

Why I am Not a Darksider

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WRITTEN BY AARON SEEKER ON 16 FEBRUARY 2020. POSTED IN [LIGHT CONTENT](#). HITS: 924

I can see why you would think the things you do, and I would probably have those same thoughts if I assumed that the appearance of self and other was the entire story of reality. If I was just me and that thing was unconnected from all other things, then perhaps the things that Jedi do would look like they were 'sacrifices'. Perhaps I would think it silly that they were denying something when they spoke of acting from centeredness rather than anger. It might even make my eyes cross by making me see them on one hand as being unrealistically altruistic and on the other hand somehow egocentric. It would be a confusing thing to me.

But I don't see myself as only this separate and human thing that my senses show me. I think there is a deeper truth to who I am. I think that if you look closely at my hand, you will see it is a swarm of molecules. Look closer still and you will see clouds of electrons. One more step inward and the electrons break into vibrations; no real matter, just probabilities and energies; my hand stops having borders and limits and is just a flicker in a larger idea that merges with every other thing that ever flickered in time. Even time itself falls apart when you look at it close enough.

So where in that is space for selfishness? When you stand in the awareness of that perspective, there is no sacrifice. There is just a realization that you do not want to waste this moment causing harm to yourself. You embrace your life, and you are able to experience the love that penetrates everything. You can see how everything you think, everything

you say, everything you feel radiates out from you and echoes back to you. A Jedi is not selfless because he neglects himself. A Jedi is selfless because we are one with the Force and there is no self. There are just opportunities to allow the energy of the world to flow and to touch all of the minds and patterns that flicker and dance upon the wave that creates us.

A Jedi does not pen emotions within him. He expresses them. He notices them. He understands them. I think that expressing anger by hitting a racquetball or a punching bag is a way to avoid confronting the things you are feeling. I think it is just an easy way to hide. Sigmund Freud used the word 'neurotic' to describe the things that we did using the energy from repressed feelings. Ultimately, the things we do not confront begin to control us. If you find yourself with extra anger lying around to use as fuel, I think there are things in your life that you have not come to terms with yet. That is normal. It is true of all of us, but to ignore the warning signs of your own fear and frustration, and to try to punch a bag a little harder, instead of bringing your mind and spirit into health, is a quick way to lead your body into sickness.

Our ancestors' survival required more than the fear of being eaten. Most likely all the species with awareness were afraid of being eaten. Many of them did not survive. What helped us to survive was not the fear, but the willingness to act with clarity and to move ourselves to places where we did not need to live in fear. Just as pain is a useful thing to alert us to where we need attention, fear can be the same. A Jedi pays attention to the symptom of fear, and then goes about eliminating it and restoring himself to health. I do not repress my anger, fear, or jealousy. I face it. I deal with it. I move past

it. I share your concern about online therapy. I don't think that the tendency is limited to Lightsiders, however. I am quite sure that I have seen equal numbers of people from all paths giving advice, and the Independents even more so. From your description of how you respond to people's requests for council, I would say you allow yourself to get a little more involved than I personally am comfortable getting. I try to live in a way that expresses my beliefs on one of the ways living can be carried out. I express sympathy, empathy, or compassion depending on how I feel I can be most helpful to the person asking for help and to the others standing nearby. I try to share what I know about ways to approach problems, but I rarely suggest specific answers for problems. Mostly I listen. I see what requests I can fulfill. I think of who I know that might be going through something similar with whom they might have a partnership in discussing their experiences. What I don't do is therapy. With no face-to-face contact, and with no reasonable way to follow up, it would be unethical to enter into that sort of relationship. Perhaps some Lightsiders feel differently, but from discussions I have had with the leadership on my path, I believe they agree with me on that point.

You spoke of the ego of the Lightsider, and that accusation makes me smile. Most of my favorite Force Academy members have had egos the size of the internet, and not half of them are Lightsiders. Walk through the history of Shadow leadership and tell me that you can't find any arrogance. From the top of Mt. Shinobi, you can see for miles, and looming there in the distance is the mountain range that is the ego of the Dark Side. I am one of the most self-righteous of Lightsiders. How am I doing compared to Darksider,

Richard Irvine? To Lord Moor? And yet, I think there is something that is more important than the size of the pedestal someone places themselves upon, and that is the nature of their humility when they look at others. What is Light within me is not my belief that I am a good human being, but my belief that I have things to learn from everyone. I think we are all fantastic, and I am lucky to have met the people I have met here. Their pride can be as large as mountains, but their wisdom and their spirits reach to the stars. I have met Lightsiders who thought they were amazing, but I have yet to meet one who knew how amazing they really were. The same goes of people on every single path here.

You made a final point that I would like to respond to. You said that the Light Side was the path that supposedly accepted all, and I think you are wrong about that. I think we embrace all people, but I do not think we have ever had a majority of our order that believed that all actions were proper or that all beliefs were true. If anything, we are dedicated to living our lives in a way that we have come to believe is proper for ourselves. Part of our journey and commitment as teachers at an academy involves helping others to ask and answer the question of "what is right?", but we do not insist that they find the same answers as us. They can say whatever they believe. We can respond with whatever we believe. We both listen and we speak. If that seems like intolerance to you, then you are missing the reciprocal nature of freedom of speech. With that said, I invite you and everyone else to disagree with me on everything. I am always up for a good discussion.

