



The Three Stages of Initiatic Spirituality
Craftsman, Warrior, Magician

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Media Questions

1. When and how did you become interested in the esoteric?

I meditated for the first time when I was fifteen. I'd got hold of a book on astral projection and the classical elements. I don't recall why I bought it, and it didn't make much sense to me at the time, but it interested me. Later, when I was seventeen, I discovered a New Age bookstore a few miles from where I lived, in the southeast of London. I was immediately fascinated by all the books that were for sale there. I started buying them and immersed myself in studying religion, spirituality, Western esotericism, paganism, shamanism, and ceremonial magic. Some of the books were scholarly, such as the work of Mircea Eliade, and some of them were by influential ceremonial magicians, such as Israel Regardie and Aleister Crowley. It opened up my imagination, and it was quite a romantic time, in many respects.

2. What is your background in relation to the arts and martial arts?

At twenty, I began studying fine art painting at Chelsea College of Art and Design and, a couple of years later, I studied fashion design at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design. I wasn't really interested in everyday clothing, however. I was influenced by designers such as Koji Tatsuno and Issey Miyake, and I was quite experimental. The clothing I created was actually quite influenced by my studies of religion and spirituality. I sewed leaves from a local woods into one garment and over a few months, they broke apart. It was quite beautiful and embodied the Japanese idea of the beauty of the rustic and the imperfect (*Wabi-sabi*). My final collection at Saint Martins was influenced by monasticism. I was reading about a Thai monk at the time, and I had been staying, annually, at a Benedictine monastery, which had a big influence on my psyche. I was partly wondering if I should become a monk after graduation. (Incidentally, most of the monks I met were just intrigued that I was studying fashion and staying in a monastery. It's not that typical.)

I continued with my practice of oil painting for many years, and first exhibited at the Tearooms des Artistes, in London, where the alchemist John Dee had once had dinner

when it was a private home, several centuries earlier. After moving to New York, I devoted most of my time to painting, and exhibited occasionally. I've painted several Masonic works, and some are in the permanent collection of the Chancellor Robert R Livingston Library and Museum of the Grand Lodge of New York, and others have been shown at The Henry Wilson Coil Library & Museum of Freemasonry in San Francisco. I still sometimes create visual art, but my art or craft is now really writing.

In regard to martial arts, I started practicing Nam Pai Chuan Shaolin Kung Fu around the time I left Saint Martins College and remained with the martial arts school until I moved to New York City. Once in the US, I practiced with a few schools and teachers -- mostly Kung Fu, but also a little bit of Tai Chi. Somehow, I fell in with a young guy called David Kaplan, who was just then beginning to teach Shaolin Kung Fu, and we would go to practice in Chinatown really early in the morning when everyone else was asleep, except for a few Chinese people who were practicing Tai Chi and Chi Gong. Now, I've been practicing a mixed style of Kung Fu with another school in NYC. I've been there for around eight years, but I also practice once a week with a friend who studies kickboxing.

3. Why did you decide to write this book?

I don't recall exactly why I began writing *The Three Stages of Initiatic Spirituality: Craftsman, Warrior, Magician*. Books often just evolve. There's no clear beginning point. But, of course, I had long been interested in mythology, ritual, symbolism, and esoteric practices. My previous books had focused largely on Freemasonry and were essentially histories of the "Craft." But I felt something was missing. Being histories, they couldn't and didn't really reflect my understanding of spirituality, self-development, and our relationship to the archaic and archetypal. I also felt there was something lacking in most books on esotericism. In my view, they often lacked a holistic worldview. I wanted to show the importance of spirituality to the craftsman and warrior as well as to the magician, and I wanted to show the influence of the craftsman and warrior on especially ancient spirituality.

4. Freemasonry is mentioned a lot in the first section. Can you tell us about Freemasonry?

Freemasonry is a complicated subject, but roughly-speaking it is a fraternity that emerged from the stonemasons' guild of Great Britain in 1717 C.E., though the guild had its own ritual and mythology well before that time. The earliest recorded stonemasons' or Masonic myth dates from around 1390 C.E. After 1717, with Freemasonry now distinct from stonemasonry, the focus was ethical and spiritual self-development. The lessons of the fraternity were, and still are, taught largely through initiatic rituals and explanations of various symbols.

When Freemasonry spread across France and Germany a couple of decades later, new rituals were created and various competing Masonic factions emerged. These were often influenced by chivalry, Christian mysticism, alchemy, and Rosicrucianism. While most of

these rituals disappeared some were incorporated into the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry and what, in the USA, is called the York Rite, with its highest degree being that of the Order of the Temple or the so-called “Knights Templar” degree.

