

Force Academy
Light Aspect's
Course on
“The Force”

By Various Members

Finding “the Force” Outside of Star Wars

By Alethea “Setanaoko” Thompson

It is not surprising that many people who first hear about Jediism, react with ridicule. One of the primary reasons for doing so, is that we take the name from a movie that has some rather unrealistic attributes to it-i.e. "the Force". "The Force" is often a discussion I find myself in, when one discovers my religion. If it happens to me, then I know it happens to you. So how do you combat everything someone comes at you with when you talk about "the Force"? A percentage of you probably shy away from the subject. The rest of us will hone in on the idea of Chi, and explain it from there.

Unfortunately, that hasn't seemed to get through to people. Because the next question I'm faced with is: Why not call yourself a Taoist? What I have found, is that giving more than one example of the Force found in the world, tends to get people to take you more seriously. Therefore, the object of this article, is to educate you on some of the incarnations of "the Force" throughout history.

Energy

This is the scientific term. Energy is the basis for all things, it is an impartial, unquantifiable concept. Science can show the results of energy, but not the energy itself.

According to the famous equation, $Energy = (Mass \times Speed\ of\ Light)^2$ ($E=MC^2$). Looking further into scientific “laws”, we learn that Mass and Energy can neither be created nor destroyed (Einstein’s Law of Conservation of Mass and Energy), instead they simply transform into one another. Visually, mass manifests as matter. This fits in with the vague definition of “the Force” outlined in the Star Wars movies.

Ashe

Ashe is the Yoruba term for the energy which encompasses all things-living, dead, animate, inanimate. At the beginning of creation, everything was empowered with Ashe. It is by this empowerment, that Olorun(the god of the Yoruba) is able to monitor everything within the infinite cosmos. It binds everything together.

Because of Ashe, Olorun is able to "split" himself up so as to provide mediators between humans and himself. Much the same concept as Catholics praying to Saints and the Angels. Through the ashe, these anthropomorphic entities (known as orishas) keep the cosmos operating smoothly.

Olorisha are individuals who are skilled in manipulating ashe and working with orisha for purposes of healing (physical, mental and spiritual). Ashe can be used for other things, however it is important to note that ashe has a karmatic effect.

Teotl

South American natives had an interesting word when Cortes and his men arrived, and for years the term was misinterpreted as "god" or "lord". Teotl is a supernatural energy source which acts as a super-computer for the cosmos. It is present in every little detail that exists, and it continues to create and mandate the universe. In accordance with Aztec belief, teotl cannot be exhausted by any single, existing thing. It is a constant "circle of life" which holds no concept of what is good or evil.

Magick

Although this isn't the preferred method of spelling the word, I use it to discern the difference between "parlor tricks" and the pagan views of magic. Magick usually refers to the practice of ritual and spells, however talking with the pagan community, I have come to realize it is much more than

this. It describes an energy force that is constantly around us. It is in more concentration of select objects than others. Usually by having a charge placed upon the object itself (i.e. talismans and charms).

The energy's purpose is also varied. For example, it is held that a Tiger's Eye provides protection, whereas Malachite is used for healing. If you attempt to charge a stone for a purpose other than what it is meant (i.e. charge a Tiger's Eye for healing purposes) the item will not be as effective as either what it is intended for (protection stone) or what you have charged it to do (healing stone). On the same note, there are different dieties which control the energy fields. Unlike Ashe, or Teotl, however, these entities are not part of magick. Rather they are dieties which control magick in it's various forms.

Abrahamic Traditions

Abrahamic religions include Judaism, Christianity, Islam. Although there is no formal term in the Bible to represent an idea of "the Force", these religions all have certain elements that suggest there is a "Force" within their beliefs. One story that is common to all these religions is the story regarding Israel being freed from Egyptian captivity.

As the story goes, Moses was asked by God to be his representative to Pharaoh. When this mission was given to Moses, he went to his brother Aaron to assist him in communicating the importance of God's command. The first time Moses and Aaron came upon Pharaoh to demand that he "Let My People go," Pharaoh demanded a miracle be shown unto him. Aaron cast down his rod and it became a serpent. To prove that these were mere tricks that could be replicated, Pharaoh had his own magicians cast rods before the court. Aaron's serpent swallowed theirs and then returned to the form of a rod. The magicians would be able to duplicate the red river, mass appearance of frogs and nothing further. It was agreed that God was the only one who could have produced the other four miracles.

After showing Pharaoh, his sorcerers and Israel the might of God, Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. However, Pharaoh changed his mind. He and his soldiers chased after the Israelites until they reached the Red Sea. Here, Moses was commanded by God to part the waters so as to allow safe passage for the Israelites, with his staff. Once the Israelites were safely across, the waters collapsed together and caused the Pharaoh and his soldiers to drown.

