

## VIRTUAL THERAPY

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Text for video 'Virtual Therapy', 2006 / 2007, DV Pal, 9:55, mono. Language in the video: English.

The world seems to be green, or at least, to have a green cast. Green ciphers drizzle over pretty ancient computer monitors; nocturnal urban landscapes are floodlit in green, and green, too, are the pale faces in this film.

All the people live in coffins of dark green, every individual in such a coffin, in a slimy, viscous, jelly-like mass. All the people are attached by thick cables from their brainstem and limbs, connected, to one great computer. That is a virtual world, an all-encompassing 3-D game – known as The Matrix. The intelligent, Evil Machines that rule the people, keep and breed them all this way, to exploit their electric energy and body heat for their, the machines', own operation.

However: there are some people who do not live in this Matrix, nor are they connected to it; they are rebels. They battle against the ruling machines and against this Matrix.

Mentally, in other words with their brains and sensory perceptions, the people in the Matrix all live together in this one game, and think it is the real world and behave like we do – considering which, - depending on one's particular philosophical concept of reality – one might ask oneself: Why the rebellion, what's all the excitement about then?

But there appear to be some people in the Matrix who do notice that something isn't quite right. This is probably because of the agents. The agents are actually intelligent spy-software, but to the people in the Matrix they manifest themselves as secret-service agents with dark glasses.

Of course, that only makes people aware that they're under control – like our hero, Neo, a handsome young IT professional who spends his nights as a hacker. The agents have compiled a green file on him, and they interrogate Neo, because they suspect he is in touch with the rebels.

And, in fact, the rebels do contact Neo, by computer, and ultimately set him free from his jelly coffin and whisk him off to their underground spaceship, a kind of submarine with bunker-like rooms – a pretty unprepossessing affair, this underground.

All these revelations, that the world in which he has lived is not genuine, and so on – for the naïve, but freedom-loving Neo this is an incredible shock; but the crew of the spaceship, that is, the rebels, look after him like a family.

They start to train Neo – virtually – it's all in the mind: He trains gong fu, walking across the ceiling, flying, and other skills. The purpose of all these exercises is to be able to move inside the Matrix independently of the simulated laws of nature there. So when they 'click' or hitch up into the Matrix, the rebels there can fly. Neo trains this new separation of body and mind, or say, of consciousness and instincts, so well that he does not even notice that the beautiful rebel Trinity has fallen in love with him.

Morpheus, the rebels' leader, is utterly convinced that Neo has the mental prowess to hack the Matrix, to oppose the agents – and, ultimately, to conquer the machines and to set humanity free. And, because Morpheus believes that Neo is the Chosen One, he thinks, 'I have to take him to the Oracle'.

The Oracle is a wise woman who is on the side of the human freedom-fighters, but, oddly enough, can be found only in the Matrix. So the rebels have to make their way once again into the Matrix – the point being that they all still have one of those sockets in back of their necks from the time when they were connected to the Matrix and into which, that's what enables them to plug back into the Matrix; and, thanks to their hacker computer, they can reconnect and, as it were, go online.

So that's what they do; and, no sooner than they are inside this world of the Matrix, standing in some house or other, - a

telephone there rings. The call is from the rebel ship, it's someone from the control centre, calling them up to check if all is well. Morpheus the rebel leader picks up this phone and says, 'We're in!'

A little later, Morpheus and Neo arrive at the Oracle's flat. It's a nondescript little flat, and Neo is led by a lady in a white gown, to a room where several children sit playing; they're concentrated and calm, reading Asian books, sitting at computers.

Neo hears from the lady in white, that these children are Potentials: people who are still plugged into the Matrix, but whom the Oracle and her helpmates are already preparing for their liberation, and who are learning how to handle the Matrix. So there is Neo gazing spellbound at two girls, maybe ten years of age, who are making dice float in the air, juggling with them without touching them.

Then his gaze falls on a boy, bald-headed, pallid, dressed in a grey cloth robe he sits on the ground, in front of him is silver cutlery. This little Buddhist monk picks up a spoon, and, like Uri Geller, he concentrates and has it twist and turn like this. Neo crouches down with him, and the boy hands Neo the spoon and says, in honed Oxford tones, 'Don't try to bend the spoon – this is impossible. Instead, only try to realize the truth: there is no spoon.'

Then Neo is taken to the Oracle - to the kitchen. In the kitchen is a friendly elderly woman, bustling about the stove. She greets Neo and says, 'I'm just baking some cookies'

Neo takes a look around the kitchen, which is, goes without saying, tiled in green, and then the Oracle applies a psychological trick to persuade Neo of her talents. Facing the stove, without looking at him, she says, 'I'll be with you right away – and don't worry about the vase.' Of course, Neo, taken aback, spins round, and crash tinkle, there goes the vase, down on the floor.

The Oracle sits down at the kitchen table with a cigarette and a long drink. The long drink contains green slices of lime, and by her appearance and with the long drink, I'd guess she'd be from the Caribbean originally (yes, the Matrix has thought of everything). With a broad smile, she looks up at Neo and asks: 'Do YOU think you're the One?' Neo doesn't know.

The Oracle points her tumbler at a wooden panel hanging above the kitchen door, and translates the Latin motto on it: 'Know thyself!' Then, like a doctor, she examines Neo, looking into his eyes, nose, mouth, ears, and at the lines on his palm – for an avatar that seems to me a somewhat pointless exercise... but:

The Oracle arrives at the conclusion: 'I'm sorry, dear, you're not the One. But Morpheus has so much faith in you that he will put his life at risk to save yours. And I prophesy to you, one of you two will die. You must save Morpheus – because without him, humanity and our resistance are lost – one of you is going to die for that, and it's in your hands who.'

Naturally, after this terrible revelation, Neo is utterly dismayed. But the Oracle gives him one of the newly baked biscuits and says, 'by the time you're done eating it, you'll feel right as rain.' So I'll close and leave you with the dreadful question: Was it a virtual fortune-cookie, or a virtual hash cookie?