**ep 81 The Rise (& Fall) of Skywalker**

[00:00:00] **New Track:** [00:00:00] Welcome to the endless knot podcast where the more we know,

**Mark:** [00:00:04] the more we want to find out

**New Track:** [00:00:05] tracing serendipitous connections through our lives

**Mark:** [00:00:08] and across disciplines.

**Aven:** [00:00:16] Hi, I'm Aven,

**Mark:** [00:00:17] and I'm Mark.

**Aven:** [00:00:18] And today we're going to be talking about Star Wars.

**Mark:** [00:00:22] So timely.

**Aven:** [00:00:24] We are keeping to our tradition of being way behind the curve and responding to things after giving them months, to years to mellow,

**Mark:** [00:00:33] we were just the first to start flattening curves. We flattened this one out.

Really well.

**Aven:** [00:00:43] So today we're going to talk about the last of the sequel trilogy "The Rise of Skywalker".

**Mark:** [00:00:50] Yes.

**Aven:** [00:00:50] And you know, we're mostly just going to talk about the movie, but we'll try to interject some classical and medieval thoughts into it as well.

**Mark:** [00:00:58] We bring this up [00:01:00] because it did just. Well, I say just, it's not even all that just, but it came out onto home media and we just watched it.

**Aven:** [00:01:10] RE-watched it

**Mark:** [00:01:11] Yes yes

**Aven:** [00:01:12] Don't make us sound like people who don't go to the theater,

**Mark:** [00:01:14] but we just watched it on home media

for the first time at home.

**Aven:** [00:01:19] Yeah. So it's in our thoughts. And since we did the, we've done podcasts on a couple of previous movies, Last Jedi maybe.

**Mark:** [00:01:29] I don't think we did the last Jedi. We did The Force Awakens.

**Aven:** [00:01:33] And we did Rogue One. That's right. Not The Last Jedi. So we just thought that would be a fun topic. And,

**Mark:** [00:01:40] and I'm going to be honest with you. I kind of came up with this idea because we needed to come up with a topic and we were sort of short on time to do a lot of research, and this seemed...watching.

what is it about, a three hour movie?

**Aven:** [00:01:52] That we had to watch anyway because with our kids, it was Friday night. Yeah.

**Mark:** [00:01:55] It seemed relatively easy.

**Aven:** [00:01:57] And the other slightly [00:02:00] less, lazy and self centered reason was that as things continue in the outside world, in. You can't see, but I'm waving my hands in a gesture of -- THAT --, you know, we considered, again, maybe doing an episode on disease words and we might still do that.

**Mark:** [00:02:16] Let us know if you want to hear a podcast episode from us on plague and disease and

**Aven:** [00:02:22] Or about theories of disease in the ancient and medieval world,

theories of something or words for disease. We could do that.

And we've considered it, but in many ways, distraction is what I'm looking for. And I feel like I can't be quite alone on that. So that's really what we're going to talk about

**Mark:** [00:02:39] also. I mean, there are no new movies to report on now because no one's seeing any new movies cause there are no new movies.

**Aven:** [00:02:47] So we can't, we can't go to the theater and see the new releases, so why not? Alright, so before we get to that, just one little piece of, we really want to say thank you to a new Patreon supporter. Dan [00:03:00] B, who became a supporter last month.

**Mark:** [00:03:03] Thanks Dan.

**Aven:** [00:03:03] Anyone who'd like to join in and become a supporter as well, please go to patreon.com the endless knot. However, we continue to be not charging people.

I'm going to admit, however, I forgot to turn off the charging for May, and so you were charged for the 1st of May.

**Mark:** [00:03:23] It turns out you have to turn them off every month.

**Aven:** [00:03:25] Yeah, you have to do it every month and you can't do it until the new month. And while March was the longest month that has ever happened and was about six years long.

April went by so fast that I genuinely didn't even realize it was May until a couple of days in. So I apologize for that. I know I said I would give you warning before we turned it back on and I didn't. So I really am very sorry about that. That said, I have paused it for June, June 1st you won't be charged.

And if we decide not to pause it for July, we will announce it on Patreon and on social media. Sorry.

**Mark:** [00:03:58] But I do think, and we were [00:04:00] just talking about this, before we turn things back on again, we want to kind of revamp the,

**Aven:** [00:04:05] the tiers,

**Mark:** [00:04:06] the tiers and all of that.

**Aven:** [00:04:08] So if anybody has any suggestions for rewards, I'm very torn about rewards and how to do them.

**Mark:** [00:04:14] A lot of people don't seem to be interested in them.

**Aven:** [00:04:17] So if you have thoughts about what you would like us to do or how you would like to organize that, please feel free to let us know, because I'm a little bit at see how to do that. I know that myself, as a supporter of other creators, I tend to just want to give them money and don't care what I get for it.

but I don't want to assume that's what everyone else thinks and I'd like to hear about that. If you have an opinion.

**Mark:** [00:04:40] And once again, we want to mention Lyceum a new platform that we are part of, and it's all about educational podcasts, so podcasts specifically on educational topics. the advantage of this is it gives you better signal to [00:05:00] noise ratio for those of you who like us, are really particularly interested in, in all the great educational podcasts there are out there.

So it's, it's a lot easier to find. podcasts that you're interested in,

**Aven:** [00:05:12] It's good search. And it's, there's a lot of curated lists on particular topics or approaches to things. So they've done the sort of first layer of searching for you. Yep.

**Mark:** [00:05:21] And there are all kinds of other cool features on this platform.

There's more opportunities to interact with podcasters and have discussions on the platform. So, check it out. It's at lyceum.fm

**Aven:** [00:05:35] Right now most of the functionalities are on, only on apps, not on the desktop. But it's very much just still in beta. So they're going to be rolling a bunch of stuff out over the next little while.

**Mark:** [00:05:46] So if you, if you go to that website, there'll be a link there to get to the app and you can download it to your mobile device and proceed from there.

**Aven:** [00:05:56] So join us over on Lyceum. All right. [00:06:00] Last thing before we get going, talking about Star Wars, is a Star Wars cocktail.

**Mark:** [00:06:04] Yeah. And by way of this, we want to mention a book that I don't think we've ever mentioned before.

**Aven:** [00:06:11] No, I don't think so.

**Mark:** [00:06:12] We've been quite enjoying it,

**Aven:** [00:06:14] since Christmas,

**Mark:** [00:06:15] since Christmas,

**Aven:** [00:06:16] which now is like years ago. I'm pretty sure. Yeah.

so this cocktail recipe, which is called a photon fizzle. And is, let me see if I see what it says. It talks about, it's a carbonated concoction from diners at core worlds like Coruscant back in the days of the Galactic Republic, that's in the writeup about it is in, it's a recipe in a book called Star Wars Galaxy's Edge, The Official Black Spire Outpost cookbook.

And we were given this by my sister and her partner for Christmas. And it's a cookbook. And unlike most novelty cookbooks, which tend to be not very good, recipes are not very [00:07:00] good. They can be fun, but not.

**Mark:** [00:07:01] You know, they often just throw a bit of food coloring in and otherwise it's not really well thought out.

**Aven:** [00:07:06] or it's bad, like it's, it's made to be funny and therefore it's not actually tasty or interesting. Yeah. Yeah. This, the recipes with the very, very few exceptions of a couple of things that just didn't work out perfectly. Every recipe we've made from it, we've made most of the recipes now has been genuinely delicious and different, and many of them have been things that wouldn't have occurred to me as ideas for combining different tastes or textures or methods. Methods of cooking. Yeah. Bread with mushrooms and Curry paste and soy sauce in the dough that is like really good, and I was a hundred percent sure it would A) not work and B) wouldn't taste good, and it's great.

**Mark:** [00:07:51] There's one with bread and the meat on a skewer. Yeah. Cook the

**Aven:** [00:07:54] bread dough that you wind around, meatballs on a skewer and you cook. And again. A hundred percent [00:08:00] convinced not the bread wasn't going to cook right, the meat wasn't going to cook right. Wasn't going to be good. It was really good. So we would recommend this book is what we tried to say.

We are not sponsored by this book or by Star Wars, but we really like it. And it has a series, a set of cocktails at the back. So this photon fizzle has, it has, it has Boba pearls, which are those, tapioca pearls that are in bubble tea. And you make a batch of those. We had to order those way back and then you soak them in a syrup that you've already made that they call a Dagobah slug syrup.

That is ginger and Rosemary sugar syrup with some green food coloring. So you soak, you make the pearls, then you soak them in that syrup, and then you make the cocktail with a little bit of that syrup, the pearls, gin, lime, and then top with ginger beer. And so the cocktail has ginger beer, lime, and gin, and this ginger and [00:09:00] Rosemary syrup.

And then it has these tapioca pearls that taste of ginger and are green floating in the bottom. It's really good.

**Mark:** [00:09:08] And I'd never thought of putting gin in ginger beer. That's a new

combination. So yeah.

