

**Through the looking-glass:
The Matrix as filmic container and fortigenic tool**

by

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Life can be pulled by goals
just as surely as it can be pushed by desires.
Viktor Frankl

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respective deaths created. Loss – Gain. Fear of abandonment – Transcendence of abandonment. Debilitating grief – Adaptive joy. Faith. Hope. Love.

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SUMMARY

This qualitative investigation addresses the notion of using the film *The Matrix* (Silver, & Wachowski, Wachowski, 1999) as a fortigenic tool. Fortigenesis is a process of developing strengths. Within the relatively new field of positive psychology (PP) the premise is that character strengths and virtues can be fostered to lead a better life with positive goals and richer meaning. This positive outlook has several links with existentialism. As such PP and existentialism were used as theoretical points of departure in this reading of the film. For this new field to grow, positive psychologists embrace the idea of using many foci. Hence many looking-glasses or lenses were used in this reading: these are PP, existentialism, philosophy, Christianity and fairy-tales. As a result, several PP notions such as *self-efficacy*, *love*, *hope*, *courage*, *open-mindedness*, *creativity* and *faith* and two existential themes, *freedom of choice* and *will to meaning*, were read into this motion picture. Thus conceptually, *The Matrix* is specifically explored as a filmic container. Its application as a fortigenic tool is highlighted through the use of Broaden-and-Build theory to validate and solidify constructs. Broaden-and-build theory is founded on the idea that positive emotions lead to a broadening of cognition (e.g. new and *creative* ways of thinking), which in turn allows for a broader repertoire of positive actions that people can consider. Lastly, conclusions are discussed, one being that more research about the positive in psychology is necessary.

Keywords: filmic container, fortigenic tool, positive psychology, existentialism, self-efficacy, love, hope, courage, open-mindedness, creativity, faith, freedom of choice, will to meaning

INTRODUCTION

The Matrix (Silver, & Wachowski, Wachowski, 1999) can be described as a filmic container, since it is my contention that the film may be interpreted in many ways. It may, e.g., be viewed as an action-packed SF film; an influential artefact, given the many articles and books the film has generated; or an exploration of what it means to be human in a society preoccupied with technology. Nevertheless, it is a motion picture that exists as a cultural artefact in society. As such, it is my contention that this film potentially has the power to influence viewers in a variety of positive ways.

A key consideration for positive psychology (PP) is to embrace many foci. Therefore the objective that underpins this reading is to use many looking-glasses or lenses to understand *The Matrix*. Lenses were chosen through a process of personal, subjective and selective interpretation, which is consistent with the qualitative research tradition. Two main lenses were used here that act as theoretical points of departure. The first lens is PP, which is a relatively new field in the landscape of psychology. PP was born from an increasing awareness that “normal functioning cannot be understood solely within a problem-orientated framework” (Strümpfer, 2005, p. 22). However, this awareness does not deny the “extensive roles played by fearful, painful and hurtful emotions” (Strümpfer, 2006b, p. 145). As a result PP, as its name suggests, is about focusing on a positive psychology. Many facets of PP are explored, including its origin, goals, worth, strengths and limitations.

The second lens used here is the existential theory of Viktor Frankl (1967; 1978; 1992; 2004a; 2004b), which similarly has a positive point of view. The core principle underlying Frankl's theory is the striving and searching for goals and meaning in our lives, which serve to lay the groundwork for the “development, fulfilment, and discovery of our essential selves” (Längle & Sykes, 2006, p. 44). Accordingly, various facets of existentialism are also explored, including its origin, goals, worth, strengths and limitations. It is shown that existentialism is linked to PP in several ways, one being that in both fields the emphasis is on fostering positive changes in people with the aim of leading the best possible life. In addition, three more lenses are used in this reading, which are those of philosophy, Christianity and fairy-tales. The philosophy lens mainly comprises the ideas of Baudrillard and Nietzsche. A Christian lens is used because many references to Christian apocalyptic thought in *The Matrix* were found in the literature and as such, were read into the movie. The fairy-tale lens serves to inform numerous references in the film, specifically to *Alice's adventures in Wonderland*, in addition to a reference to *The wizard of Oz*. Chapter headings were borrowed from Carroll's much-loved classic, *Alice's adventures in Wonderland*, to imply a link between this study and the many references to his work in *The Matrix*: in other words, to imply a link between academic discourse (this reading), works of fiction and films.

Consequently, in an active thematic content analysis of the transcript (text) of the film, seven PP themes were read into the movie. The themes that were highlighted and explored in this reading are *self-efficacy*, *love*, *hope*, *courage*, *open-mindedness*, *creativity* and *faith*. Two existential themes, to wit *freedom of choice* and *will to meaning*, were also identified and explored. These themes have been indented to show how the themes form threads throughout this reading.

As a research psychologist I was therefore curious to explore this filmic container to understand how it could be used as a tool to nurture strengths in a therapeutic setting. PP is known as the “strengths perspective” and the process of developing strengths is known as “fortigenesis”. This word is derived from the Latin word *fortis*, which means *strong* (Strümpfer, 2006b, p. 145) combined with the Greek word *genesis* (from *gen*, which means *be produced*) (Strümpfer, 2006a, p. 12). I also wanted to understand how themes read into *The Matrix* could be used as a fortigenic tool in therapy. This is done from within both the PP (or strengths) perspective and existential theory, by using Broaden-and-Build theory to validate and solidify constructs. Broaden-and-Build theory is based on the premise that positive emotions lead to a broadening of cognition (e.g. new and *creative* ways of thinking), which in turn allows for a broader repertoire of positive actions that a person can consider. It will be demonstrated how techniques originating from existentialism’s therapeutic method called logotherapy can be applied. The existential techniques that are explored include *will to meaning*, paradoxical intention, dereflection, behaviour modification and challenging a client to change him- or herself. The use of the word “client” in this study is to relate the research findings and interpretations to examples of how PP can be or is used in clinical or psychiatric settings. It therefore does not imply that this movie was applied in such settings.

The Matrix itself is investigated by telling the story and including some narrative excerpts from the movie, and these sections are indented. The analysis is done by continuously mapping, which is a process where visual devices are used in film to map character’s feelings or to convey a specific mood. Conclusions are then drawn, one being that more research is required in order for PP to develop and grow. Conceptually, therefore, this reading may be described as a matrixial textual container or quilt. Also called a bricolage, such a quilt is defined as “a pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation” (Trochim, 2001, p. 4). This investigation was done with a view to joining the dialogue around new and positive approaches to psychology, since the gist in much of the available PP research points to the conclusion that more research can and should be done about PP.

Keywords: filmic container, fortigenic tool, positive psychology, existentialism, self-efficacy, love, hope, courage, open-mindedness, creativity, faith, freedom of choice, will to meaning

CHAPTER 1: DOWN THE RABBIT-HOLE

1 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of a literature review, which is important for a number of reasons. First, it offers an opportunity to sketch a background in support of the research; second it is done to refine constructs and concepts, and lastly it is done to indicate the relevance of the research work. The literature review illuminates a variety of perspectives on *The Matrix* and highlights the relationship between these perspectives. Specific lenses used in this reading are identified, namely PP, existentialism, philosophy, Christianity and fairy-tales. *The Matrix* is conceptualised as a filmic container, since it is argued that several PP and existential themes may be read into this movie: these themes are identified and discussed.

One of the broader implications of exploring a film through Alice's "looking-glass" is that PP:

Reflects [*sic*] the viewpoint that the most favourable of human functioning capabilities can be studied scientifically, and that ... we should not be miniscule in our focus, but rather, positive psychology should embrace many foci – a wide lens that is suitable for a big topic. (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002, p. 263)

Hence the assumption that underpins this study is to embrace many foci and to use many lenses with which to explore and understand *The Matrix* – which is, as will be shown, a multi-dimensional movie. The philosopher Alan Watts (1951) asked a question about whether it is better to classify rabbits according to the features of their fur or of their meat; Maddux (2002) replied that people can count, sort and divide the world into specific things and events, but that this division is another way of thinking about the world because the world is never really divided. Therefore, in the interest of academic rigour, each lens is identified, described and used – which could seem to the reader like an exercise in division. However, conceptually, it may be argued that this reading is a multi-dimensional textual container, since many lenses and thus many foci are used to understand one multi-faceted film. It follows that the above-mentioned observations can serve as a basis from which to delve into this reading, or textual container, or rabbit-hole, by first reviewing the literature.

1.2 What is *The Matrix*?

1.2.1 *The story.*

It is first necessary to summarise what this motion picture is about. The movie was written and directed by the Wachowski brothers, Andy and Larry, and released in 1999 on Easter weekend (Gordon, 2003; Litch, 2002; Yeffeth, 2003). The film is set in a rather bleak world two hundred years in the future where machines have taken over Earth. The machines harvest bio-power from humans, who, in essence, unintentionally act as batteries to sustain the machines. But most of the humans are unknowingly plugged into a computer simulation called the matrix, wherein programmes are looped to create the illusion that they are still alive.

The main character is a computer hacker, Thomas Anderson (played by Keanu Reeves), who spends much of his time “in the alternative reality of the Internet, where he goes by the name Neo, spending his time among hackers and phreaks [*sic*] who have come to rely on his expertise” (Schuchardt, 2003, p. 11). Rowlands (2003) points out the utter meaninglessness of Neo’s existence by likening it to boring dreams: “The Ones where you get up, have a couple of slices of toast, go to the same job you’ve been doing for the last fifteen years, say the same inconsequential things, to the same inconsequential people, with the same inconsequential results” (p. 34). Hence Neo is stuck in a rut. He ploughs through each day at his desk in a little cubicle in the subconscious knowledge that there is something wrong with his life and that it has very little or no meaning. Neo then receives a phone from a FedEx agent, Morpheus (played by Lawrence Fishburne); he is one of the key characters in this film, who is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Morpheus is the leader of a small band of rebels who form part of the resistance against the reign of the machines. He tells Neo that he knows that Neo is aware that something in his life is wrong, and that Neo is a slave to modern technology. Morpheus warns Neo that Agents are on their way to capture him and says that he can help Neo escape. However, Neo does not trust Morpheus enough, does not follow his advice and consequently is caught by the Agents. It is shown that the Agents are ominous policing representatives of the machines; they are in fact computer viruses that are controlled by the machines.

At the outset of the movie, neither Neo nor the spectator is aware that his body is trapped in a womblike structure. This womb is egg-shaped and resembles a diaphanous and fleecy sack. Each sack contains a person, and is cradled in a metal receptacle that individually connects not only Neo but millions of other humans to the matrix through an array of black tubes. Everyone, including Neo, is fed the liquefied remains of humans. His mind has been tricked into believing that his life is real. When Morpheus and his team succeed in locating Neo’s brain in the matrix, Neo has to choose whether to take the blue pill (and remain blissfully unaware) or take the red pill (follow the White Rabbit and face reality). In the movie this birth is portrayed in a rather graphic scene where Neo is flushed from his machine-made womb.

Thus, Rowlands’ (2003) boring dream turns into a nightmare. Neo has to re-assess and think critically about life as he knows it. In the process, he has to upload fighting programmes and come to grips with

what the matrix entails. Neo fights against deadly Agents (or viruses) that use shotguns and move at lightning speed, and at times he barely escapes with his life. Meanwhile, Neo also has to live up to his reputation as the One who will save the world from the machines, whilst struggling with his own doubts and insecurities about whether he is actually up to the task. On a deeper level, Neo knows that he is miserable even though he cannot pinpoint the exact nature of his misery, and this is highlighted as a realisation when Morpheus says:

“Let me tell you why you’re here. You are here because you know something. What you know you can’t explain. But you feel it. You felt it your entire life. There’s something wrong with the world. You don’t know what it is, but it’s there. Like a splinter in your mind, driving you mad. It is this feeling that has brought you to me.”

Neo continually questions his fate of being chosen as the One who has to save the world. He now not only faces this responsibility, but also has to make sense of the “cyber-existence” (Gerrold, 2003, p. 6) reality he now inhabits. Morpheus takes Neo to see the Oracle who is described as someone who loves to bake cookies and predict the future. The Oracle then predicts Neo will be the “One” (anagram for Neo) who will succeed in leading the onslaught by the last remaining humans on earth in the war against the machines. Neo experiences an epiphany when he realises he has the freedom to choose to save Morpheus’s life and ultimately to save the human race from the scourge of the machines.

Schuchardt (2003) points out that: “The Matrix is also the story of the chosen one’s doubts, slow realizations, and final discovery that it is he and not anyone else, who is the saviour” (p. 11). The essence of the nature of reality in *The Matrix* is summarised by Beller (2002):

It depicts a situation in which the computerised (incorporated) control of the sensual pathways to our bodies have reduced us, from the point of view of the system, to sheer biopower, the dry-cells enlisted by the omnipresent spectacle to fuel an anti-human artificial intelligence. Whatever life energy we put into the world is converted into the energy that runs the image-world and its illusionary logic while we remain unknowingly imprisoned in a malevolent bathosphere, intuiting our situation only through the glitches in the programme. (p. 63)

1.2.2 An action-packed science fiction film.

As a science fiction (SF) film, *The Matrix* forms part of the SF genre. Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A space odyssey* (1968) is considered by many to be the first SF movie (La Valley, 1985). Sawyer (2003), on the other hand, argues that Robert Wise’s 1951 film *The day the earth stood still* can be considered the first SF film. This movie features a humanoid alien named Klaatu, who is accompanied by Gort, a giant robot, on his journey to Washington. The word “robot” was coined by the writer Karel Capek; when writing his 1920 play *RUR*, which was set in the factory of Rossum’s Universal he needed a word for mechanical

slaves and used the “Czech word *robot* and shortened it to “robot” (Sawyer, 2003, p. 57). The word *robot* is a referent to an obligation to a landlord “that can only be repaid by physical labor” (Sawyer, 2003, p. 57). These *robotniks*, or human labourers, rebelled against their landlords in 1848. Hence the ideas that the relationship between humans and robots may lead to conflict, and that robots can be used as slaves, were born (Sawyer, 2003).

The SF films that were made from 1968 onwards were characterised by the dominance of special effects. La Valley (1985) makes a distinction between the representational and the presentational qualities of special effects in movies. This distinction is described in the following way: “As well as representing the techno-scientific wonders demanded by SF narratives, they are also presentations of the techno-scientific achievements of the filmmaking and special-effects industries to cinema audiences” (Pierson, 1999, p. 161). The SF films of the 1990s are characterised by their computer-generated imaging technologies (Pierson, 1999).

According to film theorist Christian Metz (1977), SF films deliver brand-new imagery by using special effects to tell the story. Consequently SF can be found in many hybrid species, e.g., horror SF and fantasy SF, but as a whole, or “[a]t it’s [sic] purest, it is fantasy as a form of technological speculation” (La Valley, 1985, p. 144). Science is always at the heart of SF, and is there to underpin imaginative fiction that may otherwise have been only fantasy. Even though SF is escapist and does not allow for the confrontation of reality, there is the very real risk of becoming lost in a magical fantasy world; but there is a belief that “SF can assist us in adapting to changes in life at the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, personal, and societal levels” (Herman & Herman, 2006, p. 269). SF therefore offers an effective way to illustrate radical and new ways of thinking without being too serious, thus opening up the possibility that they will be seen, understood and enjoyed by broader audiences (Herman & Herman, 2006).

David A. Kyle is a writer of SF, a publisher and historian and a co-founder of Gnome Press. He passionately endorses SF, whose “fundamental premise is that science fiction allows us to explore what it means to be human in a technological and scientifically oriented society” (Herman & Herman, 2006, p. 263). Sawyer (2003) observes that *The Matrix* similarly explores what it means to be human in a technological and scientifically oriented society. In this film, only a small number of humans are cognizant of the true reality – that millions of humans are essentially slaves to the machines by acting as a source of their power. The implication is that we are slaves to modern technology, and are trapped in the same way as almost everybody in the movie, who are “kept prisoners in vats of liquid, virtual-reality imagery fed directly into our brains” (Sawyer, 2003, p. 62). Many other SF films explore the idea of using robots as slaves (Sawyer, 2003). An example is *Star Wars: A new hope* (1977), in which, when we first meet Luke Skywalker – the hero – he is buying slaves, two robots called R2-D2 and C3PO, who are there to serve people.

The idea that technology can replace humans is not new. More recently, in Ray Kurzweil's (2005) book *The singularity is near*, the author notes that the paradigm shift is doubled every decade, and he therefore believes that the rate of technological innovation is doubled every decade. This rapid growth can be seen particularly in the field of information technology, where power, which includes elements such as bandwidth, performance and capacity, doubles nearly every year. We are at a point where: "Today, we are learning the precise biochemical pathways that underlie both disease and the ageing processes, and are able to design drugs to carry out precise missions at the molecular level. The scope and scale of these efforts are vast" (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 5). This will be followed by what Kurzweil (2005) predicts is the "N" or nanotechnology revolution. An example is a computerised device "that is implanted under the skin and delivers precise mixtures of medicines from hundreds of nanoscale wells inside it" (Kurzweil, 2005, pp. 5-6). Another such an example is neural implants, where the latest versions allow patients¹ to "download new software from outside their bodies" (Kurzweil, 2005, p. 6). Kurzweil then foresees the "R" or robotic revolution, where Artificial Intelligence (AI) machines will be far more advanced than their precursors and will be able to do a variety of things, e.g., interpret electrocardiograms more accurately than doctors or fly and land planes. He also predicts that we will be able to recreate human intelligence towards the end of the 2020s. Kurzweil thinks that we will ultimately become one with technology, because non-biological intelligence will be able to access its own designs and will therefore be able to improve itself. Kurzweil (1999) then asks an intriguing question about technology:

Before the next century is over, the Law of Accelerating Returns tells us, Earth's technology-creating species – us – will merge with our own technology. And when that happens, we might ask: What is the difference between a human brain enhanced a millionfold by neural implants and a nonbiological intelligence based on the reverse-engineering of the human brain than is subsequently enhanced and expanded? (p. 6)

Walker and Chaplin (1997), however, point out some of the negative forces underlying technology:

Technological "progress" appears to be relentless. It is driven by various factors: human curiosity; the desire to reduce human labour and to solve problems (paradoxically, the solution to a problem caused by technology may itself be technological); profit (thousands of researchers are employed by large companies for the purpose of inventing new materials, machines and products). (p. 197)

The word "techno" is derived from the Greek word *techne*, which means *art* or *skill*, and this was later developed into words such as "technical" and "technology"; "[i]n one sense 'technology' means 'knowledge of applied science and engineering'; in another it means 'systematic treatment'" (Walker & Chaplin, 1997, p. 196). As illustrated in *The Matrix*, machines and by implication technology have the

¹ The word "patient" here is used in a medical sense; Frankl refers to a person in therapy as a "patient" whereas positive psychologists refer to such a person as a "client".

power to create or destroy. The subject matter in many SF motion pictures is technology. Filmmakers often strive to create either feelings of elation, or conversely of apprehension, about computers, robots and the like. The main quality of technology is that it enhances human capabilities qualitatively as well as quantitatively (Walker & Chaplin, 1997). But we need technology for many obvious reasons. Neale (1985) expands on the important link between technology and cinema by arguing that “technology is the basic component of cinema a condition of its existence and a continuing factor in its development” (p. 2). It may be contended that we create products by using technology and are also products of technology, and it is precisely for these reasons that technology can be used to benefit us (e.g., through therapy).

In *The Matrix* however, the reverse is true, since the machines (or robots) are using humans, and the potential darker side of artificial intelligence is explored (Sawyer, 2003). The relationship between AI and SF can be traced back to the stories about robots by Isaac Asimov (1986), who is credited with the invention of the field of robo-psychology (Sawyer, 2003). Kyle (an SF writer, as has been mentioned previously) notes that “SF makes the impossible or improbable seem possible” (Herman & Herman, 2006, p. 265), and that the common denominator in all SF is “human imagination” (Herman & Herman, 2006, p. 266). As an SF film, therefore, *The Matrix* is a symbolic representation of the idea that technology and computers can become so advanced that the computers attain consciousness. It will later be shown how this film makes the impossible seem possible².

1.2.3 A filmic container.

In my opinion there are several reasons why *The Matrix* can be described as a filmic womb or container. Webster’s locates the Latin for “matrix” in *ma*, which means “womb” and the French *matr-* or *mater* meaning “mother” (Merriam-Webster, 1967, p. 522). A matrix can also be defined as a: “womb; place in which thing is developed” (Carr, Hutchinson, & Eagle, 1984, p. 525). Though these are descriptions of a matrix they can certainly also be applied to the movie, since the humans who are enslaved in mechanical wombs in the matrix also live out their lives there. Another definition (which, incidentally, generated the first impulse for this reading) is by Foulkes (1991): “The network of all individual mental processes, the psychological medium in which they meet, communicate, and interact, can be called the matrix” (p. 19). This definition resonates very strongly with me, because this Foulkesian³ insight caused me to view the movie in a different light – namely that of a multi-dimensional filmic container and not merely as a one-dimensional SF film.

² Several such examples may be found in Chapter Four: Advice from a caterpillar.

³ Foulkes is a well-known group analyst and is the father of group analysis according to Proddgers (1991). I have included this quotation because it has personal meaning. Moreover, this inclusion is meant to elucidate an idea and is not meant to imply that group analytic notions are used as a lens in this reading.

Given that *The Matrix* is a SF movie, it may therefore further be described as a filmic container, since it can conceptually be seen as a filmic womb that has the potential to bring forth new ideas. Moreover, if this film can be referred to as a filmic container, this is attributable to the fact that it has had an impact on several levels. Danser (2004, p. 1) argues that *The Matrix* is an extraordinary film in many ways: certainly because the movie as a whole (in other words script, set and message) is “informed by many different stories and myths” and because it has generated several academic articles and books. Baggott (2005) also refers to an assortment of books and articles that have been written as a result of the film, and then goes so far as to call *The Matrix* “the mother of all reality movies” (p. 7). Similarly, Rowlands (2003) considers this movie to be “possibly *the best – sci-phi*⁴ film of all time” and calls it “the remarkable 1999 Wachowski brothers’ movie” (p. 29).

1.3 Lenses used in this reading

1.3.1. A positive psychology lens.

An overarching lens used in this reading is that of PP. Sheldon and King (2001) describe PP as “nothing more than the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues” (p. 216). Positive psychologists aim to understand “what works, what is right and what is improving” (Sheldon & King, 2001, p. 216). PP might also be described as the examination of contributing factors that create and sustain a satisfying and meaningful life (Gillham & Seligman, 1999).

With a view to contextualising PP, it is necessary to expand on the origins of this discipline. Mahoney (2002) posits that the term “positive psychology” has recently been created, but that “it shares a rich legacy with humanism, health psychology, constructivism, and spiritual studies” and can thus be described as a modernist movement (p. 745). Historically psychology started out with three main goals, namely: “curing mental illness, making the lives of all people more productive and fulfilling, and identifying and nurturing high talent” (Seligman, 2002b, p. 4). However, two economic events changed the course of psychology. Firstly, the *Veterans Administration* (VA) was founded in America in 1946 and many psychologists realised they could earn an income by treating people with mental illnesses. Secondly, the VA brought about the establishment of the National Institute of Mental Health in 1947, which in turn solidified the notion that funding could be granted for research on pathology. This awareness led to huge advances being made in the body of work surrounding the understanding of mental illness. However, the result was that many psychologists made the first goal (curing mental illness) their priority. Consequently, the second and third goals (making the lives of all people more productive and fulfilling and identifying and nurturing high talent), were neglected (Gillham & Seligman, 1999).

⁴ Given that Rowlands (2003) is discussing the nature of reality and philosophical arguments he highlights in *The Matrix*, it can be deduced that “sci-phi” means *science-philosophy*.

Similarly, a positive psychologist called Maddux (2002) noticed that the pathology model seemed to overshadow the more positive aspects of psychology. For Maddux (2002), it was about examining the underlying assumptions that informed the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) (a classification or categorisation model of the illness ideology) and not about questioning the validity of the categorisation in general or of the DSM in particular. He identifies four faulty assumptions of the pathology model:

- that categories are facts about the world,
- that we can distinguish between normal and abnormal,
- that categories facilitate clinical judgement, and
- that categories facilitate treatment.

It is not within the scope of this study to explore this particular train of thought in more detail. However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Maddux (2002) points out that the philosopher Alan Watts (1951) asked whether it is better to classify rabbits according to the features of their fur or of their meat. The conclusion that he reached is that one is not better, or worse, or more valid, or truer than the other. The point is that we need to ask, “What can be accomplished?” and “What are the things that matter to us?” “What do we value?” (Watts, 1951, pp. 43-44). Thus values, goals and usefulness need to be considered. In the final analysis, Maddux (2002) urges us to “stop the madness” (p.13) and quotes Watts (1951): “However much we divide, count, sort, or classify (the world) into particular things and events, this is no more than a way of thinking about the world. It is never *actually* divided” (pp. 43-44). Hence, by deconstructing the DSM, Maddux (2002) hopes to make a contribution to PP and thereby facilitate a long-overdue opportunity for making positive changes to psychology.

The more optimistic work of many scholars paved the way for PP, notably: Christopher Peterson (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990; 1997); Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, (1993); Viktor Frankl (1959; 1967; 1978; 1992; 2004a; 2004b) and Rollo May (1953; 1961; 1975). Abraham M. Maslow was the first to use the term “positive psychology” in the title of a chapter of his 1954 book *Motivation and Personality*, namely “Towards a positive psychology” (Schui & Krampen, 2010, p. 52). However, Martin Seligman is credited with being the “father” of PP (Seligman, 2002b, p. 4). He pioneered this relatively new field by introducing PP in a speech he made in 1998 to the American Psychological Association (Gillham & Seligman, 1999). This is how Seligman (2002b) describes the moment of PP’s conception:

It took place in my garden while I was weeding with my 5-year-old daughter, Nikki ... I am goal-oriented and time-urgent, and when I am weeding in the garden, I am actually trying to get the weeding done. Nikki, however, was throwing weeds into the air and dancing around. I yelled at her. She walked away, came back, and said: “Daddy, I want to talk to you.” “Yes Nikki?” “Daddy, do you remember before my fifth birthday? From the time I was three to the time I was five, I was

a whiner. I whined every day. When I turned five, I decided not to whine anymore. That was the hardest thing I've ever done. And if I can stop whining, you can stop being such a grouch." This was for me an epiphany, nothing less. (p. 4)

This event proved to be life-changing and led Seligman to realise that raising children is about giving them wings; recognising their strengths and nurturing those instead of concentrating on their weaknesses: in other words, looking at positive as opposed to negative qualities. Seligman then realised his daughter was right; he was "a grouch" living in a household filled with happiness and *love*. He resolved to change. What was interesting was that he started seeing psychology in a new light and realised psychology also needed to change (Seligman, 2002b). Niemiec and Wedding (2008) echo Seligman's sentiment:

The field of psychology has predominately focused on identifying, categorizing, and alleviating pathology, i.e., assessing, diagnosing and treating psychological illness. The positive psychology movement emphasizes what is going right with people, maximizes their strengths, and fosters future growth. (p. 2)

Essentially then, PP, on a subjective level, encompasses "valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present)" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). On an individual level the focus is on positive character traits such as: "the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skills, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future-mindedness, faith, high talent, and wisdom" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). Lastly, PP in a group context "is about the civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship: responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). Change and a move toward a more positive way of doing psychology are therefore necessary, because: "Psychology is not just the study of disease, weakness and damage; it is also the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is wrong; it is also building what is right" (Seligman, 2002b, p. 4).

Seligman's (2002b) "awakening" led to the birth of PP, which may be concisely described as an optimistic movement that is about repairing broken spirits and encouraging what is best, and achieved by inter alia using movies as a fortigenic tool (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008). Niemiec and Wedding (2008, p. 5) explain that movies are able "to portray the subtleties of the human mind – thoughts, emotions, instincts, and motives – and their impact on behavior", perhaps more so than many other art forms. Williams (1998, p. 230) postulates that "images are the language of the psyche". Hence films are "a natural vehicle for examining character strengths and how they are developed and maintained" (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008, p. 5).

One of the reasons *The Matrix* was chosen is because it meets the criteria for a PP movie that were developed by Niemiec (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008). The criteria revolve around character strengths and virtues, these being:

- 1) Character who displays at least one of 24 strengths set out by Peterson and Seligman (2004);
- 2) Portrayal of the character's struggle, journey, or obstacles faced in attaining or maximising a strength;
- 3) Depiction of how the character overcame barriers and/or shaped and sustained strengths; and
- 4) An inspirational or motivational tone or mood. (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008, p. 7)

Niemiec and Wedding (2008) further note that various positive psychologists regard movies such as *The Matrix* as valuable tools with which to cultivate character strengths and their corresponding virtues. These comprise six virtues and 24 strengths, and were compiled by Peterson and Seligman (2004). I have grouped the character strengths and their corresponding virtues in Figure 1:

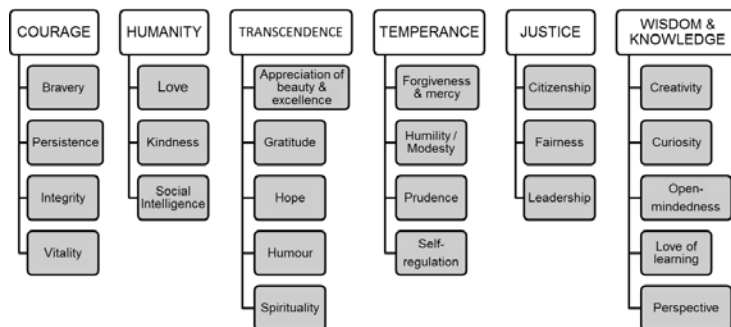


FIGURE 1: Character strengths and their corresponding virtues⁵

In the *Handbook of positive psychology* (Snyder & Lopez, 2002), character strengths such as *creativity*, *hope*, *open-mindedness* and *self-efficacy* are situated in the domain of cognitive-focused approaches. Here it should be noted that *self-efficacy* is explored using the ideas of James E. Maddux⁶, who

⁵ Source: Peterson & Seligman, 2004.

⁶ Maddux is a Professor and Associate Chair for Graduate Studies in the Department of Psychology at George Mason University (Snyder & Lopez, 2002).

contributed several chapters to the handbook. This notion is analysed through a social cognitive theory (SCT) lens. SCT is rooted in the idea that individuals are active participants in shaping their environments (Maddux, 2002). Furthermore, it should be noted that positive psychologists consider *hope* to be the belief that individuals can find the impetus for and new ways of reaching goals that in turn serve as a driver of wellbeing and emotions – which is the essence of hope theory. As such, the identified theme of *hope* is explored through the lens of hope theory.

Love, on the other hand, is situated in the domain of interpersonal approaches. It is interesting to note that in the overlap between PP and existentialism, the *pursuit of meaningfulness in life* (which is an existential theme I have read into the movie) and *faith* are both situated as specific coping approaches within the PP framework. Hence, PP embraces many foci, as has been done in this study, and the existential notions of *freedom of choice* and *will to meaning* that have been read into the movie as themes are explored in Chapter Three, along with the identified PP themes.

Moreover, consideration is given to the premise that PP is known as the strengths perspective and that “fortigenesis” is the process of developing strengths. This word was derived from the Latin word *fortis*, which means *strong* (cited in Strümpfer, 2006b, p. 145) in conjunction with the Greek word *genesis* (from *gen*, which means *be produced*) (Strümpfer, 2006a, p. 12). An exploration into the use of *The Matrix* as a fortigenic tool may be found in Chapter Five: The mock turtle’s story.

1.3.1.1 How far has PP developed?

It is vital to consider and briefly review PP’s progress. In 2005, Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson published a progress report, which included evidence of the validity of their interventions. In this article they refer to the fact that a multitude of books have been published about PP, such as *Authentic Happiness* (Seligman, 2002a); *Handbook of positive psychology* (Snyder & Lopez, 2002); *Flourishing: positive psychology and the life well lived* (Keyes & Haidt, 2003); and *A psychology of human strengths: Fundamental questions as well as Future directions for a positive psychology* (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003). In Lopez and Snyder’s (2004) *Positive psychological assessment: A handbook of models and measures*, they list a variety of PP measures that have been developed, e.g.: creativity, wisdom, *hope*, self-esteem, empathy, gratitude, *faith*, emotional intelligence, morality and quality of life. Progress has been made in terms of the number of meetings held, and a variety of networks and centres have emerged; for instance, there are 50 research groups that are supported by the Positive Psychology Network. The University of Pennsylvania offered the first master’s degree in applied positive psychology in 2005, and a website has also been developed. Hence it is clear that this movement has expanded considerably (Tan, 2006).

1.3.1.2 The negatives about PP.

When researching the positive in psychology, a number of complications need to be highlighted. Some of the reasons for this are described earlier in this chapter (e.g., that monetary reward caused many psychologists to focus on pathology instead of fortitude). Research on positive emotions such as joy, love and contentment has unintentionally been marginalised. Another reason is that the number of articles focusing on pathology far outweighs the number written on positive aspects. There are fewer positive emotions, and these are naturally quite diffuse. For the most part positive emotions lack discernible autonomic responses, and many can easily blend into a variety of subjective experiences (Strümpfer, 2006). Nevertheless, an exclusive focus on weaknesses “may limit psychologists’ understanding of typical and successful human functioning” (Sheldon & King, 2001, p. 216).

Another negative aspect of the fortigenic use of film is that each film can be interpreted differently by each individual spectator (Schulenberg, 2003). In his review of Niemiec and Wedding’s (2008) book, *Positive psychology at the movies: Using films to build virtues and character strengths*, Bergsma (2010) also raises important concerns. He points out that Niemiec and Wedding (2008) fail to supply any scientific data to back up their assertions about the fortigenic benefits of watching movies. Moreover, there is no evidence in support of their classification system of strengths portrayed in films they have classified as PP films. Bergsma (2010) further maintains that Niemiec and Wedding (2008) rely on the devices of imitation and inspiration to effect change in people, which the author finds dubious at best. As a result, Bergsma (2010), like Schulenberg (2003), notices that the same movie means different things to different people and therefore may not be useful in facilitating fortigenic change.

1.3.2 An existential lens.

Viktor Frankl’s existential theory is another lens that is used to explore and understand the film, and the findings integrated into this reading or textual matrix. This is done not only as a theoretical point of departure, but also because existential notions such as freedom of choice and will to meaning have been read into *The Matrix*.

Whilst Frankl is not a positive psychologist per se, he, along with several others, certainly paved the way for PP. Historically, a number of psychologists, writers and scholars have explored what it means to lead the best possible life and in doing so have unknowingly made a significant contribution to PP, as stated previously. William James (1902) focused on mental wellbeing and Gordon Allport (1958) contended that individuals can positively influence their own development. Abraham Maslow (1971) worked on self-actualisation and Carl Rogers (1992) formed ideas about optimal functioning and unconditional positive regard. Both Maslow (1971) and Rogers (1992) believed that people who are optimally developed can

develop their potential fully. Irwin Yalom (1980), Rollo May (1953; 1961; 1975) and Viktor Frankl (1959; 1967; 1978; 1992; 2004a; 2004b) all concentrated on the importance of finding meaning in one's life. Incidentally, Pytell (2006) sees Rollo May's work *Existence: A new dimension in psychiatry and psychology* (which was published in 1958), as the precursor "of the existential psychotherapy movement in America" (p. 494).

Nevertheless, it is Viktor Frankl who is considered to be one of the fathers of existentialism, and Boeree (2006) gives a synopsis of the origins of this movement:

In September of 1942, a young doctor, his new bride, his mother, father, and brother, were arrested in Vienna and taken to concentration camps in Bohemia. It was events that occurred there and at three other camps that led the young doctor – prisoner 119,104 – to realize the significance of meaningfulness in life. (p. 1)

Frankl's (2004b) first book on his experiences in concentration camps was *The doctor and the soul* and reflects his attitudes towards meaning, suffering, philosophy and *freedom of choice*. However, he initially struggled to solidify his theory. In his early writings, Frankl (1967) contends that body, mind and psyche should be seen as diverse dimensions inextricably linked to form a whole. In a later work, Frankl (1978) still explores the mind-body dualism, but Pytell (2006) argues that Frankl's use of dimensional ontology fails to solve this dualism, because "Frankl's wholeness ... actually depended on the tripartite⁷ division of human experience" (p. 492).

Längle and Sykes (2006) explain that Frankl's philosophical outlook coupled with his knowledge of the work of theorists such as Freud and Adler drove him to seek a more humanistic approach to the fields of psychology, philosophy and medicine. Existentialism therefore forms part of the humanistic school of psychology and is rooted in a modernist epistemology. The authors further note that several fundamentals form the cornerstone of both existential analysis and its corresponding therapeutic method, logotherapy. These fundamentals include "Frankl's deep respect for the dignity of each individual, one's (moral) conscience, personal meaning and what one takes responsibility for" (Längle & Sykes, 2006, p. 45). Längle and Sykes (2006) observe that Frankl argued that it is impossible to understand life fully and that the very thing that is missing in traditional psychotherapy, namely "the very human act of encounter" (p. 45), is a precursor to unconditional meaning, and a steadfast search to unearth life's depth and its many layers of meaning.

⁷ This tripartite division refers to the mind / body / psyche split. Reber (1985) defines ontology as: "An aspect of metaphysical inquiry concerned with the question of existence apart from specific objects and events" (p. 491).

In Frankl's (2004a) book *Man's search for meaning*, he cites countless examples of the role of the *will to meaning* and *freedom of choice* in concentration camps, as well as in life after his release, which led to his insights into the human condition. Frankl's (2004a) outlook is based on the assumption that we transcend existence (or a life that merely seeks pleasure) to find the meaning therein. He developed his theories whilst experiencing Auschwitz, Dachau and other concentration camps. Of this Längle and Sykes (2006) write: "Frankl's theoretical emphasis on meaning, suffering, what makes us truly human, responsibility, freedom, and the reality of death and despair was tested personally and observed during the horrors of WWII" (p. 41).