First Essay- A Bargain with the Shaman

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WRITTEN BY AARON SEEKER ON 16 FEBRUARY 2020. POSTED IN LIGHT CONTENT. HITS: 789

First Essay- A Bargain with the Shaman

Years ago I struck a deal. I wanted a work of art crafted that I would give as a gift to a woman. I turned to a master of brushwork and asked for such a piece as he would chose to design, offering a haiku for possible inspiration. I do not remember the exact words, but I believe it was not far from this

Fleeing the mountain,
I caught a glimpse of the ghost,
A blur of red hair

The master named his price and I agreed. There were three things I needed to create in return: A certain amulet, a certain relationship with the red haired ghost, and a certain record of my teachings. His part of the deal was well satisfied, and mine sat unfinished for more than two years. The ghost flew by and we had our moment and she fled this mountain. The amulet was made, but stays safely in my pocket for now lest the shaman have power over me through it and my unfinished promise. Today I will begin to satisfy the third part of our bargain. I will begin the first of five pieces. If I live to complete them, I expect each to be as different in nature as

the five elements, but I hope each in their way satisfies part of our arrangement.

One way of seeing the larger road

Everything is a cycle. Every step is both before and after every other step. The spiral begins at every moment and moves upwards. In accordance with what I was taught by others, I will chose the beginning of fear, and then follow it part of the way towards love

The first level we will call SECURITY.

The view is from fear. The view is of self.

The individual seeks to be an island, and to stay free from the predators of the outside world. These people do not come to the academy. They are still too deep in darkness, and they do not trust the world enough to share. Some of them stepping out of this darkness may come to listen but not speak. They begin to sense there is something more. Elevate their fear and they will retreat into security. Gift them with love and they will take their first nervous steps towards the light. How can they find safety in community?

The second level we will call RULES

The view is from fear. The view is of community.

Security can be found in the company of others when there are rules. Learn the code. Follow the church. Live within the law. There is Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, Justice and Injustice. Taking one step away from fear and towards love is a revelation. The fearful see God for the first time and have

strength and faith beyond their grasping for security. Yes. They will die for the cause. They will sacrifice for the team. They will follow the flag. The Evil of the heretics will be struck down.

A Jedi code of ethics. A Jedi constitution. A Jedi order. These are things to follow. I will arm the former Jedi Knight Draconis with this saber. When his journey was still young, he took his first step from fear, and he resolved to help others across that threshold. He saw his first vision of the Light, and he struggled against his Fear from falling again towards his old ways. He looked instead up the spiral ladder to those who were on the next step. Eventually, he took that step himself. For if there are to be rules, someone needs to be making those rules.

The third level we will call POWER

Fear wanes. Love grows. The view is of self.

The holders of titles. The makers of rules. The home of the Masters. Master Ellen made the rules that her knights enforced. The understanding of RULES frees the individual from the anxiety of SECURITY, and there is an opportunity to grow as an individual and prove one's own excellence. It is not enough for just anybody to make the rules. They need to be acknowledged and ordained. From far down the ladder they will be distrusted as all things are distrusted by those who seek security, but they are the best friend or worst enemy of those who seek rules. For much of her time at the Academy, Student Knight Master Spark Vallen fell back through this step. Climbing the ranks over and over she fell beneath and rose above Master Ellen. This is the highest

point of vision for many of the self-proclaimed Lords of the Sith. This is the earliest point of entry for Master Brandon. This is even perhaps the story of why Jedi Knight Adi Klem climbed to the top of the Council, and then left it for other things. The climb. The acknowledgement. The power.

But what was different for Master Ellen and Master Joni, Master Brandon and Widge, is that they eventually put at least one foot on the rung of the next step. No longer power for self, but power for community.

The fourth level we will call RELATIONSHIP

The view is from love. The view is of community.

Master Brandon took a step into the worldview that at the time was held by Master Irvine and myself. Rules were not something to be followed, but rules useful to the community may be. Leaders were not something to be followed, but just leadership might be as long as it remained just. It is a place of questioning. It is a place of deciding what is best for the community in a new way.

When you stand in RULES, everything above you looks like POWER. If Master Brandon was questioning the rules, than in Vandor's eyes he must be seeking power outside of the appropriate channels. Brandon and Spark Vallen were branded heretics rather than Masters when they questioned the symbols and trappings of the rule makers. Those living in the black and white world of rules feared a tumbling downward of their laws and everyone being thrown into chaos and insecure darkness.

Those in RELATIONSHIP saw no need for paths and titles, and did not understand the critical need for those things for those stepping out of the darkness.

There were internal wars. Accusations of arrogance and rebellion flew. The people who carried the sabers and followed the laws tried to protect the Order against the people who wore the robes and looked for inclusion rather than division.

