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.[1] Around two thousand years before this, claimed comparative philologist and mythologist Georges Dumezil, 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,[2] 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.

It is possible, too, that the colors black/blue, red, and white were associated with the craftsman, warrior, and priest respectively. There is evidence that, since the Stone Age, this triad of black, red, and white were used across Africa for ritual purposes,[3] where they probably symbolized blood, milk or semen (and thus life or procreation), and death.[4] We find these turning up in European mythology. In the tale of “Iron Hans” or “Iron John,” recorded by the Brothers Grimm, the hero rides a white, red, and black horse. Closer to our own time, these colors have made their appearance in alchemy and Freemasonry.

René Guénon has claimed that all initiatic knowledge is passed down through successive phases and through corresponding initiation rituals (or “grades”), and that these phases and grades “can always be reduced to three” which mark the “three ages of the initiate.” According to Guénon, these grades represent “birth, growth, and production.”[5] We can of course

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[1] Boyce, Mary, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs And Practices*, Routledge, UK, 2001, p. xv.
[2] Anthony, David W., *The Horse, The Wheel, And Language: How Bronze-Age Riders From The Eurasian Steppes Shaped The Modern World*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2007, p. 92
[3] Turner, Victor, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, USA, 1970, p. 86.
[4] T. O. Ranger and Isaria N. Kimambo (eds.), *The Historical Study of African Religion*, University of California Press, Berkeley, California, USA, 1976, p. 32.
[5] Guénon, René (Henry D. Fohr, Cecil Bethell, and Michael Allen, trans.), *Studies in Freemasonry & the Compagnonnage*, Sophia Perennis, Hillsdale, NY, 2004, p. 47.

find other interpretations (such as birth, life, and death, which we might associate with white, red, and black respectively), but Guénon means to give us an image of something like the seed, the trunk and branches, and then, finally, the flowering of a tree.[6]

In this book, we will explore the myths, symbols, rituals, and practices of the craftsman, warrior, and magician, concerning ourselves with their metaphysical aspects, and, as such, as three "grades" through which each of us might still pass.

In this regard, we should note that anthropologist Mircea Eliade draws together the smith (craftsman), warrior, and shaman (magician), suggesting that these are all "masters of fire."[7] The smith masters the fire of his forge, and the warrior the heat of battle, while the shaman is able to produce heat from his own body. (Still today, we find that some Tibetan Buddhists are able to meditate in the snow, and to melt it with their body heat.)

As masters of fire, the craftsman, the warrior, and the shaman are all masters of primordial energy that connects man to Divinity. Mythologically, it is Prometheus that steals the fire from Olympus, bequeathing it to mankind. In the Zoroastrian temple a fire is burned and never allowed to expire, and the Zoroastrian priest wears a veil so that his breath will not pollute it. In Freemasonry, still today, there is a great emphasis on "Light," and traditionally three "lesser lights" or candlesticks were kept lit during Lodge rituals and meetings.

On being initiated into an esoteric society such as those of Freemasonry, Tantra, or Sufism, the initiate is presented with various teachings and symbols. In pre-modern cultures, the teachings almost always related to a religion, deepening its teachings. The symbols, though sometimes related both to the esoteric teachings and to the religion, sometimes appear to have arisen from outside of the latter. Where, then, do these symbols come from? Why have they been preserved from one generation to the next?

When we consider symbols we are dealing with the idea of lineage or tradition, through which they have emerged and have been transmitted. "Tradition," Gustav Mahler tells us, "is not to preserve the ashes, but to pass on the flame." Although Mahler's comment is perhaps simplistic, it is nonetheless the case that contemporary Western man appears split between wanting to stamp out the flame and wanting to preserve the ashes, in the latter case revering institutions but not their essential meaning. We find this conflict both in society at large and in fraternities and esoteric and spiritual Orders. And in both cases, the attitude is one that anti-initiatic.