Frankl (2004a) divides the entire holocaust experience into three distinct phases: (1) the period following admission, (2) being well-entrenched in camp life and (3) release and freedom. Various emotions characterise the first phase. Upon arriving at Auschwitz most were gripped by fear – "[t]he very name stood for all that was horrible: gas chambers, crematoriums, massacres" (Frankl, 2004a, p. 22). Though the initial reaction was one of fear, Frankl's other reactions in the period following admission include horror, relief, optimism, curiosity and objectivity. The second phase (being well-entrenched in camp life) was characterised by apathy, regression and low self-worth, but also positive emotions such as the strengthening of his inner life, joy, *love*, gratitude and empathy. The third phase (release and liberation) brought about a sense of numbness, depersonalisation and a slow realisation of and return to joyousness and *faith*. Conversely, he also felt disillusioned and resentful (Frankl, 2004a). It is clear that Frankl suffered a great deal and, in the process, experienced a range of positive and negative emotions and cognitions. Yet, despite everything, he maintained an inherently positive attitude (Frankl, 2004a). By doing so, he managed to adapt to and transcend his ordeals. Hence he used what would later be identified as a number of positive character strengths and virtues.

Meyer, Moore, and Viljoen (1997) write that Frankl does not agree with Freud's theory that human beings seek to fulfil their needs and seek out pleasure in order to reduce their anxiety. They postulate that Frankl opposes the view held by Freud that man is driven by needs that beg to be satisfied. Moreover, the authors note that existentialism is a very positive view of man's existence and presupposes our freedom to be able to make choices in life. Frankl acknowledges the fact that we are shaped by our genetic make-up and our environment, but argues that man is essentially "the master of his own destiny". This freedom and responsibility also relate to living life to the full and using each opportunity that comes one's way to the fullest (Meyer et al., 1997).

For Frankl (2004a), the essence of life is that it has significance (meaning), which is described as an implicit and profound drive that guides our daily existence. Man's search for meaning empowers him to endure, to persevere and to make sense of everything that comes his way in life, which touches on Nietzsche's well-known maxim "He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how" (as cited in

Frankl, 2004a, p. 84). Frankl (2004a) believes that this search for meaning could awaken inner tension instead of inner equilibrium. It is clear that Frankl drew inspiration from Nietzsche's ideas. However, this tenuous link between Frankl and Nietzsche does not imply that the two scholars can be linked in a positive way. Rather, it serve to highlight my contention that references to both the ideas of Frankl and the philosophical ideas of Nietzsche can be used as a lens to understand *The Matrix*.

Frankl (2004a) furthermore believes that man has free will, which encapsulates the concept of choice. Granted, our choices are sometimes fuelled by unconscious forces and not every person always has the freedom to make the choices they want to make. Choice as such is linked to a rational embeddedness in a situational and historical context that one cannot escape. Neo similarly is caught up and has to make his choices in *The Matrix*. Nevertheless, every person is ultimately free to decide what his or her attitude towards his or her life is (Frankl, 2004a).

Guttman (2005) writes that Frankl argues: "For the human being gives meaning to his or her own life and existence by trying to fulfil something in which he or she sees value" (p. 23). Frankl (2004a) furthermore remarks:

Man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a secondary rationalisation of instinctual drives. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own will to meaning. (p. 121)

Frankl (2004a) postulates that finding meaning in hardship is intrinsic to man's existence, which in return bears directly on his fondness of Nietzsche's belief, as mentioned before. Frankl (2004a) holds that we can discover the meaning of our lives by using three different approaches: (a) by creating a work or doing a deed, (b) by experiencing something or encountering someone and (c) by the attitude we take towards unavoidable suffering (p. 115). The first approach is self-explanatory. The second approach necessitates that we experience the uniqueness of another human being through the act of loving him or her, and here Frankl (2004a) has the following thoughts on *love*:

Love is the only way to grasp another human being in the innermost core of his personality. By his love he is enabled to see the essential traits and features in the beloved person; and even more, he sees that which is potential in him, which is not yet actualized but yet ought to be actualized. Furthermore, by his love, the loving person enables the beloved person to actualize these potentialities. By making him aware of what he can and what he should become, he makes these potentialities come true. (p. 116)

The third approach through which one can find meaning is through suffering, and Frankl (2004a) explains why: "since it is a uniquely human capacity to be able to see the potential in suffering and to transcend difficult circumstances, in other words to transform a personal tragedy into a triumph" (p. 116). However, Frankl (2004a, p. 116) notes that suffering is not a prerequisite for finding meaning in life: "I only insist

that meaning is possible even in spite of suffering – provided, certainly, that the suffering is unavoidable ...”. Throughout life’s journey, most people have to deal with suffering, though it may not be as harsh as that which Frankl experienced in concentration camps. What makes it possible to weather adversity? How can one suffer but still endure and find some way to make sense of it all? Frankl (2004a) holds that it is the *will to meaning* or a sense of purpose that makes us prevail. Similarly, Meyer et al. (1997) note that “suffering has meaning. It offers the opportunity to transcend adversity. By the way suffering is borne, a tragedy can be turned into triumph. The freedom to live a life of worth and dignity remains, even in suffering” (p. 540).

Therefore Coetzer (2005) observes that Frankl’s ultimate message is: “Man can still say ‘yes’ to life; man is still free to change his attitude to suffering, guilt and death” (p. 3). Frankl (2004a) argues that it is an individualised search for meaning that allows us to face and make sense of everything life brings:

... one should not search for an abstract meaning in life. Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfilment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus everyone’s task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it. (p. 131)

Hence Frankl (2004a) has an innately positive belief about man’s free and conscious will to make a choice about his stance, born from an optimistic outlook on life, and to find meaning even in suffering.

Given the abovementioned observations, an important aim of this reading is to highlight positive messages that have been read into the film, these being the *will to meaning* as well as *freedom of choice*. That is because these messages tie in closely with the main tenets of Frankl’s existential theory. PP centres on “a life of pleasure, engagement and meaning” (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008, p. 3). In the same way, Frankl (2004a), as the main advocate of existentialism, defines psychology in the context of the *will to meaning*, defining it as a positive and active search to find meaning and a spiritual sense of purpose under any and all circumstances. Längle and Sykes (2006) summarise the essence of Frankl’s outlook by noting that striving and searching for goals and meaning in our lives serves to lay the groundwork for the “development, fulfilment, and discovery of our essential selves” (p. 44).

Logotherapy is also incorporated in this reading through the use of an existential lens, and it can be defined as follows: “Logotherapy focuses rather on the future, that is to say, on the meanings to be fulfilled by the patient in his future ... [i]n logotherapy the patient is actually confronted with and reorientated [*sic*] toward the meaning of his life” (Frankl, 2004a, p. 104). Lukas (1979) notes that the goals of logotherapy are to view clients not as machines that can be retrained, but to consider a client “in his totality, including his noëtic dimension where he is concerned with meanings, values, goals and tasks, leading him to accept an inner-directed responsibility”. (pp. 95-96)

Lukas (1979) proposes the use of four steps in the logotherapy process⁸: “1) gaining distance from the symptoms; 2) modification of attitudes; 3) reduction of symptoms; and 4) orientation towards meaning”. The aim of the first step is for the client to become aware that what he or she *presents with*, does not define *who he or she is*. In this sense he or she can choose to modify or possibly overcome his or her behaviour. Step two is where the therapist assists the client to see a different side of him- or herself – this should spontaneously emerge and therefore should not be forced. The premise is that once these two steps have been taken, step three usually takes care of itself. Lastly, according to Lukas (1979), the client is steered towards meaning, and in the process his or her specific circumstances are explored and enriched. This means that the client is assisted to see his or her values to buffer him or her from “future existential frustrations” (Lukas, 1979, p. 99).

1.3.2.1 The relationship between positive psychology and existentialism.

The more obvious link between PP and existentialism is a keen and active focus on a positive point of view. This connection between PP and existentialism is evident in many older, as well as more recent, sources of research and is discussed below.

Baumeister and Vohs (2002) note that Frankl was one of the first theorists to look at ideas such as “meaning” and “value”. They describe this pioneer’s work as “a courageous rebellion against the behaviourist and psychodynamic paradigms that dominated psychological theorizing at the time” (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002, p. 608). A distinction is made between low and high levels of meaning, and the relationship between increased meaning and reduced suffering is discussed. A low level of meaning includes more immediate and concrete meanings, is more readily changed and influenced, is quite detailed and the focus is specific (e.g., going to school). A high level of meaning, on the other hand, is informed by the intelligent use of principles and values, spans a longer time period and is usually more goal-driven (e.g., studying with the aim of bettering your life). A further distinction between the two levels of meaning is that a low level can be described as “gearing down” because it appears that gearing down enables us to solve problems and make changes. A high level shifts us up to a more advanced level of meaning and is usually a more positive event that increases pleasure and satisfaction. This increase is important in PP because: “Increases in level of meaning do more than help one escape from suffering: they also enhance positive satisfaction and the sense of fulfilment” (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002, p. 610).

Snyder et al. (2002) note that Frankl’s notion of an existential vacuum is understood to be that the universe does not contain any value or meaning. In order for an individual to find meaning, he or she

⁸ An in-depth exploration of the fortigenic use of specific principles of logotherapy can be found in Chapter Four: Advice from a caterpillar.

must choose to actualise values. This choice has three value facets: (a) *creative* (such as giving birth or writing a novel), (b) *experiential* (touching or feeling or any other way of experiencing) and (c) *attitudinal* (what your attitude towards your circumstances is). Given these assumptions, a measure was developed called *The Purpose of Life test* (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964; 1981). Aside from this measure, there are two other like-minded measures that are widely used, first the *Life Regard Index* (Battista & Almond, 1973) and second the *Sense of Coherence Scale* (Antonovsky, 1986).

Nolen-Hoeksema and Davis (2002) write about the impact of Frankl's idea of *will to meaning* that leads to having a sense of authenticity in your life. The assumption that a seemingly insurmountable obstacle allows you the opportunity to choose to actualise your values is at the heart of this idea. Therefore, if you choose the *will to meaning*, it signifies personal growth and deflates feelings of hopelessness. For Nolen-Hoeksema and Davis (2002), loss is something that can be overcome. The focus is not on making sense of loss, but rather on finding the benefits gained from such an experience and by implication also deflating feelings of hopelessness.

Another research study that explores PP's association with existentialism was done by Strümpfer (2005), who argues that PP is indebted to positive pioneers such as Frankl, and that PP therefore stands on the shoulders of giants. The aim of his article was to show that the paradigm under consideration, namely PP, is "basically an ancient one" (Strümpfer, 2005, p. 22). Frankl's theory had a big influence on both non-psychologists and psychologists, and was formed in the context of the inhumane conditions in concentration camps. Strümpfer (2005) writes that Frankl noticed that it was only when accepting that a part of their existence could not be controlled that people in camps could attain a sense of freedom, thus allowing them to retain a measure of their dignity. Specifically the idea of *will to meaning* or the noölogical dimension as a primary motivational driving force is identified. It is furthermore highlighted that Frankl believed that each person had to find his or her own unique sense of meaning and had to plot his or her life course in this direction (Strümpfer, 2005).

The relationship between PP, existentialism and Logotherapy can also be seen in the more recent work of Abrami (2012). Concern is raised over a worrisome trend in which contemporary psychologists are using Frankl's ideas without acknowledging this theorist. Suggestions are made to publicise Frankl's contribution by using new media, newsletters and forming training centres in conjunction with universities (Abrami, 2012).

Hence, as has been shown, it is clear that there is a link between PP and existentialism. An emphasis on the positive in both these fields is in contrast to traditional thinking in psychology that focuses on "an excessive proclivity for deficit detecting to the exclusion of acknowledging strengths and resources"

(Strümpfer, 2005, p. 22). Conversely, existentialism, like PP, primarily focuses on a more *hopeful* and optimistic outlook and Thompson (2002) concludes that:

A central focus of positive psychology is to make beneficial ways of thinking available to the maximum number of people. Establishing environments where more people feel empowered to make positive changes in their lives is an important step in that direction. (p. 210)

1.3.3 A philosophical lens.

In my opinion, *The Matrix* as filmic container explores an interesting mix of very diverse philosophical thoughts, ideas and conclusions. Evidence in support of this opinion can be found in many articles and books, and is discussed below.

Lawrence (2002) argues that *The Matrix* encompasses a plethora of themes that include references to the nature of reality, good and evil, knowledge, philosophy, religion and the meaning of existence. Constable (2006) identifies key issues in the juxtaposition of philosophy and film texts and observes that “[t]he extensive writing on the philosophical aspects of *The Matrix* Trilogy⁹ raises the problems inherent to the interrelation of philosophy/theory and film texts in an acute form” (p. 233). In this article, Constable (2006) begins by highlighting the fact that *The Matrix* trilogy is used to illuminate notions such as the nature of reality. Rowlands (2003) uses *The Matrix* to show Descartes’s principles of the real: can we know that what we experience is not just a dream? Litch (2002) similarly uses the movie to write about Neo as an embodiment of Descartes’s philosophy. Haber (2003), a writer of both SF and non-fiction, published a book that contains articles by prominent SF writers on the topic of themes in *The Matrix*. Irwin (2002) explored similar philosophical underpinnings of popular culture and used *The Matrix* as an example. He also wrote about the importance of Baudrillard and the ways in which philosophy and film connect in this movie (Constable, 2006).

The significance of Baudrillard’s (1994) work in the context of understanding this movie is underlined by the fact that *Simulacra and simulation* was the only book that was compulsory reading material for the cast of *The Matrix* (Constable, 2006) – incidentally, the book also appears in the movie. Baudrillard (1994) is a French postmodernist whom Gordon (2003) describes as someone who makes sweeping and mostly hyperbolic statements that simulation has engulfed the world we live in. Consequently it is contended that Baudrillard’s ideas should be treated figuratively, because he argues that, in a postmodern world, the “real has been almost totally displaced by the simulated” (Gordon, 2003, p. 107). Thus, Gordon (2003) concludes that the movie is based on this contention, which, in his opinion,

⁹ For the purposes of this study, I focus solely on the first movie in *The Matrix* trilogy.

erroneously assumes that a computer programme can be written that simulates life, touch and smell so fully that millions of people living in wombs but plugged into the matrix think that their lives are real.

It may be true that no such computer programme exists, but to my mind, Gordon's view is pessimistic and misguided because the value and potential of imagination cannot be underestimated. The ideas of Kurzweil (2005), which are elaborated on in Chapter Four, are testament to the reality that there are new technologically imaginative innovations that have changed many people's lives for the better. Rowlands (2003) also argues that the question of the nature of reality is a key theme in *The Matrix*, and returns to Baudrillard's philosophical debate about the nature of reality; it is clear that many writers have examined Baudrillard's philosophical ideas by using *The Matrix* as an example (Constable, 2006; Gordon, 2003; Irwin, 2002; Lawrence, 2002). Hence the question as to the nature of reality exists in this movie, and, in my view, this philosophical debate forms part of a broader way of thinking in the real world.

Therefore it is shown how *The Matrix* undoubtedly deals with Baudrillard's (1994) premises on reality. It should be noted that simulation is referred to as "hyperreality" and the term "hyperreal" describes a world of limitless copies (Fuery & Mansfield, 2000). But Baudrillard's philosophy is also part of the postmodern paradigm. It is my belief that the use of this philosophical lens is not diametrically opposed to the chosen modernist theoretical frameworks (lenses) of PP and existentialism. It is merely a different lens that I have chosen to use with which to explore and understand this movie.

The postmodern movement was originally rooted in art, literature, cultural studies and architecture rather than the social sciences, but ideas spread to other disciplines (such as the philosophical ideas of Baudrillard) (Webster, 2002). Postmodernists are insistent that a new era is upon us, and call for a break with the past. This way of thinking has caused many to confront new ideas, in the sense that many people question whether this new age has indeed started and whether we are truly part of an information society (Webster, 2002). The intention here is not to explore the breadth of postmodernism. Rather, the idea is to think differently about psychology (innovation) and to analyse the "nature of reality" question in this film, and specifically Baudrillard's philosophical interpretation thereof. Thus these concepts are explored through a postmodern lens, which I *hope* may lead to a better understanding of the movie.

In my opinion *The Matrix* also contains references to the philosophical ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche, Nietzschean perspectivism, and specifically Nietzsche's well-known quote: "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how". Nietzsche (1844–1900) "lived in the nineteenth century; thus, he predates the birth of postmodernism" (Litch, 2002, p. 53). Nietzsche is recognised as the first philosopher to endorse the concept of relativism of rationality, which incidentally is the starting point for postmodernism. His views are important since they are described as prophetic of postmodernism. This is because he emphasised the idea that language is the vehicle for solidifying our conceptual schemes and because he fashioned

the notion of an objective truth (Litch, 2002). Litch (2002) explains: “So, Nietzsche does not use some objective standard of rationality in judging the adequacy of a conceptual scheme, but rather a pragmatic standard: a conceptual scheme is adequate if it allows me to thrive” (p. 53). It is my contention that Nietzsche’s philosophical perspective is a positive way of thinking about the world. Consequently, the ideas of this eminent philosopher are used as a lens through which to examine *The Matrix*.

Köhler (2000) wrote the following: “*Vieles spricht dafür, daß Nietzsches Hauptwerk Also sprach Zarathustra von einer Opiumhalluzination ausgelöst wurde*” (Köhler, 2000, p. 38). This means that Köhler intimates that morphine was the catalyst for most of Nietzsche’s philosophical writings – notably also *Thus spoke Zarathustra*. Köhler then describes how Nietzsche used morphine as medication to relieve his migraines. But the morphine was at first erroneously prescribed to treat the pain he suffered as a result of falling off a horse and injuring himself. Nietzsche consequently became addicted to the drug. From the hallucinations the morphine caused, Nietzsche postulated that man has the power to create and recreate to become the ultimate human being. At that juncture, Nietzsche came to view man’s existence in a new light; he believed that death need not be feared but that one can rejoice in everlasting life. However, Nietzsche believed that the burden of eternity lies in every action of man (Köhler, 2000).

Köhler (2000) further contends that in this continual process of recreating and bettering himself lies man’s power to choose to become what Nietzsche called the *Übermensch*, which means “superman” (Langenscheidt, 1970, p. 1133). Returning to *The Matrix*, I show how Neo continually chooses to better himself, and that he ends up as a “superman” who can transcend the rules of the matrix by flying, hence solidifying my contention that Nietzsche’s theory ties in strongly with Neo’s journey, which is explored in more depth later.

1.3.4 A Christian lens.

I have chosen to use a Christian lens to examine the movie for the purposes of this study, but it is understood that the notion of *faith* should not be confused with religion (the Christian lens used here). In this reading, *faith* is equated with meaning-making, spirituality and a connectedness to the divine. There are two reasons for choosing this lens: first, it is a personal choice because I am a Christian and second, because there are many references to Christian apocalyptic thought apparent in the movie¹⁰.

Fontana (2003) wrote about finding God in *The Matrix* and mentions that the Wachowski brothers situated God in the movie by noting: “[t]his film is surprisingly true to Biblical theology – despite its unorthodox appearance” (p. 191). *Faith* is identified as a PP strength that makes up one aspect of the overarching

¹⁰ These references are explored in more depth in Chapter Five: The Mock-Turtle’s Story.

virtue of transcendence¹¹. Defining *faith* is perilous because it is very wide in scope and its meaning can easily be misunderstood. Pargament and Mahoney (2002) offer one possible definition:

It is the most human of the character strengths as well as the most sublime. We define the strength of faith and religiousness as having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe and one's place within it. (p. 533)

Within the framework of PP, the notion of *faith* encompasses a variety of concepts including spirituality, meaning-making and religion (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008). Broadly speaking, *faith* is a uniquely human and transcendental dimension. It is a search for existential meaning and a quest to find the sacred. It comprises being attuned to one's beliefs and being connected to a higher power (or the divine). Although religion can bring about this connectedness, *faith* does not require a particular institution or dogma. *Faith* is generally considered to be a more private affair, unlike religion where one may be part of a larger and more public community (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008). The choice of a Christian lens does not imply that Christianity is the only religious message in the film. There is evidence of many other metaphors in *The Matrix*, and numerous links with Buddhism are explored (Ford, 2003), but these links will not be discussed here since they do not form part of the Christian lens.

1.3.5 A fairy-tale lens.

As mentioned before, Lawrence (2002) believes that *The Matrix* draws on many references to the well-known fairy-tale *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1994). This story is summarised below for the reader who may not be familiar with Alice's adventures.

A little girl named Alice follows a White Rabbit, tumbles down a rabbit-hole and consequently ends up in a little room with many small doors. She then (conveniently) finds a bottle labelled "Drink me" and after drinking the liquid, shrinks considerably. Alice sees a key to a door on the table high above her and (conveniently) finds piece of cake labelled "Eat me", which makes her grow taller and taller. Her distress at not being able to escape the confines of the room leads her to start crying, and her tears form a river that eventually washes her onto a shore. It can be said that Alice meanders through a looking-glass into a fantastical Wonderland of talking animals and curious experiences. On her journey she meets a disappearing Cheshire cat, a hookah-smoking Caterpillar, a Mock Turtle, Humpty Dumpty and a Mad Hatter, amongst many other weird and wonderful creatures. Alice is invited to attend a tea party with the Mad Hatter, the White Rabbit and some of their friends. She finds herself at the trial of the Knave of Hearts, where she encounters the sadistic Queen of Hearts and marvels at the injustice of the trial. Alice finally wakes up and realises that she has been dreaming. This story is a metaphor for Alice's dreams and is lauded as keenly descriptive of the vivid imagination children have. This fantasy world illustrates

¹¹ See Figure 1, Chapter One: Down the Rabbit-Hole, denoting PP strengths and virtues.

that everything that is seemingly ludicrous makes sense to children and that the road through Wonderland, although full of frustrations and loneliness, ultimately leads to understanding (Bush, 2004; Carroll, 1994).

Given that there is a reference to *The Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 1960) in *The Matrix*, this story is also summarised for the reader who may not be familiar with the book. Dorothy, the main character, is an orphan who lives in Kansas with a farmer, Uncle Henry, and his wife, Aunt Em. Their small house is situated on a prairie: a flat, dull, grey landscape of limitless stretches of sand. The harshness of this area in America is reflected in the grey pallor of both Uncle Henry and Aunt Em. Dorothy was very young when she came to live with them and at first she scared Aunt Em whenever she laughed because this was not a house where people often laughed. Dorothy's dog, Toto, was mostly responsible for her laughter, since this little black creature was merry and loved to play.

A cyclone then lifted Dorothy and Toto clean off the ground and deposited their house in Oz. In stark contrast to Kansas, Oz is described as having luscious greenery with brightly coloured birds singing in gigantic trees. But Oz is also neatly divided into areas. The East and West are ruled by wicked witches, and the North and South by good witches. Perchance, Dorothy's house landed on top of the Wicked Witch of the East, who was instantly killed. Despite her beautiful surroundings, all that Dorothy desired was to return to Uncle Henry and Aunt Em. The good witch of the North then told Dorothy that she should travel to the Wizard of Oz to ask for his help to get back home. On her journey along the yellow brick road to the Emerald City where the Wizard of Oz lived, Dorothy was accompanied by three friends, each seeking something and hoping the Wizard of Oz will grant it to them; a Tin Woodman (seeking a heart), a Scarecrow (seeking a brain) and a Cowardly Lion (seeking *courage*). Dorothy was given a pair of magical ruby shoes that could, if the wearer clicked the heels together three times, be commanded to take the wearer anywhere she wished to go. During the course of their travels, each her three friends acquires what they desire, as does Dorothy, who clicks her heels three times and finds herself back in her own bed in Kansas. Several intrinsic messages may explain why this is an ever-popular fairy-tale: that real needs are not predicated on possessions, that goodwill, joy and *love* can transform the arid landscapes of grey and cheerless lives, and that there is no place like home (Littlefield, 1964).

1.4 Conclusion

There are many elements contained in *The Matrix*, but I have chosen to scrutinise the movie through a small selection of lenses. Each of us is unique and thinks about the world in a unique way. It is important to understand that the use of many lenses does not imply that the world is divided, since sorting and dividing the world into specific things and events implies another way of thinking about the world (Maddux, 2000).

CHAPTER 2: A CAUCUS-RACE AND A LONG TALE

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

Methodology is a key element in research psychology. The method I have chosen is an interpretive analysis that was carried out by an active thematic content analysis by virtue of deductive reasoning, bearing in mind that such interpretive analyses are situated within the broader and multifaceted qualitative research context. The way in which the research was done for this reading of *The Matrix* is described in phases and the research context is explored.

2.2 Theoretical background

Qualitative research is a methodology that essentially uses words as data, whereas quantitative data are made up of numbers (Trochim, 2001). Qualitative measures can be defined as “any measures where the data is not recorded in numerical form” (Trochim, 2001, p. 152). Qualities are “emergent properties arising from the configuration of elements in a whole” (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003, p. 9). Datum (the singular of data) is defined as: “A collection of information ... Also sometimes used to refer to other kinds of raw material used in research, such as a collection of texts or images” (Trochim, 2001, p. 477). A data set or data corpus “might be identified by a particular analytic interest in some topic in the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79), and a data item is “used to refer to each individual piece of data collected, which together make up the data set or corpus” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79).

Essentially, in qualitative research the smaller parts (or qualities) are always analysed bearing in mind the whole (Trochim, 2001), thereby allowing for the dissecting and scrutiny of details as well as the dissecting and scrutiny of more than one aspect of a topic. Camic et al. (2003) explain: “Qualitative data also allow researchers to develop multi-layered interpretations by returning to the data to carry out multiple analyses of different aspects of the topics, which can be contextualized by the other analyses” (p. 9).

The epistemological assumption that underlies qualitative research is the belief that it may be best to explore ideas in context, which may in turn lead to understanding (Trochim, 2001). The ontological assumptions that underlie qualitative research are the following:

They [qualitative researchers] don't assume that there is a single unitary reality apart from our perceptions. Since each of us experiences reality from our own point of view, each of us experiences a different reality. Conducting research without taking this into account violates the fundamental view of the individual. (Trochim, 2001, p. 158)

Qualitative researchers, myself included, therefore believe that every researcher is a unique person who is influenced or biased by his or her own perspectives (Trochim, 2001). As a result, qualitative researchers are described as quilt-makers or bricoleurs. A bricoleur is “a Jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself person” (Levi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17), who uses tools, methods and strategies to edit, stitch together, shape and ultimately form something new (Trochim, 2001). The newly stitched quilt (or this reading) is called a bricolage, which is defined as “a pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation” (Trochim, 2001, p. 4). It follows that this piecing-together process is a *creative* and flexible journey, and Braun and Clarke (2006) note that creativity and flexibility are two of the key elements of qualitative research. Kottler and Minichiello (2010) hold a similar view:

What is the point of doing a research study if you already know what you're going to find? The beauty and excitement of qualitative research is that you take on a position of complete openness and flexibility, almost of naivety, in which you want to be surprised by what you discover. (p. 278)

Subjectivity within a number of academic standards is embraced when doing qualitative research (Kottler & Minichiello, 2010). One method of ensuring good qualitative practice while doing a thematic content analysis is through triangulation, which is described by Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999) as “the use of multiple perspectives to check one's own position against” (p. 430). Though triangulation can be used within a single case, it can also be used across cases or studies (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Thus triangulation is about collecting different kinds of material in addition to material from as many different types of source as possible. The purpose is to approach the phenomenon from many angles to lead the researcher to an accurate understanding of the phenomenon (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999; Trochim, 2001).

There are four kinds of triangulation: (a) data triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation and (d) methodological triangulation. Theory triangulation was used in this reading, because it is defined as: “the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data, and this also means that the research findings can be incorporated into a more macro analytical level of inference” (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999, p. 431). Interdisciplinary triangulation is a fifth type of triangulation (Janesick, 1994). This fifth type has been applied in this reading, which not only includes the assimilation of ideas from disciplines such as philosophy and media research, but also integrates research from PP, existentialism, hope theory and flow theory, amongst others.

I *hope* that interpretative readings such as this one may be generalised to other contexts besides that which was researched here. Hence it is vital to create a foundation to ensure that these findings can be compared with the work of other researchers (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Such a foundation is established when the research done contains the following: an “accurate description of the research

process, and second, an explication of the arguments for the different choices of methods ... and third a detailed description (thick description) of the research situation and context” (Smaling, 1992, p. 318).

One commonly held objection is that the findings of qualitative studies are not representative. To overcome this objection, I have aimed to ensure that this reading can give answers that may be used in other contexts (Trochim, 2001). Another solution is to ensure that the research findings gleaned can be transferred to findings in other situations (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999; Trochim, 2001). Hence, by creating a foundation for transferability, the abovementioned objections can be overcome.

The arguments for choosing to do a thematic content analysis are now discussed. In the interest of representativeness and transferability, and to ensure transparency and good qualitative practice, a description of how my research was done follows thereafter.

2.3 Method of analysis and interpretation

My journey towards finding the right fit in terms of method of analysis and interpretation was not an easy, unplanned and spontaneous affair. Rather, finding the right fit is the culmination of a substantial amount of time spent thinking about the options and reading a vast amount of literature. Various methods were considered during the course of writing this mini-dissertation and ranged from a philosophical reading rooted in hermeneutics, to doing focus groups with respondents (recruited to explore their views on movies in general, to their views on *The Matrix* in particular and to finally to uncover what movies mean to them). The methodology used here seemed to make the most sense. Choosing to do a qualitative research using a thematic content analysis using many lenses to understand and to explore *The Matrix* and how this film can be used as a fortigenic tool is the result of a personal, subjective and selective interpretation, which is “in keeping with the tradition of qualitative research” (Camic et al., 2003, p. 8).

The overarching reason for choosing to do a thematic content analysis is not complicated. This reading is meant to be interpretive. Interpretive researchers believe that social interactions allow for the emergence¹² of meaning, understanding and experiences. The social interaction that is of interest to the researcher can be either naturalistic or, as is the case here, the “interaction between researcher and subject” (Durrheim, 1999, p. 49). Given that this reading was done between researcher and subject, it may also be called unobtrusive.

A thematic content analysis is one of the methods that can be grouped under the umbrella of interpretive analysis (Kruger, 1979; Trochim, 2001) and can be defined as “the identification of themes or major ideas

¹² Later on in this chapter I explain how my research process can be described as active, and thus certainly cannot be seen as a passive process wherein insights and themes “emerged”.

in a document or set of documents” (Trochim, 2001, p. 165). Braun and Clarke (2006) believe that a thematic analysis “offers an accessible and flexible approach to analysing qualitative data” (p. 77). Interpretive analysis has three distinct characteristics. First, that researchers working with this approach assume that subjective experiences are real and should be seen in an earnest light (ontology). Second, that listening to people can lead to understanding (epistemology). Third, that the ideal manner in which to gain understanding is through qualitative research (methodology) (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).

Braun and Clarke (2006) write that: “A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (p. 82). The researcher decides what a theme encompasses. The prevalence of a theme does not equal the importance of a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, if a theme were to appear numerous times (or is seen in, e.g., more than 50% of data items) or only once in a data set, this does not signify the importance or unimportance of that theme: this again indicates that words rather than numbers are valued in qualitative research. It follows that by listening to the characters in a movie such as *The Matrix* and by experiencing the movie, analysing the transcript of the film and incorporating a thorough exploration of the literature, an interpretive analysis can be done to understand the research question being investigated.

The manner in which the thematic content analysis was done is now explored. This is done, first, to facilitate insight into the method of analysis and interpretation used here. Second, it is done to ensure that the findings from this reading may be used to compare to the work of other researchers. Lastly, it is done to ensure that the reader gleans a clear sense of how this analysis and interpretation were carried out, to adhere to requirements of transparency and to build a solid foundation that can be used to compare this work to the work of other researchers.

2.4 How was this research done?

Guy, Edgley, Arafat, and Allen (1987) ask whether it is possible for qualitative researchers to arrange, organise and make sense of the mass of data they accumulate, and come to the conclusion that it is the most difficult aspect of qualitative research. They furthermore note that it is impossible to write a step-by-step account that can produce a qualitative analysis. However, Braun and Clarke (2006) differ from Guy et al. (1987) because they believe that it is conceivable to set out clear guidelines for doing a thematic analysis. These guidelines, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), were used to inform the manner in which the thematic analysis was done in this reading, and are now discussed. Moreover, it is demonstrated how visual devices are used in film to map characters’ feelings or to convey a specific mood; this is carried out through a process Bartsch (2010) calls continuous mapping.

2.4.1 Phase 1.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the first guideline is: “Phase 1: familiarizing yourself with the data” (p. 86). An appropriate metaphor for my familiarisation process is that of preparing to make a quilt. One of the first considerations was to obtain the fabric for the quilt – or obtain the data. The process of doing a thematic content analysis was set in motion by having the film transcribed by a professional transcriber, which may be likened to acquiring the fabric that the quilt consists of. I then read through the transcript many times in addition to watching the film several times to familiarise myself with the content. This familiarisation process led to my internalising the content and can therefore be described as immersive. I watched the film, read the transcript, read a theme into the content and made preliminary notes, and repeated this process many times. Here an appropriate metaphor is the creation of pieces that the quilt consists of – each individual aspect meticulously and thoroughly explored, evaluated, worked on, lovingly laboured over and sewn together. Getting acquainted with the material can be described as a feedback loop, where ideas, theories, thoughts and data were gathered, explored and then critically evaluated in terms of potential fit, and accordingly either used or discarded. Hence my process cannot be described as linear. This familiarising process was also immensely useful in checking the accuracy of the transcript against the movie for the sake of accuracy.

2.4.2 Phase 2.

The second step (or phase 2) was to generate initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999) explain how this works:

In coding, we break down a body of data (text domain) into labelled, meaningful pieces, with a view to later clustering the “bits” of coded material together under the code heading and further analysing them both as a cluster and in relation to the other clusters. (p.143)

Initial codes are useful in that they are small enough not to be daunting, are interesting enough to be useful in showing the beginnings of an emerging quilt, and are a helpful way to break down large amounts of data into manageable parts. Codes form the foundational early stages of understanding the whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Many authors agree that it is important to work through the whole data set, not only for the sake of consistency but also because the significance of codes may only be revealed at a later stage in the process (Attride-Sterling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Trochim, 2001).

Given that I identified codes in the preliminary stages of my research, these ideas were pregnant with the promise of becoming something more (a theme). Therefore codes are a valuable tool with which to give a voice to that which does not yet exist, but which can be used, altered, added to or discarded at a later stage at the discretion of the researcher. For this reading, coding was handwritten on paper or typed in

Word documents that were printed. Having a tangible record of codes seemed to solidify my ideas, and was soothing because these notes acted as a container. Many ideas were born into the world of awareness and existed on paper as codes, even though they may or may not have turned into themes.

2.4.3 Phase 3.

It follows that coding and thematising flow into each other, and therefore the third phase in the process of doing a thematic content analysis was identifying themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes that were read into the content of the transcript of *The Matrix* include existential notions such as *will to meaning* and *freedom of choice*, and the PP notions of *self-efficacy*, *love*, *hope*, *courage*, *open-mindedness*, *creativity* and *faith*.

These themes were chosen first because they captured something important about the data in relation to the research question. Second, these themes were chosen because they hold personal value and have been applied in many instances not only to overcome hardships in my own life, but to attain goals and build a joyous life that is filled with meaning. Hence, the themes represent a degree of meaning and patterned response both within the data set and on a personal level. The themes were also chosen at a latent level of thematic analysis, which means that each theme “goes beyond the semantic content of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). Braun and Clarke (2006) define a latent level of thematic analysis: “Thus, for the latent thematic analysis, the development of the themes themselves involves interpretative work, and the analysis that is produced is not just description, but is already theorized” (p. 84). That is because core concepts, ideas and abstractions were identified, explored and infused with the theory to inform and mould the content of my data.

The following is an example of how a theme was decided on (or read into the movie). It is included for the sake of clarity, and is meant as a brief explanation of the process¹³. When Morpheus gives Neo the choice to take either a red or a blue pill, he says to Neo:

“This is your last chance. After this there is no turning back. You take the blue pill and the story ends. You wake up in your bed and you believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit-hole goes.”

In my opinion, this choice that Neo is faced with is significant for a host of reasons. The most important is that he is free to decide what he wants to do. If Neo decides to take the blue pill, it can be interpreted to mean that it is the safe option that will not lead to any answers. If, on the other hand, Neo decides to take the red pill, the ramifications are uncertain; anything can potentially happen to him. But it holds the

¹³ This digression is meant to illustrate how a theme was read into the movie. A comprehensive discussion of this extract from the film can be found in Chapter Five: The mock turtle’s story.

promise of unlocking answers that may lead him to find meaning in his life. Therefore Neo's decision to take the red pill was interpreted to imply two existential notions, namely *freedom of choice* and *will to meaning*.

2.4.4 Phase 4.

The fourth phase in the process was one in which themes were reviewed. Braun and Clarke (2006) note that this reviewing process is important since some themes may collapse into each other, although other themes may prove to be insignificant (due to insufficient data to uphold them). Here the example can be used of the notion of *bravery*, which was identified as a code during the initial stages of my analysis. After much research and deliberation it became clear to me that Neo can be described as *brave*, but that the virtue of *courage*¹⁴ seemed to be more appropriate since *courage* encompasses the notion of *bravery*.

The next step in the thematic content analysis was to relate the data from the transcript and the themes to the content, which was done by turning to germane literature to formulate and build valid arguments for the choice of themes, methodology, theoretical framework and insights. Doing so allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the literature. Older literature was used because certain ideas, such as the philosophical ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche or the film theory of Christian Metz, are timeless. The recent literature that was used was also essential because it was compared to other sources both old and new in addition to developing my own insights.

