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The Role of The Monomyth in Star Wars

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THE ROLE OF THE MONOMYTH IN STAR WARS

By

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Abstract

The concept of the monomyth has figured prominently throughout the millennia. From the Bible to Greek mythology, Jesus to Hercules, the monomyth linked the past and the present storytelling into a shared belief that transcended culture and background. One example of the monomyth come to life was Luke Skywalker, the hero of Star Wars Episode Four, Five, and Six.

Throughout the three films, Luke undertook much of the journey of the hero as defined by Joseph Campbell. Yet, despite the friendship between the director George Lucas and Campbell, there are differences in both timeline and depth in the monomyth and the journey of Luke Skywalker. This paper analyzes the comparisons and contrasts between the story of the one myth and that of Luke Skywalker. There are seventeen stages to examine to see where Luke Skywalker lies on the monomyth.

Acknowledgements

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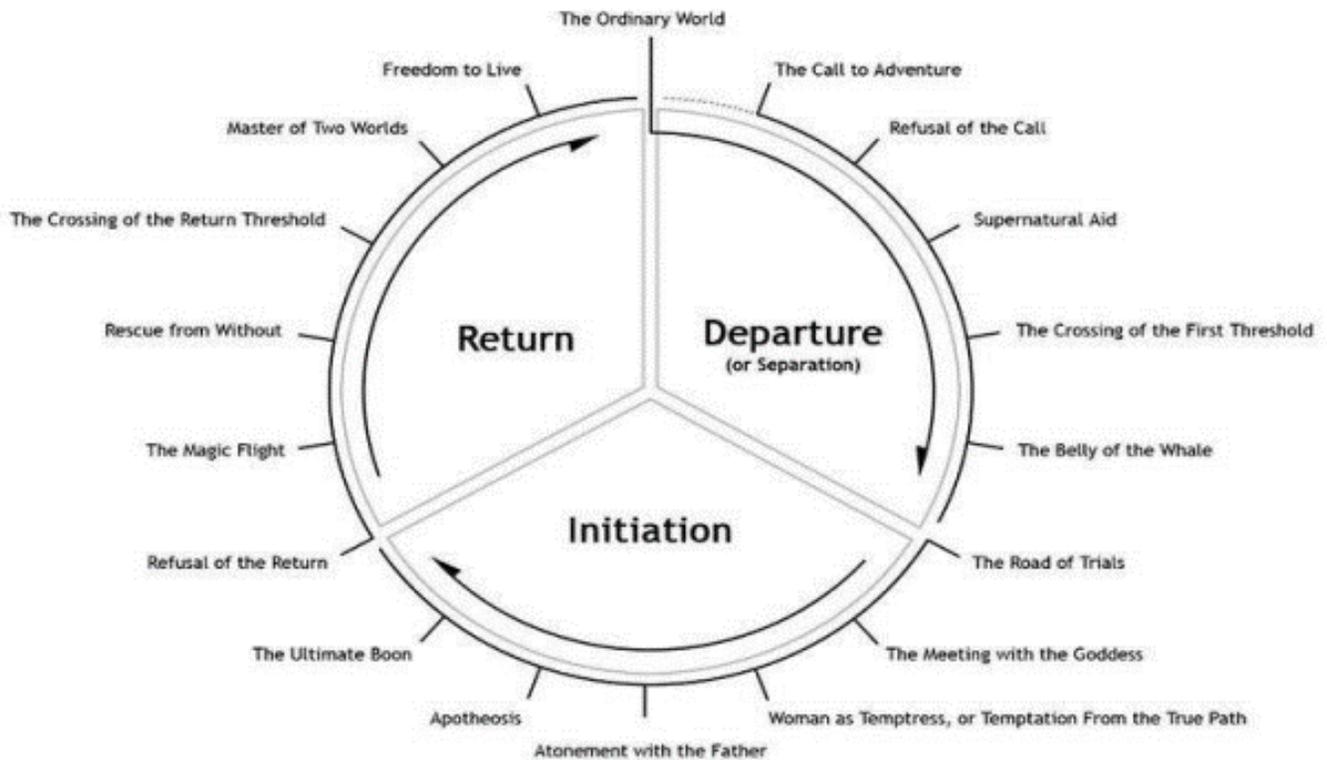
Introduction to the Monomyth

The monomyth is a myth-based framework that has been strewn throughout history in mythology, literature, and pop culture. The concept has been largely developed and advocated by Joseph Campbell to represent the pathway of the Hero's Journey. Campbell (2008) promoted the central pattern of the hero's journey as the single great story written throughout all mythic narratives. Breaking down the word itself, the word "Monomyth" comes from two Greek root words. Mono, meaning "one," and mythos, meaning "story." So, when you combine the two, you get the "one story" (Coker, 2015, para. 8). It was important to remember this definition as rooted in Greek. Some of the most famous myths, such as that of Achilles, Odysseus, and Hector all sprang from Greek mythology. George Lucas, creator of the Star Wars Universe, cited Joseph Campbell's work as a major influence on the initial three films (Moyers, 2015). Lucas said in an interview, "I consciously set about to recreate the myths and the classic mythological motifs. And I wanted to use those motifs to deal with issues that existed today" (Moyers, 2015, para. 3). The hero of the first trilogy, Luke Skywalker, followed and met the criteria of the one great story that has been read and reread throughout first the spoken word of Homer and now both literature and film.

Campbell (2008) broke the adventure of the hero down into three main chapters broken down further into seventeen total stages. Figure 1 below illustrates these chapters and stages, showing the cyclical nature of Campbell's concept of the Hero's Journey. All heroes begin in The Ordinary World, not considered a defined stage, but a required step in which the hero is lacking something and has yet to begin his journey. Once a character is introduced in the Mundane world, unknowing of the great path ahead of him/her, Campbell then begins with the initial chapter, discussing the Departure or Separation of the hero. The second chapter was the

Initiation of the hero and lastly, third chapter was the Return. The Departure, also known as the Separation, is the initial phase in which the hero leaves his normal life in five stages including The Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, Supernatural Aid, The Crossing of the First Threshold, and The Belly of the Whale. The Initiation is where the hero truly grows by facing the road of trials, meeting the goddess, facing a woman as a temptress, atoning with the father, apotheosis, and the ultimate boon. In the final chapter, the hero circles back to the normal world following the refusal of the return, the magic flight, and a rescue from without.

Figure 1



Note. The Monomyth in visual form to show the cyclical nature of the journey of the hero (Butler, 2019, p. 3)

When referencing the Call to Adventure, this was merely the initial impetus to begin the road to becoming the hero. This often appeared to be some challenge or chance given to the hero

and set up a goal to progress towards. There are various forms of the call throughout mythology, but on Star Wars, it was merely the first attempt to get Luke to begin the arduous journey of the hero. Secondly, the Refusal of the Call often led to dire consequences for heroes of myth. This was the moment that a hero initially was reluctant to or completely denied the call. In many practical uses of Campbell's cycle, the hero balances consequences of the path invoked by the Call and may even require further motivation. Next, finding Supernatural Aid along the journey was part of the cycle. This often involves some encounter or introduction to a mentor for the hero to offer guidance or unique item/tool that the hero will require to succeed. In Star Wars, this was simply having access and the ability to utilize the Force as a form of Supernatural Aid. In a science fiction-based universe, the ability to move objects with the mind, jump massive distances, and become a ghost capable of influencing reality, certainly qualifies. A hero must Cross the First Threshold to move on with character development. This stage is the commitment to accomplish the goal and is the beginning of movement in the Special World. There are a variety of thresholds, but for the purpose of Luke Skywalker, the initial threshold is leaving Tatooine. The Belly of the Whale was a rebirth from the descent into darkness as the final stage of the Departure chapter.

The second chapter of the hero's journey was Initiation. The Road of Trials was the first stage of this chapter, and one of the more prevalent throughout the six films referenced throughout this thesis. During this phase, the hero must become familiar with and a part of the new Special World. This is often where the most character growth occurs, and where the characteristics that make the hero what is truly defined as a hero are introduced in the story. From the moment Luke leaves Tatooine, to the moment he himself became a Force ghost; the trials never ceased. The second stage, The Meeting with the Goddess, is a point when the hero

of the story experiences some form of 'love' or 'feeling' that has power and significance. This is not always portrayed as a romantic encounter but can be an infant/child with a mother, or as was the case in Star Wars, Luke would meet Leia, his twin sister, in the rescue on the Death Star.

The third stage in Initiation is Woman as the Temptress. This phase is a test for the hero. It can again be a person or can simply be any temptation during the hero's journey that has caused the hero to stray or temporarily abandon the path to the initial goal. While the third stage was Woman as the Temptress, it was rather the dark side of the Force that ultimately served as such in the Star Wars series. No woman by literal definition served directly as a Temptress for Luke.

The Atonement with the Father is the step in which the hero must confront some figure or conflict that holds power over him/her. For many mythological stories, and in Star Wars, this phase was a central theme and desire of Luke throughout the movies. In truth, confrontation with the father was sought by the last remaining Jedi Knights, Yoda and Obi Wan. This atonement is typically the central point for the hero's journey, and in Star Wars, this act would complete Luke's training. The fifth stage was Apotheosis. The etymology of *apotheosis*, was created among the ancient Greeks meaning "making into a god." "The prefix *apo-* can mean simply "quite" or "completely," and "Theos" is the Greek word for "god" (Apotheosis, n. d.)

Essentially, this was the moment the hero became more than a man—that during his development he became greater in skill or personal powers than the average man. This could be a physical death or spiritual death, but overall, the hero moves beyond the physical human form he/she started the journey with. The last stage of Initiation was The Ultimate Boon, the achievement of that Call, the goal of the journey. It is the hero's reward for persevering through the trials and stages in this chapter.

