

# The Modern Jedi Knight

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*A guide to thriving here and now from a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away*

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*A two -chapter preview of the soon to be released book*

*Almost known as*

*Everything I needed to know in life I learned from the Jedi*

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## Chapter I

### A Long Time Ago

*"I want to learn the ways of the Force and become a Jedi like my father."*

-- Luke Skywalker to Obi-Wan Kenobi

"There has been an awakening. Have you felt it?"

This wasn't just a question offered to Kylo Ren in *The Force Awakens*. I am asking you that same exact question right now, at this very moment. And we both know what the answer is. You find that question as whimsical and amusing as when Luke asked Old Ben if Obi-Wan was a relative of his.

You have felt the awakening. *Your awakening*. Like many others, you have heard the myths, the rumors, the stories that surround and abound concerning the Jedi. What would you say if I told you the same thing Han Solo told Finn and Rey aboard the *Millennium Falcon*, "Crazy thing is, it's true. The Force. The Jedi. All of it. It's all true." Soon, if you haven't already, you will realize, just as Rey and Finn did, that the Jedi are real. But, we should not get ahead of ourselves too quickly. Let us return to where it all began, to a long time ago in an imagination far, far away.

It was on May 25th, 1977 that the world was first exposed to the mysterious, supernatural and mystical warrior group known as the Jedi Knights. From a frugal hut overlooking the Dune Sea of Tatooine, we all watched with wide-eyed amazement as Luke Skywalker, the adopted son of a local moisture farmer and his wife, ignited his father's lightsaber for the first time as the shimmering blue blade hissed to life.

As Luke twirled the pulsing energy blade around, Obi-Wan Kenobi gave us our first inkling to the numinous realm of the Force and the Jedi Knights. "For over a thousand generations the Jedi Knights were the guardians of peace and justice in the Old Republic." Obi-Wan shortly afterwards answered Luke's query of the Force by saying, "The Force is what gives a Jedi his power. It's an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together." As we continued to watch and learn about the Jedi through the original trilogy we learned that the Force could help guide proton torpedoes into small thermal exhaust ports, free lightsabers from ice-encrusted snow banks in the frigid lair of the wampa, raise Incom T-65 X-wings from muddied and swampy graves, help Jedi see into the future, and provide the strength and courage to battle insurmountable odds for the welfare of the galaxy.

The Jedi, with their lightsabers and knowledge of the Force, have intrigued countless fans for years after the original trilogy was released. I fondly remember the many adventures that my friends

and I took in the *Star Wars* universe while playing in the park across the street from my boyhood home. It wasn't until 1999 that the interest in the Jedi took a huge upswing with the release of *The Phantom Menace*. With Padawan Obi-Wan Kenobi entering the prime of his life while working and training alongside his Jedi Master, Qui-Gon Jinn, we were amazed at the much-improved capabilities of the Jedi when compared to their latter selves. Their acrobatic moves and Force-enhanced lightsaber manipulation used against Darth Maul and the Trade Federation droid army were lightyears ahead of what we had seen possible in the duels between Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader. Our introduction to the historic Jedi Order, Mace Windu, a young Anakin Skywalker, and a multitude of other Jedi Masters and Knights was also accomplished at this time.

The public amazement and fascination with the Jedi after *The Phantom Menace* was released culminated in the Jedi becoming a popular answer to the question of religion on government census forms in England, Australia, and New Zealand, where over 500,000 people listed themselves as Jedi. While most people would try to have you believe that listing yourself as a Jedi with the government in a census poll was part of a large-scale practical joke, I believe that many of the respondents actually viewed themselves as Jedi or were looking for something similar spiritually, as the established religions of the last few thousand years were beginning to experience a dwindling membership. With the release of *Attack of the Clones* and *Revenge of the Sith*, audiences everywhere continued to be spellbound by the Jedi and their connection to the Force. The animated movie and television series *The Clone Wars*, along with the newly released *Star Wars Rebels*, kept our desire for *Star Wars* in check for a while, and now with the release of *The Force Awakens* and the building anticipation for the upcoming movies to complete this sequel trilogy, the fascination in becoming a Jedi continues to grow.

The as-of-yet complete heptalogy of the *Star Wars* saga, spanning Episodes One through Seven has so far covered a timeline of 66 years. During that time frame, we were witness to tyrannical dictators, censorship, political corruption, civil and galactic war, rebellions, military buildups, embargoes, trade disputes, and treason. We watched as a well-crafted plan by the Sith slowly turned into reality, morphing a democratic entity spanning the galaxy into a tyrannical dictatorship of one. This dictatorship was brought down by those willing to stand up and fight, and after the explosion of the second Death Star we are seeing the cycle begin anew with many questions as to what will happen next.

A short time ago in a galaxy very, very close to us, in fact our very own galaxy, we have witnessed many of these same events, with one small but notable difference. In the last 36 years since the original showing of *Star Wars* there was no established Jedi Order to provide stability to our galaxy, no group of warriors who were willing to put others in front of themselves.

## THE MAKINGS OF THE JEDI

According to all we know the Jedi were true heroes. They were the Guardians of the Republic, Keepers of the Peace, Defenders of Justice, and the Sentinels of Democracy. They were warriors and champions, fighters capable of handling almost any attack thrust upon them. But besides being dutiful protectors, they were also diplomats, philosophers, humanitarians and philanthropists. The Jedi were individuals with esteemed morals and distinguished ethics who exemplified discipline, accountability,

spirituality, balance, and the desire to help others. We also know that they were highly attuned to the Force, which Obi-Wan Kenobi explained to Luke in that small hut on Tatooine as "an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together."

You might be thinking to yourself right now, "Those are all qualities I would like to be associated with, but I can't be a Jedi. I don't have a lightsaber and the Force isn't real." Darth Vader would tell you in his deep and sinister voice while preparing to throttle you through the Force, "I find your lack of faith disturbing." While you would be correct about not having a lightsaber that functions exactly like it does in the movies, if you look closely you will see the definition of the Jedi I provided in the previous paragraph does not make any mention of having a lightsaber. The Force, on the other hand, does exist under many names and it is something that you can feel, experience, harness, and use. Don't believe me? Right now the skeptics are thinking I am full of bantha poodoo and not flying with a fully assembled and functioning pod racer. How is that for precognition through the Force? In all seriousness, though, part of you already does believe me or wants to believe me. You may be skeptical and say that this is all "a lot of simple tricks and nonsense" but something, be it a voice in your head or a feeling, is compelling you to continue. Otherwise you would have put this book down by now or never even picked it up in the first place.

Up until a few years ago I felt like most people when it came to these so-called "New Age", "Holistic", "Alternative", or even "Hippie" phenomenon and their practitioners with their "mumbo jumbo" of meditation, yoga, and incense. I had always considered myself a person who trusted the science over the unknown. The New Age people had always seemed way too far "out there, man", wherever that "there" would be. At that time in my life I felt just like Han Solo did while transporting Luke, Obi-Wan, and their fugitive droids towards the yet unknown remains of Alderaan aboard the *Millennium Falcon* as he said, "Kid, I've flown from one side of this galaxy to the other. I've seen a lot of strange stuff, but I've never seen anything to make me believe there's one all-powerful force controlling everything. There's no mystical energy field that controls my destiny."

However, in my short lifetime I have had moments that have had a profound impact on me. In these moments of enlightenment I experienced intense lucidity and tremendous feelings of satisfaction, happiness, and hope. These were moments that were absolutely perfect and I can remember them all clearly now, even if they happened over twenty years ago, as if it were only a few seconds in the past. Any enlightenment I may have experienced was just for the briefest of periods of time. But I could see more in those few seconds of clarity than I could see throughout years of living with a clouded mind.

As a psychology major throughout most of my college experience, I chalked up these experiences in my own lifetime to brief moments of what Dr. Abraham Maslow, a humanistic psychologist, would describe as self-actualization or the full realization of one's true potential. Dr. Maslow is quoted as saying, "A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be at peace with himself. What a man can be, he must be. This is the need we may call self-actualization. It refers to man's desire for fulfillment, namely to the tendency for him to become actually in what he is potentially: to become everything that one is capable of becoming." While these words ring true, I found that my experiences didn't fully mesh with Dr. Maslow's theory of the Hierarchy

of Needs in that my lower-order necessities weren't always fulfilled when I had achieved my own brief moments of self-actualization or enlightenment.

But I am getting way too far ahead of myself. By this time many people probably have had a little voice inside their head say, "Jedi? Why *Star Wars* and the Jedi? Why believe in a fictional pseudo-religion and life practice that was in a space-opera movie?" To explain why I am writing this book, let us start at where I started and see if you have had a similar journey.

## MY OWN JOURNEY

It was the spring of 1977, and I was a 6 year old boy from Lincoln, Nebraska and only slightly taller than an Ewok. From the first moment I saw the Tantive IV, the Corellian Engineering Corporation CR90 Corvette, in its ill fated escape attempt over the desert planet of Tatooine from the pursuing Imperial Star Destroyer Devastator in *Star Wars*, now known as *Star Wars* Episode IV: A New Hope, I was forever hooked. At the time I desired to be more like Han Solo, the cynical Corellian space-pirate, than I did the whiny farm boy from Tatooine, perhaps because it struck too close to home for me. Lightsabers and the Force were really cool, but piloting the *Millennium Falcon* with a blaster in hand and a trusty Wookiee with a life debt as my First Officer was a little more captivating than firing some proton torpedoes through a small thermal exhaust port, even if it did make you the hero and got you close to the Princess. That Christmas I started asking for *Star Wars* toys and action figures, some of which I still have to this day almost 40 years later, so I could continue to experience that amazing galaxy that was located far, far away.

While watching *The Empire Strikes Back* a few years later, I watched with piqued interest as Luke Skywalker underwent his rigorous training under Yoda on Dagobah and endured his epic battle with Darth Vader in the Cloud City over Bespin, but I still was enthralled with the rogue scoundrel Solo and his comedic wry wit. As the original trilogy ended with *Return of the Jedi*, Luke's transformation from a young moisture farmer on Tatooine to a self-proclaimed Jedi Knight gained considerable respect from me, and put him on an even par with Han and Chewbacca.

Following the end of the original *Star Wars* trilogy, I continued on with my life as I had planned it ever since my life was influenced by watching *Star Wars* when I was just six years old. Watching Luke, Han, and Chewie and their escapades in space had made me want to become an astronaut. I had learned that most astronauts were Air Force pilots so that became my next goal. I finished high school, started college, all the while learning to fly and earning my Private and then Commercial Pilot License. I ended up not getting to fly for the United States Air Force but I continued my career in aviation after graduating from college and started a family that same year. In all that time, *Star Wars* was never far from my mind.

It wasn't until the prequel trilogy, beginning with *The Phantom Menace*, that the austere Jedi, with their lightsabers and their Force powers, intrigued me more than I was by any of the pilots we had been introduced to throughout the series. I feel this was because we were experiencing the true Jedi Order, witnessing those who had undergone the traditional training of the Jedi, and we were witnessing them at the apex of their potential. No longer peaking in their Force capabilities by stacking mossy rocks

on top of each other while standing on their head, the Jedi now had a deeper, fuller, and more complex understanding of the nuances of the Force. Being attuned to the Force allowed them to deflect blaster bolts, cut through droids and other enemies with ease, and perform acrobatic acts that made Luke's back flip onto the scaffolding in the Emperor's Throne Room of the second Death Star while dueling Darth Vader in Return of the Jedi look quite sedate. Attack of the Clones and Revenge of the Sith continued the expansion of the Jedi and their capabilities.