2.4.5 Phase 5.

The fifth phase in a thematic content analysis is defining, refining and naming of themes. This phase is equally important since it forces the researcher to distil his or her choices, arguments, themes and theories into a meaningful whole without sacrificing the detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

¹⁴ The notion of *courage* is deliberated on in more detail in Chapter Three: The Rabbit sends in a little (P)ill.

2.4.6 Phase 6.

The sixth and final phase is writing the report, which is described as telling “the complicated story of your data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of your analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). The final story or quilt should include vivid examples to illustrate your points and should be: “[e]mbedded within an analytic narrative that compellingly illustrates the story you are telling about your data, and your analytic narrative needs to go beyond description of the data, and make an argument in relation to your research question” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93).

This newly stitched quilt (or reading) can be called a bricolage, which was defined earlier as “a pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation” (Trochim, 2001, p. 4). The aim of my *creative* and flexible journey was to develop a multi-layered interpretation of *The Matrix* and all the other facets highlighted earlier. By using many lenses or looking-glasses to examine this film and by burrowing ever deeper into the rabbit-hole, whilst exploring a myriad of sources of information such as ideas, books and articles, I *hope* to have woven together all the threads and to have told my story in a convincing manner.

Since qualitative research allows for flexibility and creativity, I will include Diana Gabaldon’s (2006) revelations about how she wrote her books, which accurately describe my own process:

I don’t use outlines and I don’t work in a straight line. I write in disconnected bits and pieces – where I can “see” things happening – and as the process goes on and I do more research – I begin to see the linkages between the bits, and they start to coalesce into larger bits, which in turn eventually form still-larger “chunks”. By the time I’ve achieved “chunk-hood”, I generally have a relatively good notion both of the historical timeline to be dealt with in this particular book, and of the focus-points on that line ... It is a very organic process, though: something like growing rock crystals in your basement. Or mushrooms. (pp. 1397-1398)

This attempt to describe the research process, which was informed by the guidelines given by Braun and Clarke (2006), may serve to ensure that the findings gleaned from this reading can be used and applied in other qualitative studies and with other texts, e.g., by using another film. Moreover, it is clear from the above that the research process followed here can be described as active. It was not a passive process wherein insights and themes “emerged”, but was instead an active and continued search for deeper understanding and meaning. There were times during the course of this process where new insights were arrived at, and new synergies formed in an instant. Such moments are exhilarating for any researcher. However, the majority of the research done for this reading is the result of hard work and actively and critically engaging with every aspect thereof. My choice of research question is very meaningful to me

and allowed me to maintain high levels of interest which, in turn, fuelled me to see the research through to its conclusion.

2.5 Continuous mapping and its application in this reading

Bartsch (2010) explains that visual devices are used in film to map characters' feelings or to convey a specific mood. For example, the visual portrayal of dark clouds on the horizon in a movie can be used to convey to the spectator that something ominous is going to happen:

Perhaps the most common strategy of metaphorical storytelling is the continuous mapping of emotional processes on a coherent source domain that serves as an outward projection of the characters' inner feelings. Typical source domains of continuous mappings include the weather, the landscape, the characters' clothing and bodies, their vehicles and their homes. (Bartsch, 2010, p. 254)

Accordingly, such visual or cinematic devices play a vital role in movies (Bartsch, 2010). Given the apparent importance of these devices, such devices in *The Matrix* are highlighted and explored in Chapter Five: The Mock-turtle's story.

2.6 Description of the research situation and context

Given the qualitative nature of this reading (i.e. conceptual and not empirical), it is necessary to describe the research situation and context.

The last piece of the puzzle in the process of reaching my objective of attaining a Master's degree in Research Psychology is this reading, which renders it intrinsically meaningful. This process commenced five years ago when I started studying and is arguably one of my more difficult self-imposed personal life-goals. The difficulties faced along the way were challenging on many levels and are mentioned briefly: losing my son, losing my friend and mentor, moving to a new city, starting a new job as an intern researcher and later starting to work as a research executive at a global research company. Nevertheless, the benefits I gained undoubtedly outweigh the hardships. Therefore, if someone were to ask whether I would make the same choice, the answer is a resounding "yes".

2.7 Conclusion

It is important to note that qualitative research offers the researcher an avenue for creativity and flexibility. However, building a foundational framework is equally important in such a process. Therefore it is advisable to always consider two seemingly disparate ways of thinking, namely unbounded and bounded.

CHAPTER 3: THE RABBIT SENDS IN A LITTLE (P)ILL

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to prepare the reader for the interpretive work on *The Matrix* that can be found in Chapter Four: Advice from a caterpillar. As such, the seven PP themes that have been read into the film are now discussed; these being *self-efficacy*, *love*, *hope*, *courage*, *open-mindedness*, *creativity* and *faith*. Thereafter, the notion of *flow* is deliberated on and the vital role highlighted that *flow* plays not only in PP, but also in the context of *hope* and hope theory. Lastly, the two existential themes *freedom of choice* and *will to meaning* are explored. Each of the above themes¹⁵ is defined and discussed individually.

3.2 PP themes

3.2.1 Self-efficacy

In dissecting the anatomy of *The Matrix* and by exploring the notion of *self-efficacy*, I dug deeper into Maddux's (2002) contention that *self-efficacy* is inextricably linked to self-regulation. *Self-efficacy* is defined as "the power of believing you can" (Maddux, 2002, p. 277). The belief in yourself as the master of your own destiny is a key factor in "the behaviours people choose to engage in and how much they persevere in their efforts in the face of obstacles and challenges" (Maddux, 2002, p. 277), and "[s]elf-efficacy is not perceived skill; it is what I believe I can do with my skills under certain conditions" (Maddux, 2002, p. 278).

The origins of *self-efficacy* can be traced to Albert Bandura, who first coined the term in 1977 in the *Psychological Review* (Maddux, 2002). Bandura's (1977) article, *Self-efficacy: Towards a unifying theory of behavior change*, sparked a flurry of subsequent articles in a variety of fields, including medicine, public health, nursing, kinesiology, sociology and of course psychology. Barlow and Durand (1999) posit that it was Bandura, a behavioural theorist, who formulated social cognitive theory (SCT), which may be defined as "an approach to understanding human cognition, action, motivation, and emotion" (Maddux, 2002, p. 279). To clarify, Maddux (2002) maintains that *self-efficacy* and the related notion of self-regulation can be understood best against the backdrop of SCT.

¹⁵ Note that the sequence in which the themes are discussed here does not imply that one is less or more important than the other.

The premise of this theory is explained by Bandura (2001):

Social cognitive theory accords a central role to cognitive, vicarious, self-regulatory, and self-reflective processes. An extraordinary capacity for symbolization provides humans with a powerful tool for comprehending their environment and creating and regulating environmental events that touch virtually every aspect of their lives. (p. 267)

Thus SCT is based on the assumption that we play an active role in shaping our environment. It is rooted in four basic principles, as summarised by Maddux (2002):

- That we have the innate ability to create internal forms of our experiences by virtue of our mental and symbolising faculties. We can generate *creative* ways of doing things, and can test imaginary alternative ways of doing things by envisaging various scenarios. As such, we are able to convey complicated experiences and ideas to other people. We have the ability to self-reflect, which in turn allows us to understand our own behaviour, emotions and thoughts, thus providing an underlying basis for *self-efficacy*.
- That we react to environmental occurrences by thinking about them (cognitively), in terms of our feelings about them (emotionally, biologically and interpersonally) and how we respond to them (behaviourally). This matrix of elements is interwoven and mutually influential.
- That we are made up of a personality and a self, and, that we are rooted in a social context. Whether or not our ideas about our context are accurate, the entirety of our ideas forms patterns in relation to other people, to sets of circumstances and to what we bring to a situation, the aggregate of which forms part of a social context. Hence it is not only about how we influence these patterns, but it is also about that which is created in our relationships with other people.
- That we have the ability for *self-efficacy* because we identify goals and adapt our behaviour to reach these goals. By drawing on past knowledge and encounters, we can look forward to or formulate expectancies to shape beliefs about future encounters, situations and convictions about our abilities and actions. (Maddux, 2002, p. 297)

Consequently, *self-efficacy* is not only about reducing disparities between how people perceive their performance measured against their standards, which is called discrepancy reduction (Bandura, 2001). People also motivate themselves by setting higher goals and then use their skills, their efforts and their resources to reach these goals, which is called discrepancy production. Therefore, according to Bandura (2001): “[h]uman self-efficacy relies on discrepancy reduction as well as discrepancy production” (p. 268). Thus it may be said that, since people have the ability to regulate their behaviour, they are capable of initiating change within themselves to a certain extent.

The notion of *self-efficacy* is important in the PP context because if an individual believes in his or her own capabilities, and believes that he or she will yield the desired results, this positive focus will

determine the types of behaviour he or she chooses to engage in. Additionally, it may determine his or her fortitude in overcoming obstacles. Positive psychologists hold that *self-efficacy* is an essential ingredient not only in psychological adjustment, but also for psychological health and “professional guided and self-guided behavioural change strategies” (Maddux, 2002, p. 277).

3.2.2 Love.

The entirety of theories about *love* has resulted in a large body of research evidence. Early writings on the topic include abstract qualities such as the good and gods in relation to *love*. Later on, four distinct categories were identified: first, *Agape* that is the divine *love* given to creation; second, *Eros* or desire for virtuosity and beauty; third, *Philia*, which is *love* between friends; and lastly *Nomos*, which is obedience to God and consequently to a *loved* one. As research about *love* progressed, various other theories were explored. Questions were asked around marriage for *love*, and whether passionate *love* is vital to marriage, and where friendship with a *lover* or partner fits into the equation (Gadlin, 1977; Singer, 1984a; 1984b; 1987).

More recently, positive psychologists Hendrick and Hendrick (2002) remark that theories about *love* can be categorised into two groups: psychological/social and naturalistic/biological. The first group encompasses elements such as motive, cognition, interaction, communication and several classifications of *love*. The second group is more basic, and is about bodies, *love* and sex. Hendrick and Hendrick (2002) then set out to review studies done on how to communicate *love*, different *love* styles, sexuality and *love*, and *love* across cultures. Evidence is presented that people in relationships are happier than those who are alone, or are happier than people who have never been in a relationship of some kind, to indicate the correlation between *love* and happiness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Myers & Diener, 1995).

Later, Hendrick and Hendrick (2002) posit that romantic interactions are now more frequently linked to concepts such as *love*, marriage (or living together), friendship and sex. They believe that this combination may ultimately ensure that couples derive greater pleasure from *love* relationships than before. But the authors warn there may be a high price to pay in such relationships, since people expect more from them (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2002). Hence *love*, or meaningful intimacy, comes with a degree of risk, which may then require *courage*, which returns us to May's (1975) aforementioned definition of social *courage*:

The courage to relate to other human beings, the capacity to risk one's self in the hope of achieving meaningful intimacy. It is the courage to invest one's self over a period of time in a relationship that will demand an increasing openness. Intimacy requires courage because risk is inescapable. (p. 17)

In their exploration of the importance of this PP notion, Hendrick and Hendrick (1992) conclude that: “Romantic love may not be essential to life, but it may be essential to joy” (p. 117). An interesting finding was that they equated a loveless life with a black-and-white movie, in that such a life will be “full of events and activities but without the colour that gives vibrancy and provides a sense of celebration” (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1992, p. 117). Hendrick and Hendrick (2002) argue that *love*, among other things, may well be the most significant human trait and they then expand the argument to include various other types of *love*, such as parental *love* and the *love* best friends have for each other. They ask whether *love* is the ultimate condition for a happy life and set out to show that it is, in addition to showing that *love* is also the axis around which PP revolves (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2002).

Love as a key idea also features prominently in existentialism. Frankl (2004a) writes how someone in the concentration camp joked about how their wives would have laughed if they had to see them in this state and how he *hoped* the wives were better off. This conversation led Frankl to think of his own wife, even though he didn’t know whether she was still alive or not. While he was thinking about her and his *love* for her, Frankl (2004a) suddenly understood the significance of the power of *love*:

Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: *The salvation of man is through love and in love*. I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of this beloved ... Love goes very far beyond the physical person of the beloved. It finds its deepest meaning in his spiritual being, his inner self. (pp. 49-50)

Guttman (2005) concludes that Frankl maintained that *love* makes it possible to conquer evil and to reach limitless heights, whether it is done for the sake of a loved one or done for an idea in which one believes.

3.2.3 Hope.

The aggregate of many theorists’ earlier definitions of *hope* can be described as the perception that one’s goals can be reached (Cantril, 1964; Farber, 1968; Frankl, 1992; Melges & Bowlby, 1969; Schachtel, 1959). Positive psychologists, on the other hand, question whether the notion of *hope* is one-dimensional; that *hope* consists solely of the idea that one can reach one’s goals.

Accordingly, a new definition and theory was formulated by Snyder (2002). *Hope* is defined in the context of transcendence: “Simply put, hopeful thought reflects the belief that one can find pathways to desired goals and become motivated to use those pathways” (Snyder et al., 2002, p. 257). Thus hope theory is based on the view that one can find new ways and motivation to use routes (pathways) to goals: “We also proposed that hope, so defined, serves to drive the emotions and well-being of people” (Snyder et al., 2002, p. 257). Hopelessness, on the other hand, is described as stemming from attributing negative

events to one's own personality flaws, which is referred to as a pessimistic style (Abramson, Alloy, & Metalsky, 1995).

Moreover, positive psychologists believe that hope theory is a cognitive-focused approach. This classification is not at odds with the chosen theoretical lenses; it essentially means that Snyder's (Snyder et al., 2002) Hope theory is based on the premise that human actions are goal-oriented. Both long- and short-term goals require cognitive action and need to have value or substance to be sustainable. To set a goal implies direction and focus, but additionally implies a degree of vagueness (not knowing when the goal will be attained). To reach a goal, a person must therefore be able to believe that he or she can attain the goal and then find ways of doing so. Snyder et al. (2002) call these perceptions *pathways thinking* and have found that high-hope people are proficient at finding alternative routes to reach their goals. *Agency thoughts* are then employed to overcome obstacles: examples of agency thinking include the use of mantras such as "I can do it".

Goals then are reached by using a combination of pathways thoughts (such as planning), and agency thoughts (such as energy that is goal-driven). Feedback loops form between the use of pathways thoughts, agency thoughts and determination of the value of the goal. It follows that successful attainment of goals should lead to positive emotions, and vice versa. A further implication is that, in this process, people return to their original goal to re-assess the value of the goal. The hypothesis is that whether the goal is reached ("success derived positive") or not ("failure derived negative"), this schema will inform future goal-driven activities and thoughts (Snyder et al., 2002, pp. 258-260). Hence, the gist of hope theory "emphasizes the person's self-referential belief that he or she will initiate (and continue) the requisite actions" (Snyder et al., 2002, p. 262). Snyder et al. (2002) maintain that *hope* is linked to a better understanding of depression, by examining the inner dialogue of people with depression, being on-task as opposed to off-task, and by using hope theory to understand Maslow's (1971) hierarchy of needs and the corresponding notion of self-actualisation.

One of the practical applications of hope theory can be found in sport psychology. Sportsmen and women can also gain positive benefits from *hope* because *hope* may well play a key role in bringing about the desired outcomes in the sports arena. High-hope thinking individuals can find the best possible way to reach the goals they set for themselves, which, in turn, may also foster "flow". Csikszentmihalyi (1990; 1997; Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1993) has done extensive work around the concept of flow and the advantages of this state of consciousness for optimal sports performance. Therefore, hope theory can be used when working with individual sportsmen and -women, but can perhaps be just as easily applied when working with teams. The same holds for overcoming sports injuries (Snyder et al., 2002).

3.2.4 Courage.

To better explain this concept, I draw on the work of a number of scholars who have all, in some way or another, attempted to delineate what it means to be *courageous*. Rachman (1984, p. 341) describes *courage* as “approach behavior under threat”. Rollo May (1975) explores *courage* by tracing it to its origins in the French word *coeur*, which means “heart”: “Thus just as one’s heart, by pumping blood to one’s arms, legs, and brain enables all the other physical organs to function, so courage makes possible all the psychological virtues” (p. 13). May’s (1975) further explanation must then be noted:

We are called upon to do something new, to confront a no man’s land, to push into a forest where there are no well-worn paths and from which no one has returned to guide us. This is what existentialists call the anxiety of nothingness. To live into the future means to leap into the unknown, and this requires a degree of courage for which there is no immediate precedent and which few people realize. (p. 12)

This explanation is significant because it effectively illustrates Bergsma’s (2010) call to do more research about PP, as well as the prospective benefits of the use of movies – in other words to leap into the unknown. Therefore, to borrow a phrase from *Star Trek* (1969), PP researchers need to “boldly go where no man has gone before”, and this will require *courage*.

To return to May’s (1975) work on *courage*, it is clear that he deems it an essential virtue: “Courage is not a virtue or value among other personal values such as love or fidelity; it is the foundation that underlies and gives reality to all other virtues and personal values” (May, 1975, p. 13). May distinguishes between several kinds of *courage*, namely physical, moral, social and *creative*. Physical *courage* relates to a more earthy *courage*, similar to that of American frontiersmen who needed brute strength in order to survive. May also calls for a new kind of physical *courage*, where sensitivity is cultivated instead of muscle. This brings us to moral *courage*, which is the *courage* to stand by our convictions. Moral *courage* is hallmarked by empathy and sensitivity (May, 1975). According to May (1975) social *courage*, on the other hand, is:

The courage to relate to other human beings, the capacity to risk one’s self in the hope of achieving meaningful intimacy. It is the courage to invest one’s self over a period of time in a relationship that will demand an increasing openness. Intimacy requires courage because risk is inescapable. (p. 17)

Lastly, May (1975) talks about *creative courage* – which, he believes, is arguably the most important kind: “Whereas moral courage is the rightings [*sic*] of wrongs, *creative* courage, in contrast, is the discovering of new forms, new symbols, new patterns on which a new society can be built” (p. 21). *Creative* courage is not the opposite of despair: rather, it is “the capacity to move ahead *in spite of despair*” (May, 1975, p. 12). As such, the *courage* to create requires centeredness – “we must always base our commitment in

the centre of our own being, or else no commitment will be ultimately authentic” (May, 1975, p. 13). However, he cautions: “A curious paradox characteristic of every kind of courage here confronts us. It is the seeming contradiction that we must be fully committed, but we must also be aware at the same time that we might possibly be wrong” (May, 1975, p. 20).

Rachman (1984) observes that psychologists have traditionally shown a fair amount of interest in the concept of *fear*, yet much less in the concept of *courage*. When Rachman first started exploring courage, the journal *Psychological Abstracts* seldom contained more than four mentions of courage annually. On the other hand, the concept of fear was covered in hundreds of articles. Moreover, Rachman noticed that in general, fear has garnered more attention than *courage* in the field of psychology. This is despite the fact that when people are expected to be *courageous*, e.g., during air raids in the Second World War, the greater majority tolerated the raids very well. Rachman (1984) explores this idea further and asks a very intriguing question:

People adapted to air raids and became more courageous with increasing experience – even when, as in London, the raids became progressively heavier. During the raids, people who were given socially responsible tasks to carry out experienced a growth of courage. Perhaps this is the opposite side of the coin that Seligman (1975) labels ‘learned helplessness.’ Does ‘required helpfulness’ breed courage? (p. 110)

Rachman (1984) used wartime surveys as the main source of his information, but has also investigated the notion of *courage* amongst parachutists. Here he found that jumpers who felt confident in their own abilities tended to stay in the programme, keep at it and successfully complete it, thus linking *courage* with self-confidence (Rachman, 1984). More recently Rate (2007), on the other hand, postulates that there still is no single, all-embracing definition of *courage*. Still, positive psychologists Niemiec and Wedding (2008) posit that bravery, persistence, integrity and vitality are corresponding virtues to *courage*, as mentioned in Chapter One: Down the Rabbit-Hole.

3.2.5 Open-mindedness.

Initial studies on *open-mindedness* link this notion with *creativity*. It is specifically Rokeach (1965) who entertains this thought and who asserts that *creativity* might be a precondition for *open-mindedness* in that it may be necessary but not sufficient. Consequently, an interpretation of *open-mindedness* can be seen in the combined thoughts of Rokeach (1965), Gardner (1996) and Hare and McLaughlin (1998). *Open-mindedness* forms part of the stable of intellectual virtues that include elements such as a consideration for humility, *creativity*, truth and inquisitiveness (Hare & McLaughlin, 1998).

In my examination of Hare and McLaughlin's (1998) defence of their stance on *open-mindedness* to reassure Peter Gardner (1996), I hope to delve deeper into this concept. Hare and McLaughlin address each of Gardner's four anxieties. The first is if children hold firm beliefs about things that matter (e.g., that child abuse is morally wrong), then it clashes with the idea that they should be persuaded to be more *open-minded*. Accordingly, Hare and McLaughlin place such appropriate beliefs on a sliding scale. For example, on one end of the scale you may find beliefs that should be firm because these challenge what they call the "limits of open-mindedness" (Hare & McLaughlin, p. 284). A case in point is basic logical values. Further along the scale, you may find beliefs that are fixed and justifiably sound. Firmly held beliefs that are not disquieting can be found at the opposite end of the scale (Hare & McLaughlin, 1998).

Hare and McLaughlin (1998) hold that it follows there should be room for growth when incorporating beliefs into students' paradigms. If students who are exposed to certain fundamental laws (e.g., in science), accept those beliefs, then these can be revised and updated by more complex knowledge later on. Furthermore, the authors emphasise that one cannot always be *open-minded* about beliefs (for instance that racism is evil, which is one example Gardner uses). To narrow down the concept of appropriate firm beliefs is virtually impossible (e.g., the fact that one should not be *open-minded* about *racism* because it is morally indefensible) (Hare & McLaughlin, 1998).

Additionally, it makes sense when Hare and McLaughlin (1998) argue that students should be encouraged to base their beliefs on reason. As the authors point out, issues such as morality and religion should always be approached with a mindset of: "rational understanding and questioning" (Hare & McLaughlin, 1998, p. 286). Gardner posits three conditions for forming and maintaining *open-mindedness*: *question*, *revise* and *welcome*. Conversely, Hare and McLaughlin (1998) observe that only *revision* is necessary for *open-mindedness*. Revision entails a willingness to entertain new ideas about a belief that may lead to a revised or altered perspective of the belief. However, *questioning* and *welcoming* (of criticism or new input) are required in some instances, e.g., when doing scientific research (Hare & McLaughlin, 1998).

Gardner's (1996) second anxiety is around the "fear of non-judgemental hospitality to unworthy beliefs" (Hare & McLaughlin, 1998, p. 287). Here the authors once again argue in favour of the idea that *open-mindedness* should always be embedded in rational thought. Thus, it makes sense that if something is of no consequence, then it is futile to pay too much attention to it. In the third instance, Hare and McLaughlin defend their position regarding inhibiting the positive reception of inferences and conflicts about beliefs. Here they argue that someone who is *open-minded* cannot think that beliefs that are in opposition to their beliefs are necessarily untrue. The very nature of *open-mindedness* implies that a realisation that what one currently believes to be untrue could change when new evidence comes to light. Hence their

conclusion: “Open-mindedness as we understand it prevents assessments from becoming unduly dogmatic; it does not prevent such assessments being made” (Hare & McLaughlin, 1998, pp. 288-289).

Lastly, the notion of *fear of relativism* is addressed. Gardner’s assumption is that Hare and McLaughlin (1998) imply “that it is mistaken for someone to disbelieve what is inconsistent with his or her own belief is to encourage relativism” (pp. 288-289). The authors dismiss this concern by virtue of the fact that this was not their intention in the first place: “Open-mindedness in our view consists centrally in the disposition to form or revise one’s views in the light of evidence and argument. What would be the point of such a disposition if all views were equally defensible?”. (Hare & McLaughlin, 1998, p. 289)

In conclusion, Hare and McLaughlin (1998) wonder about Gardner’s position, because it raises many concerns. They argue that *open-mindedness* forms part of the stable of intellectual virtues that include elements such as a consideration for humility, *creativity*, truth and inquisitiveness. Their apprehension stems from Gardner’s apparent inability to create a space where the character virtues of *open-mindedness* can be allowed in.

3.2.6 Creativity.

In the sections above, creativity was integrated into the PP notions of *courage*, *love* and *open-mindedness*, respectively. Moreover, and turning to the existential lens, Frank (2004a) notes that one way in which to *find meaning* is *creatively* (e.g., by having a child).

Creativity is a highly regarded virtue in many cultures. As such, modern communities encourage *creativity* through a variety of means. Copyright and patent laws have been implemented to protect the creators. Special prizes are awarded for higher levels of achievement in science and literature (e.g., Nobel Prizes) and a unique set of prizes is awarded to recognise writers (e.g., the Pulitzer). Similarly, the film industry has the Academy Awards and the Golden Globe awards. When a community has brought forth many *creative* individuals, it is described as having a “golden age” (Simonton, 2002).

Historically, in a psychological context, William James (1880) used the theory of Darwin to touch on aspects of *creativity*. Much later, Gestalt psychologists Wolfgang Köhler (1925) and Max Wertheimer (1945–1982), investigated *creative* problem-solving. Humanistic psychologists such as Carl Rogers (1954), Abraham Maslow (1959) and Rollo May (1975) similarly expressed an interest in this notion. But it is J.P. Guilford (1950) who can be credited with instilling the idea that *creativity* deserves attention as a research topic.

According to positive psychologists, *creativity* can be defined as the forming of ideas that satisfy two conditions. The first condition is that it must be original. Originality comprises aspects such as unexpectedness, surprise, novelty and in some cases, even shock. The second condition is that *creativity* must be adaptive. As can be surmised, it is difficult to measure such adaptive originality. The reason for this is that *creativity* can be measured in three ways: (a) that it is a cognitive process, (b) that it originates from a specific type of individual, and (c) that it can be analysed in terms of the resultant products that are brought forth by a *creative* person (Simonton, 2002).

3.2.7 Faith.

Historically spirituality, or the notion of *faith*, has not played a big role in psychology. One reason for this could be because it is an elusive and subjective subject. Definitions of spirituality are equally elusive and range from the pinnacle of what it means to be human to a search for existential meaning. In their quest to find a definition of spirituality, positive psychologists write that two elements may play an important role, these being *search* and the *sacred*. This implies that spirituality is a process, an active and effortful search for the divine and by implication also to maintain the sacred once found. Several factors contribute to this search, to wit personal, social and contextual. I find it interesting that positive psychologists note that a person's perception of their God impacts on how helpful he or she perceives his or her God to be. This perception may range from a loving and compassionate God to a distant God who is harsh and punitive (Pargament & Mahoney, 2002).

3.3 The notion of flow

Humanistic thinkers such as Rogers and Maslow incorporated flow theory into psychology in the 1980s (McAdams, 1990). Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) observe that, throughout the 1980s and 90s, Csikszentmihalyi and his colleagues did numerous studies on flow. Many other scholars also studied flow across a wide variety of fields such as those mentioned above, but in particular in schools, where it is vital to cultivate positive experiences. The outcome of that body of research is the conclusion that the flow model incorporates what is called *interactionism*. This means that the flow model does not focus exclusively on the person, but instead extends to include the environment, as well as the interaction between person and environment (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Other complex processes underlie this idea. An accomplished artist, for example, can easily become engrossed while working on a complicated art work. But the artist's skills have already been honed, which makes what the artist is doing seem effortless. Therefore this unfurling process of flux between person and environment could be called *emergent motivation* (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) explain more:

It is the *subjectively perceived* opportunities and capacities for action that determine experience. That is, there is no objectively defined body of information and set of challenges within the stream of the person's experience, but rather the information that is selectively attended to and the opportunities for action that are perceived ... Sports, games, and other *flow activities* provide goal and feedback structures that make flow more likely. (p. 91)

In 1960, Csikszentmihalyi was examining the *creative* process when he saw that artists would very often, when their work on a painting was going well, resolutely persevere despite being hungry, tired or uncomfortable. He also noticed that artists would lose interest very quickly once the painting was done. These insights underlie flow research and theory in that Csikszentmihalyi realised that the *intrinsically motivated activity* is the reward, over and above the end result (the painting). Such activity is also called "motivated, or *autotelic*, activity ... (auto = self, telos = goal)" (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 89).

Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) interviewed people (such as dancers, chess players and rock climbers), who focused primarily on enjoyment as a driver for their interest in and pursuit of an activity to examine the essence and conditions of enjoyment. Such pursuits naturally yield intrinsic rewards. They then turned their attention to people who work to earn extrinsic rewards (e.g., surgeons who earn money and prestige). This research led them to grasp the essence and conditions of enjoyment, which are similar regardless of type of work or play. These conditions are:

Perceived challenges, or opportunities for action, that stretch (neither overmatching nor underutilizing) existing skills; a sense that one is engaging challenges at a level appropriate to one's capacities and clear proximal goals and immediate feedback about the progress that is being made. (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 90)

Thus flow is entered into by balancing perceived action *abilities* and perceived action *prospects*. This balance is delicate because if skills outweigh challenges, people tend to relax and lose interest. Conversely, if challenges outweigh skills, people are more on their guard at first and then become apprehensive. Therefore, when a person experiences either boredom or anxiety, it may compel him or her to regulate the level of skill or challenge, which in turn may cause him or her to enter into flow once again. Flow studies on a wealth of disparate areas, including literary writing, sport, aesthetic encounters, science and art, all show that experiences are similar across factors such as gender, age, class, culture and type of activity (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

It makes sense that flow theory cannot be confined just to the arenas of sport or art. Anybody can find flow in anything they do. Any activity can either cause boredom or create anxiety. Hence Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) conclusion: "It is the subjective challenges and subjective skills, not the objective ones that influence the quality of a person's experience" (p. 91). Csikszentmihalyi (Nakamura &

Csikszentmihalyi, 2002) developed a model of experience, consciousness and the self, in reference to flow theory. This model is based on the premise that individuals are faced with vast amounts of information and that consciousness makes it possible to decode the information (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

By paying attention to bits of information, the information becomes part of awareness. Awareness is the means through which conscious processes are dealt with (e.g., emotion, motivation and cognition) and then stored in memory. The subject matter in the consciousness forms the totality of our subjective experiences. Consciousness acts as a filter for the entire suite of information and it is through consciousness that the self emerges. Therefore, consciousness allows the self to act freely, and is not at the mercy of cultural and genetic influences. It follows that the self is shaped by what it pays attention to. But attention is limited and thus necessitates *choice*. As a result, attention is the key ingredient that determines both what has been paid attention to in the past and what is paid attention to in the present (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

3.4 Existential themes

3.4.1 *Will to meaning*.

Given that this notion was introduced in Chapter One, it is dealt with only briefly here. Frankl (2004a, 2004b) believes that the *will to meaning* is the main driving force for human beings and not a process wherein meaning is part of an instinctual drive. Given that the *will to meaning* is the core focus of Frankl's existential theory, it is ideally suited as a theoretical point of departure for the purposes of this study. It will later be shown that Neo, though he does not realise it at first, is essentially looking for a more meaningful life.

According to Frankl (2004a, 2004b) a meaningless life is an empty life. A meaningless life causes what is referred to as an existential vacuum. An existential vacuum can be described as a state of inertia, boredom or apathy, which, if left to fester for long enough, results in existential frustration and culminates in neuroses (2004a, 2004b). Noögenic neurosis is described by Frankl (as cited in Gill, 1979) in the following way:

In contrast to animals, man is not told by drives and instincts what he *must* do. And in contrast to man in former times, he is no longer told by traditions and values what he *should* do. Now, neither knowing what he *must* do nor what he *should* do, he sometimes seems no longer to know what he basically *wishes* to do. Hence either he wishes to do what other people are doing – this is conformism; or he does what other people want him to do – this is totalitarianism. But there is also a third effect of the existential vacuum: a new, unprecedented type of neurotic illness. Logotherapy terms it *noögenic neurosis* because it does not derive from complexes or traumas,

but mainly from the frustration of man's search for meaning, from the fact that he can no longer see meaning in his life. (p. 24)

The absence of meaning is further described by Fabry (1979) who posits that meaninglessness is wrapped up in many elements, e.g., frustration, despondency, indecision, the feeling of being trapped, a sense of failure and of not actualising one's potential. Lack of meaning is very often also felt during periods of transformation and when important decisions about relationships, lifestyle and work must be made or when struck by tragedy (Fabry, 1979).

More recent findings that come to the same conclusion as Frankl (2004a), link post-traumatic stress disorder and the resultant strengths of character that such an experience brings to the fore, and positive psychologists call this post-traumatic growth (Peterson, Park, Pole, D'Andrea, & Seligman, 2008). As such, the authors argue that Nietzsche's belief, namely that which does not kill us makes us stronger, is fairly accurate because only a few people who experience life-threatening events (or high levels of suffering) develop post-traumatic stress disorder. Of those, only a small number develop psychopathology; the rest may even experience positive outcomes or benefits. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) isolate five such positive psychological benefits that can be called post-traumatic growth. These are: appreciation of life, better interpersonal relationships, expansiveness, more personal power and enhanced *faith*. Peterson et al. (2008) admit that their study has its limitations, e.g., that it is cross-sectional and not longitudinal, but posit that there is some evidence that traumatic events can lead to post-traumatic growth and hence also amplify positive character strengths.

Though suffering may cause people to search for deeper meaning and can bring about positive psychological benefits, Bartsch (2010) posits that people are keen to impart *meaning* and look for fuller understanding in movies. He holds that movies and stories may unlock the sense in the viewer that a hidden truth can be uncovered, which may intrigue and tease the viewer who may, or may not, uncover the mystery. Bartsch (2010) further notes that the pleasure derived from making meaning or when trying to understand movies better, is an integral part of the reason people watch movies. This point disproves the widely held belief that art appreciation is an elitist intellectual pleasure. Much of the work done on entertainment has been and still is around pleasure-seeking viewing impulses that thrive on sensation and dealing with emotions (Zillmann, 1988; Zuckerman, 1979). Bartsch (2010) expands on this idea:

I propose that besides the role of affective experience as a source of pleasurable feelings and sensations, emotions do also serve an important function in social-moral reflection. Primary emotion scripts such as anger, fear, sadness, joy and love seem to form a basic layer of meaning in an architecture of more complex social-moral concepts and ideas. (pp. 240–241)

However, some researchers have used a different slant and have come to the conclusion that people consume media not only to relax and entertain, but also as a tool with which to experience beauty and feel good (Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973). These results are similar to more recent work done by Cupchik and others (Cupchik, 1995; Cupchik & Gignac, 2007;; Cupchik, Oatley, & Vorderer, 1998; Cupchik & Shereck, 1998). These scholars research what is called a *reactive* approach to viewing (which is about reinforcing positive mood states and stimulation), and a *reflective* approach to viewing (which is about experiencing very meaningful emotions that fuel self-reflection and understanding). Their research was done within the context of concepts such as images, movies and design objects (Cupchik, 1995; Cupchik et al., 1998; Cupchik & Gignac, 2007; Cupchik & Shereck, 1998).

One way in which to combat the above is through the *will to meaning*. There are three ways in which meaning can be attained (as mentioned before): (a) through creativity (e.g., having a child), (b) experientially (such as any form of experience), and (c) through your attitude (how you locate yourself with regards suffering). Two levels of meaning can be distinguished: (a) ultimate meaning – that which is just out of reach (e.g., a search for God or truth); (b) meaning of the moment – that which is required from us from moment to moment (Frankl, 2004a; 2004b).

In the junction between existentialism and PP, positive psychologists then also connect the notion of *will to meaning* with the notion of *hope* (Snyder et al., 2002):

We posited that hope should relate strongly to meaning because it is through our self-reflections about the goals that one has selected and the perceived progress in the journey toward those goals that a person constructs meaning in his or her life. (p. 267)

3.4.2 Freedom of choice.

It is Frankl (2004a) who suggests that we are free to choose our attitude towards the nature of our reality; we may not be able to control what happens to us in our modern cultural milieu, but we can certainly choose how we respond. Pattakos (2005) points out that this relates to Frankl's principle of *freedom of choice*: "...a cornerstone of Dr Frankl's philosophy ... In all situations, no matter how desperate they may appear or actually be, we always have the ultimate freedom to choose our attitude" (p. 11).

It then follows that it is vital to recognise how attitudes are formed to understand how to effect attitude change. Aside from Frankl many others have researched the concept of "attitude". Attitudes act as a frame of reference and as a source of knowledge to work out how the world works (Petty, 1995). People draw on attitudes to figure out whether, e.g., a situation is threatening (bad) or not (good), which is a useful tool with which to negotiate things that happen in their life on a daily basis. Attitudes also help to save time, since one can turn to this tool in any given situation (Petty, 1995). Attitudes have a range of

other purposes, for instance: first, a *utilitarian function*, which, according to Petty (1995) is “based on the extent to which (attitudes) lead to explicit rewards and/or punishments” (p. 198), second: an *ego-defensive function* that serves to buffer people against uncomfortable truths about themselves or that can boost their self-image, and lastly: a *value-expressive function*, which allows people to “give expression to important values” (p. 198).

In investigating the phenomenon of attitude change, Petty (1995) points out that there is conflicting evidence of the influence of cognitive and affective bases for attitudes. Edwards (1990) found that a *matching strategy* works best; that is providing a person with new experiences and attitudes that match but oppose the core of the attitude. This could be done by, e.g., challenging someone that sushi tastes delicious, despite the fishy smell; in other words, countering the good taste with the bad smell. Conversely, Millar and Millar (1990) believe that a *mismatching strategy* is more successful for changing attitudes, which is about countering negative feelings (affect) with positive thoughts (cognitions). An example of this is if one were to present the person with facts about the nutritional value of sushi. However, Petty (1995) concludes that research has steadily backed the *mismatching strategy* as an effective foundation for attitudes.

