An Introduction to Ethics Using "Star Wars"

Figure 1 Images from Lucasfilm.

Ethics is the study of moral standards of right and wrong behavior. It consists of both **descriptive ethics,** which studies the way that different cultures, people, and cultures *actually behave* and **normative ethics,** which studies how we *ought* to behave (or which moral standards are *correct*). Disciplines such as sociology, political science, psychology often study descriptive ethics, while **philosophy** often studies normative ethics (though there is considerable overlap between the two). Within normative ethics, there is a further distinction between **theoretical ethics** and **applied ethics** (or **practical ethics**)**.** Theoretical ethics studies the general ethical principles that *explain* and *justify* our ethical decisions at a deep level, while applied ethics tries to figure out "the right thing to do" in specific cases.

An Example: Ethical Distinctions in Star Wars. As matter of descriptive ethics, we might say that Darth Vader's (the villain of the original *Star Wars*) ethics allows for such things as blowing up planets full of civilians to "send a message" to his enemies. We might also study how popular these actions were in the more general populace ("85% of Storm Troopers agree that this was the right thing to do!"). As a matter of normative ethics, however, doing these sorts of thing is clearly wrong. Among other things, this seems to be a paradigmatic case of *terrorism* (killing innocent civilians to cause widespread fear and terror). The question, "Is it morally OK to us terroristic methods to win a war?" is a question of applied ethics. By contrast, a question of theoretical ethics might be "What general ethical standard *should* Darth Vader be using to make his

decisions—should he try to maximize the well-being of all citizens (utilitarianism), follow the rules taught to him in Jedi school (deontology), or try his best to act like Obi Wan Kenobi (virtue ethics)?

1 A (REALLY) SHORT HISTORY OF THE "STAR WARS" UNIVERSE

The first *Star Wars* film ("A New Hope") appeared in 1977. Since then, the *Star Wars* universe has expanded to include many films, books, TV shows, comics, and video games. These all take place "long ago" in a galaxy "far, far away." The universe is, in many ways, a typical "science fiction" scenario. The universe is full of intelligent alien species and robots ("**droids**"). There are space ships and laser blasters. The "heroes" of the universe are the **Jedi Knights,** who have the ability to use the mystical power of **"The Force."** In general, the Jedi seek to defend and uphold the ideals of the democratic **"Republic."** The Jedi are opposed by the **Sith,** who use the "Dark Side" of the force. The Sith seek to replace the Republic with a totalitarian dictatorship where they will have power over everyone.

The main plot of Star Wars occurs over nine films or "episodes". The original films (released 1977 – 1983) are episodes 4 to 6, the "prequels" (released 1999 to 2005) are episodes 1 to 3, and the most recent films (2015 to 2019) are episodes 7 to 9. The basic events are as follows:

Episodes 1 to 3 (The "Prequels"). This details the "fall" of the Old Republic, and the rise of the evil "Empire." The movies revolve around the character of **Anakin Skywalker,** who we first meet as a young (and somewhat angry) youth. The Jedi **Obi Wan Kenobi** takes on Anakin as an apprentice, and they battle the forcers of **Palpatine,** who will eventually become the Galactic Emperor. Anakin secretly marries Senator **Padme** (against the Jedi rules!), and Palpatine uses the fear/secrecy around the marriage (along with Anakin's general anger) to turn him to the "Dark Side." Anakin becomes **"Darth Vader"** and kills many of the Jedi. Obi Wan defeats (but doesn't kill) him, but Palpatine succeeds in achieving power. Padme dies while giving birth to the twin **Luke** and **Leia,** and arranges to have them hidden from Darth Vader.

Episodes 4 to 6 (The Original Trilogy). These movies take place 20 years after the prequels, and grown-up Luke and Leia lead a revolt against the Empire, which has begun blowing up planets with the **Death Star**. They do so with the help of **Han Solo, Chewbacca, Obi Wan, the droids R2D2 and C3PO, a large number of Ewoks,** and others. Luke becomes a Jedi and is trained by Obi Wan and **Yoda.** They blow up the Death Star (twice). In the end, they still almost lose as Palpatine capture Luke and is about to kill him. Anakin decides to sacrifice himself to save his son. Without Palpatine, Luke and Leia's Rebellion succeeds in establishing a "New Republic."

Episodes 7 to 9 (The "Sequels"). Another 20 years have passed, and Han Solo's son Ben Solo (also known as **Kylo Ren)** has turned to the dark side, and leads another effort to overthrow the Republic in favor of the tyrannical "First Order." He is opposed by the Force-user **Rey,** along with her friends **Finn** (an ex-Storm Trooper) and **Poe** (a rebel pilot). At the end, it is revealed that everything has been orchestrated by the (mostly, but not entirely) deceased Palpatine to come back to life and regain his old power. Rey discovers that she is (sort of) Palpatine's granddaughter, and defeats him with Ben's help (after he renounces the Dark Side).

2 TWO THEORIES THAT DON'T WORK: DIVINE COMMAND THEORY AND ETHICAL EGOISM

Before considering the major ethical theories we'll be talking about for the rest of the class, it's important to note two theories that might *seem* to work, but actually have deep flaws. These theories are as follows:

2.1 DIVINE COMMAND THEORY

"An action is morally good *simply because* God [or whoever/whatever it is I worship] approves of it."

Many **theists** (people who believe in God, such as most Jews, Christians, Muslims, and some Hindus and Buddhists) hold that there is a tight connection between religion and morality. However, there are significant problems in trying to *define* morality in this way. Some of these are merely practical, though difficult: how can we determine which religious texts are the "correct ones" (Talmud v. Bible v. Koran v. Vedas, etc.), and convince others that this is correct? How should we interpret difficult passages (e.g., such as those allowing slavery or harsh punishments of unbelievers)? And how can determine how these texts apply to problems (abortion, health care, gun rights, government programs) that the ancient texts don't explicitly address?

Even if we could solve these problems, however, a deeper problem remains. According to this theory, God's decisions are *arbitrary*—if God decided that murder was OK tomorrow, it would suddenly be OK. Moreover, the theory can't be saved by saying that "God promised not to do that!" After all, the only thing that makes promising *good* on this theory is that God has decided (up to now) that it is good. And there's nothing to stop God from deciding otherwise. For these reasons, most theists are NOT divine command theorists, but instead hold that "good" and "evil" are *in some sense* independent of God (so, for example, many claim that "God's nature is essentially good," which explains God's trustworthiness, but also requires that we understand good independently of God).