It was at this time, during the prequel trilogy, that the fan interest in the Jedi Realist Movement really began to escalate. A few years after Attack of the Clones was released, I was at Disney's Hollywood Studios in Orlando, Florida in the spring of 2004 when I saw my first "real" lightsaber. At the completion of the Star Tours ride, I was in the gift shop located in the trunk of a giant wroshyr tree with a T-47 snowspeeder and an AT-AT outside when I heard the familiar snap-hiss-hum of a lightsaber igniting and saw my first Master Replicas lightsaber, a reproduction of Luke Skywalker's lightsaber, with its electroluminescent blue blade lit up in all its glory. At that point, I knew I needed to have my very own lightsaber. It took some time to acquire my first laser sword, but one led to two, two led to three, three led to building my own (I think you can see where this is going). Having a lightsaber collection at my house was great, and my kids and I really enjoyed dueling with them in the driveway and the backyard to the raised eyebrows of our neighbors. It made me exceptionally happy to again be playing in the *Star Wars* galaxy like I did as a Youngling, and I soon began wondering if I could learn to perform the spinning maneuvers done throughout the prequel trilogy. With a few quick searches of the internet, I watched literally hundreds of video tutorials that other enthusiasts had posted and learned how to direct my lightsaber through the same magnificent and eye-catching arcs that we had witnessed on the movie screen.

At this time I also learned of a lightsaber enthusiast group located in New York City comprised of instructors, martial artists, and cosplayers (short for costume players, people that perform performance art in pop-culture costumes) that would meet and train each other in the art of the lightsaber and stage combat techniques. They would teach the spins and flourishes that had been made popular in the prequel trilogy and then, when the time was right, they would begin choreographing their own lightsaber battles. The entire group would help with costuming, suggestions on the flow of the duel, and moves to incorporate into their routine, and then these choreographed battles would be performed for the entire group or at comic conventions or other public events. Soon there were sister organizations on the West Coast in Los Angeles and San Francisco and I thought to myself, "Why is there nothing in the middle of the country?" I created a website, MileHighJedi.com, and tried to get a collective of saber enthusiasts together along the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains but was unable to get the organization going (but I am still working on it). It was my attempt to get the Mile High Jedi established, however, that led me to further my training as a Jedi.

While practicing the lightsaber flourishes in the hopes that the Mile High Jedi group would soon be established I would sometimes think about the lightsaber dueling styles and their origins in the martial arts of kendo, iaido, escrima, bojutsu fencing, and other styles. To research these martial arts I read many books about swordsmen and their craft, such as Miyamoto Musashi's Book of Five Rings and Dokkodo, samurai Yamamoto Tsunetomo's Hagakure, and Darrell Max Craig's The Heart of Kendo.

Along with these esteemed titles I also read other lauded martial arts books such as Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* and Takuan Soho's *The Unfettered Mind*. These books led me to read other classic Eastern books on philosophy such as *The Book of Zhuangzi* and Laozi's *Dao De Jing* as they are known in the Pinyin romanization of Mandarin, more commonly known in the West as *The Book of Chuang Tsu* and Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*, along with more contemporary titles written by renowned authors such as the His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Eckhart Tolle, and Thich Nhat Hanh.

My research into these martial arts and Eastern philosophies taught me that, in addition to learning self-defense, the martial arts were a way to learn about and develop yourself through self-cultivation. I also noticed similarities between martial artists and the Jedi while reading all of these books and that led me to start thinking about what it would be like to train as a Jedi, which directed me to the many websites of the Jedi Realist movement. When I started visiting these websites, I was amazed at just how many people were interested in becoming a Jedi, just like I was, and at the significant influence *Star Wars* still had over us after all these years. It was at this point that I first started my own meditation practice.

However, no matter how many websites I looked at, or how many books I read, or how many podcasts I listened to, something was missing. As American mythologist Joseph Campbell, an individual we will talk about in more detail later, once said, "If the path before you is clear, you're probably on someone else's." So I looked deep down inside myself and had some revelations on how I thought training as a Jedi should go. It was then that I started writing a book to help out other people who might be having the same concerns that I was having. However, shortly after I started writing what would eventually evolve into the book you hold now, I realized that I didn't have the complete method of training as a Jedi. To be honest and more accurate, I wasn't even close at that point. But I knew that I was heading in the right direction and that I didn't even have a full map to get me to the end of my journey, but like Brazilian author Paolo Coelho once said, "The moment that he begins walking it, the warrior of the light recognizes the path."

At that point I started up another website, [ModernJediKnight.com](http://ModernJediKnight.com), and started writing a blog. For five years I took inspiration from what was around me, whether it be the local, national, or world news, postings on other websites, *Star Wars* news, and wrote my thoughts about it. It was writing to this blog that developed my thoughts, revelations, intuitions and hunches into a cohesive system of training that can be used by anybody interested in becoming a Jedi Knight. Honoring the words of Mother Teresa, who said, "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples," I wanted to share this information with as wide an audience as possible. I am following the directions of Yoda when he told Luke, "Pass on what you have learned," shortly before leaving the crude matter of his body behind. The end result is what you are reading now.

## WHY STAR WARS?

While there are some that might consider this a slanderous attack of monumental proportions on classical literature (Sir Alec Guinness initially referred to *Star Wars* as "fairy tale rubbish", as an example), I believe the *Star Wars* saga has become so entrenched in our culture because it is our



generation's modern, epic, heroic tale. *Star Wars* is our generation's version of many classic hero tales such as Beowulf and Homer's Iliad and Odyssey in what has now become a new genre known as science-fantasy. An epic tale is defined as an extensive and impacting poem or story normally relating to a serious subject containing details of heroic deeds and events that have a significant meaning to a culture or nation, and you would be foolish to believe that the *Star Wars* saga doesn't fit that definition.

The American people of the 1970s, anomic, tired and beat down due to the long "police action" in Vietnam, a tumbling economy, an enduring recession, rising inflation, and a gasoline shortage, latched onto this hero's journey from a galaxy far, far away as a way to escape the monotony of their daily life, even if only for the movie's run time of 123 minutes. *Star Wars* provided an optimistic outlook on humanity, showing that we had a potential to be so much greater than we currently were as a race. As the previously mentioned American mythologist Joseph Campbell once expanded upon, *Star Wars* give us "the message that technology is not going to save us. Our computers, our tools, our machines are not enough. We have to rely on our intuition, our true human being."

The intense interest in *Star Wars* continues to this day. There are all of the books under the *Star Wars* Legends banner, non-canon tales formerly known as the *Star Wars* Expanded Universe, that routinely occupied spots on the New York Times Bestseller list. There are numerous games across many platforms that occupy the enthusiast's time, two of the latest being the highly-acclaimed *Star Wars: The Old Republic*, a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) and the First-Person-Shooter *Star Wars Battlefront*. *Star Wars* continues to have a strong television presence as of late, as evidenced by the successful animated series *The Clone Wars* and *Star Wars Rebels*, through parodies as seen on *Robot Chicken* and *Family Guy*, short computer animated productions such as *Lego Star Wars*, more fan-created films than you can shake a lightsaber at, and even in the exciting rumors of an upcoming live-action television series as well. The Celebration events, where fans from across the globe get to come together and share their joy of *Star Wars* with other likeminded individuals continue to be highly successful. The Phantom Menace was converted to 3D and re-released in the theater much to the joy of older fans who were able to share their *Star Wars* theater experience with their own Younglings (whether the five remaining saga movies will undergo this transformation and re-release is still unknown) With the recent acquisition of Lucasfilm by Disney and subsequent release of Episode VII: *The Force Awakens* and the intent to make a new *Star Wars* movie every year for the foreseeable future, fans are anxiously waiting to see what direction the saga will take. Announcements of a *Star Wars* theme park in the Disney complex and charitable initiatives such as *Star Wars: Force For Change* are also helping to keep the public interest high. When events such as *Star Wars* Celebration and movie trailers for the first movie of the sequel trilogy *The Force Awakens* and the other anthologies like *Rogue One* become international news events that are attended and discussed and dissected by fans and mildly interested bystanders alike, you know that the story has permeated our own culture in a significant way. The stories are advancing, the excitement is crossing all borders, and our adoration of the *Star Wars* universe only continues to grow.

WHY THE JEDI?

Just like it was back in 1970s, the United States is again ending their involvement in a long, drawn-out conflict while fighting a battered but recovering economy and high consumer goods prices. Americans are also still deeply entrenched in the *Star Wars* galaxy, the epic tale of our modern age, evidenced by the continued expansion of the story through movies, books, video games, and television productions. This book could have, instead of the Jedi, easily utilized the training methods and philosophies of non-fictional warrior classes such as the knights of medieval times, ninjas, Shaolin monks, samurai, Hwa Rang, Sohei, Native American warriors, or even Plato's idealistic Guardians of the Republic. One could also use other hyper-real pop-culture heroes as their source of inspiration, ranging from comic book heroes with cinematic adaptations such as The Dark Knight, Spiderman, and Superman, to the members of the rag-tag fleet in the re-imagined Battlestar Galactica television series, or other original movies such as The Matrix trilogy or Avatar. One could even look for motivation from Star Trek (Gasp!) If that is too much sci-fi, you could look to The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings trilogies. Or one could even take inspiration from books and movies that are true stories of heroes who showed valiant resilience in the face of adversity, such as Anne Frank, Viktor Frankl, Louis "Louie" Zamperini, and Marcus Luttrell. Regardless, the perpetual interest in the Jedi and the *Star Wars* universe, along with the latitude allowed in the training choices and the story being the most relevant and modern hero's journey of our time, made it the obvious choice. Why are Jedi the obvious choice? Because it is what has amazed, captivated, and inspired us. Just as every chapter or subchapter in this guide could be its own book, this book could stand on its own as a guide on how to live a more satisfying life without making a single reference to *Star Wars*, but it seems only noble to pay homage to the inspiration that started this journey. Let us examine why this is so in a more thorough manner.

At first glance the *Star Wars* movies, books, and television shows, along with the massive amount of content under the *Star Wars* Legends banner, appears to just be entertainment, something to be watched, read, or played as a way to wile away the time. However, just like every other myth and legend that has been known to humans and our paleolithic ancestors, these stories weren't told and written to simply entertain. They were spoken and read to give instruction on how to live a life. All of the myths and legends we know are outgrowths of the stories told by the tribal leaders and shaman from hundreds of thousands of years ago. To the young they were entertaining stories, to the older members they were a verbal or written guide to living and experiencing a joyful life. And now as humans have evolved and our grasp of technology has expanded we can now experience these myths and legends visually.

How can we infer that these myths, legends, and other stories of old, along with the new epic tales from the *Star Wars* franchise, are to serve as a guide? Because if you examine them closely, you will soon see that the stories are different but yet so similar at the same time. And for what other reason could a monomyth, a term coined by Joseph Campbell, exist? The monomyth states that the many myths and legends humans have told for thousands of years that come from dissimilar times, distant regions, and contrasting cultures all share fundamental architecture and stages. It is this mythos, the Greek word for myth, that served as the foundation that was later developed into the logos, or logic, that has directed civilization since the human race was a nomadic collection of hunter-gatherers. As Joseph Campbell told in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, "A hero ventures forth from the

world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder. Fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won. The hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man." Sounds familiar, doesn't it? It is through these heroic tales that we learn what must be done, either actually or metaphorically, to return and share our good fortune with others. Now that we know what the message is, let us dig deeper as to why the ideal of the Jedi resonates with us.

Why is it that you feel drawn to emulate the Jedi in yourself? The answer might just be understood with the concept of neuroplasticity. Until a few years ago the brain was considered a physiologically static organ once it was housed in the cranium of an adult. Yet recent discoveries show that the brain is constantly in a state of flux. Neuroplasticity refers to the brain's ability to create, enhance, and change neural pathways and processes due to environmental changes, thinking, emotions, learning, and experiences. Our brain changes its structure based upon how we live and think, much as our muscles grow when we train them with sets and reps (repetitions for those who are unfamiliar with the term). This explains how one can continuously learn new concepts, tasks, and behaviors through practice and rehearsal. With that understanding think about these words by Frank Forench, a leader in health education and performance training, as he wrote in his book *Beautiful Practice*: "Repeat a story one time and the mind-body will take note. Repeat a story two times and your mind-body will detect a pattern and prepare an appropriate neuroendocrine response. Repeat a story a hundred times and the narrative will become embedded, not just in your body, but in your identity. The words and meaning will carve a groove into the terrain of your nervous system and, in turn, your life." A variation of this concept was voiced a few thousand years earlier by Aristotle when he said, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." Gandhi said the same when he voiced, "Man is a product of his thoughts. What he thinks, he becomes."

