



Athene, Obi-Wan and Yoda as Mentors with Masks

Characters representing a millennia old story-telling tradition

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Athene, Obi-Wan and Yoda as Mentors with Masks,

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Introduction

If there is something that differentiates us humans from animals it is arguably our highly refined ability to pass down knowledge, skills and social values to our children. This ability has resulted in us, as a race, having accumulated information amongst all of us, and what better way to collectively remember this information than through stories? Whether it is through oral lore, written literature or film, millennia old social constructions have survived and are still being articulated, practiced and passed down today. One of these social constructions is arguably a story-telling tradition of initially putting a metaphorical mask on the unknowing hero's mentor, thereby hiding the mentor's identity as part of a test of character.

The intention of this essay is to, through mythological criticism, compare two works containing the mentor character archetype. Those characters will be Athene along with her disguised forms mentoring both Odysseus and his son Telemachos in *The Odyssey* (ca 800–700 BC) by Homer, and Obi-Wan and Yoda together mentoring Luke in the original *Star Wars* trilogy (1977, 1980 & 1983) by George Lucas. The comparison of the two works will serve as a basis for an analysis that begins to answer the question as to why it might be important for the hero in the story to have an unveiling moment of the mentor, or, in other words, why it might be important for the mentor to initially wear a metaphorical mask.

There are some different versions of translations of *The Odyssey* from its original Greek version to different languages such as English. For this essay, Richmond Lattimore's English translation from 1967 of *The Odyssey* will be used. The main reason for this is that it is considered to be amongst the closest versions to its original source material. This is expressed by, for example, Harris in his online article *Reading Your Homer* (n.d.).

After reading and viewing *The Odyssey* and the *Star Wars* trilogy respectively, four relevant commonalities between the mentors' actions towards their pupils were found. Those commonalities that will be juxtaposed and analysed in this essay are the following:

1. The mentors as journey starters, aiding the hero to get started with his journey.
2. The mentors as masked test makers, in which the mentors show their tendency to initially disguise themselves as part of testing their pupils' true character.
3. The mentors as givers of supernatural gifts, aiding the hero with supernatural help.
4. The mentors as guides to complete self-reliance, in which the mentors boost their pupils' self-confidence so that they may overcome their inner boundaries.

By comparing these mentors in their stages of journey starting and gift giving, we can see that the basic overall function of these stages is to identify the characters as mentors, in alignment with primarily Campbell's ideas of what that character archetype does. The common act of journey starting also shows that the mentors are an important, if not vital, part of the hero's journey from start to finish, and the act of gift giving shows that the mentor is a provider of supernatural aids. As

a provider of the supernatural, the mentor character archetype then becomes associated with the supernatural - be it god, the subconscious mind or anything in between.

Test making behind a metaphorical mask, however, goes along with this essay's idea of mask bearing. Giving guidance towards self-reliance seems to be the ultimate goal of a mentor archetype. The guide towards self-reliance aspect also connects the mentor to the supernatural even further, as it may be argued that the hero, at the end of its journey, achieves illumination through acquired self-reliance. (Campbell, 1993, p. 238-259)

Hence, by comparing these four found commonalities between the mentors, a clearer picture of how they function in relation to their heroes will render itself, and the hypothesis of mask bearing as a story telling tradition will be analysed.

Furthermore, *The Odyssey* becomes relevant as the initial work to compare with *Star Wars* as it, according to Mackey-Kallis in *The Hero and the Perennial Journey Home in American Film* (2001), "is probably one of the earliest Western models of the hero's perennial journey home." (Mackey-Kallis, 2001, p. 34) Therefore, by viewing *The Odyssey* as a metaphorical and plausible cradle for Campbell's theory of the hero's journey, it becomes fruitful to not only look at the beginning the use of the word "mentor" within story-telling, but at the same time bearing in mind that the same work represent the beginning of modern story telling quite generally.

Defining Mentor

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines mentor as follows:

1. capitalized : a friend of Odysseus entrusted with the education of Odysseus' son Telemachus
2. a : a trusted counselor or guide
b : tutor, coach (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

As evident by this definition, the second non-capitalized definition of the word in question seems very relevant - a trusted counselor or guide, a tutor as well as a coach. Included in the quotation above, however, is, interestingly, an etymological explanation of why this word will be used as a term for this very character archetype.

Huang-Ming Chang is one of many scholars who discusses the definitions of the mentor character. In his essay *Emotions in Archetypal Media Content* (2014), Chang discusses, amongst other archetypes, the mentor from the perspective of Carl Jung's *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (1959). He mentions that "[t]he mentor archetype typically appears and represents the knowledge that is needed to cross the thresholds when the hero is in a hopeless or desperate situation from which he cannot extricate himself alone." (Chang, 2014, p. 52) He then continues with the description of how Carl Jung views the archetype in question, which he refers to as the Wise Old Woman or the Wise Old Man: "This figure is described as representing knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness, and intuition, as well as moral qualities such as goodwill and readiness to help, which make his spiritual character clear". (Jung, 1959, pp. 217-230)

Chang uses Campbell's work alongside Jung's, connecting the hero's journey with Jung's archetypes (Chang, 2014, p. 54). It could thus be argued that Jung's archetypes found in, for example, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, can be used to complement Campbell. However, since Chang considers Jung's work on archetypes to be included in the work of Campbell (Chang, 2014, p. 46), this essay will only consider Jung's work as the archetypal foundation of the mentor.

Campbell, having continued with parts of how Jung views the archetypes, refers to this character archetype as the Supernatural Aid due to its, according to Campbell, often supernatural characteristics concerning the advice and gifts they give. (Campbell, 1993, p. 69) Campbell describes this character archetype in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* as "a protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass". (Campbell, 1993, p. 69) The amulets received from the character representing the Supernatural Aid seems, according to Campbell, to be synonymous to critical advice that the hero will be required to use at some point during his journey (Campbell, 1993, p.

