

YODA'S REVELATION ABOUT DUALITY

(A Supplement to the Jedi vs. Sith Script)

by Eli Williamson-Jones

Duality as defined in this presentation is warfare. In Star Wars this warfare is perpetuated by the Light and Dark side of the Force. In the 1999, April 26th issue of Time Magazine, George Lucas gave an interview in which he explains the idea behind these two opposing energies in the Star Wars universe. **"The film is ultimately about the dark side and the light side, and those sides are designed around compassion and greed. The issue of greed, of getting things and owning things and having things and not being able to let go of things, is the opposite of compassion-of not thinking of yourself all the time. These are the two sides-the good force and the bad force. They're the simplest parts of a complex cosmic construction."**

In Star Wars, the Jedi and Sith are vicious enemies who carry out eternal warfare against each other with no end in site. In Episode I, The Phantom Menace, the Jedi have been free from the Sith threat for over a thousand years. This soon changes when evil rears its ugly head in the form of Darth Maul. He is a frightening apprentice of the new Lord, Darth Sidious who is making good on a millennial plot of revenge the Sith have been planning for over thirty generations.

The battle between the Jedi and Sith are a reflection of the duality in the human condition. Ever since humans have existed, our species has been captivated by stories that revolve around good versus evil. Perhaps this is a reflection of the duality inherent in living life. Choosing to support and live life will automatically put you in conflict with those who don't. And if there are people who want you to die, it will naturally create an antagonism that pits you against them. Even in the English language, live spelled backwards is evil. It was the philosopher Plato who said, **"Only the dead have seen the end of war."** ¹

In Buddhism, Nirvana is a state of emptiness transcending duality and war. **"Nirvana as non-duality is the very absence of ideas and conceptualization. It is beyond notions of "good" and "bad" "birth" and "death" and "happy" and "sad."** ² **"Nirvana means extinction - but not just the extinction of suffering; it is also the extinction of dualistic thinking."** ² **"It is, "the ground of all being."** Those who attain nirvana ultimately are freed from the cycle of suffering and all war. This is what the Bodhisatva sacrifices in order to re-enter the realm of duality to save others. In Buddhist teachings, the Bodhisatva forsakes nirvana out of compassion for all living beings trapped in the dualistic realm of existence. Rather than enter the freedom of nirvana they become reborn and devote their life to the service of others. The Dalai Lama translates the Bodhisatva vow as such: "So long as space remains, So long as sentient beings remain, I will remain, in order to help, in order to serve, in order to make, my own contribution."

In the tradition of the heroes journey, some kind of evil always emerges to break the peace and ignite a war. This leads us to wonder, can there be a heroes journey without good versus evil? Can the light exist without the dark? Would we know peace without war? The answer to these questions are difficult to answer. What we do know of our myths and stories show us that the heroes journey involves a quest for peace and the cessation of war and suffering. Action heroes respond after evil has been unleashed. Wisdom heroes work to prevent evil from being unleashed in the first place. This isn't to say though that a wisdom hero never turns into an action hero or vice versa.

Unfortunately, it seems that preventative medicine in our society isn't as highly prized as a good drama with cliff hanger action and excitement. We sit at the edge of our seats wondering whether or not the odds

¹ Peace Knights of the Soul - Wisdom in Star Wars by Jon Snodgrass - pages: 23, 160, 27

² The Dharma of Star Wars by Matthew Bortolin - pages: 123, 127, 124-25, 190, 24, 195, 192-93

stacked up against the hero can be overcome in time before the end. Indeed, the drama stacking up against our species lead us all to wonder if the heroes of the world will be able to handle the countless evils we have unleashed upon ourselves.

What exactly is the most desirable heroes journey for our world and why? Another question we must ask, why does this journey always seem like a never ending cycle? Does not every generation forget the horrors of war during peace time and make the same mistakes pushing us into new battles again and again?

THE THREE MODELS OF THE HEROES JOURNEY

1) Peacetime reigns --> Evil emerges --> Villains plot war against peace --> Heroes try to stop villains plan --> Heroes stop villains plan and prevents war.

2) Peacetime reigns --> Evil emerges --> Villains plot war against peace --> Heroes try to stop villains plan --> Heroes can't stop villains plan --> Villains succeed in starting war --> Horror of war experienced --> Longing for peace --> Quest to end war --> Heroes succeed, stop villains and peace returns.

3) Peacetime reigns --> Heroes prevent evil from emerging in the first place through wisdom, compassion and non dual living. Peace is never challenged or broken by war.