5. What is initiation?

“Initiation” means a beginning. To be initiated, is to begin something. In regards to spirituality or what we might call “the Mysteries” (whether in Freemasonry, Mithraism, Wicca, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, or Sufism, etc.) there is some kind of initiation ritual. During that ritual, the initiate will often be shown certain symbols, hear certain lessons about morals, ethics, behavior, the nature of Divinity, etc., and will swear not to violate the sacred, etc. But the ritual initiation is only a formal beginning.

It’s like a student of painting hearing a lesson on how to paint and then being presented with some paint and brushes. After that, it’s up to him to see if he can embody the lessons. But it’s not about mimicking. Eventually, he will want to go beyond the teachings to represent the ideal in a way relevant to his time. The same applies to spiritual initiation. You want to have a profound grasp of the sacred, and embody the teachings, but, at some point, you have to use your own words to explain them, and you have to embody the spirit in a way that is authentic to you and to your time.

6. *The Three Stages of Initiatic Spirituality* has three sections. Why did you write it like that and what does that mean for the reader?

Yes, there is one section for the Craftsman, one for the Warrior, and one for the Magician. And each section has chapters on the history, mythology, ritual and symbols, and the practices related to each of these archetypes. Each section is, then, structured to be something like a small, literary initiation. (I’ve described them as the Mnemonic, Somatic, and Gnostic Initiations respectively.) The reader learns the history and mythology, goes on to explore the rituals, and finally explores a practice or practices.

Passing from Craftsman, through the Warrior, to the Magician, I wanted to the reader to get more than just information. I wanted it to be a kind of literary initiation. I wanted to impart to the reader an initiatic feeling -- a feeling for the sacred and the holistic -- and I wanted him or her to come to the last section, on balancing the archetypes, with a sense of wanting to balance their lives through them, developing mind, body, and spirit.

7. Can you explain the Craftsman archetype?

The Craftsman archetype is the embodiment of spirituality in craftwork, or “ordinary” work, that unveils the sacred, whether that is an Orthodox monk painting an icon or a Zen Buddhist performing the tea ceremony (*Chado*, “Way of tea”).

Just as the first Chan Buddhists to visit Japan, from China, taught Buddhism through simple work -- polishing a mirror, drinking tea, cleaning a sword, sweeping leaves -- so Freemasonry saw the transcendent in the ordinary work of the stonemason. The trowel, level, chisel, and other tools became metaphors of our own spiritual development.

It is about aligning oneself with the Divine, and remembering It, recalling It and embodying Its creative laws in art, everyday actions, ritual, and even in one's own life. You might also say that it is about seeing the sacred when other people only see the mundane.

8. Can you explain the Warrior archetype?

The Warrior archetype is the embodiment of spirituality in the inner spiritual struggle, in not giving in to fate but forging one's own destiny, meditating upon impermanence, and the development of the body and its subtle energy.

In regard to the inner, spiritual struggle, we see this, and the motif of war, in various religious texts. In the Hindu Bhagavad Gita, Krishna tells his disciple to fight in battle, and it is on the battlefield (not in a temple, garden, or somewhere peaceful) that Krishna reveals his cosmic form, with millions of heads, arms, legs and torsos. Similarly, the Bible speaks of a "war in heaven." The Buddha was from the warrior caste and was revered as a master wrestler. And in Islam there is the notion of the "greater struggle" with oneself.

9. Can you explain the Magician archetype?

The Magician is concerned, firstly, with the transformation of his or her own consciousness and, secondly, with the transformation of the world around them. For the magician, there is a relationship between the individual's consciousness and the material world. There is, we might say, a greater Consciousness that subsumes them. As such, the thoughts of the magician can change the world.

Yet, the magician is especially concerned with an ecstatic consciousness because it is through ecstasy that he or she glimpses the Divine. And, in it, he or she is also able to shake free of everyday fears and anxieties to penetrate the subconscious mind and the total Consciousness of the universe to cause change in the world.

10. What's the importance of these three archetypes? Do we need to develop all three or can we just develop one or two?

In the modern world, we are encouraged to specialize both in education and in our careers. We're told that we have to find a "niche" so that we can be the expert in one tiny area. Even in our private lives we often find that people want to restrict who we are and keep us

in a box. Instead, I encourage you to develop all aspects of yourself: mind, body, and spirit. Develop a holistic life. Defy clichés and go beyond yourself to become all you can be.