72). This character archetype reappears in the work of Campbell, especially in his retellings of the myths presented in his *The Masks of God*, consisting of *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (1959), *The Masks of God: Oriental Mythology* (1962), *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology* (1964), and *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology* (1968).

Christopher Vogler, although not a scholar but with vast experience using these archetypes in his job as a writer for film, bases his *The Writer's Journey* (2007) on Joseph Campbell's theories in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Furthermore, in his description of his film work Vogler develops the role of the Supernatural Aid and refers to the same character archetype as the Mentor. It seems like Vogler agrees with everything Campbell says about this particular character archetype, whether or not it is called Mentor or Supernatural Aid does not seem extremely relevant. However, Vogler goes into greater detail concerning, for example, the giving of advice and amulets or gifts. He calls the gift-giving subarchetype of the Mentor the Donor after Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968), an analysis of Russian fairy tales, and assimilates the following into the mentor archetype: the "gift or help of the donor should be earned, by learning, sacrifice, or commitment." (Vogler, 2007, p. 41)

For the scope of this essay, it is unnecessary to distinguish between a Mentor and a Donor, since they often seem to mean the same thing, unless one would distinguish physical gifts from guidance and advice - which would not be relevant to do here either. These character archetypes that differ only slightly will therefore be referred to as they most commonly are in *The Writer's Journey* - namely as Mentors. The Mentor as a character archetype and everything that connects that archetype with the hero and its story will hence be seen in the light of Vogler's take on Campbell's hero's journey with the addition of Propp's donor characteristic. The definition of the term Mentor in this essay will thus be the following:

The Mentor is a knowledgeable, insightful and wise counselor, guide or tutor, often in the form of an old crone or old man, who aids the hero spiritually and supernaturally with advice or gifts so that the hero may pass the coming testings of the journey.

Distinguishing the idea of mask bearing from others

When it comes to the definition of mask bearing, Campbell introduces the reference to masks and explains its relevance to the supernatural in the first volume of his *The Masks of God* quadrilogy, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*. He states the following about humans connecting with deities via masks:

Moreover, the mask in a primitive festival is revered and experienced as a veritable apparition of the mythical being that it represents—even though everyone knows that a man made the mask and that a man is wearing it. The one wearing it, furthermore, is identified with the god during

the time of the ritual of which the mask is a part. He does not merely represent the god; he is the god. (Campbell, 1959, p. 21)

This essay proposes that the mentor character archetypes traditionally seem to hide their supernatural identity as mentors behind metaphorical masks, often shown as other identities. While the similarity of connecting the mask bearing between a shaman-like mentor and a represented deity of, for example, knowledge is found within both Campbell's idea of mask bearing in *The Masks of God* and the idea of mask bearing in this essay, there is a crucial difference that is vital to point out. What this essay proposes is not that the mentor character traditionally seems to display his or her godlike knowledge through mask bearing - rather, the opposite is proposed: the presumed storytelling tradition of mentor characters initially hiding his or her godlike knowledge through mask bearing. It is indeed this character archetype trait that this essay intends to discuss.

To clarify, Vogler speaks about a type of character who appears to be a traditional mentor in the eyes of the hero, the reader and/or the audience, but is in fact using and tricking the hero into "unknowingly working for the villains" (Vogler, 2007, p. 121), turning out to be a "fake Wise Old Man." (Vogler, 2007, p. 121) He calls this type of misdirection "The mask of the Mentor" (Vogler, 2007, p. 121) as an encouragement to writers that want to defy traditional archetypes. The definition of mentor-related masks that Vogler suggests is distinctly different from its definition in this essay.

What is being meant by a mentor with a mask is, in this essay, a mentor who the hero originally thinks of as unimportant to them, but later becomes unmasked and identified as their mentor. The definition in this essay does not refer to, for example, a fake wise old man who turns out to be a trickster, but rather a fake trickster who turns out to be a wise old man.

Literary criticism review

As a millenia old piece of literature, *The Odyssey* has been a subject of written papers and similar research before a conventional database. However, in the MLA International Database, which includes indexed items from 1923 and forward, the earliest search result of *The Odyssey* was published in the year 1926. Interest in research on *The Odyssey* apparently began to rise in the 60's, peaking in the 00's by as many as 357 records of research works that includes *The Odyssey* by the end of 2009.

As for *Star Wars*, research naturally did not occur until after the first film's release in 1977, and the interest seems to increase over time. The total number of papers found in the MLA International Database adds up to 397. The number of papers written on *The Odyssey* in the 00's alone is almost as high as all the papers written on *Star Wars*.

As publications on *Star Wars* seem to increase, perhaps along with the continuation of *Star Wars* films produced even in this writing moment, almost 40 years after the first *Star Wars* film came out in theaters, the number of publications on both *The Odyssey* and *Star Wars* show that there is, and has long been, extensive interest in research on both works.

Review of records on *The Odyssey*

Early papers published that deal with Homer's *The Odyssey* seem to focus largely on the translations and language used, while later publications mostly deal with the character functions and archetypes. The first records found in MLA International Database, however, lean more towards the linguistic area of interest and are from 1926 and 1928.

The focus on language slowly seems to shift with time. The first scholar describing the story function of disguise older works such as *The Odyssey* seems to be Keightley, whose anthology contribution "Epistemology in Cultural Context: Disguise and Deception in Early China and Early Greece" (2002) compares disguise in the Greek *The Odyssey* with other relevant work from early China (Keightley, 2002, pp. 119-153). Similarly, in the French article *Métamorphose d'Une Métamorphose: Le Dévoilement De La Déesse Protectrice Dans Télémaque Et Dans l'Odysée* (2010), Hepp, although focusing mostly on the character Athene and her transformations, continues to contribute to the understanding of disguise as a story function in the work in question (Hepp, 2010, pp. 25-32).

Other kinds of focuses on disguise in *The Odyssey* have naturally been rendered. An example of this is Vlahos' *Homer's Odyssey: Penelope and the Case for Early Recognition* (2011), which proposes that, if read from a certain viewpoint, Odysseus' disguise while back in Ithaka does not deceive his wife (Vlahos, 2011, pp. 1-75).