The positive psychological quality of dispositional optimism is consistent with this belief, in that it can be described as holding a generally optimistic belief that outcomes will be positive, which leads to actively searching for opportunities to change bad results or endings into good ones (Nolen-Hoeksema & Davis, 2002). Studies done by Affleck and Tennen (1996), Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) and Tennen and Affleck (1999) unfailingly show that dispositional optimism is a good predictor of finding gains in trauma. Regardless of which factor plays a role in people’s attitudes, Guttman (2005) posits that “human beings everywhere have the basic freedom to respond to whatever happens to them” (p. 23).

3.5 Conclusion

Researching ideas, theories and insights opens up a myriad of possible uses and applications. However, themes that were read into *The Matrix* needed to be rooted in a solid foundational research application whilst at the same time adhering to the need for a form of personal significance.

CHAPTER 4: ADVICE FROM A CATERPILLAR

4.1 Introduction

Here, the focus is on *The Matrix* as fortigenic tool, done from within both the PP or strengths perspective as well as existential theory, by using broaden-and-build theory to validate and solidify constructs. A selection of themes are scrutinised and brought to bear on the idea that themes identified in a movie, and role models such as Neo, can bring about positive changes.

4.2 Raison d'être

The traditional pathogenic perspective has produced a large body of work on the assessment and therapeutic curative practices of psychological disorders and adverse environmental stressors (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). However, it is now becoming evident that "normal functioning cannot be understood solely within a problem-orientated framework" (Strümpfer, 2005, p. 22). But the inclusion of positive and constructive emotions in no way negates the "extensive roles played by fearful, painful and hurtful emotions" (Strümpfer, 2006b, p. 145).

People are born with an array of positive and negative traits. These traits are shaped and influenced by many factors including: societal contexts, cultural values, race, class, gender, access to education, healthcare and money, economic opportunities and living conditions (Prilleltensky, 2007) that cannot, in many instances, be altered. Hardships and suffering are also a natural part of life. Positive psychologists believe that most people have inherent positive character strengths and virtues. Therefore the questions that need to be researched are: Why do some people flourish despite hardships? What does it take to have the grit to stay positive? Why are people who seem to have everything, negative, although others, who seemingly have very little (for instance they may be homeless), very optimistic? It is not within the scope of this reading to explore these questions extensively. Rather, the purpose of this chapter is to consider how a device, such as a film and specifically *The Matrix*, can be used constructively in a fortigenic sense.

4.3 What is fortigenesis?

The concept *fortigenesis* is derived from two words: the Latin word *fortis*, which means *strong* (cited in Strümpfer, 2006b, p. 145) in combination with the Greek word *genesis* (from *gen* that means *be produced*) (Strümpfer, 2006a, p. 12). Strümpfer (2006b) extended this construct from the concept of *salutogenesis* that was introduced by Antonovsky (1987). *Salutogenesis* combines the Latin *salus* that

means *health*, with the Greek word *genesis*, to “emphasise strengths at other end points than health only” (Strümpfer, 2006b, p. 145).

Hence PP is known as the strengths perspective. Fortigenesis is based on four assumptions: (a) that there are two continua of mental health and mental illness, and in mental health the process of fortigenesis moves people in the direction of less or more strength; (b) that the human condition fundamentally entails suffering, challenges and struggling; (c) that strengths exist with which to negotiate and overcome such demands, which may be channelled towards flourishing; and (d) that there are also undiluted positive experiences (Strümpfer, 2006a).

4.5 The role of movies in the strengths perspective

The potential fortigenic use of movies is highlighted by positive psychologists Niemiec and Wedding (2008) who argue that:

The language of film is universal ... Movies transcend all barriers and differences, whether these barriers are culture, language, religion, geographic borders, or belief systems ... Therefore movies are a commentary on more than society – they inform us about the human condition. (p. 1)

This reading, however, is aimed at exploring the use of movies in a therapeutic setting that is framed as a counselling session. The therapist therefore needs to guide the client away from the idea of movies as entertainment to a fortigenic function.

The perceptions people have of each other and of themselves are affected by the images projected in the media. The movie industry in particular illustrates the pervasiveness of these images. Producers of motion pictures aim to entertain and attract audience’s interest to generate large amounts of revenue (Glen & Cunningham, 2007). “Millions of people flock to theatres to view the fantasy world that Hollywood has created, all the while processing a large amount of information that guides their formations and expectations in actual society” (Glen & Cunningham, 2007, p. 135). Aside from their entertainment value, filmic images are instrumental in shaping our innermost values and our views of the world; “what we consider good or bad, positive, or negative, moral or evil” (Kellner, 1995, p. 5). Thus, movies represent emotions, thoughts and actions (Greenberg, 2006). The idea that film can have a noteworthy impact on people’s attitudes towards mental illness and the value of film as a source of education may not be ignored (Gabbard & Gabbard, 1999). Films are therefore highly accessible for many people, and the language, experience and understanding of PP strengths and virtues seem to be universal (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008).

All filmic vessels consist of many elements: visual, auditory and sometimes even 3D. Moreover, movies convey meaning through a variety of filmic devices, such as use of narrative, dramatic music or ominous silences. Movies are also cultural artefacts made for human consumption and Wartenberg (2004) writes: "To coin a phrase, it takes a village to make a movie" (p. 6). This quotation in my opinion is a clever and easily understood adaptation of the original. It simply means that it takes many people to make and by implication also to understand a movie. The original proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" stems from the African country of Benin, and was used by Jane Cowen-Fletcher (1994) in her book *It takes a village*.

Accordingly, *The Matrix*, or any other movie, exists as a cultural artefact or filmic container within culture. Greenberg (2006) sees cultural artefacts as a *creative* means to represent emotions, thoughts and actions through a variety of channels, e.g., music, poetry, art, sculptures, theatre and film. These encompass assumptions about that which drives or determines behaviour, although film brings this to life in a more vibrant, impactful and vivid way. Greenberg further explains that movies illustrate a host of different sets of behaviour as well as social issues. Movies also illuminate and question. Given that Greenberg (2006) holds that movies represent emotions, thoughts and actions, the act of watching *The Matrix* (or any other movie that means something to a client) could resonate on an emotional and intellectual level; could potentially provoke discussion in the fortigenic setting and then assist in unlocking the clients PP character strengths and virtues.

Like Niemiec and Wedding (2008), Hesley and Hesley (1998) maintain that *all* films contain universal themes. Thus, it follows that a film, e.g., *A beautiful mind* (2001), may be used because the inspirational main character can serve as a role model. In this movie, Russell Crowe's character is portrayed as a person diagnosed with schizophrenia who uses *creative* coping mechanisms to lead a richer and more meaningful life. Interventions could then be designed to capitalise on PP character strengths and virtues. His character might for instance be used as a role model to demonstrate the virtue of *creativity*. This certainly does not imply that a film is like a magic wand that can miraculously "cure" people diagnosed with schizophrenia. Rather, it means that, within the PP paradigm, it is understood that positive role models from movies can be used to turn our focus away from disease, damage and weakness to concentrate on virtue, strength and reparation.

All movie heroes face obstacles that must be overcome and Neo is not unique in this respect. However, given the broad scope of character strengths and virtues in the PP framework, the implication is that these notions can be read into most films and used as fortigenic tools. Together with this, Bergsma (2010) emphasises that Niemiec and Wedding's (2008) guidelines state that clients should be informed or educated about the PP perspective as well as the role played by character strengths and virtues, to allow them to interpret and understand a movie in this context.

The use of movies furthermore allows the client the opportunity to be a spectator in a non-threatening space, in other words, not too close for comfort (Dermer & Hutchings, 2000). It has been noted that films may be an effective way of reaching clients who may otherwise be difficult to reach on an emotional level (Hesley & Hesley, 1998; Schulenberg, 2003). Hence media has the potential to influence in a very powerful and meaningful way, which reinforces my contention that it is important to interpret and understand movies for use in positive psychological settings.

Bergsma (2010) did exploratory work around the efficacy of movies and found interesting idiosyncrasies. In one example, Bergsma, talks about a character in a film who, in full view of an autistic boy, crushes a pigeon with his boot to end its suffering. The boy then goes home and crushes his hamster for the same reason. This graphic scene had a profound effect on one spectator in particular. She had suffered the loss of a loved one, was struggling to cope and considered suicide as a result. After watching the movie she realised she: “was imitating her lost friend in an effort to get a grip on what she could not comprehend. This realization (sic) was the beginning of her recovery” (Bergsma, 2010, p. 657). Hence, the author concedes that movies could potentially be a beneficial fortigenic tool. The use of movies as a tool in psychology may seem ambiguous and the initial results not at all robust, hence Bergsma’s (2010) observation that “most reports about the positive effects of films are the result of an unpredictable interplay between the spectator and the content” (p. 657). Nonetheless, filmic devices may prove to be a useful instrument with which to unwrap and fortify positive character strengths. It follows therefore that a space should be made to allow for the continued exploration and examination of this device.

Turning to Dermer and Hutchings’s (2000) and Hesley and Hesley’s (1998) arguments mentioned earlier, that the use of movies specifically, gives a client a chance to be an observer in the protective womb of a theatre. Similarly, Walker and Chaplin (1997) write that watching a film is a non-threatening activity:

Movies are made to be seen but in the majority of cases they do not acknowledge the presence of the spectator. This coupled with the fact that the people in images are not literally present, is what enables us to enjoy images voyeuristically: we can look at a scene as if we were peering into a room through a one-way mirror. Fundamental to the appeal of visual media is the fact that we can watch to our heart’s content without ourselves being observed. (p. 101)

Walker and Chaplin (1997) then draw attention to many potential pitfalls. It seems as if photographic images in particular, are easier to decode and are more universally digestible than movies. This may be an accurate assumption, but still does not imply that just because people can see a photograph or an image, they necessarily understand its meaning. Since symbols, codes and conventions are drawn on to make visual artefacts, spectators might not recognise them. Similarly, clients may not be equipped with the historical and cultural understanding or knowledge needed to fully understand the content and subject and therefore need to be guided by the therapist (Walker & Chaplin, 1997). Baudrillard (1994) believes

that many cultures can be pictured as the end products of their distinctive media technologies. Walker and Chaplin (1997) elaborate on this claim:

Such fatalism puts technology in the driving seat, and leaves humanity feeling helpless in spite of the fact that it is we who are responsible for it. A disturbing future scenario, prompted by the quest for artificial intelligence, is that one day machines that can think, sense and replicate will rule the world. (p. 199)

To better explain the idea that technology can be used in a positive way, I shall draw on Walker and Chaplin's (1997) premise that a consumable movie imparts meaning in a modern consumer society, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Fiske (1982) maintains that we find meaning in what is being communicated, e.g., a movie, because it has its roots in the context within which both we and the movie exist. This process of finding meaning may be used to define ourselves relative to the ideology as well as to our society (Fiske, 1982). Nowell-Smith (2004) explains the premise underlying finding meaning in movies: "It is easier to say why films mean than how" (p. 10). Human beings imbue films with meaning. Therefore the making of meaning is not a passive attribute that can be found in films, books, or computer programmes. Nowell-Smith (2004) concludes that "[r]ather it is the result of a process whereby people "make sense" of something with which they are confronted. This making sense goes on in the presence of real-life situations as well as artefacts" (p. 10).

4.6 Broaden-and-build theory

This reading of the use of a movie such as *The Matrix* as a fortigenic tool is grounded in Fredrickson's (1998) broaden-and-build theory. Within the field of PP, two assumptions underlie this theory; first that positive emotions produce non-specific action predispositions, whereas negative emotions produce specific action predispositions. Secondly that, positive emotions can be described as having fairly broad thought-action predispositions, as opposed to negative emotions that have narrow predispositions for physical action.

The reasons for these assumptions are that negative emotions trigger ancestrally adaptive actions characterised by specific action predispositions. Such emotions allow people to adapt to life-threatening situations, given that they culminate in fast and decisive action. In positive situations, however, these actions are not necessary and therefore it is futile to narrow a person's cognitive predispositions, thereby causing a broadening of a person's cognition. Thus positive emotions lead to a broadening of cognition (e.g. new and *creative* ways of thinking), in turn allowing for a broader repertoire of positive actions that can be considered (Fredrickson, 1998). Positive emotions "build larger stocks of intellectual, emotional and social resources too, which have enduring effects as reserves for managing challenges and threats in the future" (Strümpfer, 2006b, p. 146).

The Broaden-and-build theory is illustrated by virtue of the notion of interest. Interest is associated with intrigue, challenge, flow, curiosity, excitement and intrinsic motivation. Interest stems from an environment that a person considers as safe, but that also offers something new or holds some form of mystery. Such an environment in turn is deemed important since it requires effort and attention and is often accompanied by feelings of being alive or animated and does not necessarily require physical action. A willingness to be open to new experiences, concepts and actions can broaden cognition as well as expand the range of possible actions that may be considered (Strümpfer, 2006b).

Thus, if a client's interest is sparked by SF movies in general, *The Matrix* may be the catalyst for sufficient challenge and excitement. The client can watch this film at home, or selective snippets can be watched with the therapist. The nature of the movie is such that it offers many new elements, for example, not only through the cinematography that is technologically advanced as can be seen in the action sequences, but also in the unfolding storyline of Neo's journey. The client should be exposed to the film as a whole, to facilitate an important contextual understanding. Since positive experiences allow for the broadening as well as building of cognitive and action predispositions, it follows that whatever PP character strengths and virtues a client may glean from this movie, can be stored and used by the client, and may be used as a tool in future.

4.6.1 Supporting evidence for broadening effects.

Evidence in support of the first part of Fredrickson's (1998) theory, that positive emotions cause broadening of a person's social, cognitive and motivational functioning, can be found in wide-ranging research done by Isen and her associates. This evidence will now be discussed.

4.6.1.1 Short-term effects.

The first finding points to the notion that short-term influences generate short-term effects. In research done by Isen, Rosenzweig, and Young (1991), two groups of medical students were studied. The experimental group were given anagrams to solve and told that they had performed amongst the top 3% in the country, whereas the control group were asked to judge the difficulty of the anagrams but were not given any feedback. All the students were then asked to decide which of six hypothetical patients with a pulmonary nodule was most likely to suffer from lung cancer. All of the students made the right choice, but those in the experimental group did so by being more keenly interested, they did so sooner and they were able to integrate the material more fully (Isen et al., 1991). Hence, the research indicates that the observed effects were present where participants had been randomly assigned to experiments. This caused effects of personal variables to be controlled – implying that the observed effects can be raised in

almost any person (Isen, 2002). Thus the value of small everyday positive feelings may not be underestimated.

Reed and Aspinwall (1998) then did research to demonstrate that more complex manipulations yielded more complex and longer-lasting effects. This was done by asking participants to use self-affirmation by evoking and validating their past acts of kindness. Experimental participants were exposed to a list of ten minor acts of kindness. They had to indicate whether they had ever performed such an act and write down a brief example. Participants in the control group were asked to respond to non-self-relevant opinions. The aim of the study was to determine how the induction of affect reduced biased processing of self-relevant health-risk information. Each participant was presented with three sets of information on the use of caffeine and fibrocystic breast disease: one set was risk-confirming, one set was risk-disconfirming and one set remained neutral. One week after the experiment, participants were tested for biased information processing and recall. Those “[p]articipants who affirmed the self-concept on a dimension unrelated to the health-risk information did not show the pattern of self-justifying processing of risk information found among participants who were not provided with an opportunity to do so” (Reed & Aspinwall, 1998, p. 126).

It is now also necessary to turn to the effect of lingering negative emotions and the resultant narrowing of thought-action predispositions, and whether or not the effects of such negative emotions can be undone. To this end, Frederickson and Levenson (1998) led studies with the intention of showing the undoing of cardiovascular sequelae of negative emotions. I find it interesting that the undoing hypothesis was tested by using a film clip stimulating fear. Four other film clips stimulating sadness, neutrality, amusement and contentment were shown immediately after the clip stimulating fear, and these clips were varied across the different experimental groups. Cardiovascular activity was recorded throughout the viewing. The hypothesis was supported, since it was the two positive emotion clips (namely amusement and contentment), that resulted in the fastest cardiovascular recovery. A second experiment was done by using a film clip of sadness. Whenever a participant smiled spontaneously during this negative emotional context, the smiles were counted. Spontaneous smiles were interpreted to imply a short-lived interruption of potentially harming effects. Cardiovascular activity was simultaneously recorded and smiling was found to be linked with speedier recovery from cardiovascular arousal (Frederickson & Levenson, 1998).

The undoing hypothesis was tested by Frederickson and Joiner (2002). They administered a scale that assessed broad-minded coping in addition to scales to measure negative and positive affectivity, twice with a five-week interval. Examples of broad-minded coping included “try to distance from the situation and be more objective” as well as “try to think of diverse ways in which to deal with the problem”. It was shown that positive affectivity led to increased broad-minded coping. Positive affectivity was grounded in broad-minded coping, so much so that the finding led the researchers to conclude that the two mutually

build into one another. Thus “positive emotions, through incremental processes associated with broadened thinking, initiate upward spirals toward emotional wellbeing ... [and] build their coping arsenal for handling future adversities” (Frederickson & Joiner, 2002, p. 175).

4.6.1.2 Long-term effects.

Research done by Redelmeier and Singh (2001) support the assumption that positive feelings early on may still be reflected in significant variables much later on in life. I find it interesting that their study was also related to the movie-industry and focused on award-winning actors and actresses in a leading or supporting role ever nominated for an Academy Award (n=762). The group of winners consisted of those who were nominated and had won at least one award. The second group consisted of nominees who had never won an award. A control sample consisted of a different member of the cast of the same film, who was of the same gender and was born in the same era (n=887). Success at this craft was used as an indicator of death dates, whereupon dates of birth and death were collected. The overall difference in life expectancy between winners and controls were 3.9 years and between winners and nominees were 3.6 years. Actors and actresses who had won multiple awards had a life expectancy that was on average 2.7 years longer than those who had only won once, and they had a 6.0 year advantage over those in control groups. Survival rates amongst controls and nominees were almost the same. Control variables were investigated for but made little or no difference. Such a high level of success (namely winning an Academy Award) naturally produces a myriad of positive feelings, and the resultant recognition from winning lingers, thus causing a continuation of ensuing positive emotions. Hence the result is a dramatic effect over a lifetime (Redelmeier & Singh, 2001).

A selection of character strengths and virtues is now discussed and integrated into an exploration of how these were read into *The Matrix*. Conceptually, each of these is then rooted in the broaden-and-build theory and it is shown how these notions can be used as fortigenic tools.

4.7 Creativity and *The Matrix*

This returns us to the present study and an exploration of how *The Matrix* can be used in a fortigenic sense. Within the context of PP, a *creative* person is described as someone who creates behaviours or ideas that are inventive and adaptive in the sense that these make a meaningful contribution to, not only their own, but to other people’s lives (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The notion of *creativity* encompasses the concept of *flow*, which is a conscious state wherein it feels as if activities are moving in an uninhibited and focused way (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). In my opinion, the role played by *freedom of choice* and free will, discussed in Chapter Three, adds another dimension to the character strength of *creativity*.

At the onset of the movie, Neo is portrayed as an ordinary computer nerd, who lives alone, works during the day and who hacks computers at night. Therefore he does not resemble the *creative* genius of Picasso or Van Gogh. This reading of the film has interpreted that Neo has the character strength of *creativity* for a number of reasons. These are that Neo follows the White Rabbit by agreeing to go with the hackers who invite him to go to a club after he sees a tattoo of a White Rabbit on the girl's arm. The White Rabbit therefore forms a part of the continuous mapping of Neo's emotional journey, alluding to the idea that he is falling ever deeper into the rabbit hole. Various other cinematic devices illustrate his turbulent emotional journey: he has just experienced his mouth closing up and has had a metal bug that at first appeared to be alive, extracted from his stomach. These strange goings-on may have deterred someone else, but Neo is flexible and *open-minded* and decides to see what this new experience will lead to, hence my contention that he is *creative*.

Another example of Neo's creativity is his decision to go back into the matrix to try and save Morpheus's life. This feat (going back into the matrix) has never been attempted before and could potentially have dire consequences. Yet it is a novel approach that may succeed precisely for the reason that it may catch the Agents off guard. This is a very serious and potentially life-threatening obstacle, but Neo has already thought it through and has made up his mind that it may just work. Therefore it can also be described as a spontaneous and *creative* solution in the face of danger. Naturally it can be argued that most heroes in films face potentially life-threatening obstacles, but that is not the point here. It can be said that Neo is a hero who has to face a unique set of obstacles since he is an ordinary man who has to come to grips with curious events. He has now become part of a small group of individuals who has to save a human race enslaved by machines, by fighting computer viruses in a virtual space called the matrix. As a role model therefore, Neo is different to other heroes for these reasons, given that not many other movie heroes face this particular set of circumstances. Neo however, does so in a *creative* manner.

4.7.1 Creativity: Enablers and inhibitors.

Environments that support creativity are reinforcing and open, whereas those that restrict creativity are time urgent, contain constant criticism and the supervision is too close (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Therefore the context of the fortigenic setting should be conducive to fostering creativity. The client's internal obstacles may inhibit his or her own *creative* fortitude. Other obstacles that can detract a client from fostering creativity include: fatigue due to pressures or demands, being preoccupied, lacking discipline and not being aware of his or her *creative* energy (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

4.7.2 Creativity: fortigenic applications.

Neo may be used as a role model. A client can watch the film, and consider instances where Neo has used *creative* coping mechanisms, as described in the above section. These instances can then be discussed and reflected on in a fortigenic setting. The scene where Neo decides to go back into the matrix e.g., can be used to reflect on how to find a *creative* or new way in which to cope with an obstacle. The client may be guided to recall these instances and reflections whenever facing obstacles to begin to create novel ways to cope in a positive way. Positive psychologists write about the antonyms of creativity, e.g., “boring, insipid, bland, dull, and unoriginal” (Niemic & Wedding, 2008, p. 22). A client may similarly be introduced to the idea that being open to new ideas and *creative* solutions may come in many forms. Here an example is to use humour and playfulness as a coping strategy (Niemic & Wedding, 2008).

A client may also be asked to keep a journal of instances where obstacles were faced in a *creative* way. Since new and positive experiences lead to broadening and building of cognitive and action predispositions, it follows that a client can then turn to the journal to re-read what he or she has accomplished, thus incorporating the broaden-and-build theory and therefore broadening and building his or her own creativity (Niemic & Wedding, 2008).

4.8 Courage and *The Matrix*

Courage is defined as “the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, either external or internal” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 199), and includes four strengths; these being: bravery, persistence, vitality and integrity, as has been described in Chapter Three. The virtue of courage is depicted in a wide range of courageous cinematic characters due to their popularity and the effect of “cinematic elevation” that depicts many characters (with this virtue) (Niemic & Wedding, 2008, p.55).

In *The Matrix*, there are several instances where Neo is interpreted to have displayed *courage*. Neo, much like any other movie hero, is on an extraordinary emotional journey. Various cinematographic devices set the scene for extremely bizarre events, for example, a strange phone call from a seemingly omnipotent caller, and the horror of finding his mouth physically closing up and having a bug inserted into his body. Hence his experiences can be called “curiouser and curiouser” to quote Alice. The idea that Neo continuously opens himself up to new experiences, for instance by going into the matrix, being uploaded with programmes to learn how to fight against Agents in the matrix through a bioport in his skull and his very courageous act of going back into the matrix to save Morpheus’s life, can all be interpreted to convey the PP notion of *courage*.

Within the PP paradigm, courage includes four strengths, as has been mentioned. Therefore Neo displays this virtue given that he is brave, since he acts on his convictions; he has integrity, since he takes responsibility for what he says and does; and he is persistent, since he faces many obstacles to

see his task (of being the One) through to the end. Thus the entirety of his actions can also be interpreted to imply that he can be called a moral archetype. These clips from the movie that have just been highlighted can be shown during the therapeutic session, discussed with the client and framed within the context of a PP paradigm.

4.8.1 Courage: Enablers and inhibitors.

Positive psychologists believe that behaviour can be influenced positively (and of course negatively) by role models and that the virtue of *courage* can be influenced by moral archetypes (Niemic & Wedding, 2008). In this regard, four developmental processes are highlighted that support the attainment and maintenance of moral goals and actions; these processes are:

- An ongoing capacity for change;
- Being sure of moral values that are balanced by actively searching for trust and being open-minded;
- *Love*, humility, optimism and *faith*; and
- Forging an identity that merges moral and personal qualities and that is aimed at integrity. (Colby & Damon, 1992)

4.8.2 Courage: fortigenic applications.

Many people face fears ranging in scope from mild to debilitating. Niemic and Wedding (2008) suggest that a client may be encouraged to practice confronting his or her fears and to begin with something simple. The idea is to look for inventive ways in which to do so. The use of a character in a movie a role model is again highlighted by positive psychologists to illuminate and discuss the notion of *courage* (Niemic & Wedding, 2008). One way of accomplishing this is to emulate a character you admire (Niemic & Wedding, 2008). Neo's first *courageous* step was to attempt to think differently about his life - e.g., by realising that he was inert inside a machine-made womb but plugged into a computer simulating a life. In a similar vein, a client may be introduced to this idea by initially taking one *courageous* step and graduating onto bigger and more *courageous* acts (Niemic & Wedding, 2008).

This fortigenic application of the virtue of *courage* again incorporates Fredrickson's (1998) broaden-and-build theory. Since positive emotions broaden and build not only thoughts, but serve to open novel ways of doing things, small acts of *courage* can serve to enhance feelings of optimism, which in turn may encourage a client to strive to persist in fortifying this virtue. In a sense, Neo's powerful displays of *courage* (my interpretation) may also serve as a catalyst to inspire the client, who, admittedly, may not be facing the barrel of a gun in everyday situations like Neo has to do in the movie. Nevertheless, Neo is not an action hero in the general sense that he is a "hardbody" hero. Rather, he begins his journey as a

computer nerd, who then during the course of the film, has to face very unusual stumbling blocks and he does so in a *courageous* manner. Granted, that is what all heroes in films do, but it can be argued that Neo, as the antithesis of a hyper-masculine hero, can serve to inspire a client, since his “metro-bodyness” may be easy to relate to and does not necessarily require physical strength per se.

A distinction is made between personal and general *courage*. Personal *courage* involves *courageous* acts that are important for the individual, whereas general *courage* involves acts that are considered *courageous* by most people (Niemic & Wedding, 2008). This interpretation of the film has read both these virtues into Neo’s actions. Neo displays personal *courage* by actively facing his obstacles head-on (for instance when he fights the Agents) and displays general *courage* (e.g., when he sacrificed himself to rescue Morpheus). These ideas around the notion of *courage* can then be discussed with a client and related to the movie. A client may then be given an opportunity to identify instances in his or her own life where he or she has displayed either of both or all of these virtues and where it has resulted in a positive outcome, thus again incorporating the broaden-and-build theory.

4.9 The notion of flow

Given that flow is one of the important aspects in building and maintaining fortitude in the context of PP, it is necessary to discuss this notion.

Flow theory, or entering into flow, has many obvious advantages and has the potential to be applied in scores of contexts, fields and situations (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Despite the fact that most people have the ability to experience flow, some people are more inclined to seek it out and therefore such people could be called *autotelic*. This term describes a person whose behaviour is aimed at activities done for the sake of doing them rather than activities aimed at the attainment of outward goals. Furthermore, people who have *autotelic* personalities are equipped with competencies such as wide-ranging *curiosity*, an expansive interest in life, perseverance and the “ability to be motivated by intrinsic rewards” (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 92).

4.9.1 Flow: Enablers and inhibitors.

The question that one can now ask is this: how does one enter into flow? Flow is achieved in a matrix of three specific conditions: setting definite goals, incorporating instant feedback and choosing challenges that are slightly out of reach. Essentially, flow is entered into when a person is totally engrossed in all facets of the undertaking. Naturally, a person stays in flow when he or she remains fully immersed in the action, wherein consciousness is ordered and “subjective experience is both differentiated and integrated” (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 92). These authors hold that being in a state of flow yields

intrinsic rewards and causes people to duplicate these flow experiences. What this in turn raises is a discerning device in a person's psychological make-up that nurtures growth. As people then master tasks, they become more proficient in these tasks and the tasks become less challenging. Hence, new and increasingly more challenging tasks must be sought and engaged in to remain in a state of flow (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

In Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) framework of *flow experience*, he posits that in order to derive the most pleasure, clients need to be challenged on both a mental and physical level. However, he cautions that clients should not be over-extended. Therefore the task should not be too difficult, but should lie just outside of their grasp because this condition facilitates heightened levels of pleasure (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

4.9.2 Flow: Fortigenic applications.

In exploring how to apply *flow theory*, scholars have discussed its use by practitioners and people alike (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990; Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Perry, 1999). The significance of flow theory has also been investigated in diverse settings such as Montessori schools (Kahn, 2000) and occupational therapy (Emerson, 1998). In addition, *flow principles* have been implemented in a number of different environments, as will shortly be shown.

I will begin by investigating how individuals can benefit from flow because it seems as if it is in the field of psychotherapy where people have gained the most. Inghilleri (1999) notes that The Milan group in particular have focused on developing psychiatric interventions with the explicit aim of fostering a more positive life. Findings show benefits in varied cultural settings such as northern Somalia and Nicaragua. Here, Delle Fave and Massimini (1992) describe the journey of a woman who suffers from agoraphobia and who experienced anxiety when she was outdoors. This disorder cocooned her into a solitary existence of a life that revolved around her home, accompanied travel and work. Whilst this way of life lessened her anxiety, it in no way contributed towards it being happy and meaningful. A flow questionnaire was administered to establish areas of flow that she has encountered in the past and therapy was implemented to guide her attention and time back to these pursuits. For the year that she was in therapy, nine weeklong *Experience Sampling Method* (ESM) samples were collected and ESM data formed a vital part of her treatment. Various strategies were discussed with the client, including how she allocated her time, her related perceptions of quality of experience and how to bring about changes to her life. Significant inroads were made because she watched less TV, which is a passive, homebound activity, and went out more to socialise and participate in volunteer work. The result was a marked reduction of agoraphobia symptoms. She could spend longer periods of time on her own because she did not need to be accompanied when she was travelling. Moreover, she was not directed towards apathetic

activities such as watching TV that demand low-challenge and low-skill. Instead, the client spent more time doing *flow* things that demand high-challenge and high-skill, and, she was able to stop using medication after 10 months (Delle Fave & Massimini, 1992).

Here, a movie such as *As good as it gets*, starring Jack Nicholson, may have been used in addition to the tools described above. That is because the message of this movie ties in with PP principles, since Jack, who portrays someone with agoraphobia and obsessive-compulsive disorder, is similarly challenged to do *flow* things. Even though he is very uncomfortable when he has to leave his apartment, he does so every day to eat at his favourite restaurant where he is served by his favourite waitress (played by Helen Hunt). Helen, who puts up with Jack's eccentric and odd behaviour and his disparaging manner, only does so because she needs the money to pay for her ill son's medical bills and Jack, being a successful romance novelist, tips her very generously. But his seemingly selfish and oafish behaviour drives her to a point where she tells him that she will not put up with it anymore and forbids him to come to the restaurant.

Meanwhile, his neighbour is attacked and Jack is the only one who is in a position to take care of Verdell, his neighbour's dog, while he is recuperating. This turn of events wreaks havoc with his sheltered life and habits since he is now faced with *high-challenge* activities such as having to tolerate a dog in his apartment and having to face the staff at the restaurant, who are not as accepting of his behaviour as Helen was. Moreover, he becomes conscious that he desperately needs to see her, which requires him to leave his safe haven and to go into unfamiliar territory. At first she is wary of his efforts, and is distressed when she realises that he is still disparaging and that he is only pursuing her because he wants her to be his waitress again. Things are not much better on the home front as he starts to notice that Verdell neither likes nor trusts him. These events conspire to force Jack to see himself in a new light, namely that he is alone, not only by choice, but also because the walls he has built around himself are so high that it is impossible for anyone to come close to him. He realises that he is selfish, that he is not perfect, and that other people similarly are not perfect.

When he goes to visit his neighbour (a *high-challenge* activity), they end up having a blazing row about many things, but also particularly about which of the two of them Verdell favours. Jack manages to entice Verdell to choose him with the help of strips of bacon that he keeps in his pocket, much to his distraught neighbour's amazement. Jack then does something very out of character since he attempts to placate his neighbour by assuring him that Verdell does in fact not like him better, but rather, prefers his bacon. This attempt to placate his neighbour can be described as a *high-skill* activity, since Jack normally tends only to his own needs and feelings.

Jack also refuses to stay away from Helen, and his persistence is finally rewarded when she lets her guard down and tells him about her son's condition. This gives him a chance to help her son by arranging for them to see one of the top doctors and also by footing the bill. Helen is immensely grateful, and

agrees to go out with him on condition that he “Be nice”. He gradually learns to consider her feelings and learns to overcome his fears, which brings him closer to his waitress and, after his heartfelt speech about his imperfections, his declaration of *love* for her and by arguing that this is “as good as it gets”, their *love* triumphs in the end. It can be said that Jack has found *love*, meaning and happiness by engaging in *high-challenge* and *high-skill* activities instead of insulating himself in the safe bubble of his apartment.

When we look at the lady in the example mentioned previously, it can be argued that the act of watching a movie plays into her phobia because it is a house-bound activity, but it may also cause her to consider identifying and fostering her own key strengths. The act of watching *As good as it gets* in conjunction with making notes whenever something in the movie resonated strongly with her may have provided additional material for discussion in therapy and Jack may have become her *flow hero* / role model.

4.9.3 The link between flow and finding meaning.

It follows then that movies should not be too difficult to de-code, or should be intriguing enough or else they will not satisfy the spectator (Bartsch, 2010). Making meaning from or learning from movies can be brought about by watching movies with varying degrees of ease of decoding, which may assist in fostering flow experiences.

It is necessary to consider the role of emotion in social-moral reasoning because emotion seems to be a vital part in the decoding (or meaning making) process, according to Bartsch (2010). Basic emotion scripts and scripts for being pleasant or unpleasant when interacting on a social level underlie more complicated social-moral reasoning. In addition, abstract notions, for example, responsibility and truthfulness also form part of this matrix. These basic scripts are attained early on in development and progressively incorporated into more intricate notions and meaning structures (Bartsch, 2010).

More layers of meaning structures are added with time, and Bartsch (2010) explains that with on-going social-cognitive development, many more layers of meaning are layered onto this emotional centre. Examples here are harm caused to the individual (be it intentionally or otherwise), and the varying kinds of reparations that will be sufficient in each instance. Bartsch (2010) then explores so called *paradigm scenarios* in film studies: “Emotion concepts seem to be organized around five basic emotion scripts that are similar across cultures, namely, anger, fear, sadness, joy, and *love*” (p. 245). He notes the concept of self-sacrifice as a moral notion does not live within the realm of the abstract. It seems as if such concepts sprout from an amalgamation of basic emotion scripts such as fear, sadness and *love*, and Bartsch concludes that if someone who is self-less, *loves* someone else, then the need to save the loved one from harm overrides danger to oneself. Alternatively, the saved person will be imbued with *love* and sadness when they think about the sacrifices made for them. Therefore the importance of basic emotion

scripts underwrites the importance and understanding of moral notions in filmic narratives (Bartsch, 2010).

Fischer, Bullock, Rotenberg, and Raya (1993) make a distinction between two kinds of social-cognitive skill development, namely functional and optimal. Functional social-cognitive skill development requires nominal social feedback and these skills can be used voluntarily. Optimal skills on the other hand are skills people can use on their own but which need to be supplemented by rich social contributions and feedback input. Bartsch (2010) points out: “the “gap between functional and optimal levels of social-cognitive development has interesting implications in terms of media aesthetics” (p. 246). This is because movies are inherently a source of rich and ordered social information that makes the facilitation of functioning at the best possible level of social-cognitive development much easier (Bartsch, 2010).

Bartsch (2010) explains that film aesthetics seem to make the amalgamation of first- and third-person viewpoints possible. This is done by enhancing the portrayal of social reality with a variety of emotional cues. These cues are not readily available in real-life situations and include devices such as flashbacks, zooming in on a particular facial expression and inner monologue. In addition, the nature of film is such that devices that are not part of the story, but that convey emotion, can also be inserted. Here elements such as lighting, music, colour and editing come into play (Bartsch, 2010).

Thus the act of watching and making sense of a movie, as an enhanced means of representation sprinkled with different layers of emotional cues, assists the spectator to link what is happening on the screen to his or her own stories, emotions and understanding. The value in respect of social-moral reflection is this: (a) “viewers can use their personal experiences to fill gaps of meaning in the filmic narrative” and (b): “they can adopt ideas from the movie to fill gaps in the biological narrative that they use to make sense of their own emotional experiences” (Bartsch, 2010, p. 246).

However, the use of movies as fortigenic tools may not always elicit the desired effect. This is due in part to the fact that even if the movie is experienced as gratifying, and some form of *meaning* or insight is harvested from that movie, it does not necessarily imply that what is gained is accurate or wise. But Bartsch (2010) points out that social cognition is obviously non-linear and could therefore infect people with harmful beliefs or whimsical answers.

Nevertheless, it is therefore clear that movies, as filmic containers can be interpreted to “hold” a considerable array of elements, not least of which, in the case of this movie, the ideas behind it and special effects in it. That is because the ideas, for instance that machines and by implication technology and computers can become so advanced that they take over the world, though not being particularly new, but that are contentious and that fit into the on-going social discourse. These ideas raise burning

questions that beg understanding and further thought about the nature and ever present concern that technology can replace people. Similarly, the special effects were so ground breaking at the time *The Matrix* was released, and, according to Yeffeth (2003) the violence so stylised, that the graphic nature of the violence, although posing a problem for some, was appreciated by many due to the distinctive and original look it lent to the action scenes. This novel approach coupled by the thought provoking messages in the movie, can lead to a mind-expanding experience that may resonate with clients and can potentially unlock issues, themes, stories and meaning. Furthermore, the process of making sense of a movie could be internalised by the client and used or applied to find *meaning in life*.