**Aven:** [00:09:14] So we've made it before. this isn't new to us, but cheers. Cheers. It's really tasty. It's a light and refreshing drink.

I mean, not that light. It's got three ounces of gin in it, but because of the ginger beer, it doesn't feel so heavy. It's sweet, but not, but the ginger really cuts through, and the lime and then you end up with pearls. And the only drawback is that we have not been able to find a good straw. Like those bubble tea straws.

**Mark:** [00:09:38] which of course are probably disposable,

**Aven:** [00:09:40] so, well, the one in this picture is metal,

but

I don't know if you can get metal ones that size. I've seen smoothie straws, but they're not big enough for these. I don't think they'd be big enough. So that's the only drawback that you kind of

**Mark:** [00:09:51] If anyone knows where to get

**Aven:** [00:09:53] big metal bubble tea straws. Yeah.

Let us, let us know. Anyway, so that's our little plug for that book. [00:10:00] and it was, you know, instead of having to find. Not very good Star Wars cocktails. We've actually got good tasty. There's a number of other ones, including a liqueur that I made that a lavender look here that they give a recipe for that I made a few months ago now, and I still have in the fridge and it's purple and really quite tasty.

I had a drink with that earlier.

**Mark:** [00:10:23] Yeah. So we actually had to decide which cocktail to make

**Aven:** [00:10:26] because there's several that are really good. Yeah. Alright. So there'll be a picture of that on the blog. Okay enough preamble

**Mark:** [00:10:34] So now we're onto the amble.

**Aven:** [00:10:36] Yes. Now, time to amble. Hmm. Rise of Skywalker.

Obviously going to be spoilers. Can't really imagine that anyone who could be possibly interested in watching the movie hasn't watched the movie already.

**Mark:** [00:10:46] But if you are one of those few pause now,

**Aven:** [00:10:50] go watch the movie. Watch the movie.

**Mark:** [00:10:51] It's available for home media so you can go. Watch it on Disney

**Aven:** [00:10:56] plus, then come back, come back.

[00:11:00] Or if you have no interest in watching the movie at all, we'll try to be interesting in talking about it to say, well, we'll try to explain what we're talking about so that you can have some idea what we're going on about. So this of course, is the last of a trilogy, a trilogy that was set after the original trilogy.

And it's the third piece of a, so it's the last

**Mark:** [00:11:23] of a trilogy of trilogies. Yes. Yeah. Third trip, third movie of the third trilogy of the entire saga

**Aven:** [00:11:31] and was very, you know, heavily signaled as being the end. The wrapping up, the culmination. My thoughts mostly are sort of. I, I've jotted down a bunch of stuff about connections to ancient Epic and things.

It's not a terribly coherent set of thoughts. Do you have any sort of overall discussions you'd like to, things you'd like to say?

**Mark:** [00:11:51] What I wrote down is I have a bunch of things that I want to say about. How I took the films, just as films [00:12:00] themselves, first of all, and how I think, you know, where I think it works and where I think it doesn't work and how it all fits together.

And then I have a series of questions about the film and the entire saga in relation to, medieval and in particular Norse literary genres,

**Aven:** [00:12:18] right? Like family sagas. Okay. So really, really briefly, what's the plot of the movie? Okay. Do you remember, is this one of the criticisms,

**Mark:** [00:12:29] and I think this is one of the criticisms because there was a whole lot going on.

In some ways, not a lot happens, but in a lot of ways it's trying to do, it's trying to

**Aven:** [00:12:40] tie up a

**Mark:** [00:12:41] bunch of loose ends.

So the instigating event is, a message gets sent out across the galaxy. That seems to be from the emperor who we all thought was dead.

due to, ewoks back in 1983.

**Aven:** [00:12:58] Yeah. [00:13:00] Yeah.Ewoks with sticks.

**Mark:** [00:13:01] So at the end of the last movie, they all just barely managed to escape in their, their only remaining ship, which is the Millennium Falcon and the number of,

**Aven:** [00:13:13] of, Oh, yeah, right. Rebel, rebel

**Mark:** [00:13:16] Alliance or

**Aven:** [00:13:16] whatever they're called.

**Mark:** [00:13:18] Yeah. And so it's a small enough group that, that they can all kind of fit into the Millennium Falcon and basically their whole movement has been almost wiped out, but they still have hope.

**Aven:** [00:13:28] Yeah. Because Leia gave them hope. Yes.

**Mark:** [00:13:32] and there's this, this other thing that, people will, remember what they did and it will be the spark that

**Aven:** [00:13:37] lights the flame and then somehow by the next, so at the beginning of this movie, they do have, another base and a bunch of people that

**Mark:** [00:13:45] have managed to build up at least some more resources.

**Aven:** [00:13:48] So we see, we see Rey training. Yes. With Leia. Yes. Who has become more and more a figure who apparently did Jedi training, [00:14:00] which is fine, but

**Mark:** [00:14:00] like they didn't reveal that in the first two movies of the trilogy.

**Aven:** [00:14:05] So, but now we were told that she's done and it becomes clear over the movie that she's done training.

so she's doing training with, with Leia. The boys are out.

**Mark:** [00:14:16] getting information

**Aven:** [00:14:18] right. They're doing a run, trying to get it because there's a spy and it's going to give them information

in

**Mark:** [00:14:23] the first order. And

**Aven:** [00:14:24] So they get the information and they come back.

And then the clock has started, when they get back, we're told, the emperor is alive somehow. Maybe a clone, not clear. And he has been gathering a huge fleet that nobody knew anything about. This is not the first order. This is the last order. There's no middle order. and the disorder, it's been collected on some place, but we don't know where.

And we have 16 hours, we're told, [00:15:00] until they will be fully powered up and they will, and every ship has the power of a death star, essentially, they were each a planet killer. and they're hidden somewhere that no one knows where it

is The 16 hour thing drives me bananas.

I mean, I don't like that in the original trilogy either. you know, they do everything in like a day and it doesn't make any sense and I don't understand why it needs to be so fast. And apparently no one in star Wars ever sleeps. Ever.

**Mark:** [00:15:29] Well, I guess you could stay awake for 16

**Aven:** [00:15:31] hours.

I know,

**Mark:** [00:15:31] but

**Aven:** [00:15:32] if it is only 16 hours, but like they were all awake when they found out there were 16 hours to go. So they've presumably been awake at least a couple of hours already. And how like, smart, are you at the end of six? I'm like, why? Why did I have to be 16 hours? Why can't it be two days?

**Mark:** [00:15:47] It does seem a bit of kind of artificial, trying to ramp up the tension

**Aven:** [00:15:51] or something like two days would also work.

Two days would be obviously not enough time to gather our coalition and find these. Like, you know, you can have a week and it still wouldn't be enough [00:16:00] time. So anyway, whatever minor, minor quibble, just I don't get why you need to do that except to parallel. The ridiculously short time in which things happen.

In the first movie

so what they have to do is they have to find this place and how are they going to do it?

There's apparently. There's sort of clues to how to follow these way finders,

**Mark:** [00:16:22] These Sith artifacts that supposedly have, that have

**Aven:** [00:16:26] the information about how to get there. So they have to go track those down and they go to different places and I've already forgotten why they ended up going to the places they go to.

Not important. they go to a bunch of places to collect these things up. They have to find them. They have to find the people. Then they find the thing, they don't know what it says. So then they have find a dagger and they don't know what the dagger says. So then they have to find a person to interpret the dagger.

You know, like, it's a series of challenges, right? along the way, they fight over and over again with, Ben solo with, Kylo Ren. And then they end up in this place where the death star crashed. And [00:17:00] then there's a big confrontation between, Ray and Ben or Kylo Ren, to which Finn also goes totally pointlessly.

He does nothing. No. He risks his life getting out there

**Mark:** [00:17:14] and he's just there to see her go away I guess is the point

**Aven:** [00:17:16] he does nothing. He's just, it's nothing. I don't understand it. and then she leaves because she thinks she knows, cause she knows where to go now.

**Mark:** [00:17:27] Well, no, she heads, she goes, she goes in frustration or something and goes back to,

**Aven:** [00:17:33] she goes back to Luke's planet where she then.

talks to Luke and Luke's Force ghost

**Mark:** [00:17:37] And Luke says " everything I said in the last movie I was wrong about."

**Aven:** [00:17:40] Yeah, you should totally be a Jedi. and then he raises in my favorite scene in the movie, to be fair, he raises the, his flyer out of the water and then he gives, and he smirks about it. And I love it. I abs- that I'm like a hundred percent behind that scene because it's the swamp [00:18:00] scene.

**Mark:** [00:18:01] But that scene was just fan service

**Aven:** [00:18:04] and I was there for it, totally there for it. And then, Rey gets in that and knows where to go, sends the information to the fleet. So the fleet is all gonna follow her, but the fleet is tiny, so they're all gonna follow her and they need to like, and apparently the first, the last order ships take a long time to take off.

