

THE SYMBOL

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In ancient Greek language the word was underlining a way to control or a way of recognition, obtained breaking an object into two irregular halves, in such a way that the owner of one of the twos could have been recognised by putting his half to coincide together with the other one. It is also a thing which represents another one. The symbol, in fact, hide deeper meanings. The mystic Ugo di San Vittore describes symbols like “ the connection of visible things, in order to show the invisible ones”.

The comprehension of the symbol is strictly related to the knowledge already acquired by the one who is studying it. It is plain that men never stop to develop a symbolic imagination, looking around them symbols even there where no human reasoning has seen one.

The profane world communicate by words, whilst symbolism is the way the initiates communicate. Traditional symbols, in fact, join the material and spiritual worlds through a synthesis grounded on intuitive knowledge (pure transcendent intellect), which does not have its origin in the mind (because it transcends the latter) but in the “centre” of the individual (the “centre-hearth“ of certain traditions) , where resides the divine light which gives origin to us.

This is possible because the traditional symbol is part of the sacred, but it does not reveal it.

It is a duty of the initiate to reveal the living and operating reality, the reality of the sacred enframed into the symbol, because it stimulates the consciousness through the creative imagination. However, this is essentially an acknowledgment, an increased awareness of the True, in other words Gnosis.

The symbols, on different times, have represented the only way to save and to hand down memory and knowledge. In order to understand the Masonic symbol, we do need to release certain structures of the profane culture, which force us to attribute to the symbol just one meaning, action which eventually transforms the symbol into a code. The journey in the work of the initiate will be as rich as the number of possibilities connected to it will be wide.

As Di Bernardo wrote: “In Freemasonry the symbol expresses just one secret: the initiatory one. There is just one initiation, which is feeling to be part of the ideal chain of the Fraternity. The one who is unable to understand this will always find himself to be a profane who has entered the Masonic Temple by chance, who observes familiar objects, like the square, the compass, the hammer...without being able to understand their real symbolic meaning.”

The symbols that surround us in the temple have progressively achieved so much potentiality that one can read and interpret them in many different ways.

It is also true that through them (and even more through the rituals) we will become able to find the way to look for “the Truth”.

Most of those who deny that symbols carry any kind of deeper meaning probably do not have the psychological capacity to think in symbolic terms, to detach themselves from the everyday life in order to face and start a community and symbolic work.

Everything can be a symbol, if we want that to be it. Symbols are referred just indirectly to the physical reality; nevertheless they directly underline a mental, imagined one, made of meanings and sense.

Ernst Cassier stated that the man is a symbolic animal.

Following a hermetic concept, he is “ an incarnation of cosmic functions”, or, because he is placed on the centre of the creation, he is considered the UNIVERSAL SYMBOL.

We can say, like Guénon writes, that we do not have just visual symbols, but sonorous ones as well.

Now I would like you to think of one of our rituals: it is constituted by a group of visual symbols (the objects which are in the temple, our aprons). But, if we think about it, even words and gestures are symbols. We can say that they are symbols which are given action to .

The interpretation of the symbol, then, is down to the intelligence and sensitivity of each one of us, through an inner quest which lead us to find , in ourselves, our microcosm.

This interpretation does not want to show any dogmatic character, and can assume therefore different meaning without experiencing contradictions; on the contrary, self-completing.

We can in fact affirm that the symbol cannot be completely disclosed, explained and rationalised, because each attempt in such direction will deprive it of its magical dimension. We can say, then, that the symbol promote free-thought, contrary to all religious and political dogmas.

As our Bro. Rocco Ritorto wrote, “ ritualism and symbolism are the ways that drive the mason to the light which frees him from superstition, fanaticism, dogmatism, allowing him to enrich his Ego of knowledge; without this any way of truth and spiritual, moral and intellectual growth is vane”.

The experimentation of the symbols onto an inner way, connected with the rituality of the temple allows the initiate to proceed towards the highest of the journeys, the one of “know thyself”.

I want to conclude with a quote from Bachofen:

It is in the graves that the symbol has been created...

Thoughts, feelings, dumb prayers

Evoked by the aspect of the tomb

Could not be expressed by words;

Just the symbol, because of its immutable silence,

Can enable one feel them.

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