•Note: It is important to note that Aaron and Moses are not the only ones that were able to produce miracles. This suggests that "the Force" is available to all for use. In this respect, you can have good and evil actions that employ the use of "the Force". In accordance with Abrahamic traditions, however, God is the strongest influence you can have. If you have him backing you, then your opponent's power is highly limited. From here, you can derive the ideas of "light" and "dark" uses of "the Force" as being intent rather than an actual side to the Force.

I have given you only a couple of words that embody "the Force" throughout the various theologies of our world. It is my hope, that you will challenge yourself in finding other terms that fulfill that role. The more educated you are on the subject, the less likely someone is to challenge your beliefs.

What is The Force

By Jasta T'Kara

"The Force is what gives a Jedi his power. It's an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together." - Obi Wan Kenobi, A New Hope

It was a good enough explanation for Luke Skywalker, and for each of member of the audience listening back in 1977. But we do live in a different world now - a world in which doors really can open automatically, and in which information can be accessed, downloaded and transmitted continuously from every corner of the world. With all of us so familiar to concepts such as "chi" and "god", it is so easy to cram the Force into any one of these concepts, wrap it up, and say: There you go. This is the Force.

"Without the midi-chlorians life could not exist, and we would have no knowledge of the Force. They continually speak to us, telling us the will of the Force." - Qui-Gon Jinn, The Phantom Menace.

Fans were not impressed with the 1999 release of the Phantom Menace - and it's half-hearted attempt to explain the Force a little further to the ever-curious crowds. Overnight, this great source of energy went from being something accessible, something tangible, to something almost entirely fictional. In today's Jedi Community, it is considered almost exclusively that - pure fiction. But what if it isn't?

Let's skip the opening line of Obi-Wan's original quote, and concentrate on the second. "An energy field, created by all living things."

All life produces energy. When the sun shines upon a leaf on a tree, the chemical reaction that takes place (photosynthesis) converts the sun's warmth to an energy that enables the plant to sustain life. A human being moving to open a door produces kinetic (movement) energy. The warmth generated by the blood in their veins, their pressure on the handle - it all produces energy. Simply breathing, we are generating energy. The very process of cell division creates energy. So how far fetched is Obi-Wan's theory? All life produces energy. The concept that, collectively, it might become an actual "field" is more than possible.

Nowadays, we take it as scientific fact that every piece of solid furniture around is made up of millions of molecules, all of which are held in place by magnetic fields, generated by the opposite and like polarities of the individual atoms. Densely packed molecules form such things as rock, and concrete - less densely packed molecules form liquids, and some even float around in the air that we breathe. Imagine, for a moment, the concept of many tiny oxygen bubbles being "breathed out" of the pores on a tree's leaf, floating around in the air. Now just imagine that the energy that was used in the photosynthesis process also being "breathed out" to float around with it. Imagine every living creature, giving off that same respiratory energy. Suddenly we find ourselves surrounded in it, swimming in these bubbles, breathing them in and out - and that's just from the energy generated by breathing. Think again of all the energy a human being produces -the electrical energy of impulses in your brain, of messages being passed along your nervous system every time you make contact with anything. "It surrounds us and penetrates us". One who is in tune with these subtle energies could certainly be seen as possessing certain powers, such as "sensing" a physical presence, or sensing a death that happens miles away. A deep, profound understanding of these energies could certainly lead to their full manipulation - including such things as using it to open doors and pull out seats.

This concept is simple enough to understand. The main question most people have, once understanding the basic structure of how the Force might exist, is then: What about the will of the Force?

"Remember, a Jedi can feel the Force flowing through him." "You mean it controls your actions?" "Partially. But it also obeys your commands." Obi-Wan and Luke, A New Hope

The Jedi, as depicted in the prequels, spent their entire lives training to reach an understanding

of the Force. From early childhood, throughout their adolescent years, it was the focal point of all their studies.

When it comes to "control", we must remember Obi-Wan's reply: "Partially". But let's think on that logically for a second.

Imagine a mind so open to the intrinsic energies floating in the air, that you can "see" them. Imagine being able to see the Force, seeing it penetrating you and everything around you. Now imagine that an entity came out of nowhere - say, to attack. Deeply entrenched in the energies of the universe around you, of course you would see it coming, long before anyone else. Of course you would respond with an impossibly quick reflex - and if it was asked of you, what would you say? "I saw it in the Force", or - "The Force told me".

This goes a long way to explaining Qui-Gon's answer to Anakin, in the Phantom Menace. "They continually speak to us, telling us the will of the Force." Bear in mind that Qui-Gon is attempting to explain molecular energy fields to a nine year old. Although Anakin at this point has proven himself an extraordinarily capable engineer, and extremely talented in the Force itself, at this point in his young life it is safe to assume no one has spoken to him about invisible energies binding the universe together. He is unaware of the Force - he knows that his reflexes are good, but he doesn't know why. Explaining to him that the Force "tells" him what is going to happen before it does, is a child-friendly way to ease a new person into a world in which they are not alone.