**Mark:** [00:18:23] No, they, do they follow her or

**Aven:** [00:18:25] is it, no, they follow her cause she, she sends them the information. She sends them the chase back to or whatever.

So they follow her and apparently the exciting, important plot twist is that it takes them like three hours to take off The ships reaching the atmosphere is really slow. So they, they have time to get there and destroy the ships before they hit the atmosphere. And then they'll be able to save the galaxy.

They arrive. And then there's a big fight between, Rey and Kylo Ren, who's now turned good because he had a big chat with his dad, who was dead. And [00:19:00] so they have a fight against the newly resurgent emperor who's I guess a clone. But they're a dyad in the Force. We don't know what that means, but it's important apparently.

And then they fight. Meanwhile, and this is this, the standard star Wars parallel, right? There's the, the, the fight going on between the powers of the Jedi and the Sith, while there's a big firefight going on in the sky, which I'm fine with. Like that's, that's standard star Wars stuff. and it's pretty good firefight.

actually, I quite like it. There's some really interesting things goes on and then, Rey dies. Kylo Ren brings her back. It's not clear how, force healing dyad of the Force stuff, she dies in killing the emperor. Yes. She kills the emperor. She dies, Kyloe Ren brings her back, but then he dies, but she doesn't bring him back.

And then. Everybody's rescued and everybody's good. And that's the end, right. I'm trying to remember if there's a Coda, is there a coda?

**Mark:** [00:19:58] Well, she goes to Tattooine.

[00:20:00] **Aven:** [00:20:00] That's right. She goes back to Tattooine and she takes the name of Skywalker. Yes, that's right. So she buries, all of their lightsabers, which is like a renunciation of the Jedi, but she also takes the name Skywalker, which seems like a continuation of the Jedi.

And that's the movie. So everybody who watched the movie is now like, yes, thank you for summarizing this really badly. But for those of you who didn't or but have the some idea of, of the star Wars movie or haven't watched in a long time, because as I said, I've only watched it last week and I've already lost track of a bunch of stuff.

That's just to give you a sense of what we're going to be talking about. So what are your overall thoughts about how it fits into the franchise?

**Mark:** [00:20:40] Alright, well, first of all, let's talk about the sequel trilogy and how it fits into that. So episodes seven and eight went in very different directions, and I don't think there's any denying that.

**Aven:** [00:20:52] Right. Yeah.

**Mark:** [00:20:52] They had very different ideas about what they were doing, and I think they were both excellent films.

**Aven:** [00:20:58] Yeah, I agree. They [00:21:00] didn't mesh very well. No, but they were good movies.

**Mark:** [00:21:03] So how do you make a third film to wrap both of those up

**Aven:** [00:21:07] and all of the threads from all the previous stuff? But yeah.

**Mark:** [00:21:09] Yeah. so,

**Aven:** [00:21:12] and by the way, we know that lots of people have different opinions, about all of these movies, that's fine. We liked them, the first two, you don't have to, there's really divided opinions about this. Not going to address that.

**Mark:** [00:21:25] so in the end, I think episode nine had too much to cover.

It mostly focuses on picking up stuff from episode seven.

**Aven:** [00:21:34] Right. Not eight. It

**Mark:** [00:21:37] drops a lot of the themes that were brought up in eight. Though the one theme that is continued throughout, I guess all three films and you know, I guess arguably through all nine films is the theme of family

**Aven:** [00:21:52] though, as far as I can tell.

It completely reverses as far as I can feel it reverses course on what family means.

[00:22:00] **Mark:** [00:21:59] Yes. Yeah, yeah,

**Aven:** [00:22:01] yeah.

**Mark:** [00:22:01] So I mean, there, there are all these questions that get asked and they're not even necessarily answered,

So do family lines as in genealogical family,

do they matter?

Yeah. Yeah. Are familial connections important in some way? and sort of more broadly are personal emotional connections, good or bad, is attachment, right?

**Aven:** [00:22:26] Good or bad, which is, which is a question that to be fair, is really confused in the first trilogy. And then more confused in the prequels. And now is confused, like there was no, there's a real problem with a consistent answer to that.

**Mark:** [00:22:43] Then there's another theme that's not really there in the original trilogy as much though it is sort of, there, it is sort of there, but it's much more muted. this theme of slavery It's very much there in the prequels.

**Aven:** [00:22:59] Yes.

[00:23:00] **Mark:** [00:23:00] And

**Aven:** [00:23:01] well in a prequel,

**Mark:** [00:23:03] a prequel, but it gets sort of opened up from just the specific question of slavery to a broader question about capitalism.

**Aven:** [00:23:09] Yeah. And that's how it gets exploitation and

**Mark:** [00:23:12] so forth. And that gets more sort of broadly kind of covered in, in the rest of the prequels. And it. Comes up again in a big way in episode eight so they finally come back to this. Yeah. This question in episode eight and it looks like, okay, this is the big payoff,

**Aven:** [00:23:31] right?

And then,

**Mark:** [00:23:31] and then they drop it completely. So it's not there at all. As far as I can tell in episode nine.

**Aven:** [00:23:38] The only place I can see it at all is in the little bits of discussion between Finn and the other woman who was, a storm trooper not strong from where they were First, First Order.

**Mark:** [00:23:52] Troopers

**Aven:** [00:23:52] or whatever, whatever those were. Yeah. And I'm, I'm not like, I'm not disagreeing with you. I'm just trying to think if there's anything, there is that [00:24:00] little bit of the way they were stolen as children. They were slaves in meaningful ways, and they rebelled.

I could go down a rabbit hole of talking about slave rebellions Like Sicily because they're on their own isolated world. They managed to do it like, or they're Haiti, right? Like, and I wouldn't be surprised if somebody somewhere in writing it or staging it was thinking a little bit of like, Haiti, the only so successful.

Slave rebellion. Right. There's like some parallel I can sort of see, but I can imagine a version of that movie where that was a bigger storyline, but in what we actually get.

you have to fill most of that in with head canon. It's not really there. There's just

**Mark:** [00:24:40] a little bit of, maybe there was more of that in some stage of the script that then just had to get cut

**Aven:** [00:24:45] the other piece is the way they treat C3PO. Right? Wiping of his memory, the risking of his life

**Mark:** [00:24:52] Does he get a choice.

**Aven:** [00:24:53] Which he doesn't, but like there's no coherent moral there because they do it. Our heroes [00:25:00] do it to him, and then they play his trauma for laughs and then he's restored. So it's all okay. So in the same way then in the original series, the droids and their slavery was played for laughs. You know, there was no moral weight given to that question of these seem to be sentient beings. What the hell are you doing with them? Never got fully explored

**Mark:** [00:25:21] and the only place that they're ever treated even a little bit better is in the prequels, specifically by Anakin, and not just Anakin as a little boy; all the way down to Revenge of the Sith, he's kind of sticking up for the droids.

**Aven:** [00:25:35] Yeah. And then he becomes the evil guy. So like what does that tell us

**Mark:** [00:25:39] I don't know how to take any of that?

So

**Aven:** [00:25:41] I don't think it's coherent. I like, I think a much as I love the world, I think, and I mean, I guess this is where you're going with this whole point.

There is no coherent ethical through-line, ethical or even thematic through-line through even each of the trilogies. Even each of the [00:26:00] three movies in each of the trilogies do not manage a coherent, but

**Mark:** [00:26:03] the weird thing is they keep poking at the idea.

**Aven:** [00:26:05] I know! t keeps coming up

**Mark:** [00:26:07] and then they just, you know, as if, ah, we're going to do it and then they don't

**Aven:** [00:26:12] and or they, or they completely undercut the things they've, yeah.

You know, like the whole, you're going to free the slaves in the first prequel, which. Is literally , not just never payed off, but it's the opposite of that. and then we're sort of given by the end of the prequels to understand that the Jedi are horrible exploitative people who have.

You know, and that's even the clone Wars. We've been watching the Clone Wars, the final season, the animated series, and in it, they really, I mean that, that series is more ethically coherent than anything else in the Star Wars universe as far as I'm concerned. But in that, they really dig into that the Jedi are an exploitative, elitist group who don't follow up on their own ideals and absolutely benefit from a [00:27:00] hierarchical structure that ignores the suffering of many. But

**Mark:** [00:27:03] I guess that's the, that's what knights are.

**Aven:** [00:27:06] Well, yeah, and I'm like, there are coherent ways in which that's true, but the, but plot lines and the lines in the movie keep, you know, keep countering that.

**Mark:** [00:27:14] Cause that's the other historical thing is, you know, how they portray a knight and their commitment to, you know, all these kind of ideals. but also the fact that they're part of this hierarchical

structure. Yeah.

