



## The Ultimate Star Wars and Philosophy

You Must Unlearn What You Have Learned

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### 1 Why *Star Wars* and Philosophy?

This book is impressively vast and engaging. Whether it should be called an impressively vast and engaging *contribution to the philosophy of Star Wars* depends on there being something as “a philosophy of *Star Wars*”, a matter on which many raise doubts. These doubters are intellectually far far away from the volume’s essayists and the present reviewers - they raise their eyebrows unimpressed by the statement that writing on *Star Wars* counts as a contribution to philosophy much like we raise our eyebrows unimpressed at each out-of-context occurrence of some catchphrase from *Game of Thrones*.

The volume does not do much to justify its own existence, so let us try to bring some help to the cause. Joining an elite selection of 20th century artistic production, the *Star Wars* material is first and foremost didactically useful. It stimulates the needs of philosophical younglings for philosophical mumbling. A quick research also shows that the Internet is overfilled with discussions over, say, the nature of the Force, the moral commitments of the Jedi, the democratic limits of the New Republic, and so forth. Yet the vast majority of the forums’ users is philosophically quite illiterate. This book, we believe, is a successful attempt to guide them to the analytic core of their reflections.

Second, the book performs an aetiological task, as it aims at bringing out the reasons behind George Lucas’ narrative choices. Very good narratives often evoke a sense of puzzlement, towards which one can gain a vantage point by retorting to philosophical ‘detail’. Our impression as philosophers and *Star Wars*

lovers is that, when it comes to intrinsically philosophical matters, Lucas' take is not too different from that of the forum users or other science-fiction writers - proof of this is the richness in philosophical motives of some fan fictions, as well as of the (previously canonical) *Expanded Universe* novels. Micheal Dunn, one of the contributors to this volume (p. 202), makes a reasonable point as he says: "As an artist, Lucas takes his bearings from human experience rather than abstract reason". But [...] "Philosophers have always aspired to uncover an underlying unity behind the cluttered mess of our experience". The way we see it, one should add to this consideration that "abstract reason" complements Lucas' vision in a way highly enjoyable to us role-players. For reflecting on the topics emerging out of Lucas' unguided intuitions means as much as bringing a contribution to his own universe. Hardly anything is more enjoyable to a fan than truly feeling a *live* part of the *Star Wars* universe.

Beyond these merits, the book contains an impressive collection of essays on a number of topics. Among these, normative ethics is markedly predominant. A minor role is played by metaphysics, philosophy of language, artificial intelligence and hermeneutics. The expanded 2016 edition also contains critical reflections on *Star Wars*' famously controversial portrayal of female characters. As much as we would have liked to discuss each contribution exhaustively, some had to be sacrificed for reasons of space. We hope however that the above discussion will capture the readers' interest and lead them to independent study, or at least to make use of some enhanced reflections in the context of a good old *Star Wars* marathon.

## 2 The Philosophical Menace

In "The Platonic Paradox of Darth Plagueis: How Could a Sith Lord Be Wise?", Terrance MacMullan asks us to imagine Plato and Nietzsche crossing lightsabers. What is the path of the wise man? Pursuing knowledge through the practical guide of reason or pursuing power through subduing our subordinates' will to our aims and ambitions? There is little doubt here: Plato's saber emanates ardent, profound blue light - his stance steady, his determination unfluctuating. Nietzsche's burns with vermillion thunder.

Now, *Star Wars* systematically warns against the consequences of Nietzsche's path. Even those with a superficial knowledge of the brand will have heard that fear, hatred and anger are steps along the path to the Dark Side. However, for the Sith, the followers of the Dark Side, this narrative is question begging and unjustified the Platonic assumption that all practical consequences of a theory of wisdom should be morally good. Not to mention that one of the greatest Sith Lords ever to be born, a creature whose mastery of the Force surpassed

even Yoda's, *consciously* rejected this assumption, yet he named himself Darth Plagueis *the wise*. The existence of someone like Plagueis raises a problem for the Platonic view. For Plagueis agreed with the Jedi on practice being guided by rational rather than impulsive control over the Force. But he denied that the resulting effects should be classified as either good or evil.

