

Archetype Schmarkytype

I'm a bad toad. On many occasions I've said that I hate Harry Pottery and then felt justified and smug about it. But on this occasion I decided to figure out why I have such a strong reaction to the guy. With a little introspection, I find that it isn't Harry Potter I hate. What gets my goat are real world magicians trying to make themselves into Potter-esque Wizards and surrounding themselves with a Potter-esque world. It seems to me that this approach is more interested in being the archetype instead of being the magician.

Archetypes tap into primal facets of existence and reality, just like symbols and spells. In fact, an archetype is a form of symbol, just like a rune or pentacle. The basic concept of a particular archetype holds a vast amount of meaning far beyond the basic shapes our minds give that archetype. Like symbols archetypes are doorways and conduits for facts and reality, but they are not the fact or the reality themselves. It's almost like saying the clothes are the human underneath. From a distance it may look that way, but closer examination reveals the shape the human gives the clothing. Being close up also reveals the way the clothing governs what we see of the person beneath.

Granted, magicians work with archetypes and do it extensively. Potter's world, and a few other fantasy worlds, are chock full of those archetypes. Those archetypes can teach us great things, but I'm not sure we sometimes learn what we are supposed to. When we get caught up in the form we lose sight of the function. This means that the danger in working with archetypes is that instead of using the archetype to highlight aspects of our selves and reality, we attempt to mold ourselves into the archetype. I think every occultist has trodden this path at least once. I know I have.

Personal experience indicates that trying to become the archetype is not advisable. Nor am I entirely sure it can ever meet with success. Working with an archetype to help get in touch oneself is significantly different than working to become the archetype at the expense of self. We are people, not archetypes. Those great and wondrous characters are pure symbolic essence. They are what we might be if we weren't human.

I don't feel the task of the magician is to *look* like a magician, prove that I'm a magician or prove that magic works. The old burden "To Know, To Dare, To Will and To Be Silent" runs through my mind when I consider how best to approach being magical. Franz Bardon in particular was keen on the silent part and there are several extant systems that advocate silence about ones activities. In short, the primary task of a magician is to be effective. Truly effective magic is improvement of self and world and when archetypes are used for those purposes then they are used wisely. If used to reinforce what we already know or want to

believe then the archetype, like so many other things, becomes a stumbling block or cage.

I'm pretty sure I'm about as far from the Wizardly archetype as I can get. But, then again, I'm a money ho in Corporate Babylon and there doesn't seem to be much point in destroying my upward mobility or credibility. In fact, I find that to be distinctly anti-magical. Ironically, if I surround myself with the trappings of the archetype instead of integrating that archetype within my own psyche, I have effectively isolated myself from the world. And magic doesn't work in a vacuum.

But magicians wear robes! Magicians act magical! Magicians are supposed to act different! That's what magicians do! No. It isn't. Except for maybe the "act different" part. But even that should be a natural byproduct of living a magical life and not some hell bent for Texas need to look like a magician to everybody else on the planet.

In Potter's world the magic stays hidden because it is outside of the norm, but in Tolkien's world someone like Gandalf was within the social, political and theological norms for his world. He may have been on the edge, or walking two worlds at once, he most certainly was not human, but he was not *outside*. There was common ground between himself and his world. Granted, as an archetype Gandalf had the luxury of not having to look to an archetype for answers. There may be a bit of wisdom in that. That's because archetypes don't have the answers. We do. Archetypes help us to ask the right questions.

We can't be the archetype, but we can still be magicians. There are quite a few ways to go about it, but it's worth taking a moment to consider what Agrippa said in his Three Books of Occult Philosophy:

"Whosoever therefore is desirous to study in this Faculty, if he be not skilled in naturall Philosophy... Mathematicks... [and] not learned in Theologie... he cannot be possibly able to understand the rationality of Magick. For there is no work that is done by meer Magick, nor any work that is meerly magical..."ⁱ

In other words, we don't live by magic alone because we are multi-dimensional people in every sense. We draw from many disciplines, whether magical or mundane, to create a composite way of life. Our way of life sees magic as a philosophy, a process of self-realization, and a tool to help us realize our potential and manifest Will. It does not see putting on the archetype as the answer to the problem.

St. Ignatius and the Grey Pilgrim

I suppose that since I've railed about the wrong way to approach an archetype I should present what I feel to be a right way to work with one. It's not the only way. And, quite honestly, I think the underlying intent of what you do is probably more important than the actual methods and techniques used.

When I was younger, I thought that I really wanted to be like Gandalf because he could cast spells. I realize now that I wasn't attracted to his spell-casting prowess, I was attracted to his wisdom and his ability to bring out the best in others. His true power lay in how he worked with people and the world around him. In fact, for a wizard, he didn't practice a lot of magic.

That lack of spell casting made me curious, so I decided to get to know Gandalf and try and understand those qualities I admired so much. To make a long story short, St. Ignatius had a technique for getting to know Christ. It involved putting yourself in his place and trying to understand what he was thinking and feeling and why he was doing what he was doing. It's apparently quite effective for the faithful, and it is also an ingenious way to learn about an archetype. I resorted to the wisdom of St. Ignatius while reading the Lord of The Rings and focusing on Gandalf. What was really magical about Gandalf wasn't turning pinecones into fireballs. (Though that was pretty cool.)