But, the other thing, I think that this, this whole issue of this weird mishandling of the theme of slavery is it's part of a larger theme of good and evil,

**Aven:** [00:27:43] which obviously is at the heart of all of these movies, but confusedly

**Mark:** [00:27:48] and it's sort of, many of the films, though not all of them ask the question, is there absolute good and evil? Yeah. Right. Yeah.

**Aven:** [00:27:57] Is there a black and a white, even though like the, [00:28:00] the imagery of all the movies is all about black and white.

Very literally,

**Mark:** [00:28:05] and in the first, the very first film. I mean, it's very, it's a very simple morality. There is good and there's evil

**Aven:** [00:28:12] There's bad guys and they blow up planets. There's good guys, and they don't,

**Mark:** [00:28:17] it's very straight forward. Yeah. And then as the, the series goes on, especially when you get to the prequels, it really problematizes this binary of good and evil.

And. particularly in episode eight of the new trilogy, it really cast doubt on this idea of good and evil by pointing out that both the first order and the resistance are buying their weapons from the same sources. Yeah. And you know who is really good and evil here?

**Aven:** [00:28:52] Yeah. And then, but, but even in that movie itself, they don't follow up on that.

No. Right. They have this amazing set piece in the [00:29:00] middle that looks like it's going to question the whole structure of the galaxy. Well,

**Mark:** [00:29:06] it seemed like it was setting it up that it could be then later,

**Aven:** [00:29:11] but, but even so like, and they, they'd like, who are the heroes and can you really trust the heroes? And they're setting up this, oppressed group and its idea of the, the, the glitterati who, who ride it out and always win no matter what.

No matter what else happens, they are always the ones who win. And they have an amazing like cathartic scene of destroying the town. And it comes to nothing in that movie. And it comes to nothing, as you are saying in this movie, either. Totally ignored.

**Mark:** [00:29:41] Plus it undercut the idea of the individual hero, right? Heroism isn't the act of one brave person who saves the day. In fact, true heroism is a broad.

**Aven:** [00:29:54] Understanding of context and everything else, right.

**Mark:** [00:29:56] And it's a collective action, right?

**Aven:** [00:30:00] [00:30:00] Am I misremembering? Rose is in, not in the ninth movie at all.

**Mark:** [00:30:05] She is. but very briefly. She has

like a scene. A few scenes. Right. But

you know, just a few lines

**Aven:** [00:30:10] here and there. And she's so central to that story of what. Is wrong with the world. Yeah. And that's just written right out. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And all, all of this stuff. And I know lots of people disliked the eighth movie. Yeah.

For lots of reasons to do with that. But I mean, I adored the way, what's his face? Poe was wrong, just loved it. And then they totally discard that cause Rey acts just like him. Yeah. She's just doing what she's going to do. She goes out to the death star without telling anybody, you know, she's totally, she's not following any, anybody's orders.

She's not doing what anybody tells her to do. She's just doing what she thinks is right and now suddenly that's heroic and great. Yeah.

**Mark:** [00:30:59] Well, I [00:31:00] mean that's the way the Jedi have always, that's the way Luke always sort of functioned that he was, he had a higher responsibility.

**Aven:** [00:31:09] That's how he functioned. It wasn't how the Jedi functioned.

That's very much in the prequels, right? I mean, that's what Anakin fights against in the prequels is the Jedi are like, no, we have a council and we do things according to rules and you do things. And that's the big tension of the end of the prequel trilogy is the Jedi council telling him what to do.

And him not wanting to do it and thinking they're wrong, but having no mechanism for getting around that. whereas in the original series there is no Jedi counsel. So Luke can act, he has access to knowledge that nobody else has, so he can act on that. But,

**Mark:** [00:31:42] that's, I mean, you could say that about the new.

Trilogy is that there's no Jedi council.

**Aven:** [00:31:47] No, but

**Mark:** [00:31:47] Rey is acting on some special insight.

**Aven:** [00:31:50] Maybe Rey is, but Poe isn't right. Because he doesn't have special insight. And those people do know about the Jedi and they know like they're not ignorant of it. So yeah.

[00:32:00] I will never not enjoy the Star Wars movies and want this to be really clear. This sounds like it's a trashing of them and it's not. I really enjoy them all. I enjoy the, let me get on the cards on the table here. I enjoy Rise of Skywalker too. I don't hate any of these, but it is frustrating how incoherent they are.

They're incoherent as movies. And I don't mean incoherent in plot, though. They have some problems with that in Rise of Skywalker too. But I mean incoherent in message and in theme. And it is frustrating because while I don't want to declare myself of Jedi by religion, I do want, you know, a story that's all centered on good and evil.

It feels like it should tell me what good is and what evil is, or tell me that they aren't or whatever, but it shouldn't. It should have a message at the end of this huge saga about good and evil.

**Mark:** [00:32:53] This is the thing, is that all the way back from, I guess at least, the Empire Strikes [00:33:00] Back, the question was sort of posed either explicitly or implicitly were the Jedi wrong?

About their whole stance on attachment and all of that, right. And should, should the Jedi just pass. And that, that finally becomes very explicit in episode eight where Luke says, no, let the Jedi go. there's no point for them anymore.

**Aven:** [00:33:20] They are not important. And Yoda says the same, right? If Yoda says it's right, then we think it's right too, and when he says to Luke, no, we don't need these books. It's all good. Let it go. We think, okay. That's a real thing.

And it's in fact it, you know, at the end of episode eight, it's not even, I mean, it starts off with Luke being very pessimistic and angry, but

he's not, he maintains

**Mark:** [00:33:42] that position, but in a more positive sense, or at least that's what, what Rey gets out of it, is that, well, it doesn't matter.

**Aven:** [00:33:48] And that's what Leia gets too right at the end.

**Mark:** [00:33:51] Now, I guess in a sense, episode nine does give us an answer.

Luke says he was wrong and. all the Jedi [00:34:00] sort of, you know, in their spirit form lineup behind Rey and save the universe from all the Sith spirits lined up behind the emperor. And it becomes that simple black and white question again.

**Aven:** [00:34:14] Yeah. It's so disappointing. It really is. And the idea that suddenly she is all the Jedi when last movie.

The whole point is she wanted to be a Jedi and he said, no, you need to be something more than a Jedi better than a Jedi. The Jedi were wrong. They made a whole bunch of stupid errors. They were arrogant. They, they thought they knew the answers, and for that to be completely discarded and turned around into, Hey, all you need is all the Jedi.

But, but it almost, it's so annoying cause it only needs a couple of tweaks because in a sense what you couldn't, you could have had the same idea of like all the Jedi, but her saying rather than being this [00:35:00] vessel, this empty vessel who's in, whose selfhood doesn't matter.

Cause that's what's really frustrating at the end. It doesn't matter who she is. It matters that she has the Jedi behind her. If instead it was a more about.

**Mark:** [00:35:12] Well, you could say it's about her choice.

**Aven:** [00:35:14] Yeah. But you could. But if at the end, instead it was to say, I, I am going to transcend Luke who rejected the Jedi and I'm going to instead understand that the Jedi have value and created, an important thing.

But I understand in my sort of next step that they are not. They didn't have the final answer and that the final answer is in fact not being arrogant and not thinking I know everything. So I can now like call on the strength of Jedi past to move into a new future that is beyond the Jedi. Like I don't think it would have been almost the same scene.

It would have been Rey saying, I have learned from Luke's rejection of the [00:36:00] Jedi. And Kylo Wren's rejection of the Jedi and my own desire to be part of the Jedi. I've learned that these are like balanced things that have to be, cause that's, you know, that would feel very star Wars. Right? There's a balance here.

Balance between the, the value of the past and, an understanding that the arrogance of thinking you knew all the answers was a problem. Take the strength of the Jetta in the past, but move forward in a new way. And I mean, they could have done that in different, they could have had a new weapon or she could have had found a new power, you know, not force lightning, not, I'm not a film writer, but you know, something like that.

Right. That something that somehow synthesized, maybe even something that did what has been, we were told all through the other trilogies of combining Sith and Jedi, like finally finding some kind of balance point instead of it just coming to, Oh, well, I guess we just have to completely destroy and kill everybody who's Sith so that only the good side survives, which [00:37:00] totally ruins the whole point of the first two trilogies too, which is all this idea that there's a sort of inevitable balance.

You can't have the end without the yang. That's it. Like I find that really frustrating because it was so close and then it just sort of fell back on a kind of storytelling cliche. So, yeah.

**Mark:** [00:37:18] So anyways, that's my opening screed, in terms of just purely on the basis of the movies and their own narrative logic

and all of that.

**Aven:** [00:37:27] Well, I've kind of given a bunch of my thoughts mean we've talked about about like an hour and already almost. So do you want to talk about the questions you have or do you want me to, shall I like talk a little bit about some of the Epic tropes and interesting connections I see to sort of?

**Mark:** [00:37:42] Well, let me state the questions and not answer them.

Okay.

So, first, because at least one of these questions is going to, interrogate the sort of classical foundations of all of this. So first of all, is the Skywalker saga, a saga?