In "You are Asking Me to be Rational: Stoic Philosophy and the Jedi Order", Matt Hummel sides with the Jedi on the use of the Force being a morally laden action. Hummel does not discuss the case of Plagueis, but he would most probably say that the latter deceived himself by claimed to possess *wisdom* along with refusing to attribute any moral significance to his actions.

The argument comes from the Stoics and has it that moral goodness is manifested through happiness and lack of suffering. When we become conscious that most things are not in our control and that what is not in control is a cause of suffering, we discover that being in control exclusively of what can be controlled just is moral goodness, as it enhances happiness over suffering. The Sith destroy themselves by trying to control the uncontrollable.

Hummell turns to the criticism most insisted upon in Lucas' work: it follows from the Jedi creed that human love and the wish for eternal life should be dismissed as uncontrollable attachments. One may be tempted of turning tables against the Jedi in virtue of the fact that the Jedi suffer just as much as the Sith by having to renounce love and immortality. But for Hummell, whether a Jedi suffers depends on their mind being well-trained, which means: capable of systematically framing individual events into bigger pictures.

The Jedi would say that choices made for the sake of the universe are exactly those not guided by selfish desires. However, we can hardly see how choices can be characterised so neatly: some actions will take place for the sake of the universe *even* if guided by selfish fears and desires. In particular, it is not clear whether the Plagueis paradox dissolves, as the Sith pursued personal immortality and power exactly because he was moved to exert control over ignorant people; exactly for the sake of the entire universe - at least according to his vision.

Even Jedi like Anakin Skywalker have faced the danger and the consequences of violent passions such as love, loss and vengeance. The aim of "Like My Father before Me: Loss and Redemption of Fatherhood in *Star Wars*", by Charles Taliaferro and Annika Beck, is to propose an account of love and goodness, in order to better understand the complicated relation between Anakin Skywalker and his emotions. Anakin's will to protect people he loves at all costs and his attachment to Shmi and Padmè led the Jedi hero to a tormented path. A possible therapy for such lack of self-control is offered by Yoda. As the authors suggest, the counsels of the little green Jedi Master are very similar to Stoic moral principles: he admonishes Anakin to avoid dangerous attachments, he warns him not to

pursue apparent goods such as power and to control his emotions. The authors brilliantly highlight the similarities between Jedi code and a constant feature of both Western and Oriental Philosophy, which is namely the connection between wisdom and unattachment.

Kevin S. Decker further pursues a comparative line in “The End of the Republic and the Beginning of Chinese Philosophy”. His aim is to offer a parallel between the early Chinese philosophy and the worldviews of certain characters inhabiting the *Star Wars* universe during the the period between the rise of the Empire and its fall. All of them are Jedi, and thus they are hunted down by the empire, who aims at eliminating all light side users from the galaxy. The paper’s interest seems to lie more in its narration of the characters’ lives, which is pursued in great detail, rather than in the ideas developed. However, the parallel between *Star Wars* and Chinese philosophy looks extremely promising on the side of contents and deserves further development.

### 3 Attack of the Morals

It is just a matter of time before the much-scorned Jar-Jar Binks makes his appearance in the volume. In “How Guilty is Jar Jar Binks”, Nicholas Michaud tackles the question whether the annoying creature should be judged responsible for consenting to the Galactic Empire’s formation, and the death of billions of former Republicans along with it. Notoriously<sup>1</sup>, Jar-Jar takes a careless approach to moral decision making - he hardly realises the consequences of his actions. Can he be blamed?

Michaud opts for a mixture of Kantian and Nagelian theses. Intention is necessary and sufficient for determining moral responsibility - one must only measure whether Jar-Jar was *trying* to be good in order to fix whether he is culpable or not. However, when it comes to the *epistemic* question of how Jar-Jar intentions are made accessible to others (e.g., to the judges that might put him on trial), the consequences are the only partially reliable indicator.

