



# Source of the Force

SECRET BEHIND STAR WARS INSPIRATION

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## Secret Behind *Star Wars* Inspiration

I would like to share with you my personal experience of collaborating for three days in the early 70's with Marcia Lucas and a small team of Anthroposophy scholars on the script of *Star Wars* and my recent discoveries about how that foundational work affected the writing, editing and expansions of the original Trilogy.

First of all, it seems fitting that my first encounter with the origins of *Star Wars* – a modern fairy tale ultimately about the return to spirit – would happen at Christmas time, a season in which humanity recalls its sense of spirit and hope.

I was a student at the Waldorf Institute at the time, and remember the day that I first met the characters of Luke Skywalker, R2D2, C3PO, and the entire *Star Wars* entourage. Yet, when I first encountered them, they were more like two-dimensional paper-dolls in an unfinished script, before their true meaning had been breathed into them. For example, Luke Starkiller as I met him was a far cry from the Skywalker he turned out to be. You may be surprised to learn that the story in its early form was depicted through the machinist eyes of two robots, not yet the familiar, crowd-pleasing epic that would become one of the most famous and endearing movies in the world.

That is, of course, before I and colleagues from the Waldorf Institute would spend three days as part of a think-tank working session with George Lucas' talented wife and professional film editor, Marcia Lucas (née Marcia Griffin), to transform a story that was originally based on two robots into a sweeping modern fairy-tale that even today still evokes a timeless sense of human destiny.

### Meeting Marcia

At that time, like the characters, I was in development, too, as are all earnest students. In addition to being a student of Anthroposophy – a discipline of knowledge developed by Rudolf Steiner concerned with all aspects of human life, spirituality and future evolution – I also managed the Waldorf bookstore, which was a treasure trove of spiritual knowledge.

That Christmas season had been busy, and I was just locking up the store and ready to head home when my teacher, Werner Glass, approached me.

Born in Austria, Werner was a beloved instructor at the Waldorf Institute and inarguably the most prominent Anthroposophist scholar in America. I can only say today that it was a great honor to be his student. That day, there was a glint of lighthearted cheer in his eyes. Thinking that he was simply going to wish me a merry holiday, I was surprised when he asked me to follow him.

“Where?” I said, blindly following him like a faithful puppy.

Without answering, he led me into one of the more spacious classrooms, where four other students were already seated around a table, talking with the Institute’s co-director, Hans Gebert. A woman I did not recognize seemed to be at the center of the conversation – a pleasant-looking brunette with a friendly, yet sophisticated, air.

When everyone saw Werner in the doorway, they looked up with a sense of expectation, as most students typically did when Werner walked into a room. He was like a father to us all. He motioned me to take a seat, then sat down and began to explain the situation.

“I’m very pleased to introduce you all to Marcia Lucas,” he said. “Her husband is a well-known movie director who is working on a screenplay for a science fiction film – a space opera of sorts – and they would like our Waldorf perspective. I don’t know if you have heard of George Lucas?”

This was the first time I had ever heard George Lucas’ name. I certainly hadn’t seen his critically-acclaimed and commercially successful *American Graffiti*. I also didn’t know that his wife, Marcia, was an accomplished film editor in her own right.

“Well, Marcia is familiar with Anthroposophy and the work of Rudolph Steiner, and she needs our help with the script, to make it more Waldorf-inspired so it will have good merit as both a movie and a spiritual story.”

Marcia nodded and offered more context. She said that the “big screen” should be used to deliver important messages to audiences and tell a more spiritual story, one that has a good foundation in the truth, not just another director’s dream.

This began to inspire me, as story-telling is at the center of our teaching curriculum in Waldorf schools. Movies are mass exposure to stories. Stories, like fairy tales, help inspire the psyche of those who witness them, similar to shared dreams. At the Waldorf school, the teacher will tell a story to the children, who learn it by heart and recite it back in class the next day. Once memorized, the stories are further interpreted through music, dance, drawing, painting, and any number of other creative responses.

Marcia needed our input, she told us, because the script was entering its third draft and lacked an element of spirituality. I could see that she was problem-solving, earnestly searching for a way to make the screenplay work.

“I’m sure we’re up to the task,” Werner said, looking at me.

For the past few minutes, I had been sitting there wondering, “*Why am I here? No one had even told me about this meeting.*” Then, I looked around and realized that I was the most experienced student there. The others were too young, less studied in Anthroposophy and

certainly not up to this level of work. I was immensely relieved that Werner would be there to lead us through the session, and sat back, relaxed.

“The dialogue is a bit lacking,” Werner said. “I told Marcia we could help with that as well.”