In [00:38:00] particular, is it a family saga in old Norse terms? Is it a saga of the Icelanders kind of essential structure? and the question that I would ask there then is do the plots of the Norse family sagas discuss matters of great import.

**Aven:** [00:38:18] Are they how to be human or are they about like, this is what happened to my family.

**Mark:** [00:38:22] I mean, indirectly, they, kind of address human universal fears and concerns and

**Aven:** [00:38:27] that sort of thing. Every story does, but they don't

**Mark:** [00:38:29] tell the stories of Kings and nations. Right. they tell the stories of families.

**Aven:** [00:38:35] not, I mean, some families are Kings and nations.

But these

**Mark:** [00:38:38] are not, these are not these, the people. The Icelanders were, it was not well, and it was, it was not a kingdom. There was no King. It was a democracy. And it's not within the purview, at least of the sagas that it ceases to become a democracy. On the other hand, is it an Epic in The classical sense [00:39:00] of, you know, Greek and Roman Epic, which are matters of great import. They are, they decide the fate of nations. They decide the feet of kingdoms and great people

and so we can also compare both of these to, you know, the saga structure and the classical Epic structure. And there are, you know, in our previous.

Yeah, I guess episodes

**Aven:** [00:39:24] we ddressed, address these in particular in, the, the force awakens since we talked about this.

**Mark:** [00:39:29] So now that we have the full nine films,

**Aven:** [00:39:31] what can we

**Mark:** [00:39:32] say about it, yeah.

Is our, was our prediction, you know, right or wrong. you're

**Aven:** [00:39:38] suggesting, I remember our prediction

**Mark:** [00:39:41] and then there's, there is the other possibility that there is some element of romance. As a genre here. and there were Norse romances.

**Aven:** [00:39:50] And what you mean by romance is not like romcom not a romance novel or, yeah, like a medieval romance,

**Mark:** [00:39:58] a medieval romance, like the King Arthur [00:40:00] stories. and there, there were even Norse romances in this later stuff and there are even some hybrid forms.

So, there are some, one in particular saga that the first. Three quarters of it, maybe, or maybe two thirds, are, is a family saga in structure. And then there's this long Coda at the end, which is very much a romance. So is it blending genres like that? and then finally, I guess the other issue is all the question about.

Family that we discussed already and the importance of genealogy in North sagas, particularly family sagas, where it is kind of telling the story of generations over several time periods. So those are the questions that I have.

**Aven:** [00:40:48] I mean, my very broad answer is I think the incoherence we've just talked about is key to saying, it's really hard to say any of you know, to answer any of those questions. Because [00:41:00] to have an, you know, I'm, we're mean, I'm saying this as very much as a criticism. On the other hand, these are movies that span what, three, four decades?

Five,

**Mark:** [00:41:12] 1977 so

**Aven:** [00:41:15] to 17 is four decades. So like four and a half decades. And obviously bunch of different writers, bunch of, you know, like, so to ask for coherence from that is asking a big thing. And to be

**Mark:** [00:41:30] fair, I mean, the first six movies were auteur productions,

**Aven:** [00:41:34] and then the last three are not.

But the first six movies aren't coherent either. So, yeah. Lucas doesn't get an out on that.

**Mark:** [00:41:43] I think they were more coherent, though. I will make the argument that the problem of, of the, the recent trilogy is it didn't have a guiding.

**Aven:** [00:41:54] No, I, I would agree with that, but I would say also that the prequels.

[00:42:00] Retcon a ton of stuff that's in, and I don't just mean in little pieces. I mean, in terms of like suddenly bringing up the slavery stuff and then dropping the slavery stuff, bringing up black and white as not the binary that we thought it was. And then like not really carrying that through. And you know, like there's, they bring a bunch of stuff up and then they kind of drop it.

**Mark:** [00:42:19] Though I would say in defense of the prequels, they're probably as a set of three films, the most coherent

**Aven:** [00:42:25] I would. Yeah, I think that's true. I think they are utterly let down by their scripts, and it's really frustrating because I think they have really good ideas and they're beautiful and they have the stupidest dialogue in the entire world, which makes it impossible for the actors to produce good

**Mark:** [00:42:42] acting.

Yeah. Lucas probably should've taken his sort of

**Aven:** [00:42:46] draft and then given it to somebody who knew how to write dialogue. Yeah. Yeah. No, and okay, we're not, we're not dealing with those. That said, I agree those three are pretty coherent, but they aren't. They don't fit as well with the original [00:43:00] three as you would want them to.

And then there's been definitely problems with coherence. Okay. So that said, it's hard to answer your questions because you can kind of come up with an answer that's several different answers and find, you know, you can, you can show your work to prove most of them if you just. Cherry pick your scenes sometimes within the same movie.

So what I will do then to sort of start answering those is I will talk about some of this stuff cause my eye moves naturally to Epic because that's what I know best. So let me talk about some of the things that I saw that are Epic. these are not like. you know, what are the big picture things that make it an Epic?

Well, it's about the fate of nations and worlds. It's about the fate of a galaxy. So on that level, like you just said, definitely Epic, not saga. it, while it lacks coherence it's attempting for coherence, which I mean, I think is not a romance. There's a, a goal. A narrative coherence, [00:44:00] at least theoretically,

**Mark:** [00:44:00] there's a unified plot.

**Aven:** [00:44:01] Yeah. Yes. Yeah. There's a, there's an overarching plot, which means it's not really like a romance that said that it could be elements, all of those things, but so I think in its entirety as a nine movie thing, and we're leaving aside all that, you know, rogue one and solo and stuff, but as those nine movies, I think it's an Epic.

Or an Epic cycle because it is dealing with huge questions. Yeah. The galaxy is different. It is Wars on a scale hitherto unimaginable, et cetera, et cetera. That has to be Epic. There's no real other. What else could you compare it to? Right. Now the fact that it has families in it, you could argue, so do all epics.

I mean. They're all about families and family obligations and family inheritances as well.

**Mark:** [00:44:55] But do they cover a timeframe across generations? They generally don't.

**Aven:** [00:44:59] Well the Epic [00:45:00] cycle does, and I think that would be the thing to say. So Epic, like the Iliad doesn't, the Epic cycle,.Which does not survive. So to people that don't know what I'm talking about, when we talk about the Epic cycle, we're talking about a whole series of epics.

That went from at least the story of Peleus and Thetis, the parents of Achilles and the wedding at which the Apple of discord was thrown, that produced the judgment of Paris, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. From at least that period all the way to past, the Odyssey of many returns from Troy. I don't know all of the details of it, which ones they were, but there were also epics about the seven against Thebes and the first siege of Troy, which happened to the

That was the generation of Heracles,

**Mark:** [00:45:46] they're not considered part of the same cycle,

**Aven:** [00:45:49] but they are. The point being, there's a huge interconnected series, or there were a huge interconnected series.

I mean, no, they maybe don't have [00:46:00] quite as many generations, but the whole scope of mythology does definitely cover all those generations and you have episodic, you know, if we're going to talk about nine movies, that's nine poems. If I were going to make a connection to a classical, you could definitely find nine poems that went that far.

**Mark:** [00:46:18] I mean, I guess you could say loosely, well, first of all, there are Icelandic sagas that in a single saga covers many generations.

**Aven:** [00:46:28] But you know, to say nine poems, like nine movies shouldn't be one poem. Yeah. You know,

**Mark:** [00:46:34] I mean, the other thing you can say is that the collection of, well, not that they were ever thought of as a collection, but all of the Icelandic family, there is Interconn-

people are mentioned in

**Aven:** [00:46:44] multiple sagas. So I don't think, like, I, I guess my point is I don't think it's really useful. I mean. None of these screenwriters was sitting down and being like, I am going to do exactly the Epic cycle. Right? So it's not really [00:47:00] useful to try to, to say, this is only this or only that.

So on that level, I will say there are many things about it that are Epic. And I would say that the people constructing the story probably were thinking in Epic terms, often, not exclusively about, yeah, the scope, you know. Epics are about of gods and men. There are no gods in the star Wars world, but you can very definitely say that the Jedi play that role, right?

Like they are the supernatural, natural and the Force is

**Mark:** [00:47:32] God.

**Aven:** [00:47:33] It's like a God, there's this idea or the forces like fate and the Jedi are the ones who are enacting fate or trying to follow the dictates of fate. And they have this supernatural ability that raises them above the, raises them above regular people.

So, you know, you can make those kinds of parallels. And then there's on a, on a sort of more granular level, just looking at this movie in particular, You know, there are things like [00:48:00] the, the Epic cycle is filled with prophetic requirements. Things that are prophecies like for Troy to fall, you have to have, and this is the Epic cycles, not in the Iliad, but for Troy to fall in the Epic cycle, you have to have the bow of Heracles. You have to have, the son of Achilles has to come. You have to get the palladium, you have to steal the palladium from Troy. You have like, there's like. Seven or eight different requirements that have to be fulfilled and at various points, some prophet will tell you or some Oracle will tell you, you have to have those in order for Troy to fall.

