

Neo, the One who was sent to save the world. Those who believe in him also have faith that he will return and do what many believe we cannot: bring about the end of the eternal war on Earth. The Devil is like Agent Smith, who is hell-bent on stopping Neo and continuing to be ruler of the world which has been dominated from the beginning by violence and the law of the jungle.

Although there are those who believe the Devil is real and that he is in part responsible for humanity's fall from grace, many others see the law of the jungle as a fact of evolution. War and the survival of the fittest have dominated life here for millions of years. Along with the harsh aspects of evolution, there are also transcending qualities that are unique in human beings. There is something else that counteracts the destructive, blind side of our nature and allows for organization and ultimately the construction of great civilizations. Altruism, compassion and non violence are relatively young in humanity but could potentially make a sizable impact against the R-complex of society's collective brain and its propensity for violence. The R-complex refers to the aggressive reptilian base of our brain which in its evolution has been transcended with higher functioning. Unfortunately our society's higher functioning has yet to transcend the council of fear and aggression from militant political leaders, who like the R-complex, push us into war.

Clearly we can see that there is a longing in most human beings to live in a world at peace. For those societies who have enjoyed peace for great lengths of time, the tantalizing prospects of our potential combined with a benevolent application of technology make us hunger for a harmonious way of life that war can never touch. At the same time there is a revulsion felt by many towards the prospects of World War III and the devastation it would bring. This takes us back to the appeal of our movies and the similar intellectual threads running through them. All the heroes of Lord of the Rings and The Matrix hunger for peace and an end to war. As Morpheus says in Matrix Reloaded, "What if tomorrow the war could be over? Isn't that worth fighting for? Isn't that worth dying for?"

The idea of fighting for peace and an end to all war is the driving theme in both these stories. But when we examine this effort in the real world, doesn't fighting for peace just bring more war? al Qaeda attacks America, America attacks al Qaeda and Iraq. This never-ending succession of violence only breeds more violence until one has utterly smashed and destroyed the other. But with today's weapons and climate of hate directed at us from the Middle East, this may not be obtainable until millions of people on both sides have been murdered.

The evolutionary forces of war and violence will most likely rear their ugly heads again and again until we transcend the

primitive side of our evolution to complete the non retrogressive phase in humanity's advancing social evolution. Just as the United States of America brought about an enduring peace between north and south after the Civil War, an enduring world peace will only come about when East and West join together under the benevolent order of a United States of Earth. Perhaps it is a fools hope to believe this can be done non violently but this method should be pursued if we want to avoid a violent fate where humanity takes a long detour into another dark age after the widespread use of weapons of mass destruction in a third world war.

At the end of the first Matrix movie, Neo speaks on the phone to the powers who run the Matrix, a system of control and oppression which has kept humanity at war and blinded to their true potential for peace. The same can be said about our system dominating the Earth today. It is an order of control and oppression that profits when we wage wars against each other. Generations X and Y must speak out against this intolerable situation with Neo's spirit of defiance but within the context of non violence. We must reject the way of war if we are not to play into the hands of the old order and its rejection of the idea that an enduring world peace can be won with ends that are preexistent in the means.

"I know you're out there... I know that you're 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'm going to hang up this phone and then I'm 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." -- Neo, The Matrix



"Can we forge against these enemies (tyranny, poverty, disease and war) a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, that can assure a more fruitful life for all mankind? Will you join in that historic effort?"

-- John F. Kennedy



## THE MATRIX AND THE LORD OF THE RINGS: A MYTHOLOGY FOR ENDING ALL WAR



Every generation seeks to identify with some mythology that helps them find meaning in the world. For Generation X, it was the Star Wars Trilogy. For Generation Y, it is the Matrix and Lord of the Rings. The violent stories in these mythological trilogies speak to a new generation coming of age in a world with growing prospects for new wars. It is also a world where our politicians talk about the impending crisis with terrorism as a battle between good and evil.

Evil is a fitting word for those who experienced the mind-numbing violence of September 11th, 2001. The kind of destruction and suffering wrought by the terrorists was clearly an act of war. The same evil caused by the hijackers smashing their planes into the World Trade Towers was also manifest in the killing of thousands of defenseless civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan, even though it was done with the intention of removing regimes who were obstacles to peace and freedom. War is evil, but a necessary evil to those who believe it

can win back peace and a nation's shattered dignity.

The human pulse of war and peace has been continuously beating for as long as our history has recorded. This fact might make one wonder if they are two sides of the same, forever unchangeable, evolutionary coin. But when we see how powerful our weapons have become and how much suffering and destruction they can bring to us and our world, how can we not seek to resolve a way to keep the peace and end all wars forever?

It is the theme of fighting war for peace that runs strong in both *The Matrix* and *Lord of the Rings*. In *The Lord of the Rings*, it is a "fool's hope" that compels the heroes of the story to fight Sauron and seek to destroy the One Ring, the backbone of his power that has perpetuated an endless war over Middle Earth. In *The Matrix*, Morpheus holds onto a religious like faith that Neo will save humanity by bringing the eternal war against the machines to a final end.