But at the moment we recognize the truth of Mahler's claim, we must acknowledge its limitations. If we take the paintings of the Old Masters, for example, undoubtedly the historic clothing depicted by the artist, for example, may be of relevance only to the historian, and, as such, considered as ashes of a past, of no relevance to our own lives. But what then is the

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[6] The three "grades," alluded to by Guénon, were, we might note, primarily the three Degrees of "Craft" or so-called "Blue Lodge" Freemasonry (Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason). More recently, former director of the Chancellor Robert R Livingston Masonic Library, William D. Moore has argued in his book *Masonic Temples* that American Freemasonry came to embody the archetypes of the craftsman, holy warrior, and mystic in the Craft Lodge, the Masonic Order of the Temple (or "Templar" Degrees), and the Scottish Rite respectively, with the Shriners embodying a jester or trickster archetype. While this might ignore an early and largely sincere interest in Sufism among the founders of the Mystic Shrine, and while it overlooks the *Societas Rosicruciana* -- a Rosicrucian-influenced and esoterically-inclined research society, open to regular Master Masons -- Moore's thesis is broadly correct.

[7] Eliade, Mircea, *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structure of Alchemy*, University Of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 106.

flame? The technique of the Old Masters? This, too, might be considered ash, since technique itself has, for better or worse, moved on.

We must think, then, that there is something other than flames and ash. This, of course, is the thing that the fire has burned to ashes -- the fuel for the fire. We commit things to memory the way civilizations -- and with them entire worldviews -- are committed to the flames of time.

Techniques, compositions, and materials may all be of relevance, but, to the novitiate artist, It is the spirit -- the fire -- of the artist that is of ultimate importance. Lineage and initiation exist to pass along the essence in the shapes of things that have deceased or that are or have become immaterial — in other words, to pass along a realm that, in Jungian terms, has become psychic.

This is, most literally, the role of the craftsman. In his ordinary, daily work, he is the creator of images in metal or wood, etc., that recall collective, archetypal memories. Yet, he also functioned as a priest within ancient society.

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 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.

The Craftsman

Long before the dawn of history, our ancestors discovered how to make tools. Sharpened pieces of flint, used for cutting, and primitive stone anvils -- on which smaller stones were hammered to make tools -- have been discovered on the shores of Lake Turkana, Kenya. They were made about three million years ago by *Australopithecus afarensis* (an early human species, with characteristics similar to an ape's, that survived for around 900,000 years) or by a related human species.[8]

By about 1.5 million years ago, *Homo erectus* began producing more sophisticated axes, the blades of which were symmetrical and teardrop-shaped. (Such axes have been found in Africa, Asia, and Europe.) Half a million years later, oversized axes began to be made. Since these were too large to be used for the mundane work of chopping materials, it is probable that they had some kind of ceremonial function.[9] A red axe carved from rose quartzite was also found in what appears to be a primitive grave, inside a cave in spain. This axe -- which was never used as a tool, and so, likewise, probably had some ritual function -- was made by the immediate ancestors of modern humans, *Homo heidelbergensis*, around 450,000 years ago.[10]

Myth has been described as "timeless history" that plays out in the unfolding of human events, in our experiences, and in the world we know. According to the myths of the ancient world, it was the gods who first harnessed fire, melted metal, reshaped stone, and made tools. They invented metallurgy, music, writing, and every art. And, envisioning a cosmos that could be made from nothing, they made the world and the stars. The Creator was a "Craftsman" or, to use the Masonic terms, a "Great Architect" or "Grand Geometrician."

The ability to imagine, and imagery itself, has a strong spiritual dimension. To make an image was to go beyond the mere human, into the realm of the Supernatural. The craftsman made the invisible visible. Primitive man drew the images of animals on cave walls and then, throwing spears at them, ritually, symbolically, killed them before the actual hunt. It was an act of magic that ensured that the hunting party would be not only successful but that their actions would be in accord with the supernatural laws of the universe, which sustained life, and that compensated for deaths with a comparable number of births.

