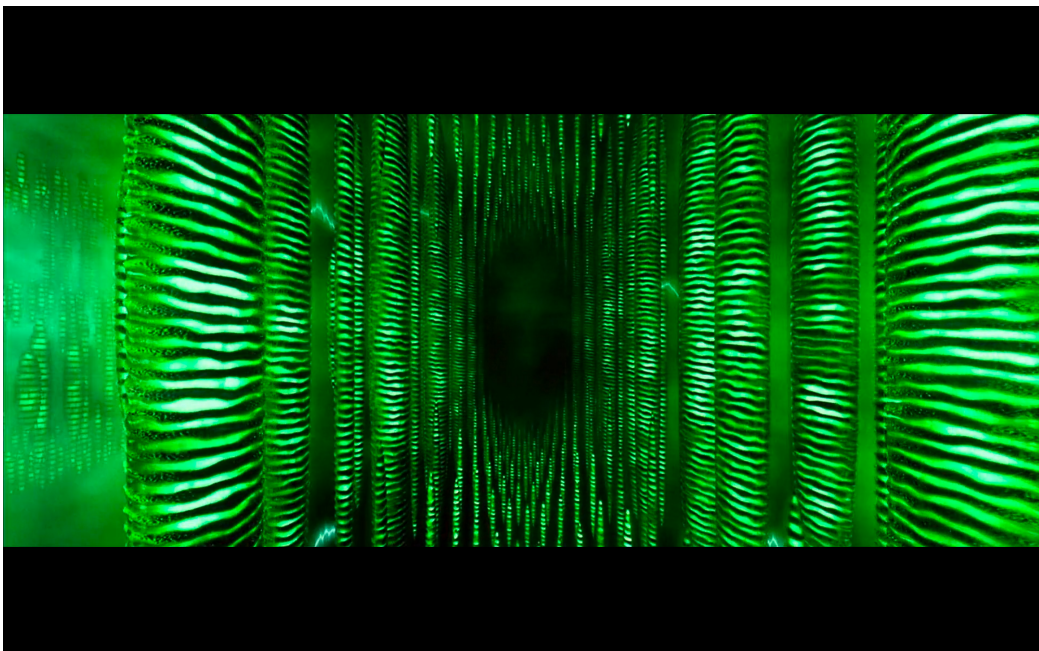
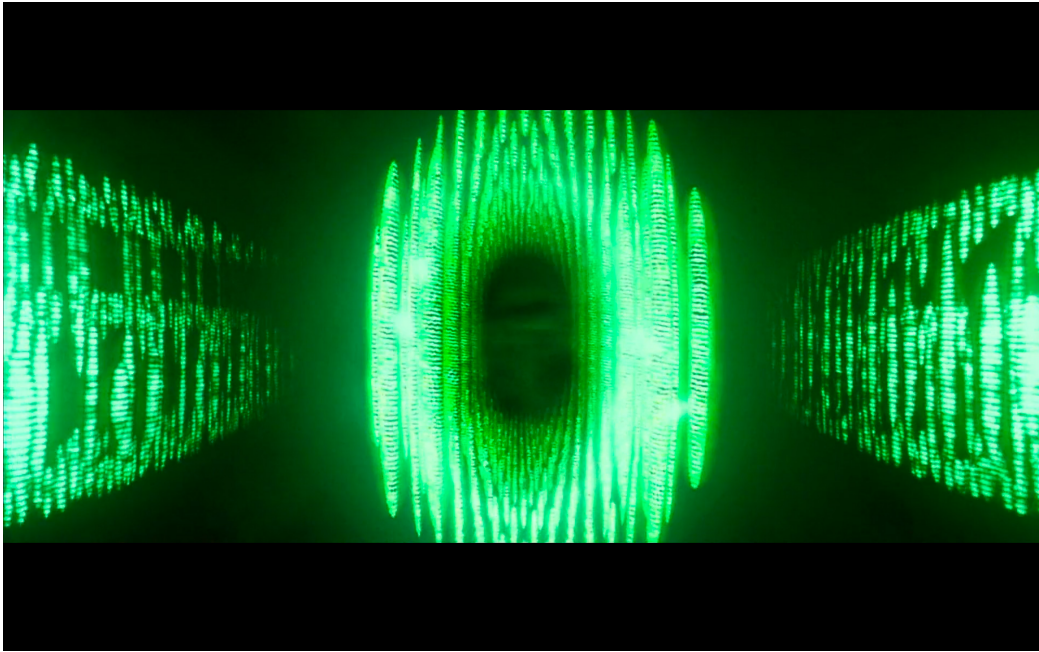
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2) 5 5

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7	7	4	9	0	9	0	4	9	1	2	3	9	4	5
4	7	9	1	6	5	2	0	5	4	0	8	2	3	4
7	8	1	1	5	8	2	8	7	6	7	5	3	8	5
4	3	6	9	9	1	6	9	8	6	3	9	0	3	0
5	5	1	3	2	2	9	1	8	2	2	2	4	0	4
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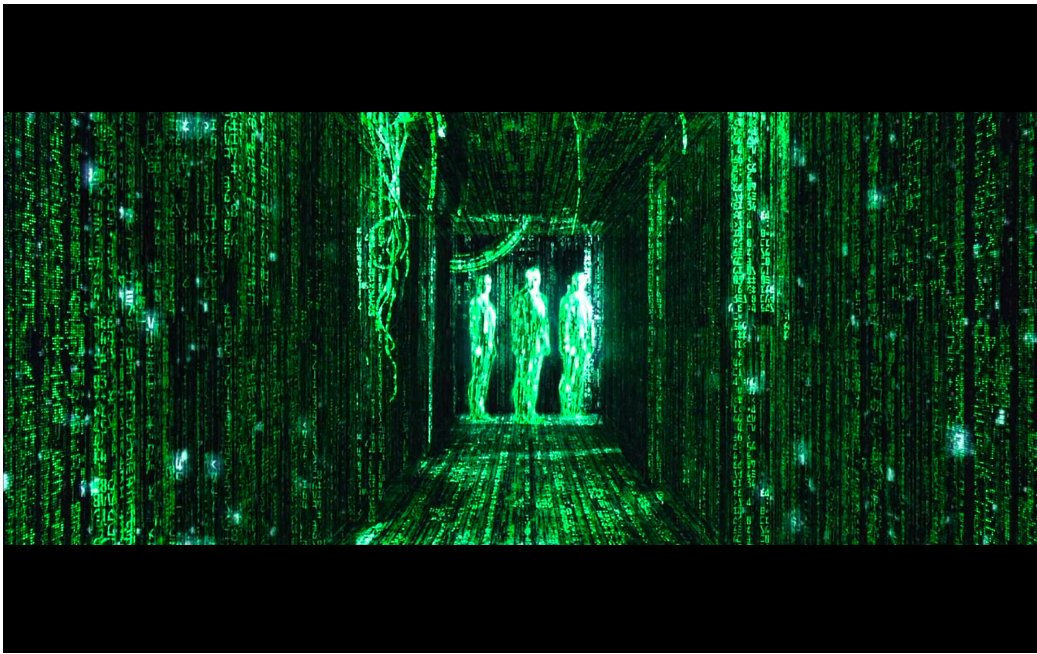


The Wachowski Brothers (now known as the Wachowski Sisters) have noted that they got their inspiration from Japanese Kanji/text.