Because our history has been a long succession of wars, we identify with the themes of these stories even though we don't fight against machines or some monstrous entity like Sauron. The eternal war we have been fighting for thousands of years has always been waged against ourselves. The great enemy is us. Humanity is at war with itself.

A disturbing exhibit at the United Nations in New York City expresses the reality of our ridiculous situation. A chart depicts what humanity spends in preparations for war. Our world military expenditures top \$780 billion dollars a year. Every ten minutes, \$9 million dollars is spent around the world on weapons. Consequently, the money needed to fight some of the other great problems threatening us is only peanuts in comparison to the bloated military budgets that feed the military-industrial machine.

The following statistics were found at the same U.N. exhibit. Only \$50 billion dollars a year would provide clean, safe energy for everyone. \$30 billion could forgive the developing nations' debts. \$24 billion could prevent soil erosion threatening our food supply. \$21 billion could provide health care and control AIDS. Another \$21 billion could provide housing for the world's homeless. \$19 billion could end starvation and malnutrition. \$16 billion could prevent acid rain and global warming. \$15 billion could stop ozone depletion, illiteracy and provide relief for the world's refugees. \$14 billion could eliminate nuclear weapons and stop deforestation. \$10.5 billion could keep the population from spinning out of control. Another \$10 billion could provide safe, clean water for all. \$4 billion could remove the world's land-mines and help spread democracy. For a grand total of \$234.5 billion dollars, we could move our Earth closer to enduring peace and further from the injustices that ignite wars. That's over a hundred billion dollars less than the annual military budget of the United States.

If we have the resources that might help us put an end the eternal war being fought against ourselves, why don't we take advantage of this opportunity? If we have the means to end the gross imbalances already setting us up for the next world war, why is so little being done? In the *Lord of the Rings*, this theme of wasted opportunity plays out in the story. In the early days of Middle Earth, humanity had the chance to destroy evil once and for all. But because of greed and the lust for power, Isildur threw away his chance to destroy the One Ring forever.

The same theme in this story is very familiar in our world today. Most of those living at the top refuse to destroy their greed and lust for power by using their abundant resources to help transform the situation of those at the bottom. The gross imbalance of humanity's priorities has set the stage for history to repeat itself yet again.



Viewing a photograph of the Earth at night shows the imbalances that have continued to mount. The United States, Europe and Japan are lit up like Christmas trees. The combined population of these industrialized and developed nations is close to a billion people. The dimmer areas of the planet constitute the almost five billion human beings who live in developing nations, two billion of which live on two dollars a day and less. Africa can be seen on this map as having the worst infrastructure. Only a few clusters of light break the dark shroud of an entire continent populated with 800 million people. Today we sustain an order where 14% of the world's population control 65% of the world's resources and produce most of the world's destructive levels of CO2. This vast and ugly imbalance on our Earth can't continue forever. Unless something intervenes and ends business as usual, these imbalances will continue to mount until they reach a breaking point.

The natural world has been known to have mechanisms in place that break imbalances down when they manifest for too long. When forests get clogged with too much dead and decaying timber, fires cleanse away the imbalance and help the ecosystem start over fresh. Could World War III be a similar mechanism? Is the great hatred for the West among the poor

nations just a fiery movement of evolution that will lead to the eventual break down of industrialized countries whose greed has clogged the excess vital nutrients needed for the Earth body of humanity to achieve balance?

Many people from within the West look at their society like the ship builders and crew looked upon the Titanic, believing that this technological masterpiece was unsinkable. But perhaps evolutionary mechanisms also work from the inside. Like a cancer eating away even the most fit, arrogance and greed have been known to crumble empires from within. It happened to the Roman Empire and Edward Gibbon took note of it in his famous book, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

Gibbon made three distinct observations about why the greatest empire on earth was defeated by primitive barbarians from the north. The first factor was caused by the greed of Roman people, who kept trying to sustain the status quo in the face of war as well as social and political meltdown. The second were the escalating attacks on the Empire from the outside. The third was the apathy and unwillingness of its citizens to get involved with politics, whose primary concern was the afterlife and not the world their children would be inheriting from them.

If we examine America today, these three factors are trying to take hold. The September 11th attacks have been a wake-up call for some, yet many still believe life can go on as usual. Vast resources are being poured into efforts to fight terror through military action but not enough is being done to alleviate the desperate third world poverty and imbalances that help create terrorists. Will an extended occupation of Iraq bring us peace and stability or a chain reaction of terrorist strikes with more war? There are many Americans who see unavoidable war and impending chaos ahead in the Middle East as a welcome sign of the End Times. In this paradigm, the promised bliss of the afterlife negates any concern for the world's condition they leave behind.

If humanity was unable to stop World War I and World War II from starting, the logical conclusion is that World War III is inevitable. But how can we resign ourselves quietly to the evolutionary forces that will break down our imbalances while causing the deaths of hundreds of millions of people all over the world? Is there something we can do to transcend our evolution and challenge fundamentalist perspectives that view such destruction as necessary before the anticipated Judgment Day comes? We must all come to realize the judgment is every moment and how we choose to proceed now can change our fate.

The evolutionary forces that shape human nature also help shape the theologies of religions, which are in turn reflected in the plots of many popular movies. In Christianity, Jesus is like