Every time you were enthralled by the story of *Star Wars* you were doing one more rep in your mind. The more reps you performed, the more you could realize and actualize the Jedi and see them in yourself. By calling yourself a Jedi now you accept this as your identity which makes the training and adoption of new patterns of behavior easier to learn and keep while also making them more profound. Luke validates this statement in *Return of the Jedi* where, after throwing down his lightsaber to the feet of the Emperor, Luke stands tall and proud and says, "You have failed, your highness. I am a Jedi, like my father before me." This proclamation gives Luke the courage and guidance to stand defenseless yet defiant against the Emperor.

It is this fascination, this wondrous appeal, that makes us want to invest in ourselves and train as a Jedi, to make an investment that will pay off with exponential interest later on in your life. And, as you continue to read you will soon realize that the Modern Jedi Knight is not a new philosophy at all, it is just a new way of looking at current and established philosophies already in practice. As they say, "What was old is new again."

But just in case all of those reasons were not enough to convince you of the need for heroes in general and specifically the Jedi, let me tell you a story about an experience I recently had. It was just a short time ago in March of 2015 (it was on Pi day, to be exact) when I went on a pilgrimage to the Yoda

Fountain. For those that are unfamiliar, the Yoda Fountain is a 26 inch "life size" bronze statue of Yoda sitting atop a fountain in a small alcove at the entrance to Lucasfilm, which is located in the Presidio area of San Francisco and just a short distance from the Golden Gate Bridge. It was a beautiful day in the Bay Area, with high cirrus clouds to diffuse the intensity of the midday sun and a cool breeze coming off the bay. My journey to the fountain involved a roundtrip hike of over seven miles from the light rail station at the Civic Center of San Francisco and the crisp morning temperatures kept me comfortable. I enjoyed my stroll through the neighborhoods of the City by the Bay, although it certainly seemed to me that the trip to the Presidio was entirely uphill. Shortly after entering the Presidio area and after a quick stop at the local coffee vendor I found the statue after a little searching and took the obligatory tourist photos and selfie, but instead of the other tourists who came and quickly left, I stayed in the small courtyard for a little more than an hour.

While I was there I must have seen at least 100 people stop by and visit their favorite Dagobah resident. They were ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, fans of all ages, ranging from a few months of age to some octogenarians. They were of all ethnicities and races, and I personally heard Russian, French, German, and the Queen's English being spoken. And out of all of these diverse groups of people, all of them, without exception, began to smile when they rounded the corner and caught their first glimpse of Yoda standing atop his burbling oasis, and subsequent visits have only confirmed this even more. Their happiness was a palpable vibe that was joyous and overpowering, and you didn't need to be a Jedi to feel and experience it. People feel happy and secure and safe, and the universe seems to fit together just a little tighter and cleaner, when they are around Yoda. That is why they, and us as well, are drawn to the Jedi.

[WHY DO WE NEED "MODERN" JEDI?

Now, back to the question of, "Why should we strive to be like the fictional Jedi?" In this modern and civilized age, one would believe that the many divisions of our federal, state, and local government would be able to protect us with their military and police forces, but that is not always the case. One only needs to read the newspaper or watch the evening news to see that there are multiple attacks on individuals and families daily. With no disrespect intended towards law enforcement, the police very rarely stop a violent crime in progress. The police usually show up after the crime has been committed, relegated to acting as a historical recorder of the carnage in the hopes of catching the criminal offender at a later date and time. This reliance on the government to protect and save us, to willingly give up our personal control and responsibility, is tantamount to Mace Windu telling Yoda that "our ability to use the Force has diminished." The catastrophe of September 11, 2001 showed us what can happen to us on a large scale when we, as individuals and as a nation, are untrained, unprepared and disorganized when attacked. As Albert Einstein said, "The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything." Deciding to attack someone is a choice, but being called upon to defend yourself or your family is a task that is thrust upon you with little to no warning.

It is my strong belief that there are three types of people in this world. Maybe you are familiar with the sheep, wolves, and shepherds analogy but we are going to create a new one: nerfs, manka cats,

and nerf herders. The nerfs are kind and gentle herbivorous creatures that couldn't harm anybody by choice as they don't have a violent hair on their furry bodies. The manka cats look to do harm to the nerfs at any opportunity, attacking with malice and disregard for their victim in order to satisfy their personal hunger. The nerf herder, thought of by many as a simple lower-class worker, would stand against the fangs and claws of the manka cat with nothing but a stick and his wits to prevent an attack to the flock of nerfs around him. However, the nerf herder is one who is in control, not someone who is wild and ruled by the ego, emotion, and desires. The nerf herder's purpose is to serve and to protect others who cannot protect themselves, whereas the manka cats purpose is only to satisfy itself and possibly its pack.

Which would you rather be? The nerf that blindly goes through life thinking nothing bad can ever happen to them and spending all of their time thinking about nobody else but themselves, the manka cat who looks to feed on the nerfs without mercy or remorse, or the nerf herder who is trained, prepared, and, most importantly, willing to step between the nerf and the manka cat? What the world really needs at this time are more nerf herders, even if it is considered to be an insult by Alderaanian Princesses. What the world needs are heroes and warriors, Jedi who believe that one person can change themselves and the world for the better. Society needs individuals who are looking to restore balance to themselves, the Force, and the world around them, people who are willing to take an active role to get their objectives accomplished and make it a reality. As Martin Luther King, Jr. once spoke, "An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."

Don't think for a minute that my only concern or justification for the training of the Modern Jedi Knight is for protecting yourself from some abhorrent crime that rises from the dark side, although it will indeed prove invaluable if needed. And your training isn't just to help save yourself, your family, and any innocent bystander lucky enough to be near you from any of the numerous natural disasters that have occurred lately and could occur again without warning, whether they be earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, or even the ever-popular zombie apocalypse, made possible to *Star Wars* fans through the recently discovered Sith spell of reanimation, Isaiwinokka Hoyakut, or by an unconfined bioweapon created by the Empire and featured in the book *Death Troopers*.

Your training as a Modern Jedi will not solely be in preparation for your as-of-yet unknown fight. "Which fight?" you may ask, just as Rey asked Maz while Han and Finn watched from their shared table of Maz's tavern on Takodana. "The only fight, against the dark side." answered Maz. "Through the ages I have seen evil take many forms. The Sith, The Empire, today it is the First Order." Evil and the dark side have taken many forms in our own galaxy as well, ranging from local criminals to terrorists and corrupt governments. The dark side can also be anthropomorphized as any of the natural disasters, or supernatural disaster in the case of zombies, listed above. No, your training as a Modern Jedi isn't just to prepare you and save you from your eventual encounter with the dark side.

But it will if you need it to.

The purpose of training as a Modern Jedi Knight is to make you a complete person; one who is thriving, happy, energetic, healthy, connected, centered, one who enjoys a long and meaningful life, and hopefully even becomes enlightened. But perhaps most importantly it will allow you to go through life without the shackles of fear. You will be self-reliant and willing to take the initiative when necessary, one who gives without any thought of reward. The training will also keep you and those around you safe. It will allow you to be, in the words of Maya Angelou, "the rainbow in someone's cloud. Remember, when seconds count in an emergency, the police, firefighters, and other emergency medical services and first responders are minutes away.

#### THE MODERN JEDI DISCLAIMERS

There are two important matters I would like to cover at this time. The first is that, as a Jedi, even though you are looking to protect yourself, your family, and others, you cannot become a vigilante and take matters of law and justice into your own hands. That is not what a Jedi does. If you are confronted and someone wants to take your wallet, for example, your best method of coping with the attack is to comply with the aggressor while doing everything possible to emerge unharmed and help the police capture the individual at a later date and time. You should only use any combative training if there is a direct threat that someone could be significantly injured or if there could be loss of life. Your wallet and its contents, as you will soon discover, are just not that important in the grand scheme of things and you should not feel a strong attachment to holding onto it when faced with confrontation.

The other matter that needs to be addressed is that it is indeed a dangerous world we live in. Wars, terrorists, criminals, natural and manmade disasters, and many other known and unknown threats are out there. As an airline pilot I know that there are bad people out there who train every day to cause me and my crew, along with potentially thousands or hundreds of thousands of people on the ground, serious bodily harm. However, as a Jedi we should not live in a state of hyperactive paranoia, fearful of what might come around the corner or attack us from behind. As a matter of fact, the opposite is true. As a Jedi you should go through life mindful of every experience, enjoying every moment of every day as a wonderful treasure. The purpose of the training of the Jedi is not to learn how to fight but to develop the body, mind, and spirit so they are powerful, relaxed, and ready to respond as necessary. By being confident in your own ability to handle anything that comes your way, be it stress, floodwaters, or an assailant with a gun, you can enjoy a life free of the tractor beams of fear. In the words of Italian statesman and historian Francesco Guicciardini, "Nothing is better or surer than fixing things in such a way that you are safe, not because your enemy is unwilling, but because he is unable to hurt you."

#### THE PERILS OF TRAINING

Many people across the planet imagined what it would be like to be a Jedi, to wield a lightsaber with complete authority and be a master of the Force. Thanks to the internet, people started researching the ways of the Jedi, and then they began to form groups, organized themselves, and began to train like the fictional Jedi using established practices of the martial arts, philosophy, and philanthropy. With no real conscious effort, their training carried over into their real world activities

and lifestyle and the Jedi realist movement started. The Jedi realists strive to live their lives just as the Jedi did, following an established code and practicing morality, ethics, and honor. Even though the group itself is highly diverse the Jedi realists all have one common and dominant goal, to live their life and train as close as possible to the way the Jedi did. The truth, even if spoken by a Muppet such as Yoda, is still the truth.

Just as Qui-Gon told a young Anakin Skywalker on the dusty streets of Mos Espa, "Anakin, training to become a Jedi will not be an easy challenge. And if you succeed, it will be a hard life." There are going to be those who make fun of you for following in the footsteps of characters from a movie and there are going to be those who berate you for following some pop-culture ideal instead of committing yourself to an established discipline possibly rife with dogma. Others still will view this as overly optimistic and hopeful mysticism, a fool's journey into something that makes no appeal to "common sense" or "rational thought", and will believe that because you are using the fictional views and tenets of the Force that you are a crackpot and that you do not really understand what you are talking about. Then there are those who will simply label you as a geek, a fanboy or fangirl, or a nerd because they don't comprehend what you are about.

As Ursula K. Le Guin wrote, "When you light a candle, you also cast a shadow. When one begins the path of self-improvement there are others who will become uncomfortable with themselves who will then feel the need to put an end to your endeavor. When faced with these people and their views, remember the words of Vincent Van Gogh who once said, "Normality is a paved road: it's comfortable to walk, but no flowers grow on it." Go find the flowers, your own personal flowers, and help them develop, grow, and prosper.

For example, if you tell someone you are training in the art of the katana, the famed sword of the Japanese samurai, they might be slightly amused that you would train in a discipline with what they perceive to have little modern relevance but most will not discredit you in your undertaking. Mention that you are training in the art of the lightsaber, though, and be prepared for ridicule. The art of the lightsaber is just as legitimate a form of sword manipulation as any of the others if you understand two basic tenets: dueling with a lightsaber is based upon established sword forms that are still practiced to this day and that choreographed movie swordplay is totally different than real sword fighting, regardless of whether you are using a lightsaber, katana, rapier, or broadsword.

We use the reference of the Jedi for many reasons, a few of which are the widely known cultural relevance, the often used terminology in our own culture, and the all too convenient holistic fit the training provides for your mind, body, and spirit.

No matter what your passion is, I am here to tell you that it is perfectly acceptable to be who you are and do what you like to do. It is the passion you have for something out of the ordinary that will have other people question and possibly make fun of you. But if they spend any time to truly understand you they will also give you respect you for the hard work and effort you are putting into your passion. The passion that gives you joy is good because it shows you are truly alive and taking an active interest in pursuing your interests and making yourself a better person. Martin Luther King, Jr. is

quoted as saying, "The hope of a secure and livable world lies with disciplined nonconformists who are dedicated to justice, peace, and brotherhood." I am certain Mr. King wasn't specifically referring to Jedi in that statement, but if you take away the Force powers and the lightsaber, the Jedi are indeed that group of compassionate individuals Martin Luther King, Jr. was talking about, individuals who will go out of their way to help those in need.