RULES vs RULES is a comfortable fight for those on both sides. The writers of the RULES the holders of the POWER, draw nice clean lines. Master Ellen vs. Darth Moor.

Ellen will always fight Moor and in each cycle Ellen will win. POWER of the righteous will trump POWER of the greedy because righteous Power seeks to draw people up from fear, but the selfish Power of Moor scatters them downward into fear and insecurity.

Moor was never able to really compete with Master Irvine when it came to building real community. With his one foot in Power and his other in Relationship, Irvine was able to lay waste to the old structures and create a new battleground of RULES-POWER vs POWER-RELATIONSHIP. Ellen vs. Richard, and of course the Lightside fractured and Ellen's Power began to change.

I stepped into leadership at this point. I was the Light counter-point to Richard in a way that built community for both the Lightside and the Dark path. Brandon could be recognized as well as Vandor. Those who sought Rules misread my work as a seeking of Power, but there was no need to correct that. I wanted them included in the discussions as well. Those who sought personal Power and acknowledgement were offered those things as well. Keeping everyone in the conversation was the highest good. Master Joni wanted to heal the damage left by the internal and external wars, and I worked with him to try to bring Vandor, Brandon, Ellen, Spark, Richard, Widge and everyone else to every table. I moved out of that role. Those who were working from the view of Rules saw it through that lens and saw it as another victory in the struggle of this thing over that thing. Those who stood looking at the world through Power saw it as another grab for that in another way. Those who stood at least partly in Relationship saw it perhaps in terms of what it meant for the health of the community. But there were others who didn't see it that way. Of course, they weren't looking at me at all

The fifth level we will call DISCOVERY

The view is from wisdom. The view is of the self.

Master Aldar was involved in his own adventures of Kabala and family. Master Irvine and Lady Satelle walked these roads. Sometimes the struggle of the community is not so important. Sometimes one can be selfish, but not act from fear. A person in Security does what they think will benefit the self. A person in Rules will give everything, even their own

life, for the good of the group. A person in Power will give what they must to ensure their legacy. A person in Relationship will sacrifice self for the community. A person in Discovery will do things just to see what happens. They are engaged in living fully and telling their own story. It is easy from an earlier stage to confuse this space with many other things. A person in any other stage might think that they are here without really dwelling in this worldview, or they might mistake the self-centered exploration of someone here for the selfish fearfulness of someone in the earliest places. This can be a place of hermitage and retreat, but it is really an inward door to a much wider world.

The sixth level we will call the TRANSPERSONAL

All things are connected, and walking in Discovery some people touch that connection.

Master Oda on the mountain top. Master Nova and Master Joni bending through their yogic arts. Individuals stop really being individuals in this place, so those names and titles really describe the people who never get here. This is the web of the living Force. This is All Things being One Thing. This is the eye of nature, and this is the birthplace of shamanistic power. The talisman and the scroll reach from this place down into the personal. The interconnection here is the reason that the true energy of the Force can never be used selfishly, because to harness it for the self is to separate the self from all things. This is where the true teachings of the Jedi reside.

The seventh level we will call the SUPRAPERSONAL

As the Transpersonal was All Things being One Thing, this is

the indivisible One that is All Things. This is the Tao. This is the Force. This is the true Divine. This is not the final level. The spiral continues.

Many whose names I mentioned are no longer at the levels they characterized. Even for people at a particular perspective, in times of wisdom they act from above their stages, and in times of stress they can move below. Organizations can be built around each triad. A business may be built around the idea of Rules, but a crisis may throw them into a mode of Security.

My America has often lived in the stable formation of SECURITY-RULES-POWER. The individuals at the margins can come together in agreement at the social place of the center. The paranoid and the powerful can meet in the courts of Rules and hammer out the disagreements.

Recently our government has worked from the triad of RULES-POWER-RELATIONSHIP. The individuals in the center do not understand true Relationship so they lean on the law when it serves them and on their cronies when it does not. Remarkably this week center of the individual has often been the operating principle of the Academy. When a group striving for Rules fights with a group that strives for Relationship, the decisions are made by those sitting in Power. More often than not the result is for Power to decide in favor of that which will gain it the most Power. By making new and tighter Rules, those fearful of insecurity applaud the imposed structures. Usually, those seeking Relationship walk away from the structures for a while. Brandon gets purged.

Spark chooses a new path. The pull of Relationship eventually brings them back again.

I believe that this essay is offered from POWER-RELATIONSHIP-DISCOVERY. Sitting in the divide between the good leaders who benefit from the acknowledgement of Power and the good wanderers who benefit from the experience of Discovery is a community space where there might be Light and Dark, but they are not sides or oppositions. They are ways to explain the internal conflicts that drive our learning and interactions. All of this is merely meant as another way of helping those in that community to hold a new context. It is a place of stepping into a social center so that those with Power can understand what is above their rules and an invitation for those in Discovery to stop in and see what the community has to offer them in their travels. It is my own stopping in and saying a brief hello, but it will serve most as a sort of mirror.

As with all things, it has only the meaning you are able to bring to it and only the wisdom you can create to carry away.

May the Force be with you.