The act of drawing or painting, or otherwise creating, has a role in some later religious, spiritual, and philosophical traditions. Over the doorway of Plato's academy was a sign prohibiting anyone that did not understand geometry from entering. In Hinduism and Buddhism, mandalas must be drawn according to specific rules governing the placement of imagery, colors,

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[8] BBC News, May 20, 2015, Rebecca Morelle, "Oldest stone tools pre-date earliest humans", http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-32804177. See also Nature.com, Sonia Harman *et al*, "3.3-million-year-old stone tools from Lomekwi 3, West Turkana, Kenya", http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v521/n7552/full/nature14464.html

[9] Petzinger, Genevieve von, *The First Signs:Unlocking The Mysteries of The World's Oldest Signs*, Atria Books, New York, 2016, pp. 26-28.

[10] Petzinger, Genevieve von, *The First Signs:Unlocking The Mysteries of The World's Oldest Signs*, Atria Books, New York, 2016, p. 29.

and so on. In Tibetan Buddhism, there is the tradition of ritually drawing, and then ritually dismantling, a large mandala in colored sand. In Freemasonry, during the first half of the 18th century, a rectangular shape with a triangular peak was drawn in chalk and charcoal on the floor, and the initiation performed inside of this “Lodge.” After, it too was wiped away.

Even in the modern era, we see the survival of the idea of the link between creating and magic or mysticism. Salvador Dali (1904-1989) studied alchemy and Tarot. And Dutch painter Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), and American painter Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) were all influenced by Theosophy -- a spiritual tradition founded by Mme. Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891).

Like the warrior – who enters chaos to restore order – and the shaman – who lives in both the world of the material and the realm of the spirits – the craftsman embodies opposites. He is the one who preserves the myths and who preserves the traditional methods, rules, and style of his craft as they were passed down to him. But the he is, ultimately, the primary innovator of his culture. The taming of fire for metallurgy, the invention of the wheel, weaving, the sword, spear, jewelry, writing, etc., in truth, he is responsible for every new invention. And as each transforms society, its myths must change in accord with it. New myths must be created (or old ones adapted) to explain how such technology came into the hands of men.

To some degree, the contradiction between the personal and the mythic is resolved by the idea, in ancient Greek philosophy, of *anamnesis*, the individual requirement to gain knowledge of the soul’s previous incarnations by remembering them. In a sense, this means thinking of one’s self as living out an archetypal plan, and it may mean thinking about developments in technology as an awakening to a long forgotten divine, or at least impersonal, memory.

Like the sacrifice of blood, fruit, or wine to an icon, it is the gods, not man -- and certainly not to a specific member of society -- to whom the developments in technology and techniques must be credited. Thus, a moon god or a war god will be reimagined as the one who discovered an alphabet and writing, and, from then on, will be associated with it, his old attributes no more than a folk memory.

To give credit to the living, human craftsman would be to risk placing him too high over the rest of the tribe. Yet, the earthly craftsman is close to the gods, and recognized as such. He is an initiator of young men, a priest of the tribe, leading rites and passing down the secrets of the gods: the manipulation of fire and metal, music, song, sacred poetry, geometry, and, later, stonemasonry.

Civilization, as we understand it -- with society producing aesthetic objects, growing crops, divided into classes, and with the state having an established army of some sort -- began around a mere 10,000 years ago, in what is now the Middle East and China, and slightly later in South America. Even into the 20th century, most people lived in rural societies. Although it is now one of the world’s few superpowers, in 1912, in Russia, for example, there were only 166 tractors in the whole country, with wooden ploughs being the norm. Still today, both rural and tribal cultures continue to exist, as do more traditional and religious societies even in the West.

The remarkably early dating for primitive tools puts the relatively short history of civilization -- and the even shorter modern era, of only a few hundred years -- in perspective. Man has had very little time to adapt to the rhythms of the modern world, the pace of which seems only to increase. Yet something remains in the forest, in the archaic and the primordial.

That thing is our nature or our being, and our desire for knowledge of the Mysteries of life and death.

