

*S A G A*  
*J O U R N A L*

*Volume 1*

*Issue 2*

*February 2005*

# SAGA JOURNAL

*An academic Star Wars fan journal*

The Saga Journal is a monthly on-line academic review dedicated to the in-depth study of the *Star Wars* saga as presented in George Lucas's six-film series. Our goal is to deliver one of the best collections of scholarly essays on the subject that the internet has to offer.

Here at the Saga Journal, we believe *Star Wars* is more than just an enjoyable space opera set in a galaxy far, far away. We recognize it as a modern myth, a cultural phenomenon all its own. We want to encourage the literary exploration of all aspects of the story as presented in the Prequel and Original Trilogy films.

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# Triumph Over Technology

## by ami-padme

[Campbell] talked about how Lucas “has put the newest and most powerful spin” to the classic story of the hero... “the message that technology is not going to save us... We have to rely on our intuition, our true being.”<sup>1</sup>

[Star Wars]...asks, “Is the machine going to crush humanity or serve humanity?  
Humanity comes not from the machine but from the heart.”<sup>2</sup>

George Lucas once said, “*Star Wars* is made up of many themes... One is our relationship to machines, which are fearful, but also benign.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the subject of humanity’s eventual triumph over technology – and over the uniformity, oppression, and evil that the technology-bound Galactic Empire symbolizes – is one of the core messages of the saga. Literature is replete with warnings about the dangers of becoming over-reliant on the technology we have created; it is equally full of praise for the uniqueness of the human spirit, which can be lost as we become more strongly correlated with soulless machines. The *Star Wars* saga reflects this dichotomy between man and machine through the story’s main protagonist, Anakin Skywalker, who provides a more personal window to the major conflict between the Republic-Empire-Rebellion and the Jedi-Sith. Anakin’s own humanity, goodness, and connection to the Force are shown to be in tension with his link to and reliance on technology throughout his life. His struggle is that of the forces of good in the galaxy, and through six episodes the audience sees the fall and eventual triumph of good over evil, and humanity over technology.

*The Phantom Menace* begins the saga and introduces us to Anakin, showing his connection to the Force, and to technology. It also reveals a galaxy in turmoil, displayed through the rise of machines used for evil purposes.

Anakin is shown to be the Chosen One of prophecy – a young boy who is essentially the human embodiment of the spiritual energy of the *Star Wars* galaxy, the Force. Before he is even seen onscreen, Anakin’s presence is felt by Jedi Masters Qui-Gon Jinn and Obi-Wan Kenobi; upon meeting Anakin, Qui-Gon is quickly taken with his Force strength and potential. His midi-chlorian count is perhaps the highest ever recorded. When he is later brought before the Jedi Council, he is able to perform the Jedi’s tests on command.

Anakin is also introduced through a relationship with various kinds of technology. The audience first sees him in Watto’s shop, surrounded by machinery, explaining rather bitterly to Padmé that he “wouldn’t have lasted so long if I wasn’t so good at fixing things.” He offers those skills to Qui-Gon’s group to help repair their ship, claiming, “I can fix anything!” He is equally good at building things, as he has secretly created a protocol droid and podracer. Later on in the film, Anakin’s flying skills are highlighted during both the podrace and the Battle of Naboo. His exceptional abilities seem to blend innate skills, advanced technical knowledge, and the advantages of being Force sensitive. Thus, the audience sees the important, competing aspects of Anakin’s character.

With regard to the galaxy at large, Episode I chronicles the beginning of the end of both the Republic and the Jedi by focusing on the blockade, invasion, and eventual freeing of the planet Naboo. The Sith, who represent evil in this story, are shown to be in control of large, automated droid forces bent on controlling and subjugating the peoples of Naboo – creating enough chaos in the Republic to allow the Sith to begin to gain control. Many visuals of *The Phantom Menace* play on the theme of technology

rising against the human spirit: a fleet of ships blockade the planet, a seemingly endless row of droids march on its plains and cities. Though Naboo is freed from the Trade Federation's grasp by the end of the movie, the Republic and the Jedi have unwittingly begun to lose the larger war. Anakin, the Republic, and the Jedi are all set up for a conflict between humanity and machines, between good and evil, through this introductory chapter.