With that, Werner rose from his seat and said, “Well, then. My family is waiting at home and I must be off.”

None of us could believe it. America’s leading Anthroposophist was going to leave this important project in our hands?

Werner added, “Douglas is my right hand, and I will check in on your work throughout the next few days.”

He then welcomed Marcia to the resources and hospitality of the Institute and politely left.

With Werner gone, we all looked at the Institute’s co-director, Hans, to lead the session.

Hans stood up.

“Well, I must admit that science and mathematics are my true specialty,” Hans said, in his characteristic fashion. “So, I am afraid I will not be of much assistance to this group.”

He politely bid us all adieu, then left.

At this point, I became a bit panicked. My leaders had left me in a great unknown!

Marcia Lucas, who I did not know at the time was one of the greatest film editors in the world, was looking expectantly at me.

I suddenly got the feeling Werner had said something to her about me, akin to his comment about me being his “right hand.” I had a vague realization that both she and I were here solely because of Werner. Having been a brilliant actor at the London School of Theater, Werner had been the primary Anthroposophist from the Waldorf school in North Hollywood in dealing with actors, directors and producers. She was here because of him and I was here because he had brought a promising student to the table for this specialized project. Surely, he knew what he was doing, so I decided to trust it.

“Well, then, let’s get started,” I said. “Tell us the story, Marcia.”

As she spoke, I got up and went over to the classroom blackboard. Marcia had trouble articulating the story; it didn’t flow easily. In colored chalk, I began to sketch out the story-board.

“It’s a story of two robots, you see – the movie is seen through their eyes,” she said. “The robots are key elements of the story. They must be kept.”

I understood that the robots were non-negotiable. We must somehow work with them.

“Ok,” I said. “Can you please read us the starting dialogue?”

She began. It was difficult for us to listen to. As an experienced editor, Marcia knew this. The characters didn't work. They weren't alive. She sincerely wanted to rewrite her husband's movie script to its full potential, but at this moment, it was stilted. Only later would I learn more about the context of their partnership – how George was a genius concerned with the theme of machines and technology, and Marcia was the humanistic side, focused on telling a meaningful story that would resonate with the audience. I did not know it then, but she was here, basically, trying to save the script.

I decided to be frank with her.

“First, the story is not archetypal,” I said. “The author doesn't know the true nature and value of the characters he is set on gluing together.”

Marcia began writing down notes quickly in her notebook.

“The dialogue is unreal and trite. It serves only one purpose – to move to the next scene. So, the message of the story happens in the action between scenes.”

She nodded, writing.

I continued. “There is no character development. No one will identify with these characters.”

Then, on a positive note, I said, “However, your husband has tapped into the true spiritual reality of our time. His obsession to see the world through the eyes of two robots is genius, but a little confused. We can work with that.”

Since everyone there, including Marcia, was a student of Anthroposophy, I began to do what Werner knew would come naturally to me as both a teacher and a student – apply the principles that I had studied to our current problem with the script.

“George has described the challenge of our times,” I said, “The war with machines, symbolized in the two robot playmates of Luke Starkiller.”

Now, an interesting side note about the names. Like Luke Starkiller, none of the character's names that Marcia read to us were in their final form. In fact, I later recommended that the hero, Luke Starkiller, be changed to “Luke Skywalker,” from American Indian and Tibetan traditions. Then, since Lucas is the name for “light,” I also had the concept of a light saber, a weapon that both defends as a shield and attacks as a formidable force. (In Anthroposophist terms, the light saber represents the human spinal column.)

Those details would come later. Now, we had to focus on shaping the story itself.

“I think it needs to go back to the concept of a fairy tale,” I said, explaining that all fairy tales begin with a reference of the story being outside of time and space and end with some reference to their own continuance. “I think what you may want is an adult science-fiction fairy tale that is spiritually accurate, yet engrossing and interesting.”

Marcia agreed.

With her input, we decided to begin with Luke Starkiller. We tried to describe his character development in terms of the polarity that every person has in their soul – the left and right-hand paths of evil. In the end, it is the middle path, “the Force,” that the Jedi warrior should choose. Yet, without exploring both the left and right paths, the Jedi is weakened by not knowing his enemy.

“So, each movie goer will be faced with making the same decision, no matter what their life is like?” said one of the students.

“Yes, that’s the path of most fairy tales,” I said. The question is: “Which of the three paths will you choose?”

Here again, I was impressed with George Lucas’ brilliance. His obsession with machines underscored the biggest challenge of our age – the right-hand path of mechanical occultism as described by Rudolph Steiner and the left-hand path of thinking that has turned evil. Had I seen his first film, *THX-1138*, I would have recognized this even more clearly.