Two further essays on the moral status of *Star Wars* characters are “Of Battle Droids and Zillo Beasts: Moral Status in the *Star Wars* Galaxy” by James Okapal and “Mindless Philosophers and Overweight Globbs of Grease: Are Droids Capable of Thought?” by Dan Burket. Okapal shows great knowledge of different theories of morality: he quotes Rosalind Hursthouse’s division between morally considerable beings inside the circle of moral status, and mere things which stand out of it; he develops an important distinction, assessed to Benjamin Hale, between moral considerability, moral relevance and moral significance, and he

<sup>1</sup>The rumors have it that Jar-Jar’s obliviousness in Episode III is a feature consciously devised by Lucas, partly in order to enhance the fandom’s rising annoyance towards Jar-Jar.

assigns each of them to different species and characters of *Star Wars*, also discussing the various criteria which contribute to the definition of what is morally significant, considerable and relevant.

Continuing on this line, Burkett enquires the capability of thought and emotions of droids, in order to determine which is (and which should be) their proper moral and social status in *Star Wars*. The reader is familiar with the pessimistic lines of Threepio: the robot often claims how sad and hard his life is, he keeps complaining about his pains and misadventures, and he even admits his concern for Luke, Princess Leia and R2-D2. Nevertheless, despite such intense (and human) feelings the droids are usually treated as mere objects: they are bought and sold, used and destroyed during wars and explicitly considered less important than biological life forms.

For these reasons, the author reviews Searle's famous Chinese Room experiment (here remarkably renamed *Bocce Room*, quoting the famous Tatooine's robot language). Burkett tries to turn Searle's argument against Searle: by highlighting the affinity between humans and machines with respect to behavioural interaction as a consequence of language-learning, the author suggests that it would be more correct to consider droids at least capable of human behaviour, like Threepio proves, without treating them as second-class beings.

William Lindenmuth describes a different complexity inhabiting the ethics of Jedi in "The Jedi Knights of Faith: Anakin, Luke and Sören (Kierkegaard)". The movie constantly refers to the Force having a "will", and to the will of the Force as being one for the good. How come then, that the Force wills Luke to kill his own father?

Once again, one can respond that the will of the Force is always aimed at the entire universe's sake and prevails over the individuals' selfish desires. According to this interpretation, Luke's actions in *Episode VI* would count as disagreeing the Force's commands - revealing a selfish nature similar to that which guided his father to the Dark Side.

A different interpretation has it that Luke's actions "brought balance to the Force" rather than straightforwardly disagreeing with its commands. Darth Sidious, who witnesses the duel, spurs Luke to kill his father because he thinks that this course of actions would finally lead the young Skywalker to the Dark Side. However, the killing of Vader is also the same course of events that would bring the most gain to the Light Side. The act of bringing balance cannot be the act that commands both the most of good and the most of evil. It must be a different act, unexpected to occur in the relevant context, that generates neither of the two outputs.

Lindenmuth's is probably the essay that most closely gets at the main issues of *Episode VII* (which is remarkable, given that the volume has been published before the episode's release). In *Episode VII*, it is questioned whether Luke ac-



tually brought the Force into balance, and it is hinted that the answer depends on the real nature of the Force. Suppose that the Force has a will for good *and* a will for evil, each realised by a Light and Dark “component” (for this Manichean view of the Force, see George Dunn’s contribution, pp. 195-208). Rather than manifesting a “lack of will” of the Light Side, the Dark Side has its own independent will. In this case, it is the will that Luke gains hatred through killing Vader. The Light Side also wills Vader’s death rather than his redemption, but this time because of the universe’s sake. In this perspective, Luke’s final decision *is* a way of bringing balance to the Force exactly in the way envisaged by Lindemuth, as it manifests a course of action independent of either will (Questions: what else aside from the Force itself can bring balance to the Force? If it is the Force itself, which of its sides is operating? Neither the Dark nor the Light, it seems. But can something other than the Dark or Light Side have a will of its own?).