As for archetype analyses and other character function studies, there is of course quite a lot to be found. Examples of these are Schueb's *Trickster and Hero: Two Characters in the Oral*

and *Written Traditions of the World* (2012) in which he proposes that the character archetype of the trickster can be found within the character Odysseus, which most readers would identify as the character archetype of the hero (Scheub, 2012), and Loude interestingly compares the father-son-relationship found in *The Odyssey* in *Telemachos, the Odyssey and Hamlet* (2015) to Hamlet (Loude, 2015).

All in all, having only glanced at the many records found in the database dealing with *The Odyssey*, it becomes quite apparent that there has been a great interest of researchers who have approached the piece of literature very differently, including several considering the concepts of mentors and disguises.

Review of records on *Star Wars*

If there is diversity in the research topics found in papers on *The Odyssey*, research on *Star Wars* is arguably equally diverse in its comparably smaller amount of records listed in the MLA International Database. The first record found in the database dealing with *Star Wars* is Gordon's article *Star Wars: A Myth for Our Time* (1978), which discusses the first film and draws attention to its mythological attributes (Gordon, 1978, pp. 314-326).

It seem like the connections between *Star Wars* and its mythological elements seems to be a well visited topic. Sparks, for example, brings Campbell to *Star Wars* in her *The Hero's Journey in Campbell's Hero with a Thousand Faces and Star Wars* (1998), where she discusses how *Star Wars* fits within Campbell's theories (Sparks, 1998).

The connections to mythic story attributes continues to be brought up, especially in the 00's and 10's; for example, Cox writes, in his article *Star Wars: Decoding the Spectacle of Myth*, about how the mythic relates to *Star Wars* (Cox, 2004, pp. 17-30). There have also been papers in which *Star Wars* is seen through the theories of Campbell, such as Lawrence's *Joseph Campbell, George Lucas, and the Monomyth* (Lawrence, 2006, pp. 21-33). By looking at these records, it indeed becomes quite apparent that *Star Wars* seems compatible with the monomyth theory of Joseph Campbell.

Also, along the lines of Campbell's monomythical idea of the hero, in each story, being self-realized in the end, von Loesch argues, in *Self-Realization and Popular Culture: An Analysis of the Most Popular Movie of each of the Last Four Decades* (2013), that every popular film from the last four decades, here seen as modern myths, revolves around the hero ending their journey by being self-realized (von Loesch, 2013) - a common ending that arguably is made possible thanks to each hero's mentor, as discussed in this essay.

Theoretical introduction

It should be stated that the theoretical scope of this essay will largely be based on Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1993) which is a work of comparative mythology describing the so-called monomyth - a theory that states that all greater mythic narratives are variations of one single story, or myth - here rather humbly also referred to as "[t]he standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero" (Campbell, 1993, p. 30). The theory reaches its conclusion by observing common patterns in mythic stories from different cultural and historical origins. The claim that humankind has been retelling the same overall story over and over again with modifications, manifest itself in a simplified and unified version of this story:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (Campbell, 1993, p. 30)

Indeed, one may easily fit many stories into this generalizing story formula - *The Odyssey* and the *Star Wars* trilogy being only a fraction of these.

Campbell then seems to move away from the so-called modern fictional stories over time. Instead, Campbell seems to focus more of his research mapping out the past mythologies of the world, as seen in his four volume work divided up in the following titles: *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, *The Masks of God: Oriental Mythology*, *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, and *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology*.

Although now only seemingly focusing on mythology as well as drawing attention to the many differences and variations found in myths, Campbell still holds on to his idea that all stories may be metaphorically boiled down to a single unit - an idea he expresses well in *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* as follows: "The comparative study of the mythologies of the world compels us to view the cultural history of mankind as a unit". (Campbell, 1959, p. 3)

After presenting a number of primitive myths and mythological elements comparable to each other in *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, Campbell goes on to do the same thing with myths with oriental origins in *The Masks of God: Oriental Mythology* as well as myths with european origin in *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, where he brings up many examples of heroes receiving advice from the mentor archetype, before tackling the more modern, but still very old, myths in *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology*.

Here, Campbell continues to claim the following, which he arguably has claimed more or less all along his research career: "Millenniums have rolled by with only minor variations played on themes derived from God-knows-when." (Campbell, 1968, p. 3) He also presents several functions of mythologies, attempting to explain why humans have told these stories to each other from the

beginning of humankind. For the scope of this essay, the last function of mythology presented turns out to be the most relevant one; Campbell claims that the "most vital, most critical function of a mythology [...] is to foster the centering and unfolding of the individual in integrity, in accord with d) himself (the microcosm), c) his culture (the mesocosm), b) the universe (the macrocosm), and a) that awesome ultimate mystery which is both beyond and within himself and all things". (Campbell, 1968, p. 6)

Even though this essay will focus largely on the theories derived from *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, the proposed underlying reasons to why humans have invented mythology for themselves presented in *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology* perhaps have a potential to be reflected in the social values communicated by the mentors to the heroes in these stories.

Theoretical critique

There is, naturally, a lot of critique of the work presented in the theoretical introduction. Robert Ellwood writes, in his *The Politics of Myth* (1999), that one of Campbell's issues was his "oversimplification of historical matters and tendency to make myth mean whatever he wanted it to mean" (Ellwood, 1999, p. 153).