In *Attack of the Clones*, Anakin moves closer to his ultimate fall – as do the Republic and Jedi. The relationship between Anakin and technology becomes more central, and more complex. The audience sees a great deal of Anakin's humanity and his connection to the Force, as he struggles to find his place as a man and Jedi. He falls in love with Padmé and chafes against the parental guidance of his mentor, Obi-Wan, as many young men his age are wont to do. He speaks about feeling strong in the Force, about coming along in his training, and about his desire to no longer be held back. He makes it clear that he wants to become “the most powerful Jedi ever.” A nearly-fully trained adult, Anakin uses the Force in impressive ways to fight and fly, eventually losing control with both the Tusken and in his initial attack on Count Dooku.

Anakin's connection to technology is also stronger in this second film. He is recognized by his former slave owner, Watto, after ten years away, for fixing a droid. After his first slide to the Dark Side – the Tusken slaughter – Padmé finds Anakin in the Lars' garage echoing sentiments from Episode I, about how good he is at fixing things, and how much easier life seems when he's able to do so. Most importantly, when Count Dooku severs his right arm during a lightsaber duel, Anakin literally loses his first piece of his humanity and replaces it with a machine.

As the galaxy moves toward war, we once again have the “bad guys” – the Separatists, who are ultimately controlled by the Sith – leading a mechanical army of droids against the Republic. Ostensibly, the army of the “good guys” is not filled with machines; the clones are living, human beings. However, technology is used extensively to artificially create, grow, and replenish this army. The Republic's forces are corrupted as they were procured under false pretenses by the Sith – this corruption is symbolized by the use of technology to create artificial life for the army of the “good guys.” For Anakin and the galaxy, the decline and fall is beginning to take shape, and technology is figuratively beginning to take over.

The last piece of the prequel trilogy has yet to be seen – and there will undoubtedly be surprises in store – but there are several easy avenues of speculation with regard to *Revenge of the Sith* that fit the theme of humanity's struggle with the technology it has created. Anakin will of course fall to the Dark Side and become Darth Vader, a shell of a man trapped inside monstrous machinery. The details of why Anakin fell are still open to debate, but there is a line of thought that argues that Anakin wants power – power to do a variety of things from protecting and controlling the people he loves, to ending the war that is engulfing the galaxy. In *The Power of Myth*, Bill Moyers and Joseph Campbell discuss how technology can fit in with these desires: “Machines help us to fulfill the idea that we want the world to be made in our image, and we want it to be what we think it ought to be...But then there comes a time when the machine begins to dictate to you.”<sup>4</sup> Anakin loses his morality and loses his humanity in both body and soul, and therefore becomes, for all intents and purposes, a complete machine, reliant on bionic lungs and limbs in order to live.

The Republic and the Jedi face similar destruction at the hands of the Empire. In the original trilogy, the Empire is marked by massive and deadly technology. Weapons such as the Death Star ensure that oppression is the new order of the day, and the individuality of the human spirit is ruthlessly stamped

out by Palpatine and his new armed forces. Both Anakin and the galaxy have failed Campbell's test – the machines have crushed humanity.

With the original trilogy, the story enters a pattern reverse that of prequels. Technology has won, and the human spirit has been defeated – the audience finds that humanity is not entirely lost. The saga reaches its conclusion after a trend of the human spirit reasserting itself in the face of the soulless Empire.

Darth Vader, from the first time we see him in *A New Hope*, is defined by his machinery; his trademark mask and his breathing introduce him to the audience. He is almost always seen surrounded by technology – a Super Star Destroyer, the Death Star, a TIE Fighter. However, the Force is still a strong part of Darth Vader's character. As George Lucas once explained, "He has mechanical legs. He has mechanical arms. He's hooked up to a breathing machine...but I wanted him to be human enough that we could identify with him."<sup>5</sup> Ironically, Vader himself provides reminders of his own humanity as he pointedly reminds the Imperial rank that he is unimpressed with the Death Star's power; he remains an adherent of the Force. He is referred to more than once as the last remnant of the Jedi "religion." Through the Force, he senses both Obi-Wan's and Luke's presence. He is still a skilled flier and fighter, as evidence by the battle at the end of the film. While these hints may not seem like much in the face of what Anakin has become, they form a glimmer of hope to carry the audience through the rest of the trilogy.