“The two robots can represent thinking and willing,” I proposed.

As the heroes of George’s original story, both C3PO and R2D2 enable the audience to “see through the eyes of machines.” In his relationship and interactions with them, Luke uses his robots to enhance his thinking (C3PO) and willing (R2D2) in an age of machines, but finally finds the middle path – of feeling.

“Let’s explore the two extremes: the left-hand path of thinking and the right-hand path of willing,” I said.

We spent time talking it through. Both C3PO and the Evil Emperor are on the left-hand path of “thinking” that has turned evil. For example, C3PO can think but cannot act, and the Emperor needs Darth Vader to carry out his desired actions. In contrast, R2D2 and Darth Vader are on the right-hand path of “willing.” Having the capacity to will, they still must be told what to do.

“Darth Vader is the being we know as Ahriman,” I added. “He represents the composite cleverness of all machines, incarnated into a human being.”

“So, what about a middle path? Is there one?” one of the students asked.

“Excellent question,” I said. “The middle path is what both the right-hand and left-hand paths miss. Unable to understand the middle path, both sides seek to destroy it. The Jedi masters such as Obi-Wan Kenobi and Yoda have developed themselves on the middle path, having already mastered the other two paths. They represent the desired balanced center between the two extremes.”

Indeed, this dynamic of two poles of evil is the central motif of the first *Star Wars* trilogy.

## Master of the machines

Once we understood the story in context of this Anthroposophical framework, the next step was to focus further on Luke's character.

"I think that Luke needs to develop his character by interacting with the two robots, both the left and the right hand," I said.

We then discussed each robot.

As a robot on the "thinking" side, C3PO can speak many languages and is programmed for etiquette and translating, a truly inspired use for machines that we seldom see. He represents an evil that has been around as long as languages in every culture since the beginning of human intellectual development – the being named Lucifer, who incarnated in a physical body in China in 2000 BC. As the "left-hand path of evil," Lucifer is a Promethean archetype who brings fire, language, philosophy, writing and culture to humanity. Chained to a mountain, he suffered each day as a vulture ate out his liver until rescued by Heracles. By representing Lucifer/Prometheus, C3PO would serve as a counter-pole for the incarnation four thousand years later in 2000 AD of Ahriman, the king of machines, otherwise known as Darth Vader.

Luke, who models the original Heracles or the hero in all of us, eventually breaks the chains to free Prometheus, the fire-bringer, who is on the left-hand path. So, too, the Evil Emperor in *Star Wars* represents the power of fire (demonstrated as lightning from his hands and the evil wisdom of the Sith) that increasingly consumes him as he misuses it.

"Luke is situated between the two robots, between the two paths, like his twin sister. His lost spirituality is drawing him upward into spirit," I said.

All Jedi warriors have transformed blood, what was later called "midi-chlorians" in the blood. As they balance the forces of the left and right paths, they raise their consciousness, which then increases spiritual potential in the blood, a process that Steiner calls the "etherization of the blood." As Steiner taught, spiritual people charge their blood with a consciousness that connects them to spirit (the Force). However, unlike the movie, the ability to access spirit or the Force isn't passed along through heredity.

So, after discussing all of these concepts and laying the groundwork for common understanding, here is the story of *Star Wars* that we mapped out:

*Once upon a time, in a galaxy far, far away, Luke Skywalker (the archetypal human) finds his life embroiled, if not consumed, by machines. Luke is the master of those machines, because he has consciousness and, therefore, is pulled by the left and right. He is an orphan, as all modern humans find themselves, and knows that something great lives inside of him. He has hope in a hopeless world.*

*Luke's father has fallen prey to the evil right-hand path of machines that has transformed him into a part-man – part machine*

abomination who wars against his own spirit and wishes to dominate the world, even if it means killing his son.

The left-hand path of personal black magic lives in the Evil Emperor who also wishes to kill all Jedi and, most especially, the son of Darth Vader.

Luke is protected by the humble Jedi, Obi-Wan Kenobi. Eventually, this Jedi leads him to his teacher of the “middle way” (the Force) and sacrifices himself so that he can help him from the spiritual world. This middle path is like the path to the Higher Self.

On the path, just like Dorothy on the Yellow Brick Road, Luke gains some traveling companions. Just as the Wizard of Oz was a distillation of Masonic initiation rituals, Star Wars introduces the audience to parts of the soul. This is necessary to make the story archetypal, so that it will always be fresh.

For example, **Obi-Wan Kenobi** represents the highest of the three parts of the soul, the **consciousness soul**, which merges spirit with matter just as his Jedi powers give him the power of mind over matter.

