



**The Three Stages of Initiatic Spirituality**  
Craftsman, Warrior, Magician

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## Excerpt

### Introduction

Craftsman. Warrior. Magician. As if an echo reverberating through the millennia, these three words remind us of something that lies buried deep in the history of mankind and deep within our own psyche. “Primitive” by the standards of modernity, when we reflect on them they nevertheless stir in us an awakening to our own potential, mental, physical, and spiritual.

In one form or another, the figures of the craftsman, the warrior, and the magician were known to every ancient culture on earth. In some cases, the functions of each could be performed by a single member of a tribe, with herders having to double as warriors, and with responsibility for performing religious or initiatory rituals falling to older members of the tribe or to the head of the household.

For many cultures, though, they were more than just duties, vocations, or positions in society. Together, the craftsman or farmer, warrior, and magician (sage, priest, or brahmin, etc.) characterized its very soul. Written around three millennia ago, in Iran, the sacred Avestan texts (of the world’s first monotheistic religion, Zoroastrianism) show us a culture composed of peasants and farmers, warrior nobles, and priests. Around two thousand years before this, claimed comparative philologist and mythologist Georges Dumézil, Indo-European societies (from which the Zoroastrian society ultimately emerged) had essentially the same three classes or castes.

However, it is possible that, as David W. Anthony has suggested, the herder/cultivator, warrior, and priest may have constituted “three age grades,” through which every man would pass, if he lived long enough. As is the case with the Maasai of Africa, the younger men might have worked as herders or artisans, while the elders of the tribe would have taken on the role of priests or spiritual guides. The profession of the warrior would, then, have been taken up by men between these two ages, when they were at their maximum physical strength.

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If we think of the craftsman, warrior, and magician (or, more broadly, the shaman, brahmin, or tribal wise man, etc.) not merely as three vocations within society but as three types of consciousness within initiation

itself, we might say that the craftsman who is aware of his role as an initiator has risen to the stage of the magician, brahman, or sage, etc., and returned to his vocation in a higher, priestly form. As an initiator, acting within his cult or Lodge, the images he passes on are the psychic, opening the Golden Age to the initiate, and reuniting him with the gods or God.

Traditionally, acceptance into a vocation often required the novice going through some kind of initiation ritual which imparted a mythology that explained how the art itself came into existence, which god or mythic figure created it, and what ethics and behavior is expected of the initiate.

Ritual initiation is, in effect, a kind of spiritual *machinery* or spiritual *technology*, not in the contemporary sense of these words, but in their original sense or, to point to a historical period, in the sense used by the ancient Greeks (Techne - technology, technique, craft, the act of crafting). By *spiritual machinery*, we are referring to several interrelated mythic and natural forces, most literally - or in the most outward sense - the machinery or tools of the gods or of the trade or guild: the hammer, chisel, square, compasses, fire, flint, and alchemical vessels, etc., which appear in the initiation ritual as symbols of a higher and deeper reality.

The root of the term machinery is the Proto-Indo-European *maghana*, “that which enables.” It is related, also, to the Greek word *makhaná* (tool, means) and to the Old English *mæg*, meaning “I can,” and to the contemporary English word “may.” In the context of initiation, the *machine that enables* is the ritual itself, its set of procedure, movements, the unveiling of symbols and ritual objects, etc., reflecting the predictable movements of the planets; the seasons; of birth, life, and death, etc.

These things are not objects of devotion, per se, but hint at natural law or cosmic law, i.e., an all-pervasive cosmic Intelligence, Consciousness, or Law Giver that has set everything in motion. The heavens and earth are, in other words, a kind of machine of God or the gods, and the initiatic ritual emulates and connects the initiate to its essence, or the fuel, of existence.

Initiation unveils the workings of the cosmos outside of the initiate and points to his place within it and to the path he might take through it, toward the Divine. He is not a cog but a star, a universe - a microcosm that reflects the whole of existence and its essence. In attaining that that consciousness in which he feels he *can* understand, *can* do, and *can* cultivate a new, empowered way of living and being, he starts to glimpse, and to embody, what is sometimes called the Higher Self.



**About the Author:** Angel Millar is a well-known lecturer on Freemasonry, initiation, and esotericism as well as an artist and student of the martial arts. The author of several books, including *Freemasonry: Foundation of the Western Esoteric Tradition*, he lives in New York City.

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