## IS THIS A CULT?

Onboard the *Millennium Falcon* while in hyperspace en route to Alderaan, Han Solo shows his true feelings of the Jedi by saying "Hokey religions and ancient weapons are no match for a good blaster at your side, kid." Here on planet Earth, being a Jedi and believing in the Force does not need to be considered as a religion, and it is debatable about whether the Jedi Knights were considered members of a religious order in the *Star Wars* universe. Dictionary definitions of religions are wide ranging but at the same time far from all encompassing. Perhaps the best answer as to whether being a Jedi is a religious or philosophical choice can be found in United States Supreme Court Associate Justice Potter Stewart's famous answer to the definition of pornography as "I know it when I see it." Whether you view your life as a Jedi, or for that matter Daoism (Taoism) or Buddhism, as a religion or philosophical choice depends upon your own experiences, thoughts, and interpretation. But any of these choices can be highly spiritual while still refraining from being religious.

Jedi do not worship the Force, but instead listen to it, follow it, and draw from it when needed, and use the ideals of the Jedi as a discipline to lead their life. So if you are having concerns about being a Jedi Realist and it conflicting with the practices of an established religion, do not worry. You can train as a Jedi and still follow the beliefs of your church, synagogue, or mosque without fear of heresy. I know of many members of the Jedi realist movement who are Christian, Jewish, and Muslim, and if they can train as a Jedi, so can you. You might even find that by studying the ways of the Jedi your connection with your personal faith will be enhanced to an even higher and more personal level.

You may encounter resistance about being a Jedi from those who have a very strong religious faith. One way to avoid such confrontation is to understand that the Force and God are synonymous with each other and that they can be used interchangeably with each other. This is not hiding your true intentions nor is this a deceptive act. Remember what Obi-Wan Kenobi said from the cockpit of the *Millennium Falcon* to Han Solo after they were first snared by the tractor beam of the Death Star, "You can't win. But there are alternatives to fighting." Be selective in your battles and use the common nomenclature if it will prevent discord. Sometimes peace and accord are more important than the need to have your own beliefs expressed completely or to prove that you are right.

Even though I say that being a Jedi or a member of the Jedi Realist Movement isn't a religion or cult, it does necessitate a certain way of thinking in the beginning. And the best way to explain what way of thinking would be to call it faith. But I am not referring to faith in the rigid and fixed dogmatic fashion most commonly used but as a personal acceptance of the way the universe operates. I am talking about the kind of faith that is more like an open skepticism, one that only requires one to keep an open mind long enough to search, explore, and ask questions and then make a discovery based upon



a personal experience. Said another way, one can think that there are two types of people on Earth. There are those who believe that everything that happens to them, whether via the Force or whatever term you wish to use, is unique and special and amazing, while the other type of people don't see it that way. Those who see it as the former would have what I would call faith. Let me explain in greater detail with a story, one that was very pivotal in my training as a Jedi.

I was in Chicago by the O'Hare airport in October one year, hiking along the banks of the Des Plaines river in the Chippewa Woods on a breezy but fair and sunny fall day. I took a break from my hike and found a secluded spot at the base of a tree that stretched from the bank out over the water, sat down, and meditated with an accompanying playlist of some John Williams music quietly playing in the background. When I was done meditating I opened my eyes while the score of *Star Wars* was still playing. As I sat there, leaning against the trunk of massive tree, I watched the multitude of leaves falling from the treetops. Much to my amazement, I soon noticed that the leaves landing next to me were coming to rest on the ground in time with Yoda's Theme from *The Empire Strikes Back*. Note for note, it was like the forest floor was an orchestra being played by the leaves and composed by the wind. I sat there for quite a while, mesmerized, smiling and laughing in wonder at the experience, before eventually getting up and continuing my walk back to the hotel, deep in mindful but contemplative thought over the experience I had just had.

Critics and skeptics would argue that the events I just described were random and chaotic and meaningless or simply a matter of luck. I found it to be beautiful and poetic and deliberate and spiritual because in my experience, and Obi-Wan's as well, there is no such thing as luck.

Who is right? As Qui-Gon said in *Mos Espa*, "Nothing happens by accident." But trying to determine who is right, that really isn't the proper question to ask. The more appropriate question should be, "Who cares?" With all things considered, though, out of the two groups I previously described which type of person do you think finds life more beautiful? You know who does, it is the one who has faith, the one who believes. Not the jaded skeptic, critic, and or cynic. You don't have to abandon science and rational thought, though, as that would be foolhardy and unwise. Why not be the person who has faith, the Jedi who believes? Remember what Yoda said after Luke's failure to extract his X-wing from the swamp when he told him, "I don't believe it."

Yoda replied, "That is why you fail."

## HOW DOES ONE TRAIN TO BECOME A JEDI?

The problem with the Jedi Realist movement is that, until now, no one has taken the effort to incorporate everything into what I would consider all-encompassing training. You can go online and find hundreds of websites devoted to the Jedi Realist movement. But all of these websites fall short in one way or another. Some are great for teaching you how to manipulate a lightsaber and conduct actual or mock duels and choreographed stage combat. Others focus entirely on the Force while neglecting any other aspects of training. Many others focus on meditation, lightsaber construction, costuming, etc. But none of these websites focus on everything, on all of the aspects related to training and becoming a Jedi.

Until now.

With this book and its accompanying website, ModernJediKnight.com, we will cover all aspects of becoming a Jedi as a part of the Jedi realist movement. We will leave Jediism, the view of being a Jedi as part of a religious group, to someone else to cover. We will cover the Force, the history and makeup of the Jedi, the Council, and their Code. We will also cover many other aspects, such as lightsaber construction and training, martial arts training, and meditation techniques. We will also make mention of many different practices, arts, and beliefs from across the world. The concept of the Jedi was not simply pulled from thin air or George Lucas' imagination. The Jedi are deeply rooted in many different aspects and tenets of modern spirituality that are currently practiced right now. It is the combination of these all these different aspects that makes up the Jedi.

Just as the Jedi seek balance with the Force and balance in their own life, this book and accompanying website would be unbalanced if I didn't cover all aspects of the Jedi and the Force. You will benefit greatly from this book and website even if you are only interested in certain facets of the Jedi, such as choreographed or sport lightsaber dueling or studying the Force. But I am willing to bet that as you study certain aspects of the Jedi you will be drawn to the other aspects as well. Just as nature strives for balance you should also, and by studying and mastering all aspects of the Jedi your training will be complete.

Like the three-legged Tri-droid of the Techno Union, you have three distinct aspects or legs that make up you as an individual, and all three aspects need to be cultivated for you to be able to stand strong and firm as a warrior and a Jedi. These three aspects are the mind, the body (sometimes referred to as the form), and the spirit (sometimes referred to as the energy). These are also known as the Three Pillars of the Jedi, which are the Force (spirit), Knowledge (mind), and Self-Discipline (body). The mind, body, and spirit are not separate entities. They are not parts of a trichotomy of what makes you a person, but they are all aspects of what makes you complete. This line of thought is a one hundred eighty degree change from the reductionist way of thinking that has been so prevalent for the last few centuries. Your body can't exist without your mind, your mind can't exist without the spirit, and your spirit can't be in human form without your body.

Just as the three legs of the Tri-droid support the head of the droid, the mind, body, and spirit support another primary aspect of being a Jedi that I call the Republic. The Republic is being a part of something greater than yourself. The Republic is being a member of a family, a group, a clan, a society, a tribe, a nation, a continent. The Republic is also bigger than people, it is also the environment you live in. This can be construed to be a small environment as your local neighborhood or city or state, while on a grander scale the Republic can include the entire planet Earth or even the galaxy and the universe. Without the Republic you are not a Jedi, you are just someone who is training themselves deep in the woods or high on a mountaintop. While some might think this would include Yoda in exile on the swamp world of Dagobah, they would be mistaken. The more obvious reason why this would not be so would be due to Yoda's lack of a transport, but the real reason is that Yoda knew that Dagobah, from a previous visit along with some Force insight, would provide him the solitude needed to continue with his training while waiting for the new hope of the galaxy to arrive. Luke Skywalker's self-imposed exile to

the original Jedi temple will require more information before we can say for certain but I feel Luke will follow in the same footsteps of the one who trained him. With no sense of Republic, you are only training for yourself instead of training for the good of your fellow man or your environment. Remember, strong people stand up for themselves, but the strongest people, the Jedi, stand up for others.

All of these aspects continually feed off of and support one another and the sum of these aspects, you, cannot exist without the Force. If you are lacking in one of these facets you would stumble and fall just as an unbalanced warrior or two-legged Tri-droid is easily and effortlessly toppled and conquered. The mind is developed through study, meditation, experience, and attentiveness. The body is developed through rigorous and playful training and preparation. The spirit is developed through good actions, character, and living in harmony with the Force. And with that, by taking what you have learned through your mind, body, and spirit and putting it to actual use develops and enhances your sense of the Republic.

If the mind, body, spirit, and Republic cannot exist independently, why would it make sense to train them independently? Training must be all encompassing because life is all encompassing. Even if you only want to learn how to correctly handle your lightsaber, you will eventually find that your mind hungers for more than what is being provided to and by the body. When the mind enters the equation, you will begin to see the subtle markings of the Force on your manipulations. And when your mind later exits that same equation you will truly see the power of the Force, but we will cover that in a later chapter.

## THE HERO'S JOURNEY

Joseph Campbell was an American mythologist and author who had spent his life examining many religious, narrative, and mythological texts that came to the conclusion that there was a common formula and fundamental set of archetypes that all epic stories shared, what he referred to as the monomyth or the hero's journey. Campbell's monomyth was composed of seventeen stages, and while not all epic tales have all seventeen stages or followed them in the exact same order, the vast majority of them were involved. George Lucas has openly credited Joseph Campbell's influence upon the shaping of the *Star Wars* saga through his published works, such as *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, which caused Lucas to make changes to his first draft of *The Star Wars*, later shortened to *Star Wars* and now known as *Star Wars* Episode IV: A New Hope.

You can see the monomyth all throughout the *Star Wars* saga. It can be found in every movie, in both the Original and Prequel trilogies, and it can be found across the span of both of the trilogies. Even more, you can also find that the monomyth exists for multiple characters in each story. The monomyth of *Star Wars* can be seen across the hexalogy as Anakin's journey, fall, and redemption. It can also be seen as Luke's journey from farmboy to Jedi in the classic trilogy or Obi-Wan's progression from Padawan to Jedi Knight in the prequel trilogy.

In our training to become Jedi we will follow the same format of training that Luke did in the original trilogy because it most closely resembles our very own journey. The prequel trilogy gives us so

much information about the Jedi and the Force and it is all pertinent and usable, but Anakin's journey from slave to Padawan to Jedi is very different from yours in innumerable ways. Similarly, Rey's awakening is very similar to Luke's, as well as your's and mine, but we will have to wait a few more years before we can see how Rey's training is going to proceed before we can use it as a guide and an inspiration.

At first we are oblivious to the Jedi and the Force just like Luke was in the beginning of A New Hope, then after what seemed to be a random encounter we will know of the Jedi and the Force. Soon, with a little training of the mind we will actually experience the Force and then we will use it. After that we will proceed to The Empire Strikes Back and work on training the body, then we will continue to Return of the Jedi and work on training the spirit. Once we have a strong foundation established we will then be able to rid ourselves of the lightsaber just as Luke did against the Emperor in Return of the Jedi when he truly understood the concept of the Republic.