When looking beyond Darth Vader, there is the Empire, fully in control – but with the first Rebel victory appearing as a chink in the armor after the destruction of the Death Star. The Jedi are assumed to be extinct, but Obi-Wan Kenobi has survived and set Anakin's son on the path to becoming a Jedi. Luke, in his first real test, chooses not to rely on the computers of his X-Wing. Instead, he trusts in Obi-Wan, the Force, and himself. Despite everything, it is clear in Episode IV that all is not lost.

The ascendancy of the forces of good and humanity continues in *The Empire Strikes Back*, despite continued dark times overall. Darth Vader is at his worst behavior of the entire trilogy, killing his subordinates, torturing Han Solo and Chewbacca, carbon-freezing Han, and so on. Yet the main drive of his irrational rage is his obsessive pursuit of his son, Luke. This obsession echoes his very human need for family that the audience saw in the prequels. Vader is also revealed under his mask for the first time; the pod he needs in order to survive is shown, and he is briefly seen from the back without his mask. The tension between the dual sides of his character has reached a crescendo. The philosopher Descartes once pondered this duality, and decided that "[t]he body is purely mechanical, a machine...An animal possessed a body but nothing more...True, man had a body, but he also had a mind that housed the soul."<sup>6</sup> The fact that the audience still has evidence of Vader's soul in Episode V will be critical to the saga's final chapter.

**The question of Luke's ultimate fate, of whether or not he will follow in his father's footsteps, is raised by [his] technological hand.**

On a broader scale, *Empire* features an ongoing plot thread related to the workings of technology – Han, Leia, Chewbacca, and C-3PO (and eventually Lando and R2-D2) are continually trying to evade Darth Vader and can barely stay ahead of him because of the constant failures of the *Falcon's* hyperdrive. Also importantly, Luke loses his hand in this movie and it is replaced with a mechanical one. The question of Luke's ultimate fate, of whether or not he will follow in his father's footsteps, is raised by this technological hand.

*Return of the Jedi* ends the saga with the final redemption of Anakin Skywalker, the defeat of the Empire, and the rise of a new Jedi Order. Vader is initially shown in

connection with the Death Star and in subservience to Emperor Palpatine. However, Vader still senses Luke through the Force (even when the Emperor cannot), and is clearly giving Luke signs of his innate goodness, whether intentionally or not. The original piece of Vader's mechanical body, his right arm, becomes an instrument for good, as does Luke's mechanical arm. Both serve as powerful warnings to Luke of the dangers of the Dark Side to which he has tread so perilously close, and he makes a conscious choice not to sacrifice his own humanity even if it means his death.

The part of Darth Vader that is still Anakin Skywalker recognizes the choice his son has made. As his final redemptive, soul-restoring act, he saves the galaxy and his son by killing the Emperor in a manner he knew would destroy the technology that keeps him alive. Just before Anakin dies, his face is revealed and the mask of Vader is removed for the last time. Joseph Campbell says, "when Luke Skywalker unmasks his father, he is taking off the machine role that the father has played."<sup>7</sup> When Luke burns Vader's suit in a traditional Jedi funeral, it seems to symbolize the end of the technological being Anakin Skywalker became. Finally, Anakin's spirit is seen at the end of the movie, with the spirits of Obi-Wan and Yoda, and the audience sees that his journey back to the light, back to humanity, is complete.

For the rest, Han is freed from his carbonite prison and learns to let go of the *Falcon*, his own tie to technology, in pursuit of the greater good. The Rebellion takes on the Imperial fleet and destroys the second Death Star, spelling the end of the Empire. On the ground, the Empire's forces are defeated by the Rebels working in concert with the primitive Ewoks of the Endor moon. The Emperor, Empire and Dark Side are all defeated, and both literally and symbolically the technology that gave them power goes with them.

The *Star Wars* saga, both through the character of Anakin Skywalker and through the general plot, tells an old story about man's relationship with his machines. The triumph of the human spirit is an inspirational tale for all audiences and generations.

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<sup>2</sup> Campbell, 23-24.

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<sup>4</sup> Campbell, 24.

<sup>5</sup> *Time*.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Charles Seigneuret, ed. *Dictionary of Literary Themes and Motifs L – Z*. New York, New York: Greenwood Press, 1988, 1083.

<sup>7</sup> Campbell, 24.