To me the symbolism of the computer-code kanji is significant, because in some ways-- the information we perceive in the real world can all eventually be abstracted into data. It is how we *interpret* this data which creates our own reality.

Skipping ahead in the film (spoiler alert), there is a point where Neo believes in himself, and he is able to see the false reality of the Matrix simply encoded as all green-computer-code-kanji:





Low angle shot of just Trinity's eyes, then the camera slowly pans downwards, to reveal the cop lights, and then her hands up

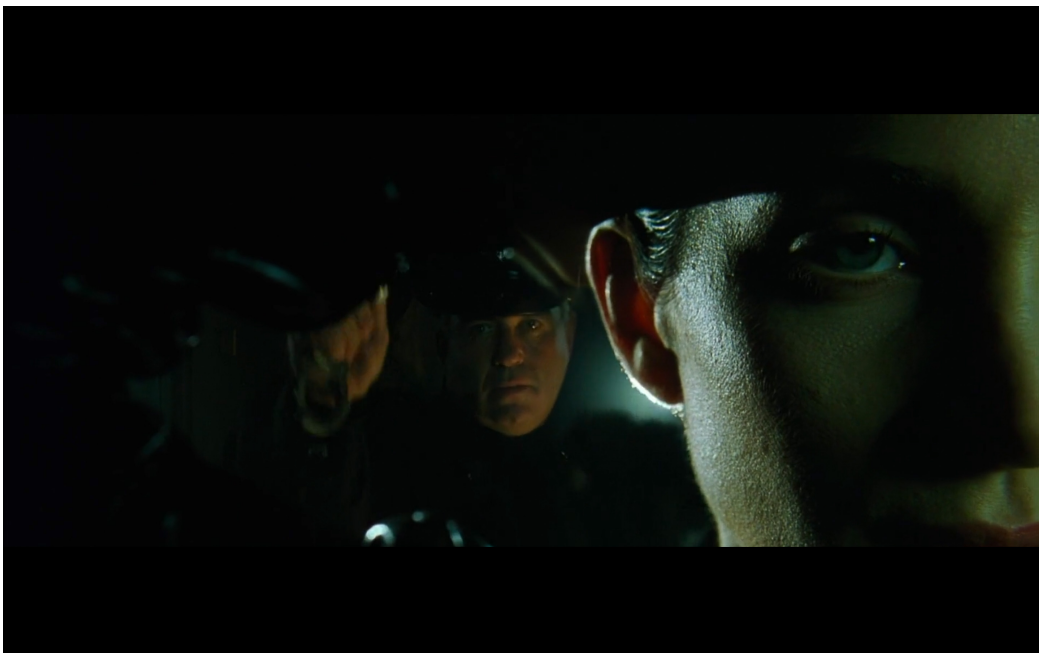
To analyze this, note the negative black space from her computer which starts from the top of the frame, then lowers:



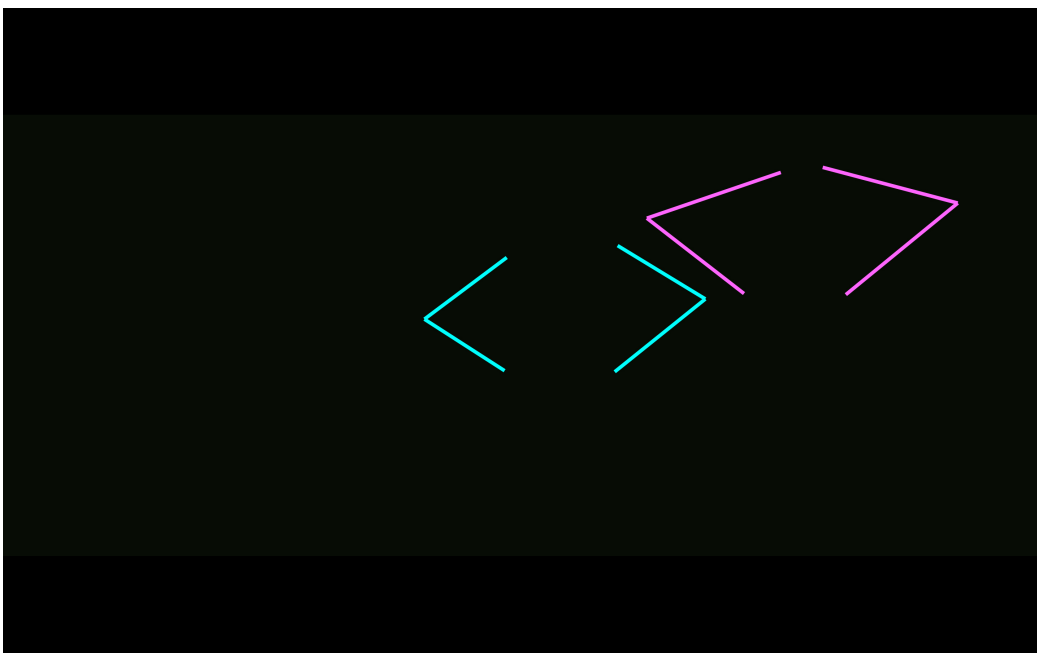


Elbow framing

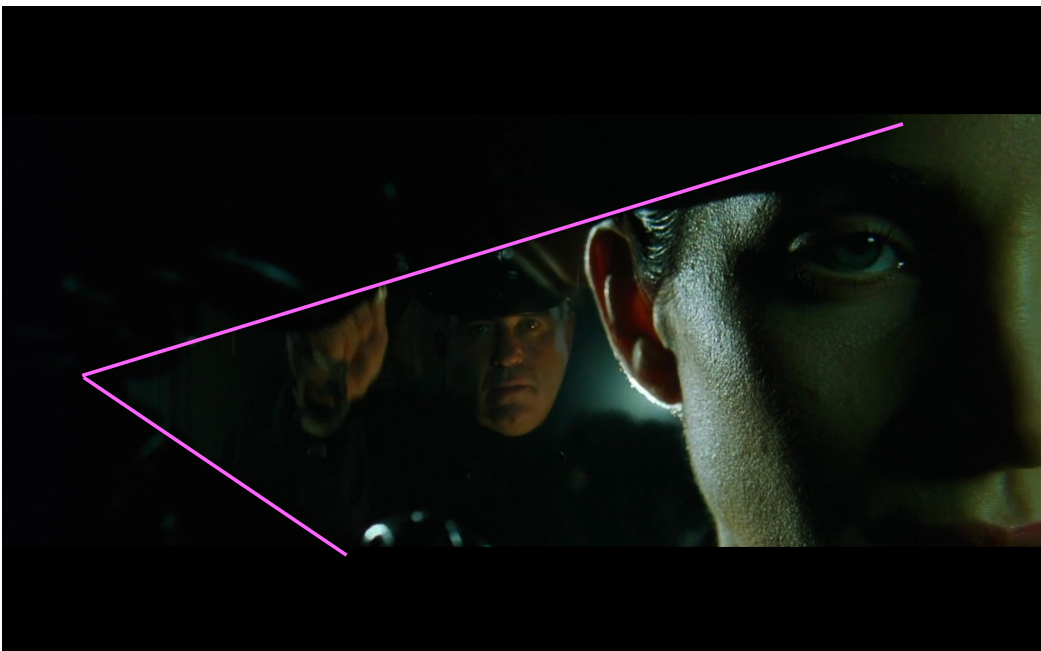
Another nice shot: first starts off from the back of Trinity (her arms behind her head, with elbows in a triangle shape), then the next shot you see the cop's head framed in-between her elbows/arms:



Note the triangles made with the elbows:



Then in the next shot, note the new angle, with the elbows blocking out the rest of the shot:





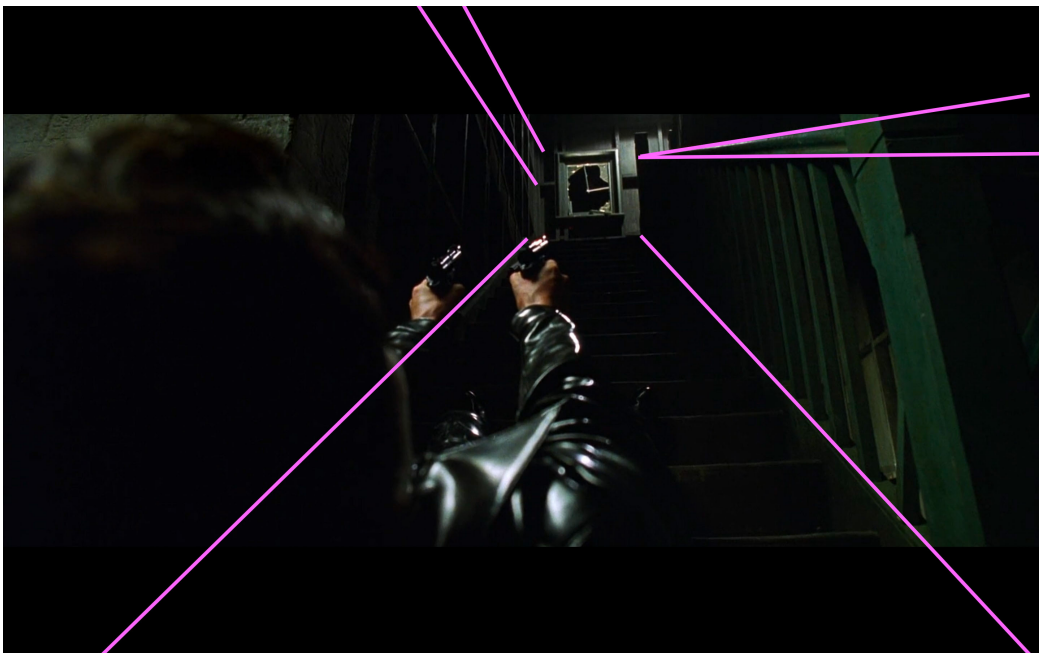
Gun scene

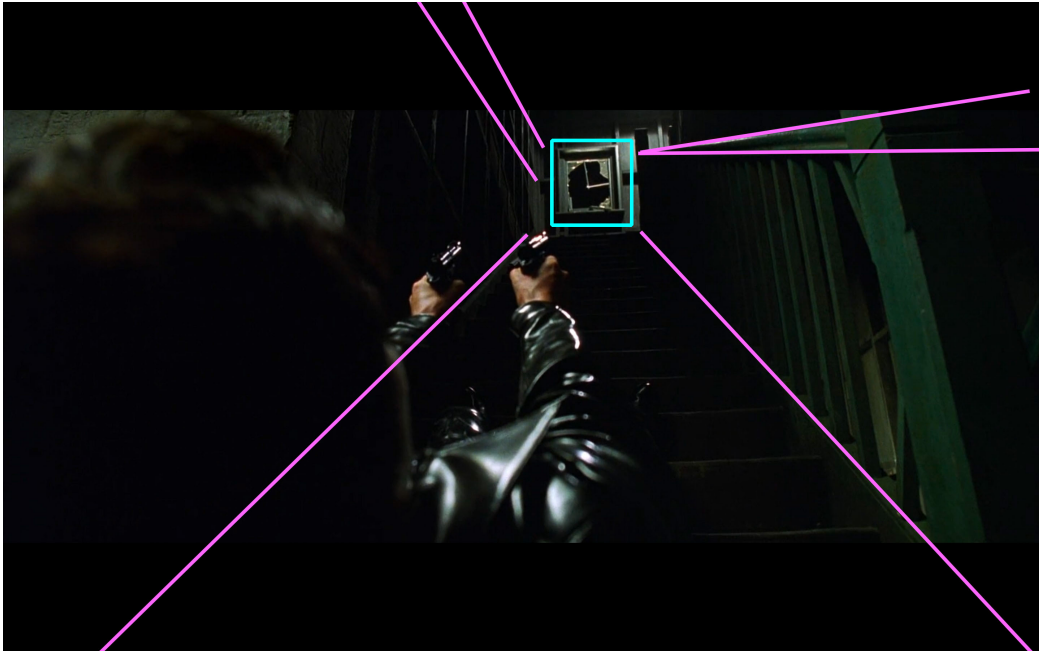
When Trinity is first running away from the agents, she jumps through a window, then draws her guns, waiting for the agents to enter. Note this nice change of camera angle and cinematography:



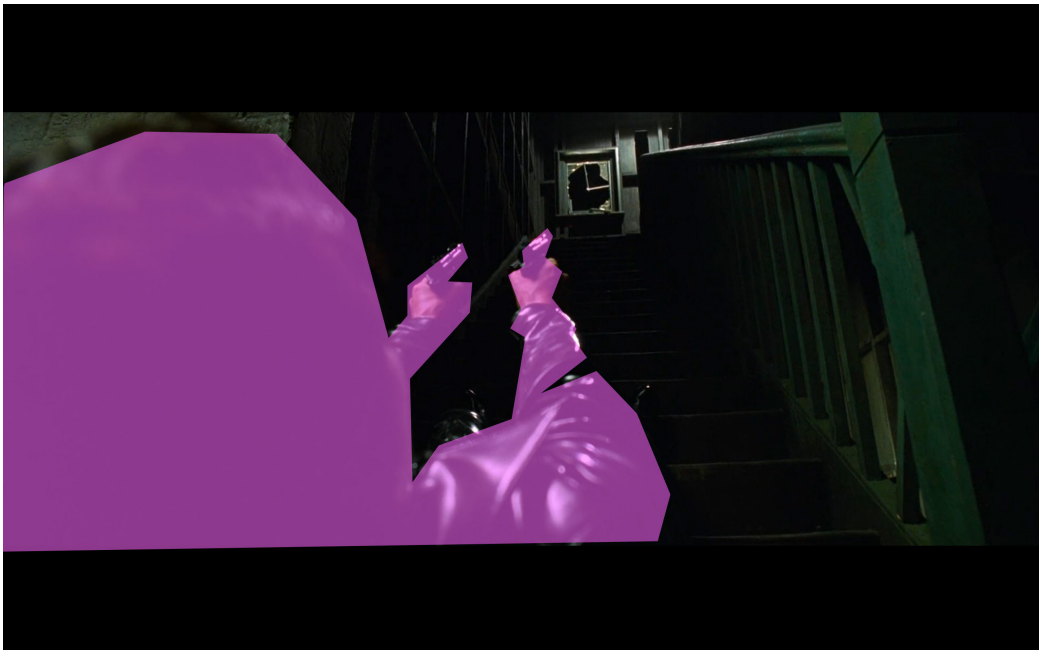


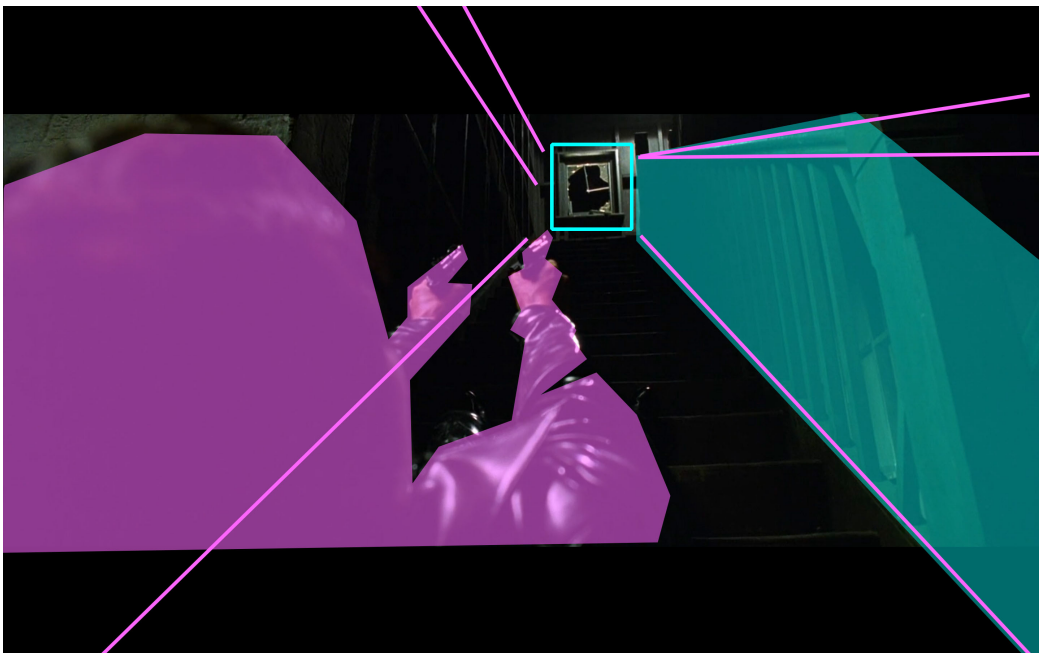
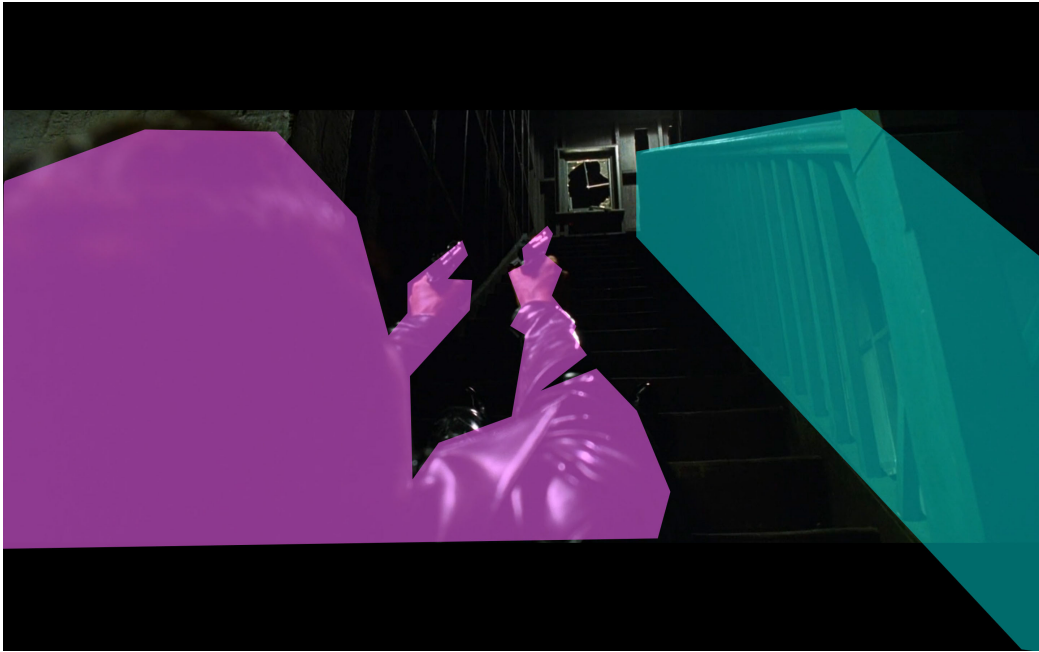
Note the leading lines:





Note trinity outlined in pink; the epic perspective, and the leading line of the stairs on the right in cyan:





Phone focus

Nice shot of the phone on the far left of the frame, then the next frame which focuses on trinity. A simple yet effective cinema technique:



Trinity about to get killed by truck

Next epic scene, note the shift of camera perspective, then trinity holding up her hand (as a gut instinct of fear):







Especially note the use of the red blood on her left eye, which is a nice contrast with the green/blue tones of the film.