Furthermore, Campbell is mentioned in literary critic Paglia's online article *Pelosi's victory for women* (2009), where she speaks about his and structural anthropologist Lévi-Strauss' works: "Lévi-Strauss' work was as much a fanciful, showy mishmash as that of Joseph Campbell, who at least had the erudite and intuitive Carl Jung behind him." (Paglia, salon.com) The mishmash part of Paglia's criticism probably refers to what many other critics claim is one of Campbell's major issues, further spoken of in Norman N. Holland's online article *Trouble in Myth-Land: Campbell and Moyers* (2010) from the website of Psychology Today. Here, Holland argues that Campbell practices both bad anthropology and bad psychology (Holland, psychologytoday.com). Holland accuses Campbell of sloppy methodology when it comes to gathering data and reaching conclusions, saying that Campbell's "procedure [sic] is to mash all the myths together, get a few patterns, the hero's journey, the mother goddess, and so on. Slough off all the details." (Holland, psychologytoday.com)

Daniel Jr. Gorman seems to agree on Campbell's weak points, and states, in his article *Revisiting Joseph Campbell's the Power of Myth* (2014), that Campbell may overstate his monomyth theory in applying it to all human religion and storytelling. He also states that the theories contain "irreconcilable tensions and far too much reductionism" (Gorman, 2014, p. 87); according to Gorman, Campbell's theories not only reduce religion, myths and stories to something that will fit into his theories about the commonalities between them but use theories that do not work well together, such as the combination of "the qualitative and empirical traditions with a healthy dose of his own personal philosophy" (Gorman, 2014, p. 86). Although I agree with

Gorman's arguments on Campbell's reductionism of religion, there is a point in doing so with fiction in order to find and explain similarities between texts, as I intend to do in this essay.

Athene and her several forms in *the Odyssey*

In Homer's epic *The Odyssey*, the character Mentor appears to be counseling both Odysseus at the end of the story and his son Telemachos in his journey to find his long lost father. This has arguably confused some readers into believing that it is not Athene's, but Mentor's, actions in *The Odyssey* that developed into what mentoring means today. Roberts, however, makes it perfectly clear in his paper *Homer's Mentor: Duties Fulfilled or Misconstrued* (1999) that it is important to be aware of the distinction between the character Mentor in *The Odyssey* by Homer and the same character mentoring the very same Telemachos in Fenelon's *Les Aventures de Telemaque*, where the character Mentor indeed is described "with the qualities, abilities and attributes that have come to be incorporated into the action of modern day mentoring" (Roberts, 1999, p. 7).

It is therefore worth mentioning, before beginning to look at the role of the mentor in *The Odyssey*, that it is not Mentor in *The Odysseus* who acts as a mentor archetype, but rather the goddess Athene who acts as a guide and advice-giver to both Odysseus and his son Telemachos. The same character also does this through disguising herself to the main characters in Homer's *The Iliad* (ca 800–700 BC).

By looking at the most important passages in which Athene guides the two protagonists on their individual, but spiritually shared, journeys it becomes apparent that Mentor seems only to be used by Athene as a mask to hide her godly image from mortals.

Athene as a journey starter

The first time Athene takes on the form of a human in *The Odyssey*, she does not use Mentor as a deceptive mask. Instead she takes on the form of Mentos, a "friend, [and] leader of the Taphians" (Homer, p. 30). As Ithaca is being exploited by suitors of Odysseus' wife Penelope, Athena gives advice to Telemachos as Mentos, and tells him as follows:

But for yourself, I will counsel you shrewdly, and hope you listen. Fit out a ship with twenty oars, the best you can come by, and go out to ask about your father who is so long absent, on the chance some mortal man can tell you, who has listened to Rumor sent by Zeus. (Homer, p. 34)

In the first sentence of her advice, Athene in the form of Mentos clearly communicates her intentions by stating that she hopes that Telemachos listens to her counsel - a caring statement that fits the role of a caring mentor. In the second sentence she simply tells him what she thinks he ought to do. Vogler identifies this point in the story as a Call to Adventure (Vogler, 2007, p. 120), which, according to his twelve stages of the Hero's journey, precedes the Refusal of the Call, in which Telemachos is discouraged by the suitors (Homer, pp. 45-46). Vogler continues to write the following about this: "Once again the story seems stuck, and Athena unsticks it by taking the form

of Telemachus' teacher Mentor. In this disguise she drums some courage into him and helps him assemble a ship and a crew." (Vogler, 2007, p. 120) This drumming of courage that Vogler speaks of reads as follows in *The Odyssey*:

Athene came to [Telemachos] likening herself to Mentor in voice and appearance. Now she spoke aloud to him and addressed him in winged words: 'Telemachos, you are to be no thoughtless man, no coward, if truly the strong force of your father is instilled in you; such a man he was for accomplishing word and action. Your journey then will be no vain thing nor go unaccomplished. But if you are not the seed begotten of him and Penelope, I have no hope that you will accomplish all that you strive for. (Homer, p. 46)

By reminding Telemachos, and by rephrasing herself, thereby putting emphasis on the importance of what she is saying, that he has his father's fantastic ability of accomplishing things, Athene gives him confidence to believe in himself as the son of the great and cunning famous warrior Odysseus, although doing so not as herself in the eyes of Telemachos, but as Mentor.

As Telemachos accomplishes to get on a ship and travel to Nestor in order to ask him of Odysseus' whereabouts, Athene gets to act out her role as a mentor in a very distinct manner, as she tells Telemachos the following when he is unsure of how to speak with the older and powerful Nestor:

'Telemachos, some of it you yourself will see in your own heart, and some the divinity will put in your mind. I do not think you could have been born and reared without the gods' will.' So spoke Pallas Athene, and she led the way swiftly, and the man followed behind her walking in the god's footsteps." (Homer, p. 52)

In other words, Athene tells Telemachos, as any encouraging coach would, to not only believe in himself, but also that she think that he is special, since she tells him that higher powers will help him on his way. Following in the god's footsteps, the thereafter confident Telemachos is then literally guided by the goddess of wisdom.

