

Simply, what is esotericism

Text by Bro. Athos A. Altomonte

Q: «I hope you won't laugh at my question: what exactly is esotericism? If you can answer please do it in a way a sixteen year old boy can understand it.

P.S. if you think I'm a burden for the list because of my ignorance you can cancel me, although I would be disappointed. Thank you very much, Valerio Genovese»

A: I have always stuck to the scale of values that I have been taught which, in the respect of economic laws, lavishes the maximum in the minimum and the minimum in the maximum. I'll explain myself.

The time, the abilities and the energy that an instructor directs to his work are considered a fruitful investment. This work is mainly directed to the divulgence of initiatory principles meant for the education of the aspirants. The more fruitful is the work, the more profitable is the investment. The result, though, will depend on both the protagonists, that are both the pupil and the instructor.

Initiatory education is not the only one to inspire more attention to the least expert rather than to the oldest, which are maybe standing still at the post of mundane habits. It is difficult for the latter to accept willingly to correct the preconceived ideas they have been "feeding on", originated by a derivate culture lacking in personal experience. Furthermore, every situation of prejudice is created by choice and not by chance.

Certainly to explain what esotericism is to a sixteen year old boy is a stimulating trial; but sixteen year olds must grow as well, therefore I'd start saying to this sixteen year old that **esotericism is a method of enquiry and not a philosophy.**

It is a precious method if it is used by able researchers to "strip" the object of study from exterior covers (formal or literal meanings) up to reach its deep meaning.

I am talking about **the soul of the meaning and not the apparent meaning** of the word, the idea, the symbol or any identity we are supposed to discover.

The esoterical enquiry starts from the exterior "covers" and penetrates up to reaching the central nucleus of the idea, which is its soul. The method of research is similar to peel an onion that, skin after skin, is "stripped" of its external covers and makes visible the essential part of the inner nucleus and by analogy, the **center of the system.**

On Esonet there are plenty of works dealing with esotericism, from the most classic one to the scientific one.

An example of how to "strip" a symbol down to "touch" its soul, that is the radical meaning that is its cause and fundament, is the work: *"The Mysteries of the Builders"* where chapter after chapter, are taken back to life the invisible meanings of the Cathedral (the Sephirotic Tree and the cosmic Man crucified in the 4 elements of the matter). It is also discovered that the "signs" marked on the Cathedrals are the same that give form to the internal spaces of the Masonic Temples.

Before talking about esotericism, though, we must understand how the esoterical research occurs; how we can remove skin after skin and "reveal" the hidden meaning of what we want to know.

The core of the matter is in the words **to analyze and to link**, which are the pillars of esotericism and explain a method that **analyzes facts and circumstances through analogy and correspondences.**

The word esotericism derives from the Greek word **esoterikós** that means inner and therefore looking inside. There is a similar word in Latin: **intelligere** (to know the principle of things – op. cit. C. Vallaturi, C. Durando) from which derives **intelligentia** (the noblest faculty of the soul – op. cit. C. Vallaturi, C. Durando) which is not *learning by heart* (**sciolism**) but the ability to understand the inner (occult) sense of what is perceived, seen, touched and heard.

The esoterical enquiry doesn't involve only abstract concepts or symbols, but it applies to the most refined subject for research as well: the extraordinary **living symbol** that is a human being.

To start a deep research on a living symbol (**archetypical Man**) means to find an answer that will have to be correct under the scientific profile as well, at least until we cross the meta-physical boundary.

The reason for this is that **esotericism is not a result of old tales neither of obscure medieval eccentricities**, but an instrument for enquiry rooted into the initiatory science.

V.I.T.R.I.O.L. – Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem.

Visit the Inside of (your) Earth and Rectifying (correcting yourself) you will Find the Occult Stone (the soul).

Knowing the most secret (deep) part of a person means to reach the aura (Light) of his soul.

The esoterical representation of this inner journey is a Labyrinth.

The **Labyrinth** with its many aspects represents the **destiny** and the **paths that are the lives** of individual's commitment or journey.

All the paths or roads converge to the center but, like in life, many paths (decided experiences) **are dead end roads and don't lead anywhere**. Others, on the other hand, intersect with other paths or roads and allow the "traveler" to advance.

