“Guns . . . Lots of Guns”: The role of violence in *The Matrix*

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9th July 2003

In September 2000, a man who murdered his landlady claimed that he was living in the Matrix. More recently, a woman charged with murdering her landlord made the same defence, as did a teenage boy who shot his parents, and a man accused of serial sniper killings also cited *The Matrix* as inspiration. Interestingly, these confessions (or pseudo-confessions) did not raise as much of a media storm as we might have expected, although producer Joel Silver still felt obliged to say of the film “It’s a wonderful fantasy story that doesn’t take place in the real world, so I can’t comment on what makes people do what they do.”¹ Perhaps crazed killers blaming their crimes on films or video games are no longer as newsworthy as they used to be; perhaps it is simply that graphic violence has been a feature of Hollywood films for so long that few people take it seriously any more. However, it is worth examining the violence of the *Matrix* films in a way which goes beyond clichés about “glorifying violence” or debates about whether it is significant that the latest serial killer wore a long black coat and sunglasses. Film audiences can tell when violence is merely entertainment (whether in cartoons or action films), although they may be less aware of how supposedly realistic portrayals of violence can be turned into fantasy.² One thing that is obvious if you read even a small proportion of the film reviews, scholarly essays, blog entries and political rants about the *Matrix* is that the films are deliberately constructed so that people will see what they want to see in them, but that those who look closer will find that, just as in the world of the Matrix itself, things are seldom what they seem. The violence needs to be there because action films sell tickets and philosophical films don’t, but in a philosophical action film, especially one which is based on ideas about simulation replacing reality, we can expect that violence itself is just another theme which the directors are playing with.

I Hyperreal violence

A central idea of *The Matrix* is hyper-reality, a term invented by Jean Baudrillard. Hyperreality occurs when the simulation becomes more real than what it is supposed

²No portrayal of violence in film can be as real as the experience of being shot, or even punched in the face. Films which attempt to show the reality of violence run the risk of being absorbed by their fantasy colleagues: *Rambo* is obviously fantasy and *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket* are serious attempts to show the violence of the Vietnam war, but in the end, they all get categorised as Vietnam films.
to be a simulation of. Baudrillard gives Disneyland as an example of hyperreality: although it seems to be a fantasy, it is, he claims, more real to its visitors than either the fairy tales it plunders or the “real” America: Disneyland is America. This is not a uniquely American phenomenon, or even a Western phenomenon; we can see the same thing in developing countries. In Turkey there is a cultural style called arabesk, which started in music as a genuine expression of the disillusionment of rural migrants to the cities; it deals with poverty, impossible romantic love and the conflict between urban and rural values. Within a short time, arabesk became hyperreal. Now, young Turks define themselves in reference to arabesk music, films and soap operas: if they are in love, they compare themselves to arabesk lovers; when they have a fight on the street, they are thinking of the heroes of arabesk films.

In Baudrillard’s view, hyperreal violence assimilates physical violence. This is why terrorism is not only immoral, it is self-defeating. The terrorist wants to make the ultimate act of defiance. The powers that be (the Matrix) have taken everything from him, or at least he thinks they have. His response is to declare war on that society by a spectacular act of violence. “The Israelis have killed my daughter, so I will go into a Jewish cafe and blow myself up—let’s see how they feel about their daughters being killed.” What he does not realise is that his action, as soon as it is observed, will become just another scene in a hyperreal drama. For the Israeli whose daughter has just been blown into bloody meat, it is as real as you can get, but for everyone else it is just another scene in a collective simulation: “Evil Arab kills innocent Israeli girl”. If Baudrillard is right, then few people care about what really happened and why it happened; the important thing is what happens in the simulation. The father who was prepared to give up his life and commit murder to avenge the death of his daughter has become a character in a film, no more real than Neo or Agent Smith. His compensation—which is really no compensation at all—is that he has a role in a mass-media drama. What is more, the meaning of that drama is obscured, according to Baudrillard, who, in a famous passage in Simulacra and Simulation, writes:

Is any bombing in Italy the work of leftist extremists; or of extreme right-wing provocation; or staged by centrists to bring every terrorist extreme into disrepute and to shore up its own failing power; or again, is it a police-inspired scenario in order to appeal to calls for public security? All this is equally true, and the search for proof—indeed the objectivity of the fact—does not check this vertigo of interpretation. We are in a logic of simulation which has nothing to do with a logic of facts and an order of reasons.4