Athene as a masked test maker

Likewise, we can see Athene taking on different shapes and helping Odysseus in finding his way back to Ithaka. She does this many times in the story, for example, when Odysseus, who has angered the mighty god of the ocean Poseidon, becomes shipwrecked on the island Scheria. Here he is guided by "a young girl, a little maid, carrying a pitcher" (Homer, p. 111), who is Athene in disguise. She advises him to do the following in order to return to Ithaka:

First of all you will find the mistress there in her palace. Arete is the name she is called I...! She dissolves quarrels, even among men, when she favors them. So if she has thoughts in her mind that are friendly to you, then there is hope that you can see your own people, and come back to your house with the high roof and to the land of your fathers. (Homer, pp. 112-113)

Despite there being a handful powerful men on the island, Odysseus takes the advice of the little girl to befriend Arete. Odysseus listens to reason and sees beyond the appearance of what might look like an inexperienced little girl unfit to give advice to a renowned leader and warrior. It does not matter if it is a man or woman, old or young - if the information Odysseus hears makes sense he listens to it.

This might also give the reader a clue why Athene appears behind a metaphorical mask every time she meets Odysseus; she tests him. Another explanation is given in *The Odyssey*, however, why Athene chooses not to show herself to Odysseus:

So [Odysseus] spoke in prayer, and Pallas Athene heard him, but she did not yet show herself before him, for she respected her father's brother, Poseidon, who still nursed a sore anger at godlike Odysseus until his arrival at his own country. (Homer, p. 110)

Even though a reason for her need to conceal her true identity is given in the story, the narrative function of many of her disguises turns out to be tests for Odysseus; even though he believes that he is speaking to a regular mortal little girl, Odysseus, despite all ordeals he has been through at sea, manages to be polite and respectful while still cunning and careful - traits that Athene seems to praise and reward.

Athene as a giver of supernatural gifts

When Odysseus, after many hard years lost at sea, finally reaches Ithaca, the traits mention above are indeed rewarded by Athene with a gift that enables Odysseus to be unrecognized by those who knew him - a power that Athene herself has used throughout the entire story. Firstly, however, she disguises herself "in form to a young man, a herdsman of sheep" (Homer, p. 204) and makes sure that she is the first person Odysseus meets on the island of Ithaca.

She informs him, when he asks, that he is on Ithaca, but when she, disguised as a young herdsman, asks him where he comes from, Odysseus is indeed cunning and careful, so he lies about where he has been before arriving to Ithaca, thereby concealing his identity and impressing Athene (Homer, p. 205), saying that "[a]nyone else come home from wandering would have run happily off to see his children and wife" (Homer, p. 206), which would probably end in the death of him, since his house is full of suitors who want him dead so that they can exploit his house's hospitality.

Having passed the test, Odysseus now witnesses the young herdsman turning into "the shape of a woman both beautiful and tall, and well versed in glorious handiworks" (Homer, p. 205), which may be interpreted as the undisguised form of Athene. Now, as herself, she transforms Odysseus, hence giving him the gift to go unnoticed in his home otherwise hostile to himself because of the suitors:

Then in turn the goddess gray-eyed Athene answered: 'I will indeed be at your side, you will not be forgotten at the time when we two go to this work, and I look for endless ground to be spattered by the blood and brains of the suitors, these men who are eating all your substance away. But come now, let me make you so that no mortal can recognize you. For I will wither the handsome flesh that is on your flexible limbs, and ruin the brown hair on your head, and about you put on such a clout of cloth any man will loathe when he sees you wearing it; I will dim those eyes, that have been so handsome, so you will be unprepossessing to all the suitors and your wife and child, those whom you left behind in your palace.' (Homer, p. 208)

With this gift, Odysseus is able to gather the information he needs in order to gain the trust of both his son Telemachos and his wife Penelope, as well as devise a plan to kill the suitors. The act of testing Odysseus in this manner clearly also applies to the masked test maker category above, and shows that passing a masked test from a mentor is rewarded with advice, guidance, or in this case, supernatural gifts.

Athene as a guide to complete self-reliance

Just as Athene aids Telemachos in feeling self-reliant and confident in himself at the beginning of *The Odyssey*, Athene also drums courage and enforces self-reliance in both Odysseus and his son as they are about to finally fight the suitors. As Odysseus cries out to Mentor and begs him to aid in fighting the suitors (Homer, p. 326), Athene, who has disguised herself as Mentor, does the following to fuel his courage and to help him believe in himself:

Athene in her heart grew still more angry, and she scolded Odysseus in the words full of anger, saying: 'No longer, Odysseus, are the strength and valor still steady within you, as when, for the sake of whit-armed, illustrious Helen, you fought nine years with the Trojans, ever relentless; and many men you killed there in the dreaded encounter, and by your counsel the wide-walled city of Priam was taken. How is it now, when you have come back to your own possessions and house, you complain, instead of standing up to the suitors?' (Homer, p. 327)

By reminding Odysseus of who he is and the great skills he possesses, Athene guides him as well as his son into believing in themselves and relying on their own abilities to manage the situation. Indeed, they manage to kill the suitors, thereby restoring their home and family to what is was

before, and, with the continued help of Athene once again in the form of Mentor, they finally settle a peaceful agreement (Homer, p. 359) that leaves Ithaka the way it was before Odysseus went off to war.

Obi-Wan and Yoda in *Star Wars*

In the so-called original trilogy of *Star Wars*, consisting of *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope*, *Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back*, and *Star Wars: Episode VI - Return of the Jedi*, both the characters Obi-Wan and Yoda can be seen mentoring the young Luke in his journey towards learning who he really is, and, through that, saving the galaxy from the evil Empire.

Just as Mackey-Kallis states in *The Hero and the Perennial Journey Home in American Film*, "The *Star Wars* trilogy, perhaps more than any films in the history of Hollywood cinema, are the quintessential hero quest films. [They offer] the most clearly articulated version of the Odyssean hero's journey outward, inward, and homeward" (Mackey-Kallis, 2001, p. 202), so while *The Odyssey* might have been one of the first pieces of literature articulating the hero's journey, it seems that *Star Wars* refined that form of articulation into popular culture.

Furthermore, one similar aspect in both works are the way the mentors aid the heroes; just as Athene in *The Odyssey* starts off the journey of Telemachos, tests Odysseus' abilities, gives a divine gift to him in the form of a disguise, and guides both Odysseus and Telemachos towards self-reliance, Obi-Wan and Yoda's combined actions towards Luke and his journey show that these mentors have a similar *modus operandi* as their ancient Greek predecessor Athene.