Well, the Sith Wayfinders are very much a MacGuffin like that, right? Like you have to find the Sith Wayfinders or else you aren't going to be able to. fight the final battle. So I wrote down the McGuffin is that must be found before the final boss battle, which like it really does feel at moments like it is just a, video game, right?

Like, Kay, go here, go here, go here, do this, press that, see this, got that. Okay. Collect [00:49:00] this, collect that. Moving on. there's tons of in the Epic cycle would like that. Like the Iliad wasn't. But tons of the other ones that don't survive, we have the, they would totally like that.

**Mark:** [00:49:10] Now in the earlier, really both earlier trilogies.

there was a prophecy surrounding a person, the chosen one, and bringing balance to the force.

**Aven:** [00:49:21] Yeah. But that prophecy

**Mark:** [00:49:23] was that there at all in any of the new films.

**Aven:** [00:49:26] No, I don't feel like it was, I don't feel like it's ever picked up on. And I, I think that's one of the frustrations. And that's sort of what I mean about like, I think Ray's final apotheosis cause that's what she has, right?

She has a moment of becoming divine. I think it could have culminated all of those things, and it doesn't, all it does is make the line between the four, the Jedi and the Sith an irrevocable uncrossable line. It doesn't make any sense. but yeah, that those prophecies in the first two sets of trilogies though, are very much like the nebulous kind of [00:50:00] prophecy that you don't understand until it's fulfilled.

Right. Whereas the idea that there's a prophecy about, cause she finds the book, right, right. She finds the books just like there's a prophecy about these. It's like information about these things. I have to find. And I think Luke was going to figure it out and I'm, I think I figured it out now, that kind of prophecy where you might not fully understand it, but it's definitely telling you a task you have to do.

That's a very epic cycle thing. Right? And you know, here's the thing. You have to go and get this item, and if you don't get this item, you won't succeed. And so I thought that was a point. So

**Mark:** [00:50:36] I mean, the other thing that that seems to be a real key element of the way that a plot moves in those kinds of epics is that there is this sense of fate, as you were saying.

And certainly that kind of fate stuff is there in again, the two earlier trilogies. Is there any kind of operation of fate then in the new trilogy, [00:51:00] and particularly the last

**Aven:** [00:51:02] film.

I think the, I think the stuff at the end where it's all of the people come together and they have this dyad of the force that feels like they're picking up on the idea of fate They were fated to get to this point. But you're right, it isn't, it isn't highlighted the same way it is earlier. and in the earlier movies, you know, Palpatine seems to sort of understand what will happen.

**Mark:** [00:51:31] This is as I've foreseen.

**Aven:** [00:51:33] I'm foreseen it and it must happen this way and you can do whatever you want, but whatever you want, will lead you.

You know, it's the self fulfilling prophecy thing of it doesn't matter what you know or what you think you're trying to fight against, it's going to lead you to the same place no matter what. But then of course, he keeps failing, right? Like he's wrong. Every time in the end he's right and right and right and right and right, and then.

At the last moment, except in the final prequel where he's [00:52:00] ascendant. but he's, you know, he's eventually wrong in the second trilogy. Yeah. I think it's one of the, again, one of the points that well, I'll get to that in a moment. Let me just point out some of the other things that were sort of Epic, like, Epics have aristeia, which are moments of best-ness, right? So one of the things you have in an Epic is because most epics are martial in some form, you have fighters having their moment of glory, right? Where they, off their excellence. They show off the things that make them a hero. And I will say that I think with rise of Skywalker, we have that with Rey.

We have that in the ship sequence. You know, like that's a moment of just pure, sort of her perfection as a force user, and yet that,

**Mark:** [00:52:46] that engagement ends with her believing she.

**Aven:** [00:52:50] Yeah,

**Mark:** [00:52:51] killed a

comrade

**Aven:** [00:52:51] yeah, you know, that is an extreme, it's such an extreme use of force that even Kylo Ren is shocked she can do it. So that is her aristeia. [00:53:00] But an aristeia doesn't always like. It's excellence in it shows the strength you have.

Well, doesn't necessarily mean it's good.

**Mark:** [00:53:07] Yeah. And that's often an element, I guess, with classical heroes is that they're, they're very

**Aven:** [00:53:13] Their excellence is not necessarily morally good. Yeah. So Achilles' aristeia involves him fighting a river, slaughtering, like it's horrifying. It is to, I think, genuinely to anybody.

Even an ancient Greek. he is a force of nature and he is murderous and it's, terrifying. It shows what he is, where he is extreme and where he is excellent. But that doesn't mean you would want to be like that or be around it or that it wasn't terrifying. And he, he breaks the bounds of nature.

He goes beyond what a human should do. Diomedes' aristeia is so extreme that he ends up wounding Aphrodite, you know, like it's more than anyone should do. So an aristeia isn't necessarily, and that's like, that's an important point of ancient [00:54:00] heroism. Heroism in the ancient world is not comfortable or wholesome, right?

there's no captain in America in the ancient world of heroes. They, when they protect you, it's great. But it's still scary and they don't always protect you. And so I think an aristeia, in its purest form is not necessarily about goodness. It's about excellence.

Rey shows in that scene, her extreme ability with the force. But that in itself, and I think it's very meaningful in that scene that she uses force lightning, which we have only ever seen associated with evil. so she uses it. She has that capacity. It shows the extremity of her abilities. But it doesn't have a good result in the end.

It's okay. But though apparently we're okay with the fact it killed lots of people. As long as it didn't kill Chewie.

**Mark:** [00:54:54] I don't know that we've ever, up to that point, seen anyone use force [00:55:00] lightning to destroy a ship.

**Aven:** [00:55:01] Yeah. So she is exhibiting her special ability, which is an extreme force ability. Yeah, I had written down the balance between like the gods and the fate, the gods, even the gods have to follow the fates in Epic. Even Zeus has to do what fate has foretold.

so even the Jedi have to bow to sort of the force and the prophecy. So I think there's this balance between gods and fate. The emperor is so bad at persuasion and psychology, and he's done this ever since, return of the Jedi. He's always saying yes, give in to the dark side, given to your anger.

And that always gives people the clue that they're like, Oh, I shouldn't be angry. I must restrain myself. And he does the same thing in this one. He's like, he tells, Rey, you and Kylo, you're going to do this, you're going to attack me. This is what's going to happen.

**Mark:** [00:55:53] It worked with Anakin.

**Aven:** [00:55:55] It did work with Anakin, but it doesn't work with anybody else.

And in this case, it's like the [00:56:00] self-fulfilling prophecy of much of myth, right? By telling them what will happen. it's sort of the reverse of that. It's reverse of a self fulfilling prophecy. He tells him what will happen and therefore it does not happen. So it's like, it's just a little flip of that.

It just makes me laugh every time. One of the other scenes is the, the idea of the ghost of the father. So fathers and sons, right? Fathers and sons, are huge in Epic, Roman Epic in particular, but Greek epic too, big deal. So thinking of Aeneid in particular, the Roman Epic, the ghost of the father coming back as a guide, telling you what to do.

We've had the father figure in other movies, but here we have literally the father. So Han Solo coming back to tell Ben what to do. And then Ben chooses the right path because of the ghost of the father.

**Mark:** [00:56:50] And that's, that's something, I mean the, the sort of classical father son thing, something that's very different from the way it operates in Norse [00:57:00] Saga. If anyone comes back from the dead in Norse Saga, it is unambiguously not good.

**Aven:** [00:57:06] Yeah, terrifying and horrifying.

Yes. Yeah. Whereas this idea of ghosts--

**Mark:** [00:57:10] I mean, there is the influence of trying to live up to your--.

**Aven:** [00:57:13] Patrilineal descent, Yeah, yeah.

**Mark:** [00:57:15] And you're often reminded of it by other relatives saying, you

know,

**Aven:** [00:57:18] a lot of wives and sisters and mothers say, your father did, why, why are you such a weakling?

**Mark:** [00:57:23] There's that kind of reminder. But if anyone comes, if you see a spirit from beyond the grave, this is NOT GOOD.

**Aven:** [00:57:30] Bad bad bad. Yeah, yeah.

So that's, that's a difference though. the real locus classicus there is, the Aeneid, is the well, and it's the Aeneid, going to the underworld and getting the advice from his father right.

but even he also has a dream where Anchises comes to him and he has a dream where Hector comes to him, like multiple people come to him and dreams and give him important advice. So that element of the ghost coming back is, is really very Roman specifically, though it may be pulling on sources we don't know for the Greek [00:58:00] sources.

And then I will say, just to cut to your earlier points about the incoherence like I'm going to read the point I wrote down while we were watching the movie. Incoherence of message: friendship? Love? Jedi bad or good? Family, important or not? Blood? Like it's exactly what you were talking about.