However, violence in the “desert of the real” is different from violence in the simulation. Any streetfighter will tell you that real fighting is nothing like kung fu films, and any soldier will tell you that war is not like war films. Nevertheless, when people do violent things, they are often trying to recreate the violence of television or films. It is

3Snow White is a good example. When we think of Snow White, we usually think of the Disney film. We do not think of the old German fairy-tale, and if anyone were to make a film of the original version (including the scene where the wicked queen is made to dance in red-hot iron shoes until she dies) no one under the age of eighteen would be allowed to see it.

not that films make us violent; human beings can always find reasons to be violent. It is that when we are violent, we try to make our violence more meaningful by imitating the violence of the simulation. This explains the statements by violent criminals that some film made them do it. The film did not make them do it; those people would probably have killed someone if they had been living in a world with no mass media. What the film did was make them try to turn an ordinary act of murder into something they felt was important. Neo and Trinity gunning down a host of security guards has in this sense become more “real” than a drunken brawl turning into manslaughter. Real physical violence is only interesting to those it directly concerns; if you want an audience outside your family, your neighbours and the local police, killing your landlord is not enough; you have to kill him on Reality TV. If you can’t do that, you need to convince yourself that your banal act of murder is something like Neo killing an Agent, or, in a former age, John Wayne killing an Indian.

But of course, most people are not particularly violent. We are attracted to the violence of films, not because we really want to kill people, but because it represents things we really want. We want to assert ourselves, to eliminate problems, to rebel against authority. When Neo destroys Agent Smith (for the time being) we cheer because Smith represents our boss, father or whatever authority figure we want to rebel against. Smith may indeed represent the banality of our lives in general, as I.Q. Hunter claims: “Neo discovers another reality, where he can fight the dull everyday life—personified here by agent Smith.”

This illustrates a problem with the idea of hyperreality. By claiming that the hyperreal is somehow “more real”, it fails to distinguish adequately between the hyperreal violence of a reported terrorist attack, and the hyperreal violence of The Matrix. To say that X is more real than Y is not terribly meaningful; the word “real” then becomes a cipher for vague ideas like “engaging”, “authentic” or “seductive”. I would claim that everything is real; the important question is “A real what?” The Palestinian blowing himself up in a cafe is a real physical event; the report on the evening news is a real media event, and Neo fighting agent Smith is a real cinematic event. They do not represent levels or orders of reality (with one being more real than another); they are simply different, although related. Television audiences may sometimes be confused by the correspondences between media events and physical events, often assuming that the former is a simple depiction of the latter rather than an entity in its own right (with its own social and political meaning) but they are rarely so naïve as to assume the same of cinematic events. We know that the violence in The Matrix bears only a slight resemblance to physical violence, and either accept it as entertainment or look for alternative meanings. The remainder of this paper will deal with the alternative meanings that the film-makers may have had in mind.

II “I know kung fu!”: the martial arts theme

The Matrix is full of displays of martial arts, and this is continued in Reloaded. But of course, these are hyperreal martial arts. In our world, learning kung fu or jiu-jitsu takes years of hard training, but within the Matrix, Neo learns a variety of martial arts. 
arts styles in under a minute; the first time he looks even slightly happy in the film is when he comes out of the training program saying “I know kung fu!” Apart from the practicalities of the story-line—it would disrupt the plot to have Neo go away for ten years to learn how to fight—this scene may well be a parody of martial arts films. In many such films, the hero needs to learn from a master in order to defeat his evil opponent, and the audience are treated to scenes of strenuous training as the hero masters his art. What the Wachowskis seem to be pointing out is that even this supposedly traditional martial arts training is still far too short: not even Jean-Claude Van Damme can learn a new martial art in a few weeks. Neo’s instant kung fu is a clever parody of kung fu films.

An element of parody is also present in the scenes where Neo displays his martial skills, such as his lazy one-hand blocking (while looking in the other direction) at the end of the first film, or his fight with multiple Agent Smiths in the second. Martial arts films (particularly Chinese ones) have always used special effects to exaggerate the characters’ abilities (Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon is an extreme and rather tongue-in-cheek example). Since there are no physical constraints inside the Matrix there are no limits to Neo’s abilities, but he still feels obliged to follow the forms of traditional martial arts.