On the other hand, suppose that the Force has only a will for the good, and that the Dark Side manifests as “lack of light” in all courses of events in which the Force is not “sufficiently present” for willing the good. In this view, “bringing balance to the Force” and fulfilling the will of the Force simply mean the same: executing Vader. Hence Luke has *not* brought balance to the Force. As far as we currently know from *Episode VII*, and given especially the narrative veil laid by director J.J. Abrams on Luke’s true intentions, both interpretations are still equally possible (and suggest intriguing speculations).

#### 4 Revenge of the Alliance

In “Light Side, Dark Side and Switching Sides: Loyalty and Betrayal in *Star Wars*”, Daniel Malloy argues that loyalty is neither necessary nor sufficient to guide righteous action.

Loyalty dictates roughly that one’s course of action is directed to the preservation of an ideal, or the aims of a group of people. One can see the failure of sufficiency very easily: Stormtroopers are blindly loyal to the Empire, but their actions can hardly be righteous. It is more difficult to show the failure of necessity, but Malloy makes a convincing case that, even if loyalty were necessary to righteousness, it often conflicts with further loyalties in such a way that the conflict is solved by independent moral reasons. For example (p. 145): “If betraying A will lead to A’s death, while betraying B will lead to B losing some money, then I should betray B”. Malloy retorts to the claim that the value of loyalty rests in its explaining *what* righteous action is - for righteous action and loyalty share some features: chiefly, sacrificing selfish desires for the well-being of others.

However (as he acknowledges) if this view is correct, it entails that the Sith cannot be loyal. For the Sith Order promotes the individual acquisition of power over any other value and a part of the Sith’s “duty” to their Order consists thus

in betraying their master for the sake of acquiring new power. Can we call this proper loyalty?

“Guardians and Tyrants in the Republics of *Star Wars* and Plato”, by Adam Barkman and Kyle Alkema, claims that the wisest governors are the “lightsaber-wielding philosophers”, in clear analogy with the Platonic guardians. The rise of the Empire should be traced in the faulty democratic institutions of the Old Republic - the Senate being constantly impeded by the recklessness of elected politicians and the Jedi Council systematically deviated to issues of secondary importance. Among the main traits of a guardian are the ability to obey superiors, control emotions and give up attachments. Barkman and Alkema, however, further add that the Jedi are distinguished from the Sith in that they *lack* the ambition to be rulers. In spite of their lack of ambition, they will be suitable for holding political power exactly because their excellence as guardians allow them to conceive of such power as a duty rather than a gain.

In “Chasing Kevin Smith: Was It Immoral for the Rebel Alliance to Destroy *Death Star II*?”, Charles C. Camosy holds that the destruction of the second Death Star was a morally justified act on the rebels’ part. Camosy’s argument is concerned first with defining what a terrorist attack is, since this is usually how the accuse against the rebels is framed, and then with evaluating if they can be considered morally guilty for their attack. First of all, he rejects a utilitarian approach for defining terrorist attacks, and choses a just war framework. He then proceeds to define a terrorist attack as an act purposefully directed at causing deaths between innocent civilians in order to reach some goal. Under this definition of terrorist attack, the rebels cannot possibly be considered terrorists, for they were directly aiming only at the destruction of the Death Star and not at the killing of civilians. Camosy then proceeds to ask whether the Death Star’s employee were innocent or not, and his answer is positive. For the majority of them were either clones or droids, and none ever had any choice regarding what to do (even if it’s controversial whether or not droids actually count as people). In spite of this, the rebels’ attack remains morally justified in that the potential damage for the galaxy coming for a fully operative second death star was such that even the death of millions of innocents was a price worth paying.

We think that this point looks especially controversial in that it reintroduces a utilitarian criterion into the picture. Also, we are not sure that the proposed definition completely captures the intension of terrorism. More in general, the argument seems to suffer from the “good guys lens” complex about which Camosy talks in the end, the fact that we tend to always justify the rebels because of their leading protagonists’ role in the *Star Wars* narratives.