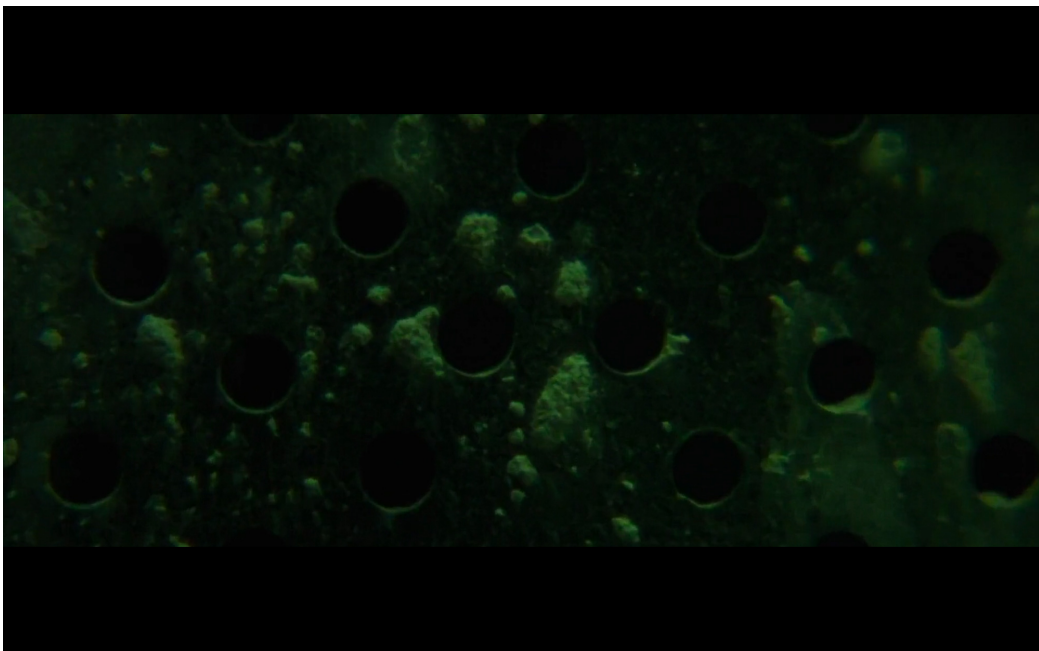
Especially nice: the fingers on the far right of the frame, then the shadow on her eyes:

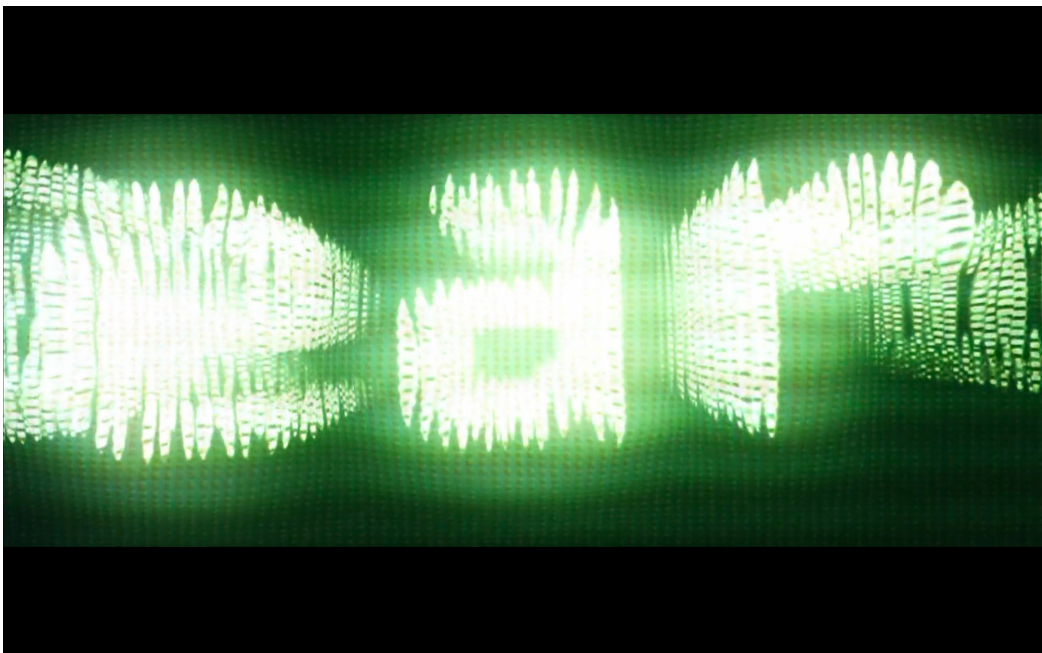
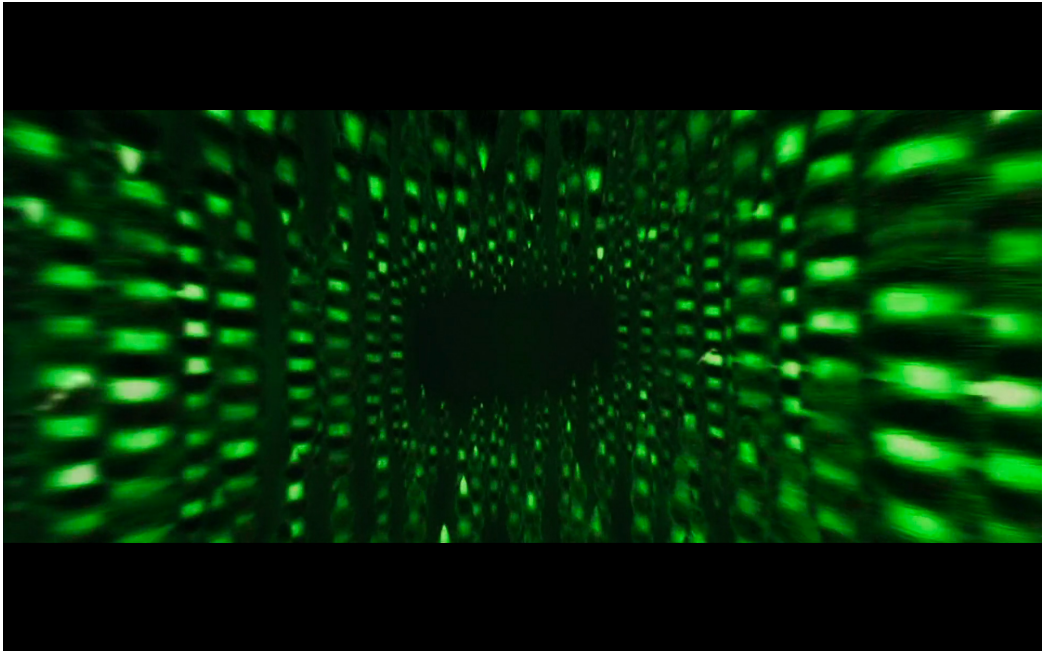