One other reason that we will focus on the classic trilogy as our blueprint for training is Yoda. In the prequel trilogy you can see that Yoda, while still wise and powerful, is more aggressive and serious than when Luke finds him on Dagobah. When Luke tracks Yoda down after the Great Jedi Purge he is playful and impish, partially as a test against an impatient Luke. But I also believe that Yoda had gone through some serious soul searching while enduring his self-imposed exile on Dagobah and realized that the Jedi Council on Coruscant had made some significant mistakes in the past regarding Jedi training and philosophy. The most important realization Yoda probably had was that the Jedi were cocky and hubristic with their abilities, often inducing a fight with wise cracking insults and one-liners when the true Jedi way would have incurred no physical conflict and found a peaceful resolution. Another truth that was a close second most likely realized by Yoda is that the Jedi had lost their way once they started serving as Generals within the Clone Army. This is evidenced by Yoda's revelation as a Force ghost to Ezra Bridger on Lothal when he said of the Jedi, "In our arrogance, joined the war too swiftly, we did." One doesn't need to pay close attention in The Empire Strikes Back to notice that Yoda never instructs Luke on how to use a lightsaber, even telling Luke while he is entering the Tree of Evil, "Your weapons, you will not need them." The astute and observant eye will notice that Yoda himself doesn't even carry a lightsaber while on Dagobah after he lost his on Coruscant in the Senate building while fighting Darth Sidious. That insight should provide you with information on how your training will proceed and we will discuss this in more detail later.

Whether you know it or not, you have already undertaken the first stage of your own Hero's journey. Before you contemplated becoming a Jedi you were engaged in your normal life in your normal world. This was where Luke was before the Jawas came and Uncle Owen bought two droids from them. Then, somehow through some personal experience known only to you, your curiosity about training as a Jedi was aroused, even if only slightly and you found this book or the website. That was the first stage of the monomyth, the Call to Adventure, the first step on your path into the unknown where you are introduced to your mentor. Which, in your case, is me through this book and accompanying website. Luke received his Call to Adventure from his mentor when Obi-Wan Kenobi told him, after being rescued in the Jundland Wastes from the Sandpeople, "You must learn the ways of the Force if you're to come with me to Alderaan."

Luke passed the second stage, Supernatural Aid, when he received his father's lightsaber. A lightsaber isn't very supernatural, but neither is this book or associated website which are serving as the catalyst of the second stage of your Hero's journey.

Maybe you took a few steps along the path and said to yourself, like I wrote earlier, "This is crazy." This is the third stage of Campbell's monomyth, the Refusal of the Call. Luke refused the call also, laughing to Old Ben, "Alderaan? I'm not going to Alderaan! I've got to go home. It's late, I'm in for it as it is."

Even though you might have initially refused your call, something made you come back and take a second look. You then proclaimed to yourself, "I am going to do this. I am going to become a Jedi." This is the fourth stage, the Crossing of the First Threshold. Luke reached the fourth stage when he found his adoptive parents, Uncle Owen and Aunt Beru, dead and burned by the Imperials at the entrance to his home. It is at that point that he continues on his Hero's journey, telling Obi-Wan Kenobi, "I want to come with you to Alderaan. There's nothing here for me now. I want to learn the ways of the Force and become a Jedi like my father."

#### YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

In the movies, high levels of midi-chlorians were required to be sensitive to the power of the Force. In the expanded *Star Wars* Legends universe, brought to us through the numerous books and games, it was learned that almost all life could attain a small connection with the Force. Here on Earth, however, the Force is already in you, your cat and dog, the plants outside, and every other living organism of nature. Or, as Master Yoda would say, "For my ally is the Force. And a powerful ally it is. Life creates it, makes it grow. Its energy surrounds us and binds us. Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter. You must feel the Force around you. Here, between you, me, the tree, the rock, everywhere! Yes, even between this land and that ship!" Your insight into the Force will be one that is yours and nobody else's, because the way you learn about the Force is dependent upon your own upbringing, experiences, and interactions with other people and the environment around you. Even though the Force is universal, the path that you will walk in your life is totally yours and no one else's.

That itself brings up a quandary. If the Force is already in you, what could I possibly teach you that you do not already know? And how can I teach you about the Force if we arrive at the same destination but by different methods and paths? Galileo once said, "You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself." Miyamoto Musashi, a renowned Japanese swordsman, said something similar, "There is nothing outside of yourself that can ever enable you to get better, stronger, richer, quicker, or smarter. Everything is within. Everything exists. Seek nothing outside of yourself." Thich Nhat Hanh said something analogous as well, "You cannot transmit wisdom and insight to another person. The seed is already there. A good teacher touches the seed, allowing it to wake up, to sprout, and to grow."

Your journey to become a Jedi is just like your entire life. It truly is a  $n=1$  experiment, where you alone are the subject size of the experiment. What works for me may not work for you and vice-versa. We all have unique dreams, wants, and desires. We all create habits and patterns differently than other

people do and we are all unique individuals with unique bodies, needs, and methods of practice. There are some universal truths that we can use as a baseline, but from there it is up to you to research and experiment to finely tune and optimize your experience.

In this book I will provide many methods, options and alternatives that you can use in your training, but these lists will be far from all-inclusive and I invite you to be the skeptic. Just because I don't mention something does not mean that it is not an excellent and viable training opportunity or method. And even if I do mention something explicitly it may not work for you, it is up to you to determine what is best for you. Don't let yourself be limited by what I write in this book. Listen to the Buddha who said, "Believe in nothing, no matter where you read it or who said it, no matter if I have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense." This is similar to the words of Bruce Lee who said, "Absorb what is useful, discard what is useless and add what is specifically your own." This sage advice is repeated by Obi-Wan Kenobi, who said in *The Approaching Storm*, "No Jedi would be a true devotee who didn't question the system, along with everything else." Adopt, adapt, or abandon. Even though you have to pass through the stages of the monomyth just like everyone else does, your own challenges, obstacles, trials, and successes will be unique to you.

Understand also that I am not a perfect Jedi and I don't proclaim to be. Even though I write about the training needed to become a Jedi I don't always follow it explicitly. Some days I can't seem to find the time to meditate correctly. Some days I don't train my body through exercise or other activities. Some days I eat the wrong types of food or think the wrong thoughts. Some days the dark side of the Force haunts and beckons me. I know and understand that perfection is impossible but working towards perfection is acceptable and desirable. Every Jedi, from the Togrutan Initiate Ahsoka Tano to Grand Master Jedi Yoda, including you and I, all have our own Sith Lords to face on a daily basis, whether they be internal or external. But, just as I stated earlier, there are universal truths that will guide us, help us, and keep us on the pathway to becoming and steadfastly remaining a Jedi Knight.

My goal with this book and website is to simply open your eyes to the world around you and to the Force, and from there you will teach yourself with the subtle guidance of myself and others. Like an old path in the woods that has been neglected and become overgrown, so is your trail you must find and follow if you wish to become a Jedi. The path is there, waiting to be discovered and walked upon, but if you don't know where the path starts, where it wanders, or where it can take you, how could you possibly follow it? My purpose is to show you the clues you need to bring that path to light. These clues can be found in science and Stoicism, experience and experimentation, Buddhism and body weight exercises, mindfulness and meditation.

The clues to the path of the Jedi are all around you, evident in the *Star Wars* saga and movies, along with common sayings, phrases and cliché that we use on a daily basis. Yet if you don't truly listen and understand them how can they be of any help to you? You would spend your time wandering aimlessly and getting lost instead of making progress on your path to your own personal enlightenment. Since your journey is your own I will show you where to look but I won't tell you what to see. As an unknown author wrote, "I am not here to teach you that which you do not know, I am here to deepen the wisdom that is already yours." Similarly, Yoda told the young Padawan Ezra Bridger in *Rebels*, "And

your master, tell you everything must he?" With some helpful insight and a little assistance from some local teachers you can find the path that already exists, the trail that was created just for you, and take your first steps on your journey to a broad new world.

If you are ready to direct your life instead of react to it. If you no longer believe that training to become a Jedi is, as Obi-Wan mused of Owen Lars, "some damn fool idealistic crusade", then let us start your training in earnest and turn the page. Let me pass on what I have learned.

May the Force be with you, my fellow Jedi.

## Chapter II

### The Force

*"The Force is what gives a Jedi his power. It's an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together."*

-- Obi-Wan Kenobi

In the *Star Wars* movies, the Force is an abstract, esoteric, and omnipresent energy field that exists throughout the galaxy. Even though we are all familiar with the Force and our own interpretation of it, there are many different beliefs about the Force, even within the *Star Wars* galaxy itself. It is widely believed that the Force is a universal pool of pure and timeless energy, linking all things, times, sentient consciousnesses, and dimensions. Some believe the Force to be a conscious being that exists without a physical body and capable of intelligent thought, choice, favor, and even as having a sense of humor. Others believe that it is simply a tool that can be manipulated by those who have won the "galactic lottery", a term used by the nefarious bounty hunter Boba Fett, by having a highly attuned sensitivity to the Force. Some believe that the Force has an innate need to be in balance, that it is always seeking an equal level, while others believe that it cycles between the polar opposites of light and dark or good and evil on some specific but unknown timeframe. In between these opposing ends of the spectrum there are as many differing views about the Force as there are stars in the galaxy. Regardless of your personal viewpoint, by many of these definitions one who was aware of and in touch with the Force had the potential to know all times, all people, and all phenomenon.

To be able to manipulate, employ, and draw from the Force in the *Star Wars* galaxy one needed to have a high level of midi-chlorians in their bloodstream. Midi-chlorians are diminutive organisms that live within cell tissue and have the capability to communicate and interact with the Force, and they act as a conduit between the Force and the user. In the *Star Wars* galaxy, midi-chlorians are responsible for all life and exist in a symbiotic relationship with all other living creatures. Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn, in a conversation with a young Anakin Skywalker in the dusty city of Mos Espa on Tatooine, said, "Midi-chlorians are a microscopic life form that reside within all living cells and communicate with the Force. Without the midi-chlorians, life could not exist, and we would have no knowledge of the Force. They continually speak to you, telling you the will of the Force."

The number of midi-chlorians in a being's body was dependent upon numerous variables such as genetic disposition, environmental factors, and the will of the Force itself, but the higher the concentration the higher the sensitivity to the Force. We learned this to be true when Obi-Wan Kenobi stated, "...the reading's off the chart... over twenty thousand. Even Master Yoda doesn't have a midi-chlorian count that high!"



Because of the nature of the midi-chlorians and their existence in all life forms, it was later revealed in the *Star Wars* expanded universe that all living beings were capable of interacting with the Force at its most rudimentary and basic level if they had received a sufficient amount of proper training. It was the Jedi, however, who have learned to harness a continuous connection to the Force, allowing them to constantly listen and interrelate with the midi-chlorians in their body to gain a rich and complex connection with the Force.

Being one with the Force brought about many extraordinary capabilities, commonly referred to as Force Powers. We have all been exposed to these Force Powers through the movies and they cover many mental and physical capabilities. Using telekinesis the Force is able to influence the travel of objects, such as proton torpedoes, lightsaber blades, and falling Jedi, as well as the ability to lift and move items, such as X-Wings, R2 units, and golden protocol droids. Other physical Force Powers the Jedi can summon are incredible strength, stamina, agility, and speed from the Force. Mentally, the Jedi's Force powers can include such mind tricks as Force Persuasion, Force Illusion and others, along with telepathy, precognition, heightened awareness, and compassion. In addition to the abilities already listed there are supernatural Force powers as well, such as the ability to heal wounds, conjure Force Lightning, and even create life and prevent the living from dying. There are many additional Force powers that have been introduced throughout the books and video games within the expanded universe, but it should be clear that even with only a few of the Force powers listed the Force users would be remarkably competent warriors.

## SIDES OF THE FORCE

In the movies the Force is categorized in many different sub-sets or philosophies, each with its own concepts, aspects, and divisions. We first heard of the Force as having two different sides, the light side and the dark side of the Force, acting as polar opposites of a moral compass. With the release of *The Phantom Menace*, we were introduced to a different sub-group of the Force, where the Force was divided and referred to as the cosmic Force and the living Force, also known as the greater and lesser Force. In addition to the divisions already listed, there are some lesser known sub-categories and philosophies as well, such as the personal Force, the unifying Force, and the Potentium. Let us examine these various aspects of the Force and see how they correlate to the Modern Jedi Knights view and interpretation of the Force.

## THE LIGHT AND DARK SIDE OF THE FORCE

In the original trilogy, we were introduced to the Force as having two different sides. These sides of the Force were referred to as the light side of the Force, used mainly by the Jedi Knights, and the dark side of the Force, primarily employed by the Sith and the Knights of Ren. However, earlier we mentioned that any believe the Force to be a universal pool of pure energy, an unpolluted source of power incapable of being tainted by the users who could interact with it. Darth Sidious was almost right when he said, "The reality is that there is only the Force. It is above such petty concepts as positive and negative, black and white, good and evil."