Example: There are many different "peoples" within the Star Wars world, and (presumably) many different religions (just as in the real world). For this reason, appealing to one's "religion" won't work to settle disputes. However, the problem goes deeper than this. For example, let's just say it turns out that one of the races is "right" about which deities exist. That is, they worship a (really existing!) "God" that wants them to do something that other people may disapprove of (such as "conquer and enslave all of the other races). It sure doesn't seem like this sort of thing makes these actions right. And once we start saying something like "a *real* God would never do that", we've basically admitted that God's actions *can* be judged, and by a moral standard independent of God!

Question: What do you think of divine command theory, and these criticisms of it? Do they work?

2.2 ETHICAL EGOISM

"An action is morally good if and only it benefits *me* in the long run."

As a matter of descriptive ethics, it is undeniable that some people really do adopt ethical egoism (see Darth Vader above). These people may *pretend* to be ethical, but this is only because they recognize doing certain things (murder, theft) will lead to bad results in the long run. Unfortunately, there's little reason to think that a class in ethics will convince them they are wrong. This is because most ethical theories *presuppose* that we should treat other people "fairly" and that we are all in some sense "morally equal." An ethical egoist simply denies this, and claims that other people *really don't matter at all.* A more interesting question is: "Is ethical egoism a *better* or *more rational* alternative to other ethical theories?" The answer here is clearly "No." As a

matter of fact, the vast majority of us *do* care about other people, and *are* (sometimes) willing to make sacrifices on their behalf. Moreover, all the evidence we have suggests this is a *good* thing—studies have consistently found that ethical egoists (who think only of "me, me, me") are less happy than those who devote their time and effort to helping others. For people who are NOT ethical egoists, studying ethical theory CAN be helpful, since these theories can help us get better at "being good."

Example: There are ton of ethical egoists in Star Wars. Some notable examples include Jabba the Hut (who wants lots of money) and Emperor Palpatine (who wants power). However, people like Han Solo *start* as ethical egoists, but eventually seem to move beyond this (as Han begins to care about other people and causes beside himself. It's worth thinking about *why* they do this.

Question: The "paradox of hedonism" refers to the fact that people who adopt ethical egoism (and thus devote their whole lives to "making myself happy, no matter what happens to others" actually end up being *less* happy than those who are "altruistic" (and genuinely care about others). Why do you think this is?

2.3 OTHER FLAWED APPROACHES

Along with divine command theory and ethical egoism, most people who have written about ethics have also suggested that the following ethical theories don't "work"

- **Cultural relativism:** An action is morally right (or wrong) just in case the people in one's culture approve (or disapprove) of it.
    - **Problem:** Let's say Palpatine proposes enslaving (or killing off) an unpopular group, and the majority of voters approve. Does this make it right?
- **Subjectivism:** An action is morally right (or wrong) *for me* if I like (or dislike) it.
    - **Problem:** While this theory might do a good job of explaining why its wrong for Rey (a Jedi Knight) to murder people (she dislikes doing it!), it has the unwelcome consequence that murder ends up being OK for those that do enjoy it (such as Bobba Fet).

If all of these approaches don't work, what are our options? In the next section, we'll consider some of the major proposed answers.

3 FOUR ETHICAL THEORIES

3.1 CONSEQUENTIALISM: THINKING LONG-TERM

Consequentialism holds that the rightness or wrongness of an action depends only on the consequences. Historically, the most influential version of consequentialism is **utilitarianism** which states that an action is morally right if and only if it maximizes happiness, and minimizes suffering, for everyone affected by the action. Utilitarians are, in some circumstances, will to sacrifice the few to save the many. So, for example, a utilitarian would likely be willing to kill one innocent person to save 20 people.

> **Advantages:** Consequentialism in probably the simplest ethical theory, and it can serve as a good "baseline" theory, since almost everyone (regardless of religion, culture, etc.) will agree that things like happiness and suffering matter. Consequentialism also does a good job with "big picture" social issues, where it tries to balance **efficiency** (the more stuff we can produce, the better off we will be) and **equality** (as a rule of thumb, relatively equal distributions make people happier than highly unequal ones). For this reason, consequentialism plays a major role in public policy as it regards healthcare, economics, business, etc.

Disadvantages: While consequentialism is a simple theory, it can be tough to apply in practice, since it requires we make long-term predictions about the effects of our actions. Many critics have also argued that it is too demanding (i.e., it requires we devote our lives to helping the worst off, since this is what "maximizes happiness") and that it lead us to treat others unjustly (when we sacrifice someone "for the greater good"). While many critics think that consequentialism captures *part* of what it means to behave ethically, they argue that it also leaves something fundamental out.

A Common Confusion—Egoism v. Utilitarianism: When people first hear that utilitarians care only about "happiness," they sometimes think that is a *selfish* theory, which justifies doing whatever you want. Nothing could be further from the truth. Utilitarians (unlike egoists) care about *everyone's* happiness, and not merely your happiness. In fact, one common criticism of utilitarianism is that it is far too demanding, since it seems to require that people donate massive amounts to alleviate poverty (since your loss of happiness will be more than made up for by the happiness this would bring to other).

Example: In the *Empire Strikes Back,* Lando Calrissian (among the only minority characters in the original trilogy) hands Han Solo over to the Empire to protect the people of Cloud City. From a utilitarian point of view, this one is a no-brainer. After all, it's one life against thousands. Lando's friendship with Han and the "injustice" of the case against him simply don't matter. The Empire (predictably) reneges on its end of the deal, bringing out another aspect of consequentialism (it's tough to predict the future, and "calculate" consequences). In the end (after Lando help save Han), the rebel alliance seems to recognize that he choice

was a reasonable one, given the circumstances, and names him General. (All things being equal, Generals should consider the consequences of their actions!).

3.2 DEONTOLOGY: FOLLOW THE RULES

Deontology holds that the rightness or wrongness of an action depends on factors besides (or in addition to) the consequences. So, for example, some deontologists hold that it is *always* wrong to kill an innocent person, even if this was the only way to save ten other innocent people. Simple versions of deontology include things like the **Golden Rule** ("treat others as you would like to be treated") or rules such as the Ten Commandments (don't murder, steal, etc.). In academic philosophy, the most influential version of deontology is due to Immanuel Kant, whose **categorical imperative** requires that we do NOT treat people as "mere means" for our own purposes, but always as "ends in themselves" (who have their *own* desires, interests, and life plans). Among other things, Kant argued that this forbids our deceiving or tricking people, or using force to make them go along with our plans.