The Return was the final chapter in the breakdown for the cycle. This is the return back after completion of the goal, however, in many cases this is not just return to be celebrated, but more a journey to deal with the consequences of the actions he/she had to take to get to the Ultimate Boon. This was also where the most difference between the path laid down by Joseph Campbell and the script/movies written and produced by George Lucas diverged. In the first stage, the Refusal of the Return. This phase represents the hero being conflicted with a return to the Mundane world or remaining in the newfound enlightenment or peace of the Special world. It was delineated in Star Wars by Luke absconding from society and refusing to assist Rey in Star Wars: Episode VIII - The Last Jedi. The next step, the Magic Flight, depicts a hero's need to evade a new conflict, and could be as adventurous or dangerous as the initial journey to achieve the goal. While there were many flights for Luke throughout the six films, there was not one that stood out to reach The Magic Flight of stage two status. The third Stage in the Return, Rescue from Without, this was defined as bringing the hero back to the real world; that they would have to leave the world they have created for themselves back to the mundane. It often involves the hero needing to be motivated or pushed by a powerful guide or mentor to return them back to the Mundane world or just everyday life. For all of his refusals and recalcitrant nature, it was first Rey then Yoda that assisted Luke with The Rescue from Without, beginning with Rey seeking him out for training. To truly become part of the normal reality, the hero would have to commit to The Crossing of the Return Threshold. This involves another symbolic movement, which results in the return from the Special world to the Mundane world; however, the hero now has the advantage of wisdom, strength, and overall character development from the journey in which he/she would share with others. Stage five of the Return was for the hero to become the Master of the Two Worlds. This stage involves the hero finding or achieving

balance between the Mundane and Special worlds. In Star Wars, the two worlds were separated by the mundane and the mystical—the Force, and finding balance was key throughout the Star Wars journey. The Freedom to Live was the end stage of development for the hero's journey. This freedom is typically seen as a mastery over death or the fear of dying or mastery over the fear of change and can now look forward to the future no matter the circumstances.

Introduction to Luke Skywalker

In the Star Wars filmography, the development of Luke Skywalker from peasant farmer to Jedi Master was the central story of Episodes IV, V, and VI. While he completed his development in the final three films, he was the central character in the previous trilogy. He did make an appearance in Episode III, *The Revenge of the Sith*, it was as an infant, and no true development should be noted outside of his birth.

Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope was the first release of the Star Wars cinematography (Lucas, 1977). Luke Skywalker was introduced to the audience as a moisture farmer under the care of his Uncle Owen and Aunt Beru. Impetuous but capable, honest but lacking maturity, Luke demonstrated all the teenage angst while at the same time showing capacity for piloting a speeder as well as repairing a droid. He also showed the ability to wonder and dream once he saw a piece of the original message from Princess Leia Organa. The maturity, or lack thereof, was shown shortly after he attempted to rescue the escaped droid, rather than alert Owen. Naturally, Luke was captured by Jawa raiders and rescued by General Obi Wan Kenobi, a Jedi Knight and former leader for the Rebellion. It was with Obi Wan that Luke first learned that his father was a Jedi Knight slain by the Sith Lord, Darth Vader.

When the realization hit that the droids could have been tracked by the Empire, Luke sped home to discover his entire family had been slaughtered. At this point, Ben Kenobi became

the mentor to Luke that would lead him off Tatooine and into the next chapter of Luke's life. Once off Tatooine, Luke discovered his affinity with the Force—the mysterious energy linking all living things—and quickly took to the tutelage of Obi Wan. After being captured by the Empire, Luke led a daring rescue of Leia while Obi Wan confronted Darth Vader in an effort to distract Empire troops. As Obi Wan was apparently struck down by Darth Vader—there would be no body as Obi Wan almost immediately spoke inside Luke's head—Luke and the crew of the Millennium Falcon escaped the Death Star. The moments in the Death Star from their capture via tractor beam to rescue of the Princess and eventual escape led to the rebirth of Luke Skywalker. No longer was he the orphan from a moisture farm on a backwater planet, but he had had his first brush with being a hero.

The droid Luke's family had bought, and he had repaired, R2D2, had ferreted away in his memory plans for the weakness of the Death Star. It was with guidance from Obi Wan and the Force that Luke managed to exploit the one vulnerability in the Death Star. Darth Vader escaped as the Death Star exploded. Luke would face more trials and tribulations in the follow up sequel, *Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back*.

It was *Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back* (Lucas, 1980), Luke would come to begin to know himself as the son of a Jedi and potential Jedi himself. Luke flew to Dagobah to train with Master Yoda. On Dagobah, Luke faced the darkness within as well as physical and mental challenges set by Yoda. He later felt the danger to Han and Leia and left Dagobah with his training incomplete. Despite Yoda asking him to stay, Luke had chosen to fight for his friends versus completing his training. This would prove his loyalty to friends, but folly towards the larger picture. He did however promise to complete his training in the future. He would end up confronting Vader and having his hand dismembered and world shattered.

The simple declaration of “I am your Father” (Lucas, 1980, 1:51:17), was historically one of the most famous from all the Star Wars movies. For Luke, it was destructive and psyche shattering. His equally famous denial quickly followed, though as he was rescued, Luke acknowledged Vader through the Force. He left to return to Dagobah to confront Master Yoda, and the Force ghost Obi Wan and sought to confirm the truth. As he was being questioned, Obi Wan told Luke that in a way Darth Vader had murdered Anakin Skywalker, that he needed to complete his training in order to confront Darth Vader and the Sith Master, Darth Sidious. The last of the original trilogy, Star Wars: Episode VI - The Return of the Jedi, featured more trials but as well as the culmination of the first two films.

In the final film of the original trilogy, Star Wars: Episode VI - The Return of the Jedi (Lucas, 1980), Luke came into his own as a Jedi. The martial skill and use of the Force in rescuing Han Solo and Princess Leia was part of the advancement as Luke as Jedi. He arrived back on Tatooine in order to force a truce or exchange for Han Solo and Princess Leia once he learned that she had been captured as well. In the end, Jabba proved duplicitous, and this cost him his life and his prisoners. Considering the development from water farmer to Jedi Knight, his progress was astounding. Jedi mind tricks, Force jumps, and the lightsaber were all used in the rescue of Han Solo. Yet, this would be parlor tricks compared to facing his father, Darth Vader, and the Emperor. It was through the spiritual aid of the Force that Luke was able to overcome many obstacles in the climactic scene.

First, Luke rightly sensed the good in his father. Calmly and without trepidation, Luke asked his father to let go of his hatred and anger. While Vader acknowledged the hit, he would not forsake his master or the dark side of the Force. After being goaded into a violent duel to determine the Emperor’s apprentice, Luke holds back the death strike and regained his calm.

Darth Sidious was not pleased at this and began to electrocute him with Force lightning. As Luke called out to his father, Vader grabbed and threw the Emperor to his death. The redemption and atonement of the father was complete. Vader died as he asked Luke to remove his mask so he could look upon his son with his own two eyes. Vader died as a Skywalker on the Death Star. As he took his place among the Force ghosts at the celebration on Endor, Luke acknowledged them all. It was during the victory party that Luke told Leia the truth about their bond. As he took his place among the Force ghosts at the celebration on Endor, Luke acknowledged them all.

During the time span between the victory over the Empire, Luke had attempted to train a set of students to become the new Jedi Order. Among them was Ben Solo, son of Han and Leia Solo, as well as several other students. Luke felt the dark side in Ben and sought to take the choice from him. This failure led to the destruction of the Jedi Order Luke had attempted to create as well as Ben Solo becoming Kylo Ren, Sith Apprentice. Luke withdrew from all, hidden away on a secret Jedi temple, and awaited his time to die and for the Jedi order to cease.

In the monomyth, however, heroes are expected to return across the threshold a second time. He was located by Rey in *Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens* (Lucas, 2015) and the following films complete the second crossing of the threshold and completion of the monomyth. While he first rejected the idea of training Rey, Luke later acquiesced. This would eventually bring him back to society and to a second rebellious army, The Resistance. He would finally confront Kylo Ren and achieve the “peace and purpose” he had long craved.

Introduction to Balance

While not a core piece of the journey of the hero, it was important to note that balance played a large role in the Star Wars universe. First, there was both a light and dark side of the

Force. The Force was defined as the energy interconnecting all living species. The Force could be manipulated, and the user could have abilities such as levitating objects or themselves, the ability to jump long distances, throw lightning at will, and become an entity of pure Force. Certain skills were more suited for either a Jedi or a Sith. This was also in balance. While the Sith were able to utilize Force lightning, a Jedi would have been able to use the Force to heal or deflect. With all life, there was a balance.

The Jedi and the Sith were two sides of the same coin. Where the Jedi sought enlightenment, the Sith sought power. Yoda and Sidious, Anakin and Luke, all in perfect opposition of each other. The Jedi relied on calm enlightenment, the Sith wanted rage. They were feared while the Jedi were respected.

This certainly tied into the journey of the hero when referring to the Chosen One. It was thought that Anakin Skywalker was the chosen one to bring balance to the Force. Anakin was trained to be the greatest Jedi Knight of them all. Yet, his fear and doubts of Padme, his love interest, the Jedi, and his mentor Obi Wan would prove to be his downfall. Manipulated by Darth Sidious, Anakin instead became Darth Vader. As Darth Vader, he would slaughter children or anyone else as directed by impulse or by his master. He also would later strike down Obi Wan.