So we can go onto the saga thing. I was so mad they made her Palpatine's granddaughter. Like what the hell?! That surely was not what they were thinking when they were like. ... I feel like that's a change from, she's nobody.

**Mark:** [00:58:36] Well, it's certainly a change from episode eight

**Aven:** [00:58:38] that's what I'm saying. Like in episode eight when

**Mark:** [00:58:40] But it may have been what was intended in episode seven maybe,

**Aven:** [00:58:45] but I,

**Mark:** [00:58:46] I mean, they were certainly hinting heavily

**Aven:** [00:58:49] that there was some issue about her heritage, and I mean, admittedly her having no parents and stuff, you know, sets up, but I loved what they did, in eight where they were [00:59:00] like, no.

That doesn't matter. Her parents were just people who left her because the world is a complicated and sometimes cruel place where people don't always come back and things, you know, things go wrong and she's just a person. And then in nine, and especially at the end when she's like, I'm, my name's Rey Skywalker.

It seems to just have reverted completely back to, the only way you can be a hero is if you have the right DNA and you come from the right people, and if your race and your class and your family isn't right, you can't be a hero. And I hate that. I've got to say really, it's very ancient. Don't get me wrong.

Totally in keeping with the ancient world. I don't like it,

**Mark:** [00:59:43] but of course it entirely depends on how you read the prequels, because Anakin was a nobody. His mother was a nobody.

**Aven:** [00:59:52] Yeah. But he starts a family that becomes basically, Zeus slept with his mom. Right. I mean, that's [01:00:00] essentially what we get. The force impregnated her.

It might as well be a golden shower. And then from that point on, the house of Skywalker is the only force in the galaxy that matters.

**Mark:** [01:00:12] Now, again, as I say, this depends on how you read the sequels because some people have taken it to be implied that really Palpatine is the sort of father of Anakin

**Aven:** [01:00:24] somehow manipulated the Forcet to do that.

Yeah. Well, in that case, it just makes it even more extreme. It's still, it's even more about like only one, only from one person does all power descend. I just

**Mark:** [01:00:37] In which case, she is sort of a Skywalker, or at least all the Skywalkers are Palpatines or

**Aven:** [01:00:42] whatever, whatever. But none of that makes it better.

**Mark:** [01:00:45] No, no.

**Aven:** [01:00:45] I mean, ideologically, I think it's, I think it's vile, frankly. It's just, I don't, I understand that that's, I understand that that's not like, this is very normal in fantasy. And I , I don't mean, that this is all about evil racism. Like, you know, I [01:01:00] know this is how fantasy works often, but I, You know what, as soon as you start to pick it apart, what the hell message is that? It's awful.

**Mark:** [01:01:09] Again, it is just drawing on, cause it's also the medieval thing, right? The farm boy who turns out to be

**Aven:** [01:01:15] absolutely.

**Mark:** [01:01:16] But that's kinda the difference between fairytales and folktales.

Well, yeah, fairytales and folktales. Cause that's more the folk

**Aven:** [01:01:22] tale. That's a folk tale

**Mark:** [01:01:23] story. The folk hero is

**Aven:** [01:01:25] nobody, but he's clever. And so he, yeah, no, absolutely. And, and from that perspective, it is very classical.

As I said, you know, nobody in classical mythology is ever a nobody, they're always connected somehow to somebody. It's also the romance, the romance tradition, and in many ways, even though you're not talking about Kings, it is the saga story. Like you were saying, descent and lineage is very important in Icelandic sagas.

It's

**Mark:** [01:01:52] important, though, I mean, you frequently see descendants, not living up to

**Aven:** [01:01:57] but they're expected to. That's the point [01:02:00] the idea that blood has power, that family lineage matters, It's

**Mark:** [01:02:05] important, but not a determiner.

**Aven:** [01:02:08] No. But it's, no, it's, it doesn't determine your state, but the idea is that, When a generation doesn't live up to its family, the whole point is that blood should make the difference, but doesn't for this generation, and then it will be redeemed by the next generation. So the underlying assumption still is there.

**Mark:** [01:02:29] I don't know if the assumption was that it's causal or that it's a question of, do you try and live up to that for the sake of honor?

Right. And it's what you do that matters.

**Aven:** [01:02:41] Yeah. But the people who, will manage to achieve great deeds are very rarely not of some sort of lineage.

**Mark:** [01:02:50] I think there are some sort of the, the peripheral characters who are not of, you know, particularly notable birth who ended up being loyal and [01:03:00] you know, heroic and noteworthy and.

**Aven:** [01:03:02] Loyal, loyal and noteworthy. Worthy, but not the main character.

**Mark:** [01:03:06] Not the main character maybe. But

**Aven:** [01:03:07] I mean, that's the, you know, if you're going to do a family saga, you're going to do it about your family. So obviously the members of your family are going to be, they're notable characters, right? Like there's a circular logic to that.

So, no, I don't think the Icelandic sagas are as focused on that element as some of these others. But it's there. So to say that Star Wars cares about family lineage, just puts it in this tradition. So I will, you know, granted that, they're hardly different on that, but I still find it disappointing and I, I'm not surprised it's there in the first trilogy and I understand why the prequels double down on it, but when the sequels seemed to be breaking the mold, I was so excited.

And for them to then come back to, Oh no, she's actually a Palpatine. Not that we ever get explained how she is a Palpatine

At least she wasn't a

**Mark:** [01:03:58] Skywalker somehow. [01:04:00]

**Aven:** [01:04:00] I don't like the emphasis on blood and it, didn't bother me as much in the original series, in the original trilogy, but I was so disappointed that they didn't follow through on breaking that emphasis from eight to nine

I think we're very agreed on the fact that seven, eight, and nine, do not hang together.

No, they don't. They aren't saying, like, is friendship a good thing or is it a bad thing? Like Finn being left behind on the death star in nine, for instance, his devotion to Rey,

yeah. That whole like it seems to be building up to this like really important friendship. The fact that she and Po and he are friends is like key to why they will succeed. Just like it was in a new hope. Right.

**Mark:** [01:04:46] And she has a freak out and leaves

**Aven:** [01:04:47] and she never even sees

**Mark:** [01:04:48] him.

Well, she does see him because she throws him back with the Force. So she knows

**Aven:** [01:04:52] he's there, but she doesn't like, as far as she, she couldn't care less. She's totally uninteresed in him. Nothing he does affects whether or [01:05:00] not she succeeds. He is not important to it. So in the original trilogy, their friendship, and you know,

**Mark:** [01:05:06] Is everything.

That's

**Aven:** [01:05:06] the important point on Dagobah right.

**Mark:** [01:05:08] Oh yeah, absolutely.

I

**Aven:** [01:05:09] have to save my friends is, is, is this key thing, in contradistinction to what the Jedi think,

Oh

**Mark:** [01:05:15] yeah. The, the friendship bond between Luke, Leia and Han is much more powerful,

**Aven:** [01:05:20] and even Lando, like he and Chewy like everybody and the droids, right? Like it's there and it's not only powerful, but we, we are told it is the thing that makes them actually successful.

Well, not just motivate, it's what makes them successful. They succeed because they are friends, not in spite of being friends. Yes. And that is what seems to be, you know, in nine, it seems to be building that up the.

**Mark:** [01:05:41] Yeah, it's completely irrelevant.

**Aven:** [01:05:43] but in that wonderful scene at the beginning when they arrive and like back, to see Rey, and they seem so like a team, but

**Mark:** [01:05:51] But the fact that she succeeds, has nothing to do with,

Poe and Finn.

**Aven:** [01:05:54] I know. That's my point, is

**Mark:** [01:05:57] it's entirely about the relationship she's built up [01:06:00] with Kylo.

**Aven:** [01:06:00] Yeah. It's yet another place in which they've, they just totally undercut any message they had in a previous movie or even in the movie itself,

**Mark:** [01:06:10] and the thing is,

**Aven:** [01:06:11] it's really bad writing.

**Mark:** [01:06:14] It's all kind of built up in seven. Yeah. Right. In that the friendship does matter. And it does save things,

**Aven:** [01:06:21] it does matter, and in eight and then eight because like Rose and Finn becomes really important and, and the connections in that final battle.

Yeah. So all of this is me just saying that's what's really frustrating is that I think these, these good pieces, but I don't in the end, understand. Is friendship important is friendship not?

**Mark:** [01:06:43] which is why I think my, my reaction to nine is maybe more negative than yours, is that there's just a few little set pieces that are more fan service than anything else that are kind of enjoyable just as a scene.

But the film as a whole is

not.

[01:07:00] **Aven:** [01:07:00] Well, my positive reaction.

