

The Chamber of Reflection

The Black Room

The word reflection suggests many meanings, of which at least three correspond to what this curious passage in this small and black chamber, with its surprising decoration for the profane, is supposed to trigger in this same profane.

From the Low Latin, reflexio, and the Latin, reflectere, it means to bring back. In physics, we call reflection the fact that a body changes direction after an impact with another body. Indeed, are we not invited, during our stay in this place of retreat and isolation, to look back on ourselves? Isn't this return induced by our encounter with this other body that is the F.:M.:?

Reflection is also a phenomenon by which waves, particles or vibrations are reflected on a surface. Here, it is the evocation of the mirror. Even if this one is absent from the chamber of Reflection, we are symbolically sent back to ourselves, invited to look at ourselves without detour, deep inside. By writing the philosophical will to begin the descent which must allow us to know ourselves better to then improve ourselves and reach, later and perhaps the perfection of the cubic stone, the knowledge of the philosophical stone.

Finally, reflection is also the action of thinking, of stopping one's thoughts on something in order to examine it in detail. Is it not our commitment that we are called to examine in all its aspects?

Are the inscriptions on the walls guiding the path of our thoughts? It is difficult to understand all this on the day of the initiation. The Chamber of Reflection then presents itself as an enigma, a mysterious and occult language. What are these objects that surround us, why these ones? What meaning do they carry in them? So many unanswered questions, so many mute symbols, so many times to say to oneself: *"I can neither read nor write"*.

I would say that the Chamber of Reflection is the place where one must return regularly, physically or in thought, to take stock of oneself and one's understanding of the symbols and the Masonic commitment.

It comes almost too early in the path as it is so rich in meanings that are very long to decipher for the young apprentice. But it also represents the first journey, the one where the new initiate tries to dominate his passions after having taken inventory of them. Without doubt it contains more vocabulary because it is closer to the profane representations of the world from which we wish to distance ourselves to gain a more spiritual and ethereal approach.

MERCURY, SULFUR, SALT

The alchemists distinguished 7 metals (*gold, silver, mercury, tin, iron, copper and lead.*) They considered gold as incorruptible, silver as perfect, and the other 5 as imperfect.

For them, mercury, an imperfect metal, was linked to the planet Mercury and represented the white, etheric body, the node of the personality.

Mercury, metal from the earth, planet of the solar system, but also Mercury-Hermes messenger of the gods, god of trade and world travelers. He was the one who made the first lyre and the first flute, the one who learned the art of fire by rubbing a hard wood against a soft one, the one who assisted the Fates while they were composing the alphabet, the one who invented astronomy, the musical scale, the weights and measures. This is undoubtedly why the builders took hold of his character and why he is integrated in an allegorical way at the threshold of our path of knowledge.

For the alchemists, mercury represents one of the two basic principles with which the adept must work to reach gold. Together with sulfur, it symbolizes the principle of metamorphosis, which the new initiate must achieve. In this operation, mercury is a feminine element. Therefore it can be linked to the Boaz column, while its passivity links it to the moon. Sulfur, according to the alchemists, represented the heat of the earth, the building principle of all organisms.

For the masons, this fire is considered as a dynamizing and fertilizing principle, which by its action on mercury, participates in the "Great Work", it is an aspect of the creative light, it is linked to the Sun and symbolically represents the Spirit which acts on matter.

If mercury and sulfur are found in the bowels of the earth, it is interesting to note that salt is the result of the action of the wind and the sun on sea water. Thus, in the Chamber of Reflection, the four elements are symbolized: earth, air, water and fire, as well as the four journeys of the initiation ritual.

Salt is both preservative and destructive. In the past, food was preserved in salt, and the Romans used salt to make the fields of the people they wanted to enslave unfruitful. It is said that salt enriches food by enhancing its taste. By preventing the putrefaction of flesh, salt also symbolizes incorruptibility. Finally, it evokes wisdom, and symbolizes the spiritual food given by the priest to the newborn in Christian baptism.

THE ROOSTER

Before entering F.:M.:, I only saw in the rooster a very French symbol, not to say Gallic, a noisy and pretentious bird sometimes indicating the direction of the wind from the highest steeples. So I was quite surprised to discover him in this dark cubbyhole in which I was locked up the evening of my initiation. What was my Gallic rooster doing there and what did this unexpected crowing of vigilance and perseverance that crowned his head mean?

What is the function of the rooster (apart from the rather prestigious one of guaranteeing the perpetuation of the race?) to watch for the sun and announce the daybreak. The rooster is therefore an emblem of passage. For us it symbolizes the passage from the profane world to the initiatory world, at the same time as it evokes the Light towards which we tend. As it precedes the light of the sun, the rooster is a symbol of vigilance: it watches for the first signs of the return of the light and warns men. This is the same role he plays in the Chamber of Reflection, announcing the coming of a new light in the darkness of the earth, the end of the profane darkness, the initiatory birth.

Perhaps this is why the two roosters can be contrasted, the one in the Christian world, which sits atop the bell towers and represents the exoteric light: the new day is shining for all men, while the one in the Chamber of Reflection represents an esoteric light, which will shine for the impetrant at the moment of initiation.

Perseverance is a necessary virtue for any person who wants to carry out any undertaking. For us, it is just as indispensable since the path we have chosen to follow is all the more difficult since it can only be followed and continued by the efforts we make day after day, to carve our stone and go towards as much perfection as we can, both for ourselves and for all others.

I have Spoken W.:M.:

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