Yet, there was a balance to this. As Anakin was the one who failed, it would be his son, Luke Skywalker, who would take up the mantle of Chosen One. It was Luke that would become the hero that Anakin did not. Luke, in the climactic ending of *Return of the Jedi* (Lucas, 1983), was able to resist the call of the dark side. This was a direct comparison to the failure that Anakin himself faced. Indeed, as the climax continued, it was Luke redeeming his father rather than striking him down. As Anakin did not have a father, Obi Wan Kenobi was the closest thing

that approached this, and Anakin attempted to kill him in Revenge of the Sith. He later would manage to defeat Obi Wan in combat, though Obi Wan did become a Force ghost that would aid Luke throughout his journey as a hero.

Failure also was a featured piece of balance, particularly, the way failure was either accepted or rejected. For Anakin Skywalker, the defining moment of failure was when he accepted the dark side of the Force as his cause. His fear of loss, specifically Padme, led him to seek powers that would prevent her from dying. This led directly to him attempting to kill both his mentor as well as his son. Indirectly, this led to the death of Padme, whose will to live vanished as she discovered the truth about the new Sith Apprentice. For Luke Skywalker, the failure to allow Ben Solo to choose his own fate caused an immediate withdrawal from society. It was Luke Skywalker that would learn from his mistake and seek out the confrontation to both sacrifice himself for the greater good, but also face his failure. The story arc of both Luke and Anakin was more about balance and the redemption of a lost soul than individual power.

There was a similarity in Episodes IV through VI as well as VII through IX. Where Darth Vader and Luke were in opposition, this would transfer to Kylo Ren and Rey in the final three films. Kylo Ren even had Vader's helmet in his possession; Rey would end up having Luke Skywalker's lightsaber in hers. Obviously, the stories were different as far as the plot details, but the mirroring of plot devices, themes, and symbolism persisted in relative balance for both pairs of characters. The bond these two characters shared was more profound than the bond between Luke and Darth Vader, but both were able to communicate to one another via their minds. All four of these characters were at odds with their beliefs at different points.

The Departure/Separation

George Lucas encompasses the overall broad structure of Joseph Campbell's monomyth as is seen with the three sections, Departure/Separation, Initiation, and Return being evident in each film. The films introduced the audience early to the two separate worlds, and to our hero, Luke Skywalker. The pathway described by Campbell begins in *A New Hope* (Lucas, 1977) as we are introduced to Luke as a simple farm boy, living in his ordinary world on Tatooine, appearing to have no hope of begin anything more.

Stage One: The Call to Adventure

The basic structure of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Campbell 2008) was broken down into seventeen individual stages with three overarching designations. In Homer's *The Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (Homer & Chapman, 2000) Achilles' was called to war; in the Star Wars series, Luke was called to rescue a beautiful woman. Luke, however, was unaware of his origin, unaware that a simple message on his droid was to be the harbinger of his heroic journey. The call to adventure was clearly stated at this juncture, even if the call was not directed to him.

The call was sent to a hero of a previous era, Obi-Wan Kenobi, who would become the mentor to Luke. However, at this juncture, the likelihood of Luke receiving and translating the call to adventure would have seemed to be happenstance at best. This was a key factor for this stage of the call to adventure. Campbell (2008) suggested:

A blunder—apparently the merest chance—reveals an unsuspected world, and the individual is drawn into a relationship with forces that are not rightly understood. As Freud has shown, blunders are not the merest chance. (p. 42)

That Luke's Uncle bought the droid and Luke himself had the knowledge to adjust and repair R2D2 was not blind luck. The droid in question was released in an escape pod that happens to crash land on Tatooine. A key concept of the Star Wars Universe was balance.

Having balance in the Force, balance in Jedi versus Sith—here the universe sent the message to the one person at the right time when there was the greatest of needs. Ben Kenobi was more than a mere acquaintance of Skywalker. Certainly, at no point during this time span was Luke aware of the game he was being drawn into.

Luke believed that Kenobi was nothing more than an itinerant vagabond; he could not have fathomed that “Ben” was the general referenced in the message. This was the lightning rod that called him to adventure. Generals are needed for war and heroes are needed for rescues. The Princess needed both a general and a hero for the upcoming events. Luke truly did not understand the scope of what he was involved with long after leaving Tatooine. He clearly did not understand the magnitude of the droid ending up in his position. An important difference between a hero such as Achilles, who knew he was destined for greatness, and Luke was the fact that he seemed like just an everyman. Achilles screamed greatness on every occasion, Luke was destined to grow into a hero in front of the audience.

Stage Two Refusal of the Call

A central characteristic of Luke’s personality is grounded in the love of family and the feeling of responsibility. Just as he felt a responsibility towards the lost droid, Luke would not have abandoned his caretakers during harvest. This is the groundwork for a hero’s reasoning to refuse the call to adventure. The hero refuses the call out of the noble reason versus the petty. Again, to lightly parallel the tale of Achilles’, it was not Achilles that feared the call but rather his mother. This was early foreshadowing for the tragedy of Achilles—as quite he metaphorically received death at his mother’s hand. Luke, on the other hand, was more concerned with the harvest and his family.

Yet, Luke directly discussed his resentment of being isolated on Tatooine. He stated a desire to C3P0 in a sarcastic manner that the only help he could provide would be to “teleport me off this rock” (Lucas, 1977, 0:20:00). Luke became highly animated when discussing the droid’s history with The Rebellion. This was the first discussion that centered around Luke’s desired outcome. He balanced this with his love of family. Luke did not recognize the importance of the droid’s distress signal/message, but this was a catalyst to his development of a tangible idea for what the future could bring.

Despite his best intentions, Luke was met with tragedy after the refusal of call. This was not chance that he stated his intention to remain home; without the grief and catastrophe, Luke may not have found the strength to leave his home. However, with the idea that the Force or universe required a hero, the hero said no, he would also be faced with the consequence of the refusal. Luke felt direct responsibility for the death of his aunt and uncle. Campbell (2008) quoted the story of King Minos: “Because I have called, and ye refused...I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind...” (p. 49). Now if the quote above was attributed to the Universe or Force, the refusal of the call led directly to the destruction of his life. The murder of Luke’s family came from other angles as well. Luke was obviously crushed by the event but fortunate by any other standard as he would have been among the dead had he been home.

A second angle to note was the idea of Luke leaving for the academy. Despite his uncle’s efforts to have Luke remain a farmer, his aunt noted “he (Luke) has too much of his father in him” (Lucas, 1977, 0:25:27). Balance—where previously the ‘hero’ to bring balance to the Force and save the Jedi (Darth Vader) turned to darkness—the wave corrected and balanced in this situation to bring forth a hero in Luke that would embrace the light.

Lastly, Luke began to understand the scale of what forces beyond his ken were. He discovered Obi-Wan's identity as that of a Jedi, and most importantly that his father was also a Jedi. Obviously, this was the first ankle deep step into the ever-deepening ocean of water he would wade into rapidly.

Stage Three: Supernatural Aid

There are two types of Supernatural Aid in play for Luke Skywalker in Episode IV (Lucas, 1977). This stage represents both a meeting with a mentor and receiving or introduction to some tool that will assist the hero in accomplishing the goal at hand, and oftentimes the mentor is the entity that provides the tool needed. The first, slightly more mundane, was the role of Obi Wan Kenobi as mentor. Secondly, the Force itself, while organic in the Star Wars Universe was completely supernatural, but the necessary tool to achieve Luke's quest.

Obi Wan embodied "the benign, protecting power of destiny" (Campbell, 2008, p. 59) in the sense that he was available as both a mentor and ambassador for the Force itself. Originally, considered the odd hermit by Luke, Obi Wan became more when his background became known to Luke. In Campbell's *A Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2008), he discussed the supernatural figure as "protective and dangerous, motherly and fatherly at the same time, this supernatural principle of guardianship and direction unites in itself all the ambiguities of the unconscious" (p. 61). Luke had lost both his parents at both, and later his Aunt and Uncle. Obi Wan represented the parental figures Luke had lost.

Furthermore, Obi Wan demonstrated the more martial aspect of guardianship. Prior to the destruction of the farm where Luke was from, it was Obi Wan who rescued Luke from the Jawa traders. His mere presence startled the Jawa after they had taken Luke, unconscious, as hostage. In a cave, it was revealed the Obi Wan had known Luke's father and had been friends

with him. It was also at this time that Ben offered Luke the opportunity to leave Tatooine and rescue Princess Leia. A pivotal sequence, and a failure on Obi Wan's part was when Luke asks, "How did my father die" (Lucas, 1977, 0:34:10). Ben replied, "A young jedi named Darth Vader, a pupil of mine until he turned to evil, helped the Empire hunt down and destroy the Jedi Knights. He betrayed and murdered your father" (Lucas, 1977, 0:34:15). This was done to protect Luke from the truth, but at the same time this specific action betrayed the concept of guardianship as a lie. However, Luke would not find this out till much further along in his progression. In short time, he would learn again of the war like aspect of his mentor. As a patron at the cantina sought to first intimidate, then physically assault Luke. Obi Wan demonstrated faculty with the ancient weapon of the Jedi order, the lightsaber, in removing the arm from the aggressive patron. That was the definitive moment of how Obi Wan played the role of mentor in a physical aspect. Yet, Obi Wan also provided aid in a supernatural sense multiple times by showing capacity with the Force.

Over the long term, the ability for Luke to use the Force successfully was far more important to his character arc than many of the physical training he received from Obi Wan. Obi Wan defined the Force to Luke, "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" (Lucas, 1977, 0:34:40). Luke first observed the Supernatural aspect of the Force from a simple Jedi mind trick on the Stormtroopers in town. Here was the first clear delineation that Obi Wan represented the Supernatural Aid directly with skill with the Force while Luke was able to observe. In subsequent training, Luke also attempted to utilize the Force with his own skill and power. Naturally, as a son of a Jedi, Luke was gifted in the Force. The version of Supernatural

Aid had been present all long but had not been able to be manifested by Luke till he received the training of Obi Wan.