Obi-Wan and Yoda as journey starters

Similar to Athene in *The Odyssey*, Obi-Wan in *Star Wars* begins as a mentor with a mask; young Luke leads a simple but boring life as a moisture farmer, but when he finds a recorded message on a newly purchased droid named R2D2, Luke goes away to find the old hermit Ben Kenobi in hope that he might know more about the Obi-Wan Kenobi that is mentioned in R2D2's message. Luke is, however, attacked by raiders and knocked unconscious. While the droid R2D2 manages to hide from the raiders, a hooded figure scares the raiders off with an otherworldly scream, and the following happens: "Obi-Wan folds the hood on his robe off his head, thereby uncovering his face, before turning to R2D2." (Lucas, *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope*)

Obi-Wan's first takes off his mask almost literally as he uncovers his face to R2D2. Nothing about him is communicated about him being a future mentor to Luke here. However, a lasting close-up of his face reveals, at least, that he is an important character. The first uncovering of the character Obi-Wan, however, is merely a visual means of raising suspension compared to the second uncovering of the character, which develops as follows:

LUKE: Ben? Ben Kenobi? Boy, am I glad to see you.

OBI-WAN: The Jundland wastes are not to be traveled lightly. Tell me, young Luke. What brings you out this far?

LUKE: This little droid. I think he's searching for his former master, but I've never seen such devotion in a droid before. He claims to be the property of an Obi-Wan Kenobi. Is he a relative of yours? Do you know what he's talking about?

OBI-WAN: Obi-Wan Kenobi? Obi-Wan. Now that's a name I've not heard in a long time. A long time.

LUKE: I think my uncle knows him. He said he was dead.

OBI-WAN: Oh, he's not dead. Not yet.

LUKE: You know him?

OBI-WAN: Well, of course I know him. He's me. (Lucas, *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope*)

Prior to the mentor unveiling of Obi-Wan, Luke knows Obi-Wan as just a simple hermit that goes by the name of Ben; Luke's uncle Owen indeed refers to Obi-Wan as "just a crazy old man". (Lucas, *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope*), and this description seems to be part of the mask Obi-Wan metaphorically carries in order to test the true character of Luke.

Indeed, as a true hero in the early stages of development, Luke chooses to ignore his uncle's view of seeking out this hermit for help, and for that he is rewarded with the truth; the crazy old hermit reveals himself to be an able mentor as Obi-Wan, in the preceding scene, tells Luke that he "was once a Jedi knight". (Lucas, *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope*)

In this scene, Luke, Obi-Wan and the droids have come to Obi-Wan's home where they eventually listen to R2D2's message in its entirety. The following dialogue takes place after the message that communicates a call for help has come to an end:

OBI-WAN: You must learn the ways of the force if you're to come with me to Alderaan.

LUKE: Alderaan? I'm not going to Alderaan. I've got to get home. It's late. I'm in for it as it is.

OBI-WAN: I need your help, Luke. She needs your help. I'm getting to old for this sort of thing.

LUKE: I can't get involved. I've got work to do. It's not that I like the Empire. I hate it, but there's nothing I can do about it right now. It's all such a long way from here.

OBI-WAN: That's your uncle talking.

LUKE: My uncle. How am I ever gonna explain this?

OBI-WAN: Learn about the force, Luke.

LUKE: Look, I can take you as far as Anchored. You can get a transport there to Mos Eisley or wherever you're going.

OBI-WAN: You must do what you feel is right, of course. (Lucas, *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope*)

After having listened to the message, Obi-Wan seems to understand something about Luke, which he chooses to reward with an opportunity, or, with the terminology of Campbell, a Call to Adventure; since Luke has shown an incipient heroism by not ignoring the call for help in the message despite his uncle's dissuasion, Obi-Wan not only chooses to share his true identity with him, but also offers to train him in the ways of the Jedi knight - a transfer of knowledge from mentor to pupil comparable, perhaps, to a divine gift from a god to a worthy, mortal hero.

Furthermore, the reaction Luke gives to this Call to Adventure is comparable to how Vogler describes the Refusal of the Call that Telemachos makes prior to getting his Call to Adventure from his corresponding mentor Athene (Vogler, 2007, p. 120). Although Luke's refusal is almost immediate while Telemachos initially intends to go out and have his adventure before temporarily refusing it, both show the same stages, and both have their adventures sparked by their mentors.

Although initially refusing the Call to Adventure, Luke finds his home and caretakers destroyed by the Empire. Left with a bittersweet freedom, he decides to accept the Call to Adventure, which means learning the truth about who he truly is with the help of his newly acquired mentor.

Obi-Wan can also be seen starting Luke's journey in the sequel, *Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back*, where he appears as a ghost, telling Luke to seek out the Jedi master Yoda, thereby starting Luke's journey:

Obi-Wan appears as a ghost image before the nearly unconscious Luke.

OBI-WAN: Luke.

LUKE: Ben?

OBI-WAN: You will go to the Dagobah system.

LUKE: Dagobah system?

OBI-WAN: There you will learn from Yoda, the Jedi master who instructed me.

LUKE: Ben!

The ghost image of Obi-Wan fades away and Luke loses his consciousness. (*Kershner, Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back*)

Just as Obi-Wan puts Luke's journeys in motion in the two first *Star Wars* films of the original trilogy, Yoda can be seen setting a spark to Luke's final journey in the beginning of *Star Wars: Episode VI - Return of the Jedi* as Yoda tells Luke the following: "One thing remains. Vader. You must confront Vader. Then, only then, a Jedi will you be. And confront him you will." (*Marquand, Star Wars: Episode VI - Return of the Jedi*)

Both Obi-Wan and Yoda can therefore be seen carrying out the same function in the beginning of each film, and even though the mission appears to be different in each film they all point in the same direction, therefore conveying the same overall meaning: Luke must find himself.