4.9.4 Flow and conflict.

Wells (1988) contends that flow theory is also a useful tool for addressing conflict. He writes that conflict is traditionally handled by working through the issues with the belief that once this is done, happiness will take its place. However, flow theory directs therapy towards the construction of strengths and interests, which in turn allows the client to build his or her skills and levels of confidence, thereby reducing his or her dysphoric experiences (Wells, 1988). Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) also note that the application of flow principles in two settings in particular, namely in education and therapy, should have a dual purpose: (a) it should be aimed at assisting clients to recognise activities that bring them joy and, (b) clients should then learn to direct their time and attention into such activities.

This returns us to link between PP and existentialism. A selection of logotherapy tools will now be discussed and integrated into an exploration of how these were read into *The Matrix*. Conceptually, each of these tools will in turn be rooted in PP theory. An indication will also be given on how to use each of the existential methods that form part of logotherapy, as fortigenic tools.

4.10 Positive psychology and logotherapy

Frankl (2004b) developed a method of treatment called logotherapy and he explains the difference between this and psychotherapy by noting that psychotherapy is about bringing unconscious material to consciousness. In contrast, logotherapy endeavours to bring spiritual reality into awareness. Humanity is comprised by responsibility and reality, and it is the task of the logotherapist to make clients aware of their responsibilities. Hence, Frankl (2004b) concludes that logotherapy is an optimistic (or positive) call to action.

In another answer to what the difference between logotherapy and psychotherapy is, Frankl (2004b) jokingly replies: "Now in Logotherapy the client may sometimes remain erect but he must hear things which sometimes are very disagreeable to hear" and further that logotherapy is: "a method less

retrospective and more introspective” (p. 104). Here, Frankl explains that logotherapy focuses on finding and fulfilling meaning, whereas psychoanalysis focuses on drives and instincts and the gratification and satisfaction of these, and aims at adapting to the environment and to society. Frankl (2004a) describes how a man who had been in therapy for many years came to him because “the patient was discontented with his career and found it most difficult to comply with American foreign policy” (p. 107). The man’s previous therapist had instilled the idea in him that his career and his American superiors “were ‘nothing but’ father images and, consequently, his dissatisfaction with his job was due to the hatred he unconsciously harbored towards his father” (Frankl, 2004a, p. 107). Frankl however, pinpointed that the client’s job was thwarting his *will to meaning* and consequently the client found a new vocation and new happiness. Thus, as mentioned before, Frankl’s ideas tie in closely with those of PP since the *will to meaning* is considered to be an important aim for a fulfilled life in both viewpoints (Frankl, 2004a).

4.10.1 Logotherapy tool: Will to meaning.

4.10.1.1 Is it as elusive as it sounds?

Gill (1979) asked Frankl how a psychiatrist can give meaning to his client and Frankl answered: “He cannot. Meaning cannot be given. It has to be found. Meaning has to be discovered by the individual” (p. 30). Frankl goes further by explaining that this meaning is not in the broad sense of the word, but is very specific in that it is distinctive; each person and situation has its own meaning. Every person must find his or her own distinct meaning in everything he or she does and be responsible to use those unique possibilities (Gill, 1979).

Frankl (2004a) therefore believes that there are two different kinds of meaning, first *ultimate meaning*, which may be found amidst the seemingly chaotic nature of the universe. Every person is naturally part of this order and has to choose how he or she wants to partake in it: “Ultimate meaning is like the horizon: it can be approached but never be reached. Important is not the attainment but the search” (Fabry, 1979, pp. 11-12). This ultimate or super meaning can be defined as follows:

This ultimate meaning necessarily exceeds and surpasses the finite intellectual capacities of man; in Logotherapy, we speak in this context of a super-meaning. What is demanded of man is not, as some existential philosophers teach, to endure the meaninglessness of life, but rather to bear his incapacity to grasp its unconditional meaningfulness in rational terms. Logos is deeper than logic. (Frankl, 2004a, p. 122)

The second kind of meaning is to be found in the here and now, *meaning of the moment*. Arnold and Gasson (1979) posit that Frankl, however, preconditions the idea of finding meaning with the idea that one cannot treat only emotions because the human spirit is ever present and bears no relation to

emotions. The point is to find meaning and try and attain it. This can only be done by having an adequate philosophy about life (Arnold & Gasson, 1979).

Additionally, Crumbaugh (1979) notes that logotherapy is aimed at assisting clients to delve into core values so that they can find and optimise that which has personal meaning for them. As such, clients are encouraged to explore all the values mentioned above, namely attitudinal, *creative* and experiential, to find their own meaning. Hence it is apparent that movies can ignite this flame of meaning, but it is also clear that finding meaning is an active and engaged process that requires the will or choice to do so and the commitment to actively seek it out. Arnold and Gasson (1979) summarise the aim of Frankl's views of therapy by maintaining that the starting point of psychotherapy was to help people to solve their personal problems and that the next step was to shorten the time span of therapy. Arnold and Gasson hold that Frankl's notion of urging clients to find meaning and then fulfil the task they set for themselves is underscored in his personality theory by a questioning, *creative* and thought provoking personality. This is in stark contrast to dissecting a neurotic personality, caught up in its own problems (Arnold & Gasson, 1979).

Frankl (2004a) contends that: "According to Logotherapy, we can discover meaning in life in three different ways: (a) by creating a work or doing a deed; (b) by experiencing something or encountering someone; and (c) by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering" (p. 115). Frankl (2004a) notes the first is self-explanatory because it pertains to "the way of achievement or accomplishment" (p. 115). The second relates to *experiential values* and "refers to those that a person experiences through his or her meetings with others, or what he or she takes from this world" (Guttmann, 2005, p. 25); this could include any number of experiences such as: "goodness, truth and beauty" (Frankl, 2004a, p. 115) or to experience another person in totality, or to *love* that person because he/she is unique. In order for these values to triumph, one needs to be receptive which, Frankl notes, explains why "a single moment can retroactively flood an entire life with meaning" (Guttmann, 2005, p. 25). The third is *attitudinal values* and encompasses one's attitude in any given situation and Frankl (2004b) contends that clients who are facing a particular destiny have the opportunity to realise their attitudinal values only when they accept their destiny. What matters is the client's attitude: *courage* in suffering, or dignity in the face of disaster.

In order to link Frankl's (2004b) notion of a single moment that can drench life with meaning, to the focus of this chapter, it is necessary to return to the discussion about the power of movies in Chapters One and Four. It was shown that Greenberg (2006) argues that movies convey messages in a vibrant, impactful and vivid way, portray varying sets of behaviour, and sometimes highlight and question. Moreover, it was shown that movies are informed by many different stories and myths, and mythological elements were discussed in reference to Yeffeth's (2003) notion that Morpheus's mythological name can be interpreted as the son of sleep and the god of dreams. It can therefore be argued that movies are vessels for myths.

As such, Campbell (1988) notes that movies have a magical quality because the actor on the screen is actually somewhere else in real life, which imbues that actor with a god-like quality. The actor is a compound presence because if he or she were to walk into the theatre, everybody would notice him; he or she is on another level. Although actors rarely actually come into the theatre, their presence on screen, the characters they portray and the mythical stories they embody can give rise to magical moments that may be a catalyst for reflective insight into clients' self-knowledge (Campbell, 1988).

It is now necessary to consider the use of the notion of the *will to meaning* that has been read into Neo's journey in *The Matrix*. A client may be challenged to turn to the movie and to question why Neo ends up transcending everything that the matrix implies. This may be done through a *creative*, flexible and thought provoking process where the client actively seeks out and revises events in the movie that may have given rise to the *will to meaning*. These events may then be used to compare to events or to a series of events in the client's life that the client has viewed as negative. The client can then be challenged to find a positive aspect in his or her own life event or series of events, thus incorporating several logotherapy tools, such as *will to meaning*, in addition to highlighting the client's responsibilities, challenging the client to attempt an attitudinal change and dereflection (which is about, in this case, transcending yourself by focusing on the movie and also mentioned later on in this chapter).

Finally, since this is a qualitative reading which inherently allows for a flexible and *creative* process, consideration may be given to a related field in the broader psychology context, which is that of sport psychology whilst still bearing in mind that this discussion is about *will to meaning*. Let us consider then that young people often experience difficulty attaining *meaning* in their lives because they are in a transitional phase of their lives. They have to make key decisions regarding a career and a partner. Fabry (1979) mentions the value of logotherapy principles in combination with sport and notes that Frankl argues that sportsmen and women thrive on the pressure that comes with striving to reach their full potential. As such, partaking in sport is a healthy way of ensuring that he or she has tension in his or her life. Young people tend to seek out other outlets through socially unacceptable or dangerous practices e.g., taking drugs or flouting authority without the requisite tension (Fabry, 1979). A working example is of baseball coach Robert Korzep who uses paradoxical intention (which is discussed later in this chapter), very successfully with players who are struggling: "He suggests they tell themselves, "I don't give a damn if I never hit that stupid little ball the rest of my life. I'll show everybody by how many yards I can miss" (Fabry, 1979, p. 200).

4.10.2 Logotherapy tool: Paradoxical intention.

Gerz (1979) notes that the workings of paradoxical intention are rooted in the idea that people are free, not from their circumstances, but free to choose how they deal with, for example, neuroses. In addition,

Gerz writes that people have the ability for self-detachment that helps them to rise above themselves and their behaviour. This is done in a safe and trusting space, by taking a client's case history, explaining how paradoxical intention works and suggesting that the client tries it. However, Gerz (1979) cautions that: "The technique of paradoxical intention, however, is not suggestion alone. Quite the contrary: we do not tell the patient ... everything will get better and better" (p. 78), but instruct him to get "worse and worse" (p. 78). Gerz maintains that this technique can be used to overcome neuroses such as phobia or obsessive-compulsive neuroses but cautions that it will not alleviate all suffering and neuroses. Rather, this technique may be in addition to psychotherapeutic treatment. Though paradoxical intention could be of use in therapies other than logotherapy – change may also take some time and is dependent on the severity or length of the illness. Another factor to consider is that clients should not be pressed to make dramatic changes. It is advisable to start with smaller fears and progress from there (Gerz, 1979).

Here a client may be shown excerpts from *The Matrix* where the notion of *freedom of choice* was read into this movie. For example the idea that Neo could freely choose to take either the red or the blue pill and the consequences of his choice, may be discussed with a client. Earlier it was shown that the blue pill symbolises a choice to stay passive (do nothing). If a client then is urged to "take the blue pill" when dealing with obstacles in his or her own life – the resultant outcomes can be explored and noted, thus reflecting the idea of paradoxical intention. Similarly, another instance from the movie may be used to illustrate the notion of paradoxical intention. The scene where Neo chooses to test his skills against Morpheus in the virtual reality of the matrix has been interpreted to show that Neo is free to choose. He has been uploaded with fighting programmes such as Kung Fu, and is now essentially able to do martial arts. Therefore in theory, he is equipped to fight against Agents in the matrix. However, by choosing to fight against Morpheus, Neo is choosing to see what he is practically capable of. Given that a client has been made aware of PP character strengths and virtues, and the film contextualised as a tool in the fortigenic setting and not as pure entertainment (as mentioned before), the scene can then be explored with the client. In the case of the movie, Neo chose to act, but the client can be asked to explore the outcome if Neo had decided to remain passive. This exploration can then serve to inform, broaden and build the client's exposure to the idea of *freedom of choice* and the corresponding idea of paradoxical intention. Naturally the premise of paradoxical intention is to bring about a positive outcome and fortitude. Gerz (1979) notes that it is not the idea to cause the client any harm (i.e. that he or she decides to stop taking medication).

4.10.3 Logotherapy tool: Dereflection.

Within the framework of Frankl's existentialism, Kocourek (1979) defines dereflection as a therapeutic application of the client's *will to meaning* in addition to his or her capacity to transcend him- or herself. Hence meaning, and not the gratification of instincts and drives, is what causes a client to focus on

something, or someone, other than himself. So in the true sense of the word the client is dereflected away from himself and to focus less on himself, thereby effectively enabling him to disregard his symptoms. This differs from paradoxical intention in that, as Kocourek (1979) explains, is about a client ridiculing his symptoms.

Accordingly, Pattakos (2005) writes that dereflection is: “the ability to shift our focus of attention from the problem situation to something else, to something positive, in order to build our coping mechanisms for dealing with stress and change” (p. 12). Pattakos (2005) also emphasises the importance of self-transcendence in the dereflection process and argues that self-transcendence “allows us to manifest the human spirit ... by relating and being directed to something more than ourselves” (p. 13).

I have read two instances into *The Matrix* where both Neo and Morpheus have chosen to focus on people other than themselves. In other words, to return to this discussion, these scenes may be used to convey the concept of dereflection to a client. The first instance in the movie is where Morpheus chose to sacrifice himself so that the band of rebels could escape out of the matrix and back to reality. Morpheus was consequently captured and tortured by the agents, but his people were safe. The second instance is where Neo decided to go back into the matrix to save Morpheus's life. This feat, as has been discussed, was potentially very dangerous since it had never been attempted before. Yet Neo felt that he had to try, and notwithstanding the fact that he had to face the wrath of the agents, he succeeded in rescuing Morpheus, thus focusing on Morpheus and not on himself.

Improvisation can be used in addition to dereflection and to explain Kocourek (1979) uses an example of a client who is experiencing difficulty to climax and who is advised to avoid intercourse altogether, thus “the partner now expects no sexual activity and the patient is released” (p. 88). Note that dereflection is not only useful for working with sexual disturbances. It works on the same principle as asking someone who has a sleep disturbance to count sheep in order to fall asleep (Kocourek, 1979). Therefore, this method seems to take psychotherapy one step further. This technique allows the unconscious to become conscious, and it also leaves room for the unconscious to then “allow it finally to recede back in the unconscious” (Kocourek, 1979, p. 93). Frankl maintains (2005) that these principles, e.g., dereflection and self-transcendence amongst others can be used “to advance transformational management and elevate the human spirit in the workplace” as well (p. 13).

4.10.4 Logotherapy tool: Behaviour modification.

Another existential method which may be useful in a fortigenic setting is behaviour modification. This is done by interrupting the client who is talking at length about “victimization by forces beyond his control” (Lukas, 1979, p. 99). The therapist interjects by suggesting that the client is free to choose how he or she

reacts and free to choose how he or she behaves in any and all circumstances. Therefore, Lukas (1979) maintains that it is up to the Logotherapist to teach clients to take control of their lives. This may be done by drawing them out of their meaningless existence and root them in a life that is filled with the unique meaning they attach importance to.

Commitment forms a crucial part of logotherapy and hence Crumbaugh (1979) notes that commitment is wrapped up in motivation. A person should be totally dedicated to fulfilling the meaning that is important to him or her that is through the use of his or her energy, as well as his or her cognitive and emotional resources. It is naturally quite difficult to fathom motivation and similarly difficult to achieve by using objective tools. Crumbaugh cautions that self-confidence is the key to ensuring commitment since *meaning* may become less important when the person is feeling inadequate and apprehensive. In the final analysis then Crumbaugh ascertains that finding *meaning* is an on-going process and by implication cannot be satisfied indefinitely once it has been found thus leaving the person in a state of homeostasis, and self-satisfied and unmotivated. Rather, it is a state of flux that never ceases and where satisfaction is gleaned in the journey towards finding *meaning* (Crumbaugh, 1979).

Here again, it may be useful to turn to movies since there are such an abundance of heroes and role models in movies who, as discussed previously, do not necessarily start out as heroes, but as ordinary human beings whose lives mimic ours. It may be said that Neo in *The Matrix* is a useful role model to begin a discussion with a client around behaviour modification. One example of how Neo modified his behaviour is towards the end of the movie, where Neo realises that he has the capacity to fly – hence transcending the rules of the matrix.

4.10.4 Logotherapy tool: Challenge a client to change him- or herself.

Frankl (2004a) maintains that change is a *choice* that has to come from within. Hence, for him, every person has the inimitable ability to turn negative events or tragedies into positive triumphs. He further holds that, when a person cannot change the situation he or she finds him- or herself in, e.g., when he or she has cancer, that person may be called to change him- or herself.

Frankl (2004a) cites an example of a client who was severely depressed because his wife had passed away. He confronted the client with a question about how his wife may have felt if he (the client) had died first. The client related that it had caused her immeasurable suffering. Frankl (2004a) then told the client that his wife had been spared this suffering, but that this may come at a cost: “at the price that now you have to survive and mourn her” (p. 117). Frankl then recounts how the client shook his hand and left the office in silence; Frankl consequently writes: “In some way, suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of a sacrifice” Frankl (2004a, p. 117). Frankl points out

that this encounter did not serve as therapy, rather, he managed to sway the client's *attitude* (Frankl, 2004a).

It could now be argued that Neo could be used as an example of someone who had to start his life over by taking the red pill and being born again. This new start in turn led him to opt to choose a different attitude to the suffering that he was experiencing in the curious reality of the matrix, that in no way resembled the anguish of a floating and meaningless existence in his mechanic womb. However, it is very important to note that "in no way is suffering necessary to find meaning ...To suffer unnecessarily is masochistic rather than heroic" (Frankl, 2004a, p. 117).

4.11 Conclusion

It is imperative to consider that new theories or new ways of thinking, such as PP, need time to be proven effective. But the value of "tried and trusted" traditional ways of doing or thinking about psychology is universally understood to be wrapped up in a sincere impetus to bring about positive changes. Thus implying that newer and by association "positive" psychology, is not necessarily better than older, and by association a "negative" outlook. The end goal, though admittedly or purportedly reached by different means, is essentially the same.

CHAPTER 5: THE MOCK TURTLE'S STORY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter tells the story of *The Matrix* in two layers, one being a structural layer relating to actual events in the movie. The second layer consists of an interpretive reading encapsulating and highlighting the themes that have been read into the movie: seven PP themes, namely *self-efficacy*, *love*, *hope*, *courage*, *open-mindedness*, *creativity* and *faith* and two existential themes, *freedom of choice* and *will to meaning*. Interpretations made through the identified lenses are interspersed throughout.

5.2 Analysis of *The Matrix*

5.2.1 Presenting the hero.

The Matrix starts with a phone that rings and two people talking to each other. The next scene shows Neo waking up after falling asleep at his desk. He sees a strange message on his computer inviting him to "Follow the White Rabbit" (it later transpires that it was Trinity who sent him the message). Neo appears anaemic, exhausted and somewhat dazed. Almost as if he is just going through the motions but is not really alive ...

When we first encounter Neo, he looks and seems different from the average action-movie hero. The Matrix's hero, Neo's early physical appearance is described as "a slightly androgynous masculinity" (Schuchardt, 2003, p. 11). In this regard, Ayers (2008) explores what action movies and heroes are about: "the action film is a rich site for the complex interaction of narrative, spectacle and masculinity" (p. 41) and further: "The films are also notable for their excessive violence and hyperbolic action sequences and the hardbodied protagonists dominating these films perpetrate both the violence and action of the narratives with superheroic glee" (pp. 41–42). The action film-genre typically encompasses films made in Hollywood during the 1980s and early 1990s in which a male hero must single-handedly save the day (Ayers, 2008). The author points out that movies in this genre have one thing in common, namely that the hero's body is the centre of attention, and that this is "a body that is fetishized for its hard and sculpted muscularity and/or its athletic skill and physical prowess" (Ayers, 2008, p. 42). Actors such as Steven Seagal, Bruce Willis, Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Chuck Norris are all associated with hardbody films (Ayers, 2008). Moreover, such hardbody films are: "Ruled by bodybuilder-actors ... [and] showcase hypermasculine characters engaged in various feats of heroism" (Ayers, 2008, p. 41). These scholars have all focused on concepts such as heroes, action and hardbody films. Though *The Matrix* is undeniably a SF movie, it is also action-packed and therefore Ayers's (2008) first two notions are applicable because *The Matrix* is a complex interaction of narrative and spectacle. But as the focus here

is on the idea of Neo as hero and potential role model, Schuchardt's (2003) earlier sketch of Neo is accurate. At first glance, Neo is not a typical hero. He could actually be called an antihero (nerd or computer geek), at least at this early stage in the movie, and could be described as the antithesis of a hardbody hero.

I turn to Bartsch's (2010) premise about metaphorical storytelling¹⁶, which can be described as the continuous mapping of emotional processes on an articulate source domain that functions as a signifier of the characters' inner feelings. It is my contention that Neo, who is at the beginning of his journey towards becoming a hero, is portrayed as a nerd through filmic devices such as his creased clothes, his anaemic appearance and his gloomy apartment that is filled with computers. Hence he appears to be the antithesis of a hardbody hero.

Essentially, heroes play a key role in the context of PP, according to Niemiec and Wedding (2008): Positive psychology movies are also about heroes, both the dramatic ones and those of everyday life. The American Film Institute (AFI) (2002) has identified the top 50 heroes in American film history. Consistent with our discussion of positive psychology movies, the AFI defined a hero as follows: A character(s) who prevails in extreme circumstances and dramatizes a sense of morality, courage and purpose. Though they may be ambiguous or flawed, they often sacrifice themselves to show humanity at its best. (p. 8)

Thus this portrayal may be construed as the establishment of the continuous mapping of a person who has the potential to become a hero, but does not see himself as one just yet. Neo is, for now, just an ordinary man, living an ordinary (if boring) life.

5.2.2 An existential vacuum.

Neo's apartment looks cold and gloomy with no visible evidence to suggest that he is in a relationship. This bleak picture alludes to a lonely life spent at the office during the day and in front of a computer at night. Additionally, the stark interior and Neo's appearance hint at what positive psychologists and existentialist theorists may describe as the emptiness, aimlessness and meaninglessness of his existence. On a deeper level therefore, it can be argued that one senses that Neo is experiencing what Frankl refers to as an existential vacuum or noögenic neurosis. Consequently, the lack of meaning in Neo's life is clearly and visually mapped out from the onset of the movie, as is evident in the appearance of his apartment. Moreover, it may be said that Neo's apartment, and Neo's life, embody the idea of an existential vacuum.

¹⁶ Discussed in Chapter One: Down the Rabbit-Hole.

5.2.3 Faith.

The second message on Neo's computer reads: "Knock, knock, Neo". Then someone knocks on Neo's door and this startles Neo. Choi and a couple of fellow computer hackers are there to pick up one of Neo's hacking programmes. When Neo gives Choi the programme he wrote, Choi says: "Hallelujah! You're my saviour, man. My own, personal Jesus Christ!"

My interpretation is that the notion of *faith* in *The Matrix* is portrayed as a journey that can be described as both physical and psychological. Neo's physical journey can be seen in his travels from one reality to another as he gradually starts to believe that he is the One. His psychological journey is evident from the obstacles he has to face and his steady spiritual growth and resultant wholeness at the end of the movie. Given that Neo is lauded as Choi's own, personal Jesus Christ, Neo may be described as being "Christ-like", and therefore a saviour (as Christians believe Jesus saved them). Neo can be seen as a Christ archetype. Therefore *faith* here is also about Neo's transcendence into becoming the person he can be – namely a hero, a saviour and hence also someone who has a sense of meaning and purpose.

Thus, in my opinion, the beginnings of the Christian spiritual theme in *The Matrix* may be implied, because the audience is made aware of the idea that Neo is "Christ-like". That is because Neo is summoned by an unknown person with a mysterious message to follow the White Rabbit, echoing the seminal people in the Bible who were summoned by God, e.g., Moses who was called on to lead the Israelites out of Egypt into the Promised Land. It could therefore be said that Neo is mustered by God (Fontana, 2003), which can be interpreted to imply the notion of *faith*.

5.2.4 Freedom of choice.

Choi invites Neo to go to a club, and after some hesitation, Neo sees a tattoo of a White Rabbit on one girl's arm and chooses to join them. Choi asks Neo: "Something wrong man? You look a little whiter than usual", and Neo answers: "My ... computer. Did you ever have that feeling where you are not sure if you are awake or still dreaming?" Choi replies: "All the time. It is called Mescaline – it's the only way to fly. It just sounds to me like you might need to unplug man. You know, get some R&R".

Schuchardt (2003) writes that Neo first has to be "persuaded that the computer-world in which he spends so much time is actually reality and that his life as Thomas Anderson is not real" (p. 11). Hence, Neo is pulled out of his comfort zone by a curious set of circumstances, and, though he is yet to understand his role, his equilibrium has been upset¹⁷. Moreover, Neo chooses of his own accord to go to the club with the group. He is therefore exercising his free will and *freedom of choice* to join them. In my opinion this

¹⁷ This notion is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

decision is a seminal moment in the film since it embodies his symbolic “awakening”. That is because Neo was clearly exhausted and therefore asleep at his desk before they knocked on his door. Given his state of exhaustion, he could have decided to ignore the knock, to get up off his chair and go to bed. Doing so could be interpreted to mean that he may have disregarded the call to start fulfilling his destiny. But Neo has chosen to follow the White Rabbit.

It has been shown that the premise of *freedom of choice* is a cornerstone of Frankl’s (2004a) existential philosophy. This premise presupposes that we are free to choose how we want to deal with or what our attitude is towards situations we face. Hence Neo’s decision to go to the club has been interpreted to imply *freedom of choice*. Neo’s decision to respond to the call of fate may also be interpreted to indicate the first positive steps towards changing his attitude and therefore also his circumstances.

Neo’s decision may similarly point to the PP character strengths of *curiosity* and *courage*. He seems mystified and somewhat shocked when he sees the tattoo of the White Rabbit, but nevertheless decides to go. In the film, Neo’s feeling of shock is visually portrayed by the look on his face which, to the hackers at least, seems paler than usual. *Curiosity* is implied since Neo’s inquisitiveness is piqued, leading him to choose to go to the club. Moreover, the menacing or veiled threat of the unsavoury-looking hackers, who by their own admission have taken mescaline (a type of hallucinogenic drug), can suggest Neo’s *courageousness*.

In addition, it can be said that this part of Neo’s story differs slightly from Alice’s because Alice inadvertently tumbled down the rabbit-hole, whereas Neo chose to leave the safe confines of his apartment. However, the outcome for both our leading characters is the same since both situations serve to propel them into a rabbit-hole (the unknown). Alice goes deeper into her imaginary rabbit-hole or dream, and Neo similarly goes deeper into the reality of his virtual rabbit-hole.

5.2.5 Faith and meaning.

It is at this club that Neo first meets Trinity (played by Carrie-Anne Moss), and Neo realises she was responsible for sending him the message. Trinity draws attention to Neo’s predicament by commenting:

“I know why you are here, Neo. I know what you’ve been doing; I know why you hide in sleep. Why you live alone and why night after night you sit at your computer. You are looking for him. I know because I was once looking for the same thing and when he found me, he told me I wasn’t really looking for him, I was looking for an answer. It is a question that drives us; it is the question that brought you here. You know the question, just as I did”.

Neo realises that it was Trinity who hacked his computer and advised him to “follow the White Rabbit”, thus pre-empting the visit by the hackers. The aim of Trinity’s meeting with Neo is twofold: to warn him he is in danger and to make him aware that his reality is not what he believes it to be. In short, as will be shown, she is there to turn his whole world upside down. Trinity’s arrival on the scene has been interpreted to imply the notion of *faith* when looking at the movie through a Christian lens. Upon hearing that her name is Trinity, one is reminded of the Holy Trinity in Biblical literature (i.e., the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost). Trinity understands Neo in that she understands that he is in search of something (meaning). This is because she was once also looking for the same thing. Additionally, she refers to her search for Morpheus, whom Neo is searching for. Neo believes Morpheus will have the answer to his enduring and gnawing anxiety that something is wrong with his life.

Neo is looking for Morpheus, but he is also looking for answers and *meaning*, which makes him feel anxious. Frankl (2004a) argues that a certain degree of tension is necessary for mental health, but more specifically tension “between what one is and what one should become” (p. 110). In addition, Frankl highlights the importance of having something meaningful to strive for. Nevertheless, though necessary, this search for *meaning* could still rouse inner tension instead of inner equilibrium. Frankl (2004a) explains:

Such a tension is inherent in the human being and therefore is indispensable to mental wellbeing, we should not, then, be hesitant about challenging man with a potential meaning for him to fulfil. It is only thus that we evoke his will to meaning from its state of latency. I consider it a dangerous misconception of mental hygiene that what man needs in the first place is equilibrium or, as it is called in biology, “homeostasis”, i.e. a tensionless state. What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving for and struggling with a worthwhile goal, a freely chosen task. What he needs is not the discharge of tension at any cost but the call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled by him. (p. 110)

5.2.6 The nature of reality.

Neo’s reply to Trinity’s insightful observation is this: “What is the Matrix?”

The question of what the matrix is, is the main driver in the movie. It succeeds in creating intrigue and, perhaps more significantly, forces the spectator to think about the film more deeply. At face value, it transpires that humans are actually ensnared in a computer simulation designed to trap them into the belief that what they experience is real. On another level, Schuchardt (2003) contends the matrix is “the Technological Society come to its full fruition”, and also: “The Matrix is the robot, and we are the dogs acting as servants to our technological masters” (pp. 20-21). *The Matrix* may therefore be seen as a metaphor for a modern societal system wherein a surplus of rules, laws, habits and the like (self-imposed

or otherwise) have enslaved many. Hence, Schuchardt (2003) comes to the conclusion that this film comments on the nature of reality.

Neo is looking for the answer because he knows something is wrong in his world, but (as mentioned above) he cannot pinpoint what it is. The nature of Neo's reality is that he is caught up in the matrix. Danser (2004) points out that reality consists of many conditions, experiences and viewpoints and quotes Rober Anton Wilson (as cited in Danser, 2004) who believed that "Reality is some kind of ontological silly-putty" (p. 1).

The enslavement of modern society's demands and technological systems may be experienced as the causes that result in a life devoid of meaning. In other words this state could be described as a feeling of emptiness or as experiencing noögenic neurosis, as Frankl (2004a) calls it, and may be a contributing factor in, e.g., boredom. Noös is the ancient Greek word *νοῦς*, which encapsulates mind and intellect (Kypros.org lexicon. 2013). Yet noös also has human and moral components. Guttman (2005) explains that psychology has neglected these components to a degree, and these are the parts that are infinite, everlasting and cannot get sick. In other words the soul can get congested by virtue of psychological or biological illnesses. Here, psychologists are tasked with getting rid of the congestion so as to free the soul to be the best it can be, thereby reaching its full potential (Guttman, 2005).

Frankl (2004a) writes about existential frustration in which there is a threefold meaning of the word "existential": "1) existence itself, i.e., the specifically human mode of being; 2) the meaning of existence; and 3) the striving to find concrete meaning in personal existence, that is to say the will to meaning" (p. 106). Hence it might be said that Neo similarly is existentially frustrated.

5.2.7 Angels and demons.

Trinity's answer to Neo's question regarding what the matrix is, is this: "The answer is out there Neo. It is looking for you and it will find you if you want it to". The following day Neo is called in by his boss and berated for being late. When he gets to his cubicle a Fedex agent delivers a package to Neo. It contains a phone that immediately starts to ring and when Neo answers, he correctly guesses that it is Morpheus calling.

Fontana (2003) points out that this seemingly odd incident and resulting phone-call is yet another clue to a spiritual premise. Similarly, in the Bible, where Jesus's parents, Joseph and the Virgin Mary, were called by angels, the "angel" in the movie is embodied by the Fedex agent who asks: "Thomas Anderson?" to which Neo replies: "That's me".

Morpheus says:

“Yeah, I’ve been looking for you Neo, I don’t know if you are ready to see what I want to show you but unfortunately you and I have run out of time. They are coming for you Neo and I don’t know what they are going to do”.

Morpheus is referring to Agents, which are computer-programmed viruses that trace, intercept and hunt down members of the resistance movement. However, Neo does not yet know what the Agents are capable of, hence does not realise the danger he is in and is scared to climb onto the scaffold to escape as Morpheus tells him to. He chooses to stay on the ledge of the building and is then captured by the Agents. Agent Smith tries to convince Neo to help him find Morpheus. The reason the Agents are looking for Morpheus is that he is a threat to the machines since he spearheads the resistance movement. Neo refuses to comply with their request. As a result, his mouth morphs and seems to disappear, leaving him unable to speak. In addition, a weird bugging device is inserted into his navel.

It may further be contended that the machines, computer-programmed viruses and Agent Smith embody demons.

However, Trinity helps Neo escape the clutches of Agent Smith and takes Neo to Morpheus. In the car on the way there, Morpheus calls and tells Neo he is the chosen one.

The parallel between Neo and Jesus Christ is again evident in that Neo is also regarded as the chosen One (Fontana, 2003):

The Matrix resounds with the elements of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic thought. The theology of *The Matrix* is informed by the concerns of apocalyptic expectation characteristic of this period; specifically hope for messianic deliverance, restoration and establishment of the Kingdom of God. (p. 191)

The Israelites of the Bible believed that they would be led by a saviour, a Messiah. Fontana (2003) posits that the word “Messiah” means “anointed one” (p. 191) in Hebrew and further notes that anointing was done for kings. Hence Jesus was seen as the King who would free Israel from foreign rule and repair the relationship with God. Similarly, Neo is regarded as the “One” who will save humanity (or is seen a Messiah). This interpretation is consistent with my earlier contention that Neo can be described as a Christ archetype in *The Matrix*, and forms part of a Christian lens through which I made sense of this movie.

The bug is extracted from Neo’s navel and he finally gets to meet Morpheus. Morpheus indicates he is honoured to meet Neo and that he understands that all of the bizarre things Neo just experienced have left him somewhat perplexed. Therefore Morpheus asks Neo:

“I imagine that right now you feel a bit like Alice tumbling down the rabbit hole?”

Bartsch's (2010) observation about the pivotal role of visual or cinematic devices in movies, referred to as continuous mappings earlier in this chapter, again comes into play here. All the strange events that preceded Neo's meeting with Morpheus have left him feeling very bewildered. The reference to Alice's feelings when tumbling down the rabbit-hole forms part of the continuous mapping of Neo's extraordinary emotional journey. Moreover, various cinematographic devices set the scene for these peculiar events, such as the strange phone-call from a seemingly omnipotent caller, the horror of finding his mouth involuntarily closing up and having a bug inserted in his body, make his experiences "curiouser and curiouser" to quote Alice. The virtual world Morpheus inhabits has an eerie, almost surreal character. The spatial qualities of this world can be described as reminiscent of or a metaphor for Frankl's (2004a) notion of an existential vacuum, because this world, like Neo's apartment, seems clinical and surreal.

Much like Alice, Neo has just tumbled further into the rabbit-hole that is the matrix and has yet to fully understand the implications. But our hero goes to meet Morpheus despite his misgivings. He is perplexed, understandably terrified and does not have any frame of reference for what he is encountering. Under these conditions, the fact that Neo goes to Morpheus willingly suggests the character strength of *open-mindedness*, which is Neo's key strength. Taking the exploration about *open-mindedness* in Chapter Three: The Rabbit sends in a Little (P)ill, into consideration, it follows that Neo is remarkably *open-minded*, inquisitive and therefore *creative*. It also follows that *creativity* and *open-mindedness* are linked because *creativity* generates a space within which to be *open-minded*.

5.2.8 Taking the red pill.

Morpheus attempts to explain to Neo what the matrix is:

"The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us; even now, in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on the television. You can feel it when you go to work, or when you go to church, when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth ... you are a slave. Like everyone else you were born into bondage, born into a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch; a prison for your mind".

Morpheus then offers Neo the choice to take either a red or a blue pill:

"This is your last chance. After this there is no turning back. You take the blue pill and the story ends. You wake up in your bed and you believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit-hole goes".

Neo decides to take the red pill. This pill is an element of a trace programme that enables Morpheus and his team to locate Neo's brain in the matrix.

Schuchardt (2003) notes: “The message of the Matrix is that we are already pawns in a modern technological society where life happens around us but is scarcely influenced by us” (p. 30). Whilst this notion is portrayed in the film, it is also true for the nature of our everyday reality. Neo’s whole life has been turned upside down and he has experienced things he cannot yet fathom stemming from the technological evil that has enslaved the world. Neo’s conscious, *courageous* and *open-minded* decision to take the red pill conveys that, even when the odds are stacked against you, or you simply become aware that something in your life is amiss, you have the *freedom to choose* your attitude and to make *choices*. Schuchardt (2003) argues that the aim of this movie is to lift us out of our comfort zone by asking whether this is the life we choose, and whether that which seems beyond our control is actually the very thing that controls us (a prison for the mind).

Neo *courageously* decides to take the red pill even though he does not know what lies in store for him. He may be bound in the matrix, but he has chosen to exercise his *freedom of choice* to take the red pill to see how deep the rabbit-hole goes. This in itself also signifies *open-mindedness*, *faith* (that the true nature of the reality he occupies will be revealed), *hope* and accordingly, the birth of possibility. Consequently, by taking the red pill, Neo is also in the early stages of displaying *hope*, which is a virtue that corresponds to the character strength of transcendence.¹⁸

Boettke’s (2003) view is that what we are faced with in *The Matrix* is “an all-or-nothing choice. Either we *live* our life, or we *experience* life” (p. 175). The author contends that the choice between taking the red and the blue pill is about “individual freedom and responsibility” (Boettke, 2003, p. 176). The red pill is interpreted to encapsulate the idea of choosing a life that is meaningful because it is lived with *freedom of choice* coupled with responsibility. Taking the red pill is about being in the thick of things and living with *courage*, kindness and *love* – hence, essentially also “unbounded”, as Boettke (2003, p. 178) describes it. The blue pill on the other hand is a metaphor for a life lived without responsibility, without experiencing it, floating in a womb, mindless, oblivious. It may well be the safe option in that you know what you are getting, but it is nevertheless manipulated by others (Boettke, 2003), or, as in the movie, manipulated by the machines. Thus, the blue pill can be seen as a metaphor for noögenic neurosis. Earlier in this reading it was shown that noögenic neurosis is a state in which a person has become neurotic and feels trapped¹⁹. If you then choose the blue pill, it means that you no longer take responsibility for your own choices or for your own life. It implies surrendering to the inevitability of a meaningless existence. Consequently, the choice to take the blue pill implies that “if we run from the burden, we don’t live a meaningful life” (Boettke, 2003, p. 178).