Yet, the making of the first tools is important to us for another reason. Tool-making is intimately tied to verbal communication. The two may have arisen together, or one may have spurred the development of the other, but, as scientists have now demonstrated, the same part of the brain is used for making tools and for speaking developed language.[11]

Here, though, we must consider the element missing from the scientific explanation: myth. If language and tool-making emerged together, so this way of thinking and representing ideas must have appeared with them. "[M]yth and language play similar roles in the evolution of thought," German philosopher Ernst Cassirer attests, and, certainly, if we understand the meaning of the names of the many deities of the world's myths, we get a much clearer idea of the natural phenomena and early human culture behind them.

The name of the Hindu goddess Kali, for example, means, literally, "the black one," but her name is also related to time and death. In regard to the pre-Christian, northern European deity Thor, we find that the name of his hammer, *Mjolnir* -- literally "the grinder" -- is closely related to the word "miller." Myth brings things together, animating them, and making them essential to the cosmic drama. The tool of a particular deity may be linked to some aspect of human culture, natural phenomenon, state of consciousness, and even to a specific gender.

Ancient cultures regarded plants, metals, stones, and tools, as either male or female, depending on their shape, color, and other qualities. *Mjolnir* was at once related to blacksmithery, war (since Thor uses it to crush giants, enemies of the gods), thunder and lightning, and the phallus. Such associations are not limited to ancient Europe, but can be found in other cultures, from the Indian to the Sumerian. In the latter case, we find the god Ninurta wielding clubs, associated with the thunder and lightning, called "World Grinder" or "World Crusher."[12]

In regard to Thor's hammer and sexuality, *The Poetic Edda* tells us that, having lost *Mjolnir* to a giant, the god had to wear a woman's wedding dress in order to get it back. Although this was a disguise, the myth suggests that the god's masculinity was temporarily lost along with his hammer, and recovered only once he repossessed it. However, it is possible that the story contains a memory of the practice of male shamans dressing in women's, or at least non-male, clothing, becoming a kind of androgyne that both combined the male and female sexes, and, as such, both unified and transcended them, becoming a kind of being beyond the ordinary human, able to commune with spirits and gods, etc.

Language, too, was affected by such sexualization -- and thus, it would seem, by the mythic consciousness. Even today, of course, in various languages, nouns are categorized as male or female (hence, for example, the French word for hammer -- *marteau* -- is considered a masculine noun).[13] We can say, then, that language (or words), tools, and myth form a kind of primitive trinity of meaning.

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[11] ScienceDaily, September 3, 2013, "Language and tool-making skills evolved at the same time", https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/09/130903102003.htm. See also CBSNews, January 14, 2015, "Making of stone tools may have led to the emergence of human language", http://www.cbsnews.com/news/making-of-stone-tools-could-have-led-to-emergence-of-human-language/

[12] Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and The Crucible*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1978, p. 100.

[13] Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1953, p. 43.

Mythologically, metallurgy was sometimes linked to the idea of language, especially of the gods or God. The priests of Odin were called “forgers of song.” Such connections exist elsewhere.[14] Psalm 12:6, tells us that the words of God are “as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” And the 15th century, British, Cooke manuscript tells us that “Jubal” or “Tubal” -- brother of the metallurgist Tubalcaym (i.e., Tubal Cain) -- discovered the science of song and music by “pondering” the the sound “of his brother’s hammers” (i.e., on his anvil).

As Mircea Eliade has observed, for ancient man, tool-making was itself a superhuman act[15] that appeared to unleash forces that were either of the gods or their enemies -- demons, giants, monsters, etc. The relationship of the supernatural to tools and tool-making is made evident in the medieval Icelandic text *The Poetic Edda*. In a poem called the Voluspo, a seeress or volva relates the past, present and future to the Odin, chief of the gods. On the past, the seeress recalls that:

> *At Ivatholl met the mighty gods,*
> *Shrines and temples they timbered high;*
> *Forges they set, and they smithied ore,*
> *Tongs they wrought, and tools they fashioned.*[16]

She also recalls that the gods had no lack of gold at that time -- not, we should note, gold objects, but gold ore for smelting.