Obi-Wan and Yoda as masked test makers

Perhaps the most easily recognizable uncovering of a mentor in the *Star Wars* trilogy is when Yoda in *Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back* does not initially introduce himself as Yoda in order to test Luke. Even though Yoda is the Jedi master Luke is looking for, Yoda decides to wear a metaphorical mask.

Upon meeting Luke, Yoda is consciously acting as a simple, foolish and annoying swamp creature to temporarily deceive him. The faux fool offers to help the hero in finding the Jedi master he is looking for, and based on appearances, Luke is shown being impatient and lacking respect for this small but helpful creature. The scene that shows this plays out as follows:

LUKE: Look, I'm sure it's delicious. I just don't understand why we can't see Yoda now.

YODA: Patience! For the Jedi it is time to eat as well. Eat, eat. Hot!

Luke tastes the food and pulls a face.

YODA: Good food! Good, hmm?

LUKE: How far away is Yoda? Will it take us long to get there?

YODA: Not far. Yoda not far. Patience. Soon you will be with him. Root leaf. I cook. Why wish you become Jedi?

LUKE: Mostly because of my father, I guess.

YODA: Ah, father. Powerful Jedi was he. Powerful Jedi.

LUKE: Oh, come on. How could you know my father? You don't really know who I am. I don't even know what I'm doing here. We're wasting out time!

Yoda sighs.

YODA: I cannot teach him. The boy has no patience.

OBI-WAN: He will learn patience.

YODA: Much anger in him. Like his father.

OBI-WAN: Was I any different when you taught me?

YODA: No. He is not ready.

LUKE: Yoda!

Yoda nods.

LUKE: I am ready! I — — Ben! I-I can be a Jedi. Ben, tell him I'm read — —

YODA: Ready, are you? What know you ready? For 800 years have I trained Jedi. My own counsel will I keep on who is to be trained. A Jedi must have the deepest commitment, hmm? The most serious mind. This one a long time I have watched. All his life has he looked away to the future, to the horizon. Never his mind on where he was, hmm? What he was doing. Hmph! Adventure. Heh! Excitement! Heh! A Jedi craves not these things. You are reckless.

OBI-WAN: So was I, if you remember.

YODA: He is too old. Yes, too old to begin the training.

LUKE: But I've learnt so much.

YODA: Will he finish what he begins?

LUKE: I won't fail you. I'm not afraid.

YODA: Oh, you will be. You will be. (*Kershner, Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back*)

Once Luke realizes that the irritating swamp creature is the Jedi master Yoda who, all along, has been working with the force ghost of Obi-Wan, it becomes apparent that the whole charade Yoda made was a test; in order for Luke to pass that test, he would have had to show patience. Yoda was all along a fake trickster who turns out to be a wise old man - much similar to a fake, regular person called Mentor who turns out to be a wise old goddess called Athene.

As Obi-Wan and Yoda thereafter is seen working together for the same cause, they can both be interpreted as a single supernatural force helping Luke in his journey. From this perspective, one could also view Yoda as Obi-Wan's mask just as Mentor, Mentos and the other shapes Athene uses to conceal her godly identity works as her masks; once undisguised, the mentor tells the hero whether or not he has passed the mentor's test.

Furthermore, the key to these kinds of tests seems to be that the hero is unaware of the test, and perhaps also equally unaware of the mentor's existence, so that the hero's true and unprepared character may be measured and judged.

Obi-Wan and Yoda as givers of supernatural gifts

Whereas Odysseus passes the test Athene gives him when he finally has returned to Ithaca (Homer, p. 208), Luke seems to fail many of the tests at least Yoda gives him. However, in *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope*, he passes his initial test for courage: as a reward for Luke's heroism Obi-Wan reveals his true identity and also gives a gift: "Obi-Wan gives a lightsaber to Luke." (Lucas, *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope*)

The lightsaber, like the divine gift Odysseus receives from Athene, turns out to be a weapon exclusively wielded by the mysteriously trained and supernaturally able Jedi knights. The lightsaber is therefore, arguably, perceived as a divine gift - rather clear in this case, as the mentor is perceived as a supernatural aid.

Arguably, in *Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back*, Yoda can also be seen as a gift giver as he moves Luke's seemingly immovable ship from deep in a swamp so that he may help his friends in need on another planet. The clearly supernatural act of lifting the ship only with the help of mind power plays out as follows:

Yoda moves the ship out of the water and places it onto land.

LUKE: I don't... I don't believe it.

YODA: That is why you fail. (Kershner, *Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back*)

Along with giving Luke the option of leaving the planet, Yoda gives him a piece of vital advice, which may be comparable to the courage raising and scolding of Odysseus and Telemachos which Athene stands for in *The Odyssey*. The similar manner of these reminders of the importance of believing in oneself is apparent. Even though one hero might succeed continuously in doing so, as Odysseus seems to do in *The Odyssey*, and another hero might fail, as Luke does in the task of believing that he may accomplish things he previously could not. A supernatural gift or some vital piece of advice seems to be important to get the hero on the way of self-reliance, and the job to deliver these gifts and pieces of advice naturally falls upon the mentor.

Obi-Wan and Yoda as guides of complete self-reliance

Comparable to Athene scolding Odysseus and Telemachos for not believing in themselves enough (Homer, p. 327), Yoda indeed shortly and effectively scolds Luke for not believing in himself after enabling him to use his ship again. Before Luke tries to move his own ship out of the swamp with his mind himself, however, Yoda encourages him to believe in himself by telling him the following: "Try not. Do... or do not. There is no try." (Kershner, *Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back*)

Although Luke ends up only trying and therefore finds himself failing, Yoda's advice does eventually seem to have the desired effect on Luke; in the last film of the original trilogy, *Star Wars: Episode VI - Return of the Jedi*, Luke returns to Yoda to finish his Jedi training, but instead of continuing his tutoring the now dying Yoda tells Luke the following: "No more training do you require. Already know you that which you need." (Marquand, *Star Wars: Episode VI - Return of the Jedi*)

Filling Luke with the confidence he needs to finish his journey that culminates in confronting his father and thereby testing his own belief in himself, Yoda guides his pupil in self-reliance. In the end, Luke manages to stand up for both himself and his perceived evil father by telling the emperor of the Empire: "I'll never turn to the dark side. You've failed, your highness. I am a Jedi like my father before me." (Marquand, *Star Wars: Episode VI - Return of the Jedi*)

Thanks to the guidance Luke has received, and despite failing to accomplish some tests set out by Yoda, Luke not only manages to stand firm in his self-reliance, but even accomplishes to see who his father, the notoriously evil Darth Vader, truly is. Perhaps it is through seeing the true and good character hidden in his father that Luke finally manages to rely on himself.