¹⁸ As shown in Chapter Three: The Rabbit sends in a Little (P)ill.

¹⁹ In reference to Fabry’s (1979) contention that the existential idea of meaninglessness is wrapped up in many elements, e.g., indecision, despondency, frustration ... and feeling trapped.

Boettke (2003, p. 178) therefore notes that *The Matrix* is a “wonderful artistic depiction of the basic human dilemma caused by the burden of free choice” and concludes that: “living a flourishing human life is only possible once we take Morpheus’s challenge. Once we do, the question is not whether we can go back or not, but whether we would *want* to go back even if we could” (Boettke, 2003, pp. 186–187). It follows that if we take the red pill and follow the rabbit to see how deep the rabbit-hole goes, we must deal with the reality of moral choices that are difficult to make, decisions that do not always lead to what we expect and relationships that may lead to sorrow. However, it also implies that we get the good with the bad, that we may experience happiness and success. Similarly, Guttman (2005) notes:

If one perceives the fact that each situation in life occurs only once, and that the concrete task of any person is relative to this uniqueness and singularity then one can utilize his freedom of decision and his responsibility to answer the call for life. (p. 24)

Taking the red pill is therefore symbolic of letting go of the past, embracing the future and trusting the process. Neo similarly followed the White Rabbit at the beginning of the movie by answering Morpheus’s call and meeting Trinity and Morpheus. Hence taking the red pill is a metaphor for answering the call for life and thereby for finding the *will to meaning*. Hence, Neo *hopes* that he will now see the matrix as it truly is, and will then be in a position where he can make a difference. This is in contrast to taking the blue pill that allows him to stay in the matrix. The blue pill is the seemingly safe option: i.e. he knows that he will be fed intravenously, and will live the life of a computer programmer that he is familiar with and feels comfortable with.

Snyder et al. (2002) notes that to be *hopeful* signals that one can find the ways and means to realise one’s goals, which will in turn steer one’s emotions and wellbeing. Neo realises that the red pill is the only obstacle standing between him and the truth. Neo understands and *hopes* that the red pill is the key that will unlock the mystery of the ever-deepening rabbit-hole that is the matrix. Neo furthermore *hopes* that taking the red pill will ultimately lead him to find *meaning* in his life. In this regard, Pattakos (2005) perhaps sums it up best: “we need to commit authentically to meaningful values and goals that only we can actualise and fulfil” (p. 11). Neo may have been thinking about various ways to reach his goals (i.e. pathways thoughts) in addition to thinking about how to actually reach those goals (i.e. agency thoughts). Hence it can be said that his goal-directedness and a sense of agency result in a sense of having purpose in life and finding a sense of *meaning*.

5.2.9 Technology, slavery and meaning.

After taking the red pill Neo is born again into "reality". In this very graphic scene, Neo wakes up, pulls out all the tubes attached to his body that were used to keep him "alive" and then is expelled or flushed from his machine-made womb.

At this point, Baggott (2005) provides a succinct illustration of Neo's predicament:

Because he has woken up from the matrix, Neo is no longer useful as an energy source and is flushed from the capsule by the machines, down a waste pipe into the sewers. In a very real sense, Neo is born. (p. 9)

Neo must be reborn since this will allow him "to join Morpheus and Trinity in experiencing the depth of this true reality" (Schuchardt, 2003, p. 7). Conceptually, this is Neo's second birth as an adult; at first he was born into the matrix and he is now born again into the real world which is located underground. Therefore, in a physical sense, Neo is physically going deeper into the bowels of the earth. Here, Baggott (2005) explains:

Neo takes the red pill, and discovers that his entire life and the lives of everyone he has ever known have been an illusion, in reality, his body is trapped in a capsule of viscous pink nutrient, a cable feeds electrical signals to the base of his skull, and thence to his brain, everything he has ever experienced in his life has been a virtual simulation called the matrix, fed to his mind by a belligerent machine intelligence which, though originally created by humans, has now turned on them and is using human bodies as sources of energy, the matrix is used to keep passive the minds and hence the bodies of virtually the entire human race. (p. 8)

This explanation reinforces Schuchardt's (2003) earlier point that the significance of *The Matrix* is that people are prisoners in a "modern technological society where life happens around us but is scarcely influenced by us" (p.30). Hence it could be said that Neo is one of a handful of people who have actually seen the light (i.e. reality). The graphic illustration of scores of wombs that contain humans in *The Matrix* is a stark reminder that many people in today's world also live out their lives oblivious and in the grip of technology. Analogous to *The Matrix*, technological advances (machines) run our daily lives to a certain extent. It can also be said that personal attributes can be created and existing attributes changed through the influence of media (Bandura, 1986; Williams, 1986).

Here the striking parallels between Neo and the viewer must be pointed out. Both Neo and the viewer are in a similar situation because both are also consumers. Neo was wrapped up in the safe space of an artificial womb and was consuming the liquefied remains of humans, whilst the viewer is wrapped up in the dark womb of a movie theatre and is consuming a film. In both instances, each is called on to make sense of or find meaning in what they are consuming. In Neo's case it is that he has to leave the safety of this artificial environment and wake up to the reality of his life.

Thus Neo and the viewer are in the same situation. Both have to make meaning of that with which they are confronted. Therefore meaning is made in the space and in the interaction between the spectator and the medium. It follows that one has to have the *will to meaning* in order to want to make or find meaning in a movie or in one's life. Similarly, Neo's journey is analogous to that of Frankl and therefore it may be said they are also in the same quandary (albeit not at the same time). Though Frankl did not have to wage war against machines, he was part of a war. As a consequence, both Neo and Frankl have to make meaning from a war waged by evil oppressors who have scant regard for human life.

5.2.10 A hovercraft/womb analogy.

Neo goes through a gruelling "hibernation" where electrodes are attached to his body to stimulate his nerves and muscles that have atrophied. He then wakes up on the Nebuchadnezzar, the resistance movement's hovercraft that serves as base camp for members of the resistance.

The *Nebuchadnezzar* is a large, rather dilapidated looking steel-plated transportation vessel in which the rebels live. This hovercraft allows the rebels move around in the sewers in any direction they choose and affords them some measure of protection against viruses, hence Baggott's (2005) synopsis:

Here, he is picked up by the real Morpheus and Trinity and taken on board their hovercraft, the *Nebuchadnezzar*. In the real world they are members of the last remnants of the human resistance, with its base at the core of the earth. (p. 9)

To return to Bartsch's (2010) concept of "continuous mappings" it is my contention that the *Nebuchadnezzar* is used to map out the idea that the hovercraft is a safe haven for the rebels; therefore a womb. Here the rebels can live, plan, rest, upload fighting programmes and travel where they want to go. In addition, the ship is used to map out the characters' feelings of their shared destiny. By using imagery that can be found in *Titanic* (1997) Bartsch (2010) explains how this works:

Abstract concepts and ideas can be translated into concrete images by *cognitive mappings*, which means that the intangible structure of abstract concepts and ideas is analogized to the concrete structure of processes in the physical world. For example, the idea of progress toward a goal can be mapped onto the image of a person travelling along a road, or the idea of a group's common destiny can be mapped onto the image of people sitting in the same boat ... Instead of verbal expressions such as "a long and winding road," or "sitting in the same boat," movies can provide us with sounds and images that are vividly suggestive of the embodied experience of exhausting travel, the uncertain destiny of people in a boat, or other source domains of conceptual metaphors in the physical world. (p. 248)

Metaphorical mappings of emotion in *The Matrix* are also evident in the clothes characters wear. Everyone on board the *Nebuchadnezzar* appears to be wearing rags because their clothes are old and torn. These images map out their vulnerability, and may raise doubt in spectators' minds about the rebels' ability to succeed in the war against the machines. Neo is dressed in similar rags, which is the visual device that serves the same purpose as the rebels' clothing. However, in Neo's case, the spectator may also wonder whether Neo is at all equipped to triumph over evil.

In addition, there are similarities between *The Matrix* and concentration camps as described by Frankl (2004a; 2004b) in that, in both instances, people are prisoners; therefore merely a number in a concentration camp and a slave or, as in *The Matrix*, an energy source for the machines. The *Nebuchadnezzar* is a seemingly cold steel structure that on the one hand is prison-like, but conversely houses and protects the rebels in its womb-like belly – hence the hovercraft/womb analogy.

Fontana (2003) gives various reasons for the spiritual significance and meaning of the *Nebuchadnezzar*. The Biblical worth of Nebuchadnezzar lies in the belief that he was the king of the Babylonian Empire who:

(L)ed the armies that sacked Jerusalem and exiled the two remaining tribes of Jacob, which inhabited the southern Kingdom of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar's name appears most often in the three major prophets and most of the minor prophets. The Babylonian Empire (and therefore its leader, in turn) was frequently used as catch phrase and pseudonym for present evil authorities, just as we might nowadays call any adversary a "Nazi". (Fontana, 2003, p. 206)

Moreover, in the Bible story, King Nebuchadnezzar's dreams were interpreted by the prophet Daniel, and these interpretations and predictions heralded the coming of the Messiah. Thus the name of the ship is prophetic, since Morpheus is equally dedicated to search for the One (or Messiah) (Fontana, 2003) and the Oracle hailed the coming of the One.

Turning again to Bartsch's (2010) point about continuous mappings, it must then be highlighted that "most interesting to note about projective mappings is that the use of a coherent source domain is often sufficient to establish conceptual relationships between emotions and to combine them into an illustration of higher order concepts" (p. 254). To clarify, this group of rebels is a band of misfits that seems to be one of the most unlikely teams of heroes in the history of cinema. Therefore, it might be said that these visual devices, or continuous mappings, serve to evoke feelings of dread in the spectator. The reason for this is that the viewer senses that the rebels are hopelessly mismatched against the machines: (a) since there are so few of them, and they are vastly outnumbered; (b) since their modest clothes are in tatters and resemble concentration camp rags, and they look as if they could never win the war; and (c) because the *Nebuchadnezzar* does not resemble a vessel that will be able to withstand an onslaught by the machines.

As a result, these visual devices have been used to establish emotions, such as dread, as well as the abstract notion of hopelessness. Conversely, Neo's presence as the newcomer on the ship and status as saviour is used to visually convey the PP notion of *hope*. Hence, *hope* and hopelessness exist in the same space and Bartsch (2010) reveals what the purpose of this is: "Through the mapping of both emotions on the same source domain, a conceptual relationship can be established in a direct manner without further explanation" (p. 254). Therefore, continuous mappings of emotions such as trepidation and hopelessness are conveyed by the ragged clothes the members of the resistance are wearing as well as by the dilapidated appearance of their hovercraft, the *Nebuchadnezzar*. Consequently, the notion of *hope* is conveyed by Neo's presence on the ship, since Morpheus, Trinity and the other members of the resistance all believe that it is Neo who will save humanity and destroy the dominance of the machines.

5.2.11 Bioports, rabbits, faith and the nature of reality.

Neo is about to undergo a procedure in which a metal rod is inserted into his brain through a bioport. Cypher advises Neo to brace himself because he is about to undergo a most peculiar experience. Cypher then says: "It means buckle your seat belt, Dorothy, because Kansas is going bye-bye"²⁰.

A bioport can best be described as follows:

The bioport is a way of giving the Matrix computers full access to the information channels of the brain. It is located at the back of the neck – probably between the occipital bone at the base of the skull, and the first neck vertebra. Wiring would best enter through the soft cartilage that cushions the skull on the spinal column, and pass up through the natural opening that lets the spinal cord into the skull. (Lloyd, 2003, p. 125)

In simpler terms, Lloyd (2003) explains what is going to happen next: "The rebels use the bioport to load new skills into their colleagues' brains – wiring directly into permanent memory" (p. 127).

This somewhat grim and very odd experience is, in my opinion, again reminiscent of Alice's adventures in Wonderland. When Alice meets the White Rabbit for the first time, after everything she has gone through until then, she was clearly in a state of shock. However, when she heard the Rabbit talking to himself and proceeded to ask him for help, the Rabbit got such a fright that he ran off, which led Alice to remark: "Dear, dear! How queer everything is today! And yesterday things went on just as usual" (Carroll, 1994, p. 24). Neo must surely have felt the same.

²⁰ This is a reference to the story of *The Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 1960) discussed in Chapter One: Down the Rabbit-Hole. In *The Matrix*, Cypher is therefore warning Neo that his world is about to change just as Dorothy's changed. "Kansas" in this sense implies that everything that is known to Neo is about to disappear.

Neo asks Morpheus whether he had to go through the same process and Morpheus answers: "Have you ever had a dream, Neo that you were so sure was real? What if you were unable to wake from that dream? How would you know the difference between the dream world and the real world?"

Morpheus's questions are extremely relevant because they simultaneously convey a plethora of meanings: first, the questions refer to the mythological meaning of his character (i.e. son of sleep and god of dreams) and therefore Morpheus could subsequently be envisioned as "the White Rabbit who leads Neo into the antithesis of Wonderland" (Yeffeth, 2003, p. 297). Second, these questions also touch on the importance of Morpheus as Neo's mentor. Morpheus's unshakable belief in Neo is an ever-present theme throughout the movie; he has complete *faith* in Neo since he steadfastly believes that Neo will be their saviour. Morpheus is there to guide Neo, which is evident in the meaning of his name: "To morph is to transform something, of which Morpheus does plenty (be it opening Potentials' minds to the truth, to manipulating the Matrix to the best of his ability)" (Yeffeth, 2003, p. 297). Morpheus is also referred to as John the Baptist from the Bible (Yeffeth, 2003), which has been interpreted to feed into the identified spiritual theme (faith). Lastly, these questions also comment on the nature of Neo's reality, namely that he was living in a dream world.

Neo's body is attached to millions to wires; his body initially resists and goes into arrest, but then the programmes that they are uploading into Neo's brain start settling. As a result, this process can be likened to the rebooting of a computer. Nevertheless, take into account that Neo has spent a significant amount of time in the matrix. His muscles have atrophied and therefore have to be rebuilt, and his brain re-programmed to allow him to "see" reality. When Neo is ready, Morpheus explains that it is actually 2199 and takes Neo on a tour of the ship.

Once on the main deck Morpheus explains: "This is the core where we broadcast our pirate signal and hack into the matrix". Morpheus introduces Neo to the team of rebels, Trinity, Cypher, Switch, Apoc, Dozer, Tank and Mouse. A rod is inserted into Neo's brain via a bioport and Neo finds himself in what's called the Construct – a virtual programme: "It is our loading program. We can load anything, from clothing to equipment, weapons, training simulations – anything we need".

Lawrence (2002) writes there are three distinct worlds depicted in *The Matrix*: "1) the virtual world of the Matrix, 2) the real world and 3) the train station program"²¹ (pp. 10-11). As described in Chapter 1, Baudrillard's (1994) book *Simulacra and Simulation* is referenced in *The Matrix*. According to Baggott (2005), this postmodernist writer viewed reality by virtue of simulations: "[w]e measure the success of a simulation in terms of the extent to which it resembles the reality it is simulating, the extent to which we can tell the difference between reality and simulation" (p. 24). Baudrillard notes that there are three orders

²¹ The train station programme features more prominently in the second and third films in the trilogy.

of simulation: the first order is an imperfect representation, for example, the world a novelist tries to create in a book. In reality it is imaginary and is open to many diverse interpretations. The second-order simulation represents reality so accurately that one could almost mistake it for the real thing. Here Baudrillard uses the example of cartographers in a fable who created a map denoting the empire that was so precise that it was impossible to tell which was map and which was empire. The third order is no longer rooted in reality at all. In summary, Baudrillard argues that modern society is an abstraction; that our consumer society is a virtual reality without any roots in the real and refers to it as the hyper-real. Thus it follows that the Wachowski's²², are using terminology from Baudrillard's ideas to map out, describe and distinguish between reality and computer simulation in the movie, and, as Baggott (2005) points out, Neo is now essentially inside a computer programme.

Morpheus explains: "Your clothes are different; the plugs in your arms and head are gone. Your hair has changed. Your appearance now is what we call "residual self-image". It is the mental projection of your digital self". Morpheus then goes further by noting:

"What is real? How do you define real? If you are talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, taste and see, then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain. This is the world that you know, the world as it was at the end of the 20th century. It exists now only as part of a neural interactive simulation that we all know as the Matrix. You've been living in a dream world, Neo. This is the world as it exists today. Welcome to the desert of the real!"

In addition to using terminology from Baudrillard's (1994) book to name and map out ideas in the movie, it is my contention that Baudrillard's notion of the desert of the real in the movie may be interpreted to convey what Frankl (2004a) refers to as an existential vacuum. By calling the real world a desert, Morpheus is attempting to explain (map out) to Neo that there is precious little left of the world he once knew. The real world in the movie now literally resembles a desert, since it was torched by humans to try and rid them of the menacing machines. When Morpheus welcomes Neo to the desert of the real during the Construct sequence by informing him that his whole life has been an illusion generated by a computer Matrix, he is again referencing Baudrillard's (1994) ideas. Felluga (2003) explains how Morpheus' invitation ties in with Baudrillard's (1994) thinking:

Morpheus also invites the viewer to see *The Matrix* as itself an allegory for our current postmodern condition, for, according to Baudrillard, we in the audience are already living in a "reality" generated by codes and models; we have already lost all touch with even a memory of the real. (p. 87)

Turning to the notion of an existential vacuum, which in my opinion is what the desert of the real represents, the world as Neo used to know it has ceased to exist. Therefore the emptiness and

²² The brothers who made the movie, as noted in Chapter One: Down the Rabbit-hole.

meaningless Neo experienced at the start of the film are now amplified. Hence this meaninglessness or existential vacuum forms part of the continuous mapping of his emotional journey – he has literally lost touch with the memory of the real. Nothing is left of his former life, no physical belongings – not even the clothes he wears belong to him.

5.2.12 Blue and green effects.

Yeffeth (2003) contends that the Wachowski's made clever use of colour to distinguish between scenes depicting reality and scenes within *The Matrix*. He explains the function of the colour that was achieved by using green filters and carefully selected kinds of film stock to attain the green appearance of, e.g., Thomas Anderson's office. The director of photography used this green colour since it reminded the Wachowski's of the "phosphorous green of old PCs" (Yeffeth, 2003, p. 294). On the other hand, blue was used to depict reality and here Yeffeth (2003) quotes the film's director, Bill Pope, to describe the effect:

To distinguish the Matrix from 'reality', from the *Nebuchadnezzar* and the pods, reality was given a cooler look. A bluer, more normal, less sickly look. The future in the film is cold, the sun is blotted out, there is no real warmth unless it is artificial heat, so that is why they went for the cool side. (p. 290)

Thus it makes sense to say that Neo is dealing with a host of divergent issues, for example, bioports, rabbits, and the nature of reality. Though he momentarily longed to be back in the safety of his machine-made womb, Neo now knows that his former life as Thomas Anderson was not real and that it was a vacuous, meaningless existence. The shocking state the world is in (as portrayed in the movie) can be likened to the new reality Neo has to deal with.

5.2.13 Does technology equal control?

It becomes clear that artificial intelligence (AI) was developed and humankind celebrated this achievement. A vast number of machines were borne from a singular consciousness, but then the machines attacked Earth. In the end, the humans torched the sky in an attempt to kill the machines that were, or so it was thought, dependent on the sun as their source of power. The machines started growing human beings to use as energy source. Morpheus paints a depressing picture:

"There are fields, Neo, endless fields where human beings are no longer born, we are grown. For the longest time I wouldn't believe it. And then I saw the fields with my own eyes, watched them liquefy the dead so they could be fed intravenously to the living. And standing there, facing the pure, horrifying precision I came to realise the obviousness of the truth. What is the Matrix? Control. The Matrix is a computer generated dream world built to keep us under control, in order to change a human being into this".

It is apparent from the above description that the rabbit-hole that is *The Matrix* is still getting deeper. Schuchardt (2003) notes that Morpheus points out that we are slaves to technology and used as batteries to allow the machines to do their work. Therefore, the machines (or technology) are seen as more intelligent than humans, even though the machines were created by humans. According to Schuchardt (2003) the machines' job is: "[t]o keep us humans enslaved by our own illusions, chief of which is that technology is not enslaving us, but actually liberating us" (p. 21), and explains why:

We have always used technology to improve our condition of life, yet in the embrace of technology we find the classic Faustian bargain, a gaining of one thing at the expense of another, often unseen thing. And it is the unseen thing that then comes to dominate our lives, enmeshing us in a network of technological solutions to technologically-induced problems, forbidding us to question the technology itself. (Schuchardt, 2003, pp. 25–26)

Schuchardt (2003) furthermore reasons that there are many clues throughout the film that the matrix can be interpreted to imply the world we currently live in. We may be under the illusion that we watch television because it entertains us, or pay taxes because we have to, but technology may already be controlling us, and Schuchardt (2003) concludes that:

Whether it is by our choice or unwillingness to make a choice, our technology already controls us. In an attempt to wake us up, the movie asks us to question everything we believe about our present circumstances. Even if it feels good, is it good for us? Are those things that seem beyond our control really untouchable? If we do not want to wake up, then the answer is yes, however, for those with a splinter in the mind that will not go away, the challenge has been made to open your eyes and seek true reality, and ultimately escape from the Matrix. (p. 30)

It may therefore be said that the matrix is a metaphor for life, which in turn raises some questions: How much *freedom of choice* do we have? How much of it is orchestrated? and How much of it is real? In the larger context of the movie, Schuchardt (2003) writes that one possible answer to the question of what the matrix is may be provided by Andrew Mason, who is the executive producer of the film: "*The Matrix* is really just a set of questions, a mechanism for prodding an ignorant or dulled mind into questioning as many things as possible" (pp. 23–24).

5.2.14 Self-efficacy, courage and hope.

Neo experiences shock and disbelief at the dire straits humans are in. Since all of this is overwhelming and horrifying, Neo panics, retches and wonders for a moment whether he can go back to the life he knew. But Morpheus gives him perspective by pointing out the terrifying truth: "As long as the Matrix exists the human race will never be free". Morpheus tells Neo to get some rest because he will be training

the following day. The next day Neo is again plugged into the resistance's computer programmes and uploaded with training programmes that include combat training. After completing the upload, Neo decides to fight against Morpheus to see what he is now capable of.

Neo displays the character strength of *self-efficacy* despite feeling ill when he thought about the predicament that humanity is in, as will shortly be shown. He realises that there is no way of returning to the comfort of the known: his synthetic womb in the matrix. In a seemingly cruel twist of fate, his sheltered and confined life as Thomas Anderson has been destroyed by his decision to take a little red pill. As a result, he is not the virtual Thomas Anderson any more, but has transformed into a real, living and breathing entity called Neo, who has the *freedom to choose* what he wants to do next. The reality he now faces is very daunting. By turning up for the second training session, Neo shows that he has overcome his own misgivings and that he is willing to make an effort to prepare for the battle ahead. Neo therefore exhibits the character strength of *self-efficacy* because he is now starting to believe that he can accomplish his goals. Neo simultaneously also displays the character strength of *courage* since it will require *courage* to go into battle with Morpheus.

Consequently, Neo allows Cypher to upload him with training programmes. After receiving Kung Fu via the bioport in his skull, he is amazed at how seemingly effortless this process is. He decides that he wants to be uploaded with other programmes, and spends countless hours doing this. The rebels know that this relentless process could damage Neo's brain, and this knowledge gives rise to their concern. Neo still does not truly believe that he is the One, or that he will be able to save humanity, but he is now slowly coming to the important realisation that there may be a glimmer of *hope* that he can make a difference.

Snyder's (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002) ideas about *hopeful* thought come into play here, since being *hopeful* implies that one can find routes (or pathways) to reach one's goals and become enthused to use these routes. Hence core elements of agency thoughts are that people are actively involved in their self-improvement, adaptation and self-regeneration. Neo's eagerness to undergo the training is evidence of his agentic thoughts, which are wrapped up in *hopefulness* and *self-efficacy*. Neo can then be called an agent of his own experiences and goals, thereby giving *meaning* and satisfaction to his life. As a result, Neo decides to go back into the virtual reality of the matrix to fight against Morpheus to test his newfound skills. Obviously Morpheus has had much more experience of what it is like to be in the matrix, and therefore his skills are vastly superior to those of Neo. However, Neo freely chooses to test himself regardless of Morpheus's supremacy, reinforcing my contention that Frankl's (1994) notion of *freedom of choice* is evident in Neo's journey.

Neo is making a concerted effort to better Morpheus by listening to him and testing out his advice, which is that Neo needs to change his perspective because he is now in a virtual space; anything he thinks he is capable of, is possible here. Initially, Morpheus has the upper hand, but Neo is gradually improving and almost succeeds in beating Morpheus. His prowess astounds the crew and they conclude that Neo is doing remarkably well for a novice, almost as if he has superhuman capabilities. Neo is rising above his own doubts and has tapped into his internal power of belief that he “can”, hence also reinforcing my interpretation that the PP notion of *self-efficacy* can be read into the movie. Lawrence (2002) provides a useful description of how the capacity for efficacy is used in *The Matrix*:

All of the Zion rebels who enter the Matrix tend to bend the rules of the system. This can be seen in their quickness, agility and strength. Since the Matrix program is plugged directly into their brains, all they need to do is think in the appropriate manner in order to hack the system. Neo's superhuman abilities stem from the fact that his mind/brain has learned to hack the system with almost complete control. (p. 15)

Here the viewer is exposed to the inspiration and effort Neo applies to reach his goals; his perseverance and his capacity for *self-efficacy* show that effort and confidence are key instruments with which to unlock human potential and human possibilities in a truly positive psychological sense.

5.2.15 A god-like hero.

Neo can now be described as a “new” kind of hero, since he does not initially resemble a hardbody hero in the same way that someone like Steven Seagal embodies this concept. Rather, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter, Neo at first exhibits “a slightly androgynous masculinity” (Schuchardt, 2003, p. 11), and consequently comes across as a hero who is more sensitive than muscular. Now that he has been uploaded with every conceivable programme, and he has chosen to arm himself for the tough fight against the enemy, the graphic and hard-hitting fight scenes between him and Morpheus are testament to his progress.

Since the main focus of hardbody films is the hero's hard body, which is deified and highlighted at every opportunity, and given that this is not the case in this movie, Neo can almost be described as a metro-body hero. Here, Anderson's (1998) contention is also important:

To focus on the action hero's muscular nature denies the primacy of motion which is inherent in the genre's “action” nature. While an action hero or heroine's muscularity often contributes much to the pleasure of watching an action film ... in martial arts films the muscularity of an action hero's body plays a secondary role to the very fact of bodies in motion. (p. 2)

It may be said that bodies in motion serve to communicate important narrative information that contributes to the viewer's knowledge of the hero's personality. Ayers (2008) comes to the conclusion that "just as muscularity implies rigorous and painful training, so too does martial arts skill. It is simply a matter of muscles versus motion, and both inform the narrative structure of the hardbody action film" (p. 45).

To return to earlier discussions around continuous mapping, it is important to note that it is not only through his physical prowess that Neo is showing signs of developing into a hero, but also through his attire. He has evolved from his naked and original, motionless state to a rebel dressed in rags in the real world. This is in stark contrast to the long, tailored black PVC coat he is wearing later on when he is in the matrix, with black army boots, pants and sunglasses completing the picture. In Yeffeth's (2003) book, *Taking the Red Pill*, Neo's sunglasses are described in the following manner: "(T)he Agents and the rebels wear hip mirrored sunglasses while in the matrix. There are several mirrors in *The Matrix*, reminding the audience that Neo has gone "through the looking-glass", finding reality rather than Wonderland" (Yeffeth, 2003, p. 297).

It may be said that, in addition to his clothes, his sunglasses form part of the metaphorical mapping of his emotional journey. His tailored attire reflects how he has developed from a dishevelled trainee in concentration camp rags to someone who is now able to master and control his movements and actions and who has become more powerful as a result.

His dapper look while inside the matrix makes Neo seem priest-like, once again illustrating the notion of *faith*. He gets a beating from Morpheus when they are fighting during their training session and is battered and bruised in the process despite coming across as an invincible hero wearing a black cape. As such, the soreness that Neo has to suffer has a direct bearing on the PP notion of *faith* and Ayers (2008) explains why: "Hardbody films take much pleasure in depicting these scenes of pain, which have their roots in traditional Christian iconography of passion and suffering, and the endurance of pain indicates a triumph of spirit over body in the hardbodied hero" (p. 44). To my earlier point that Neo can be described as a metro-body hero, this is evident from the beating he has just endured during his training session. It is certainly very common for most movie heroes to endure adversity and suffering and transcend their circumstances. Neo is not unique in this respect. What is important here is how Neo embodies his role as a hero – which may be easy to relate to since he embodies the PP notions of *courage*, *faith*, *open-mindedness* and *hope*. Moreover, my interpretation is that Neo's journey mimics Frankl's to some degree since both stories demonstrate how the human spirit can triumph over adversity. Both stories show that it is possible to find *meaning* in difficult circumstances. Both stories encapsulate the essence of PP, which, to clarify, is to find the character strengths and virtues in oneself to use as tools to live the best possible life.

In this brief exploration of the purpose of filmic heroes and role models other than Neo, who may potentially inspire spectators and clients, it follows that whilst not everyone is keen on SF movies, a hero or role model can be embodied by whomever a client can relate to.

5.2.16 Freedom of choice and the will to meaning.

Morpheus then says: "I am trying to free your mind, Neo. But I can only show you the door. You are the one that has to walk through it".

By inviting Neo to walk through the door, Morpheus is enticing him to choose to test out his newly uploaded skills. If people are free to choose, then they are certainly free to choose between being positive or negative. It follows that, in the movie, Neo has chosen to be dispositionally optimistic, which can be deduced from his decision to try out Morpheus's advice: something that caused him to do unusually well for someone who was fighting against Morpheus in the virtual reality of the matrix for the first time.

This dilemma Neo faces of whether to keep on thinking in the usual manner or to free his mind is the space wherein the *will to meaning* comes into play once more. It may be concluded that there is precious little that is more devoid of meaning than a world that is run by machines as portrayed in the movie, which in my opinion again echoes Frankl's (2004a) notion of the existential vacuum. Frankl (2004a) believes that the "existential vacuum is a widespread phenomenon of the twentieth century" (p. 111). He believes it makes sense because he posits that man has experienced two grave losses since the time of Adam: (a), that the sanctuary of paradise was lost, which resulted in, and (b) that rudimentary animal instincts that provided a sense of comfort were subsequently lost. These beliefs led Frankl (2004a) to conclude that man can never return to his original state, and, as a consequence, man has to make choices.

According to Frankl (2004a), tradition nowadays is not as clear-cut as it once was; there is no guide that people can draw on, as mentioned before. Often people do not know what they want, which leads to one of two scenarios: first, conformism – that is doing what everyone else is doing, and, second, totalitarianism – that is doing what other people want you to do (Frankl, 2004a). Similarly, in the movie, Neo cannot return to his original state in the womb where his life was not real. It follows that the matrix can be seen as the ultimate existential vacuum, one in which humans not only conform (albeit not of their own volition) but in which they are involuntarily part of a totalitarian nightmare by being trapped in a reality that is not of their own making and living a life that they are not actually living.

In Frankl's (2004a) opinion, the solution to this existential vacuum is in the actualising of "values" – to find a way to attribute meaning to life: "Man, however, is able to live and even to die for the sake of his ideals and values!" (p. 105). Frankl (2004a) then talks about a public opinion poll done with thousands of people

in France. The results show that 89% of respondents admitted that they needed something for which to live, or in other words some form of meaning however, he is very specific about what this implies:

For the meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person's life at a given moment. (Frankl, 2004a, p. 113)

Thus Frankl (2004a) concludes that: "Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather he must recognize that it is *he* who is asked" (p. 113), which again mimics the movie in that Morpheus asks Neo to make a choice (whether or not to walk through the door, i.e. to choose to test out his newly uploaded skills).

5.2.17 Self-efficacy and change.

Neo is at the start of his journey and he the only one who can decide how he wants to proceed, but he is called on to regulate his behaviour. Given that Neo chooses to face the challenge head-on, Frankl's (2004a) beliefs can shed some light on Neo's choice, which can be seen in the following: "In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by *answering for* his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible" (pp. 113-114). Frankl urges man to seize the moment and live as if he has been given a second chance; a philosophy that he believes may incite man to act responsibly. This can be done by imagining that what he is living today is the past, which may at the same time afford him the opportunity to rectify or change whatever can be changed. The reasoning is that this principle forces him to be accountable for a life that is not boundless. Additionally, it also compels him to realise the inevitability of the life he creates for himself. When man is responsible for himself and must actualise the latent meaning in his life, then it can only be done experientially, as explained by Frankl (2004a): "true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world rather than within man or his own psyche, as though it were a closed system. I have termed this constitutive characteristic "the self-transcendence of human existence" (p. 114).

5.2.18 Finding meaning.

It can be said that Neo is on the path to finding meaning because he has decided to fling himself headlong into this new experience that is the matrix and train to equip himself for the battle ahead. Though these actions cannot strictly be called creating a work, Neo is doing a deed instead of doing nothing. He has chosen to heed Morpheus's advice and in doing so is experiencing Morpheus's mentorship and *faith*. Lastly, Neo may be aware that a certain degree of suffering is guaranteed, but he has chosen to forge ahead regardless of the personal cost.

5.2.19 A leap of faith.

Neo then has to jump from the roof of one building to that of the next building. At first he does not succeed, and Morpheus cautions that if one dies in the matrix, one dies in reality, which is because “the body cannot live without the mind”. Neo tries again and succeeds.

Morpheus explains what the matrix is in more depth:

“The Matrix is a system, Neo. That system is our enemy. But when you’re inside 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 part of that system and that makes them our enemy. You have to understand most of these people are not ready to be unplugged. And many of them are so inert, so hopelessly dependent on the system that they will fight to protect it”.

In Chapter Two it was shown how the idea of “taking the red pill” embodies multiple meanings. Similarly, the idea that Neo has to jump so ridiculously far represents many ideas, and may consequently be called one of the other seminal moments in this movie (such as taking the red pill and the question about what the matrix is). The following discussion focuses on the importance of Neo’s jump, as it is powerfully illustrative of a variety of PP concepts, progressing systematically from the notion of *faith*, to *hope*, *courage*, and *curiosity*, and leading into the notions of *open-mindedness*, *self-efficacy*, *freedom of choice* and, ultimately, to the *will to meaning*. This analysis is concluded by showing that Neo’s jump is once again indicative of the concept of “continuous mapping” that was explored in detail in Chapter Two.

I start by noting that Peterson and Seligman (2004) believe that the virtue of transcendence encompasses character strengths such as appreciation of beauty and excellence, humour, gratitude, *faith* and *hope*. It may be concluded that in the movie, Neo’s jump signifies the idea of transcendence in that he has to suspend his disbelief and leap into the unknown, thus transcending or overcoming his own doubts. Similarly, *faith* and *hope* form a part of this transcendence, because Neo’s jump can certainly be described as a leap of *faith*, since he has to clear the significant gap between two buildings. Consequently, the notion of *hope* is implied for the reason that he obviously *hopes* he will make it, because if he does not, he will die.

Given that Peterson and Seligman (2004) hold that the virtue of *courage* includes character strengths such as bravery, vitality and persistence, it is reasonable to argue that these PP strengths and virtues are also conveyed in the movie. The mere thought of the distance that he has to clear undoubtedly required some degree of bravery, and since he failed the first time but then tried again, this suggests persistence; thus it can be said that Neo is *courageous*. Neo must surely have been *curious* about whether or not he

would succeed, which must undoubtedly have played some part in his decision to try and try again ... This jump also reinforces the idea that he displays the character strength of *open-mindedness* in that he is willing to entertain the idea that it may be possible and that he is prepared to try.

The symbolic value of this jump returns us to existential notions of *freedom of choice* and *the will to meaning*. Neo is obviously *free to choose* whether he wants to risk the jump or not, and opts to jump. This is in stark contrast to his previous life in the womb of the matrix, where he was fooled into thinking that he could make decisions even though he merely “existed” in a computer simulation. In conclusion, the noteworthy value of this jump has been shown since it simultaneously conveys many of the PP themes that are important to this study. In addition, this jump is indicative of the continuous mapping of Neo’s journey as it is a metaphor for leaving behind the known and leaping into the unknown.

5.2.20 Fight or flight?

Neo is told about one of their key enemies in the matrix, which can essentially be described as malevolent and very persistent computer viruses (otherwise referred to as “Agents”). Morpheus explains what these “sentient programmes” are about:

“They move in and out of software still hardwired to their system. That means that anyone we haven’t unplugged is potentially an agent. Inside the Matrix they are everyone and they are no one. We have survived by hiding from them and by running from them, but they are the gatekeepers. They are guarding all the doors; they are holding all the keys, which means that, sooner or later, someone is going to have to fight them”.

Neo realises that the “someone” that Morpheus is referring to is him, because Morpheus, Trinity and the other members of the resistance have all pinned their hopes on Neo.

It is clear that anything is possible in the virtual reality of the matrix, as explained before. Neo wonders whether he can dodge bullets and Morpheus assures him that when the time is right he will not need to. Neo might be faced with seemingly insurmountable odds, but all that is required of him is to think about reality in a different way, again reinforcing his character strength of *open-mindedness*.