Advantages: Deontology does a good job of accounting for the importance of certain agent-specific **duties** (parents have a "duty" to care for their *own* children) and **rights** (innocent people have a "right" not to be unjustly killed) that consequentialism sometimes seems to overlook. In comparison to consequentialism, deontology can be relatively easy to apply in practice, since it doesn't require that we try to make predictions about the distant future. Finally, depending on which version of deontology is adopted, the theory may be less demanding, and leave more room for us to do things in our life other than worry about morality.

Disadvantages: In comparison to consequentialism (which doesn't leave much room for interpretation, though the right thing to do will obviously vary according to one's particular situation), there are a large number of deontological theories, and these vary radically according to culture and religion of those who defend them. So, for example, some deontological theories hold that we have almost *no* duties to help strangers ("the rich have no duty to give money to poor"), while others (such as most religious versions of deontology) hold that we have much stronger obligations in this regard. A committed deontologist will need to give an argument why her particular version of deontology should be preferred to others—the mere fact that it "feels right" to her (and to people like her) obviously won't count for much.

A Common Confusion—Deontologists and Consequences. Pure deontologists like Kant argue that the consequences of an actions are *completely irrelevant* to judging it's rightness or wrongness. People often find this counterintuitive, since we tend to think that actions like lying or killing are wrong, at least in part, because of how they affect others (lies might lead the person lied to to make a bad decision, killing leads to a person being dead). Kant argues this is a bad approach, however, since the effects of our actions almost always depend on factors outside of our control.

Example: Why Doesn't Rey Kill Kylo. In the *Force Awakens,* the hero Rey is given a chance to kill the unconscious villain Kylo Ren. Kylo has already murdered many people she knows and loves (such as Han Solo), and has made perfectly clear his plans to murder and enslaves billions more. She leaves him on the floor and escapes. Deontologists might defend this by pointing out that Rey's worry she will "become like Kylo" is a reasonable fear, and that she can (and should) care about "following the rules" above all else. Consequentialists would argue that the stakes are simply too large (and that she should finish him off).

3.3 VIRTUE ETHICS: BECOMING A BETTER PERSON

Virtue ethics holds that the right action is the one that a *virtuous person* would do in this situation. Where utilitarianism and deontology focus on "doing the right thing," virtue ethics focuses on "being a better person." In general, this means choosing a *role model* (who may or may not be a real person), and then *practicing* behaving like this person until we can do so consistently. Virtue ethics requires that we try to acquire a HABIT of DOING THE RIGHT THING for the RIGHT REASONS. So, for example, being an *honest* person (a virtue) requires that one tell the truth without second thought, and that we do so in manner appropriate to the situation (no telling three-year-olds that Santa isn't real). It also requires that we do so *because* we think the other person deserves to know and not because we are afraid of getting caught lying, or we want to get something out of the other person. Becoming honest is NOT something that can be done in a day (in fact, the first few times you tell the truth in a difficult situation, it will be pretty uncomfortable). However, the more one practices, the easier it will become.

Advantages: Virtue ethics may deal better with the nuance of personal relationships (parent-child, romantic, friendship, doctor-patient, etc.) than the other ethical theories, since it leaves quite a bit more "wiggle room" on how one ought to behave in a particular situation. It also helps to show *why* we should care about being ethical in the first place, and on how our social environment can shape our character, which is something the other theories don't talk much about. For virtue ethicists like Aristotle and Confucius, there was no clear disconnect between "what's good for me" and "what's good to others." For both theorists, the best way to lead a truly happy life is to practice being generous, courageous, honest, etc. And this, in turn, helps makes *other* people's lives better, and makes it much easier for *them* to be virtuous. (Short version: Virtuous individuals create a virtuous society, which then makes it easier for *more* people to be virtuous.)

Disadvantages: Consequentialists and deontologists often complain that virtue ethics is vague to the point of uselessness. So, for example, plenty of people through history have said they were trying to be more like

the Buddha, Mohammed, or Jesus, but these people often had wildly different ideas of how one should behave. A similar problem concerns the choice of one's "role model" or one's decision about what particular character traits count as virtues or vices. Aristotle thought one should aim to be like a brave Greek warrior, Confucius like an honest, competent bureaucrat; and different religions have held up various gods, saints, etc. Like deontology (and unlike consequentialism), there is simply no guarantee that one person's virtue ethics looks anything like another person's. An advocate of virtue ethics will need to provide reasons for thinking that his choice of role model is *correct*.

Common Misunderstandings. Other ethical theories tend to make a sharp distinction between two senses of leading a "good" life. On the one hand, a person might have a "good" life by being happy and successful; on the other hand, they might lead a "good" life by treating others well, and following the demands of morality. Virtue ethicists often argue that these two things are, at bottom, the same thing, given the way human biology, society, and psychology actually works. They think that true happiness (sometimes called **eudaimonia)** is only possible if one is generous, kind, brave, and so on. Virtue ethics is closely related to a number of other approaches to ethics, including **natural law theory** (which is often closely associated with the religious belief that humans have the natures they do because God made them this way) and **care ethics** (which identifies the most important virtue as that of *caring* for others).

Example: In the *Star Wars* Universe, both the Jedi and their Sith enemies use a Master-Apprentice system to educate new members. This reflects a recognition of the idea that many things (including both "moral virtues" and "non-moral virtues") require more than "book learning." Instead, becoming a Jedi requires that you have a "role model" to look up to, and that you be able to engage in "guided practice" (where a young Jedi "Padawan" can tries things, fail, and get feedback on what worked and what didn't). Jedi Virtues include things such as bravery, kindness, generosity, etc. These things aren't developed overnight—they take long practice. The same thing holds for "vice" (the opposite of virtue). One doesn't fall victim to the "Dark Side" overnight. Instead, it happens gradually, as one "gives in" to emotions (such as anger) that one shouldn't.