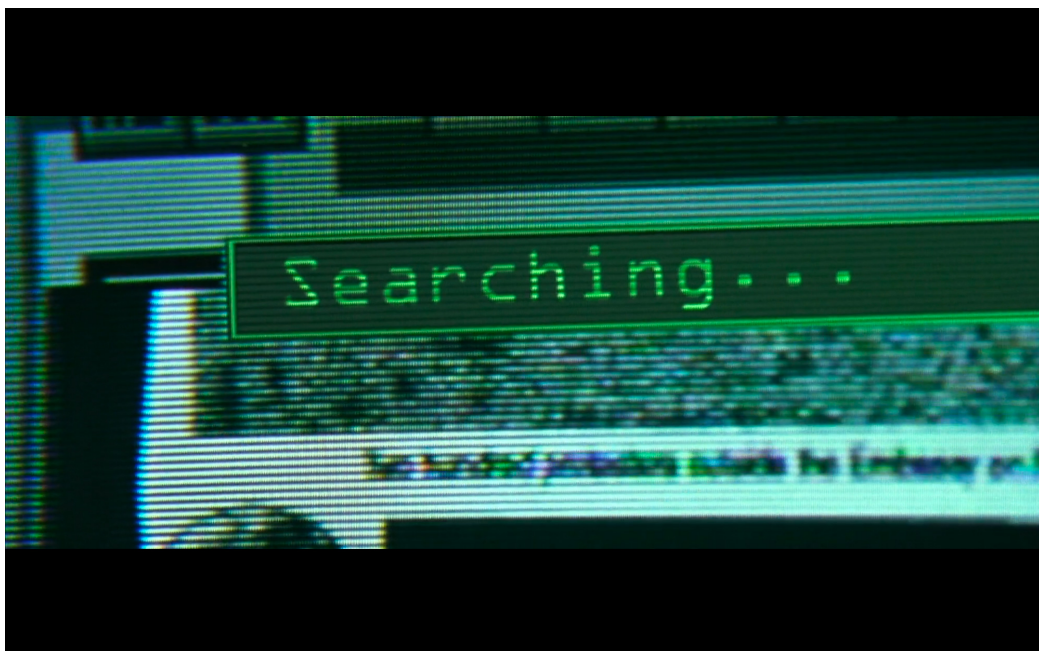
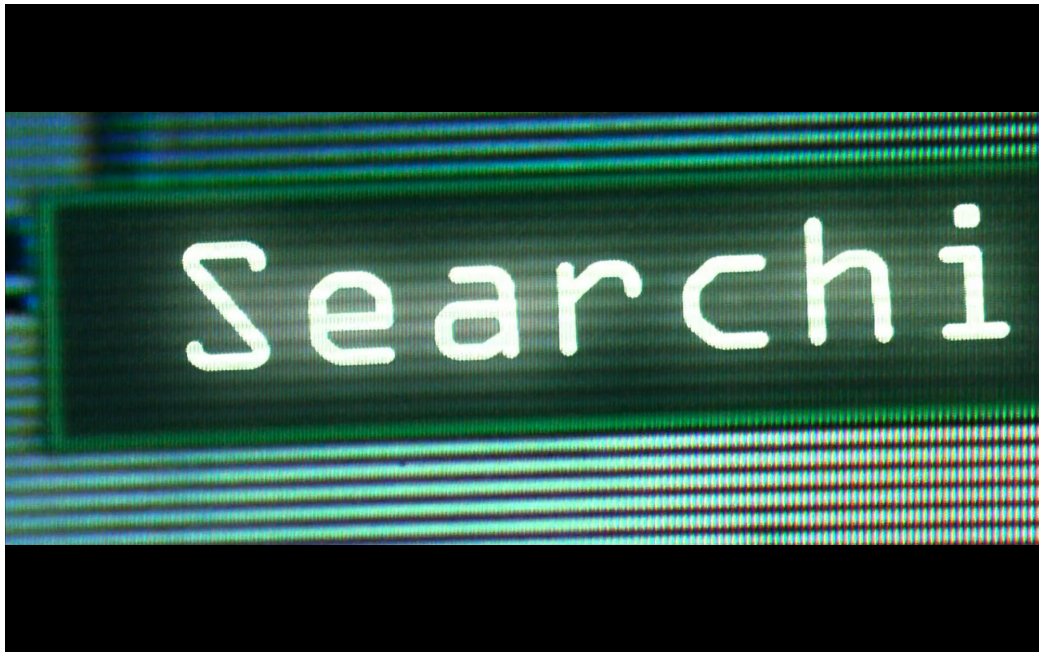