Luke has, in the end, clearly developed the ability to see beyond appearances as he finds the true hidden good character in his father. This becomes rather apparent as the following happens after the climactic final stand against the Emperor is over: "Luke takes off the mask of Darth Vader." (Marquand, *Star Wars: Episode VI - Return of the Jedi*) Arguably, had not Yoda

tested Luke in seeing beyond appearances in their initial meeting, Luke had not been equally prepared in seeing beyond the literal and metaphorical mask of his father - thereby enabling them to reconcile and find their metaphorical way home.

Concluding discussion

The Odyssey and *Star Wars* have several similarities concerning the role of the mentor characters; starting journeys, making masked tests, giving supernatural gifts and guiding towards complete self-reliance seems to be a shared modus operandi for both Athene in *The Odyssey* and Obi-Wan and Yoda in *Star Wars*.

Indeed, it seems that, through looking at these two groups of characters in their works respectively, Luke and his mentors have continued the millennia long tradition of the bildungsroman or coming-of-age story which *The Odyssey* helped create - as Edith Hall describes in *The Return of Ulysses: A cultural history of Homer's Odyssey* (2008):

For in the course of his father's poem Telemachus does significantly alter, from tearful adolescent to confident public speaker and warrior I...I. Moreover, he has an essential accoutrement of the *Bildungsroman* hero: a wise mentor – indeed, the original Mentor, Athena in disguise. (Hall, 2008, p. 107)

The overall structure of *The Odyssey* and *Star Wars* seems to be similar concerning the functions of the mentor archetype; both works show clear examples of mentors acting as journey starters, test givers, gift givers and self-reliance guides - all four actions typical and commonly found in the mentor archetype.

The similar acts of journey starting and gift giving alike show that Athene and the two *Star Wars* mentors, Obi-Wan and Yoda, indeed are comparable, as they, furthermore, seem to share the same goal for their respective pupil: self-reliance. As initially disguised guides from their own pupils' self-reliance journeys, these mentors test their pupils. An important, if not vital, part of some of these tests seems to be the inclusion of an initially disguised identity; each hero seemingly must figure out that there is a mentor behind the mask - a common test the mentor archetype seems to make in more stories than these two.

Despite not being a scholar, Vogler adds to the definition of the mentor archetype by saying that any "gift or help of the donor should be earned, by learning, sacrifice, or commitment." (Vogler, 2007, p. 41) This essay continues to theorize that it could be argued that the mere acquiring of a mentor's acquaintance should be earned by learning, as in the case of Luke learning patience in *Star Wars*, by sacrifice and by commitment, as in the case of Odysseus committing to his true character in constant times of trials. The initial reward in these stories is neither advice nor gifts - it is to suddenly acquire an unmasked helper previously thought to be an unimportant individual, or perhaps even to make an opportunity out of an obstacle.

Regardless of the appearance of the mentor's mask, the reason for wearing it is the same in both *The Odyssey* and *Star Wars*: to measure, test and thereby also teach their pupils important social values - arguably cunningness in *The Odyssey*, and patience in *Star Wars*. More generally,

however, the heroes are seen to approach complete self-reliance in these meetings, which would enable them to express respect towards those the hero interact with, regardless of appearance - hence the presumed importance of wearing the metaphorical mask. In regards to the coming-of-age view of these stories, thanks to the masked tests, the heroes' journey from an insecure youth to a confident adult becomes visible. Through their respective mentor guided journey, the heroes finally become confident, believe in themselves and, at least spiritually, finds their way back home; both *The Odyssey* and *Star Wars* illustrate this by ending both stories with great family reunions.

The proverbial circle is complete, and the hero, be it Odysseus with his wife and son or Luke with his sister and redeemed father, has regained what Campbell calls the "Freedom to Live" (Campbell, 1993, p. 238), because now, with the help of a mentor's guidance to self-reliance and in learning how to know and trust in oneself, "[t]he hero is the champion of things becoming, not of things become, because he *is*." (Campbell, 1993, p. 243) The hero himself has not changed fundamentally. However, his knowledge of who he is has arguably developed to supernatural standards, thanks to the aid of the supernaturally connected mentor along with overcoming overwhelming obstacles. If it translates into finding god or finding oneself within the subconscious mind is not entirely clear. However, Campbell states the following that might indicate that they are synonymous: "The adventure of the hero represents the moment in his life when he achieved illumination". (Campbell, 1993, p. 259) This is where the heroes in *The Odyssey* end up thanks to their mentor Athene, this is where Luke ends up thanks to his mentors in *Star Wars*, and, according to Campbell and his hero's journey, this is where all heroes end up after their journeys (Campbell, 1993, p. 259) aided by the supernatural mentor archetype.

Thus, the metaphorical mask of the mentor may, at least in these two stories, be seen as the disguise of divine beings - gods and goddesses testing the hero's ability to be humble enough to recognize this divinity so that the hero in turn may receive the gift of the gods: knowledge. As Prometheus gave fire to humans, mentors, as traditionally masked and disguised divine beings, seems to continuously give knowledge to heroes - a millennia old story tradition seen in both *The Odyssey* and the original *Star Wars* trilogy, amongst, presumably, a vast number of other traditionally constructed stories made with the same underlying message: believe in yourself.

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