1 represents a Star Wars Saga that ends at Episode III. The Jedi stop Palpatine's plan and prevents the rise of the Empire and further war.

2 represents the Star Wars saga as it is in its entirety.

3 represents a Star Wars saga in which the Sith are never born and Anakin never tempted to go down the path of the Dark Side. Peace in the Republic is never challenged or broken by war.

In looking at these three models, it isn't difficult to imagine fans of Star Wars groaning in agony over the idea of never being introduced to this galactic drama of good versus evil. Many would even shudder at the idea of Episode III being the last of the Star Wars movies that never saw the birth of Luke and Leia or the rise of Vader and the Empire. With this being the case, one must seriously ask the question, is there something in us that finds peace unattractive and boring? Is it the dark side within us that enjoys seeing the worst case scenarios unfold for our heroes on the big screen so they have an even more difficult time trying to escape and defeat evil? What about real life? What about the drama of September 11th?

If it were all just a movie, can we imagine feeling satisfied with a scenario where Israel makes peace with Palestine and all the hijackers grow up in healthy households that never raised their children with bitterness or fear towards America and the West? Mutual hate never drives them together and they never hatch their sinister plan for September 11th. Or would we rather have seen the Hijackers grow up and become united in their hate, only to witness an elite group of CIA operatives hot on their trail, to foil the unsuspecting terrorist's plan and arrest them all at the airport in Boston before they could take off? Or perhaps we would rather see the hijackers succeed in their ghastly plan, triggering a great international war against Al Qaeda in which we must wait for a hero to emerge and kill the villainous Darth Osama Bin Laden.

The way in which we answer these questions will show whether or not we share parallel characteristics between the Jedi. Why are we attracted to the dark side and what causes us to become blinded to it's causes? Was the blindness that prevented our nation from uncovering the terrorist plot against us, the same blindness that prevented the Jedi from uncovering the plot of the Sith? Is there some aspect of our nation's psyche that turns a blind eye to the causes of peace? Efforts to prevent the Iraq war have been as effective as Padme's attempt to prevent the Clone Wars in Episode II.

In the first of the three Star Wars movies, **“Amidala is the only voice for peace to her peril. “She opposes the building of a clone army for the defense of the republic. War advocates want fighting to resume no matter who wins or loses. Led by Yoda, the elder tribunal maneuvers Padme out of the political arena to protect her from plots of assassination that are provoked by their rivalry for power.”** ¹ She is later betrayed by Obi Wan and Anakin in their war. Being caught in this duality leads to her death. Clearly, being a peace activist can be disillusioning and as potentially dangerous as fighting war. When there is evil yet to be destroyed in the world, there are few who understand the peace activist’s position. War advocates may say that they also long for peace, but they have not yet exhausted their will to wage war or extinguished their fears of evil.

“The Buddhas teachings are nonviolent. The traditional Buddhist answer to whether violence can be motivated by compassion, is no.” ² **“It is difficult to find example of compassionate violence in Star Wars yet this does not mean that compassion can’t be found in violence.”** ² Clearly compassionate violence is needed to stop terrorists once they’ve turned their bodies into weapons of mass destruction, but the carnage that follows in the wake of those situations in which this was not possible, will no doubt make the families of the victims turn to the model of the heroes journey that seeks a preventative medicine. For them, keeping the disease from starting is more desirable than the invasive surgery needed for the worst case scenario, to cut out the cancerous tumor of evil with a knife before it destroys the body.

For the sake of the victims, their families, and those potential new victims who will face the consequences of the chain of cause and effect our nation and Al Qaeda has set into motion, we must take an honest look at our shadow side before we project it any more on others. **“To say evil exists only in the other, is the way we create more evil and suffering.”** ² Like Luke, we must enter the cave of our psyche and face the evil that lurks within ourselves. In the Empire Strikes Back, **“By going into the dark side cave Luke is penetrating his own nature on a quest to recognize himself and his suffering. Yoda knows that if Luke can confront the suffering within him with compassion and understanding he will do much to overcome whatever hold the dark side has on him.”** ²

When we break the hold the dark side has on us, we can then see the illusion of evil we project on others. Even in Star Wars, the title The Phantom Menace suggests the Jedi’s battle against evil is an illusion they project from their own shadow side. Obi Wan’s attempt to destroy evil, shows that the death of Darth Maul, after he is cut in half, is really a metaphorical death. First you perceive your own evil on another and then you destroy it, only to make it double. If this were not the case, the title of this movie would be, The Real Menace. ¹ In the Episode II, Attack of the Clones, the title suggests the Jedi fight against themselves. A clone is basically a copy of oneself.