Stage Four: The Crossing of the Threshold

In modern society, the Crossing of the Threshold was often performed after a wedding, where a groom would carry his wife through the door in order to begin a new phase of life. For the monomyth, it related much the same. Luke truly began to Cross the Threshold the moment he learned that his droid could be traced back to the farm where his family lived.

The first Threshold was the leaving of his family behind. A traumatic event caused this—directly following the refusal of the call—and Luke committed to leaving Tatooine with Obi Wan. This commitment to leaving the old and familiar behind and moving on to a new life was a mental line that had to be crossed. The first physical barrier would be passed in short time. “The adventure is always and everywhere a passage beyond the veil of the known into the unknown; the powers that watch at the boundary are dangerous; to deal with them is risky; yet for anyone with competence and courage the danger fades” (Campbell, 2008, p. 68). Luke and Obi Wan both learn they are being sought out after having arranged for passage with Han Solo. The Stormtroopers served the function as wardens to the boundary. For Luke, everything off Tatooine counted as the unknown besides Obi Wan; space, the Millennium Falcon, all was counted among the unknown, and thus to be feared. It was the competence of Obi Wan and the courage of them both that allowed the Crossing of the Threshold.

Campbell (2008) told the story of Prince Five-weapons who fought an ogre named Sticky-hair. Prince Five-weapons ended up an earlier incarnation of the Buddha and subdued the ogre. Campbell (2008) stated:

As a symbol of the world to which the five senses glue us, and which cannot be pressed aside by the action of the physical organs, protected by the five weapons of his momentary name and physical character, resorted to the unnamed, invisible six: the divine thunderbolt of the knowledge of the transcendent principle, which is beyond the phenomenal realm of names and forms. There with the situation changed. He was no longer caught, but released; for that which he now remembered himself to be is ever free. (p. 73)

As the hero answered the call, he crossed the threshold. That was what caused the situation to change, that the hero had been freed from constraint and free to act. As Luke crossed the threshold, he was no longer the boy shoved to the ground in the Cantina. He was the student of a Jedi Knight and freed of the restraints of Tatooine.

This part of the cycle of the hero was more present in Greek mythology. Specifically, “The Greeks associated it with two rocky islands of the Euxine Sea, which clashed together, drive by winds; but Jason, in the Argo, sailed between, and since that time they have stood apart” (Campbell, 2008, p. 73). Jason, the leader of the Argonauts, crossed a physical barrier in order to break the threshold. For Luke, there were no clear delineations of a line or concrete barrier to cross, but rather the metaphysical threshold of leaving home for the first time. This was the freedom he would need to grow.

Stage Five: The Belly of the Whale

In the Bible, it was Jonah who fled the call of the Lord, Jonah, who brought calamity upon the small crew of a fishing boat, and Jonah, who spent three days in the belly of the fish. Now in A New Hope, the belly of the whale for Luke was the Death Star itself. It was here that

Luke began to cross an entirely different threshold—the idea he was a hero—and emerged stronger and wiser.

It was interesting to note the fact that this part of the hero's journey seemed to have countless examples throughout the chapter focusing on this concept. The most relevant example was when Campbell (2008) wrote:

The Greek hero Herakles, pausing at Troy on his way homeward with the belt of the Queen of the Amazons, found that the city was being harassed by a monster sent against it by the sea-god Poseidon...Beautiful Hesione, the daughter of the king had just been bound by her father to the sea rocks as propitiatory sacrifice...Herakles took a dive in the throat (of the monster), cut his way out through the belly, and left the monster dead. (p. 75)

For Luke, the metaphor of the whale equated to the Death Star itself. His first encounter with this ship led to multiple stages of growth.

The first goal was just to escape the Death Star. Once learning the Princess was on board the planet destroying ship, Luke and the crew were determined to rescue Leia. If there were to be a physical belly of the whale, this would equate simply to the trash compactor. More broadly imagined, the entirety of the ship served the overall purpose of the whale. At first the only concern was escape, however, a rescue and later the destruction of the Death Star would show how far Luke had developed as hero in a brief amount of time.

Symbolically, the Belly of the Whale also referred to the rebirth of the hero. Campbell (2008) wrote:

The idea that the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth is symbolized in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale. The hero, instead of

conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died. (p. 74)

Prior to crossing the initial threshold, Luke was a boy. He was a moisture farmer with no worldly experience, little knowledge of himself or his true family, and few skills. He had now gained knowledge and a sense of purpose. Once he was nearly killed in the Cantina, and they escape on the Millennium Falcon, Luke began to process of growth as he joins the Rebellion and moves forward with the journey. However, his growth and development were accelerated on the Death Star.

After the tractor beam pulled in the Falcon, Luke, and company stumble on a plan to free the ship. As they split up, Luke and Han take over the control room. It was here that they discovered Princess Leia was on board and at that moment Luke was reborn. Rather than concern himself with just their lives, he reached a plan and brought a consensus to the rescue team. Perhaps this was due to Luke's naivety, that he would not know if a plan was possible or impossible, but Han allowed himself to be led regardless. Luke had recruited a seasoned smuggler and thief to a rescue plan and in that moment, he had become a hero. Prior to this was the buildup portion of the journey, it was here that he acted heroically for the first time.

The Initiation

The initiation phase of the hero's journey is where the most action and conflict arises. This is the point of exponential growth and development for the hero and will give the audience the full picture of what characteristics make the hero, a true hero. This phase enters in the Special world and beginning the long road of trials and tribulations for the hero of the journey.

Stage 6: The Road of Trials

Once the threshold had been crossed, Luke faced a varied set of trials. These trials persisted throughout all three films where he was the main character. These trials encompassed the physical, the mental, and the spiritual struggles and challenges to be overcome. The road of trials echoed loudly throughout the millennia. Odysseus underwent ten years of trials on her journey home to Ithaca. While Luke would not have that length of time to grow and develop, he did face a variety of challenges.

In Episode IV (Lucas, 1977), in the immediate aftermath, Luke first faced a physical trial. Obi Wan Kenobi led him through a simple practice exercise using a lightsaber. While this test was obviously for a novice, the next was much more impactful as Luke was then blindfolded and asked to perform the same simple practice exercise. Luke immediately became flustered as he was unable to deflect the laser beams and would not succeed until Obi Wan provided the advice to “stretch out with your feelings” in order to use the Force” (Lucas, 1977, 1:02:01). It was here the hero discovered, “...there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his superhuman passage” (Campbell, 2008, p.81). The physical trials would continue to the Death Star.

There are two main physical tests on the Death Star. The first was the disabling of the homing beacon, and the rescue of Princess Leia was the second. In the short trek from Tatooine to Alderaan, Luke’s confidence had clearly grown. He had no hesitation in taking command of the situation when the team had the possibility to rescue the Princess. The quick character development, the ability to grow in both stature and strength, this was a mark of the hero. Han Solo was much more seasoned and worldly at this moment, and all moments. Yet, it was Han who deferred to Luke on a hostage rescue gambit that would risk the lives of the entire crew. Han was no fool; the idea that he would have been convinced by the offer of money for rescuing

the Princess was naïve at best. Luke had shown the courage and skill. Han was ready to go to battle with him.

The apparent “death” of Obi Wan Kenobi struck Luke as a mental and emotional trial. The loss of the personified Supernatural Aid, the loss of a mentor, the loss of a father figure struck Luke in a profound way. He quickly resorted to rage and the desire to destroy as many Stormtroopers as possible. The odd overwhelming, Luke was only partially restored to calm as he heard Obi Wan’s voice in his head telling Luke to “run.” In the space of ten minutes, Luke experienced a true gamut of emotions—elation at the rescue of the princess, anger at the sacrifice of Obi Wan, and comfort at the thought of Ben still advising him. Again, the key concept of growth of the hero was paramount in the brief time on the Death Star. Yet, it was in revisiting the Death Star with the ambition to destroy that unlocked further growth.

The most important trial for Luke during *A New Hope* (Lucas, 1977) was the spiritual. For him to step into the role of a hero, he would have needed to acquire the Supernatural Aid for himself. With his mentor reduced to a ghostly presence, Luke was the last X-Wing fighter in flight capable of exploiting the lone weakness of the Death Star. Yet, while the computer targeting system stated how Luke should target, it was the voice of Obi Wan telling Luke once again to “use the Force” (Lucas, 1977, 1:55:39). Trust in the spiritual, the supernatural, and Luke would persevere despite the odds rallied against him. This was the pivotal moment of Luke’s growth in this movie. Luke was to trust in the aid he had only been able to hear whispers from, to accept the mantle of a would-be Jedi. It was here where his “senses are ‘cleaned and humbled,’ and the energies and interests ‘concentrated upon transcendental things; or in a vocabulary of a more modern turn: this is the process of dissolving, transcending, or transmuting the infantile images of our personal past’” (Campbell, 2008, p. 84). In that moment, Luke was

able to let go of physical restraints—a one in a hundred shot, the chaos of the moment with flight mates being shot down, the fear of the Death Star and unknown—and trust in the spiritual guidance and his own skills.

Stage Seven: The Meeting with the Goddess

Following the initial set of trials, Luke has met the Goddess in the guise of Princess Leia. Yet here we have a complete divergence from Campbell's work. Rather than the calm, peaceful, picturesque version of the deity, Leia was a rebel and a spy, diplomat, and warrior. It was Leia who initially escaped with the plans that would lead to the destruction of the Death Star. Leia who fired first at a Stormtrooper just prior to her capture, and Leia whose witty retorts and caustic remarks quieted Han Solo. Campbell (2008) stated:

Women, in the picture language of mythology, represents the totality of what can be known. The hero is the one who comes to know. As he progresses in the slow initiation, which is life, the form of the goddess for him undergoes a series of changes: she can never be greater than himself, though she can always promise more than he is yet capable of comprehending. She lures, she guides, she bids him to burst his fetters. (p. 97)

While certainly not the image of a nurturing Goddess, Leia is divine in her own right as a guide and true supporter of Luke's effort to move along the slow initiation of life. There was also an immediate connection between Luke and Leia that was further explored in the Empire Strikes Back. It was here that Leia was first discovered, she was Force sensitive regarding Luke. As the crew, minus Han Solo, began to flee Cloud City, it was Leia that shouted she knew where Luke was, and the Falcon needed to turn around. She sensed the exact location that Luke had fled to after learning Darth Vader was his father. In this aspect, Leia completely met the mystical nature of a goddess. To Luke, Leia was not only his sister, but also a type of goddess.

