Neo's unplugging and spiritual rebirth

Neo gets unplugged

The red pill that Morpheus gives Neo is like the first exposure to the reality of the world. The mirror first shows Neo his true Self as a perfect reflection, and then his Self appears distorted by the illusion. This distortion is caused by ignorance of the real world.

The mirror turns to fluid when Neo touches it and starts to spread over his entire body. Neo cannot believe that what he sees is real. At first, like Neo, we think this is strange. The truth is what is odd, is our ignorance of who we really are. Neo resists believing it. This is natural. The collective effect of our ignorance and past actions are so deeply ingrained in us that unreality appears real to us and truth loses its meaning. We keep on clinging to our sensory world even when the master shows us the Truth. We refuse to believe in it until we are completely "unplugged" from the sensory world.

Neo then finds himself caught in a web of wires with a tube connected to his mouth. He pulls it out and spits the fluid out of his mouth. He struggles to get free from the web of wires and to break through the transparent membrane covering him. Immediately, he sees millions of human beings individually encapsulated like chicken eggs in an incubator. A robotic machine grabs hold of his neck and immobilizes him. Neo sees his own face in a small lens that emerges from the machine. He looks bald and naked, innocent like a baby. The machine unplugs the steel probe from the back of his neck that has been feeding his brain with the computer-simulated Matrix world. As he is unplugged, the floor of the capsule opens up and Neo is washed out with the fluid .

This is a fabulous image of the world of bondage. Right from our conception in the womb, we are caught in a web of control, generated by our mind. Neo, in struggling to tear himself free from the transparent membrane, is throwing off the illusion that covers his sight of his true Self. We don't suspect that we are encapsulated in the womb of illusion, just like none of the enslaved humans realize they are caught in The Matrix. It is the "red pill" of knowledge that reveals the illusion and "unplugs" us from it.

We perceive the world the way our mind projects it. Like Neo, we are plugged into our Matrix-like world through the mind. When we unplug ourselves from our mind, we see our true Self (know thy self). But the process of unplugging can be painful. The wires that are connected to Neo's body are similar to our senses, they can make us weak and a slave to our mind-projections. But that same thought process that plugs us into the illusion can also unplug us when it is led in the right direction by a master. As Neo is being unplugged, he sees his own reflection in the eyes of the machine that unplugs him. The whole process of plugging and unplugging is an act of his own Self.

The master then forces us into the training that Neo later undergoes. In this sense, the entire movie is about the struggle of a spiritual aspirant to recognize the Truth about himself and the efforts of his master to show it to him. At the end of the movie, conviction in the Truth finally makes Neo wake up from the dream world and see The Matrix world for what it is.

Neo's Spiritual Rebirth

After Neo is unplugged from the machine, he undergoes a second birth, his spiritual birth. This is beautifully illustrated when Neo slides naked like a baby through an apparent birth canal. He emerges like a newborn baby grasping for breath outside its mother's body. His disorientation is akin to the confusion of the spiritual aspirant when he first confronts the reality of the new world that his teacher has brought him to. The metal harness opens and drops the half-conscious Neo onto the floor of The Nebuchadnezzar where he finds himself looking straight up at the faces of Morpheus, Trinity, and Apoc.