The light and dark sides of the Force, in all reality, aren't sides of the Force at all but a marker of the individual employing the Force. The Force exists in all life, and how it is manifested depends upon the emotions and intentions of the Force user, be it a Jedi or a Sith. It is these emotions that determine whether the end result and Force user can be defined as either a part of the light or dark side of the Force. It is like Japanese martial artist Takamatsu Toshitsugu said a long time ago, "The color of the water is the color of its vase." Following the light side or the dark side of the Force provided no special powers or abilities when compared to the other side. For example, the Keldor Jedi Master Plo Kloon was able to use a version of Force Lightning, the same power employed by the Emperor Darth Sidious and other Sith Lords. In Return of the Jedi we see Luke Force Choke the Gamorrean guards in Jabba's palace. The difference between the Jedi and the Dark Lords is that Plo Kloon and Luke Skywalker used their ForcePowers to save a child and incapacitate the guards, respectively, while the Sith and other dark side Force users employed Force Lightning to destroy anybody or anything that stood in their way.

The light side of the Force can be classified as an internal or right-handed path, one that advocates asceticism and meditation, and is a path followed when one is calm and composed. The dark side of the Force can be identified as an external or left-handed path, one that is dominated by emotions and the belief that themselves and no one else should harness the power of the Force. The Jedi and other followers of the light side of the Force were concerned with benevolence, compassion, healing, teaching, and living in harmony with the Force. The Sith and other dark side users concentrated their efforts selfishly on themselves, hungry for power, influence, and control, using the Force without any restrictions. The Jedi interacted with the Force while free of all emotional attachment, with an emphasis placed upon the absence of negative emotions such as anger, fear, and hatred. In direct contrast, the Sith embraced all emotion, both negative and positive, as a means to increase their power through the Force. The Jedi endlessly strove to live in harmony with the environment, the universe, and its inhabitants, while the Sith cared for none of it, seeming to live with a disdain of any life other than their own. The Jedi thought of the Force as an ally, something to live in harmony with, while the Sith thought of the Force as a servant, something that they could be master of.

The path of the Jedi was referred to as being very narrow and hard to follow at the beginning and becoming very wide at the end, while the path of the Sith was the opposite, very wide and easy to follow in the beginning but narrow and constricting at the end. These references to the path are a way of metaphorically saying that the training of a Jedi is difficult to begin and sustain but in the end the options are almost limitless, while the way of the Sith is tempting and easy in the beginning but provides you with very few alternatives in the end. The lack of choices for the Sith is made clear in Return of the Jedi when Luke and Darth Vader have their dialogue at the Boarding Hatch of the Imperial AT-AT. In a desperate plea, Luke says to Vader, "Search your feelings, father. You can't do this. I feel the conflict within you. Let go of your hate." Darth Vader, with a resigned tone obvious within his deep baritone voice, replies, "It is too late for me, son. The Emperor will show you the true nature of the Force. He is your master now."

It is important to point out that the light side of the Force is not always good, nor is the dark side of the Force always evil. Or, as Obi-Wan Kenobi said to a as yet non-disfigured Darth Vader prior to their duel on Malastare, "Only a Sith deals in absolutes." Sometimes, when a person tries to do the right

thing and follow the good and righteous path of the light side of the Force the outcome may not always follow. We know this to be true by the saying, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Likewise, we also know that the dark side of the Force is not always bad.

Think of the stories you have heard about mothers acquiring incredible strength to allow them to save their children from burning and overturned cars following an automobile accident, the kind of "hysterical strength" that cannot be explained by a physiological adrenal response alone. Even though the mother is concerned only with saving their child, very much a light side Force user trait, the incredible flooding of emotion and the power of the dark side of the Force is what makes this possible. The influx of power from emotion can also be seen in Obi-Wan Kenobi's duel with Darth Maul in the reactor room of the palace on Naboo and in Luke Skywalker's duel with Darth Vader onboard the second Death Star, during which each Jedi momentarily dipped into the power of the dark side.

The problem with the ease of access to the power of the dark side is that it is not earned through dedicated effort, therefore making it quite tempting and susceptible to misuse. To quote Lord Acton, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." A more applicable quote, author unknown, is, "To become a Jedi, it is not the Force one must control, but one's self." One must be very careful not to cross the line and follow the dark side, even for a moment. If you do cross that line, your first step will be cautious and uncertain but before you know it you will be traversing the boundary faster than a TIE Advanced x1 Starfighter in pursuit of X-wings through the Death Star trench.

On the swamp planet of Dagobah in *The Empire Strikes Back*, Luke asked Yoda how he would know the good side of the Force from the bad side of the Force. "You will know. When you are calm, at peace. Passive. A Jedi uses the Force for knowledge and defense, never for attack," was Yoda's sage response. While that is indeed true, there are other indicators that let you know which side of the Force you are using. The Jedi exist in harmony with the Force, using what is available and given to them at that time and place, while the Sith pull and take from the Force, imposing their own will upon the Force to provide them with everything it has.

Have you ever noticed that the Sith and other dark side Force users are weary and tired, physically and emotionally depleted after drawing intensely from the Force? As an example, after his duels with the Jedi Obi-Wan, Anakin, and Yoda in the hidden caverns of Geonosis Count Dooku was visibly exhausted and appeared almost unable to stand without assistance. In *The Force Awakens* we see Kylo Ren punching himself in the wound inflicted by Chewbacca's bowcaster to create pain in an effort to channel his anger and keep himself in the fight with Rey and Finn. In direct contrast to this we see that Yoda in *Attack of the Clones* is barely able to walk without his gimer stick, yet when he draws from the Force he is capable of amazing acrobatic feats and can return to his normal self without feeling overdrawn. If you find yourself demanding from the Force instead of taking what it is naturally giving you, you are choosing to follow the dark side. If you find yourself exhausted after encountering the Force instead of feeling energized, or if you feel yourself frustrated by your lack of connection with the Force, again you are dangerously close to walking down a path from which your return is uncertain. Be sure to heed the warning Yoda gave Luke shortly before his mortal death, "But beware. Anger, fear,

aggression. The dark side are they. Once you start down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny.”

## THE COSMIC AND LIVING FORCE

In the prequel trilogy we were introducing to another set of philosophical views concerning the universal composition of the Force. Known also as the greater Force and the lesser Force, the cosmic Force and the living Force respectively are two aspects that describe the Force not as a moral compass, but how it exists in relation to the universe. The cosmic Force is what Obi-Wan Kenobi referred to aboard the *Millennium Falcon* when he said, “It binds the galaxy together.” The cosmic Force is the universal energy that connects all time, all space, and all living beings as the common thread shared by all. When the Jedi talk about destiny and fate, or use the Force through precognition or telekinesis, they are referring to and using the cosmic Force. The cosmic Force can also be thought of as the science of our existence at a molecular level or as the concept of Dao, understanding the nature of the universe and being in touch with it.

While the cosmic Force is concerned with holding the universe together, the living Force is concerned about and responsible for the existence of all life. We first heard of the living Force, not by name but by concept, while Yoda is training Luke on Dagobah. “For my ally is the Force. And a powerful ally it is. Life creates it, makes it grow. Its energy surrounds us and binds us. Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter. You must feel the Force around you. Here, between you, me, the tree, the rock, everywhere!” The living Force refers to our connection to the Force and other living entities on an instinctual and individual level, and concerns itself with what is happening right now, unlike the cosmic Force which concerns itself with what has happened in the past and what might happen in the future. The living Force is what gives the Jedi the ability to perform the Jedi Mind Trick, various healing techniques, and the ability to retain their identity after death when they become one with the Force. When I think of the living Force in our current society, I am always drawn to the Buddhists who strongly believe in being mindful as it is the seventh element on the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism.

Prior to the Great Jedi Purge of 19 BBY (also known as 19 years Before the Battle of Yavin), the Jedi Order concentrated most of their effort on the cosmic Force, referring constantly to fate, destiny, prophecy, insight, the Chosen One, and foreseeing the future. Had the Jedi Order followed the living Force and been mindful of what was going on in front of them like Qui-Gon wanted them to instead of trying to determine future events, it is possible that the Galactic Empire would have never been given the opportunity to come into existence. Likewise, had the Emperor been more mindful of the living Force, he most likely wouldn't have been surprised by the betrayal of Darth Vader as he was thrown into the central shaft of the second Death Star and fell four hundred kilometers to what would turn out to be his first death in the Legends universe. Following the Great Jedi Purge, the few remaining Jedi, such as Yoda and Obi-Wan, began to see the error of their ways of disregarding the living Force and began practicing its concepts of mindfulness and following intuition. We know this to be true when Yoda chastises Luke in his little hut located in the swamps of Dagobah, saying, “This one a long time I watched. Never his mind on where he was, hmm, what he was doing.”

## OTHER PHILOSOPHIES ON THE FORCE

In addition to the aspects of the Force already listed, there are some lesser-known aspects that still need to be covered. The personal Force, for example, is the energy that makes up your own fundamental nature or core being, and most of us would refer to it by calling it our “soul” but I call it your Forceprint and we will discuss that in further detail later in this chapter. In the *Star Wars* galaxy (and perhaps our own as well), when you are born some energy is drawn from the living Force to create your own unique personal Force, and when you pass on that energy returns to the living Force, unless you are an adept Jedi Master, in which case you retain your identity and become what is known as a Force ghost, just like Qui-Gon, Obi-Wan, Yoda, and Anakin did.

The unifying Force has two different explanations, depending upon whom you ask. We will cover both and leave the decision upon which definition you use to yourself. One explanation is that the unifying Force is what connects all of the various aspects of the Force to each other. Cosmic and living, light and dark, and the personal Force are all able to integrate with each other due to the unifying Force. Like a spider web with the Force at its center, the unifying Force would be the conduit that connects all of this energy together. The other definition of the unifying Force was that “the Force was everything, and everything was the Force.” While at first this sounds very familiar to the first definition, it is meant to imply that neither the Force nor its users have any sides at all; it is just simply the Force. Linked to the latter definition of the unifying Force was the Potentium philosophy of the Force, which similarly believed that the Force did not have any sides or aspects to it. Followers of the Potentium view of the Force believed that the Force, and the entire universe itself, were following a predestined plan and that everything within the universe was inherently good. The Jedi Order saw this as an opportunity by its followers to practice moral relativism and possibly fall to the dark side of the Force and expelled many Jedi from the Order in 132 BBY.

## FORCE RELATIVISM

As you read through this discussion of the Force you may come to the conclusion that I am a Force Relativist or that I am under the veil of Force Relativism. For those who are unfamiliar, Force Relativism is the belief that there is not a dark side to the Force that lies in opposition to the light side, and this conclusion was reached by many Padawan learners in their training to become a Jedi. Force Relativists do not deny the existence of the dark side of the Force and the powers that it can generate, rather they believe that the dark side of the Force is created within the mind of the individual Force user. As Yoda and the Jedi Council would argue and point out to the young Padawans, the danger with the misguided concept of Force Relativism idea is this: If you believe that any action can be taken when accompanied by a pure heart, soon you will believe that your heart is always pure, regardless of whatever deed or obscenity you may commit. One needs to only look to the fall of Anakin Skywalker and the atrocities that he committed as Darth Vader at the Jedi Temple on Coruscant to see an example of this.

I personally do agree with the concept that any side or aspect of the Force is generated from within the individual Force user. However, I strongly believe that there are still limits that need to be in

place and rules that need to be followed, it is these rules that differentiate the Jedi from the Sith, other Force Relativists and dark side Force users. One of the best examples of a rule that a Jedi would follow was voiced by Yoda when he told Luke, "A Jedi uses the Force for knowledge and defense, never for attack."