“The Ballad of Boba Fett: Mercenary Agency and Amoralism in War”, by David LaRocca, aims at exploring Boba Fett’s moral status, and then expands the conclusions to the broader case of the moral status of mercenaries and their deploy-

ment in war contexts. After a digression on the character's history, the author introduces his main thesis: Fett is not a moral relativist, despite he might first look one such given his position as an intermediary between the Empire and the rebels. Instead, the author describes Fett as an amoralist, someone who has purposefully removed himself from the moral discourse. Fett does not think that both parties have their reasons, he does not weigh their relative merits, he does not care about moral judgements and does not himself have any type of moral opinion. The author then proceeds to take the consequences of his analysis of Fett into the realm of the contemporary use of mercenaries in war contexts. The question thus becomes if mercenaries are necessarily amoral and thus generally bad, or if it is possible for there to be a good mercenary. A question to which the author answers that yes, there could be a good mercenary, and also that the standard ways to distinguish mercenaries and soldiers may not be as effective as we might think. This prompts a wider reflection on whether or not we should rethink our moral assessment of the parties involved in mercenary contracts, a State and the mercenary itself, and on how this might think our judgement over Boba Fett.

## 5 Nature of the Force (Metaphysics and Epistemology)

A number of papers address the problem of evil in relation to the theodicy of the Force. Drawing upon dramatically contrasting information from both the movies and the Expanded Universe, it turns out that we know disappointingly little about the Force's nature and agency<sup>2</sup>. For example, as George Dunn stresses in "Why the Force Must Have a Dark Side", *Star Wars* does not settle whether events brought about by the will of the Force are good or evil (*neutralism*). Nor, supposing such events are morally laden, does it decide whether their being evil can be explained away by evil being the absence of goodness (Augustine's *privation theory*). Dunn wishes to defend a specific stance, according to which evil obtains because the Dark Side is a potential part of the Light Side. The Dark Side has a will of its own, but this will can only be active insofar as the Light Side is not. The capacity of the Force to will something is determined at each time by the dominating component. Thus, it takes conscious effort by the Sith to liberate the Dark Side from the boundaries of light. Strikingly, this view comes closest to the picture of the Force emerging from *Episode VII*, as Kylo Ren confesses to be "tempted" by the Light Side.

An Augustinian view is defended by Jason Eberl in "Know the Dark Side: A

<sup>2</sup>We permit ourselves to claim that the most exciting promise of the forthcoming trilogy (Episodes VII- IX) consists in fixing a canonical answer to these questions.

Theodicy of the Force”. Here the Force itself becomes the equivalent in the *Star Wars* universe of what God is in monotheistic Semitic religions. The Force thus possesses a will and a plan for the universe, and the Dark Side is understood as ‘merely’ a lack of light. Eberl then proceeds to analyze Anakin’s turn to the Dark Side, which, in the Augustinian framework, is caused by his inordinate desire to save Padme’s life, and his inability to detach himself from transient goods to embrace the true love of God, or the Force. Anakin’s love, however, is not inherently wrong, but is better described as not rightly ordered, for he puts his beloved’s life above the Force. Overall, the paper was not totally convincing. First of all, it inherits the problems inherent to Augustine’s philosophy, which by itself might make the thesis quite unstable. Not only this, but the comparison between the Force and the semitic God seems too excessive for it not to be justified by argument. Indeed, it seems that the yet fruitful idea of developing a theodicy of the Force should start off from similar considerations before even coming to address the problem of evil.