He had complete respect for Leia as a strategist as well as an ally. It was no surprise to either of them that were brother or sister. Their connection was forged in the Force and by blood. Leia would be the talisman of the Resistance in the final three movies, dictating their strategy as well as leading by example. It was Leia that trained Rey, Leia that pointed the direction that the Resistance, and Leia who sacrificed herself to give Ben Solo, her son, a chance at redemption. If divinity were earned, she would have long ago taken up the mantle. However, for purposes of the monomyth, Leia at first seemed to be the goddess based only on physical perfection. Luke certainly would become more aware of her potential as the years went by and he would see the type of woman she truly was.

In the world of science fiction, gods do not exist for the same function as mythology. While at times there are advanced beings, there was no central deity mentioned in the Star Wars movies. Leia was interpreted as the goddess based on her status as Princess Leia Organa as well as her beauty. But it would be her potential that realized her immortality. She too would become a Force ghost at the conclusion of her life.

Stage Eight: Woman as the Temptress

As Luke watched the hologram of the Princess, he commented regarding her beauty (Lucas, 1977). Leia played the role of initial temptress, and it was she who Luke strived to rescue. She was also part of the package—along with helping the Rebellion—that Obi Wan had used to persuade Luke to come with him off planet. Obviously, the loss of his adoptive parents and a mentor like Obi Wan that utilized a multi-faceted approach to enlist Luke did not hurt, but the idea of the damsel in distress was a central piece of the manipulation. The first words Luke said after seeing the malfunction was, “Who is she? She’s beautiful (Lucas, 1977, 0:21:33).” In that respect alone, she served the concept of the Temptress. Yet overall, it was an initial

superficial reaction. Down the path, Luke learned she was his sister, and Leia learned she was in love with Han Solo. However, this literal interpretation of a woman of temptation was not the true temptation for Luke to encounter and overcome.

The real Temptress for Luke during the trilogy was the dark side of the Force. While the Force is neither (or both) male and female, the idea of giving in to anger, and being reunited with his father served as the major theme in the culminating film. When Luke entered the cave of Dagobah, the dark side of the Force demonstrated a strong presence. Luke faced a simulacrum of Vader in combat. His trepidation at this was immense as the fight ensued. It was Luke that was victorious, but when he removed the mask of Vader, the face he saw was his own. This stood as a metaphor for the near Future.

The Emperor felt Luke was destined to serve him as his father did; Luke would give into sorrow and rage and become the Sith knight that Vader was not. Again, as previously mentioned, balance played a major concept throughout. Where Darth Vader gave into temptation, Luke would not. Where Darth Vader served the Emperor and the Empire, Luke fought for Leia and the Rebellion. Where Darth Vader commanded the dark side of the Force, Luke served the Light. It was only towards the very end, Darth Vader redeemed himself and saved Luke from the Palpatine. Darth Vader's reward was to see his son celebrate the end of the Empire as a Force ghost, with his old friends and mentors, Yoda and Obi Wan Kenobi.

Stage Nine: Atonement with the Father

Within the first ten minutes in *A New Hope* (Lucas, 1977), the audience was greeted with the brutality and sheer determination of Darth Vader. He did not hesitate to choke the life out of an emissary of Princess Leia or mourn the death of the entire planet of Alderaan. Though he did not realize it at the time, he used his own daughter as bait, threatened her life, and struck down

Obi Wan Kenobi. All of which was to say that he certainly classified as the ‘dark father.’ One of the more interesting themes in the initial trilogy was the search for, then reconciliation with the father. Luke had looked to multiple male figures as a father type. Naturally, his Uncle with whom Luke had lived as a farmer with and Obi Wan, who was the mysterious Jedi Knight and a general from the Clone Wars. Han Solo also bridged a gap with his jaded world view, experience as a smuggler and pilot, and ability to connect to Luke as a friend. Lastly, there was Yoda himself, the diminutive green being, with a vast knowledge of the Force, and the events that led all the players to the scene.

Luke did not come to the realization of who his father really was till Darth Vader told him—after he had cut off Luke’s hand (Lucas, 1980). Prior to the Darth’s declaration, Luke had the idea that Darth Vader had betrayed his father, a Jedi Knight like Obi Wan Kenobi. When speaking to Ben after his rescue, it was both enthusiastic and wistful when Luke asked questions about his father. Clearly, his uncle knew what had become of Anakin Skywalker as he stated he feared “Luke had too much of his father in him (Lucas, 1977, 0:25:27).” His Uncle was completely correct. Luke had an abundance of the Force within him, the talent to use it, and he was also a skilled pilot as his father was. For Luke however, the dark side was a temptation he could resist, for Darth Vader, the dark side was a force that could not be resisted. The timeline of loss and rage was far too much for Vader to bear, and he catalyzed the progression with the destruction of the children in the Jedi Temple. The following passage by Campbell (2008) has shown some of the dichotomy in the trials of both Luke and Anakin Skywalker:

It is in this ordeal that the hero may derive hope and assurance from the helpful female figure, by whose magic (pollen charms or power of intercession) he is protected through all the frightening experiences of the father’s ego-shattering initiation. For if it is

impossible to trust the terrifying father-face, the one's faith must be centered elsewhere (Spider Woman, Blessed Mother); and with that reliance for support, one endures the crisis—only to find, in the end, that the father and mother reflect each other, and in essence the same. (p. 110)

It was unfortunate that Anakin chose so poorly regarding whom his father figure would be. Instead of Obi Wan, who in the end would figure in as competition in Anakin's mind for the affection of Padme, Anakin had allowed himself to be mentored by Senator Palpatine, the Lord of the Sith. Luke was much more fortunate in his selection of a mentor. While he looked to Obi Wan as a father figure, Luke was still destroyed by the moment when Darth Vader revealed himself to be Luke's father. The climactic scene of *The Empire Strikes Back* (Lucas, 1980) was Luke denying his father. At this time, he also rejected the dark side, as one of Vader's tactics was to manipulate Luke into embracing the dark side of the Force. The "ogre father" Campbell (2008, p. 107) referred to was present in the actions of Darth Vader. This classified as an ego-shattering initiation. Not only was his world destroyed by the admission that a Sith Lord was his father, but Luke had also lost a true mentor (Obi Wan) and his own hand to his own father. At this point, Luke had to seek the wise counsel of Yoda and the ghostly presence of Obi Wan himself.

Thus, Luke centered himself elsewhere. On the planet of Dagobah, Luke came to speak to Yoda and Obi Wan to learn the truth. Luke had the fact that Vader was his father confirmed to him by his feelings and the Force, but he had to have closure for his perceived betrayal by his two mentors. Without this, there could be no atonement. The climactic scene of *The Empire Strikes Back* (Lucas, 1980) was Luke denying his father. The climactic scene of the *Return of the Jedi* was the destruction of the Empire by father and son.

A reconciliation was a huge theme that permeated the entire trilogy. Luke was always in pursuit of knowledge of who his father was to determine who Luke himself was. This was why atonement with the father was so important to both Luke and the journey of the hero. Luke did not ever feel he was a farmer like his aunt and uncle, but he did not have any concept of who he was at his core. It was here, even before Darth Vader destroyed the Emperor, that Luke felt the serenity and acceptance of his fate. If he were to die, it would not be as a kin slayer, with rage and fear in his heart, but as a Jedi Knight, who he still felt was who Darth really was. The moment was poignant and powerful; though he could have slain his father, he chose mercy. His father chose to throw the Emperor off the platform however, and it was this moment that he allowed his son to redeem him. This is the moment Luke truly connected with his father, and overcame his constant battle within himself, to know his father, and since meeting him and realizing who his father had become, saving his father. He had seen the light left inside of Anakin, and upon Anakin's death, Luke had saved him from the darkness.

Stage Ten: Apotheosis

Apotheosis, referred to as the highest point of character development, for Luke Skywalker was when he became the last Jedi and a true Jedi Knight. Recall back to Tatooine, where he made the declaration to Obi Wan, "I want to learn the ways of the force and become a Jedi" (Lucas, 1977, 0:42:40). While he was guided by Obi Wan to consider this as a possibility, Luke felt the call to be more than a farmer. With the murder of his family, Luke had no ties and could seek this future.

This began the trials that would lead to the culmination of his training as a Jedi: the complete and total rejection of the dark side of the Force and the redemption of his father. Previously, he had trained with Master Yoda on Dagobah. In this training, he was forced to

perfect the physical, the mastery over his body, to attain the perfection of the mental. This was not as simple as running a few laps and moving objects with his mind. Yoda demonstrated the impossible by lifting Luke's entire fighter out of the swamp. Had Luke not experienced Yoda's training and seen what the endless possibilities of the Force entailed, he would not have been able to face his father and the Emperor calmly, balanced, and ready for the confrontation. Luke allowed his capture in order to facilitate the rehabilitation of his father and destruction of Palpatine. The conversation in Return of the Jedi (Lucas, 1983) on the moon of Endor was noteworthy:

Luke Skywalker: I've accepted the truth that you were once Anakin Skywalker, my father.

Darth Vader: That name no longer has any meaning for me.