To explain with greater clarity and insight as to why I believe my thoughts, views, and stances are different from Force Relativists, let us work through a hypothetical situation. If time travel were possible in the *Star Wars* universe, a Force Relativist could argue that going back in time to assassinate Sheev Palpatine would be the right thing to do as it would save billions of lives in the near future and an untold number of lives across the span of time. But when would be the proper time to assassinate him? Would it be right before he became Emperor. Or would it be before he became Chancellor? Perhaps it would be better yet to assassinate Palpatine before he became a Senator. Or, do you go back even further and kill him right after his birth? Maybe, just maybe, it would be better to murder his mother and father before they even have a chance to conceive the future Darth Sidious. Maybe one should go back further and remove his entire bloodline from existence. Or maybe his entire race should be exterminated or his home planet obliterated, just as Alderaan was, to prevent his future existence. Where does this end? How does the prevention of violence justify the use of violence?

A Force Relativist may agree with me that this hypothetical situation is being carried out to the extreme if one were to wipe out an entire race just to prevent the birth of one person. But they would still believe that the galaxy would have been a better place if Emperor Palpatine, or perhaps more accurately Darth Sidious, had never existed. Regardless of whether this would be the case, remember these words Yoda spoke to Luke as he saw a city in the clouds with his friends suffering and in pain inside, "Difficult to see. Always in motion is the future." People do change. In fact, impermanence is an important concept we will discuss in a few chapters. Had we applied this same time-travel assassination thought experiment to Darth Vader, what could have been the unintended consequences? Perhaps Luke and Leia would never have been born, therefore never allowing Luke to have his opportunity to take a stand against the Emperor. Or maybe it would not have let Darth Vader let go of his hate, keeping him from saving his son from the hands of the Emperor and ultimately preventing him from completing his role in the prophecy as the Chosen One, the end result would be that the Emperor would still be ruling over the galaxy. That is why the Jedi follow the Jedi Code, to be discussed in a few chapters, without exception. By following the Jedi Code and by thoroughly understanding, accepting, and implementing their training, the Jedi are able to keep the dark side of the Force and Force Relativism in check.

## THE REAL FORCE

Many people believe that the Force, as introduced to us by George Lucas, was a synthesis of numerous aspects and qualities from many of the world's different religions, philosophies, and disciplines. It is my belief, however, that Lucas' inspiration for the Force was not a mixture at all, but was actually a distillation of all current beliefs in the world, working its way backwards from their current forms, stripping away all of the extraneous and superfluous, retreating from the dogma, until it reached the common and truest essence of human spirituality. Indeed, George Lucas took creative

input from the writings of Joseph Campbell, who believed all spirituality was the search for the same fundamental and unidentified force from which the universe was created. George Lucas has also stated that he was influenced by a phrase from the abstract film 21-87, in which cinematographer Roman Kroitor stated that “people feel that in the contemplation of nature and in communication with other living things, they become aware of some kind of force...and they call it God.”

The Force does exist and has been known of for thousands of years by numerous cultures, it has just been known by many different names. In the original writings of George Lucas the Force was referred to as the Whills. The Japanese refer to the Force as ki and kami. The Chinese refer to the Force as Qi (chi) and Dao. The ancient Egyptians referred to the Force as ka. It has also been known by almost as many names as there are cultures, such as subtle energy, mana, prana, Gaia or Mother Nature, aether, seid, élan, Odic force, awen, numina, Ouranos, logos, adur, vril, Kundalini, shakti (known more familiarly to us as the Togrutan Jedi Shaak Ti) and spiritual energy. In more general terms the Force is known as coincidence, luck, intuition, or synchronicity. In science the Force is known or theorized as being the Higg’s boson (also known as the God Particle), the quantum field, dark matter, and the “strings” of string theory. Nikola Tesla referred to the Force as the core, once saying, "My brain is only a receiver, in the universe there is a quarter from which we obtain knowledge, strength, and inspiration. I have not penetrated into the secrets of the core, but I know it exists."

Recent movies have also decided to expand upon the concept of the Force as seen in the *Star Wars* films with such terms as Eywa or the Matrix. The Force is also known in religious circles, categorized by such concepts and names as the Divine, the Maker, the Christian Soul, the Hindu Atman, the Buddhist Self, “the love of God”, “the hand of God”, “the Kingdom of God”, or the Pure Land of the Buddha. The other names of the Force listed here are just the very briefest introduction. All of the names, concepts, and philosophies could fill multiple pages of this book, but it is safe to say that throughout the history of the human race the thought of a universal life energy or life force, a “ghost in the machine”, a collective or universal consciousness, shared and experienced by all living things, has existed and continues to exist even with the continuous advancement of modern science and human innovation. As it says in the Vedas, ancient Sanskrit texts that serve as the basis for Hinduism, “Truth is one. The sages speak of it by many names.”

While a high number of midi-chlorians were required to be sensitive to the Force in the fictional *Star Wars* universe, that isn’t the case in our modern world. It is true that there are some individuals who will be more receptive or sensitive to the Force, just as there are those who have an innate ability, commonly known as “being a natural”, to excel in such activities as athletics, math, or music. But just as anybody can learn to hit a golf ball or throw a spiral, perform mathematical calculations, or play the guitar, each and every single one of us has the ability to get in touch with the Force. It is just like the conversation between Luke and Leia on Endor before Luke turned himself over to the Empire when Leia said, “You have a power I – I don’t understand and could never use,” to which Luke replied, “You are wrong, Leia. You have that power too. In time you’ll learn to use it as I have.” You just have to train yourself to quiet your mind, then listen to and become one with the Force, which we will cover in later sections of this book.

So, after all that, what is the “real” Force? The Force is a concept known to all of us, but the Force is also highly individualistic. Remember when I said no dogma? It is up to you to explore, discover, and ultimately decide for yourself what the Force is. We have covered the many different “traditional” aspects of the Force. You may totally follow one single philosophy, or you may pull pieces from all of them, or any combination in between. You might disregard all of the fictional aspects of the Force and concentrate your efforts on other philosophies, such as Daoism, Buddhism, or the combination of the two, Zen. You need to expand your horizons and knowledge base, take what you wish from your own grouping of information, believing what you wish while disregarding the rest, and begin walking down your very own individual path.

## EXPERIENCING THE FORCE

There are many who don’t believe that the Force can exist in our own galaxy, you very well might be one of them. I admit I used to be one who thought that people who could feel these so-called “mystical energies” were full of the fecal mounds that are left behind dewbacks on the desert sands of Tatooine. But then I had my own awakening, I experienced the Force firsthand. I didn't find or discover the Force because, unknowingly, I had been swimming in its ocean my entire life. I just had not been aware, I had not opened my eyes enough to see it. As Yoda said to Luke in *The Shadows of Mindor*, "If far from the Force you find yourself, trust you can that it is not the Force that has moved." But once I moved in the right direction and established the connection there was no doubting the existence of the Force.

There are many different methods that you can use to awaken and enhance your own Force sensitivity. Meditation is commonly used in the beginning to learn how to quiet your mind so that you may listen to the Force and receive its gift. Once you have experienced the Force and know it to exist in your own heart and soul, then you can work on experiencing the Force through other methods. A few examples of these methods are the martial arts, creative arts, and ritual ceremonies. Experiencing the Force through the martial arts simply entails your muscle memory taking over and giving yourself to the situation. By allowing the “training to take over” you can achieve a type of moving meditation, also known as action meditation.

You can become one with the Force through creative endeavors as well, regardless of whether you are the artist or the audience. Painting and art shows, cooking for other people, or perhaps even watching musicians, such as my favorite rock band *The Police* as they performed their last concert at the Red Rocks Amphitheater, are all avenues by which one could experience the Force. When you take time to stop and smell the roses and enjoy the moment, being mindful of where you are, who you are, where you are going, and how you feel, you have the possibility to come into contact with the Force.

How will you know when you and the Force are sharing a connection? There are numerous physiological, mental, and spiritual indicators that let you know you are experiencing the Force. Physically, a tingling or vibratory sensation in the hands, spinal column and head, or even through your entire body or across your entire skin is quite common. In concurrence with the tingling feeling you might also feel temperature differences across your skin or inside your body, with a warming sensation



being the norm but a cool feeling being possible as well. One might also experience feelings in the abdominal cavity which is the location of the enteric nervous system, commonly referred to by scientists as the second brain as this area has 100 million neurons, more neurons than the spinal cord or the entire peripheral nervous system. It is from this second brain that you will get your familiar feelings such as gut instincts, butterflies, aches, and tightness. Mentally, if you find yourself thinking with a surreal clarity and that time appears to be moving slower, these are indicators that you have connected to the majesty of the Force. You might also feel as if you have an enhanced sense of yourself and your surroundings. Spiritually, you will feel calm, connected, and peaceful. Each person's interaction with the Force is unique, and only you can know when it is truly occurring, but you will definitely know when it is taking place. As Baruch Spinoza, the Dutch philosopher said, "Everything great is just as difficult to realize as it is rare to find." It is a feeling that cannot be put into words, a feeling that you must experience to truly understand.

If you think back over your life, there are certain memories that are going to stick out in your recollection. It could be significant life changing events, such as getting married or the birth of your children. It could be specific memory of a sunset over the mountains or a sunrise viewed from the beach. It could be a time when you achieved a pinnacle in some endeavor or sport. It could even be work related, such as when you figured out what you really wanted to do for a living, when you made a breakthrough on a project you were working on, or in an interaction with a fellow employee. They have been called "a-ha moments" or "moments of realization". Phil Keoghan, author and host of The Amazing Race, refers to them as NOW moments, with NOW being short for No Opportunity Wasted. Archimedes, a Greek scholar, screamed "Eureka", Greek for "I have found it", while running through the streets naked after having a dramatic revelation about displacement and volume while stepping into the bathtub. Dr. Wayne Dyer referred to these pivotal experiences as quantum moments, No matter what you call it, there are two recurring themes that need to be noted concerning your connection with the Force. The first is that they are all moments, very small periods in your lifetime where you were mindful and all of the pieces fell into place, a time when you were enlightened and astounded by the sudden clarity of knowledge and wisdom, and it had a profound effect on your life. The other is that they are highly memorable event markers in your life, ones that stick out in your mind and are easily recalled, and these moments most likely serve as a cornerstone or foundation of your identity of your self. These moments are the ones you think of when you hear the aphorism, "Life is not measured by how many breaths you take, but about the moments that take your breath away." Think back on any of these moments in your life, did you experience any of the sensations, thoughts, or feelings listed above? I bet you have.

Given all of the signals above, you should be able to know when you have established a solid connection with the Force. These sensations and feelings often occur when you are purposefully trying to network with the Force, but the Force also interacts with you when it isn't so obvious as an "a-ha moment", and even when it is obvious most of us have either learned or chosen not to listen. Your own moral compass, your conscience, is an outreach of the Force. That little voice at the back of your head, whether you call it instinct, intuition, a hunch, your sixth sense, or insight is also the Force attempting to communicate with you. When the hairs on the back of your neck or on your arms stand on end, feel a

chill, or have a general sense of unease, you are experiencing a disturbance in the Force, and it is trying to give you a warning. When you are “in the zone”, “in the groove”, “on the ball”, “in the sweet spot”, or “going with the flow” you are interacting seamlessly with the Force. When your actions are effortless and free you are one with the Force. When you overcome the duality of the self and object, you are caught up in the Force. The small space of time between action and reaction, sensation and perception, inhalation and exhalation, or stimulation and response are all times when you can interact and become one with the Force. To be a Modern Jedi Knight you must recognize when the Force is trying to influence you, listen to it, and let go of conscious control of your mind and body, which we will cover in later chapters of this book.

## THE FORCEPRINT

A Forceprint can be thought of as a type of aura, a unique identifier, a specific vibration to everything in the universe that has ever existed or will exist in the future, both organic and inorganic, and it does so with its origins in the Force. A Forceprint is analogous to the concept of kami within the Shinto religion, whereas kami refers to the sacred essence or divinity that is inherent to and manifests itself in every form. Similar to the human fingerprint or a DNA sequence, a Forceprint allows one accustomed to experiencing the Force to differentiate objects from one another based on their unique identifiers which have both internal and external influences. Some examples of these conditions are whether the source is currently alive or dead, whether the object was handmade or manufactured by a machine, whether the object was treasured by someone else or discarded in a basement, whether the object was involved in great triumph or bitter tragedy, and many other similar identifying traits. Not only does this allow the Jedi to differentiate people from trees, rocks, and sand through the use of the Force, it allows the Jedi to individually identify one person from another, one tree from another, one rock from another, and every grain of sand from another. Every object, every form, every place, every life is unique but yet also connected, just as every snowflake, raindrop or wave is different from every other but yet still part of the same blizzard, deluge, or ocean.