While *The Three Stages of Initiatic Spirituality: Craftsman, Warrior, Magician* explores the myths, rituals, etc., associated with these archetypes, it also explores some meditational practices to help people along the path of spiritual self-development and, in the final chapter, the book suggests ways to incorporate lessons from all three into your daily life. The Craftsman, Warrior, and Magician teach us about very different aspects of life and very different aspects of our psyches and true nature. And they show us very different ways of understanding the sacred in the ordinary world.

11. How are they relevant to us, especially to spiritual seekers, today?

Lying at the foundation of probably every civilization, the lessons of the craftsman, warrior, and magician are supremely relevant to us today. For each of us, they can help us become more whole and more completely ourselves. Additionally, for the spiritual seeker, they can teach a great deal about our own traditions.

In regard to the craftsman, most people are aware of the four elements, for example, but most people aren't aware that Plato spoke about the Creator as a "Craftsman" or that he described the elements as geometric solids – or, effectively, as the building blocks of the universe, with Fire having the shape of a pyramid, Earth that of a cube, etc. Again, most people are aware of alchemy but don't know that preceding it, the blacksmith often served as an initiator and as a kind of shaman in many cultures.

Similarly, most people interested in Western esotericism know the sword as a symbol or ceremonial tool. But few know about the warrior, his myths, rituals, and so on. Yet, that is where the sword comes from and to truly understand it, you have to understand the warrior that wielded it.

12. You talk about developing the body and developing Chi or inner energy. Can you explain that?

The Chinese and Japanese martial arts, Tantra, Taoist inner alchemy, and many other traditions believe that there is a subtle inner energy in the body. The Taoists, and Chinese martial artists, call it *Chi*. The Hindus call it *Prana*. Wilhelm Reich, an early pioneer of psychotherapy, called it *Orgone*. In many of these traditions, the energy is cultivated and circulated throughout the body. There may be different reasons for this but it is usually done as a part of a process of spiritual development.

However, although some practitioners deny this, *Chi* is dependent, to some degree, on the adrenal system of the body, and it is also directly related to physical and mental health. It

may not be everyone's experience, but in mine, a strong body is conducive to cultivating strong *Chi*.

13. You mention rituals of various Orders and societies. What is the point of ritual?

Ritual is the experience of non-duality. Instead of doing one thing and thinking about another, or doing a bit of something and then being distracted, there is only oneness -- a sense of being absolutely present. In the Japanese tea ceremony, the participants are focused on the tea, on the other people they are together with, and on the aesthetics of the season -- summer flowers or autumn leaves, etc. They are in the moment, experiencing something that will never come again but that embodies the healthy relationship between one person and another and between the human, nature, and the Tao, etc.

In ritual, the sacred is considered to be, in some sense, *in* the ordinary. In Freemasonry, an ordinary object might represent or symbolize something higher. For example, the builder's trowel might signify cementing friendships, the spiritual community, or what the Buddha called "noble friendship." But, if so, the ordinary world signifies the principles laid down by the Divine that will enable us to live a healthy life. It embodies the Divine Mind.

In ritual, the veil of our distracting thoughts, desires, wants, fears, and anxieties is drawn back, and an individual has the opportunity to grasp the essence of life. Very often, then, rituals are used in initiation, to help the initiate reorient himself away from unnecessary and harmful distractions and towards the Divine and towards his true Self or, as it is often called, his Higher Self.

14. You discuss the use of the mind, in for example the Positive Thinking movement and in Chaos Magic. Can you explain the role of the mind in transforming our lives?

Yes, by mind we don't mean intellect, as such. The intellect is only one part of what we call "the mind." Other aspects of it include intuition, different states of consciousness, the ability to visualize and the ability to think non-rationally, etc. In regard to Positive Thinking and modern magic, both use the mind to attempt to change things in the life of the individual. It might be that the individual wants to change himself or herself in some way (to commit to a routine or to be less anxious, for example). Or it might be that they want to influence their circumstances: to be successful in the world in some way. There are many techniques associated with this, but entering some kind of trance state and focusing on the aim is common.

15. Are there similarities between the approach of the Positive Thinking movement and modern magic?

Yes. Definitely. Some of the most notable esoteric writers -- such as Israel Regardie -- were aware of Positive Thinking and were, to some degree, influenced by it. If you're interested in the mind, you're probably going to look to parallel fields. Hence Regardie studied



psychotherapy as well. While there are significant differences, both magic and Positive Thinking claim that the mind, the thoughts, etc., can aid in changing the individual himself *and* his or her life for the better.