This is what I came up with:

- Gandalf does not make decisions for others. He makes wise suggestions.
- Gandalf does not touch the ring. He knows his limitations and respects them.
- Treats others as beings worthy of respect. An equal isn't quite the right word. He gives others their due.
- He truly loved his world.
- People are suspicious of wizards at the best of times.
- Giving advice or information is a responsibility not to be taken lightly.
- A little melodrama never hurts a good story. Timing is everything.
- He is efficient in the communication of information and doesn't say something more times than necessary.
- Chides and supports with plenty of fairness and an eye to constructive criticism.
- He does not like rumors. Or at least, he doesn't like to act on rumors and treats them as the potentially dangerous information that they embody.
- The responsibility of being wise and knowledgeable is circumspection, patience and a desire to collaborate results.
- Having information without revealing your source can add to the mystique.
- Knowing what you are revealing is much better than guessing. Much of a wizard's respect comes from the accuracy of his observations, answers, and suggestions. This highlights the responsibility to the trust placed in a wizard's words, actions, and counsel.

- Wizards understand not only their perceptions of reality but they understand other's perceptions of reality, too.

Gandalf aside, there are some other tidbits we can take from the study of the Wizard. At a distance a Wizard is a figure of great knowledge and power. Sometimes their demeanor is unsettling. Wizards help those who are looking to find what they are looking for. Sometimes, they help the quest even though they know that what is sought may be painful to realize or accomplish. They do not do this out of malice, but out of awareness that all seekers sometimes need to find things out for themselves. They know that the path to enlightenment is not easy, nor a cure all, nor an end. They know that we all must travel the path more or less alone and yet they find a way to provide to the traveler the knowledge and support needed to continue on the journey without getting lost. In many cases, particularly in myth, Wizards help non-Wizards because enlightenment comes in many forms and is not limited to someone on a magical path.

A Wizard in myth is almost invariably tied to another archetype, the Seeker who becomes Warrior or Wizard. The relationship between these two archetypes has deep meaning, which we can tap to help ourselves become better magicians. We deal with the Warrior archetype because it resonates strongly with the hidden occult meanings of the Wizard archetype. Generally, the Seeker is a younger and/or less experienced person with potential that highlights the Wizard's established, wise, and capable traits. Rarely in these stories do we read of a Wizard touting their credentials or attempting to prove anything to the Seeker or anyone else. Inevitably, the Wizard is identified with some greater purpose that guides the Seeker's quest.

This identification with a "greater purpose" implies that the Wizard is "self realized". Realization can be many things to many people. One can be realized and not be a Wizard. Lots of people fit that mold. Mom, dad, grandpa, sisters, brothers, teachers and friends. These are the people that have walked the path and who are willing to show you the path. Like the Wizard, they know they can't walk it for you, except possibly a short way to get you started in the right direction.

What exactly does it mean to be "realized"? Words like transformation, self-improvement, or self-realization come to mind. All of those terms apply. As a realized person, a Wizard's goals generally encompass the ongoing task of making themselves better and thereby making their friends and world better. The term "realized" also implies that a Wizard, as a general rule, knows why s/he is here, what s/he is doing and the right way to go about doing it. Because the realized Wizard knows these things, and cares about themselves and their world, they are willing to help the Seekers to walk the Path. Sometimes they even show Seekers the Path when the Seeker isn't even aware of its existence.

If the Wizard represents self-realization then the Seeker represents the external application of those principles by taking the first steps and putting those

principles into action. The Seeker is sometimes a person desiring to learn and sometimes unaware of their potential. Occasionally the Seeker is someone caught up in events well beyond their skills or control. In all cases, they rely (willingly or unwillingly) on the Wizard until they develop to the point where they can finish the task they started, or were forced to start, on their own. Generally, as the Seeker becomes who they truly are the Wizard fades further into the background.

There is a very important occult principle at work here. Especially when one considers the Wizard and Warrior as internal and external faces of the same person. The Wizard symbolizes the wisdom, knowledge and transformation that give action purpose. However, it takes a certain amount of ego decompression and humility to be a Wizard. This is good because it allows the Wizard to help Seekers arrive at their own conclusions, make their own decisions and become who they are. It allows the Wizard to do so without forcing the Seeker to think/act/be a certain way. This is a liability because lack of ego and strong presence of humility may stay a Wizard's hand from acting for or against any given situation. (Because a Wizard is humble enough to know that they don't know everything and that it is not inherently right to impose their interpretation of how the world should be on others.) This is where the Seeker comes in.

The Seeker represents the application of the Wizard's transformation in the outer world. The Seeker as Warrior is strong enough, possibly brash enough, and confident enough to actually do what s/he thinks is right. The Seeker is willing to challenge the humility of the Wizard and willing to do what it takes to make their world a better place. The Seeker implements externally what the Wizard has realized internally and the Wizard's internal process of realization governs how the Seeker acts.

As the Wizard helps to guide the Seeker in his/her brashness, so too that very brashness enlivens the Wizard to be, do, act and make themselves and their world a better place. This relationship between these two gives the internal journey of transcendence an external manifestation of that journey.

In some fashion or area of our lives, we are all Seekers and we are all Wizards. As such, it is incumbent upon us to push the boundaries of what we know and who we are. To poke and prod ourselves into really thinking about who we are and what we want to be. Working with an archetype is one method for doing that. Quite honestly, the only wrong way to deal with an archetype, or anything for that matter, is to use it to stay snuggled in our belief system and insulated from the world at large.

Oh, and to be quite truthful, I don't take my staff to work because I'd beat somebody with it. I imagine it would be immensely therapeutic, but counterproductive.

i Agrippa, Henry Cornelius. Three Books of Occult Philosophy. . Translated by J.F. Moule: London, 1651. Book 1 Chapter 2.