**Angels and Demons:**  
**Love and the Hero in *Star Wars* Episodes I & II and**  
***Spider-Man & Spider-Man 2***  
**by Scott J. Epstein**

*Angels and demons dancing in my head*  
*Lunatics and monsters underneath my bed*  
*Media messiahs playing on my fears*  
*Pop culture prophets playing in my ears*  
– Neil Peart, “Totem”

George Lucas and Sam Raimi express starkly contrasting views of romantic love in regard to their central heroes in their respective recent films, Lucas’ *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* and *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones*, and Raimi’s *Spider-Man* and *Spider-Man 2*. For Lucas, romantic (and even filial) love represents a dangerous temptation to “attachment” and “possession” and a desire to use power to control the world. For Raimi, on the other hand, romantic and filial love are as essential to the hero as oxygen – and without which the hero cannot be a hero.

Both heroes, Lucas’ Anakin Skywalker and Raimi’s Peter Parker/Spider-Man, share a number of similarities. They’re both raised by strong women/mother figures (Shmi for Anakin, Aunt May for Peter Parker), both have strong father-like relationships with a mentor figure (Uncle Ben for Peter Parker, and Obi-Wan – ironically also later known as “Ben” – for Anakin), and both have life-long and similar crushes on their love interests, Padmé Naberrie and Mary Jane Watson.

Their crushes begin as children at first meeting. When Anakin meets Padmé, his first words to her are, “Are you an angel?” Similarly a six-year-old Peter, upon first seeing his love interest, Mary Jane Watson, move in next door, Peter asks his Aunt May, about Mary Jane, “[I]s that an angel?”

Interestingly enough, both of these first meetings also link the romantic object to the mother figure. But Peter is able to bring his relationship with Aunt May to an adult level before consummating his relationship with Mary Jane, while Anakin is never able to fully bring his relationship with his mother to an appropriate level before she dies.

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell described the necessity of the rite of passage into adulthood:

The so-called rites of passage...are distinguished by the formal, and usually very severe, exercises of severance, where by the mind is radically cut away from the attitudes, attachments, and life patterns of the stage being left behind. Then follows an interval of more or less extended retirement, during which are enacted rituals designed to introduce the life adventurer to the forms and proper feelings of his new estate, so that when, at last, the time has ripened for the return to the normal world, the initiate will be as good as reborn. (Campbell, 1968, 10)

Although neither formal nor ritual, Peter’s revelation to Aunt May about his role in Uncle Ben’s death (omitting his identity as Spider-Man), enacts this separation. After which, Peter retires to isolation, and finally, eventually reconciles with his Aunt, but in a different relationship than what had gone before. And this change allows Peter to embark on an adult, non-Oedipal romantic relationship with Mary Jane.

For both boys, their love object remains out of reach for most of their childhood and adolescence. For Anakin, the restrictions of the Jedi Order prevent him even from speaking to Padmé. Social status – his as a “geek” or “nerd” and Mary Jane’s as the popular girl – prevents Peter from even speaking to Mary Jane (even though she lives next door), let alone having an opportunity to date her. For both men, this changes as they come into their own with their powers, and make the transition from boy to man. Anakin re-connects with Padmé when he and Obi-Wan are assigned to protect her from assassins – and this is the first time we see Anakin as a Jedi. Peter connects with Mary Jane at the first use of his powers – his use of his spider-sense to know that she’s about to slip and fall, and his use of speed and coordination to save her.

Both men believe that a romantic attachment is by definition incompatible with their chosen lives – Jedi for Anakin, superhero for Peter. Anakin describes the restrictions placed on him as a Jedi: “Attachment is forbidden. Possession is forbidden.” Obi-Wan elaborates, when Anakin confides his attraction to Padmé: “You’ve made a commitment to the Jedi Order – a commitment not easily broken.” That romance is incompatible with a Jedi’s life – and in fact dangerous to Jedi is a central axiom of Episode II – and confirmed not only by events in the movie as they unfold (and presumably unfold in Episode III), but also by Lucas’ statements in the comment track of the DVD. Lucas conflates the fear aspect of infatuation (as opposed to the security and comfort of love) with the kinds of fear that can lead to abuse of power. That fear is an integral part of infatuation has been empirically observed:

[U]nderlying all of this angst and ecstasy was unmitigated fear...Most of Tenno’s informants reported trembling, pallor, flushing, a general weakness, and overwhelming sensations of awkwardness...Shyness, fear of rejection, anticipation, an longing for reciprocity were the central sensations of infatuation (Fisher, 1992, 39-40)

Lucas notes that “possession” leads to jealousy, and leads to fear of loss, which leads to the attempt to use power to control the universe – for Lucas, the Dark Side.