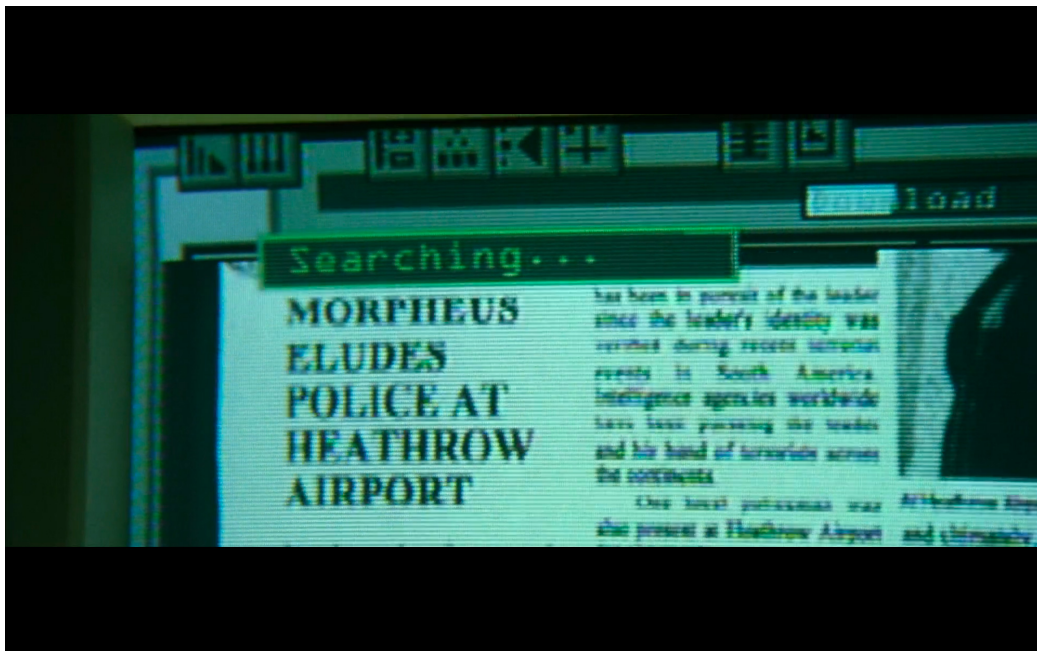
Searching

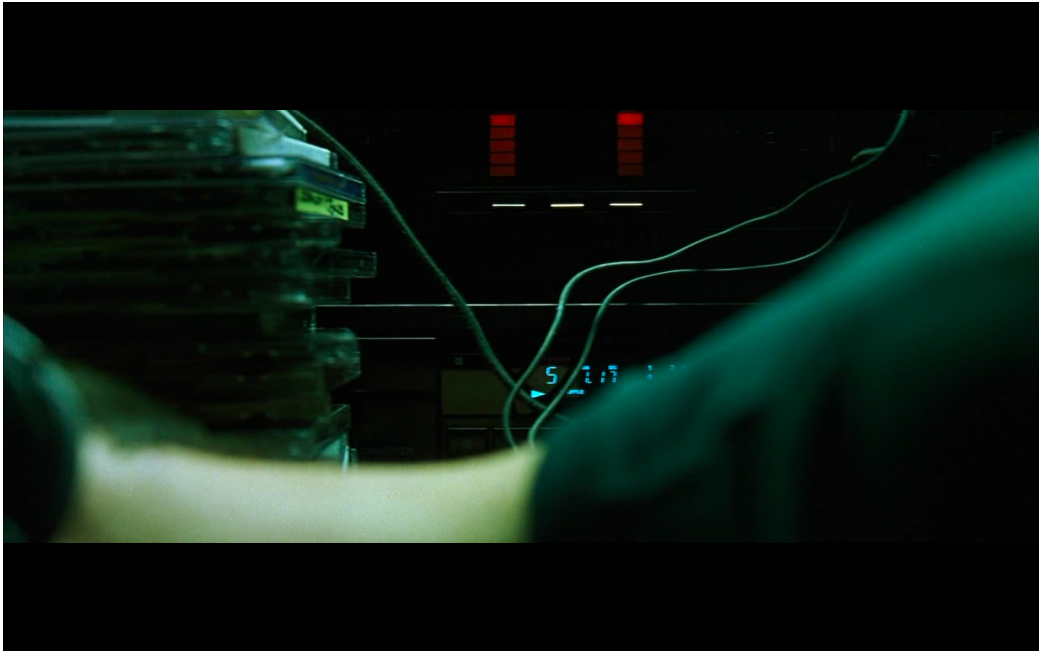
Metaphor of 'searching' -- as humans we are all searching for something deeper-- something with deeper meaning:













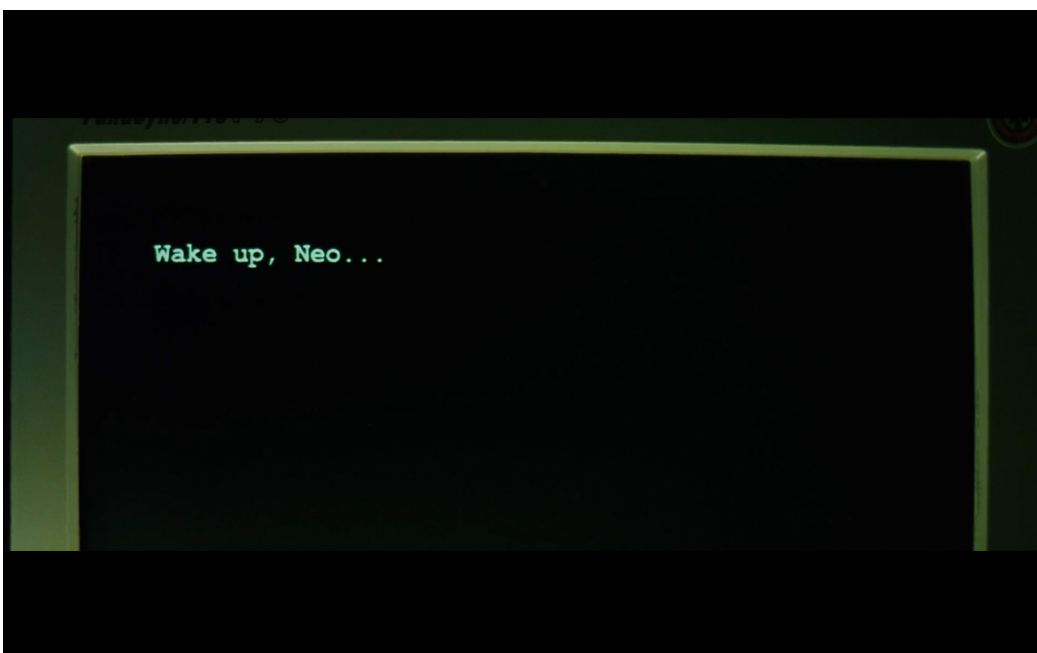


NEO is just a symbol and metaphor for all of us. A lot of us are lost...lost in our devices, the internet, and technology; striving for something deeper in our lives.

Wake up Neo...

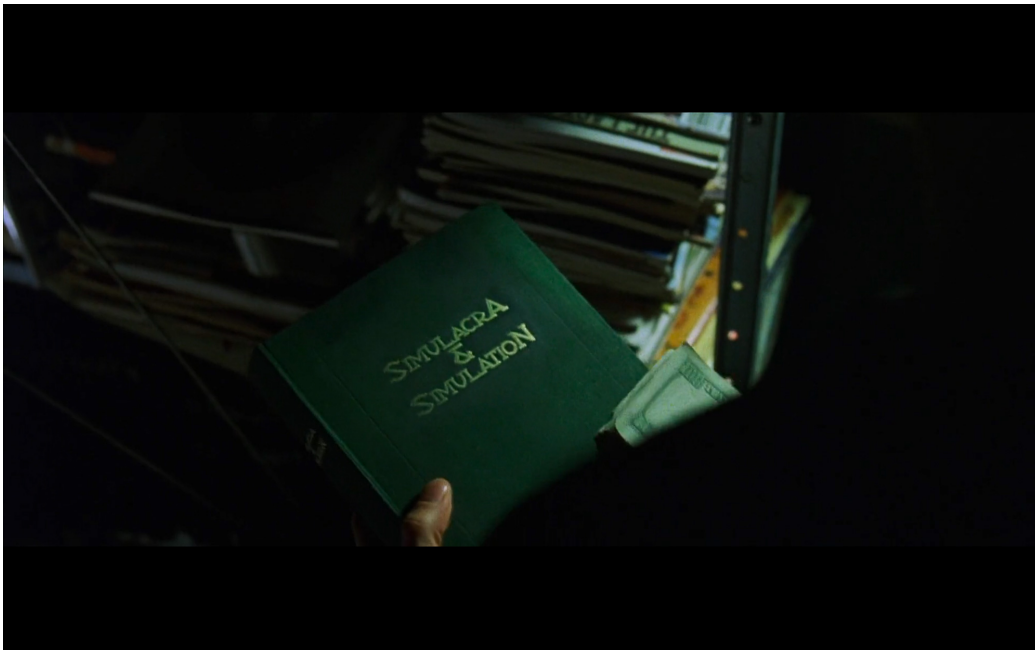
Then Neo is prompted to 'wake up'. Kind of us like us-- we must all wake up from our techno-dream-daze of false reality:



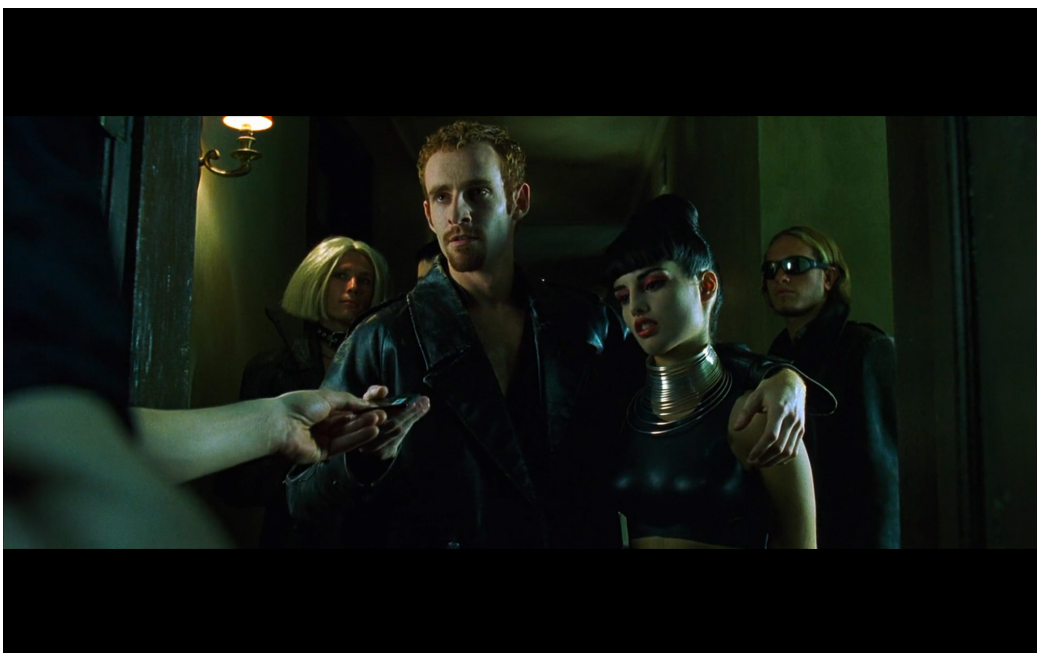


On Nihilism

Then a fascinating scene; Neo sells some hacker-disk to some punks in exchange for money, and hides it inside a book that is called 'Simulacra and Simulation' -- a book by Jean Baudrillard, on this essay on 'Nihilism' (philosophy of nothingness):







This is fun, because it takes us down a rabbit hole...of following the 'White Rabbit'.

You can read [the essay: "On Nihilism" here >](#)

To be continued in Part 2

Until then, here are some notes I jotted while watching MATRIX:

MATRIX NOTES

'welcome to the real world' 'why do my eyes hurt? because you've never used them before'

what is real? how do you define what is real?

real is just electrical signals interpreted by your brain...if we don't perceive something... is it not real? does it not exist?

'you've been living in a dream world'

-

built to keep us under control

turn a human into battery?

not easy, but the truth. - once you go find the truth....u can't go back. but would you even want to?

'the mind has trouble letting go'

--

change whatever you want inside matrix; whatever you see fit!

human race needs to be free.

we need training.

'you want some more? hell yeah!'

'10 hours straight; he's a machine'

--

what rules can be broken...besides physical laws like gravity?

what rules in life can we break...what social rules can we break?

-

what are you waiting for? you're faster than this. you're stronger than this!

don't think you are; know you are!

stop trying; just do it.

'I'm trying to free your mind, neo'

how to free your mind // but i can only show you the door--you're the one who has to walk through it

--

you have to let it all go; fear, doubt, and disbelief. free your mind.

-

'i thought it wasn't real. your mind makes it real'

The body cannot live without the mind.

--

The system is our enemy

Most people not ready to be unplugged.

Fight the gatekeepers.

--

Agents; based on rules...break from the rules! The rules don't apply to you!

Agents will never be as strong or fast as you can be // because others are held down by rules!

You can dodge bullets//you won't have to dodge bullets!

Bullets can't harm you! ***

-

Don't run against agents; stand your ground and fight!

'Ignorance is bliss'

--

What does food really taste like...and why?

'To deny our very impulses...is to deny the very thing which makes us human'

-- Are you your memories? What if your memories aren't real? // or what if you mis-remembered?

--

Try not to think of right or wrong; she's a guide.

Help find the path; but there is no right and wrong

I can only show you the door; you must walk through it ***

The truth: 'there is no spoon'

It isn't the spoon that bends; only yourself! ***

--

Do you think you're the one?

Temet nosce: know thyself (latin)

--

Without him,...were lost.

Im a guide; keep helping guide others *** // but others must find their own way ,
only show them the door.

=--

Film as a more engaging philosophy ?

Make films that have philosophy?

FIRST MATRIX supposed to be perfect human world

--

How to direct your own evolution

'I believe in something' -- we all need something to believe in!

Neo; Nobody has anyone done anything like this... 'thats why its gonna work'

--

Agent smith: I need to get out of here...I need to become free!

--

Can you fly that thing? Not yet. [not yet!] ***

--

Symbolism of breaking chains?

--

I knew it; he's the one!

--

You're the one!

-

Theres a difference between knowing the path and walking the path

-

Everything the oracle has told me has become true; except this!

-

What is he doing? He's beginning to believe!

-

My name...is Neo!

'Neo; im not afraid anymore'

--

See everything is just green code???

--

'You're afraid of change ' // why be afraid of change?

A world without controls or borders or boundaries. 'A world where anything is possible'

Where we go from there, is a choice I leave to you.