The title, Revenge of the Sith, is the one we find to be misleading. It is not only the Sith who get revenge, the Jedi do as well. Anakin Kills Count Duku out of revenge but the pangs of his conscience tell him what he did was wrong. **“It was not the Jedi way.”** Palpatine commends him for taking revenge which is the heart of the Sith way. At the end of the movie, Obi Wan’s method of trying to kill his former padawan are clearly vengeful. In Revenge of the Sith the novel, it reads, **“It would have been merciful if Obi Wan killed Anakin but Obi Wan wasn’t feeling so merciful.”** Rather than save Anakin from the Dark Side, Obi Wan seeks revenge; to let his former friend slowly burn alive in molten lava, one of the most hideous and painful of all deaths. Seeking revenge is a Sith quality and contradicts the nature of compassion. Anakin had compassion for his master and it lead him to save Obi Wan from death over nine times; the second to last being saved from buzz droids eating away at the integrity of his ship. The situation seemed hopeless and Anakin could have given up on his master but he didn’t. Is not Anakin’s situation any different? Does not the dark side eat away at the integrity of his conscience? Why does Obi Wan give up on Anakin so easily?

Later in the movie, Master Yoda faces Darth Siduous, the new Emperor. Like Mace Windu before him, he tries to assassinate Palpatine. This action is tied to the great fear that often perpetuates duality. It is a fear driven by casting oneself in the role of good and the enemy as evil. This fear is then energized by one’s own dark side, sensing that evil’s rage at your perspective is just confirmation of their guilt and that the

fate of the galaxy depends on whether or not you can destroy them before they destroy you. But this perspective works like a double edged sword. Palpatine uses the Jedi's overzealous attempts to kill him, as proof that they are the ones guilty of evil and are in secret plotting to take over the government to gain absolute power of the Republic.

This argument will undoubtedly sound crazy and scare anyone who is convinced that there are individuals of pure evil in our world, seeking to take over, enslave or destroy humanity with a base of power and support from the masses capable of such hate. Hitler and Nazi Germany is an example sometimes used to support such claims. It is difficult to mount an argument that favors nonviolence against someone like the Nazis. In such cases as this, one might have better luck arguing that nonviolence must go together with compassionate violence in order to mount any serious offensive against the injustice of such evil in the world. Without police protection and enforcement to dismantle Jim Crow, the non violent victories of the civil rights movement would have been ineffectual. Similarly, without the Rebellion's military campaign against the Death Star, Luke's nonviolent victory against the Emperor might have been short lived.

If there were individuals in the world of pure evil intent who gained the same kind of absolute power as the Emperor, perhaps the nonviolent arm of a movement to stop them would be the best means of keeping the masses from falling into a dualistic good vs. evil perception of themselves versus the opposition. When you first revert to violence in fighting a perceived evil, the opposing side may automatically peg you as the evil one. Drawing the two sides of duality together into a never ending exchange of violence for violence is the mistake that Master Yoda made in fighting the Sith. In the novel, the Revenge of the Sith, Yoda's revelation after losing to Palpatine, reveals his wariness to use violence against violence and war against war. **"The brighter his light, the darker their shadow. How could one win a war against the Dark when war itself had become the Dark Side's weapon. He knew at that instant, this insight held the hope of the galaxy."**

In a world armed to the teeth with weapons of mass destruction and our leaders guided by maps of apocalyptic proportions, perhaps the insight of wisdom and compassion together, truly holds the only hope for the future of our Earth, where the beginning of World War III is stopped in time to restore peace and bring freedom to the rest of the planet. Ultimately, Yoda became disillusioned trying to mix the Jedi's devotion to the Force with politics. The spiritual path is often at direct odds with the political world and this is evidenced throughout history where entire religions became corrupt arms of governments seeking to sanctify their wars. Because of his disillusionment, Yoda goes into exile to ponder the war of duality he failed to transcend. **"A deeper understanding requires you to dispatch yourself to a remote location where it is safe to detach from "reality." You open to a sage buried deep in the bog of your own psyche."** 1 In this solitary state of meditation, Yoda begins to understand more clearly why the Dark Side increases its power through the continuation and escalation of warfare. Eventually it will take the compassion and wisdom of Luke Skywalker to end this war and restore peace and freedom to the galaxy.

"If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

-E.O. Wilson