A different yet very interesting paper addressing the nature of the Force is “What Is It Like to Be a Jedi? A Life in the Force”, in which Marek McGann attempts to describe the phenomenal character or *quale* associated with manipulating the Force. To do this, he avails himself of the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty as well as of recent developments in cognitive science regarding the notion of embodied cognition. McGann aims at explaining what it means that a Jedi can *feel* the Force, and how something similar to this feeling might appear in our everyday experience. He claims that the experience of the Force is not simply some kind of meditative act, it is a physical, bodily act, necessarily intertwined with the fact that we are made of meat and bones, and that we are constantly embodied, as was stressed by Merleau-Ponty. The Force is something that is felt through the body, is a flow that someone moves along, not something that is merely perceived. His final claim is that, since this embodied point of view is not exclusive of the Force, but is common to all our experience, this shared feature shows the main characteristic of the Jedi’s experience of the Force, and at the same time its connection with everyday experience. This article’s idea has certainly some merit, even if in this analysis the spiritual activity required for perceiving the Force seems to be relinquished as a consequence of its reduction to a bodily aspect. Given the importance of spirituality for Force-users and for the nature of the Force itself, this probably makes this analysis incomplete. Still, it argues convincingly that the Force is not *purely* spiritual, and gives a partial solution to the problem of how it can interact with the physical universe.

“Never Tell Me the Odds”: An Inquiry Concerning Jedi Understanding”, by Andrew Zimmerman Jones, is centered around the epistemological status of understanding the Force, an ability that characters in the *Star Wars* universe claim to possess. Zimmerman Jones focuses on Han Solo’s famous skepticism, which

he compares to David Hume's equally famous skeptic attitude. Giving the due credit to Solo and Hume, he concludes by proposing that the best way to understand the epistemology of the Force is through fallibilist principles. The author argues that Solo's lack of belief in the existence of the Force, although false, can still be considered justified, for the smuggler never had any evidence that the Force could possibly exist. Further motivation for this claim is found in the work of Hume, and specifically in his argument against the possibility of miracles. In a Humean perspective, then, Han's lack of evidence for a belief in something that was no different from a miracle was reason enough for him to be justified in his skepticism. The author then moves on to question whether or not the Jedi can actually say that they know the Force according to this standard. He defines their knowledge as based on inductive reasoning. And because of this he raises the problem of induction against the Jedi's knowledge of the Force, before proceeding to solving it by appeal to fallibilist principles, according to which no knowledge can be absolutely certain, but is rather always fallible.

It is striking that the author bases his analysis on the view that knowledge is justified true belief, which is highly discredited in modern epistemology. At least acknowledging this problem and explaining why it is not relevant to his analysis, if it is so, would have been a wise choice.

## 6 Return of the non-Human

The essay "Can Chewie Speak? Wittgenstein and the Philosophy of Language", by Rhiannon Grant and Myfanwy Reynolds, is highly recommended for both philosophers of language and Wookiee lovers. Easily readable, this essay about the fierce and loyal hairy Chewbacca is packed with humour. Chewie is an important part of our popular culture: We all remember very well his wild screams during a fight on the Death Star, or the softer noises of his displays of affection towards Leia or Han. Nevertheless, from a linguistic point view, it is hard to say whether such sounds actually count as a language. In the Expanded Universe we learn that Wookiee do have their own language, called *Shyriiwook*, but in this case the problem is different, and as the authors suggest, it leads directly to philosophical considerations: in fact, we are not merely looking for the existence of a Wookiee language, but rather we are trying to understand whether this language actually has a meaning. Can Chewbecca really speak? If yes, how could we consider his screams as a real language?

Such analysis draws the readers back to the proper criteria for defining a language, and the authors provide two different options. On one hand, as Chomsky pointed out, a genuine language is composed of utterances organized by a syntax, a structure and a grammar. Accordingly, Chewie's screams and growls do not make him capable of speaking, since he has no grammar nor rules. Actually,

accepting the Chomskian perspective, we risk to be rather disappointed: are we really eager to admit that our beloved Wookiee does not speak? This would be clearly in contrast with our basic intuitions on the movies, since we actually see Chewie and Han communicating with each other.

In this philosophical danger, Wittgenstein might come to our aid, proving himself a Wookiee's saviour like Yoda during the Battle of Kashyyk. As it is renown, after a period of loneliness and meditation that the authors compare to Obi Wan's exile on Tatooine, Wittgenstein abandoned his pictorial theory of a perfect and ideal language proposed in his *Tractatus* in order to embrace a new theory, now grounded on use and context. Highlighting the nature of language games and of social aspects of language, the authors provide a new criterion that allows the Wookiee not to speak a language, but at least to communicate.