**Chewbacca** represents the lower soul, the **sentient or astral soul** that must turn the animal in us into a human with spiritual characteristics.

**Han Solo** represents the **intellectual soul** that first begins to awaken to higher thinking. Although clever, Hans lacks the ability to see the big picture like Obi-Wan.

Between Luke's three companions, much like the Lion, Tin Man, and Scarecrow, each contributes a special quality to Luke along the way. Steiner calls these soul qualities “thinking, feeling and willing.”

At the center of the story, Luke represents the ego, or the thinking human being, and must master the three steps of the development of the soul.

### **A return to spirit**

Now that we had built the underlying framework, which was the most Herculean part of our task, it was clear to me that we needed to develop these characters into archetypes. Knowing now what motivated each character, we could easily hear the words that each would naturally say and even envision their realistic reactions to the unfolding plot.



In doing so, we kept in mind a fundamental truth: good and evil are choices. The Evil Emperor and Darth Vader were not born evil; they chose their own paths. Luke, the archetypal human, also must make his choices and live with the good or evil that results.

Still, after all of this work we had done, one thing was missing.

“We still have one problem,” I reminded Marcia. “Where is Luke going in the story?”

Sorely missing in the original version of the story, this issue had to be resolved so that everything else would make sense.

“Isn’t Luke, essentially, the prodigal son?” I said. Others agreed that Luke was separated from his parent’s home and longing to return. This is a universal element with which everyone could identify. Like Luke, each of us has our particular destiny. In our life, we embark on the search to find it and return to our kingdom in the spirit.

We further developed Luke’s direction and role in the story as follows:

*Luke knows he is special but doesn’t know why. Throughout the story, he must evolve into his mission of facing his true identity as Darth Vader’s son, accept it, and decide what to do with it.*

*Ultimately, Luke denies the power of the machines that try to gain control over him. Instead of the cold-hearted machine-human hybrids, Luke chooses love. He must come to this awakening only after receiving help from his companions.*

*His sister Leia (who I suggested should be called Maya) represents his spiritual self. Although first drawn to her through physical desire, Luke transforms this attraction into spiritual love and links his destiny to hers, as the soul links to the spirit.*

*More sure about herself, Leia has been treated like the Princess she is. Luke has struggled to “catch up” to where she was, but in the end, their destinies are permanently entwined. Because he is on the spiritual path of self-development versus the physical path of earthly gratification, Luke doesn’t “win the girl” – that part of the story is left to another character, Han Solo.*

*As part of his journey, Luke uses the middle path of the Force to conquer both the Evil Emperor and Darth Vader. The more the left and right-hand paths try to win Luke,*

*the more they fall prey to the side effects of using evil for personal gain.*

*As the modern human, Luke conquers the evil machine-like foes with help from his companions and develops two powerful “forces” that the machines cannot control: human freedom and love. In this way, Luke learns to “see through the eyes of machines.” He even sacrifices his human hand for denying his father’s attempt to win him over to the Dark Side of the machines.*

*In the end, Luke loves his father and witnesses the death of Darth Vader, Ahriman, before his very eyes.*

*This is the same modern challenge that each of us faces:*

*Who is your parent?*

*What do you choose: the physical world of machines or the middle path of the spirit, the Force?*

### **A beautiful fairy tale**

Over the next two days, we built on our initial framework and polished the ideas to represent every possible perspective in our archetype science-fiction, prodigal-son story. The script was turning into a beautiful fairy tale that I was certain had merit, whether or not it ever made it to the “big screen.” I was very happy to work through these concepts, because I could see my own path to the spirit unfolding in the story. (Of course, Werner had known this would be part of my involvement!)

I also appreciated Marcia’s priority of effective story-telling. In our modern times, I have seen a decline of storytelling in our culture. This is dangerous, for as archetypal stories vanish, our imagination weakens as the source of inner nourishment and soul inspiration. Movies have taken the place of storytelling and actors have taken the place of the heroes and heroines found in all archetypal stories, whether myth, religion, legend, fairy tale, fable, or any other transcendental source. Yet, as we learned in developing *Star Wars*, if a story is not archetypal, it will not last the test of time. Successful to this day, a full 40 years after it was released, *Star Wars* has proven that to be true.

After our work was completed, I said good-bye to Marcia and wished her well with the movie. She thanked me and everyone else who had contributed their ideas to our marvelous fairy tale. I heard nothing more until 1977, when the movie was about to launch and generating a frenzied buildup of media attention.