For Peter Parker – his opening narration in *Spider-Man 2* expresses his belief that his similar powers place similar restrictions on him: “I made a choice once to live a life of responsibility. A life [Mary Jane] can never be a part of.” That his chosen “profession” is the reason he believes he can’t be with Mary Jane, too, rings more true than the other explanation he gives – that her life would be in danger. In both *Spider-Man* and *Spider-Man 2*, Peter’s battles with his super-nemeses – whether they know his identity (as the Green Goblin/Norman Osborn did) or not – place both Mary Jane and Aunt May in mortal danger. Each super-villain first attacks Aunt May, and then abducts Mary Jane, drawing Peter into a final confrontation. If Peter’s desire is to safeguard Mary Jane, he’s 0 for 2 – his plan is clearly not working. Something else is at work, and his opening narration ultimately fits better than his more public explanations.

The true source of his belief that his noble life and romance are incompatible comes from his foster parents – Uncle Ben and Aunt May. In his imagination, Peter confronts the memory of his Uncle Ben with his love for Mary Jane, and his choice to abandon being Spider-Man. Uncle Ben says, “Of all the times we talked of honesty, fairness, justice. A lot of those times I counted on you to have the courage to take those dreams out into the world...You’ve been given a gift, Peter. With great power, comes great responsibility.” But even more, the idea finds deeper expression with Aunt May – in a speech she gives Peter (after, I believe, she’s realized that Peter is Spider-Man, although the movie itself is ambiguous on that point), she says, “I believe there’s a hero in all of us...even though sometimes we have to be steady, and give up the thing we want the most. Even our dreams.”

Where the track of these two heroes split is how their directors view the effects of romance on them. Interestingly, in both Episode II and *Spider-Man 2*, both Anakin and Peter twice lose the totemistic symbols of their powers – Anakin losing his lightsaber, and Peter losing his webbing. In both cases, these losses occur in proximity with developments in their relationships with their love interests. Within hours of reuniting for the first time with Padmé, Anakin loses his lightsaber during the chase with Zam Wessel. The second time he loses his lightsaber is on the rescue operation on Geonosis – undertaken in cooperation with Padmé.

For Peter – it is the *absence* of Mary Jane that causes his webbing (a biological function) to fail him. The first time is after witnessing Mary Jane kissing her then-boyfriend John Jameson. The second time is immediately after witnessing the announcement of Mary Jane’s engagement to the same Captain Jameson. Even after Aunt May’s speech, when Peter wants to unmake his choice to be Spider-Man no more, he physically can’t without Mary Jane. He attempts to test his powers – to test leaping from building to building – a simple feat when his spider-powers are functional. Instead, he ends up literally on his back.

(As an aside – it might be noted that both the lightsaber and the webbing can be seen as symbols of male sexuality. The lightsaber as phallus, and the biologically-created webbing as a stand-in for another substance secreted by the male body. The loss of both of these symbols would represent a rendering of impotence – but with opposite causes in each case.)

Both men, similarly, face what they believe to be a moment of choice between their heroic careers and their love interests. Although Peter seems to be given more time to think about it than Anakin. For Anakin, the key moment comes on the clone trooper transport after Padmé falls out. He wants to stop and tend to her, and Obi-Wan tells him that if he does, he will be expelled from the Jedi Order. Faced with this choice, Anakin ultimately chooses to follow his commitment to duty – as he believes Padmé would do in his place.

And leaving the Jedi Order, although “not easy” in Obi-Wan’s words, *is* possible. We learn early in the movie that Count Dooku – once an accomplished Jedi – left the Order for personal and political reasons. Although it turns out that Dooku left to join the Dark Side and become Sith, the Jedi do not know this. This establishes that withdrawing from the Order – although rare – *is* an option that would be open to Anakin, but one he decides against.