3.4 SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY: LET'S "AGREE" TO BE FRIENDS

Social contract theory starts from the idea that ethics can be most usefully seen as a sort of agreement between rational people. So, for example, suppose that Bob and Belinda live on neighboring sheep farms, and don't especially like one another. All things being equal, Bob would like to steal Belinda's sheep and Belinda would like to steal Bob's. However, neither Bob nor Belinda likes lives living in continuous fear of having their own sheep stolen (or even worse, of being attacked or killed). So, they make an agreement that each will respect the property, and the life, of the other. This sort of idea explains why it is morally wrong to steal, lie, kill, and so on: on the whole, most of us would much prefer to live in a society whether these things aren't done to us. So, we shouldn't do them to others. Social contract theories emphasize that this "agreement" generally isn't explicitly given. Instead, it's "tacit," "implicit," or "hypothetical" agreement that comes as part of living in a society. The social contract theories of **Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacque Rousseau** played a major role in inspiring the democratic movements in the U.S., France, and Britain.

Advantages. Social contract theory draws a connection between abstract moral norms and the more concrete agreements and laws with which most of us are familiar. It also provides a helpful way for approaching ethical issues ("is this the sort of rule that a group of unbiased, rational people would actually agree to follow?"). Finally, it provides a helpful way of thinking about the source of *authority*. So, for example, social contract theory the *reason* political leaders have power is to use it on behalf of the citizens (since this is what the citizens would *agree* to). One might say something about the source of a CEO's authority (which derives from the owners and community), or even of the right to private property (which exists in order to enable an efficient allocation of goods and services).

Disadvantages: Critics have argued that the rational, self-interested people assumed by social contract theory fail to capture a lot of our moral lives. So, for example, it's unclear how social contract theory can take account of the interests of young children, animals, those with cognitive disabilities, and so on. It's also unclear how social contract theory might deal with the fact that people might have deeply different ideas of what counts as a "fair" society, or what rules ought to be agreed to. Historically, social contract theory has "left out" lots of people (slaves, women, Native Americans), on the ground that their preferences weren't "rational." While none of these are fatal objections, it's important to remember that a law/rule that seems perfectly rational to you might not seem so good to someone from a different background.

Example: In the *Star Wars* universe, both the "Old Republic" and the "New Republic" are conceived of as "agreements" between different peoples (and different species) to live under a common set of laws, in order to achieve shared ends. These "ends" include things like (1) reducing violent conflict, (2) ensuring individual liberty (for example, by "local" tyrants), (3) allowing people to better pursue their sense of the "good life" (for example, by traveling, furthering their education, founding businesses, etc.). Finally, it (4) allows people the right to *participate* in the political process by doing things such as voting.

The Problem of Droids. Just as in early democracies in the real world (in the US, Britain, and France), there are beings that are "left out" of the contact, despite being "rational." In real life, this included groups such as enslaved Africans, women, and Native Americans. In the *Star Wars* universe, there is at least some suggestion that the same thing has happened to "droids," who are portrayed as having human-like capacities for reason and emotion and yet seem to be given little power to "govern" themselves. Similarly, the Old Republic (unwisely) agrees to the creation of "clones" to serve as **Storm Troopers.** These clones, from what we can tell, are still fully human! And yet they serve as something like "second-class citizens" (or, more realistically, "cannon fodder"). Again, there are real-life examples of this sort of thing.

3.5 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Suppose that you can distribute 10 points to represent how much of your personal "ethics" is captured by the following theories. You can give all 10 points to one theory, give 2 point to five theories, or whatever:
    a. _____ Concern about the long-term consequences of an action for everyone who might be affected by it (consequentialism).
    b. _____ Duties to respect and foster autonomy, and respect others as persons, and to respect their rights (deontology).
    c. _____ Behaving in the manner that a perfectly virtuous person would—ensuring that you do the right things for the right *reasons,* and consciously practicing so that this becomes easier over (virtue ethics).
    d. _____ Obeying the precepts of a particular religion, even in the case that you can't see any independent justification for these rules (divine command theory).
    e. _____Doing what's best for you, even if you know this might harm others. (ethical egoism)
2. Based on the above results, give a more detailed description of how you make (different types of) ethical decisions? What are your strengths as an ethical decision-maker? Your weaknesses?
3. Do you think that studying ethics can help you improve your ethical decision-making in practical cases? Why or why not? In your answer, consider what sorts of experiences have helped you develop as an ethical thinker.

4 DOES MARA JADE EXIST (FICTIONALLY)?

The Star Wars Universe (like the Marvel universe, the DC Universe, the James Bond universe, etc.) has been "rebooted" several times such that the fundamental "history" of the universe—and the histories and lives of the characters who live within it—have been changed. In the *Star Wars* "canon" (that is, the "official" version based merely on books/shows/movies and not "fan fiction"), there was a drastic change when the new trilogy was released in 2017. Before this, the events happening after *Return of the Jedi* were described in a series of books by the Hugo-winning Timothy Zahn. They mostly involved conflict between "Grand Admiral Thrawn" (a super-smart bad guy) and the characters of the original trilogy. There was one notable addition, however—**Mara Jade**, who starts life as an evil assassin but later becomes a Jedi Knight and love interest (and wife) of Luke Skywalker.

While recent *Star Wars* shows have included a (suitably altered) Grand Admiral Thrawn, they seem unlikely to include Mara Jade, as both her backstory (which involves Emperor Palpatine) and fate (marrying a Luke Skywalker who current "cannon" has dying a bachelor) would require a lot of changes. Of course, stranger things have happened. In *Spider-Man,* for instance, Gwen Stacy was (for decades) simply the Spider-man's first girlfriend, who died in the comics (back when killing characters was a big deal). In recent years, however, she has re-emerged as "Ghost Spider" or "Spider Gwen".

With all this mind, a few questions for you:

1. Philosophers often think of fictions as describing **possible worlds.** However, these worlds are only partly specified by the actual movie/books, as the audience has to "fill in the details." Given this, is it possible for creators/authors to be "wrong" about their fictional worlds (for example, "to have a character act in a way they wouldn't?)

2. How do "reboots" of fictional worlds work? That is, when creators decide to rewrite histories to change (or eliminate) characters, how should we talk about this? Does Mara Jade no longer "exist" in the Star Wars world? Or are there multiple Star Wars worlds?
3. Are there any *ethical* concerns with creators deciding to rewrite the histories of the universe to eliminate characters? Does the fact that the decisions were made by a large corporation (Disney) rather than an individual author (George Lucas)? Does it matter that this reboot (like most reboots!) was likely motivated by financial concerns rather than purely "artistic" ones?
    a. Another way of putting this: Is there anything creators can do that would *harm* fans in some way?