"Master, sir... I've been wondering... what are midi-chlorians?" "Midi-chlorians are a microscopic life form that reside within all living cells and communicates with the Force." "They live inside of me?" "In your cells. We are symbionts with the midi-chlorians."

The fiction does stumble here. Of course there is no such thing as midi-chlorians, basic cellular structure of living organisms is something taught in pre-school nowadays. However, we do know of the nucleus - let's examine that for a moment.

The nucleus is described very often as being the "center" of a cell - or even it's "brain". It is the nucleus that contains our DNA - the very molecules that built us - and it is the nucleus that enables the cell multiplication process. If the nucleus itself is where our molecular life is stored, where our cellular lives consistently die and begin - could it perhaps be the nuclei of our cells that produce that connection to the Force? We have already established that all life produces the energy that makes up the Force. Looking at life in it's microscopic terms, here we have the center of it. It may not be a microscopic life form that lives in our skin and whispers in our ear - but it is certainly alive, and present in each and every one of our cells. Is it feasible to assume that the Force itself is generated within the nucleus of each cell? And to then say, "The Force speaks to us through our own cells, through our own bodies."?

Of course, to look at it from the point of view that Qui-Gon states we are "symbionts" with these life-forms, one could also examine the fact that our skin, our air, our kitchen surfaces are all covered in millions of microscopic life-forms. It has been estimated that approximately 95% of cells existing within the human body may actually be bacteria cells. These bacteria are what make our digestive system work well, or protect us from certain diseases - they would die without us, and we would die without them. Thus we fulfill our symbiont cycle. Now, as to whether or not millions of microscopic bacteria are "talking" to us - well, it does sound far-fetched. Let us return again to the concept that being aware of the Force, and all the energies of life, is akin to being "told" things by the Force. Now contemplate exactly how much life you are walking around with inside your intestines alone. I imagine, if one could learn so deep an understanding of this life, and our symbiotic existence with it, that

eventually you would feel it "in your cells" - or as we more commonly say, "in our bones". It would be as if your body itself was telling you all you needed to know.

"They continually speak to you, telling you the will of the Force".

The Phantom Menace also introduced this novel idea - that the Force had a will and agenda of its own, implying a new sentience to this energy that had not been brought up previously. The most common analogies were instantly drawn up, comparing "God" to the Force, and stating that they were one and the same - however, Lucas himself admits that he drew inspiration for the Force from an ideal beyond God, an ideal that humans are, as of yet, unable to comprehend.

"Many people... become aware of some kind of force, or something, behind this apparent mask which we see in front of us, and they call it God." - 21-87

"Calling" it God suggests a definite implication that we have no better word for it, so what better than one we have been using for thousands of years to describe the "higher being", or the "greater purpose" of things? To stop at God seems a little shortsighted, however. God is a definitive thought-form - and if nothing else, he is, in his own religious texts, the Creator. Based off the fiction, the Force is renewed and recreated every day - that it is created by life, while sustaining it. Therefore, it is a scientific phenomenon, before it is a religious one.

But to speak of the will of the Force - well, there is just some ground that science has not covered, and questions of fate and destiny are among them. I would wager that almost every person reading this right now has felt that "tug" at one point or another to interrupt their daily lives for no good reason - only to later find out that had they not, they may have missed an opportunity, or worse, been seriously harmed. It is for each of them find their own explanation as to "why" or "how" they heard that tug. Are our lives mapped out for us? Does the Force guide us where it wants us to go? Or is it simply that heightened state of awareness we covered earlier - that being so entrenched in the energies around us that we can sense things before they even happen - even if we are unaware of it on anything but the most sub-conscious of levels? Those are questions best left up to the philosophers - in the meantime, it is important to realise that we can choose not to listen at any point. Thus we are not controlled, nor are we dictated to. The Force does not provide us with a list of laws for behavior - once understanding of its power is attained, it can be used for all purposes. Again - the concept of the Force being any deity does not mesh well with this.

And so, we have simply the Force - the energy field created and sustained by life itself, all life, down to its tiniest, microscopic entities. An energy field that we can become aware of, like any other - perhaps even containing all others within itself. And once aware of the energy surrounding us, we can become aware of the web of life that we sit so delicately upon, waiting as the spider does for the slightest tremor to indicate a new event, a new opportunity. In time, we can learn to distinguish one tremor for another - in time, who knows what may be possible? The key is first to understand. The Force is something very real, generated from inside each of us, a science that is waiting to be discovered and proven. It is not a religious deity, residing in the clouds and watching over us - nor is it some puppet master pulling our strings from an unseen alcove. The understanding of life's intricate energies must be examined and understood - this, I believe, is our first step into that larger world. Learning that we are, in fact, such a tiny piece of the puzzle. Learning how we contribute. Learning that we are the Force, that we create it ourselves. Creatures so small, so insignificant, and yet the complexities within even our physical matter alone confound the most brilliant of scientists.

