

The Magus

by Peter Carroll

As a master of magic the Adept has some ability to change himself and the reality which surrounds him at will. The mark of a Magus however is that he is able to show other people how to change themselves into whatever they desire through the discipline of magic.

There are two main types of genuine Magus, the Apotheosis Magus and the Nemesis Magus. Additionally there is the Hierophant or pseudo-magus. Each is recognizable by the debris left in his wake.

The Apotheosis Magus, sometimes known as the Harlequin, is typically a master of internal disguise and often external disguise also. Frequently a person of fallstaffian tastes and grand gestures, he often distinguishes himself in a variety of human endeavors precisely because he has attained the freedom to be anything at all. Such freedom is often won only after a tremendous personal struggle to repair the effects of a difficult start in life. The Apotheosis Magus teaches by encouraging emulation and then often finally capping it with outrage. His play, which is often never consciously formulated, is to provide a role model for emulation by his acolytes and perhaps later to drive them away and throw them back on their own resources, the horizons of which have been expanded by the encounter. The essential trick of the Apotheosis Magus is to present magic as a source of boundless self confidence. If he can convince his acolytes that they are magicians capable of anything such beliefs will tend to become self fulfilling. The Apotheosis Magus implies this through the triumph of the will. The Nemesis Magus implies it by showing that nothing is true. Both aim to set the imagination free. Both are exponents of a short and dangerous path which is inevitably strewn with casualties and misunderstandings. Yet this is considered to be a small price to pay if a few do win through to a more effective self definition.

The continual setbacks, reverses and dry periods to which the magical tradition is habitually prone are due to the *frequent* appearance of the Hierophant or pseudo-magus figure.

The Hierophant always presents himself as an exponent representative of something greater than himself.

Out of the multiple of roles, identities and behaviors that a person might adopt, the Hierophant presents a single model as an ideal. This is particularly convenient for the Hierophant as he need not be a perfect example of his own ideal although he must at least make a show of trying in public. Additionally, as it is he who defines the ideal, it is comparatively easy for him always to appear one step closer to it than his acolytes. Of course most Hierophants are merely religious teachers who rarely venture into esoterics because of the potentially immense costs of public failure. Yet there remains a depressingly long roll call of dishonor for occult Hierophants or pseudo-magi.

The Hierophant inevitably teaches a system of magic that he has either assembled from pieces or inherited. The most enduring systems are those which are highly complicated, and of low magical effectiveness. They should furthermore be surrounded with hosts of petty exhortations. Aleister Crowley dabbled in the Hierophant mode but was a supreme exponent of the Apotheosis Magus role. Nobody of any potential adhered to him for long but many were ejected to find their own path. Crowley's writings are liberally salted with deliberate invitations to emulation and hero worship and as equally

peppered with devices designed to repel. However their effect has never been quite as reliable as the presence of the magus himself was.

The Apotheosis path is lonely, difficult and dangerous. Such a magus must be all things to all men and women. As a matter of policy he may be continually engaged in challenging the limits of what is socially acceptable. He may have to resort to trickery to make himself seem large enough to accommodate the totality of his followers expectations of him. Any true friendship prevents him exercising his life's function towards any person with whom it is shared and there will be few of his peers with whom he can be completely open. He will get few thanks from society in general for his efforts and perhaps only a grudging respect from those whom he touches. The tangible rewards of this role are limited to those he can exact from his temporary followers.

The Apotheosis Magus must be continually alert to avoid the backlash from his own lifestyle and those who have associated with him. He must always be one step ahead of the police raid. He often comes to a bad end. Notable magi operating in this mode include Cagliostro, Giordano Bruno, Paracelsus, and Gurdjieff.

The Nemesis Magus is a rare figure in the generally positive esoteric climate of the west. In the east the role is more common. The historical Buddha with his rules and restrictions to provide acolytes with a slightly new identity to adhere to. Rules concerning clothing, sex, and diet are particularly effective. Such systems are indispensable to the Hierophant in his ceaseless quest for followers. The complexities of his systems guarantees protracted tuition and its comparative magical ineffectiveness ensures that few will be tempted to go freelance. Such systems are designed to create dependency. New acolytes are always welcome in such systems no matter how long their potential; for, in the absence of measurable progress mere numbers at least provide some positive confirmation.

Heresy and Schism always threaten the Hierophant's position and system. Unrealistic ideals and ineffectual means of attaining them will always attract criticism and attempts at revisionism. Yet if these can be avoided the Hierophant can look forward to extensive rewards from his followers, the lucrative commercialisation of his system, and maybe posthumous deification for what it's worth.

Hierophantic magi frequently inherit the systems of the predecessors. The Apotheosis Magus and the Nemesis Magus rarely have direct successors, although Hierophants frequently appear on the scene afterwards and reduce their works to a system. Pseudo magi outnumber the real thing by a large margin. It would be unseemly to mention any living examples for whilst there is life there is hope of change; however, Blatavsky, MacGregor Mathers, Dion Fortune, and Franz Bardon provide examples of past occult Hierophants.

A single test serves to separate the true Magus from the Hierophant. The false magus is never able to give a simple meaningful explanation of what his teachings are supposed to do. His justifications are invariably verbose and tautological concatenations of indefinable terms.

A host of petty Hierophants feast upon the debris of Crowley's work without managing to enlarge themselves or their followers. Austin Spare's works however have been largely resistant to systematisation and slavish adherence for he left little that could be made into dogma. Yet Crowley and Spare between them exemplify the paradox facing the genuine magus. Speak and be misunderstood or keep silent and be ignored.

Most, it appears, have chosen to speak knowing that the tricks of the Hierophant are an indispensable medium but that these tricks ultimately obscure the message itself. The hope is to blow some minds in the meantime.

*Either
The Apotheosis of the Self
Or
The Nemesis of the Self
Will set the Kia soaring
But promulgation begets systematisation
And the Apotheosis
Of Somebody Else's Self
Is for suckers.*