5 READING: PHILOSOPHY OF STAR WARS: ARE DARTH VADER AND THE SITH REALLY ALL THAT BAD? (BY JONNY THOMSON)[1]

In the philosophy of Star Wars, the Sith are evil because they surrender to passion. But is a life of total rationality a "good" life?

There is no villain quite as memorable or as archetypal as Darth Vader. When he first appears in *Star Wars: A New Hope*, with his creepy, mechanical wheeze and his all black, caped outfit, he oozes malice. In a 2022 survey by *Empire* magazine, Darth beat out The Joker, Hannibal Lecter, and Voldemort to become the "Greatest Movie Villain of All Time."

Lord Vader belongs to the "dark" side of the force, which means he is of the Sith. The Sith are easily identified by their red lightsabers and sinister John Williams entry music, both of which mark them as the "baddies" for any cinemagoer. And, with planet destroying weapons, force-choke murders, and a blatant disregard for cute, cuddly lifeforms, the Sith in the *Star Wars* franchise rarely paint themselves in a good light.

But things might not be as they seem. The world of Jedi (the good guys) vs. Sith and the philosophy of *Star Wars* might not be as black-and-white as we think. What if the Sith are actually misrepresented and distorted?

5.1 PHILOSOPHY OF *STAR WARS*: JEDI VS. SITH

One of the most common discussions in the philosophy of *Star Wars* concerns what exactly the Sith and Jedi represent. If we follow the original *Star Wars* movies, we are told that the Sith are hate-filled, angry, and power-hungry. Sith seek and demand total obedience. Those that serve them live in fear of random execution for simply walking in front of the wrong person. Conversely, the Jedi stand for peace and placidity. They are the light and reason of the universe.

This is, however, an oversimplification of their respective philosophies. The "Jedi Code" features two telling lines. The first is: "There is no emotion, there is peace." The second is: "There is no passion, there is serenity." The Jedi view is that when we feel intense or deep emotion of any kind, this leads to irrational, evil actions. When Jedi Master Yoda says, "Fear leads to anger; anger leads to hate; hate leads to suffering," he seems to be making a good point. These are negative emotions, and these often do bring out the worst in people.

[1] Jonny Thomson, "Philosophy of Star Wars: Are Darth Vader and the Sith Really All That Bad?," *Big Think* (blog), 2022, https://bigthink.com/thinking/philosophy-star-wars/.

But these are not the full roster of feelings. "No emotion" also means no love or affection. "No passion" means no fury at the world's injustices. On the other hand, when we look at the Sith Code, we see the lines: "Through passion I gain strength. Through strength I gain power." Sith embrace the heart and welcome emotion. To be Sith is to live passionately and to feel powerful in everything you do.

5.2 PLATO THE JEDI

If ever there was an anti-emotion, rationality-loving Jedi in the history of (Earth's) philosophy, then it's Plato. For Plato, when we live a life governed by our feelings, then it's like getting dragged around by horses. If we do things out of fear or love, or because we're angry or horny, then we're no better than marionettes dancing on hormonal strings. Only when we use the reasoning part of the mind can we hope to take control of life. There is no good to be found in the madness of emotion. For Plato — and the Jedi — only when our passions are trained and checked can we be strong. The intellect, not feeling, is the necessary precondition to virtue.

While Aristotle disagreed with a lot of what his teacher, Plato, thought, he took a similarly dim view about emotions. For Aristotle, the purpose of theatre and drama was to *purge* the soul of feeling, especially negative feelings like fear or anger. When we witness a murder on stage, or experience misery in a film, it releases it from our own mind. This process, called *catharsis*, was necessary to good living.

So, in the philosophy of *Star Wars*, we see the Jedi come straight out of ancient Greece.

5.3 FRANKL THE SITH

At the other end of the philosophical spectrum, in the Sith Order, you find a lot of modern philosophers (often from Germany and France). Sith Lord Darth Vader once said, "Anger and pain are natural and part of growth. They give you focus. They make you strong." Here, Vader is arguing that the strongest swords need tempering, and the most resilient need testing — we need passion to grow. But also, there is a point that mirrors much that is found in the likes of Friedrich Nietzsche and the psychotherapist Viktor Frankl.

Frankl, well-read in Nietzsche and a survivor of Auschwitz, once wrote, "If there is meaning in life at all, then there must be meaning in suffering." Logic, rationality, and the cold intelligence of the Jedi and Plato are only one part of life. Suffering, pain, anger, hate, and love — in short, our passions — are an unavoidable and natural part of being human. For Frankl, meaning is to be found there.

The Sith talk of "power" echoes Nietzsche's concept of the "will to power" — the idea that everything in the universe is struggling and striving to overcome something or someone. Often this is equated with genocidal dictators, or planet-destroying galactic emperors. But "power" is just as often about freedom, agency, and choice. We are happiest when we have the power to do things and can decide which way to walk. The Sith's "power-lust" can be interpreted as only the need, and the right, to choose your own path — a power over life.

5.4 A DEFENSE OF JEDI AND STOICISM

In a lot of the "fan theory" threads about *Star Wars*, it is often said that the Jedi are like "Stoics." It's used as a mocking sneer, as in, "Look at how robotic and inhumane those Jedi are." The problem with this is that Stoicism as a philosophy is not the same as how the adjective "stoic" is used today. Stoics were about self-control, and they were about choosing your reactions to the world, but they were also about developing the *right* kind of emotions. As philosophy professor Massimo Pigliucci puts it:

"Rather, [Stoics] thought that negative, disruptive emotions — such as hatred, anger, and fear — should be controlled by reason, while positive emotions — like love, a righteous sense of justice, and even a sense of awe at the beauty of the world — should be actively cultivated."

A legitimate case could be made that Jedi are more like Stoics in this sense than "stoic" in the manner of the Vulcans from *Star Trek*. All the Jedi we see in the *Star Wars* world are not drones. They love and are loyal. They're kind and affectionate. Samuel L. Jackson's (Jedi) character even fights in what looks like a wildly aggressive manner; he even seems to relish the battle.

Of course, outside of science fiction universes, a happy and full life likely lies between the two extremes. A good life is neither coldly rational (Jedi) nor lost in the temporary insanity of passion (Sith). Perhaps we need a bit of both light and dark in our lives. Because, when you fall too far into either, you'll not see yourself at all.