So is this film kung fu hyperreal? In some ways, the martial arts shown in films is hyperreal, in that to most people, this is what martial arts are all about. Actual martial artists teaching classes back in the desert of the real have to contend with the idea that the best way to defend yourself against a pair of muggers is to jump in the air and kick both of them simultaneously. On the other hand, the fight scenes of the Matrix films are not simulation, but clever parody, in much the same way that Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon involves affectionate parody of the Chinese kung fu film tradition. It may take some experience of martial arts to see that the fights in a Bruce Lee or Van Damme film are hopelessly unrealistic, but no one at all could be fooled into thinking that matrix-fu is “real”, even in a weird Baudrillardian sense. It is similar to the world of professional wrestling as described by Roland Barthes: “only the image is involved in the game.”

Fiction traditionally depends on the “willing suspension of disbelief”, but here we have the opposite; it is almost as though the Wachowskis are trying to say “Look, this kung fu isn’t real, and neither is the rest of the kung fu you see in films.” This encouragement to disbelieve is relevant to the violence of the scenes. Whatever matrix-fu is about, it is not about physical violence. Rather, it appeals to the mythology of martial arts: that training in a martial art is essentially mental training, and that in mastering your art, you will master yourself. You may not learn to dodge bullets, but you can do things that you thought were impossible, and that is the real appeal of matrix-fu.

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6This, of course, is just another reworking of Joseph Campbell’s “hero’s journey” where the hero encounters his mentor, which may explain its persistence; after the first master-student scene of this type in a popular kung fu film (probably Enter the Dragon) it has gone through various permutations, from The Karate Kid, which is nearly all about this relationship, to Luke’s training with Yoda in The Empire Strikes Back.

7Keanu Reeves went through intensive martial arts training for the fight scenes, and later said this was one of the most enjoyable parts of the film.


9In a hapkido class I attended, I had to practice breakfalls jumping over a sword, an un-nerving
III Neo meets the NRA: the weapons theme

When Neo is not doing kung fu, he has an impressive array of weaponry. In the first film, before entering the Matrix for the last time, Neo and Trinity ask for “Guns . . . Lots of guns”. Given that “product placement” is a feature of most films today, we might think that the Matrix films were sponsored by arms manufacturers. There is a fetishism of lethal hardware in the films, but then this is normal in Hollywood, and some films do it much more blatantly, Aliens being an extreme example (Hicks presents Ripley with a weapon, describing lovingly: “M-41A 10mm pulse-rifle, over and under with a 30mm pump-action grenade launcher”).

At one level, we can look at this as just another example of America’s obsession with guns. The film plays to a society where a gun is a symbol of masculinity and freedom from oppression. Reaction to attempts at gun control in America imply that if the government want to take your gun, they want to take your penis. Enjoyable as it is to satirise America’s gun fetishism, we should not forget that it has real, and sometimes admirable, political roots. America gained independence and democracy through a people’s army, and it was only because so many of the people were already armed that this was possible. While Europeans may associate guns more with the power of the State, in America they represent the power of the individual, particularly in films. State power is more often represented by larger military hardware, which is why the scene in which Trinity hijacks a helicopter is significant—the power of the State/Matrix has been appropriated by the rebels.

Of course the guns in the Matrix are virtual guns, a point brought home in the famous scene where Neo and Trinity ask for “lots of guns” and an entire warehouse-full of lethal hardware (or rather, software) slides into place around them. A Matrix gun is an idea, not a piece of metal, so it would make sense for the person it kills to be an idea too, thus making it analogous to Baudrillard’s “intellectual terrorism.”

However, this is not the case; someone who dies in the Matrix dies in real life (except for Agents, who are software anyway). This is probably necessary for plot reasons; if no one can be killed in the Matrix, then neither could our heroes, which would make the fight scenes dull, rather like watching over someone’s shoulder while he or she plays a violent video game. It does complicate the morality of the film, though. Flannery-Daily and Wagner assert that “The filmmakers portray violence as redemptive . . . the ‘reality’ of the Matrix which requires that some humans must die as victims of salvific violence is not the ultimate reality to which Buddhism or Gnostic Christianity points,” although Julien Fielding points out that this kind of violence is common in Hinduism.10 This confusion is only to be expected when the spiritual and the political come together, especially when they are constrained by the conventions of Hollywood.

