

The Alchemical Cavern

The Chamber of Reflection or the Alchemical Cavern

Can the profane person who asks to be initiated into the mysteries of Freemasonry imagine what awaits him and the trials he will have to overcome in order to receive the light? No, but his instinct lets him foresee a “change”, a “transmutation” that is being prepared deep inside him. The path he has just taken is that of Initiation, from the Latin *Initiare* which means to begin, because it is indeed an initiatory quest that he has just undertaken. Why does he seek to be Initiated? Perhaps his unconscious, the guiding thread of most of his actions, through an imperceptible whisper, that only the one who listens with his heart can hope to hear, has revealed to him the ultimate goal of “*Man*”: PURIFICATION. Indeed, Initiation is purification, purification of the “*Cosmic Man*” who, after the drama of the Edenic Fall, leading to his own destruction, seeks to regenerate himself in order to reintegrate the lost paradise. The first test that the profane will live to enter Freemasonry will be that of the chamber of reflection, a strange name that hides a practice much older than Masonry itself. The chamber of reflection is, in my opinion, one of the most important tests on the path to initiation, because it is within it that it is necessary to “*proceed to a kind of intellectual and moral cleansing with the aim of ridding the mind of everything that prevents the light from reaching it*”.¹

The reflection chamber uses the universal language of symbolism, in order to make the profane experience his first test, which is that of the earth.

It is written somewhere in the Bible “*you came out of your mother's womb naked and you will return naked to the earth's womb. You will not take anything with you when you die, you will not take your wealth with you*”, and indeed, before the profane person enters the reflection chamber, he is asked to get rid of his money and to deposit all his metallic objects. Inside the chamber of reflection, the profane will discover several symbols evoking death, then the postulant is invited to write his

¹ Oswald Wirth- L'apprenti.

“philosophical will” because at this precise moment he will die to his profane life, but before being reborn and living fully his second birth, he must make an assessment and answer in writing to three questions:

- What are man's duties towards himself?
- What are man's duties towards God?
- What are man's duties towards humanity?

In this narrow chamber of reflection, with black painted walls, whose only source of light is a simple candle whose flame flickers slowly, the profane, once the blindfold is removed, is quickly confronted with the numerous symbols and inscriptions that surround him. Then, little by little, he discovers another symbol, whose presence no material support can express and which is nevertheless the most important of all symbols: SILENCE. It is said that *“when the noisy passions of the world fall silent, the seeker can finally listen”*, so the profane is invited to be silent, so that he can listen in the depths of himself to the words of wisdom that his heart inspires. The chamber of reflection is like an alchemical cave where a rite of purification takes place, a matrix in which our being will be reborn purified, a place where, if we spend several days there, we could reach inner illumination. When the profane person has silenced the passions of the world around him, and through a skilful control of his breathing has reached a quiet meditation, then he will begin to become sensitive to the messages that surround him. In front of him, an enigmatic inscription invites him to a journey into the depths of himself, and without even knowing it, he will be guided by the rhythm of silence. V.I.T.R.I.O.L, an indecipherable enigma, the meaning of which the profane will only understand intellectually much later, but at this precise moment, when he is in the primordial egg, an alchemical cavern with powers of infinite transmutations, his unconscious will have no difficulty in understanding this inscription whose alchemical value is no longer in doubt. The seven initials, V.I.T.R.I.O.L, are the revelation of the operation of the Great Work, an indispensable aide-memoire for the profane, as well as for the Initiate, because it reveals the alchemical process of the transmutation of the being as well as the metals.

V.I.T.R.I.O.L, a mysterious sevenfold phrase whose meaning reveals a perfect knowledge of the processes that lead to awakening, "*Visita Interiora Terrae, Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem*": "*Visit the interior of the earth, and by rectifying you will find the hidden stone.*" This stone that the profane must find is none other than the philosopher's stone of the alchemists, and this one is found in the depths of each one of us, it is revealed only to those who by a sincere interior work, arrived at the perfect balance to make only one: "*Omnia ab uno, omnia ad unum*", "*All proceeds from the Unity, all tends towards the Unity*". The alchemical ternary is also present, as it is essential to the alchemical process of forming the Philosopher's Stone.

Salt, Sulfur and Mercury together express the true balance, which the profane must strive for in order to regenerate.

Sulfur represents the expansive energy, the active masculine principle, and Mercury represents the attractive energy, the passive feminine principle, while Salt, which results from the action of Sulfur on Mercury, is neutral, the result of the two principles, and is therefore the balancing agent, as perfectly expressed by its symbol, a circle divided in two by a diagonal that crosses it, the perfect image of balance.

The hourglass, which is placed in front of the profane, is an attribute of Saturn, it symbolizes time, it represents on the material level, therefore terrestrial, the time that flows and that we cannot inexorably stop, each grain of sand that falls bringing us irreversibly closer to the day of our death.

The hourglass represents something else, which for the profane is perhaps not immediately perceptible, which does not detract from its evocative force, because the hourglass which has all power on the earthly (material) plane, has none on the astral or cosmic plane. This means that once man is freed from the material chains of earthly time, he will finally be able to reintegrate

the initial time, that is to say the time of the beginning, of creation, the primordial moment before the fall, where sin and servitude did not exist. For this rite of life and death to be effective and lead to the purification of the profane, it still needs a powerful symbol, a psychic “witness” allowing to link the living to the dead, a powerful link expressing the uninterrupted chain between the Masters passed to the Eternal East and the profane who aspires to take up the torch by becoming a Freemason in his turn. This psychic “witness” is a real human skull placed near the profane, and in front of him are written these words: “*I was what you are, you will be what I am!*” This skull, receptacle of the superior forces, will then transmit a last message to the profane, like the talking heads of the dead used to do in the past to teach the living. It will say to him: What you are going to see, I have already seen; what you are going to live, I have already lived; what you are going to hear, I have already heard, I am “*reality as it appears stripped of its sensitive decoration; the brutal truth, deprived of the veil of illusions*”, (O. Wirth) then courage and good road! But in this alchemical dwelling, the skull has yet another secret, which only appears at the delicate moment of alchemical sublimation, that of Caput mortem, when the head must be cut off, Caput mortem, in order to see the white swan appear, the alchemical theme of putrefaction. To die in order to be reborn again is a universal law: “*Truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit*” (John 12:24). Then the profane, who will gradually come out of his deep meditation, will raise his eyes to the Rooster, a solar symbol that will announce the end of his eternal night, and the coming triumph of light over darkness.

I have Spoken W.:M.:

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