Peter, on the other hand, spends an agonized night trying to decide between what he sees as his possibility for a normal life, and his super responsibility. He dreams of his deceased Uncle Ben (Uncle Ben’s murder – in which a newly-empowered Peter failed to take an opportunity to stop the thief who then murdered Ben – serves as the root cause of Peter’s original choice to be a superhero) who tries to convince him not to abandon his life as Spider-Man. Peter makes the opposite choice – at that point – from Anakin. He decides to be “Spider-Man no more,” and to pursue both a “normal” life, and Mary Jane.

To further the split, Padmé’s being in danger causes Anakin to act recklessly when he and Obi-Wan confront Count Dooku, resulting in the loss of his right arm – another image of emasculation.

On the other hand, Doc Ock’s abduction of Mary Jane brings Peter’s spider-abilities back to full power, apparently permanently (symbolized by Peter’s final abandonment of his glasses).

Padmé's confesses her love to Anakin as they're both being led into the Geonosian arena to be executed. But more than that – her reason for admitting her feelings then is that it no longer matters – that the danger of destroying their lives is moot, as their lives are about to end anyway. “I thought we had decided not to fall in love, that we would be forced to live a lie and that it would destroy our lives,” Anakin says to her. She replies, “I think our lives are about to be destroyed anyway.” And, without either of them knowing that Mace Windu and a troop of Jedi (and clone troopers) are on their way, the threat of death is entirely credible at that point. Her admission comes within the shadow of imminent death on an insect-infested, industrial desert planet.

On the other hand, Mary Jane (after leaving Captain Jameson at the altar), tells Peter that she won't take his “no” for an answer is in the bloom of life. We see her, on her way to Peter's apartment, running in her wedding gown through a Madison Square Park in mid-Spring bloom, with a fountain running full-splash behind her. And her confession to Peter could not contrast more with Padmé's to Anakin: “It's wrong that we should only be half alive – half of ourselves,” she says. And then, “Isn't it about time somebody saved *your* life?” She argues that Peter's choice between being with her and being Spider-Man is a false dichotomy. And not only *can* he have both, he *should*.

One note here, though. I've observed that Mary Jane's confession of love is in the context of living Spring, but Peter's confession of love to Mary Jane would appear to take place, like Padmé's, in the shadow of death. While holding up a wall that had been about to crash on Mary Jane, Peter says, “[I]n case we die...” and Mary Jane finishes, “You *do* love me.” But unlike the prelude to the arena on Geonosis, this threat of death isn't credible. Both Peter and the audience know that he's not really having serious trouble holding up the wall (the strain is nothing compared to, say, stopping the runaway L-train earlier in the movie), and that they will both survive. It is a sort of psychological trick on himself on Peter's part. And as he's got little to lose at that point, already having revealed his Spider-Man secret to her.

**But the most profound difference is the circumstances of the fulfillment of the relationships, when the women in the heroes' lives announce their decisions to start romantic relationships.**

As for the future implications of the consummation of these two relationships, it remains to be seen exactly how both will play out in their respective third sequels. But the implication – from both the trailer and from some comments from Lucas on the Episode II DVD – is that Anakin's marriage to Padmé will figure in his slide to the Dark Side.

On the other hand, for Peter Parker, the implication is that his relationships both with Mary Jane and with his Aunt May will strengthen him, his spider-powers, and his commitment to bearing his great responsibility. J. Michael Straczynski, the current writer of the flagship (and founding) Spider-Man comic book title, *Amazing Spider-Man*, notes on the *Spider-Man 2* DVD bonus featurette, “The Women of Spider-Man,” that “[Peter] got his powers from the spider bite, but he got his strength from Aunt May.”

In the current run of the *Amazing Spider-Man* comic book, when Peter is finally reconciled with Mary Jane after a long estrangement, he says,

I can do “all these things” [i.e., be Spider-Man] because you believe in me. Because you give me the strength and the will to get them done. Everything's easier when you're there and harder when you're

not. Without you, nothing works the way it should. But when I know you're in my life, I feel like I can do anything, MJ. Anything. (Straczynski, *Amazing Spider-Man*, Volume 2, #50, 2002)  
And although this story is external to Raimi's films, I think it is ultimately consistent with the view of these two characters and their relationship.

For Sam Raimi's Peter Parker/Spider-Man, *Spider-Man 2* described a journey away from a false dichotomy between love and the hero's life. While for George Lucas' Anakin Skywalker, the journey toward romantic love will end in a tragic fall to the Dark Side.