I was working in the bookstore when Werner came in to tell me the news: Marcia and George Lucas were so happy with our help that they were offering all Waldorf schools in the U.S. a chance to show an advanced screening of the movie as a local fundraiser. This was a thrilling offer, because I knew that a good deal of money could be raised. Yet, staying true to

its practice of opposing TV, movies and technology in general, the Waldorf Institute politely declined the offer, to my deep disappointment.

I finally saw the Trilogy, after waiting impatiently for all three installments, and was happy that it stayed true to the fairy-tale idea we had developed in our Waldorf think tank.

As I watched the movies, I realized that *Star Wars* had affected the paths of those of us involved in the project. Just as we had mapped out a path for Luke, we were all on a journey to our own destinies. The archetypes we built had done their work!

For example, by working through the philosophical concepts, I saw my own path to the spirit reflected in the story, as Werner knew it would – the process had further emboldened my own understanding of the study of Anthroposophy. Also, I remembered that Werner, who was like a scholarly father, had introduced me to Marcia as his “right hand,” while Luke Skywalker had sacrificed his own right hand in the battle with his father – both situations connected to the pursuit of spiritual knowledge. As a “right hand” substitute for Werner in the project with Marcia, I grew into my leadership role as a teacher. So, too, with the substitution of his right hand, Luke acquired more masterful poise as a Jedi warrior who had successfully denied the Dark Side and became more in touch with the Force.

George Lucas himself was on the path for his genius to be recognized with commercial and critical success. He would later open his famous Skywalker Ranch, which I think is a much better name than “Starkiller” Ranch, don’t you?

Yet, when his own right hand, Marcia Lucas, was symbolically severed in their 1983 divorce, he lost a part of the humanity that had been evident in the earlier movies, and some say lacking in the later versions of the *Star Wars* series.

For her part, Marcia Lucas would stand on stage to be ceremoniously honored, just like the characters in the ending of *Star Wars*. Looking tasteful and quietly elegant next to a glittery-gold presenter Farrah Fawcett at the 1977 Academy Awards, Marcia accepted an Oscar for best editing of a film that had started off as an unknown space opera and become a household name. At that ceremony, one of her editor colleagues would speak for her, and she would not have an opportunity to thank anyone publicly, not even her husband. Had they given her a chance at the microphone, I imagine that Marcia perhaps might have thanked the Waldorf Institute, although the process of being involved in this influential project was, for me, its own reward.

In fact, later, when working with Producer Kathleen Kennedy during the writing of the *Indiana Jones* movies, I was quite aware of my participation in shaping small moments in the movies where true wisdom and light shine through the story. This is what I have tried to do in all of my writings: share the love for spirit that I try to live each day and to bring that spirit into the souls of everyone I have the privilege to meet or touch in some small way – even through a simple story that is the ubiquitous retelling of the original story, the return to spirit.

Just a few days ago, with all of the resurgence of *Star Wars* memories and the recent release of the latest installment in the series, I googled Marcia Lucas’ name and discovered that she and George had divorced in 1983. She had returned to using her maiden name,

Marcia Griffin. When I had worked with her, I had no idea that she was one of the greatest film editors in the world, her skills having been regularly in demand by the top directors, including Scorsese and Coppola. I was delighted to learn about her Academy Award and believe she is an unsung heroine in the history of *Star Wars*.

After all, how often does a mortal human being create something eternal – a story that lasts forever?

I leave you with a link to an article about Marcia Griffin that gives a beautiful picture of her contributions to the making of *Star Wars*:

<http://fd.noneinc.com/secrethistoryofstarwarscom/secrethistoryofstarwars.com/marcialucas.html>

Enjoy, and may the Force be with you!

*Douglas and Tyla Gabriel are delighted to share this story with you as a part of the [Our Spirit project](#), which is a new Inspiration and Imagination of Anthroposophy in our times. If you received this PDF from a friend, thank them and return the blessing by freely sharing this paper with your spiritual friends and colleagues and Star Wars fans. These materials are available to readers who receive our newsletter from [www.ourspirit.com](http://www.ourspirit.com).*

*The website includes video lectures on a variety of topics, including one from Douglas on the making of *Star Wars*, but more prominent in our works is the unveiling of Sophia. Video talks can be found in the section entitled [Our Spirit Talks](#). Recipients may reproduce this paper for non-commercial uses as long as it is printed in its entirety, including this acknowledgement page.*

*We would also like to acknowledge our editor, Karen Dell Kinnison, who lovingly pours over our manuscripts, making sure that our readers have a pleasurable experience reading what we have written.*

**Know Her. Know Thyself. Be Pure. Be Curious. Becoming.**