LS: It is the name of your true self. You've only forgotten. I know there is good in you. The Emperor hasn't driven it from you fully.

DV: Your skills are complete. Indeed, you are powerful, as the Emperor has foreseen.

Obi Wan once thought as you do. You don't know the power of the Dark Side. I must obey my master. (1:23:52)

Darth Vader fully recognized the power in his progeny as Luke recognized the conflict within Darth Vader. Later, during the same conversation, Luke said "Search your feelings, Father. I feel the conflict within you. Let go of your hate" (Lucas, 1983, 1:25:14). It never was about skill with a lightsaber for Luke to become a true Jedi. The mark of Luke as a Jedi was the reconciliation with the dark and light side of the Force and to develop the trust in himself and his own capabilities. It was this moment that encapsulated this.

First, his father acknowledged the true depths of Luke's power. It was not relative to martial prowess, but the idea that Luke found the spark of light within the Darth Vader's soul. Perhaps it was more relative to the idea that Luke gave the name Anakin Skywalker meaning. He knows there is good in him. He stated it calmly as fact, no hyperbole or elevated rhetoric. Rather than admonish him, Darth Vader chose at that point to acknowledge Luke was right by simply saying his skills were complete. However right Luke was, Darth Vader would simply obey his master and that the power of the dark side was immense.

The moment was a mirror of the events on Cloud City, where Vader had offered Luke the chance to join him and the dark side. It was Luke refusing then and paying the price in blood and emotional trauma. The balance of the situations was completed with Vader refusing. The Emperor utilized the lives of Luke's friends—his remaining family—to attempt to turn him to the dark side. The Sith Master goaded Luke and Vader into a duel to prove who would be a worthy apprentice. Yet, as Luke lost his fear and rage, it was that moment that Luke made the ultimate refusal and demonstrated the Apotheosis, "I am a Jedi Knight, like my father before me" (Lucas, 1983, 1:54:20). The anger in Palpatine was reflected in the force lightning that he threw at Luke. As Luke was being electrocuted to death, he cried out for his father. In the moment Vader picked up Palpatine, the redemption of Vader was complete. This was also the redemption of the ideals of the Jedi. Luke took his place among them.

Stage Eleven: The Ultimate Boon

While there are multiple boons in the trilogy, from the original destruction of the Death Star, the development of the skills of a Jedi, the final Ultimate Boon is the destruction of the rebuilt Death Star and death of the Sith Master, Emperor Palpatine. The fact that Luke

accomplished this through hardship was at odds with the majority of Campbell's monomyth. As he told the tale of the Prince of the Lonesome Island, Campbell (2008) remarked:

The ease with which the adventure is here accomplished signifies that the hero is a superior man, a born king. Such ease distinguishes numerous fairy tales and all legends of the deeds of incarnate gods. (p. 148)

This was a common trope throughout Greek mythology as well. Achilles was the son of King Peleus, while Odysseus was the King of Ithaca. Both were more than men. They were born into wealth and power, and their personal prowess was the stuff of heroes. Yet for our everyman, Luke, humble beginnings, and failure was the source of his greatness. Through repeated failure, Luke triumphed at the end and personally led to the destruction of the fully functional Death Star, rebuilt Death Star, and end of the Sith.

For Luke, ending the Sith was a part of the Ultimate Boon but not the only boon he received for his progress. Three events culminated into the celebration on Endor:

- 1) The redemption of Anakin Skywalker
- 2) The death of the Emperor
- 3) The destruction of the incomplete Death Star

The Road of Trials had led Luke to these victories. The grind of failure—he had been beaten directly by Darth Vader in combat—had taught him the lessons he would need to know to be victorious at the end. He had also failed Yoda and Obi Wan when he left Dagobah prior to his training being complete. The odd paradox that both parties were correct in their decision did not help on the execution side of the actions. Luke left his training to rescue his friends. He failed in this, and Han was frozen and shipped to Jabba the Hut. The lack of completed training was partially responsible for Luke losing his hand and the fight with Vader. Though more trials

would come in the newest trilogy, it was here that Luke achieved balance in the Force. It was within these three acts that Luke redeemed the Skywalker family. Initially, Anakin was meant to be the Chosen One. Catastrophically, he embraced the dark side of the Force and became Lord Vader. This led to the destruction of the Jedi and rise of the Empire. Luke ended up as the fulcrum the Force needed and not only did, he chooses the light, but he also turned his father from the dark side of the Force.

The Return

Following the Ultimate Boon, one would think it would be the end for the journey of the hero; however, according to Campbell's work, this is its own beginning in a way. The hero must now face the stages of the Return. This typically involves a new set of dangerous places and tasks and face the consequences of what actions were taking to pass through the Departure or Separation and Initiation phases. The Return also has the conflict for the hero to return to the Mundane or find and keep the peace or prosperity found in the Special World. The Star Wars hero, Luke Skywalker, decided first to stay in this Special World and hide away; however, his story was not over.

Stage Twelve: Refusal of the Return

The continuation of the Skywalker saga in *The Force Awakens* (Lucas, 2015), led to Luke's hesitation to rejoin the world. Kylo Ren, the son of Han Solo and Leia Solo, had turned to the path of darkness. He was one of the students that Luke had undertook to train in the ways of the Jedi. Detached largely from the galaxy and the events that were transpiring, Luke sought to rebuild the Jedi Order. Throughout the film, Ren was consumed with becoming the next Darth Vader. In Luke's heart, this constituted a crippling failure, and again, he was the final Jedi. He sought isolation to the extreme, becoming a whisper and a dot on a two-part map. His closest

friends, Han and Leia had not felt him responsible for the failure, but Luke wore it as a scarlet letter, nonetheless. When he was needed, Luke simply was not there. Campbell (2008) revealed in the beginning chapter of the Return:

When the hero-quest has been accomplished, through penetration to the source, or through the grace of some male or female, human or animal personification, the adventurer still must return with his life-transmuting trophy. The full round, the norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess back in the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds. (p. 167).

Campbell (2008) added, “But the responsibility has been frequently refused” (p. 167).

The Return of the Jedi ended with Luke celebrating with his friends, the Force Ghosts of his mentors and father watching (Lucas, 1983). The timeline gap between the Return of the Jedi and The Force Awakens revealed the failure and the return to the normal world of humanity. Luke had sought the Jedi secrets in the interim and failed in his mentorship of a new foundation of the Jedi Order. Kylo Ren, birth name Ben Solo, had been named after Luke’s first mentor, but he would fail to meet the standard of the Jedi and ended up destroying the Jedi Order. At this, Luke simply gave up, retired to an island completely off the wayward path and turned to bitterness and despair. It was a droid, ironically, that held the piece to the puzzle that enabled Luke to be located and rejoin the world. It would be another prospective student that would brave the unknown to find him. When Rey had initially looked for Master Skywalker, she was under the impression he would be willing to fight and lead the Resistance. She certainly did not expect to find a bitter aging man that wanted no place in society.

The end of the Force Awakens came as Luke and Rey stare at each other. The tension rose much like the waves crashing on the cliffs of the island. That was how the first film in the new trilogy ended, the refusal to have any part of returning in his eyes. Rey persisted and at first at least convinced him to begin her training.

The ultimate refusal from Luke to be a part of events and society was shutting himself off from the Force. He was a Jedi Master, brought balance to the Force, and now had refused to use it for an unknown amount of time. He had isolated himself from humanity and his past.

Stage Thirteen: The Magic Flight

This was the second stage that does not truly mesh with the Star Wars cinematography. While Luke has fled all of mankind to die by himself, this was more of a calculated move so that the Jedi Order would also die with him. He discussed his hubris with Rey, that he could have kept the dark side at bay for his students, particularly Ben, but does not discuss how he arrived at this island. The monomyth discussed the flight in different myths as potentially comical, depending on “if the hero’s wish to return to the world has been resented by the gods or demons...This flight may be complicated by marvels of magical obstruction and evasion” (Campbell, 2008, p. 170). The Star Wars universe was more influenced by science fictions versus traditional Greek mythology. While there were no gods mentioned, the Jedi and Sith were closest as certain abilities they possessed would seem godlike. All the galaxy has been looking for Luke at various intervals, yet no one had been able to locate him. Luke had hidden his X Wing fighter on the island at a previous time period, but he did not utilize it to leave the temple. The concept of a Magic Flight immediately recalled Perseus and Medusa. In this tale of Greek mythology, Perseus was the son of Zeus and Danae. This would be a familiar refrain in Greek myths—that a child would be more than a man but less than a god. He would grow up

strong and brave and eventually accepted the quest to retrieve the head of the Gorgon Medusa. On the way to find the location of Medusa, Perseus was gifted the sandals of Hermes that enabled him to fly. Once victories over Medusa, Perseus utilized the gift to fly home. Now while this was as straightforward as a symbolic magical flight, there did not exist anything to match it in the Star Wars film that also coincided with the chronological growth of Luke as a hero.

Even discounting the arc of Luke, George Lucas did not work into the script the story of a magical flight. Han Solo made his flights based on skill versus the concept of the supernatural or magical. All the pilots featured in any of the movies did not at any time hint at a magic flight that would lead to discovery, revelation, or the next stage in the hero's journey.

Stage Fourteen: Rescue from Without

Of all the individual pieces of the Return, Rescue from Without figured prominently in Luke's story arc. At various points, Luke has been rescued by Obi Wan, Han Solo, Darth Vader, Yoda, and lastly Rey. In the timeline of the journey of the hero, the rescue by Yoda and Rey were the most pivotal. This is the final motivation to transcend Luke to complete, successfully, his hero's journey.