Given that our heroes are killing real people, some justification needs to be found for the casual way in which they do it. During Neo’s training, Morpheus tells him:

experience even though the “sword” in question was made of wood. The teacher said “Forget the sword. The sword’s not there.” “Sure,” I replied, “There is no spoon.”

The Matrix is a system, Neo, and that system is our enemy. When you look around, what do you see? Businessmen, lawyers, students. People. Everywhere you look, there are people. Somewhere else, somewhere in the future they may be human beings but here these people are a part of the system. That makes every one of them our enemy.

This implies a disturbing ideology. The “people” in the Matrix are not really human, but part of a system; thus, if we kill them, we are not killing human beings, only potential human beings. Killing a person in the Matrix is not murder, then, but the moral equivalent of abortion, perhaps.

This is both morally and politically dubious. It is morally dubious, because the experiences people have in the Matrix are subjectively real, so there is no essential difference between losing a life in the Matrix and losing your life in the physical world, as Julia Driver points out.\(^\text{11}\) Given that this is an action film, and we expect deaths in an action film, there is little difference to the viewer; we do not, in any case, regard this kind of death in the same way as death in the real world, or even death in a realistic film or television drama. The political message, though, is rather more worrying.

Extremist groups have frequently tried to justify their actions by something a little more subtle than old cliches about ends justifying means or not being able to make an omelette without breaking eggs. The idea is that the people you are killing are somehow not than fully human. They may be thought of as irredeemably subhuman, like Jews or Blacks are for Nazis, but there is a more subtle version: biologically they are human, but mentally or spiritually, they have either lost their true nature, or been prevented from realising it.

We see this attitude in many varieties of mysticism, which hold that the vast majority of people are alienated from their true (divine) nature through the illusion of the world (\textit{maya}). However, in mysticism it generally takes a harmless form, largely because most mystics espouse non-violence and compassion.\(^\text{12}\) In politics, on the other hand, where the believers are in conflict with the rest of society, depicting the masses as ignorant, alienated from their true consciousness and in general less than human is a convenient justification for acting against their wishes, up to and including killing them. This is reinforced by the attitude that “those who are not with us are against us.”\(^\text{13}\) As Morpheus says, “It is important to understand that if you are not one of us, you are one of them.” This is the classic Leninist view, and \textit{The Matrix} can be seen as a revolutionary Leninist parable:

Certainly, \textit{The Matrix} can be read as leftist in so far as its totalising vision offers, as Marxism used to, a seamlessly paranoid negation of surface reality. Acquiescence requires all-encompassing conversion rather than a slight readjustment of one’s view of things. We see democracy, but the reality is fascism. We think we’re free, but actually we’re prisoners, ticking over on life supports. In short, this is the theory of false consciousness taken to an heuristic, barmy extreme. Only by the actions of a sort


\(^{12}\)There are, of course, exceptions: the Thuggee of India and the Assassins of Alamut regarded murder of non-believers as a virtuous act, and a number of Medieval heretics did not regard crimes against the orthodox as sinful. These exceptions generally occur, however, when there is a political agenda involved.

\(^{13}\)This sentence has been attributed variously to Lenin, Stalin and Krzhizhanovsky.
of Leninist groupuscule, a visionary avant-garde of technologically savvy white men, spiritually attuned blacks, and sexy leather-clad women, will humanity find salvation, whether it wants to or not.\textsuperscript{14}

On the other hand, this violent elitism fits in equally well with the vision of America’s libertarian Right; as Hunter also points out, “The Matrix fits satisfyingly into a long history of American fantasies about the individual living outside the repressions of the law . . . and exerting his will existentially against the world, urged on by disbelief in the law, a sense of higher purpose and a vigilante enthusiasm for not letting bureaucracy (or society) get in the way.”\textsuperscript{15} Parts of the film look as though they could be used as adverts for the National Rifle Association.

IV America’s War on Adolescence

It is tempting to wonder if all this theorising about violence is reading too much into what might be just an adolescent fantasy. One reviewer described the Matrix worldview as follows:

\textit{The Matrix} perfectly captured the late-adolescent male computer nerd’s mindset:

You can’t trust anyone but your online friends. Maybe you really will save the world. Computer games are more real than what adults, who are zombies or evil mechanical brain controllers, call real life. It would be cool to have a girlfriend who is a butt-kicking videogame character and doesn’t care about dumb girl stuff.\textsuperscript{16}

However, if we can say anything about the Matrix films, it is that they are rarely “just” anything. The Wachowski brothers know all about Hollywood’s exploitation of teenagers, so we can expect that any teen exploitation in the films is also a comment about itself.