EZEKIO

The Force, to me, is all that encompasses and makes up reality. The Force is what creates life, and what all matter comes back to. The Force can be seen such phenomes like, The Zero-Point Field or the Electro Magnitic Field. The ideals of The Force, come from a abstract metaphore for "God" or "divinity", In the Form of animism and Pantheism . The Ideals replace termonolgies of "god" in the monotheisic veiwpoint or even polytheitic beliefs that define the greater aspects of nature with "gods", with the encompassing, inclusive, and generic words, "The Force. Perfect examples of classic interpretations of The Force throughout mans history done by Alethea are found here :<http://www.forceacademy.co.uk/forum2/viewtopic.php?f=11&t=131>

As for certain aspects of The Force, points of view, interpretations, and dispelling The Great Mythology of the dogmatic termonolgy people embrace and quarral about... These are my understandings for the time being. "The Dark Side of The Force", is the creation of The Living, The Living Force, can the Dark tendancies we lable reality with, become metaphysical in your enviorment? No, they come soely from the individual. Or are they more maze like encryptions to lose the individual into understanding more primative or metaphysical instincts and perceptions. But, The same can be seen for the contrast, indeed the whole. "The Light Side of The Force"? More metaphores that excite the movie experience between the forces of good and evil. Compassion, detachment, sacrifices, and submission to something greater than the individual, The Force. Dare say Even The Will of it? As abstract as Pantheism is to god, Is my own interpretation of "The Will of The Force". People run and hide, or yell "blasemphy!" at such things. LOL. Some simply reject the notion. Others may include a mix, or simply be, unable to dispel the power of Myth all together.

NYTESHADO

To me the force is an energy field that is a part of everything, living or otherwise. I dont quite know how the field exists or why or even how it can be measured I do know it exists. I have tried many methods to measure the energy with marginal results at best.

I believe it is a separate entity from the divine yet at the same time is some how connected, in what way I am not yet sure. The devine being God in whatever form the reader believes the entity to exist.

The force can be 'drawn' in and used by anyone and its only limitation is the imagination of the user.

QUIMARCHI

To me, the force is many things, it is all within us, and within our surroundings. Sometimes we can tell that is there because we become sensitive as to how it resonates around us. Our body's act like storage to the force, we all get a little bit that it shares with us, and that is how we learn to feel the resonation of it, although, like a grain of sand on a beach, no two grains are the same even though they look like they are. That is how I would describe the more personal side of the 'force' that we have.

To better explain what I mean, I might correct this later. I have poor sentence structure, and I still work on improving it daily.

LUMOS

I feel that the definition set forth by my personal all-time favourite Jedi, Obi-Wan Kenobi, still pretty much nails it: "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."

Although to elaborate a little, I would personally say the Force is everything, and everything that comes into being is a manifestation of the Force. The Force is all the energy of the Universe and man's separation from it is an illusion. The whole Universe in its entirety would be the so called Unifying aspect of the Force and we and all other living beings as manifestations of the Force are the Living aspect. And the smallest aspect is everyone's Personal Force. So the latter two are maybe best described as "holons" or being parts of a larger system and wholes in themselves as well. Because of this, I personally believe that anything is possible. As long as one truly believes it is possible, the Force will make it happen. But I do mean truly believe in the strongest, fullest form of the word. (In that sense I also agree with those saying that the zero-point field might be a good way to define the Force, but only if talking about it in the sense of it being like an ocean and we being drops in it. Lynne McTaggart's "The Field" is a great read on this subject.)

As for the Will of the Force, I believe the Will is essentially the Will of the Universe which is ultimately moving towards greater balance. But that being said, the Will of the Force is still the most difficult aspect of the Force for me to grasp or to define, because I don't feel it is only a natural movement towards balance, but that the Force truly has a certain Will at times, which might or might not be working only towards achieving balance in the bigger picture. And at the same time, one can still maintain a strong connection to the Force and hear or feel the Will of the Force communicating to him/her, leading one to fulfill one's destiny and achieve one's true potential through working in unison with the ways of the Force. And it is not that important to see where the Force is eventually taking You, because if You really trust it and pay attention, everything will work out for the best and balance itself out. (Though it might take time, so patience is required) I guess it is something one does not have to understand in order to do. As said by one of my favourite tv-characters, Charlie Crews from Life: "You don't have to understand here to be here." That feels like enough for now.

EXTRA: If you would like to see more takes on "the Force", you can watch the 15 part set of Youtube videos from Alethea's Class in 2009, be forwarned that it is about 2 hours long
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8aXqN8Hf-E> (part 1 of 15)