5.2.21 Judas and the Last Supper.

The crew of the Nebuchadnezzar manages to evade the overt threat of a sentinel whose mission is to “search and destroy” the hovercraft. Since the sewers provide underground avenues for the hovercraft and are the only structures that have remained intact after the war on the machines, the sewers are used by the members of the resistance as well as the sentient programmes, who alternately hide or seek each

other here. Neo wanders over to the deck and bumps into Cypher, who is one of the characters who embodies evil in the movie. Given that the matrix is a simulation, it is possible to look at it on a computer screen. Cypher prefers to look at it encoded (i.e. ones and zeros). Neo and Cypher share a drink of moonshine and Cypher gives Neo advice, which is to run from the Agents instead of trying to fight them.

It may be said that Cypher signifies the viper in the Garden of Eden, since he wears a snakeskin coat (in the Bible story, evil is represented by a snake who tempted Eve, who subsequently ate a forbidden apple symbolising good and evil. The act of eating the apple symbolises disobedience to God's will and is referred to as the original sin). In referring to the scene described above, Fontana (2003) notes that the idea of Neo and Cypher drinking a shared cup of moonshine is reminiscent of the Bible story about the Last Supper (where Jesus and His disciples shared a cup of wine, knowing that He would be betrayed by one of his disciples and crucified as a result). That is because Cypher, as the "betrayers", goes to meet Agent Smith directly after drinking moonshine with Neo (Fontana, 2003). However, the depth of Cypher's deception will be revealed in a later scene.

In further exploring the meaning of this scene, Cypher appears to be bored, which may be likened to Frankl's (2004a) concept of an existential vacuum and his contention that it is "a widespread phenomenon of the twentieth century" (p. 111). Cypher's apparent boredom may stem from the idea that he is leading a meaningless life, hence existing in an existential vacuum. Additionally, Frankl (2004a) credits boredom as one of the main manifestations of the existential vacuum, which was discussed in Chapter Two. Boredom can be described as the result of fast-paced mechanisation, which, though very convenient, allows people to have copious amounts of free time, of which boredom could easily be a consequence (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

Cypher goes into the matrix and meets Agent Smith to strike a deal to betray Morpheus and to provide Smith with the "access codes to the Zion mainframe". As reward, Cypher asks to become rich and to become someone important, "like an actor" (preferably Ronald Reagan). This clearly shows how far removed from reality Cypher is. In addition, Cypher wishes to return to his womb in the matrix, and therefore chooses to stay oblivious: "Okay. You get my body back in a power plant, reinsert me into the Matrix, and I'll get you what you want".

Fontana (2003) notes that Cypher represents evil by quoting various meanings from *The Oxford English Dictionary* of the word "cypher", such as: first, "a method of secret writing", second, "(a) secret message and lastly, "(a)n obsolete name for zero" (p. 201). (Since Cypher's name is indicative of evil, it follows that his decision to betray Morpheus returns us to the Christian spiritual theme, because Cypher is likened to Judas who betrayed Christ in the Bible story).

Meanwhile, on board the Nebuchadnezzar, the members of the resistance are having a meal together. This meal is a white glue-like concoction that contains all their dietary requirements. The members of the team debate about what this sticky “soup” tastes like and what it reminds them of, for instance: “a bowl of snot”, “Taystee Wheat” and “feels like you’re eating runny eggs”. Cypher later refers to it as “goddamn goop”. In real terms, it is a “single-celled protein combined with synthetic aminos, vitamins and minerals”.

In order to understand this discussion better, Felluga’s (2003) explanation makes it clear that “mankind cannot help but view the world through an ideological lens (p. 88). The idea of truth or objective reality is therefore meaningless” and Felluga (2003) notes that several factors have contributed towards our disconnectedness with reality:

- The role of media culture, since different types of media, including films, television, billboards, magazines and the internet decode our most personal issues for us, and as a result we see the world through the eyes of these respective “looking-glasses”. Our desires are therefore dictated to us by images and goods glorified by the media, and not necessarily by our needs.
- Trade versus value: we no longer think about goods or services in terms of how useful they are, but in terms of their monetary worth.
- The industrial revolution created a whole new dynamic that caused us to lose touch with important things like its impact on our natural environment.

In this context, the resistance fighters are discussing what Taystee Wheat tastes of, which in turn plays into the nature of reality theme; or, in other words, our reality is our perception. Furthermore, this meal denotes *faith* in that it points towards the Biblical Last Supper of Jesus’s disciples. The rebels do not know what lies in store for them, or who will survive the upcoming battle, but there is always the *hope* that Neo will turn out to be their saviour, which again returns us to the notion of *faith* as seen through a Christian lens.

Morpheus decides it is time to take Neo to meet the Oracle. Morpheus and Neo enter the matrix and Neo is reminded of his previous life and sees the restaurant where he used to eat noodles. He realises that these memories are nothing more than illusions and wonders at the meaning of it all. Morpheus says to Neo: “The Matrix cannot tell you who you are”. Morpheus also went to the Oracle as did Trinity, and now it is Neo’s turn. Bear in mind that Morpheus has always believed that he would find the person who would save the human race and that the Oracle confirmed his gut feeling. Though the Oracle can predict the future, Morpheus cautions that her predictions should be used as a guideline only. Morpheus opens the door to the Oracle’s apartment for Neo with the words: “I told you that I can only show you the door. You have to walk through it”.

This “curious” (to quote Alice) set of circumstances again highlights Neo’s *open-mindedness*, since he agrees to go with Morpheus to visit the Oracle. Yeffeth (2003) describes the Oracle as a granny who predicts the future. Given Neo’s apparent unease, it is clear that he does not make a habit of seeing clairvoyants. Therefore his willingness to visit her may be interpreted to imply his *open-mindedness*. In addition, he is *curious* enough to go to her to find out what she thinks lies in store for him, and he chooses to walk through the door into the Oracle’s apartment, hence my contention is that the PP character strength of *curiosity* can be read into this scene. It was shown that, if people are *free to choose*, then they are *free to choose* between being positive or negative²³. Given that Neo has chosen to be dispositionally optimistic, which can be read into his decision to go to visit the Oracle of his own accord, I have also read the existential notion of *freedom of choice* into Neo’s choice. The broader implication of this choice is that it is not about the seemingly inconsequential cinematic portrayal of walking through the Oracle’s door. Rather, in my opinion, it is indicative of the idea that Neo has overcome some concerns about the outcome of the visit to the Oracle and that he is *free to choose* what he wants to do. Neo is aware that Morpheus and the members of the resistance have all pinned their *hopes* on him to save the human race because they think that he is the One that will do so – which can be interpreted to imply that this awareness causes him some concern. Neo is inside the matrix when he goes to see the Oracle and he is not yet accustomed to this strange new world that the members of the resistance seem to plug into so effortlessly – potentially causing him to feel concerned. The Oracle is lauded as someone who can tell him what lies in store for him – equally worrying given that it is a potentially weighty prospect. Neo has freely chosen to see the Oracle despite his misgivings and concerns, thereby conveying a sense that he is positive. Morpheus specifically says to Neo: “*I told you that I can only show you the door. You have to walk through it*”. Therefore Neo had the *freedom to choose* whether to walk through the door (meet the Oracle) or not. This choice may furthermore be construed as a conscious, optimistic decision to find out what the future holds for him despite his anxiety. Neo is the only person who can make this decision; it is not forced on him, thus implying *freedom of choice*.

Here the imagery of Alice is evident once again. When Alice landed in the little room after tumbling into the rabbit-hole, she too was faced with many doors, which can be read to mean that she faced many choices. Like Neo and Alice, most people face many choices daily. Existential theorists argue that people are, for the most part, free to choose – choose how you perceive experiences, or perceive hardships or what your attitude towards any given set of circumstances is, like Neo and Alice.

²³ The notion of *freedom of choice* was highlighted in Chapter One: Down the Rabbit-Hole, as well as in Chapter Three: The Rabbit sends in a Little (P)ill.

5.2.22 Love and the smell of freshly baked cookies.

Neo meets the Oracle an older lady who is baking cookies. She says she's probably not what Neo expected, tells him that she would ask him to sit down but that he wasn't going to anyway and says not to worry about the vase. Neo turns around, and in doing so he breaks the vase. When Neo wants to know how she knew that he would break it, she answers: "What's really going to bake your noodle later on is would you still have broken it if I hadn't said anything?" It is also necessary to note here that long before Neo came to the Oracle, Trinity also visited her and the Oracle told her that she would fall in love with a dead man.

The Oracle could tell Neo that he is cuter than "she" had described him to be. The "she" the Oracle is referring to is Trinity, but the Oracle does not tell Neo about Trinity's visit. This is all very confusing for Neo. The Oracle tells Neo that he is not the One and laments this because of the faith Morpheus has in him. The Oracle then says that Morpheus believes so strongly in Neo that he will sacrifice his life for him. She apologises that Neo hasn't heard what he actually wanted to hear (namely that he is The One), urges him to be in control of his own life, not to believe in fate and offers him a cookie that will make him feel "right as rain". When they leave Morpheus urges Neo to keep what the Oracle has said to himself.

The concept of Neo as the salvation of the human race is challenged in this scene. It contradicts the preceding thoughts, beliefs and convictions that everyone held about Neo. The Oracle makes it clear that Neo is not the One because he does not believe that he is. Morpheus told Neo that the Oracle is there to guide people and to help them to find the path. Here, she tells Neo that the sign above the entrance to the kitchen where he is standing is Latin for "*Know Thyself*". In other words she is trying to impart the idea that he alone can decide whether he is the saviour or not. She likens being "the One" with being *in love*; it is something that you know. She then tells Neo that he has the gift but that he is waiting for something. The dilemma Neo now faces is essentially similar to Frankl's (2004a) existential belief that the human spirit is capable of inconceivable heights, such as triumphing over evil, or for the sake of a loved one or for an idea one truly believes in. The Oracle is telling Neo that he is free to choose whether he is the One or not. *Freedom of choice* also ties in with the notion of *hope*, in that Neo is very disappointed that the Oracle does not think he is the chosen one, but he still *hopes* that he may be. In an earlier discussion it was shown that the implication of setting goals and the attainment of such goals depends on whether or not the person believes he or she can reach his or her goal. Therefore it is entirely up to Neo to decide whether he can be the One.

The cookie that the Oracle offers Neo is reminiscent of the Hatter's mad tea-party in Alice's adventure. Traditionally tea-parties are about comfortable social gatherings, with the result that one can feel much better after attending such an event. However, both Neo and Alice are considerably more puzzled than soothed after their respective tea-parties.

When Morpheus, Trinity and Neo want to go "back" to their ship, Neo notices a black cat and then another and experiences déjà vu. When he tells the team what he's seen, everyone is suddenly on high alert. Déjà vu normally indicates that the Agents have changed something in the programme and this is referred to as a "glitch" in the matrix. As it turns out, the hard lines have been severed, thus making it impossible for the team to get back. Morpheus then calls Tank and asks him to find the building's structural plans on the net. This information will enable them to escape from the Agents via an alternative route. Morpheus specifically wants to know where the main wet wall of the building is located. Everyone but Morpheus manages to escape because Morpheus sacrifices himself so that Neo can be saved. Cypher has succeeded in delivering Morpheus into the hands of the Agents. Many duplicates of Agent Smith now surround Morpheus, who is being interrogated.

Morpheus has been captured by Agents because he knows the codes of the mainframe of Zion, and these can be used to destroy the resistance movement. He has sacrificed himself to allow Neo and the team to escape the clutches of the Agents. Therefore, one of the Oracle's predictions has come true. Morpheus's sacrifice maps out the spiritual significance of Neo as a Christ-like figure (in the Bible story, Christ sacrificed himself). Neo now faces the ultimate choice between whether he will stand by and watch Agents destroy Morpheus and by implication the human race, or whether he will have *faith* and risk death by going back into the matrix in an attempt to rescue Morpheus.

Back on the Nebuchadnezzar Cypher has taken over control of the ship. Bear in mind that when you die in the matrix, you are dead, as mentioned before. Not all of the Agents were "brought back" from the matrix after the last mission, in other words their bodies are still in their chairs and plugged in, but they are not capable of defending themselves. Therefore the threat of having Cypher in control on the bridge/deck is very real indeed, since they are now at his mercy and it could mean life or death for the little band of rebels. Cypher and Trinity get into a fight. Trinity accuses Cypher of delivering Morpheus into the hands of the Agents for his own selfish gains. Cypher maintains that Morpheus has not freed them, that he has to do what Morpheus tells him to do and therefore, Cypher would much rather go back to his virtual life. Cypher kills Apoc. Trinity explains to Cypher that once he has taken the red pill there is no going back, but he maintains that the Agents will be able to reinsert his body into the matrix. He believes it is better to live a life in the nebulous world of the matrix simulation rather than face reality head-on.

Be that as it may, Cypher, having given the Agents what they wanted, kills Switch and then threatens to kill Neo by pulling his plug. His argument is that if Morpheus and the Oracle were right and Neo is the One, then he will survive being unplugged. Tank shoots and kills Cypher. Bear in mind that Neo went back into the matrix to rescue Morpheus and that he now has to fight to stay alive.

5.2.23 Suffering and meaning.

Agent Smith says to Morpheus:

“Have you ever stood and marvelled at it, marvelled at its beauty, its genius? Billions of people just living out their lives, oblivious ... Did you know that the first matrix was designed to be a perfect human world where no-one suffered, where everyone would be happy? It was a disaster. No one would accept the programme. Entire crops were lost. Some believed that we lacked the programming language to describe the perfect world. But I believe that as a species, human beings define their reality through misery and suffering. So the perfect world was a dream that your primitive cerebrum kept trying to wake up from, which is why the matrix was redesigned to this, the peak of your civilisation”.

Agent Smith knows that life is not perfect and that suffering is inextricably linked to life; he relishes the idea because he cannot stand humans. In a similar vein, Frankl (2004a) is also au fait with concepts such as misery and suffering, but he links it to *meaning*:

There are many situations in which one is cut off from the opportunity to do one's work or to enjoy one's life; but what can never be ruled out is the unavoidability of suffering. In accepting the challenge to suffer bravely, life has a meaning up to the last moment, and it retains its meaning literally to the end. In other words, life's meaning is an unconditional one, for it even includes the potential meaning of unavoidable suffering. (p. 118)

Frankl (2004a) then comments on suffering and the nature of man: “Those things which seem to take meaning away from human life include not only suffering but dying as well” (p. 123). Frankl explains that the ephemeral moments in life lie in that which could potentially be. Therefore it is our responsibility to realise such possibilities. Frankl's (2004a), beliefs are in contrast to Agent Smith's, since Frankl believes suffering and misery could give meaning to people's lives, if they allow it. Agent Smith views people as deplorable and exploitable objects and therefore Agent Smith's philosophy ties in with existentialism so some degree, in that humans “need” suffering, but with the noteworthy exception that Agent Smith does not believe that suffering can actually contribute to a more meaningful life by allowing people to thrive if they seek meaning in the suffering.

Moreover, powerful emotions could be raised in the spectator within the contextual fabric of this movie through visual devices such as the appearance of torrential rain and lightning, since these form part of the continuous mapping of Neo's journey and signify that his journey has come to a climax.

Meanwhile, Morpheus is being tortured by the Agents, who have attached nodes to his body. Tank explains to Neo what they are doing:

"They are breaking into his mind. It's like hacking a computer. All it takes is time ... It depends on the mind [how long it will take]. But eventually he will crack and his alpha patterns will change from this to this [pointing]. When it does, he'll tell them anything they want to know".

The whole point of attaining the codes of the mainframe computer that is situated in Zion is that the Agents can use them to destroy the members of the resistance. Neo and Trinity are extremely worried but Tank is more practical and suggests they pull the plug on Morpheus to ensure the safety of the rest of the team. But Neo remembers the Oracle's words and tells the team that she told him he would have to make a choice. The choice he has to make is whether he will sacrifice himself to save Morpheus's life. This is similar to the predicament Morpheus was in, in an earlier scene when he sacrificed himself to allow his team to get out of the matrix. Neo also tells the team the Oracle said he was not the saviour, but Trinity does not believe him. She knows she loves Neo and hence, for her at least, the Oracle's predication has come true. Neo decides to go back into the matrix and Trinity insists on joining him. It is an extremely dangerous mission and could cause the death of both Neo and Trinity. However, Neo is adamant, so Trinity asserts her right to join him because she is the highest-ranking officer on the ship. Neo once again experiences a personal epiphany when he realises that he believes that he can save Morpheus. In the meantime, Agent Smith debates whether Cypher has managed to destroy the resistance and knows that they will try to sever the link to the matrix immediately.

By realising that he can save Morpheus, it may be said that Neo discovers *meaning* in his life. All of the events leading up to this realisation have now come to a head. Neo's *choice* to go back into the matrix is a culmination of the *hope, faith, courage* and *open-mindedness* that he has displayed thus far. No-one has ever gone back into the matrix, and it is precisely for this reason that Neo thinks his plan will succeed. This kind of innovative thinking can also be described as indicative of the character strength of *creativity*. What is important is that he now thinks he can, which is a prerequisite for attaining goals in high-hope thinking individuals. It also shows that he is *courageous* because he is going to attempt a very dangerous feat. In addition, the notion of *self-efficacy* is encapsulated by this realisation since Neo has a plan, and is not going to attempt the impossible without having thought about what he wants to do once he goes into the matrix. Additionally, and moving on to Trinity, it is clear that she *loves* Neo – the fact that she decides to join him, is indicative of her concern for his wellbeing and the *courage* she has. That is because going back into the matrix entails a level of risk-taking that may well see one or both of them being killed.

5.2.24 Going with the “flow”.

Cut back to Agent Smith and the long-suffering Morpheus. Smith tells Morpheus that he thinks very little of the human race, and likens humans to viruses that consume and destroy everything and then move on to a new place to do the same. Agent Smith is worried that the truth serum is not working on Morpheus. He concedes: “I hate this place, this zoo, this prison, this reality, whatever you want to call it.” Neo and Trinity burst into the building where Morpheus is held, shoot all the guards and reach Morpheus. Neo manages to overcome his fear, moves extremely fast and dodges bullets, much to Trinity’s astonishment.

The concept of flow has been touched on several times in this reading, and in my opinion this scene can be interpreted to embody this notion very convincingly. Given that Neo is now able to evade bullets, it may be said that he is experiencing what Csikszentmihalyi (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002) describes as “flow”; a balance between perceived action abilities and perceived action prospects.

Trinity and Neo run to the roof of the building and find a B-212 helicopter, which belongs to the Agents. Trinity saves Neo’s life again by shooting and killing an Agent that was on the verge of killing Neo. She asks Tank to upload a pilot programme to enable her to fly the helicopter. Neo rescues Morpheus by urging him to jump, and realises that Morpheus cannot jump so far. Neo decides to take the plunge and catches Morpheus in the nick of time.

When Neo tosses Morpheus a rope and commands him to “Get up!” this mimics Jesus’s command for Lazarus to get up, hence raising him from the dead, thus intimating a *spiritual* message. Hence both these figures of salvation rise: “men in tombs who each come out with their hands and feet bound” (Fontana, 2003, p. 194). Fontana claims that in both instances, this feat is the turning point. In Jesus’ case, the raising of Lazarus draws together so many people that He becomes a threat to His enemies. Similarly, Neo’s rescue of Morpheus leaves very little doubt that Neo truly is the One, and furthermore causes the Agents to set their sights on Neo as opposed to Morpheus (Fontana, 2003). As a result, the notion of *faith* has been read into this scene for the reason that Neo truly believed that he could save Morpheus. In addition, and aside from the *spiritual* message conveyed by Neo’s liberation of Morpheus, this feat has also been interpreted to convey the PP notion of moral *courage*. As described in Chapter Three: The Rabbit sends in a little (P)ill, moral *courage* is the *courage* to stand by one’s convictions and this *courage* is hallmarked by empathy and sensitivity. This description in my opinion is accurately embodied by Neo, who displayed the moral and physical *courage* to rescue his friend and mentor, Morpheus.

Morpheus phones Tank and asks him to get them an exit. Morpheus and Trinity return to reality. However the Agents have traced the call; they know the location of the Nebuchadnezzar and send sentinels to

attack the ship. But Neo is still in the matrix and is ambushed by Agents. The rebels are also in danger and only have a couple of minutes to escape in their hovercraft. Morpheus asks Tank to charge the ship, but it can't be done until Neo is back.

An Agent shoots Neo. Trinity refuses to believe that he is going to die and confesses her love for him:

“Neo, I am not afraid any more. The Oracle told me that I would fall in love and that the man I loved would be the One. So you see you can't be dead. You can't be because I love you. You hear me? I love you. Now get up”.

An Agent shoots Neo several times. Trinity, hovering protectively over Neo's real body on the Nebuchadnezzar, realises that Neo has been shot, kisses him and he is revived.

Neo's resurrection is symbolic of Christian *faith* in that, like Christ, he has been brought back from the dead. His journey has reached a climax since he is now convinced that he truly is the One. Here the continuous mapping of Neo's journey as a hero similarly reaches a climax because he is literally saved by Trinity's *love* for him. This idea could be explored in many ways: first, that he has been saved from a meaningless life, second, that he has found *meaning* in life, and third, that his PP character strengths of *courage, love, hope, faith, self-efficacy* and *open-mindedness* have irrevocably stood him in good stead, because he has now found the answers he was looking for at the beginning of his journey. Consequently, it follows that Neo's life has now come full circle in the sense that he has morphed into the hero who no longer resembles the confused and lonely computer geek we met at the beginning of the movie. Moreover, Neo's resurrection in the movie is congruent with the notion that SF motion pictures make the impossible seem possible²⁴.

5.2.25 Come fly with me ...

Neo to the machines (and the audience):

“I know you are out there. I can feel you now. I know that you are afraid. You're afraid of us. You're afraid of change. I don't know the future. I didn't come here to tell you how this is going to end. I came here to tell you how it's going to begin. I am going to hang up this phone. And then I am going to show these people what you don't want them to see. I'm going to show them a world without you. A world without rules and control; without borders or boundaries; a world where anything is possible. Where we go from there is a choice I leave to you”.

The notion of *faith* comes to the fore yet again in the last dramatic scenes in the movie. Fontana (2003) claims that one has to examine the combined effect of the Oracle's prediction with Neo's subsequent

²⁴ This is one quality of SF films that was explored in Chapter One: Down the Rabbit-Hole.

death and resurrection to fully understand that Neo had to die and be *born again* so that the war could be won. Fontana explains that Neo's death is necessary in that it is a condition for winning the war, since he can only reach his full potential after being reborn. This story is reminiscent of the Bible story of the Passion and Easter, where it is believed that Jesus chose to be crucified in order for people to be saved and become part of the Kingdom of God. Yet another resemblance to the Bible story can be seen in the sacrifice that Neo has to make when he chooses to save Morpheus's life, despite being warned by the Oracle that he will have to give up his life (much like Jesus did) (Fontana, 2003).

The Agents captured Morpheus because he knew the codes to Zion; the Agents wanted to use these to destroy mankind. Yet another parallel with the Christian story of resurrection, and by association, the PP notion of *faith* in the movie, is the unexpectedness of Neo's resurrection to the amazement of his fellow resistance fighters. It follows that the resurrection was not implied in any of the Oracle's predictions. Similarly, the disciples were also confused and shocked when Jesus died and astonished when He was resurrected (Fontana, 2003).

The last analogy between the two stories (*The Matrix* and Bible story) is how they both end. The movie culminates when Neo experiences a personal epiphany. He realises he can accomplish anything in the virtual reality of the matrix, has *faith* and consequently is able to transcend the rules of the matrix to such an extent that he can fly. Fontana (2003) writes that, much as Jesus ascended to heaven, Neo flies up into the sky. In the same vein, Gerrold (2003) notes that Neo forms part of a unique circle of heroes. In this, one is reminded of the cultural archetype of Christ who walked this earth as a man, was betrayed by someone he trusted and yet still saved many and left the world a better place for all.

Aside from the *spiritual* implication of the visual metaphor of Neo soaring up into the sky, Neo's flight is the ultimate blow to the machine's carefully thought-out malevolent plan. It proves Neo's irrevocable grasp, internalisation and transcendence of the computer programme he was plugged into and freed from when he took the red pill. When Morpheus was coaching Neo and told him that anything is possible in the matrix (as was evident from the impossible action sequences), Morpheus had probably not considered that one can actually fly. Hence, through his flight, it may be interpreted to signify that Neo has also irrevocably grasped, internalised and through a process of trial and suffering, not only transcended his meaningless existence in his machine-made womb, but also positively risen above the negativity implied in the matrix.

Hence, Neo's flight can be seen as symbolic of a variety of PP character strengths. It may require a fair amount of *courage* to be able to fly. One may need to have quite an *open mind*. Flying may necessitate limitless amounts of *creativity*. Flying may also be linked to the idea that it is a flow activity requiring high challenge and high skill. Correspondingly, to reach such heights and therefore leave behind and

transcend earthly dilemmas or problems requires you to choose (e.g., to free yourself from your boundaries or to choose to reach your full potential).

It follows that the metaphorical image of flying is linked to a larger metaphorical context of *meaning*. The image of Neo's flight has been interpreted to denote that he is starting a new journey and is moving on and/or growing. His thoughts are now more expansive and he has overcome his fears. It may also relate to his elation at finding *love*. The notion of flying, in my opinion, can further be interpreted to imply Nietzsche's philosophical ideas of an *Übermensch* and the corresponding idea that individuals have the freedom to choose to become more than they are (as discussed in Chapter One). Moreover, the idea that Neo has transcended the rules of the matrix by flying again indicates that in SF movies the impossible is made possible²⁵. The earlier metaphorical images of the continuous mapping of Neo and Trinity's *love* for each other (e.g., Trinity bringing Neo back to life by kissing him) and the corresponding linguistic narratives ("I love you Neo") built into the dialogue, form part of more intricate metaphorical images such as flying. Furthermore, and as Bartsch (2010) observes in writing about *Titanic*, but which may also be applicable in *The Matrix*, there are metaphorical images of negativity, e.g., negative emotions such as fear and sadness or hostile forces, which the hero needs to transcend. Conversely, there are positive emotions such as *love* that are presented as compassionate forces that assist the hero to be victorious.

5.3 Conclusion

This version of the story of *The Matrix* hinges on a balance between structure, that which is inherent in the story, and interpretive analyses, that which I have read into the movie. Various other elements such as continuous mapping of the character's emotional journeys are pointed out, but may have been illuminated by a greater focus on the visual devices in the film. Given that the film is considered technologically advanced in many respects, it may be advisable to include many more examples of such devices.

²⁵ As was shown in Chapter One: Down the Rabbit-Hole.

CHAPTER 6: TWINKLE, TWINKLE LITTLE BAT, HOW I WONDER WHAT YOU'RE AT

6.1 CONCLUSION

The Matrix was explored to convey that it is a filmic container since many interpretations can be read into this movie. On one level it is a cultural artefact that exists in society. On another level it may be said that it is informed by many diverse stories and myths. On yet another level, this movie has been deemed influential as it has been the subject of several academic articles and books. It can also be described as a SF movie; a commentary on what it means to be human in a society preoccupied with technology; or a story that informs us about the human condition, hence my contention that this movie can be described as a filmic container; therefore the story of this movie was told. Since not only *The Matrix* but many other movies consist of more than just a story, these movies can also be described as filmic containers and may also be utilised as fortigenic tools.

The lenses that were used to explore this film were then identified; these being PP, existentialism, Christianity, philosophy and fairy-tales. Though PP is a relatively new field; it is seen as an important one since the focus is on what is going right with people, which is in contrast to traditional psychology in which the focus is on what is going wrong with people. In PP the emphasis is on character strengths and virtues, and it is argued that the fostering of such strengths may lead to flourishing. Seven PP themes were read into *The Matrix*, these being *self-efficacy*, *love*, *hope*, *courage*, *open-mindedness*, *creativity* and *faith*, and each one was explored. *Self-efficacy* is described as the power of believing that you can. This belief serves to inform what a person can accomplish under certain circumstances. As a result, it was shown that if people are able to regulate their inner worlds, e.g., initiating change within themselves, they are also able to regulate their behaviour. The second theme deals with the notion of *love* – historical ideas of *love* and classifications thereof were discussed. Not only is *love* a key factor in a happy life, but it is linked to the notion of *courage*. *Hope* was defined and historical ideas of the notion highlighted. *Hope* was then explored within a PP context, namely that being *hopeful* implies that a person can find new pathways and motivations to use such pathways to reach their goals. Added to this is the idea that such a person must then believe that he or she can attain his or her goals. The notion of *courage* was discussed as a key foundational strength underlying all other strengths since it implies that one needs to have the *courage* to try something new, or do things in a new way. Different types of *courage* were then discussed. The notion of *open-mindedness* encompasses many elements: that beliefs that are appropriate range on a sliding scale; that *open-mindedness* is linked to several ideas such as *creativity*, truth and inquisitiveness; and that there should be room for growth in one's ideas. *Creativity* was identified as one of the strengths that has clear links not only with *open-mindedness*, as was shown, but also with *courage* and *love*. Two conditions need to be met for *creativity*, namely originality and adaptability. *Faith*, on the other hand, is more difficult to define, but the purposes of this study it is understood that the notion of *faith*

should not be confused with religion (the Christian lens used here). In this reading, *faith* is equated with meaning-making, spirituality and a connectedness to the divine. Csikszentmihalyi's notion of flow was explored throughout this reading. Flow is defined as the balance between perceived action abilities and perceived action prospects. If the balance is disrupted, for example, when someone does an activity that leads to either boredom or anxiety, the person will seek to re-enter into flow by regulating the level of challenge or skill of that activity. It is therefore not the end result of such an activity that is the reward; the reward is the *intrinsically motivated activity*. After investigating the abovementioned ideas, I found it is clear that character strengths and virtues do not exist or function in isolation.

Like PP, existentialism is also a more positive view of psychology and various aspects that connect these two theories were highlighted. By definition existentialism is about attaining personal meaning; striving for and reaching meaningful goals. The historical foundation of this theory was discussed within the context of Viktor Frankl's experiences that led to the origins of existentialism. As a result, two existential themes were read into *The Matrix*, namely *will to meaning* and *freedom of choice*. *Will to meaning* may be found in three ways: *creatively*, experientially and through suffering. The premise is that each person has to discover his or her own meaning and work towards fulfilling such a goal (or goals). This is where *freedom of choice* comes into play. It was highlighted that a person is not, in many instances, free to choose, but that a person is always free to choose his or her attitude and therein lies positive power.

A Christian lens was used because I am a Christian, but also because many references to Christian thought are evident in the movie and consolidated in the literature. One such reference is that Neo is described as Christ-like, which is shown in the movie both in the burden that he shoulders of being the One that will save humanity from the scourge of the machines and in the symbolic representation of *hope* that his saviour-like presence brings to the rebels. These ideas mimic the life of Christ, who also bore the burden of saving people from their sins whilst at the same time representing the notions of *hope*, *faith* and *love*. A philosophical lens was used to highlight the ideas of Baudrillard, given that there are several articles and books in the literature in which his ideas are linked strongly with the idea of the nature of reality in *The Matrix*. One of Baudrillard's main premises is around the nature of reality. Though this notion was investigated using a postmodern lens, which may seem at odds with the chosen modernist lenses (i.e. of PP and existentialism), it is merely a different lens that was used to highlight that which was read into the movie. In a similar vein, the ideas of Nietzsche were also read into the film, and particularly those of the *Übermensch* were discussed in addition to his thoughts related to the premise that if people have a why to live for, they are able to endure. As a result, it is my contention that these philosophical ideas, like existentialism, form part of the foundational thinking that led to the emergence of PP.

The fairy-tale lens used served to inform numerous references in the film to *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* and *The wizard of Oz*. To imply a link between academic discourse and films and to imply a

link between this reading and the many references to Carroll's work in *The Matrix*, chapter headings were borrowed from his much-loved classic, *Alice's adventures in Wonderland*. The use of many lenses does not imply that the world is divided, since sorting and dividing the world into specific things and events implies another way of thinking about the world.

The use of *The Matrix* as fortigenic tool was dealt with in Chapter Four. Fortigenesis is a term derived from Latin and Greek words meaning "strong" and "be produced" respectively. Thus this term implies a PP process of building strengths. A selection of themes were highlighted, related to relevant scenes in the movie, and it was shown how Neo and the strengths that he was identified as exhibiting, may act as a role model in fortigenesis. The therapeutic process followed by existentialism is called logotherapy and a selection of logotherapy elements was also discussed. The overarching aim of this chapter was to amalgamate both processes, namely fortigenesis and logotherapy, with Frederickson's broaden-and-build theory. Two assumptions were highlighted that underlie this theory; first, that positive emotions produce non-specific action predispositions, whereas negative emotions produce specific action predispositions. Second, that, positive emotions can be described as having fairly broad thought-action predispositions, as opposed to negative emotions that have narrow predispositions for physical action. It is also clear that the traditional perspective in psychology cannot be dismissed in favour of a new way of thinking.

A qualitative research methodology called a thematic content analysis was used here, and was done by analysing the content and identifying themes from the transcript of the movie. This qualitative reading was an attempt to stitch together the various aspects read into the film as have been highlighted, to form something new, alternatively called a quilt or bricolage. Qualitative researchers like me assume that each person is unique and that each person's perspectives are unique. This assumption does not automatically grant a researcher carte blanche instead it necessitates the use of methods such as triangulation for purposes of academic rigour. Several such methods were used to inform the manner in which the thematic analysis was done in this reading. One was the application of interdisciplinary triangulation, in addition to the incorporation of processes as set out by Braun and Clarke (2006). A reading done by virtue of a qualitative exploration allows for flexibility and creativity. Though such an organic process was infinitely rewarding because many new avenues could be explored that led to a fuller understanding of the research question, a framework was necessary to provide direction and structure.

Finally, there is the sincere *hope* that PP will be woven into the roots of psychology across a broad range of applications, grow in strength and spread its wings to facilitate many happy and meaningful lives. Flying may require a bit of *faith*; as Peter Pan's Tinkerbell knows, all you need is *faith* and trust and pixie dust. But that is a whole different story ...

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APPENDIX

TRANSCRIPT OF *THE MATRIX*

MAN : Yeah?
WOMAN : Is everything in place?
MAN : You weren't supposed to relieve me.
WOMAN : I know, but I felt like taking your shift.
MAN : You like him don't you? You like watching him?
WOMAN : Don't be ridiculous.
MAN : We are going to kill him, do you understand that?
WOMAN : Morpheus believes he is the One.
MAN : Do you?
WOMAN : It doesn't matter what I believe.
MAN : You don't, do you?
WOMAN : Did you hear that?
MAN : Hear what?
WOMAN : Are you sure this line is clean?
MAN : Yeah, of course I'm sure.
WOMAN : I'd better go.
COP : Police, Police! Hands on your head! Do it, do it now!
AGENT SMITH : Lieutenant?
LIEUTENANT : Oh shit.
AGENT SMITH : Lieutenant, you were given specific orders.
LIEUTENANT : Hey, I am just doing my job. You give me that Juris-my-diction crap, you can cram it up your ass.
AGENT SMITH : The orders were for your protection.
LIEUTENANT : Ha, ha. I think we can handle one little girl.
I sent two units. They are bringing her down now.
AGENT SMITH : No Lieutenant, your men are already dead.
TRINITY : Morpheus. The line was traced. I don't know how.
MORPHEUS : I know. Pick up the hardware. There is no time. You are going to have to get to another exit.
TRINITY : Are there any agents?
MORPHEUS : Yes.
TRINITY : Goddamnit!
MORPHEUS : You have to focus Trinity. There's a phone at Wells and Lake, you can make it.
TRINITY : Bye.
MORPHEUS : Go.
COP : That's impossible!
TRINITY : Get up Trinity, get up. Get up!
AGENT : She got out.

AGENT SMITH : It doesn't matter.
AGENT : The informant is real?
AGENT SMITH : Yes.
AGENT : We have the name of their next target.
AGENT : The name is Neo.
AGENT SMITH : We'll need a search warrant.
AGENT : It has already begun.
NEO : Follow the white rabbit?
NEO : Who is it?
MAN : *Sorry, couldn't pick up his name – sounds like George!*
NEO : Yeah, yeah.
NEO : You're two hours late.
MAN : I know. It's her fault.
NEO : You got the money?
MAN : Two grand.
NEO : Hold on.
MAN : Hallelujah! You're my saviour man. My own personal Jesus Christ.
NEO : You get caught using that!
MAN : I know. It's never happened, you don't exist.
NEO : Right.
MAN : Something wrong man? You look a little whiter than usual.
NEO : My ... computer. Did you ever have that feeling where you are not sure if you are awake or still dreaming?
MAN : All the time. It is called Mescaline – it's the only way to fly. It just sounds to me like you might need to unplug man. You know, get some R&R. What do you think Dujour, shall we take him with us?
DUJOUR : Definitely.
NEO : I can't. I have work tomorrow.
DUJOUR : Come on. It will be fun, I promise.
NEO : Yeah, sure. I'll go.
TRINITY : Hello Neo.
NEO : How do you know my name?
TRINITY : I know a lot about you.
NEO : Who are you?
TRINITY : My name is Trinity.
NEO : Trinity. The Trinity that cracked the IRS d-base?
TRINITY : That was a long time ago.
NEO : Jesus!
TRINITY : What?
NEO : I just thought, um, you were a guy.
TRINITY : Most guys do.
NEO : That was you on my computer. How did you do that?
TRINITY : Right now all I can tell you is that you are in danger. I brought you here to warn you.
NEO : What?
TRINITY : They are watching you Neo.

NEO : Who is?

TRINITY : I know why you are here Neo. I know what you've been doing, I know why you hide in sleep. Why you live alone and why night after night you sit at your computer. You are looking for him. I know because I was once looking for the same thing and when he found me, he told me I wasn't really looking for him, I was looking for an answer. It is the question that drives us, it is the question that brought you here. You know the question, just as I did.