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[Brendan's Questions:

1. **What is the "Jedi" (or Stoic) way?**
2. **How does the differ from the way of the Sith?**
3. **What do you think of the claim that "we need a bit of both light and dark in our lives?]**

6 READING: THE ASPIRING JEDI'S HANDBOOK OF VIRTUE (BY JUDITH BARAD)[2]

So, you'd like to be a Jedi Knight? Surely a good part of the appeal is the adventure, the excitement, the glory of this undertaking. But wait a minute! When Obi-Wan Kenobi attempts to persuade Yoda to train Luke, the diminutive Jedi Master objects that Luke isn't a good candidate for training because all his life he has craved adventure and excitement.

In Yoda's words, "A Jedi craves not these things." The path to becoming a Jedi lies within.

Suppose you're not deterred. You still want to be a Jedi Knight just as much as you wanted to the first time you saw Star Wars. As a wouldbe Jedi student, you'll need to have a teacher. Yoda is probably your best bet, given his experience. For over eight hundred years, the small, green Master has trained Jedi Knights. But having identified a teacher doesn't mean that the leacher will accept you as a student. Being someone's student is a privilege, not an entitlement. Yoda will most likely examine your mental attitudes before he accepts or rejects you for training. He will insist that you must have "the deepest commitment, the most serious mind." If you're committed and serious, there Is one more prerequisite that must be met before training can commence. You must have the patience to finish what you begin. The process of becoming a Jedi Knight is definitely not quick and easy.

6.1 The Old Republic and the Older Republic

If you find these prerequisites within you, it's important to keep the underlying purpose of being a Jedi firmly in mind. The ultimate aims of the Jedi are peace and justice. When Obi-Wan first presents Luke Skywalker with a lightsaber, he explains that the Jedi Knights "were the guardians of peace and justice in the Old

[2] Kevin S. Decker, *Star Wars and Philosophy: More Powerful Than You Can Possibly Imagine* (Blackwell, 2010).

Republic." If we really want to know about the "Old Republic" we should turn to Plato's seminal work entitled, oddly enough, The Republic. Plato suggests that an ideal society should train a group of virtuous warriors to preserve peace and justice in the commonwealth. It's true that Plato's Republic doesn't have the galactic proportions we see depicted in Star Wars; but much of Plato's teachings are reflected in the Star Wars galaxy. By comparing Plato's notion of a warrior class to the Jedi Knights and his Republic's Guardians to the Jedi Masters, we can acquire a richer understanding of the Jedi. With this understanding, we will be more successful in living our life to the full, just as a Jedi should.

Plato prescribes a long and rigorous period of training, which he thinks will yield knowledge of goodness and justice. Those who complete this training successfully, he insists, are fit to guard society for they will have developed the virtues associated with goodness and justice. A central feature of virtue ethics is the claim that an action is right if and only if it's what a person with a virtuous character would do in the circumstances. Plato thus emphasizes the development of virtues. An initial step in the testing that Plato requires is hard physical training for the future Guardians. However, the purpose of this training is not simply muscular strength. Rather, it is undertaken to improve the soul, that is, the mind. Unless you train your body to obey your mental commands, Plato teaches, you won't be able to have within yourself the necessary power to drive you forward on the road to even greater mental control over other things. Proper physical training produces the virtues of courage and endurance. But training to the exclusion of intellectual development may make a person may become hard and savage. Just glance at the wrestling shows on television, like WWE Smackdown!

Just as Plato requires a training program that combines physical and mental skills, so does Yoda. The training you'll receive will probably be similar to the training young Luke Skywalker receives from Yoda, since you're probably nearer his age than younger padawans. Throughout his training, Luke questions Yoda about good and evil, the Force, and other concepts important to a Jedi. Likewise, Plato's Republic features a question-and-answer interplay between teacher and students as Socrates's "padawans" question him about justice and injustice, the nature of the Good, and the ideal government.

The first step in the Jedi training Yoda imposes on Luke is intensely physical. Its point is not only to increase his endurance but to provide a crash course in Jedi virtues of discipline and persistence. By developing endurance, a Jedi padawan has the capacity to work his way through difficulties despite the frustration inherent in the task. One will learn to continue striving in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles and defeat. Endurance, requiring self-control, provides a padawan with the ability to struggle over an extended time to achieve their goals.

On Dagobah, the Jedi Master pushes his young student to the limit. Racing in and out of the heavy ground fog with Yoda on his back, Luke is winded as he climbs, flips through the air, and leaps over roots. Yet, he endures and continues striving.

[Brendan: Do you agree that "physical" training can help develop moral virtues? Why or why not?]

6.2 A Balancing Act

The next step in Luke's training is to learn physical balance. He stands on his head while Yoda perches on the soles of his feet. Like the other physical exercises, this one also has a predominantly mental objective. It requires such great concentration that nothing can distract him. By maintaining his balance, Luke is in control of himself and the circumstances around him.

Perhaps Plato's padawan, Aristotle, can help us understand the importance of balance. To avoid being overcome by strong emotions, Aristotle recommends that we have the right balance of virtue-the **"Golden Mean."** Here, all actions can be evaluated on a scale of excess to deficiency. Virtue is "the mean" or the intermediate between excess and deficiency. It's a balanced action responding to a particular situation at the

right time, in relation to the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way. For instance, you can fear something either too much or too little. Fearing too much may lead to cowardice, as when Chewie ran from the Dianoga in A New Hope. Fearing too little, us was the case when Anakin rushed headlong to confront

Count Dooku in Attack of the Clones, may lead to rashness, both undesirable traits. The balanced trait, that is, the virtue between fearing too much or too little, is virtue.

Suppose you face an ethical dilemma and fear making a decision because you have only incomplete information regarding the circumstances. You want to make the best decision possible and so try to collect as much information as you can. But, in reality, that's often not possible. Saddled with incomplete information, you may fear making a decision that might end up being wrong. But perhaps it's worse not to attempt to find a solution to the dilemma than to risk making a mistake, and so you rationally conclude that you shouldn't fear making such a mistake. Reason can help remove excess fear about being wrong, as well as inspire a proper respect for the gravity of the situation. By balancing too much fear against too little fear, you can attain the virtue of courage.

We see this illustrated near the end of Luke's training period.

Sensing that his friends are in pain and suffering, he asks Yoda, "Will they die?" But Yoda can't see their fate. Luke is in anguish. Both of his teachers, Yoda and Obi-Wan, counsel him to wait before going to their aid.