The transition from childhood to adulthood is rarely easy, and different societies have found different ways of dealing with it, some of them extremely frightening and painful. Given that rites of passage can involve things like having your labia removed or your penis split in half, we should not be too alarmed at the treatment of adolescence in Western societies. Nevertheless, there is something interesting and disturbing in America’s attitude to its adolescents (which must also be, to some extent, the attitude of the rest of us, since just as Disneyland is hyperreal America, America is hyperreal Earth). On the one hand, teenagers are pampered: they are given money, cars and expensive clothes made by Third World children; they are not required to work, and huge industries exist to cater to their desires. Carefully-sculpted pop-stars reflect their image back at them, whether these represent “nice” teens (boy bands), “nasty” teens (punk/metal) or something slightly rebellious but still essentially safe (Madonna, Avril

\textsuperscript{14}\textsuperscript{14}Hunter.
\textsuperscript{15}\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.
Lavigne). Television series project a sanitised view of adolescence (Dawson’s Creek) or even, occasionally, an intelligent one (Buffy the Vampire Slayer).

So why are American teenagers not blissfully happy? Part of it is probably due to the nature of adolescence. Our hormones do the best they can to make sure that the years between thirteen and nineteen are one long period pain. However, there are other, more important factors involved. It is dangerous to speculate about what teenagers really want, but a conservative estimate would be:

1. sex
2. combat
3. independence
4. truth.

American society allows teenagers more sexual activity than semi-conservative societies (in really traditional societies, you get married at fourteen, so you probably have more sex than you want). Combat is perhaps more important for males, but in any case the opportunities are limited in modern societies, at least among the moderately well-off (the poor have gang warfare or football hooliganism). The desire for combat is sublimated into sports or military training (which pretends to teach you how to fight, but actually teaches you to follow orders). This is probably just as well, but it causes frustration, hence, perhaps, the growing popularity of martial arts among young Western teenagers (The Karate Kid and Capoeira are films which capitalise on this).

Independence and truth are two things that America cannot provide for its adolescents. In traditional societies, you are married in your early teens and thus gain a measure of independence, but it is only relative—in a peasant society, no one is really independent. Western parents, quite understandably, want to limit their children’s independence until they can survive in a complex world, which often means going through the extended childhood of university. As for truth, nobody gets that unless they spend a lifetime searching for it, but even the kind of relative truth that comes from people not lying to you is hard to find for the American teenager.

So far, I have looked at what benevolent families try to provide for their children. However, behind the understanding, pampering and commercial exploitation, there is something more sinister. A large proportion of American society hates teenagers. Just as there was a War on Drugs (which was lost) and now a War on Terror (which is being lost), there is, under the scenes, a War on Adolescence.

Conservatism and religious fundamentalism have reached epidemic proportions in the USA. “Family values”, which started to be a source of political capital in the Reagan years, have now become the norm. Of course, teenagers are, by their nature, against family values, which also makes them, in the eyes of conservatives, an ally of all those who oppose conservative values: hippies, sexual perverts, drug-users, communists and terrorists. A worrying phenomenon is the growth of “teen boot camps” where families send their rebellious children to be abused by people who share their conservative principles. These boot camps claim to teach children discipline and make them give up their bad habits, such as drug-taking, sex or wearing the wrong clothes. Frequently they are a cover for physical, psychological and sometimes even sexual abuse.
The teenager is often taken to the camp by force. One Internet site advertises: “We can also make arrangements for your teen to be picked up and taken to the facility of your choice if he or she is not willing to cooperate with you”\(^{17}\) (there were also arrangements made for Neo to be taken to a facility of the Agents’ choice). Once there, a program of brainwashing begins. Teenagers are told that their behaviour is self-destructive, and are encouraged to criticise each other:

A girl stands up and points at her victim’s acne.