Luke admitted to Rey that he had come to the island to die and that it was time for the Jedi Order religion to cease. Yet, Rey also sparked an interest of life in him, a passionate response to her request that he train her, that he assists her in finding her place in "all this" (Lucas, 2017, 1:01:44). Luke had fled with his failure with Ben Solo. Campbell (2008) wrote, "The hero may have to be brought back from his supernatural adventure by assistance from without. That is to say, the world may have to come and get him" (p. 178). Luke was at the time knee deep in self-pity and at a remote Jedi temple to further his understanding of their ways.

Joseph Campbell (2008) also noted “And yet, in so far as one is alive, life will call. Society is jealous of those who remain away from it and will come knocking at the door” (p. 178). For Luke, this could not have been truer. Despite being light years away from the center of the events in the Resistance and a borderline myth, society in the form of Rey came calling. Rey was rebuffed at several junctures by Master Skywalker, yet in the end her persistence, passion, and need overweighed Luke’s desire for isolation and the fall of the last Jedi.

He began by teaching Rey the rudiments of the Force by defining the Force. The initial lesson began with sarcasm and toxicity, but the first lesson ended with Luke having recognized the organic power within Rey. He saw her potential but also her proclivity for the dark side of the Force. Luke became completely alarmed as Rey reached out with the Force and did not hesitate to reach into the dark side. She had no caution or fear of the dark side at all. This was not a reflection of her bond with Kylo, but she was still looking for “Someone to show [her] place in all this” (Lucas, 2017, 1:01:44). At the end of this lesson, she did not feel anything from Luke at all. Despite the fact, he was a Master Jedi, Rey could feel the cycle and balance of life growing and decay feeding the growth. But from Luke, she felt nothing. He had turned himself completely off from the Force. As subsequent lessons forward, Luke becomes more engaged with Rey. The climactic scene was the moment Luke turned himself back on to the Force in order to defend himself from Rey. The skill, talent, and passion both expressed helped to bring Luke back from the despair he had always previously expressed. The fight began with Rey confronting Luke regarding the truth about Kylo Ren, it eventually ended with Luke confessing his failure. A mirror image of Luke, she also left to help another person, as Luke did when leaving Yoda on Dagobah to save his friends. This moment, however, was not as cathartic as it may seem like it should be. Catharsis did not come till he saw his Master, Yoda.

In the initial address to Luke in *The Last Jedi*, Yoda referred to him as “Young Skywalker” (Lucas, 2017, 1:21:19). This was done fondly, but also still the Master to his student. Indeed, Yoda was there to fully bring him back and to teach him a valuable lesson as portrayed in the following conversation during *The Last Jedi* (Lucas, 2017):

Luke Skywalker: I'm ending all of this. The tree, the text, the Jedi. I'm going to burn it down.

Yoda: Hmm. Ah, Skywalker, missed you, have I.

Luke Skywalker: So it is time for the Jedi Order to end.

Yoda: Time it is. For you to look at a pile of old books, hmmm?

Luke Skywalker: The sacred Jedi texts!

Yoda: Oh. Read them, have you?

Luke Skywalker: Well, I...

Yoda: Page-turners they were not. Yes, yes, yes. Wisdom they held, but that library contained nothing that the girl Rey does not already possess. Skywalker, still looking to the horizon. Never here, now, hmmm? The need in front of your nose. Hmmm?

Luke Skywalker: I was weak. Unwise.

Yoda: Lost Ben Solo, you did. Lose Rey, we must not.

Luke Skywalker: I can't be what she needs me to be.

Yoda: Heeded my words not, did you? Pass on what you have learned. Strength, mastery.

But weakness, folly, failure, also. Yes, failure most of all. The greatest teacher, failure is.

Luke, we are what they grow beyond. That is the true burden of all masters (1:21:24)

The exact right words at the precise moment they were needed most—a Rescue from Without—by Master Yoda himself rescued Luke from his despair. This pushed Luke in the direction he

needed to go to salvage the Resistance as well as save what would become the last Jedi. “Lose Rey, we must not” (Lucas, 2017, 1:23:22) was the only goal or plan that mattered. Much as Luke was at one point the focal pivot of the Jedi, that role now belonged to Rey. As a Jedi Master, Luke should have been able to see his purpose clearly. He had been blinded by his failure and it was only through the intervention of Yoda was he able to look beyond his mistakes and look towards a future.

Stage Fifteen: The Crossing of the Return Threshold

After the masterclass lesson in the Last Jedi (Lucas, 2017) by Yoda, Luke crosses the threshold for the second time. As the Resistance transport ships are being shot down by the First Order, Rey and Kylo are engulfed in a battle over the lightsaber of Luke Skywalker. Having dispatched the Supreme Leader Snoke, Kylo assumed command of the First Order. The rebels would seek to by time that their galaxy wide plea for help would be answered. Individual speeders sought to destroy the battering ram cannon the First Order brought to bear on the allied base. With the gate being destroyed, and as the dark seemed set to overwhelm and obliterate the least vestige of the Resistance, Master Luke Skywalker would cross the return threshold.

Luke presented himself to Leia and acknowledged his failure to Ben Solo, and also stated that he was there to face Solo. The entire rebel army watched in silence and awe as the man walked through fire to face the entire army of the First Order. Therein lied a physical threshold that the audience saw. “The two worlds, the divine and the human, can be pictured only as distinct from each other—different as life and death, as day and night. The hero adventures out of the land we know into darkness; there accomplishes his adventure, or again is simply lost to us, imprisoned, or in danger; and his return is described as a coming back out of that yonder

zone” (Campbell 2008, p. 188). The threshold of the unknown was exactly what Luke walked into as he passed the doorway that was on fire.

As Kylo saw Luke, he ordered every gun in the army to fire upon Luke Skywalker. After the smoke cleared, Luke, still present, began his march towards Ben Solo. Solo began his descent from the ship. While not a physical construct of Luke’s threshold, this represented a partial ascent from the hell of his failure of teaching Ben Solo. The denouement of this scene ended in a mirrored fashion from *A New Hope* with Luke paralleling Obi Wan, “Strike me down in anger and I will always be with you” (Lucas, 2017, 2:17:19) brings together the power of the Force and the ability to remain present even when the physical body is no more that Obi Wan eluded to. As Kylo ran him through, he discovered it was merely a Force projection of Luke, and Luke had stalled the entire army of the First Order himself so the Resistance could escape. In a twist, Luke both accomplished his adventure but at the same time the image of a robe floating in the wind allowed a momentarily feeling that Luke was lost to us. He had become an advanced state of being, leading forward in the Hero’s Journey as he achieved this presence in both worlds.

Stage Sixteen: Master of the Two Worlds

The Crossing of The Return Threshold was also what triggered Luke becoming the Master of The Worlds, and finally achieve complete balance between the Mundane world and the Force. As Luke committed to the stratagem of a Force projection in the battle with Kylo (Lucas, 2017), he ultimately committed to the end of his physical form on the island. The manifestation of a Force ghost as previously been performed by the Jedi Knights, Obi Wan Kenobi, Yoda, Anakin, and Luke Skywalker, was the highest stage of being for the Jedi. This enabled them to manipulate the physical world and also gave them “Freedom to pass back and forth across the world division, from the perspective of the apparitions of time to that of casual

deep and back—not contaminating the principles of the one with those of the other yet permitting the mind to know the one by virtue of the other—is the talent of the master” (Campbell, 2008, p. 205). Master Luke Skywalker demonstrated his mastery of the Force through various continued trials. Campbell (2008) quoted the Bible: “Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (p. 205). Campbell (2008) followed that with: He followed that with:

The Meaning is very clear; it is the meaning of all religious practice. The individual, through prolonged psychological disciplines, gives up completely all attachment to his personal limitations, idiosyncrasies, hopes and fears, no longer resists the self-annihilation that is prerequisite to rebirth in the realization of truth, and so becomes ripe, at least, for the great at-one-ment. His personal ambitions being totally dissolved, he no longer tries to live but willingly relaxes to whatever may come to pass in him; he becomes an anonymity (p. 205).

Essentially, Luke first mastered the psychologic disciplines to bend the Force to his will. Secondly, he willingly entered a state that would consume his life force, which will lead him into the final phase of the cycle, freedom to live as well. He had no fear of the end results, his ambitions were for the resistance and his sister, not himself. The concept of the Force ghost was the idea that Luke was finally at one with the Force. His Jedi robe floated on the wind in a final moment of peaceful ideology. That Luke had no concern for his next adventure. In this final form, there was no room for fear, anger, or regret. As his energy dissipated and Rey felt this occur, she states she did not feel agony or despair, but rather “peace and purpose.”

He had previously demonstrated a mastery of the normal world by having first saved the Rebellion and later saving the Resistance. As a leader in the Rebellion, Luke still managed to

complete Jedi training. He was also the X Wing pilot that was capable enough to destroy the fully function Death Star with a single shot. In the final combat scene with Lord Vader (Connolly & Lucas, 2019), Luke demonstrated just how far he had come with a lightsaber. Vader was by all accounts extremely skilled at the usage of a lightsaber, and previously had defeated both Luke at Cloud City, and Obi Wan aboard the Death Star. Luke cut the arm of Vader off, balancing out the previous defeat where Vader cut Luke's own hand off. While the Emperor watched, Luke defeated Vader and stood over him. As he mastered his own temper, and found the control of a Jedi, Luke allowed Lord Vader to live.

Chapter Seventeen: Freedom to Live

In the end, freedom to live was exactly what Luke had sought: peace and purpose within himself and his spot in the universe, the ultimate balance within the Force and the universe. Luke began as a boy seeking adventure, seeking knowledge of himself and his father. Through this, he gathered a mentor and friend in Obi Wan, a friend in Han Solo, a true master in Yoda, and a family in Leia and Anakin. While part of his purpose was to balance the Force and what Anakin had done in becoming Darth Vader, an equal part of Luke's purpose was to redeem himself, coming full circle in Star Wars: Episode VIII (Lucas, 2017). It was not the dark side of the Force that needed redeeming. Instead, it was the hubris of pride and the despair of failure that led the way to peace and purpose.