Another remarkable passage of the essay consists in a funny comparison between Wittgenstein's thesis on the impossibility of a private language and a situation that Obi Wan might have possibly faced during his exile in Tatooine. Given the importance of the social aspects of language, every new word needs to undergo a checking procedure of the language community which provides the rules of the use of such new word: had Obi Wan invented a new word in his lonely hut in the desert in order to describe a disturbance in the Force, he would always lack of the public checking procedure that a real language necessarily needs. Even the most skilled Jedi must take into account the undeniable social aspect of language.

Finally, the two authors remind us the importance of the fictional setting for their analysis: whatever the language may be (Star Trek's *Klingon*, Tolkien's *Quenya* or Chewie's *Shyriiwook*), it is more correct to say that Chewbecca can convey information and communicate merely in the movies, not absolutely. All the many different languages of *Star Wars* represent a case study for philosophers who claim, following Wittgenstein, that more important is whether a language is socially understood, rather than what is simply said.

This very last important remark concerning the importance of a fictional context connects directly to "*Star Wars: Emotions and the Paradox of Fiction*" by Lance Belluomini. Here the readers are introduced to three theories of fiction, which differently explain how we can feel real emotions for non-existent fictional characters. For every fan, even the toughest, this is an undeniable fact: we clearly feel strong and intense emotions for the characters, although neither Luke Skywalker nor Obi Wan Kenobi (and, luckily, not even Jar Jar), do actually exist and never will.

In the opening, the author provides three claims which jointly express the paradox of fiction:

1. We have genuine and rational emotional responses to the fictional characters and events in *Star Wars*.

2. In order to have genuine and rational emotional responses, we must believe these characters and events really exist.
3. Nobody believes these fictional characters and events in *Star Wars* exist.

Every solution will present costs and benefits. The first attempt to solve the paradox comes from the famous English poet S. T. Coleridge: he proposed an *illusion theory*, according to which each fictional work creates in the viewers the illusion that characters and situations described really exist. The second proposal, the *thought theory*, connects our rational emotions to our mental representation of fictional characters and events. Finally, the author discusses a classic in the philosophy of fiction, Walton's *pretend theory*. On the whole, none of the three theories is able to solve the paradox. Nevertheless, the author concludes the essay with a simple but effective proposal which draws the attention of the reader on the terminology of the paradox: Claim 1 refers to "rational" emotions, and this might be a mistake. Probably, as it is finally pointed out, our feeling of pity for a tortured Luke Skywalker is not a reasonable nor a rational response, since we are just imaging the scene, and neither Luke nor Mark Hamill (the actor who portrays the young Jedi) are really in danger.

## 7 Conclusion

Lightsabers, Jedi and Siths, the power of the Force, the rise of the Empire and the victory of the Rebellion have always caught our attention. But they did more than trigger a loud heartbeat: they gave rise to another kind of mental awakening (*have you felt it?*), giving us a precious chance to meditate upon the underlying narratives. This book shows most effectively that such contemplation and reflection leads straightforwardly to rigorous philosophical thought, of a kind to be cultivated by anyone who shares the sense of wonder transmitted by Lucas' universe.

One last admonition. It is rather hard to overcome the feeling of excitement aroused by *Star Wars'* most eventful scenes: the lightsaber duels, the Podracers chases, the explosions of the (many) Death Star(s), and so forth. But we firmly believe true philosophers to be Jedi, that is, heroes who have no doubt that a life led by excitement alone is the first step to the Dark Side (yes, we *are* slightly suggesting that emotionally-driven modes of doing philosophy go under the label of 'Sith philosophy', and especially those in which the claimed grandeur of the aims collides with methods that are rigorous, if yet painful and hard to learn). Therefore, while the amount of questions arising from *Star Wars* is astonishing, and while we may deeply enjoy being a live part of a universe made up of droids, aliens, spaceships and Jedi like ourselves, at the same time we long for analysing

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each of its elements, rather than solely vaguely invoking their fantastic character and that of the narratives surrounding them.