There are many great examples of the Forceprint from the *Star Wars* movies and they can be found across the heptalogy. In *Attack of the Clones*, when Padmé approaches Anakin while he is meditating on the balcony at the Lake Retreat, she initially turns to leave when Anakin pleads to her not to leave his side, saying "Your presence is soothing." In *A New Hope*, Obi-Wan is visibly shaken after he experienced the Forceprint of "millions of voices" crying out in terror before becoming suddenly silenced. Another example of the Forceprint from *A New Hope* is when Darth Vader, influenced by the arrival of Obi-Wan Kenobi hidden onboard the *Millennium Falcon*, voices, "I sense something; a presence I've not felt since....." Yet one more example of the Forceprint can be found in *Return of the Jedi* when Luke, as part of the strike team aboard the Lambda-class Shuttle *Tydirium*, approaches the Executor to obtain clearance to the shield generator on Endor. He knows he is endangering the mission because his father, Darth Vader, now knows that the rebels are in the process of infiltrating the base on Endor. We see yet more examples of the Forceprint in *The Force Awakens* in such pivotal scenes as when Rey touches Luke's lightsaber for the first time or when Kylo Ren is able to sense that his father is nearby.

One aspect that is interesting to note is that throughout the movies there are multiple examples of non-Jedi making a connection to the Forceprint of others. We see then in *The Empire Strikes Back* when Han is able to find Luke in the vast snowfields of Hoth. Another example is first demonstrated by Chewbacca's unease as he was unknowingly approaching Darth Vader and Boba Fett in Cloud City. We witness another connection by Chewbacca in *The Force Awakens* when the *Millennium Falcon* is approaching the Jedi Temple on Ahch-To when, with the slight tilt of his head and the knowing look in his eyes, he understands that the ocean and the island are something that Rey is familiar with, even if only from her dreams. In yet another example of sensing a Forceprint by someone other than a Jedi, Leia is able to direct Chewie and Lando, all together on the *Millennium Falcon*, to Luke as he clings to the weather vane on the vast underside of Cloud City. In *The Force Awakens* we see other recent examples of the Forceprint, such as when Maz Kanata's senses Han Solo as he enters her castle on Takodana, although it might have been her boyfriend she sensed instead as she really likes that Wookiee, or Leia's reaction to the death of Han Solo at the hands of their son within the thermal oscillator located within Starkiller Base

When you expand your awareness through the Force you can see or feel the aura or energy of everything around you. My interpretation of this energy is like this: Living things give out the highest amount of energy. Once living objects have less, and non-living or inorganic objects have very little. Items worked on or used by living hands will have more energy than items made by machines. As an example, a living tree has an easily detectable and bright Forceprint. A walking staff or gimer stick has a similar yet different and less intense Forceprint than the tree but more so than a dead log rotting on the ground, which in turn has an analogous yet unique Forceprint when compared to a plank of lumber from a mill.

A Forceprint, while normally being a neutral energy, can also be categorized as good or bad, light or dark, dependent upon the nature of the person having the experience. The good Forceprint of an object is why we hold onto items that were used by those that were dear to us. Photos, family heirlooms, clothing, and other inanimate objects take on a rub or characteristic of the Forceprint from the previous owner, and it is easily detectable to those who were close to the owner, even those who have no formal training in the Force. The Forceprint from such an item will be soothing, peaceful, warm and vibrant. That is why we hang on to these objects; it provides a direct and recognizable connection to someone who is no longer near us. A light or good Forceprint imprinted on an area instead of an object internally illuminates those places, causing them to be revered and referred to as holy ground. Alternatively, items and locations that have a bad or dark Forceprint are chaotic, unnerving, cold, distressing, and often referred to as evil.

To clarify the concept of the Forceprint, let us imagine that we are in Yoda's hut on Dagobah just after he started his "forever sleep" and Luke has departed in his X-Wing to join the Rebel fleet and his friends who are congregating over the planet Sullust. We sit down in the middle of the hut and channel the Force by whatever method we use. When our mind is clear we then, just like sonar from a submarine, send out a pulse of Force energy and observe the echoes that return to us. The snakes crawling around the hut are easily visible to us as Force echoes. Yoda's gimer stick has a less visible Forceprint than the snakes but it is more visible than the bed that Yoda just passed away in. The metal

pot that Yoda cooked his stews in will have less energy than the bed because it is made of metal instead of wood and natural fibers but it will still provide a stronger energy return than the flashlight that Yoda took from Luke and R2-D2 the first time they met as it was created in a factory by machines and most likely has since sat unused in a drawer. And, off in the distance, there is the Cave of Evil emanating the energies of the dark side. Also known as the Dark Side Cave, its Forceprint was tainted by the dark side when the Jedi Minc killed a Bpfasshi Dark Jedi in its vicinity and his energies were absorbed into it.

You may have thought to yourself during this little thought experiment, "What does the energy of a Forceprint look like?" First off, it might not look like anything. Instead of something that is visualized your interpretation of Forceprint could be something that is felt, such as a temperature or a certain frequency of vibration. I personally develop a mental picture in my mind that shows the sphere of my Force sonar as a very dark blue-black background. From that background, the Forceprint I receive and picture in my mind can vary from a dark navy blue to almost white, with all the numerous shades and mixtures of indigo, cobalt, and sky blue in between. To me, the lighter the shade of color that is generated from the Forceprint is representative of how much energy is imbued in that object, location, or even thought or intent. I also have personally experienced and interpreted negative or dark side energy as shades of red and yellow. You may experience it as a different color, or all the colors of the spectrum together. You will know what your personal representation of the Force and its variable Forceprints are only after you experience it for yourself. Every Jedi will experience Forceprints differently, so trying to explain the Forceprint to someone is difficult, but at the same time your perception of them will be intuitive and easy for you to understand and decipher. Your experience with Forceprints and the ability to discriminate and separate them into singularities will ultimately be used when you want to influence the Force later in your training and have it not only control your actions but also obey your commands.

## THE SCIENCE OF THE FORCE

If you were to look at the Force through the lens of modern science in our galaxy, you would find that there is sufficient technical knowledge and theory to support the existence of the Force. When Obi-Wan Kenobi tells Luke that the Force is "an energy field created by all living things" we can find support for this statement in Einstein's special theory of relativity. All matter in the known universe is composed of individual atoms, and at the subatomic level these atoms are made of condensed energy existing in a slow-vibration state. Einstein's famous equation,  $E=mc^2$ , (Energy is equal to mass times the square of the speed of light) tells us that energy and mass are interchangeable, one gives existence to the other through phase changes or changes of state, which in Buddhist circles is often referred to as remanifestation. If you doubt this, look at the amount of energy released by splitting a little more than one gram of fuel in the nuclear explosion of a hydrogen bomb or at the immense amount of energy given off by our Sun and every other star in the universe through the process of fusion and then try to deny that an atom isn't energy.

In regards to this energy, organic matter vibrates in a more complex and radiant manner than inorganic matter. Therefore the Force, as "an energy field created by all living things", would be noticeably different than the energy field created by non-living entities, hence the different Forceprints.

Even though the energy fields of organic and inorganic matter are different, they obviously still interact with each other. Think again to Yoda's instruction of the Force to Luke on Dagobah, "Life creates it, makes it grow. Its energy surrounds us and binds us. Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter. You must feel the Force around you. Here, between you, me, the tree, the rock, everywhere! Yes, even between this land and that ship!" Yoda understood that the Force was different from other energy, yet it could relate with these different energy types and states, which is also the concept of the Unifying Force.

When we were discussing the Force earlier, I mentioned that another name for the Force is subtle energy. Paul Von Ward refers to subtle energy as the medium through which consciousness acts upon the realm of energy and, therefore, matter. In his book *Quiet Mind, Fearless Heart*, author Brian Luke Seaward, Ph.D. writes, "Scientists who study human thinking processes - particularly, intentions such as prayer and various forms of healing - are coming to the conclusion that our thoughts and feelings are actually a form of vibrant energy. Stated simply, consciousness is a vital and powerful form of energy. The mind isn't merely a consequence of neuropeptides being released from the brain cells, as some people have hypothesized. Rather, the mind is a limitless bank of conscious energy, which uses the brain as its primary organ of choice." This energy is often referred to as the "ghost in the machine."

Considering what we know from our earlier and very brief discussion of the special theory of relativity, let us now add the Law of Conservation of Energy, which states that the total quantity of energy within a closed structure remains constant. In layman's terms, the Law of Conservation of Energy states that energy cannot be created nor destroyed, that it can only change from one state to another. We have often heard that the human brain generates up to 25 watts of electricity, enough to power a child's toy train set or small light bulb, and from the concept of subtle energy we can think of our own consciousness and soul as energy. When we die, where does all of that energy go? It can't just disappear; the Law of Conservation of Energy says that is impossible. That electrical energy of the brain doesn't change its state into something with mass as our bodies don't weigh more when we die. That electrical energy just remanifests itself and changes form. A cloud doesn't appear and disappear in the sky, becoming from nothing and then returning to nothing. It simply manifests itself differently, starting as solid water or ice, then becoming invisible water vapor before attaching to condensation nuclei and condensing into a cloud, eventually falling as rain back where it collects as solid water once more. A wave on Kamino isn't something separate from the ocean that makes it up, it is just a physical manifestation that comes from and returns to the water, yet it is never not water itself.

As we discussed earlier, my belief is that the personal Force draws its energy from the living Force to create our own individual and unique soul or Forceprint, and when we die that energy returns to the pool of the living Force. Does this cycle continue, acting like reincarnation until we reach the enlightenment of a Jedi Master and become a Force ghost, or do we only get one chance to play in a mortal body? These are good questions, ones that right now can only be answered by you dependent upon your own personal beliefs. Regardless of any body else's conviction, I believe that there is no wrong answer, and that the right answer is inside of you waiting for you to find it.

With the advancement of string theory and M-theory, theoretical branches of physics that combines quantum mechanics with general relativity, I believe we will find more and more support to prove the existence of the Force in the near future. String theory won't prove the Force from the *Star Wars* movies, per se, but the Force in the concept of what I earlier called the "real" Force, an intimate understanding of the human spirit and how it relates with our own body and our environment.

But, if the naysayers won't leave it be or if I haven't convinced you that the Force exists with enough science, let us consider these facts. Consider what Clara Moskowitz, a senior writer at space.com means when she says that "all the stars, planets and galaxies that can be seen today make up just 4% of the universe. The other 96% is made up of stuff astronomers can't see, detect, or even comprehend." Ian Hutchison, a professor of Nuclear Science and Engineering at MIT and simultaneously a man of faith, has said, "I take the view that science is not all the reliable knowledge that exists." If some scientist waves their skeptical finger in your face and tells you that the Force doesn't exist, quote to them Carl Sagan who said, "If we ever reach the point where we think we thoroughly understand who we are and where we came from, we will have failed." And lastly, take the advice of who many would say was the smartest man in the last century, Albert Einstein, who said, "Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted."

What is known to us is less than a single grain of sand in the vast deserts of Tatooine. We tend to think of ourselves as being so smart, sophisticated, and technologically advanced. Boss Nass would say, "Day tink day so smarty, day tink day brains so big!" Darth Vader would say to us, just as he did to General Motti onboard the first Death Star, "Don't be too proud of this technological terror (which represents our seemingly advanced technological knowledge) you've constructed. The ability to destroy a planet is insignificant next to the power of the Force." John F. Kennedy once said, "The greater our knowledge increases the more our ignorance unfolds." Our ancient ancestors were in many ways much smarter than we are now; we have just forgotten what they knew. And, even if I am completely and utterly wrong and there is no Force, if it is proven that "there's no mystical energy field that controls my destiny," even if it is all just placebo and one great Jedi mind trick, it still produces desirable results and who are we to turn away from it?

Later in the book we will discuss the ways to regain that ancient knowledge and experience the Force for ourselves. But now that we have covered the Force in detail, let us next discuss the Jedi Knights thoroughly in the next chapter.