

Initiating the Gift

In a standard fantasy roleplaying game, there are many wizards. In canon *Ars Magica*, only the Gifted can be Hermetic magi. To account for the number of wizards normally found in a fantasy campaign, the un-Gifted can be initiated into a Mystery Cult and receive the Gift.

The idea is that there are many, many different magical traditions but each one has a method for inducting a new member and granting them the Gift.

INITIATING THE GIFT

The Gift itself is treated as a Major Virtue coupled with a Major Flaw. The Virtue grants the ability to work magic. The standard Flaw is Magical Air. The Target Level for the initiation is 21 (initiating a Major Virtue known to the Mystagogue). The Target Level cannot be lowered for an un-Gifted probationer (*Hedge Magic*, page 14) but this initiation assumes this.

The initiation script includes the initiate sacrificing one season in service to the Mystagogue (+1), the Mystagogue sacrifices one season teaching which grants the initiate Magic Theory 1 (+3), the Mystagogue sacrifices another season teaching granting (Mystery Cult) Lore 1 (+3). The rules specifically say when a bonus can only be applied once, so it seems in accordance with the rules to allow for two seasons of teaching. After three seasons, the initiate must meet the Mystagogue at a special place at a special time, which varies by cult (+3). The Mystagogue then conducts the initiation. The initiate undergoes an ordeal in which they gain the Major Flaw (+9). The Mystagogue must have a Presence plus (Mystery Cult) Lore of 3. Typically, the

Mystagogue has an Ability of 3 and the extra season of service by the initiate ensures that even a Mystagogue with a Presence of -1 will succeed in inducting the probationer. At the conclusion of the initiation, the probationer gets the Major Virtue of Wizard.

Major Virtue: Wizard

You have the ability to work magic.

For bookkeeping, the Major Virtue and Major Flaw could simply cancel, and the character receives the special Virtue of The Gift.

During the initiation, the Mystagogue could cast a spell such as *Welcoming to the Fold* to inflict Magical Air on the initiate.

WELCOMING TO THE FOLD

Creo Vim 25

R: Voice, **D:** Mom, **T:** Ind, Ritual

As *The Phantom Gift* (CrVi 15) except the target must be witting to the spell's effects and willing to receive its effect. The spell permanently bestows the Magical Air Major Flaw on the target.

(Base: 3, Voice +2, Special Effect +4)

After the initiation is concluded, the Mystagogue and new cult member typically spend a season *Opening the Arts* (which counts as another season of instruction for the next initiation).

INITIATING A MAJOR HERMETIC VIRTUE

Since wizards in most fantasy campaigns do not suffer the social penalties of the Gift, there is a second initiation that can occur (but need not). After the season spent *Opening the*

Arts, an initiation which grants the Major Virtue of Gentle Gift can be conducted.

This, too, has a target level of 21. As it is a Major Hermetic Virtue, this would be the only one the initiate should be able to get (Ars Magica Core Rulebook, page 37) so not all magical traditions would necessarily initiate Gentle Gift. Regardless, this initiation can be used to model similar initiations that grant a different Major Hermetic Virtue (such as Elemental Magic or Major Magical Focus).

This is the first initiation after undergoing a Major Ordeal, so the Target Level is reduced by nine to 12. The Mystagogue has already spent another season in teaching (+3). The initiate must acquire (by any means) five pawns of Vim vis and give these to the Mystagogue which counts as a quest (+3). The probationer must travel to a special place and arrive at a special time that is different from the previous initiation (+3). The Mystagogue must have a Presence plus (Mystery Cult) Lore of 3 for the initiation to be successful. Upon conclusion of the rite, the apprentice gains the Gentle Gift Major Hermetic Virtue (or perhaps another Major Hermetic Virtue depending on the magical tradition).

This initiation could also forego the season of teaching, the quest, and the special place and time by the inclusion of a Major Hermetic Flaw. A suitable Major Hermetic Flaw may be Necessary Condition (Use Focus for Spellcasting) to account for standard fantasy wizards normally needing material components or foci to cast their spells. The inclusion of a Major Hermetic Flaw would allow for easier initiation of Minor Virtues later.

A basic script for the initiation of a Minor Hermetic Virtue would start at a Target Level

of 15. This would be reduced by nine for the first initiation after a Major Ordeal, but the minimum Target Level is 9. The initiation would then be: Mystagogue teaches for one season (+3) and Minor Ordeal (+3). The Mystagogue needs Presence + (Mystery Cult) Lore of 3.

Several different traditions can be imagined. The names of the traditions can naturally be changed to something less generic and more campaign-suitable.

Tradition	Hermetic Virtue
Elementalist	Elemental Magic
Generalist	Secondary Insight
Ritualist	Mercurian Magic
Sorcerer	Diedne Magic
Specialist	Major Magical Focus
Spellmaster	Flawless Magic
Spellshaper	Flexible Formulaic Magic
Warlock	Life-Linked Spont. Magic
Wizard	Gentle Gift

The Minor Hermetic Virtues are many and these can be used to further define each tradition. It is worth remembering that each of the Mystery Houses grants a particular Minor Virtue. These can be used in the campaign even if the Order of Hermes is not.

INITIATED GIFT AND LIMITED SPELLCASTING

If the campaign adheres to the ratio that one in ten thousand will be born with the Gift while all other spellcasters had their Gift initiated, the Storyteller may decide that only those wizards with initiated Gifts will have to adhere to the rules found in the Limited Spellcasting document. Those born with the Gift will be truly special and have the potential to be vastly powerful, operating without a fatigue limit on their overall daily spellcasting.