If he decides to help them, he risks possible danger to himself. Yet if he decides not to help them, they may die. Even though Luke has incomplete information and is aware that he may be mistaken, he arrives at a decision, one that he has not reached lightly. He courageously decides to help his friends.

So suppose you fear skydiving, but you learn to overcome your fear. If you decide to go ahead and skydive because you are essentially a thrill- seeker, would this count as a courageous act? While Aristotle would applaud Luke's decision to help his friends as a courageous act, he would probably label your decision to satisfy your thrill-seeking desire as a rash act rather than a courageous one. What's the difference? Well, for Aristotle, the act of confronting danger or risk becomes courageous if and only if both decision and just cause enter the picture. The skydiving decision lacks just cause, which is essential to a courageous act. In contrast, Luke's decision, reached after serious consideration, involves a just cause-the lives of his friends.

Yet the very notion of fear seems to oppose the Jedi teaching at its core. Yoda tells Anakin that he's not fit to begin training because of the great fear the young boy feels. The Jedi Master warns, "Fear is the path to the Dark Side. Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hate, hate leads to suffering." Yoda also warns Luke about anger, fear, and aggression.

Does Yoda mean a Jedi should never experience fear and anger? His words could be interpreted in this way. But if we think about it, although the virtue of courage and the emotion of fear may seem to be mutually exclusive, they're actually quite compatible. The truly courageous person not only fears what she should when there's a reasonable basis for fear, but she can also stand up to fear and confront risk or danger. This is also true of anger, provided that anger is guided by reason. When Luke battles his father for the last time, as the Emperor goads Luke to "use your aggressive feelings" and to "let the hate flow through you," he controls his anger when he realizes it will lead him to the Dark Side. He reasons that the only way to destroy the Dark Side is to renounce it. Yet his anger, controlled by reason, is what gives him the courage to stand up to the evil, powerful Emperor. Throwing his lightsaber aside, he says with resolve, "I'll never turn to the Dark Side. You've failed, your highness. I am a Jedi, like my father before me."

Not only is "righteous" anger compatible with courage, but it can also result in acting justly-another virtue. Feeling angry about someone's unfair treatment could lead you to take positive action to correct this

treatment. For the Jedi, it's important to stop violent and abusive behavior, and to defend the innocent against assault. Yet, if possible, a Jedi should use nonviolent means to accomplish this. It is true, now, that your emotions enable you to act more promptly and easily than merely reasoning about a situation. So if controlled by reason, emotions can actually fuel the kind of virtuous action a Jedi should engage in.

It's thus unlikely that Yoda's admonitions about fear and anger should be interpreted as meaning that a Jedi never feels those emotions. Rather, he probably means that a Jedi never acts from fear and anger. A Jedi acts when reason is in control, when he's "calm, at peace, passive." In fact, as Yoda tells Luke, only a calm mind can distinguish the good side from the bad. In contrast, acting from an agitated condition clouds one's mind from knowing right from wrong. Anakin acts from uncontrolled linger when he sees his mother die at the hands of the Sand People, He confesses to Padme that, in retaliation, he killed behave in these ways. They will rarely be influenced by conflicting self-interests or swayed by temptations, as Obi- Wan wasn't at all tempted to join Dooku to obtain release from captivity.

When Obi-Wan refuses to join the Dark Side, he displays the virtue of integrity. Having integrity, he can discern what is right from wrong and act on what he discerns, even at personal cost. Just as the former prisoner in Plato's Cave Allegory at last sees the Good, the successful Jedi must see the good in others, a recognition which motivates forgiveness and compassion. These two virtues drive out uncontrolled anger and hatred so that the Dark Side is no longer a threat. Forgiveness frees a Jedi to overlook transgressions made against him so that he no longer needs to carry around the burdens of resentment and hostility. Even without saying the words "I forgive you" to his father, Luke's forgiveness of his father is clear as Vader lies dying in his son's arms.

[Brendan: Can you explain Aristotle's idea of the "Golden Mean" in your own words? Can you give an example of how it might work in your life?]

6.3 The Right Kind of Love

The other virtue that's generated by seeing the Good is compassion.

Anakin, in an intimate moment with Padme, defines compassion as "unconditional love" which is "central to a Jedi's life." There's a huge difference between unconditional love and erotic or romantic love. In the scene where Anakin defines compassion for Padme, she's beginning to fall in love with him. Aware that he's very attracted to her, she asks Anakin, "Are you allowed to love? I thought that was forbidden for a Jedi." The young Jedi responds with his definition of compassion, distinguishing it from attachment and possession, which are both forbidden to a Jedi. The Jedi approve of compassion, a higher and more universal form of love, while attachment to a particular individual is frowned upon. Personal attachment to someone or something is an intense emotion, which can lead to fear of losing what one is attracted to, and we know already where fear leads; compassion is a virtue. More precisely, compassion is a selfless love, involving a deep, cherishing concern for each individual as having intrinsic value. That is, individuals are valued for their own sake, regardless of their capacity to achieve anything else.

Plato also seeks to prevent the Guardians from having private attachments and possessions, which might conflict with wholehearted devotion to the public welfare. Since the Guardians are servants of the Republic, they should have no temptations to neglect the public interest; they should have no land, houses, or money of their own. This approach avoids the corruption and conflicts that can happen when it's possible for authorities to place their own good above the public good.

Plato maintains that the virtuous life is much more satisfying than personal relationships. It is so much more real than romantic attachments that those who live it will lose a great deal of the ordinary person's interest in sexual satisfaction. The very intensity of a guardian's universal love or compassion will make him less

dependent upon particular attachments. The Guardians devote as much of themselves as they can to public service. By forbidding romantic attachments, Plato hopes to free the Guardians from the competition and jealousy of these exclusive relationships. More importantly, without romantic attachments, the Guardians won't be tempted to prefer such private interests to those of the entire community. We see how Anakin almost puts his love for Padme above the safety of the entire galaxy when she falls out of a gunship chasing Count Dooku. Aware that he may be expelled from the Jedi Order, Anakin wants to rescue her, even if it means that Dooku might escape and the Clone Wars expand beyond Geonosis. Only when Obi-Wan reminds him that in such circumstances Padme would fulfill her duty does Anakin agree to fulfill his.