“Why is it that you feel so comfortable wallowing in your own crap?
That’s why you have that stuff on your face. It’s because you’re hurting yourself on the inside.”\(^{18}\)

If a teenage prisoner has a problem, it is seen as everyone’s problem. This sounds vaguely familiar:

**R** **H** **I** **N** **E** **H** **E** **A** **R** **T** **:** You have a problem with authority, Mr. Anderson. You believe that you are special, that somehow the rules do not apply to you.

… This company is one of the top software companies in the world because every single employee understands that they are part of a whole. Thus, if an employee has a problem, the company has a problem.

Prisoners at teen boot camps who rebel are punished, sometimes mildly, sometimes to the point of death. Of course, no one is deliberately murdered, but several accidental deaths have occurred, and even “normal” punishments, such as having to lie on the floor without moving for days on end, would be condemned by human rights organisations if they were applied to political prisoners.\(^{19}\) And of course, the prisoners are not allowed contact with the outside world.

**N** **E** **O:** You can’t scare me with Gestapo crap. I know my rights. I want my phone call!

**A** **G** **E** **N** **T** **S** **M** **I** **T** **H:** And tell me, Mr. Anderson, what good is a phone call if you are unable to speak?

What is surprising is that few, if any, prisoners respond with serious violence. An adult who was imprisoned in one of these places would probably not feel guilty about killing his or her guards and escaping. The rare occasions where teenagers become murderously violent, such as the famous Columbine High School massacre, receive great publicity, but what is surprising is how rare these incidents are—teenagers frequently act violently, but they generally do so in a way that is criminal but not rebellious (gang fights or hooliganism, as mentioned before).

What is not surprising is that the violence of films like *The Matrix* appeals to teenagers. The important thing is that teenagers are simply acting out in a more dramatic way what any non-conformist adult feels. In fact, this drama is usually only

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\(^{19}\) The record for withstanding this torture at “Tranquility Bay” camp was held by a girl who withstood it for eighteen months, a feat which would have impressed the secret police of any country.
perceived as such because it is ineffective, and is thus more of a spectacle than something to be taken seriously, except when it overflows into high-school shootings or drug-wars on the street. In practice, it is adults who have the big guns.

V Conclusion

Like the films it describes, this paper has asked a lot of questions and answered few of them. Is the violence of the films descriptive of violence in the real world? Is it fantasy or hyperreality? Does it have a message, or is it just entertainment? Is anything ever “just entertainment”?

Putting together the various strands of the argument, though, some patterns start to emerge. It is true that, at least on one level, the Matrix films are an adolescent fantasy, and it is also true that this has contributed to their success. However, the appeal of the films to teenagers is largely because their central theme is resistance and empowerment—issues which affect us all, but which are more urgent for the young.

The idea of empowerment is obvious in both the martial arts and the weapons themes; however, they seem to deal with it in different ways. Matrix-fu is about empowerment through self-realisation. As Morpheus says during the sparring scene:

Come on, Neo. 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 just hit me.

This confidence in ability through belief even spilled over onto the film set. Speaking of her performance during the extremely dangerous chase scene in Reloaded, Carrie-Ann Moss (Trinity) said “My biggest fear about it was, I guess, dying … So on that day, I knew I could not allow myself to question for one split second whether or not I could do it.”

Unfortunately, even the word “empowerment” has been absorbed into the bland world of self-improvement and feel-good philosophy; making the context both traditional and aggressive is perhaps a way to avoid the pseudo-empowerment of New Age weekend retreats and business seminars, as well as holding the audience’s attention.

The weapons theme seems more about appropriating power: stealing the tools of the system and taking the battle to the enemy, the most striking example being the scene where Trinity and Neo rescue Morpheus, leaving behind a dozen or so corpses, thousands of cartridge cases and one wrecked helicopter. It calls Bakunin to mind: “The urge to destroy is a creative urge.” In the end, though, Neo still wins through his own abilities, not firepower. The final conflict with Agent Smith in the first film seems more like a robust metaphysical debate than a fight:

SMITH: You’re empty.
NEO: So are you.

...  

SMITH: Do you hear that, Mr. Anderson? That is the sound of inevitability. It is the sound of your death. Good-bye, Mr. Anderson.

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NEO: My name is Neo.

In the end, metaphysics wins over ballistics, with Neo casually plucking bullets out of
the air. From that point on, he has no need of guns. If there is a message here, it might
be that taking power from the system may sometimes be necessary, but ultimately you
are your own source of power.

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