Metallurgy is, we can see, one of the first acts of the gods -- who establish forges along with shrines and temples -- and the craft plays an esoteric role in the myths of the ancient, pre-Christian northern Europeans. Most notably, if we look at the characteristics of the deity and his wives and tools, we see that Thor is intimately tied to the blacksmith’s craft. His hammer could turn red hot -- like a blacksmith’s hammer -- and had to be held using special gloves called *Jarngreipr* (“Iron Grippers”). His beard and hair were red, and when he became angry, sparks flew from them.

Eliade notes that, in other cultures, the tools of the blacksmith -- the hammer, anvil, and bellows -- were regarded not only as sacred but as being alive.[17] Moreover, besides the transformation of metal ore into various objects, the metallurgist performed a similar function to the tribal shaman, especially in Africa. That is to say that, he was intimately tied to the supernatural, not least of all because he had mastered fire.

The metallurgist created amulets or jewelry from iron that kept evil spirits away and could encourage fertility, etc. Moreover, he also led or played a major role in certain rites, especially those of blacksmiths’ guild, in the opening of a new mine, and of initiations into the mannerbund, especially in Germany, Scandinavia, and Japan.[18]

For blacksmiths, mastery of heat meant the control and manipulation of fire and heat in the smelting process. Yet, we have noted that sparks were also said to fly from the hair and beard of Thor, suggesting intense body heat. For the shaman, such mastery meant producing

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[14] Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and The Crucible*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1978, pp. 98-99.
[15] Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and The Crucible*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1978, p. 29.
[16] Henry Adams Bellows, *The Poetic Edda*, “Voluspa.”
[17] Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and The Crucible*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1978, p. 29.
[18] Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and The Crucible*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1978, p. 104.

heat from his own body. As mentioned in the introduction, still today some Tibetan Buddhist monks are able produce steam from their own bodies when meditating in the snow. Meditational techniques of heating or cooling the body are also still sometimes taught in the traditional Chinese martial arts as well.

In Vedic India, the weapon of Indra – the thunderbolt or *Vajra* – was created from the skull of the sage Dadhichi. The *Vajra* (meaning “hard one” or “mighty one”) was later adopted into the iconography of the more esoteric form of Buddhism, which incorporated pre-Buddhist elements, mostly in Tibet. Here, in Vajrayana (“Diamond Vehicle”) Buddhism, the *Vajra* represents the indestructible quality of enlightenment, and the wrath of various deities, who destroy ignorance and other negative aspects of the psyche.

However, there are several types of closely-related *Vajra* depicted in Vajrayana iconography and used in its rituals. These are symmetrical, and have three, five, or nine prongs at each end. Of those with five prongs in total, including one at the center, the four outer prongs represent the four elements: Fire, Water, Air, and Earth.

In Vajrayana Buddhism the spiritual weapon is also known as the *Dorje* (“Lord of stones”), though meteoric iron is considered to be the best material for the creation of the object for ritual use, since this type of iron is considered to have come from the gods. Ordinary iron is also commonly used in its creation.[19]

The hammer of Thor was a sacred symbol to those pre-Christian European tribes that believed in the deity from whose name we derived the name of the day of the week, Thursday. As Christianity began to spread across Europe, and as its people began, slowly, to convert to the new religion, the hammer of Thor was sometimes worn as a pendant, and stylized to resemble the Christian cross.

The hammer has remained a symbol of some importance in the West. Most notably, in the form of the gavel -- a ceremonial mallet -- it is used by judges during legal trials, as well as presiding officers of Masonic Lodges and within other fraternities and societies, to signal the end of specific sections of the proceedings, to maintain order, and so on. However, the hammer also appears in the symbolic illustrations of Renaissance alchemy, often in conjunction with the figure of Vulcan, symbolizing the art, which was concerned with the transformation of metals, of plants into medicine, and, in many cases, with spiritual transformation.

[19] Robert Beer, *The Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbols*, 2003, pp. 87-90.