But does compassion for others necessarily require people to sacrifice personal attachments to concern for the larger society? Compassion is at the root of virtuous conduct; it is the notion that everyone counts. But to say that is to say that you count as well. And an individual may feel more fulfilled when allowed to love particular others and to be loved by them in return. At the end of Luke's training on Dagobah, he experiences an internal conflict between his commitment to becoming a Jedi and his loyalty to his friends, whom he senses are suffering. Loyalty is a Jedi virtue for clearly the Jedi should be loyal to one another, to their ideals, and to the Republic. Yet loyalty also entails an unwavering commitment to the people you value. It involves the subordination of your private interests in favor of their more pressing needs. Not only would

Luke have been disloyal if he had ignored his closest friends in their distress, but he would also have lacked compassion. And it is the virtue of compassion that enables him to see through Vader to the good within him and to bring that goodness out. There's nothing inherently unethical about living in a way that enhances one's personal relationships. But neither does the advancement of personal relationships allow one to disregard the well-being of others or ignore duties. So perhaps the Jedi Order should allow family life, but prevent it from interfering with public duty.

[Brendan: There is a long, long debate in many ethical and religious traditions about whether "compassion" for all is compatible with "personal" love for a significant other/children. What do you think? Should the Jedi be allowed to marry? Should Plato allow his guardians to marry? What about Buddhist/Catholic/other monks and nuns?]

6.4 Is Brainwashing Ethically Sanitary?

One more problem about Jedi training requires some reflection. Part of Luke's training is to learn to control objects with his mind. First, he levitates a small rock, and then his sunken X-wing fighter. Now if this exercise is meant simply to learn concentration, there would be nothing wrong with it. Concentration, in itself, is a valuable skill and a necessary one for a Jedi Knight. But, eventually a Jedi progresses from mentally controlling inanimate objects to being able to mentally control "weak-minded" individuals. The Jedi can use mind control to plant suggestions in weak minds, making them do things they wouldn't ordinarily do. For instance, at Mos Eisley Spaceport a trooper demands Obi-Wan's and Luke's identification, but speaking in a very controlled voice and with a slight wave of his hand, Obi-Wan makes the trooper think that he doesn't need to see their identification. A much younger Obi-Wan used mind control to convince a young drug pusher that he doesn't need to sell "death sticks" (which look suspiciously like cigarettes) any more and that he should go home and rethink his life. Now using mind control over others is a kind of brainwashing, a practice most people think of as horrible. But is the practice justifiable if it's used for a good purpose? The problem is that anyone who brainwashes or controls the mind of another believes they are doing so for a good purpose. Can Plato help us out here?

Plato sympathizes with the desire to influence weak-minded people.

However, rather than directly controlling the minds of such people by the power of his own will, he uses the power of his thought to construct a myth designed to con-trol the beliefs of the weak-minded by appealing to

their imagination. The myth is this: the earth gives birth to people, so that all citizens are born of the same soil and must protect the land that is their mother. Additionally, some people have gold in their souls (the Guardians), some have silver (the warriors), and some have iron on bronze (everyone else). The type of metal that courses through each person will determine the role they will play in the Republic. Plato suggests this influential myth in the interest of a higher purpose, namely, the unity of society.

Unity is achieved when people prove that they can bear responsibility and give up self-interest in order to fulfill the common good. Most people won't understand that it's important for each individual to subordinate their self-interests to the common good. But patriotism is easily inculcated by careful control of information, and it serves the same purpose of producing unity in society. Plato thinks that using a myth to mentally manipulate the weak-minded will encourage the kind of allegiance to the Republic that people usually feel toward their family members. So, when the Jedi use their more direct mental manipulation for the good of the Republic, whether to fulfill a mission or reform a drug pusher, Plato would certainly validate this.

Also, in Plato's Cave Allegory, the people who carry the objects that project the shadows on the cave wall are manipulating the minds of the chained prisoners. The weak-minded are always being mentally manipulated by other people. Since they dislike thinking for themselves or are unable to do so, they turn to others to figure things out for them: family members, authority figures, the media, the rich and the powerful-you know, the Watto or Jabba the Hutt types who, interestingly, are immune to Jedi "mind tricks." The weak-minded uncritically accept what such people want them to believe. They're being mentally manipulated, although they're unaware of it. Now it's reasonable to believe that the overwhelming majority of mind- con-trrollers have their own selfish interests at heart, rather than the common good, when they put thoughts in the minds of others. Since weak- minded people desire others to figure things out for litem, and since there will always be people willing to do so, isn't it better that the controllers be people who authentically care about the common good rather than people who seek to advance their own vested interests?

[Brendan: Under what circumstances, if any, is it OK to "manipulate" people "for their own good"? For example, is it OK to manipulate children? What about people under the influence of a cult leader?]

6.5 The Jedi Model

Despite the problem of controlling others' thoughts, the virtues the Jedi possess make them great models to aspire to. As we've seen, in the eyes of an ancient Greek master and his padawan, the Jedi would likely appear courageous, loyal, compassionate, just, and forgiving. They have endurance (otherwise referred to as perseverance), are mentally focused, and have a healthy humility. Also, the Jedi have honor, they live by a code or a set of principles, and find such value in so doing that they count it as a basis of self-worth. For a Jedi, honor is closely connected to one's role as a Jedi Knight as defined by the Jedi Code. Further, the Jedi regularly manifest nobility, a desire for moral excellence that permits them to overcome personal interests in favor or some purpose larger than themselves. They show great stature of character by holding to the virtues that define them. Nobility involves admiration of the virtues of others and a desire to realize one's potential or, as the Army used to say, "Be all that you can be." Such admiration for the virtues of others and desire to bring out what is best in oneself are part and parcel of Jedi training. Due to their desire to perfect their own virtue, noble persons serve as good role models for others. Having the tendency to influence others, the noble person provides a persuasive example of what can be done in the service of goodness, peace and justice, which are, after all, the ultimate aims of being a Jedi Knight.

Being a Jedi certainly involves a lot of hard work. Fortunately, the various Star Wars movies have showed you how to awaken your "inner" Jedi.

Just as fortunately, a couple of ancient Greek philosophers shed even more light on the process. Developing the kind of character a Jedi possesses may be far more rewarding to you in the long run than learning how to wield a lightsaber. So if you're still serious and have the commitment to be a Jedi, it would be wise to follow the examples of virtuous character illustrated in Star Wars and explicated by Plato and Aristotle.