NEO : What is the Matrix?

TRINITY : The answer is out there Neo. It is looking for you and it will find you if you want it to.

NEO : Shit, shit.

RHINEHEART : You have a problem with authority Mr Anderson. You believe that you are special, that somehow the rules do not apply to you. Obviously you are mistaken. This company is one of the top software companies in the world because every single employee understands they are part of the whole. Thus if the employee has a problem the company has a problem. The time has come to make a choice Mr Anderson. Either you choose to be at your desk on time from this day forth or you choose to find yourself another job. Do I make myself clear?

NEO : Yes Mr Rhineheart, perfectly clear.

MAN : Thomas Anderson?

NEO : Yeah that's me.

MAN(FEDEX) : Have a nice day.

NEO : Hello.

MAN : Hello Neo. Do you know who this is?

NEO : Morpheus?

MORPHEUS : Yeah. I've been looking for you Neo. I don't know if you are ready to see what I want to show you but unfortunately you and I have run out of time. They are coming for you Neo and I don't know what they are going to do.

NEO : Who is coming for me?

MORPHEUS : Stand up and see for yourself.

NEO : What, right now?

MORPHEUS : Yes, now. Do it slowly. The elevator.

NEO : Shit!

MORPHEUS : Yes.

NEO : What the hell do they want from me?

MORPHEUS : I don't know but if you don't want to find out I suggest you get out of there.

NEO : How?

MORPHEUS : I can guide you but you must do exactly as I say.

NEO : Okay.

MORPHEUS : The cubicle across from you is empty.

NEO : ????

MORPHEUS : Go, now! Stay here for just a moment. When I tell you, go to the end of the row to the office at the end of the hall. Stay as low as you can. Go now! Good. Now outside there is a scaffold.

NEO : How do you know all this?

MORPHEUS : We don't have time Neo. To your left is a window, go to it. Open it. You can use the scaffold to get to the roof.

NEO : No way. No way! This is crazy.

MORPHEUS : There are two ways out of this building. One is that scaffold, the other is in their custody. You take a chance either way. I leave it to you.

NEO : This is insane. Why is this happening to me? What did I do? Shit! I can't do this!

TRINITY : Shit.

AGENT SMITH : As you can see we've had our eye on you for some time now Mr Anderson. It seems that you've been living two lives. In one life you are Thomas A Anderson, program writer for a respectable software company. You have a social security number, you pay your taxes and you help your landlady carry out her garbage.

The other life is lived in computers where you go by the hacker alias Neo, and you are guilty of virtually every computer crime we have a law for.

One of these lives has a future. One of them does not.

I'm going to be as forthcoming as I can be Mr Anderson. You are here because we need your help.

We know that you have been contacted by a certain individual, a man who calls himself Morpheus. Whatever you think you know about this man is irrelevant. He is considered by many authorities to be the most dangerous man alive.

My colleagues believe that I am wasting my time with you but I believe you wish to do the right thing. We are willing to wipe the slate clean, to give you a fresh start and all we are asking in return is your co-operation in bringing a known terrorist to justice.

NEO : Yeah. Well that sounds like a really good deal but I think I've got a better one. How about I give you the finger and you give me my phone call?

AGENT SMITH : Mr Anderson, you disappoint me.

NEO : You can't scare me with this Gestapo crap. I know my rights. I want my phone call.

AGENT SMITH : Tell me Mr Anderson, what good is a phone call if you are unable to speak?

You're going to help us Mr Anderson whether you want to or not.

MORPHEUS : This line is tapped so I must be brief. They got to you first, but they've underestimated how important you are. If they knew what I know you would probably be dead.

NEO : What are you talking about? What is happening to me?

MORPHEUS : You are the One, Neo. You see you may have spent the last few years looking for me, but I've spent my entire life looking for you. Now, do you still want to meet?

NEO : Yes.

MORPHEUS : Then go to the Adams Street bridge.

TRINITY : Get in.

NEO : What the hell is this?

TRINITY : It's necessary, Neo. For our protection.

NEO : From what?

TRINITY : From you.

WOMAN : Take off your shirt.

NEO : What?

SWITCH : Stop the car. Listen to me coppertop. We don't have time for 20 questions. Right now, there's only one rule. Our way or the highway.

NEO : Fine.

TRINITY : Please, Neo, you have to trust me.

NEO : Why?

TRINITY : Because you have been down there Neo. You know that road. You know exactly where it ends. And I know that's not where you want to be. Apoc, lights.

TRINITY : Lie back. Lift up your shirt.

NEO : What is that thing?

TRINITY : I think you are bugged.
Try and relax.
Come on. Come on.

SWITCH : It is on the move.

TRINITY : Come on, you shit.

SWITCH : You are going to lose it.

TRINITY : No, I'm not. Clear.

NEO : Jesus Christ! That thing's real!

TRINITY : This is it. Let me give you one piece of advice. Be honest. He knows more than you can imagine.

MORPHEUS : At last. Welcome, Neo.
As you have no doubt have guessed I am Morpheus.

NEO : It is an honour to meet you.

MORPHEUS : No, the honour is mine. Please, come. Sit.
I imagine that right now you're feeling a bit like Alice tumbling down the rabbit hole?

NEO : You could say that

MORPHEUS : I can 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, this is not far from the truth. Do you believe in fate, Neo?

NEO : No.

MORPHEUS : Why not?

NEO : Because I don't like the idea that I'm not in control of my life.

MORPHEUS : I know exactly what you mean.
Let me tell you why you're here. You are here because you know something. What you know you can't explain. But you feel it. You felt it your entire life. There's something wrong with the world. You don't know what it is, but it's there. Like a splinter in your mind, driving you mad. It is this feeling that has brought you to me.
Do you know what I'm talking about?

NEO : The Matrix?

MORPHEUS : Do you want to know what it is?

NEO : Yes.

MORPHEUS : The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us. Even now, in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on the television. You can feel it when you go to work, when you go to church, when you pay your taxes.
It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.

NEO : What truth?

MORPHEUS : That you are a slave. Like everyone else you were born into bondage, born into a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch. A prison for your mind. Unfortunately, no one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself.

This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill the story ends. You wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.

Remember, all I'm offering is the truth. Nothing more.
Follow me.
Apoc, are we on online?

APOC : Almost.

MORPHEUS : Time is always against us. Please take a seat there.

NEO : You did all this?

TRINITY : Uh-huh.

MORPHEUS : The pill you took is part of a trace program. It is designed to disrupt your input/output carrier signals so we can pinpoint your location.

NEO : What does that mean?

CYPHER : It means buckle your seat belt, Dorothy because Kansas is going bye-bye.

NEO : Did you?

MORPHEUS : Have you ever had a dream Neo that you were so sure was real? What if you were unable to wake from that dream? How would you know the difference between the dream world and the real world?

NEO : This can't be.

MORPHEUS : Be what?

NEO : Be real.

TRINITY : It's going into replication.

MORPHEUS : Apoc?

APOC : Still nothing.

NEO : It's so cold. It's cold.

MORPHEUS : Tank, we are going to need a signal soon.

TRINITY : I've got a fibrillation.

MORPHEUS : Apoc, location.

APOC : Targeting almost there.

TRINITY : He is going into arrest.

APOC : Lock. I got him.

MORPHEUS : Now, Tank, now!
Welcome to the real world.
We've done it Trinity. We found him.

TRINITY : I hope you're right.

MORPHEUS : I don't have to hope. I know it.

NEO : Am I dead?

MORPHEUS : Far from it.

DOZER : He still needs a lot of work.

NEO : What are you doing?

MORPHEUS : Your muscles have atrophied. We're rebuilding them.

NEO : Why do my eyes hurt?

MORPHEUS : You've never used them before. Rest Neo. The answers are coming.

NEO : Morpheus, what's happened to me? What is this place?

MORPHEUS : More important than what is when.

NEO : When?

MORPHEUS : You believe it's the year 1999, when in fact it's closer to 2199. I can't tell you exactly what year it is because we honestly don't know. There's nothing I can say that will explain it for you. Come with me. See for yourself.

This is my ship. The Nebuchadnezzar. It's a hovercraft. This is the main deck. This is the core where we broadcast our pirate signal and hack into the Matrix. Most of my crew you already know.

This is Apoc, Switch and Cypher. The ones you don't know, Tank and his big brother Dozer. The little one behind you is Mouse.

You wanted to know what the Matrix is.

Trinity.

Try to relax. This will feel a little weird.

This is the Construct. It is our loading program. We can load anything, from clothing to equipment, weapons, training simulations – anything we need.

NEO : Right now we're inside a computer programme?

MORPHEUS : Is it really so hard to believe?

Your clothes are different. The plugs in your arms and head are gone. Your hair has changed. Your appearance now is what we call Residual Self-Image. It is the mental projection of your digital self.

NEO : This isn't real.

MORPHEUS : What is real? How do you define real? If you are talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, taste and see, then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain.

This is the world that you know. The world as it was at the end of the 20th century. It exists now only as part of a neural interactive simulation that we all the Matrix. You've been living in a dream world, Neo. This is the world as it exists today.

Welcome to the desert of the real! We have only bits and pieces of information. But what we know for certain is that in the early 21st century all of mankind was united in celebration.

We marvelled at our own magnificence as we gave birth to AI.

NEO : AI? You mean artificial intelligence.

MORPHEUS : A singular consciousness that spawned an entire race of machines. We don't know who struck first, us or them. But we know that it was us that scorched the sky. At the time they were dependent on solar power and it was believed that they would be unable to survive without an energy source as abundant as the sun.

Throughout human history, we have been dependent on machines to survive. Fate, it seems, is not without a sense of irony.

The human body generates more bioelectricity than a 120-volt battery and over 25 000 BTUs of body heat. Combined with a form of fusion the machines had found all the energy they would ever need.

There are fields, Neo, endless fields where human beings are no longer born. We are grown. For the longest time I wouldn't believe it. And then I saw the fields with

my own eyes, watched them liquefy the dead so they could be fed intravenously to the living. And standing there, facing the pure, horrifying precision I came to realise the obviousness of the truth.

What is the Matrix? Control. The Matrix is a computer generated dream world built to keep us under control, in order to change a human being into this.

NEO : No. I don't believe it. It's not possible.
MORPHEUS : I didn't say it would be easy, Neo. I just said it would be the truth.
NEO : Stop! Let me out! Let me out! I want out!
TRINITY : Easy, Neo. Easy.
NEO : Get this thing out of me. Get this thing out of me! Don't touch me! Stay away from me! I don't believe it. I don't believe it.
CYPHER : He's gonna pop.
MORPHEUS : Breathe, Neo. Just breathe.
NEO : I can't go back, can I?
MORPHEUS : No. But if you could would you really want to? I feel I owe you an apology.

We have a rule. We never free a mind once it's reached a certain age. It's dangerous. The mind has trouble letting go. I've seen it before and I am sorry. I did what I did because I had to.

When the Matrix was first built, there was a man born inside who had the ability to change whatever he wanted to remake the Matrix as he saw fit. It was he who freed the first of us, taught us the truth.

As long as the Matrix exists the human race will never be free.

After he died the Oracle prophesied his return and that his coming would hail the destruction of the Matrix, end the war, bring freedom to our people.

That is why there are those of us who spent our entire lives searching the Matrix looking for him. I did what I did because I believe that search is over. Get some rest. You're going to need it.

NEO : For what?
MORPHEUS : Your training.
TANK : Morning. Did you sleep?
NEO : No.
TANK : You will tonight. I guarantee it. I'm Tank. I'll be your operator.
NEO : You don't have any holes?
TANK : Nope. Me and my brother, Dozer, are 100% pure old-fashioned, home grown human. Born free right here in the real world. Genuine child of Zion.
NEO : Zion?
TANK : If the war was over tomorrow Zion is where the party would be.
NEO : It's a city?
TANK : The last human city. The only place we have left.
NEO : Where is it?
TANK : Deep underground near the earth's core, where it's still warm. You live long enough you might see it.

Goddamn! I gotta tell you, I'm excited to see what you're capable of, if Morpheus is right and all. We're not supposed to talk about this, but if you are it's a very exciting time. We got a lot to do. We got to get to it.

Now, we're supposed to start with these operation programs first. That's major boring shit. Let's do something a little more fun. How about combat training?

NEO : Jujitsu? I'm going to learn jujitsu?
Holy shit!

TANK : Hey, Mikey, I think he likes it. How about some more?

NEO : Hell yes. Hell yeah.

MORPHEUS : How is he?

TANK : 10 hours straight. He's a machine.

NEO : I know Kung Fu.

MORPHEUS : Show me.

This is a sparring program similar to the programmed reality of the Matrix. It has the same basic rules, rules like gravity. What you must learn is that these rules are no different than the rules of a computer system. Some of them can be bent. Others, can be broken. Understand? Then hit me if you can.

Good. Adaptation. Improvisation. But your weakness it not your technique.

MOUSE : Morpheus is fighting Neo.

MORPHEUS : How did I beat you?

NEO : You're too fast.

MORPHEUS : Do you believe that my being stronger or faster has anything to do with my muscles in this place? You think that's air you're breathing in?

Again!

MOUSE : Jesus Christ, he's fast! Take a look at his neuro-kinetics, they are way above normal.

MORPHEUS : What are you waiting for? You're faster than this. Don't think you are. Know you are.

Come on! Stop trying to hit me and hit me!

MOUSE : I don't believe it.

NEO : I know what you are trying to do.

MORPHEUS : I am trying to free your mind, Neo. But I can only show you the door. You are the one that has to walk through it.

Tank, load the jump program.

You have to let it all go, Neo. Fear, doubt and disbelief. Free your mind.

NEO : Whoa! Okey-dokey. Free my mind.

MOUSE : What if he makes it?

TANK : No one's ever made their first jump.

MOUSE : I know, I know. But what if he does?

APOC : He won't.

TRINITY : Come on.

NEO : Alright. No problem. Free my mind. Free my mind. No problem. Right.

Good God.

MOUSE : What does that mean?

SWITCH : It doesn't mean anything.

CYPHER : Everybody falls the first time. Right, Trin?

NEO : I thought it wasn't real.

MORPHEUS : Your mind makes it real.
NEO : If you are killed in the Matrix, you die here?
MORPHEUS : The body cannot live without the mind.
CYPHER : I don't remember you ever bringing me dinner. There is something about him, isn't there?
TRINITY : Don't tell me you're a believer now?
CYPHER : I just keep wondering if Morpheus is so sure, why not take him to see the Oracle.
TRINITY : Morpheus will take him when he's ready.
MORPHEUS : The Matrix is a system, Neo. That system is our enemy. But when you're inside 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. You have to understand most of these people are not ready to be unplugged. An many of them are so inert, so hopelessly dependent on the system that they will fight to protect it.
Were you listening to me Neo or were you looking at the woman in the red dress?
NEO : I was ...
MORPHEUS : Look again. Freeze it.
NEO : This, this isn't the Matrix?
MORPHEUS : This is another training program designed to teach you one thing. If you are not one of us, you are one of them.
NEO : What are they?
MORPHEUS : Sentient programs. They move in and out of any software still hardwired to their system. That means that anyone we haven't unplugged is potentially an agent.
Inside the Matrix they are everyone and they are no one. We have survived by hiding from them and by running from them but they are the gatekeepers. They're guarding all the doors, they are holding all the keys which means that sooner or later someone is going to have to fight them.
NEO : Someone?
MORPHEUS : I won't lie to you, Neo. Every single man or woman who has stood their ground, everyone who has fought an agent has died. But where they have failed you will succeed.
NEO : Why?
MORPHEUS : I've seen an agent punch through a concrete wall. Men have emptied entire clips at them and hit nothing but air. Yet their strength and their speed are still based in a world built on rules. Because of that they will never be as strong or as fast as you can be.
NEO : What are you trying to tell me? That I can dodge bullets?
MORPHEUS : No, Neo. I'm trying to tell you that when you are ready, you won't have to.
TANK : We've got trouble!
MORPHEUS : Did Zion send the warning?
DOZER(?) : No, another ship.
Shit. Squiddy's sweeping in quick.
NEO : Squiddy?
TRINITY : A sentinel. A killing machine designed for one thing.

DOZER : Search and destroy.
MORPHEUS : Set her down there.
How are we doing, Tank?
TANK : Power off-line.
EMP armed and ready.
NEO : EMP?
TRINITY : Electromagnetic pulse. Disables any electrical system in the blast radius.
It's the only weapon we have against the machines.
NEO : Where are we?
TRINITY : Their old service and waste systems.
NEO : Sewers.
TRINITY : There used to be cities that spanned hundreds of miles. Now these
sewers are all that's left of them.
MORPHEUS : Quiet!
CYPHER : Whoa! Neo. You scared the bejesus out of me.
NEO : Sorry.
CYPHER : It's okay.
NEO : Is that ...?
CYPHER : The Matrix? Yeah.
NEO : Do you always look at it encoded?
CYPHER : Well, you have to. The image translators work for the construct program.
But there's way too much information to decode the Matrix. You get used to it. I don't even see
the code. All I see is blonde, brunette, redhead. Hey, do you want a drink?
NEO : Sure.
CYPHER : You know I know what you're thinking. Because right now I'm thinking
the same thing. Actually, I've been thinking about it ever since I got here. Why, oh why didn't I
take the blue pill?
Good shit, huh? Dozer makes it. It's good for two things; degreasing
engines and killing brain cells.
So can I ask you something? Did he tell you why he did it? Why you're
here?
NEO : Yes.
CYPHER : Jesus! What a mind job. So you're here to save the world. What do you
say to something like that? A little piece of advice. You see an agent you do what we do; run.
You run your ass off.
NEO : Thanks for the drink.
CYPHER : Sweet dreams.
AGENT SMTH : Do we have a deal Mr Reagan?
CYPHER : You know I know this steak doesn't exist. I know that when I put it in
my mouth the Matrix is telling my brain that it is juicy and delicious. After nine years you know
what I realise? Ignorance is bliss.
AGENT SMITH : Then we have a deal.
CYPHER : I don't want to remember nothing. Nothing. You understand? And I
want to be rich. You know, someone important. Like an actor.
AGENT SMITH : Whatever you want Mr Reagan.

CYPHER : Okay. You get my body back in a power plant, reinsert me into the Matrix, I'll get you what you want.

AGENT SMITH : Access codes to the Zion mainframe.

CYPHER : No. I told you. I don't know them. I can get you the man who does.

AGENT SMITH : Morpheus.

TANK : Here you go buddy. Breakfast of champions.

MOUSE : If you close your eyes it almost feels like you're eating runny eggs.

APOC : Or a bowl of snot.

MOUSE : Do you know what it really reminds me of? Tastee Wheat. Did you ever eat Tastee Wheat?

SWITCH : No, but technically neither did you.

MOUSE : That's exactly my point. Exactly. Because you have to wonder how do the machines really know what Tastee Wheat tasted like? Maybe they got it wrong. Maybe what I think Tastee Wheat tasted like actually tasted like oatmeal or tuna fish. That makes you wonder about a lot of things. You take chicken for example, maybe they couldn't figure out what to make it taste like, which is why it tastes like everything. And maybe they ...

APOC : Shut up Mouse.

DOZER : It's a single-celled protein combined with synthetic aminos, vitamins and minerals. Everything the body needs.

MOUSE : It doesn't have everything the body needs. So I understand you've run through the agent training program. You know I wrote that program.

APOC : Here it comes.

MOUSE : So what did you think of her?

NEO : Of who?

MOUSE : The woman in the red dress. I designed her. She doesn't talk very much but if you'd like to meet her, I can arrange a much more personal milieu.

SWITCH : The digital pimp hard at work.

MOUSE : Pay no attention to these hypocrites, Neo. To deny our own impulses is to deny the very thing that makes us human.

MORPHEUS : Dozer, when you're done bring the ship up to broadcast depth. We're going in. I'm taking Neo to see her.

NEO : See who?

TANK : The Oracle.

Everyone, please observe the fasten seat belt and no smoking signs have been turned on. Sit back and enjoy your flight.

MORPHEUS : We're in.
We'll be back in an hour.
Unbelievable isn't it?

NEO : God!

TRINITY : What?

NEO : I used to eat there. Really good noodles.
I have these memories from my life. None of them happened. What does that mean?

TRINITY : That the Matrix cannot tell you who you are.

NEO : But an oracle can?

TRINITY : That's different.

NEO : Did you go to her?
TRINITY : Yes.
NEO : What did she tell you?
TRINITY : She told me...
NEO : What?
MORPHEUS : We are here. Neo, come with me.
NEO : So is this the same oracle that made the prophecy?
MORPHEUS : Yes. She's very old. She's been with us since the beginning.
NEO : The beginning?
MORPHEUS : Of the Resistance.
NEO : And she knows what? Everything?
MORPHEUS : She would say she knows enough.
NEO : And she is never wrong.
MORPHEUS : Try not to think of it in terms of right and wrong. She is a guide, Neo. She can help you to find the path.
NEO : She helped you?
MORPHEUS : Yes.
NEO : What did she tell you?
MORPHEUS : That I would find the One.
I told you that I can only show you the door. You have to walk through it.
WOMAN : Hello, Neo. You're right on time. Make yourself at home Morpheus. Neo, come with me. These are the other Potentials. You can wait here.
BOY : Do not try and bend the spoon. That's impossible. Instead, only try to realise the truth.
NEO : What truth?
BOY : There is no spoon.
NEO : There is no spoon.
BOY : Then you'll see that it is not the spoon that bends. It is only yourself.
WOMAN : The Oracle will see you now.
ORACLE : I know you are Neo. Be right with you.
NEO : You're the Oracle?
ORACLE : Bingo! Not quite what you were expecting, right?
Almost done. Smell good, don't they?
NEO : Yeah.
ORACLE : I'd ask you to sit down but you're not going to anyway. And don't worry about the vase.
NEO : What vase?
ORACLE : That vase.
NEO : I'm sorry.
ORACLE : I said don't worry about it. I'll get one of my kids to fix it.
NEO : How did you know?
ORACLE : What's really going to bake your noodle later on is would you still have broken it if I hadn't said anything?
You're cuter than I though. I can see why she likes you.
NEO : Who?

ORACLE : Not too bright though. You know why Morpheus brought you to see me. So what do you think? Do you think you are the One?

NEO : Honestly I don't know.

ORACLE : Do you know what that means? It's Latin. It means Know Thyself. I am going to let you in on a little secret. Being the One is just like being in love. No one can tell you you're in love. You just know it through and through. Balls to bones. Well I'd better have a look at you. Open your mouth. Say ah.

Okay. Now I'm supposed to say, "Hmm that's interesting, but". Then you say.

NEO : But what?

ORACLE : But you already know what I'm going to tell you.

NEO : I'm not the One.

ORACLE : Sorry, kid. You got the gift but it looks like you're waiting for something.

NEO : What?

ORACLE : Your next life maybe. Who knows. That's the way these things go. What's funny?

NEO : Morpheus. He almost had me convinced.

ORACLE : I know. Poor Morpheus. Without him, we're lost.

NEO : What do you mean, without him?

ORACLE : Are you sure you want to hear this? Morpheus believes in you Neo. And no one, no you, not even me can convince him otherwise. He believes it so blindly that he is going to sacrifice his life to save yours.

NEO : What?

ORACLE : You're going to have to make a choice. In the one hand, you'll have Morpheus' life, and in the other hand you'll have your own. One of you is going to die. Which one will be up to you. I'm sorry kiddo, I really am. You have a good soul. And I hate giving good people bad news. Don't worry about it. As soon as you step outside that door you'll start feeling a bit better. You'll remember you don't believe in any of this fate crap. You're in control of your own life. Remember. Here take a cookie. I promise by the time you're done eating it you'll feel right as rain.

MORPHEUS : What was said was for you and for you alone.

TANK : They're on their way.

TANK : What is that?

NEO : Oh, déjà vu.

TRINITY : What did you just say?

NEO : Nothing. Just had a bit of déjà vu.

TRINITY : What did you see?

CYPHER : What happened?

NEO : A black cat went past us and then another that looked just like it.

TRINITY : How much like it? Was it the same cat?

NEO : It might have been. I'm not sure.

MORPHEUS : Switch, Apoc.

NEO : What is it?

TRINITY : A déjà vu is usually a glitch in the Matrix. It happens when they change something.

TANK : Oh my God.
MORPHEUS : Let's go.
TANKB : They cut the hard line. It's a trap! Get out!
MOUSE : Oh, no.
TANK : Oh no.
CYPHER : Oh, that's what they changed. We're trapped. There's no way out.
MORPHEUS : Be calm. Give me your phone.
TRINITY : They'll be able to track it.
MORPHEUS : We have no choice.
TANK : Operator.
MORPHEUS : Tank, find a structural drawing of this building. Find it fast.
TANK : Got it!
MORPHEUS : I need the main wet-wall.
AGENT SMITH : 8th Floor.
 They're on the 8th Floor.
MORPHEUS : Switch, straight ahead.
APOC : Neo. I hope the Oracle gave us the good news.
TANK : Now left. That's it.
MORPHEUS : Good.
AGENT SMITH : Where are they?
COP : They're in the walls.
 In the walls!
CYPHER : It's an agent.
TRINITY : Morpheus!
MORPHEUS : You must get Neo out. He's all that matters.
NEO : No, Morpheus. Don't!
MORPHEUS : Trinity, go!
TRINITY : Go!
NEO : We can't leave him!
TRINITY : We have to!
 Cypher, come on!
AGENT SMITH : The great Morpheus. We meet at last.
MORPHEUS : And you are?
AGENT SMITH : A Smith. Agent Smith.
MORPHEUS : You all look the same to me.
AGENT SMITH : Take him.
TANK : No!
 Operator.
CYPHER : I need an exit, fast.
TANK : Cypher?
CYPHER : Yeah. There was an accident, Goddamn car accident. All of a sudden,
 boom. Somebody up there still likes me.
TANK : I got you.
CYPHER : Just get me out of here fast.
TANK : The nearest exist is Franklin and Erie. An old TV repair shop.
CYPHER : Right.

TANK : Operator.
TRINITY : Tank, it's me.
NEO : Is Morpheus alive?
TRINITY : Is Morpheus alive Tank?
TANK : Yes. They're moving him. I don't know where to yet.
TRINITY : He's alive. We need an exit.
TANK : You're not far from Cypher.
TRINITY : Cypher?
TANK : I know.
 I sent him to Franklin and Erie.
TRINITY : Got it.
TANK : Got him.
CYPHER : Where are they?
TANK : Making the call.
CYPHER : Good.
TRINITY : You first Neo.
CYPHER : Shit!
DOZER : Tank! No!
NEO : I don't know. It just went dead.
CYPHER : Hello Trinity.
TRINITY : Cypher? Where's Tank?
CYPHER : You know for a long time I thought I was in love with you. I used to dream about you. You're a beautiful woman Trinity. Too bad things had to turn out this way.
TRINITY : You killed them.
APOC : What?
SWITCH : Oh, God.
CYPHER : I'm tired Trinity. I'm tired of this war, tired of fighting. I'm tired of this ship, of being cold, of eating the same goddamn goop every day. But most of all I'm tired f that jackoff and all of his bullshit.
 Surprise, asshole! I bet you never saw this coming, did you? God, I wish I could be there when they break you. I wish I could walk in just when it happens, so right then you'd know it was me.
TRINITY : You gave them Morpheus.
CYPHER : He lied to us Trinity. He tricked us! If you had told us the truth we would've told you to shove that red pill right up your ass!
TRINITY : That is not true Cypher. He set us free.
CYPHER : Free. You call this free? All I do is what he tells me to do. If I had to choose between that and the Matrix, I choose the Matrix.
TRINITY : The Matrix isn't real.
CYPHER : I disagree Trinity. I think the Matrix can be more real than this world. All I do is pull the plug here. But there, you have to watch Apoc die.
TRINITY : Trinity!
SWITCH : No!
CYPHER : Welcome to the real world, huh baby.
TRINITY : But you're out Cypher. You can't go back.

CYPHER : Oh, no that's what you think. They are going to reinsert my body. I go back to sleep and when I wake up, I won't remember a goddamn thing. By the way, if you have anything terribly important to say to Switch, I suggest you say it now.

TRINITY : No, please don't.

SWITCH : Not like this. Not like this.

CYPHER : Too late.

TRINITY : Goddamn you Cypher.

CYPHER : Don't hate me Trinity. I'm just a messenger. Right now I'm gonna prove it to you. If Morpheus was right then there's no way I can pull this plug. If Neo is the One then there'd have to be some kind of a miracle to stop me. Right? I mean how can he be the One if he's dead? You never did answer me before if you bought into Morpheus' bullshit. Come on. All I want is a little yes or no. Look into his eyes, those big pretty eyes and tell me yes or no.

TRINITY : Yes.

CYPHER : No! I don't believe it.

TANK : Believe it or not you piece of shit, you're still gonna burn!

NEO : You first.

TRINITY : You're hurt.

TANK : I'll be alright.

TRINITY : Dozer?

AGENT SMITH : Have you ever stood and stared at it, marvelled at its beauty, its genius? Billions of people just living out their lives, oblivious. Did you know that the first Matrix was designed to be a perfect human world where none suffered., where everyone would be happy. It was a disaster. No one would accept the program. Entire crops were lost. Some believed that we lacked the programming language to describe your perfect world. But I believe that as a species, human beings define their reality through misery and suffering. So the perfect world was a dream that your primitive cerebrum kept trying to wake up from. Which is why the Matrix was redesigned to this, the peak of your civilisation.

I say your civilisation because as soon as we started thinking for you, it really became our civilisation which is, of course, what this is all about. Evolution Morpheus. Evolution. Like the dinosaur. Look out that window. You had your time. The future is our world Morpheus. The future is our time.

AGENT : There could be a problem.

NEO : What are they doing to him?

TANK : They're breaking into his mind. It's like hacking a computer. All it takes is time.

NEO : How much time?

TANK : It depends on the mind. But eventually he will crack and his alpha patterns will change from this to this. When it does, he'll tell them anything they want to know.

NEO : What do they want?

TANK : The leader of every ship is given codes to Zion's mainframe computer. If an agent got the codes and got into Zion's mainframe they could destroy us. We can't let that happen.

Trinity, Zion's more important than me or you or even Morpheus.

NEO : There has to be something we can do.

TANK : There is. We pull the plug.

TRINITY : You are going to kill him? Kill Morpheus.
TANK : We don't have any other choice.
AGENT SMITH : Never send a human to do a machine's job.
AGENT : If the insider has failed they'll sever the connection as soon as possible, unless.
AGENT : They are dead. In either case.
AGENT SMITH : We have no choice. Continue as planned. Deploy the sentinels immediately.
TANK : Morpheus you were more than a leader to us. You were a father. We'll miss you always.
NEO : Stop! I don't believe this is happening.
TANK : Neo, this has to be done.
NEO : Does it? I don't know. This can't be just coincidence. It can't be.
TANK : What are you talking about?
NEO : The Oracle. She told me that this would happen. She told me that I would have to make a choice.
TRINITY : What choice? What are you doing?
NEO : I'm going in.
TRINITY : No, you're not.
NEO : I have to.
TRINITY : Neo, Morpheus sacrificed himself so that we could get you out. There is no way you're going back in.
NEO : Morpheus did what he did because he believed I'm something I'm not.
TRINITY : What?
NEO : I'm not the One, Trinity. The Oracle hit me with that too.
TRINITY : No, you have to be.
NEO : I'm sorry I'm not. I'm just another guy.
TRINITY : No, Neo that's not true. It can't be true.
NEO : Why?
TANK : Neo, this is loco. They've got Morpheus in a military controlled building. Even if you somehow got inside, those agents are holding him, three of them. I want Morpheus back too, but what you're talking about is suicide.
NEO : I know that's what it looks like but it's not. I can't explain to you why it's not. Morpheus believed something and he was ready to give his life for what he believed. I understand that now. That's why I have to go.
TANK : Why?
NEO : Because I believe in something.
TRINITY : What?
NEO : I believe I can bring him back.
What are you doing?
TRINITY : Going with you.
NEO : No, you're not.
TRINITY : No? Let me tell you what I believe. I believe Morpheus means more to me than he does to you. I believe that if you are really serious about saving him, you are going to need my help. And since I am the ranking officer of this ship, if you don't like it, I believe you can go to hell. Because you aren't going anywhere else. Tank, load us up.

AGENT SMITH : I'd like to share a revelation that I've had during my time here. It came to me when I tried to classify your species and I realised that you're not actually mammals. Every mammal on this planet instinctively develops a natural equilibrium with the surround environment, but you humans do not. You move to an area and you multiply and multiply until every natural resource is consumed. The only way you can survive is to spread to another area.

There is another organism on this planet that follows the same pattern. Do you know what it is? A virus. Human beings are a disease, a cancer of this planet. You are a plague, and we are the cure.

TANK : Okay, so what do you need, besides a miracle?

NEO : Guns. Lots of guns.

TRINITY : Neo. No one has ever done anything like this.

NEO : That's why it is going to work.

AGENT SMITH : Why isn't the serum working?

AGENT : Perhaps we're asking the wrong questions.

AGENT SMITH : Leave me with him. Now.

TANK : Hold on Morpheus. They're coming for you. They're coming.

AGENT SMITH : Can you hear me Morpheus? I'm going to be honest with you. I hate this place, this zoo, this prison, this reality, whatever you want to call it. I can't stand it any longer. It's the smell, if there is such a thing. I feel saturated by it. I can taste your stink and every time I do, I fear that I have somehow been infected by it. It's repulsive. Isn't it? I must get out of here. I must get free. And in this mind is the key. My key. Once Zion is destroyed there is no need for me to be here. Do you understand? I need the codes. I have to get inside Zion and you have to tell me how. You're going to tell me or you are going to die.

GUARD : Please remove any metallic items you're carrying. Keys, loose change. Holy shit!

GUARD : Backup. Send backup.

COP : Freeze!

AGENT : What were you doing?

AGENT : He doesn't know.

AGENT SMITH : Know what?

AGENT : I think they are trying to save him.

NEO : There is no spoon.

AGENT SMITH : Find them and destroy them!

PILOT : I repeat, we're under attack!

NEO : Trinity! Help.

AGENT SMITH : Only human.

TRINITY : Dodge this.

How did you do that?

NEO : Do what?

TRINITY : You moved like they do. I've never seen anyone move that fast.

NEO : It wasn't fast enough. Can you fly that thing?

TRINITY : Not yet.

TANK : Operator.

TRINITY : I need a pilot program for a B-212 helicopter. Hurry.

Let's go.

AGENT SMITH : No.

NEO : Morpheus get up. Get up, get up.
He's not going to make it.
Gotcha.
Trinity!

TANK : I knew it. He's the One.

MORPHEUS : Do you believe it now Trinity?

NEO : Morpheus, the Oracle she told me...

MORPHEUS : She told you exactly what you needed to hear. That's all. Neo, sooner or later you are going to realise, just as I did, there's a difference between knowing the path and walking the path.

TANK : Operator.

MORPHEUS : Tank.

TANK : Goddamn it's good to hear your voice.

MORPHEUS : We need an exit.

TANK : Got one ready. Subway station, State and Balboa.

AGENT SMITH : Damn it!

AGENT : The trace was completed.

AGENT : We have their position.

AGENT : Sentinels are standing by.

AGENT : Order the strike.

AGENT SMITH : They are not out yet.

NEO : Your first Morpheus.

TRINITY : Neo, I want to tell you something but I am afraid of what it could mean if I do. Everything the Oracle told me has come true. Everything but this.

NEO : But what?

TRINITY : Neo!

TANK : What the hell just happened?

TRINITY : An agent. You have to send me back.

TANK : I can't.

AGENT SMITH : Mr Anderson.

TRINITY : Run, Neo. Run.
What is he doing?

MORPHEUS : He is beginning to believe.

AGENT SMITH : You're empty.

NEO : So are you.

AGENT SMITH : I'm going to enjoy watching you die Mr Anderson.

TRINITY : Jesus, he's killing him.

AGENT SMITH : You hear that Mr Anderson? That is the sound of inevitability. It is the sound of your death. Goodbye Mr Anderson.

NEO : My name is Neo.

TRINITY : What happened?

TANK : I don't know. I lost him.
Oh, shit.

TRINITY : Sentinels. How long?

MORPHEUS : 5, maybe 6 minutes.
Tank, charge the EMP.

TRINITY : We can't use that until he's out.
MORPHEUS : I know Trinity. Don't worry. He's gonna make it.
MAN ON STREET : Flat or pumps? No, just ...
What the shit? That's my phone! That guy took my phone!
TANK : Got him! He's on the run.
NEO : Mr Wizard get me the hell out of here!
TANK : I got a patch on an old exit. Wabash and Lake.
NEO : Oh, shit. Help! Need a little help!
TANK : The door.
The door on your left. Your other left. The back door.
TRINITY : Oh no!
MORPHEUS : Here they come.
He's going to make it.
TANK : The fire escape at the end of the alley, Room 303.
They're inside.
TRINITY : Hurry Neo.
MORPHEUS : It can't be.
AGENT SMITH : Check him.
AGENT : He's gone.
AGENT SMITH : Goodbye Mr Anderson.
TRINITY : Neo. I'm not afraid anymore. The Oracle told me that I would fall in love and that the man I loved would be the One. So you see you can't be dead. You can't be because I love you. You hear me? I love you. Now get up.
NEO : No.
TANK : How?
MORPHEUS : He is the One.
TRINITY : Neo!
NEO : I know you are out there. I can feel you now. I know that you are afraid. You're afraid of us. You're afraid of change. I don't know the future. I didn't come here to tell you how this is going to end. I came here to tell you how it's going to begin. I am going to hang up this phone. And then I am going to show these people what you don't want them to see. I'm going to show them a world without you. A world without rules and controls, without borders or boundaries. A world where anything is possible. Where we go from there is a choice I leave to you.

THE END