**Mark:** [01:07:01] It doesn't give me a positive reaction.

**Aven:** [01:07:02] My positive reaction, as I said earlier to you, like over dinner is just that you put me in that world and you give me those characters. I'm not going to hate it. I don't really care what you do with them. Even if you do stupid things that make me annoyed, I'm still going to rather watch that than not.

Like I don't, I don't have a hatred reaction in me for that kind of a movie, so I don't hate it. I don't even have an overwhelmingly negative reaction to it, but I do feel as we move through it, I get grumpy about a bunch of stuff all the way through.End result: it's still a star Wars movie. I like watching star Wars movies.

Ic have a very small C Catholic approach to that. Like you can do mostly anything. And I'm still going to be like, yeah, I still like watching these people do these things in this world. But I agree. it's bad narrative, it's bad narrative structure. It's bad plot writing and it's really bad ethics [01:08:00] and bad ethics, both because it's bad.

I actually just do genuinely think people are redeemed for no reason, and that's bad. but also it's ethically bad in the sense it's just incoherent. It doesn't know what, like if it wants to say the messages, friendship isn't as important.

Fine. Say that. But it doesn't even say that. It just does. It has no idea from scene to scene, it does not know what its message is. And I think that's really not good. And it's frustrating because I think there's like great acting in it, wonderful visuals. You know, all of those pieces that you know are good, like people do great stuff in it.

I really liked Rey, I like Rey the whole way, even when she's being an idiot and caring about Kylo, anyway,.

**Mark:** [01:08:43] So how, should the last trilogy have gone? Like, you know, absence of all three of them. Was there any way to make this work?

**Aven:** [01:08:55] I don't know. it's easy to critique.

It's hard to write. Yeah. Let me be [01:09:00] blunt about that.

**Mark:** [01:09:00] But I suppose what you can say is, I suppose the one thing you can say is they shouldn't have made them that it was, it was coherent with six films,

**Aven:** [01:09:10] you know? You could say that, but like I loved force awakens and I really enjoyed eight too. I'm not sad those are in the world. I'm not even sad. The Rise of Skywalker's in the world. I don't think it, it doesn't undermine, you know, later movies do not destroy earlier movies. No,

**Mark:** [01:09:28] but I mean, you could have done them like. Solo and Rogue One where they were.

**Aven:** [01:09:33] Yeah, they didn't try, they didn't have to be so beholden to it.

Yeah. I don't even mind that. I just, I think if you were going to make them then sit down before you make all three movies and sketch out your story, and I don't even care which story it was. It could have been a story that went on to say, the Jedi were right. Attachment is wrong. Let's all be Zen.

Could have been that, right? Like I might not have liked that message, [01:10:00] but I could have lived with it. It could have been a story that said friendship is all , the Jedi were wrong. Like, I don't care what the story is, but figure that out. Just decide what your message is. Make it make sense with the first two trilogies.

And say whatever you do with each individual movie, it's got to fit this. It has to tell this story. that's what I think the big mistake was, and I don't, I think there were lots of different ways they could have gone. Like each of the movies gives us glimpses of different storylines that would have worked, but they're all together.

It doesn't make any sense. That's what's frustrating about it and it doesn't work. And so I don't mind that they made them. I and I don't mind that they were different in tone like that I think would have been okay too, give a different director, you know, to each of them. I don't think that would have necessarily mattered.

**Mark:** [01:10:53] They just,

**Aven:** [01:10:54] they needed, they needed a through line that says, you know, here are the beats. We're going to [01:11:00] hit each movie. We aren't even going to tell you what the plot is, but you know, the end point of the movie has to be friendship saves the day or the end point of the movie has to be attachment matters or the end point of the movie has to be black and white are not all there is.

People are more complicated than that, whatever. you know, here are the four moral principles of this, of this movie, of this movie franchise. Because people have always treated star Wars like that, like it has moral principles. Well, embrace that. Here are the like three or four points. Don't deviate from those, right?

Whatever plot you damn well, please just make sure you hit these points.

**Mark:** [01:11:43] I guess the thing I'm asking is more in terms of the structure and what we were talking about, it's its connection to ancient and medieval story structure, story structures. and you know, is there a way to have another,

**Aven:** [01:11:59] yeah. Well, [01:12:00] so there's two different things.

One is you do it as a full on family saga, and you never teased that she's not part of that family and you just make it. The next chapter. Another way you do it is to make it a romance to say, okay, we had family saga for two, two sets, and now we're going to do romance. We're going to do episodic. Adventurous,

**Mark:** [01:12:20] which is kind of what rogue one. And

**Aven:** [01:12:22] yeah, but you could have done that. We could have done that even still within the same sort of overall arc. and then you would have sort of said, okay, we won't give you those four moral structures we'll just be like, do whatever you want, but don't try to tie it all up.

Just the further adventures of, you know,

**Mark:** [01:12:37] and not bring back the whole Palpatine.

**Aven:** [01:12:39] Exactly. Not give us the same people again. Just be like, Hey, we've set up a world. We've set up the rules of that world. This is how things work in this world. We're going to do some more adventures. They can have people who are related because we can't, that make us care about them.

But they're just going to go on and have their world and it's not going to all tie neatly together. It's just going to be more stories. [01:13:00] That would have been fine, could have been an Epic, but like I think the Epic and the family saga both demand coherence. you know, the Icelandic family sagas don't necessarily always have a through line or a moral story because they're based on, to some extent, actual real people who did real things and real people are not coherent.

So in that sense it's true, but like,

**Mark:** [01:13:22] Yeah, and in, particularly in the earlier sagas of the Icelanders, they, they're not as literary. Yeah. The later ones mold the actual events into more of a plot, but,

**Aven:** [01:13:35] but, but the thing is, if that's what you're doing, then you don't pick up Palpatine and et cetera, et cetera. Right. Like if you're going to just be like, here's what people are like.

Then you don't have all these resonances and echoes and re repeating stories and Palpatine coming back. I mean, Palpatine coming back really is

**Mark:** [01:13:54] Yeah, I thought that was really cheap.

**Aven:** [01:13:56] I, yeah, I really think it, if they [01:14:00] had done it really carefully and made it pay off something like made it be the thing that like capped the basic moral messages of the first two trilogies about the seductiveness of evil versus the importance of friendship or something. I don't know. Then maybe, but as it was all it was, was just like, Oh, we can't think of another big bad, I guess we'll just have a big bad, who's the guy we already had.

We had him in the first two trilogies. So I guess we have him in the third because otherwise, what's the symmetry to it? You know? And it doesn't feel like there was any, and all he was was like a demon at the end.

**Mark:** [01:14:39] Yeah, He didn't really have personal motivation, so

**Aven:** [01:14:42] No, all he cared about was like, Oh, I'm going to put my soul in you.

So my granddaughter can be mean.

**Mark:** [01:14:48] Well, I think he would have been perfectly fine if she had just been evil and just decided to carry on and then he probably could have just faded into the background.

**Aven:** [01:14:59] Yeah, all he wanted was [01:15:00] people to be evil In the first two trilogies, he wanted power. That's fine. That's what villains want. But in this one, what he wanted was people to be mean to other people, not even himself being mean, just like people in general should be mean to other people. Like it was not a, it didn't even have the force of like a personal motivation.

Yeah. So I don't know. We have talked about this a long time and only a certain amount of it is technically relevant to the themes of our podcast. A lot of it was just ranting about Star Wars. I think we should call an end

to this. Okay.

**Mark:** [01:15:38] I do think, I mean, just to sort of defend the makers of that movie. Yeah, I think they had an impossible task.

**Aven:** [01:15:46] Yeah. But the first two movies set them up to an impossible task.

Yeah.

**Mark:** [01:15:49] So given that I mean seven and eight, which were both great movies on their own, but

**Aven:** [01:15:55] it did not

**Mark:** [01:15:55] match, set up something that couldn't be

**Aven:** [01:15:58] resolved. Yeah. I agree. And [01:16:00] I like, I can see the pieces of good ideas all through the movie. Just in the end didn't come to that.

Well, thanks for sticking with us through two hours of, these are my annoying remarks about star Wars.

**Mark:** [01:16:16] I did no research other than watching the movie. So this is not the fault of my over exuberant research.

**Aven:** [01:16:23] No, we just had a lot of opinions. Yes. we will try to come back with something maybe a little more linguistic-y next time.

Who knows? I have no idea. as I said, do tell us if you want us to talk about diseases or something else. We're always open to suggestions. We have other ideas too, but right at this very moment, I can't remember what they are. So we'll be back soon. We hope you're all doing well and either staying at home or opening up safely, depending on where you are, what's going on, or whether you can trust your government and a whole bunch of other things that we should probably not think too hard about, but be well [01:17:00] and thanks for listening.

Bye

**Mark:** [01:17:02] bye.

**Aven:** [01:17:03] For more information on this podcast. Check out our website, www.alliterative.net where you can find links to the videos, blog posts, sources, and credits, and all our contact info.

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Thanks for listening.

**Mark:** [01:17:48] Bye.