The hubris of pride was what forcibly pushed Ben Solo to the dark side. In his hubris, Luke had decided only he could make the decision that Ben would not be allowed to even have the option to choose the dark side of the Force. Luke had sensed the darkness in Ben and decided to act rather than give Ben his own freedom to live and choose. It was in that moment of shame that Ben awoke, Luke with lightsaber in hand, and fought back, destroying Luke's

training academy and killing what students he could not recruit. The despair was palpable when Luke described his failure with Ben Solo. In the facing of Ben Solo, Luke provided himself the cathartic moment and rescued the hope of the Jedi, Rey.

Luke demonstrated the freedom to live in mirroring the act of Yoda in *The Empire Strikes Back*. It was Luke showing Rey the impossible when—as a Force ghost—Luke levitated his old X Wing fighter out of the waters for Rey to fly to her final confrontation. This moment represented the idea that as Master of both the physical and the mystical, Luke was free to assist those in need, but remain apart as he needed. He ensured Rey knew that she represented the entirety of the Jedi, and that she would need this strength. In all these actions, he had become her Yoda. As much as the Jedi represent the heroic, the cycle often mirrored and repeated acts from previous films. Where Obi Wan was set free from physical constraints by violence, Luke was set free of physical constraints by overextending himself. They were both committing these acts as a sacrifice so that others may yet live. Luke gave up his physical presence in order to stall Kylo Ren, who had already declared there would be “No quarter. No prisoners,” to his General (Lucas, 2017, 2:06:33). Had this occurred, the Resistance would have been crushed.

The lack of a physical body was symbolic to the true freedom to live. As part of the Force, Luke was connected to the energy that all living beings shared. His mastery of the Jedi knowledge and concern for Leia and Rey led him to his own redemption. A final boon was being reunited with the Force ghost of Leia. The siblings had been split since birth for their protection. The Skywalker bloodline would be valuable to the enemies of the Jedi. Yet, the final seen of the *Rise of Skywalker* showed Rey burying the lightsabers of Luke and Leia together. It was here that Rey claimed the last name of Skywalker while the twins approved from a distance. The freedom to live allowed Luke to be there at that moment. “The hero is the champion of

things becoming, not of things become, because he is. ‘Before Abraham was, I am.’ He does not mistake apparent changelessness in time for the permanence of Being, nor is he fearful of the next moment (or of the ‘other thing’) as destroying the permanent with its change” (Campbell, 2008, p. 209). With this passage, this touched on the concept that Luke was free to live and act on the moment. With trials and the lesson from Yoda, Luke was no longer afraid of what would come next. He was no longer trapped by the paralyzing despair at the end of the Jedi due to his actions. Ultimately, the freedom to act without fear led Luke to the freedom to live.

Conclusion

The monomyth was a concept developed by Campbell (2008) as a way to explain the constant story that was related throughout history in all cultures, the story of the hero’s journey. What was the appeal in defining the monomyth? The book, *A Hero with a Thousand Faces*, showed the cycle that a hero goes through on his way to become a hero. Therein lied the appeal, we cherish the ancient tropes of the hero because we can either identify with the hero or “Perhaps it is because heroic, mythic stories with their supernatural, fantastic, uncanny elements give a taste of the sacred” (Vogler, 2017, p. 18). Vogler (2017) went on to say:

A myth presents a blazing example of the ideal—a god perfectly embodying a quality, as Athena embodies wisdom and Dionysus embodies passion, or a hero representing the highest potential of the human race, like Odysseus or Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. They offer us something highly refined to compare ourselves to. We perceive the world through metaphors, and heroic stories give us vivid, inspiring models on which to project our own behavior (p. 18).

Stories of heroes have moved as human beings for centuries.

George Lucas was an avid fan of Joseph Campbell. As Vogler pointed out “Lucas had encountered Campbell’s monomyth concept as he was thinking up his fantasy saga and incorporated many of its elements into his design” (Vogler, 2017, p. 11). Lucas personally believed “that Star Wars is such a popular saga because it taps into a timeless story-structure which has existed for thousands of years” (Permenter, 2002, p. 1). Various authors have written to the effect that the entirety of the monomyth was featured in, *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*. In Palumbo’s *The Monomyth in American Science Fiction Films* (2014, p. 16), he stated, “...having seen only the first movie, does claim all three stages of the monomyth are enacted in *A New Hope*, but as demonstrated below, it is actually the case that the full pattern of the monomyth is only developed throughout all three films of the initial trilogy”. As this was written well before the final trilogy, a truer representation of the cycle for Luke Skywalker begins with *A New Hope* and ends with the *Rise of Skywalker*.

When Obi Wan gave Luke the equivalent of “I’m too old for this” the requisite for the Call of the Adventure had been met. There was the potential for war on the horizon, the rescue of a beautiful damsel in distress, and the hint of knowledge that Obi Wan knew more of Luke’s father than Obi Wan was telling Luke. The Refusal of the Call was also straightforward. Luke initially refused Obi Wan’s request. Much as in Greek mythology, this was met with disaster—Luke’s entire adoptive family was slaughtered at the moisture farm. Free from all bonds, Luke received the aid of Kenobi as a Jedi Knight and began Luke’s training. This constituted the Supernatural Aid of the third stage of the Departure chapter. Kenobi also led Luke into The Crossing of the First Threshold. It was on the Millennium Falcon that Luke left Tatooine for the first time. He would be reborn on the through the Belly of the Whale as he entered the Death Star, escaped with the Princess and the plans to destroy the Death Star.

The first chapter that Campbell named the Departure was met by the journey of Luke Skywalker. The entirety of the criteria was met in the first film, A New Hope. However, there were several divergent paths in the second set of stages. The Road of Trials was met consistently. Overall, the feel to the Road of Trials in a film must be constant in order to keep attention focused and plot moving from A to B. Luke has a Meeting with the Goddess in Princess Leia, but she does not serve as the main temptress in the films for Luke Skywalker. For him, the focus to be tempted with was the dark side of the Force. It was here we see our first true contrast within the work of Campbell and Lucas. Once the revelation that Luke and Leia were siblings, this dichotomy made complete sense.

Perhaps the most pivotal motif in all three of the initial films was Atonement with the Father. For Luke, the lack of knowledge of who and what his father was caused look to doubt who and what he was. For instance, Luke, despite his bloodlines, was not confident in using his Force abilities training with both Obi Wan Kenobi and Master Yoda. When he initially went to train on Dagobah with Master Yoda, the imagery and symbolic nature of the cave Luke descended into was brought into focus as Luke saw himself as Vader. The son becoming the father was presented in graphic nature—this was also a giant fear of Luke. The next stage, Apotheosis, was met as Luke developed his powers with Yoda. This culminated with Luke both sensing the good in and redeeming his father. These acts had shown Luke was much greater than the common man as well as the average Jedi. In destroying the Death Star, defeating Darth Sidious, and turning Vader from the dark side, Luke achieved The Ultimate Boon. Any of the three victories would have been considered a huge triumph, but the defeat of the Emperor at the hands of his redeemed father felt as total of a boon as possible. In the achievement of these

goals, Luke had brought balance to the Force and righted what had gone wrong with Anakin Skywalker.

When discussing the third and final chapter, Return, there are six total stages. The first stage, Refusal of the Return was basic in the sense that Luke had no interest in returning to the normal world. Society, however, sought him out in the form of Rey. She would ignite the passion and responsibility in Luke. While there was no true Magic Flight in this timeline, the Rescue from Without occurred two-fold. First, there was Rey engaging Luke to train and teach her the ways of the Jedi, but also Yoda returning as a Force ghost in order push Luke to learn from his failures. Luke next showed up at the Resistance base in order to apologize to Leia and confront Kylo Ren. While this was part of the Crossing of the Return Threshold, the physical image of him stepping through a doorway caught on fire led directly to the confrontation Luke both feared and desired. In the end, it was a Force projection that left Luke's life force drained. However, he had mastered the skill of the Force ghost. Luke had mastered both the mystical and the physical as he transitioned to his next status. This also was part of the Freedom to Live. It was in this state that he was able to affect events in the physical presents without restraint.

Overall, the monomyth fit the character development of Luke Skywalker. On a few instances, there was a difference between imagery and symbolism—the Woman as a Temptress versus the Force as a Temptress—or the lack of a Magic Flight. And even as such, depending on interpretation of what is meant, the Star Wars story can fit into each section of the stages. Yet, there was a discernable feel that Luke Skywalker was destined for greatness. Both the Emperor and Obi Wan had told Luke to meet his destiny. At first Luke was merely a farm boy. But he walked into his fate with his eyes opened, walked into the confrontation with both his father and

Emperor confident in himself and his abilities. No longer a farm boy, he was a true Jedi Knight, a true hero.

Archetypes were heavily utilized in both Star Wars and in mythology. From the villain to the hero (Vader and Luke), the outlaw and the mentor (Han Solo and Obi Wan Kenobi) multiple characters matched up to stereotypical roles. This common appeal was exactly why there was such an idea as the monomyth—that the stories featuring right versus wrong, good versus evil, balance, and characters overcoming the odds—would never fade in appeal. The first Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope was released May 25, 1977. The Iliad by Homer was never originally published but rather passed down orally. Yet through cinema and literature, most people would be aware of who Luke Skywalker or Darth Vader was, as well as who Achilles and Helen of Troy was. Even today, the appeal of Star Wars has translated into multiple movies, books, and television shows. It all began with distress signal that a boy would eventually find, and a journey that lasted for over nine films. The entirety of the nine episodes was to tell the tell of the Skywalker clan. It was Luke who would walk the journey of the hero.

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