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# Recommendation

## From the Source

**Title:** The Mythology of *Star Wars*

**ISBN:** unknown

**Produced By:** Public Affairs Television; Thirteen/WNET New York

**Copyright:** 1999

**Length:** 57 minutes

*Reviewed by Lady Aeryn.*

One afternoon in early 1999 Bill Moyers, noted journalist and longtime friend of the great mythological scholar Joseph Campbell (a mentor for George Lucas and whose studies Lucas has long acknowledged as a foundation for the framework of the *Star Wars* series) conducted a dialogue with Lucas at Lucas's Skywalker Ranch. They discussed Lucas's various inspirations, both mythological and personal, for the *Star Wars* saga and touched on some of the saga's basic themes, too much to go into detail on in a review. *The Mythology of Star Wars* shows us the highlights of this discussion, punctuated with appropriate clips from the original *Star Wars* trilogy as well as the then newly-released *The Phantom Menace*.

The discussion reveals that the inspiration for many elements in *Star Wars* comes from Lucas's personal quest to resolve his own questions of faith and religion, to aid others (more specifically, young people) who haven't yet formed beliefs on matters like the nature of God. Lucas describes searching across different myths and religions of different cultures for the most common ideas and beliefs that seemed to be shared by the most groups of people; when he sat down to write the *Star Wars* story many elements (the temptation of a hero by an evil force, the discovery of a mysterious child with a seemingly divine aura, etc.) came naturally as a result of this exploration, not being drawn from any specific culture. Lucas also tells of the journey of Anakin Skywalker/Darth Vader coming from his exploration of the nature of humanity and what in that nature gives us the capacity for good or evil – a question which Lucas admits he still hasn't found an answer to.

Certain aspects of the saga are also shown to be direct influences from Lucas's own family experience. He admits to a bit of autobiography of his own apparently bittersweet relationship with his father in the scenes with Luke and Darth Vader, to the relationship between Luke and his mentors mirroring somewhat Lucas's own relationships with his mentors. He talks about his pursuing a life in filmmaking as opposed to taking up his father's family business as what Campbell referred to as “[following] your bliss,” following your intuition and feelings to find your place in life, your destiny, which is what “feeling the Force” essentially is. He speaks of his belief that the most fulfilling purpose of life is having children, that a person is redeemed by their children, as Anakin is by his.

Just as much as this is an insight into the saga, it's an insight into Lucas himself. Fifty-seven minutes isn't the ideal amount of time to more deeply explore the topics Moyers and Lucas touch upon – I found myself wishing we'd been shown more than an hour of this discussion – but with the time allotted, this presentation still provides a well-rounded look at Lucas's thought processes and experiences and how they wound up helping shape *Star Wars* as we know it. It's not at all necessary to already be well-versed in mythological or religious studies to understand this discussion, which makes this a good introduction or Cliff Notes for anyone interested in exploring the background and inspirations behind the saga.

Since this title is not currently being produced on video or DVD, finding a copy may be tricky (my own copy is a rather worn six-year-old recording of the original PBS broadcast). However, if you're at all interested in background information on the inspirations of the saga, it's worth the effort to look for. Your best bet on locating a copy would probably be to look at your local library, or at online auctions such as Amazon and Ebay.

## Discovering *Star Wars*

### rhonderoo

I remember the summer of 1978 as probably one of the best summers of my life so far, if not the best. I remember my aunt, who was a *Star Wars* nut, telling me we going to see *Star Wars*. I was so excited.

By the time *Empire Strikes Back* came out, you were nobody if you hadn't seen *Star Wars*, and everybody who was anybody was talking about the fact that Darth Vader had lied to Luke and told him that he was his father. I remember saying there was NO WAY that Darth Vader could be Luke's father. He wasn't human!

When *Return of the Jedi* came out, my cousin Kenny and I bet each other a buck over the fate of Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader. Kenny was convinced this was Luke's last hurrah. I had faith in the villain that had stolen the show in *Star Wars* a few years back. *Empire Strikes Back* had taught me that if Vader could let Piett live, there was good in there.

In my wildest dreams I could not imagine how it would have turned out. I won that dollar and the right to say "I told you so" all summer. I still hold that over Kenny's head, and he holds the fact that I cried like a baby through the whole unmasking scene, and still do to this day, over my head.

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**Saga Journal**  
Volume 1, Issue 2, February 2005  
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