The paths or roads represent the **possibility of choice**. In the choice (see the Art to decide) everyone will be able to throw his experiences, his common sense or, on the contrary, all his foolishness; he is free to try, to advance, to stop or to fail.

Looking at the East, I'd say that the Labyrinth is a wonderful representation of the **principle of the Karma**. The symbol that better shows the difference between "**free choice**", empirical and casual, and **Free Will**.

Free Will, in simple words, is the result of inner illumination (**Initiation**) that is produced thanks to the contact between soul and personality.

Therefore on the flat part of the floor (**physical life**) there isn't a chance for Free Will, which is generated by a status of conscience (**consciousness**) of a superior order, reached (**expansion of conscience**) after we are elevated on the vertical path, which represents **the ascent to the plane of spiritual conscience**, seat of the soul.

The **principle of light-shadow** (black and white) *divides but at the same time joins* the material and the spiritual planes; it is given by the "comparison" (allow me this daring word) between **the spiritual nucleus** (the soul) that is visible as **Light** in the **most external and dense planes**, and the **physical personality**, the concrete mind that is its **shadow**.

Here originates the saying that advises the physical mind, the shadow, to help intellectual modesty, because every thought it has is still lacking of the light of the soul (illumination).

This as well, like any other symbology, **veils** the approach to a method for **inner growth** that I can certainly define **rational and scientific**.

There are many horizontal entrances to the Labyrinth, but there is only one exit and it is a vertical one. Therefore we can only get out by "flying"; that is by rising from the floor of material life. This can happen only by subliming oneself, the thoughts of the personal self and personality.

The metaphor of **hovering, the ascent to the sky, the wings and the flight**, mentioned in the **Caduceus of Hermes** as well, **hides** the diagram to complete the initiatory journey, reach the "liberation" from earthly bonds (such as passion) and accomplish the real initiation.

Resuming: the Labyrinth symbolizes the **flat part of the initiatory dilemma** (the concrete conscience) that under the form of a spiral evolves towards the top (**the inner sky**).

The ascent (the spiral) as well is represented by the symbol of an **inner Mountain** (See Plato and Dante) that must be climbed. **We can decide** to do it in several ways.

One way is the **large path**, more comfortable, sure but slow. The other way is the **narrow path**, arduous and risky, but quick.

This metaphor refers to the **inner journey** that every postulant carries out in the search for initiation.

We still have to establish **what initiation is and what its goal is**. It is not to inflate with pride the personal self (concrete mind) as it happens in exoteric structures that represent initiation in a symbolical, and therefore only apparent shape.

It is necessary to make a distinction here. **Real Initiation is not a simple recognition amongst peers** but the result of the **transmutation** (metamorphosis) in the physical conscience of the concrete mind of the initiate, in communion or re-joining with its subtle counterpart.

Modern science calls this part **super-conscious**.

The journey through the Labyrinth (**physical existence**) and the re-ascent towards the high (inner and subtle) planes of the inner Mountain (**the destiny**) is the metaphor of the journey that the physical conscience (personal self) does in order to reach the counterpart of itself to a superior spiral (superior Ego).

The perception of oneself “enters” the physical body through senses and must be able to **coherently dominate** the impulsive, physical and emotional part.

Its journey continues through the development of the several planes of the physical mind and builds the conscience bridge that joins it to that part of superior (subtle) conscience called soul.

We can now remind you of the **12 eastern Yogas**, which Esonet presented an article about; they represent as many paths or means, to lead the several parts of the physical conscience (personal self) towards the last synthesis (Buddhi), that is the Chakra of the head in which the soul appears (Atmá).

Once again, if we are able to read them, the aspects of the East and the West match.

It is taught that the inner journey is guided by a higher Brother. An expert Brother that knows the path *because he has covered it successfully many times*.

The guide is the instructor that leads the pupil in his initiatory journey. He “holds his hand” on the threshold of the physical plane and takes him backwards in himself. Going up by planes (impulses, emotions, feelings, up to the formulation of abstract ideas) at the presence of the Ego to which he entrusts him because his task ends there.

At that point, though, the journey can continue; not as instructor and pupil, though, but as **Fellow Travelers** because the goal to be reached is the same.