

A Purpose of Masonry

MW, the GM, RW, the DDGM, Brethren; recently a young man contacted the Secretary of Templum Fidelis seeking further information regarding Freemasonry and more specifically Traditional Observance Freemasonry. I made the initial contact with him and found this individual to be very well read and definitely heading in the right direction. Eventually the question came up, "What do you expect Freemasonry to do for you?". I watched as he struggled for the correct words to express that elusive concept, jumping all over the map coming from different angles, yet still unable to definitively identify what he expected from Freemasonry. I was reminded of the same experience I felt almost 20 years ago and most still have difficulty putting an answer into words. Tonight I will attempt to start to answer that question. My intent in writing this paper was to to begin here and take you all to there. As I wrote my thoughts down it soon became apparent that unless we are prepared to sit here for the next hour, we are not going to get there. Instead I have discussed with the Master Elect to present part one of my paper tonight and the remainder will be presented at a future gathering, possibly during the Agape at our June meeting. This afternoon I hope to present a teaser of what's to come and hopefully most of you will attend to see it to completion.

Over the past year TF has had some incredibly informative presentations which have had a profound influence on my own individual, constantly evolving philosophy. I came to Freemasonry through studying various religious concepts, history, and even the occult. I have always been drawn to the works of Dr Carl Jung, who along with Sigmund Freud were pioneers in developing the field of psychology. For some unknown reason I have also been drawn to and have been attempting for years to comprehend that elusive art of Alchemy, which at first appearance seems incredibly complex and difficult to understand. Recently I had that "ah-ha" moment where I realized that the goals of Alchemy, Jungian Individuation, and Freemasonry have the same purpose. I will not say that this is "THE" purpose of Freemasonry rather it is "A" purpose of Freemasonry and, to me, answers that previously mentioned question of "What do you expect to get from Freemasonry".

So what is it we seek being in a state of darkness? Light, knowledge, consciousness; but not just any kind of knowledge; we need to answer that eternal question; what is the real truth? What is the secret of life? What is the meaning to our existence? Is there a connection with the infinite; or not? We feel a need to clarify and justify the Mystery. What does it matter? Why do we even need to know the answers to these questions? Ultimately, the reason is because to know, or at least be on the right track, reduces angst, induces contentment and as Bro Troyer informed us in a previous paper, provides us with the opportunity to experience happiness or joy. Does Freemasonry answer these questions directly? No, it does not openly answer these questions but it does offer us the

opportunity to individually reflect upon many themes throughout the dramatic ritual, which depending on our participation and commitment will ultimately lead to the integration of body, mind, and soul. Notice that I said this is dependent on your participation and commitment to the Craft; a lack of participation and commitment is why many Masons don't feel fulfilled. There's that old chestnut of "you get out of it what you put into it", otherwise known as the lesson of the first degree working tools.

Hopefully Bro Tim Hogan, who presented at the Agape of our September meeting, has convinced many of you that many of the concepts of Alchemy have become ensconced within the ritual of Freemasonry.

Let us contemplate "why would anyone even want to do Alchemy?". The Alchemist lived within a religiously oppressive period with severe mortal risks for their activities. What were they attempting to do? First of all, we have to consider that prior to the end of the Renaissance period and the formation of the Royal Society in the 17th Century, the western world was a much different place psychologically. There was no separation of the Divine and the material world. Every single aspect of life depended on the constant influence of a transcendent deity in accordance with a Divine Plan. Wars were won because it was God's Will, crops grew because the people were pious and righteous. So what were the Alchemists risking their lives for doing silly chemical experiments? They were searching for the answers to the same questions we seek today. They were searching for the Lapis, the Philosopher's Stone, that special irreducible something that was within every physical object that the creator used as a building block to create every single object in existence.

A long time ago in my High School days we might have identified this as an atom, composed in turn of a proton, nucleus, and electron. But even then that wasn't the smallest irreducible thing in existence; Neutrinos, Higgs Boson and numerous other sub-atomic particles have since been discovered. We have Quantum Physics, Super String Theory, and so on and so on. We are not much closer to figuring it all out. We are just as disillusioned today as the Alchemists of the middle ages. The Alchemists recorded all of their experimentation with remarkable documentation and artistic representations of how they comprehended that spirit was immersed in the physical world. What they didn't realize was that within their Magnum Opus, the Great Work, they were creating an historical record of their own independent investigation into their personal unconsciousness and soul. To the outside world they were attempting to transmute base metals into gold. To the inner circle they were transmuting their personalities to become "better men".

I mentioned that we are in search for the real truth. First we have to identify "what is reality?". A physical world exists around us which we acknowledge through the use of our 5 senses. We probably miss 99% of the data surrounding us, yet what

information our brain perceives is utilized to make a "world model" or "what I think the world is" or even termed a "reality tunnel". Every individual in the world has an independent model on which he bases reality. My reality is sacred to me, I have spent my whole life developing it, and some would even fight to the death to defend their reality. We must acknowledge the truth that even a defect in one or more of our physical senses would result in a relatively different physical reality. I know this is a rock because of its color, its shape, its mass, its texture etc; this is my personal consciousness. My good friend also identifies this as a rock for the same reasons and that rock obeys the laws of nature which we have established, therefore we can say that my friend and I have a shared reality with respect to this rock. This concept of shared reality expands to families, communities, religions, etc. We can also call this a collective consciousness. But we know that this sum of physical data is not the totality of reality.

We also have minds and are capable of independent thought. When we consider mind, I am specifically referring to conscious motivation such as ideas, intention, desire, wishes, and rationalizations. Man has the unique gift of conception which no other species in the world possesses; I use the term conception to mean the ability to express ideas through the use of language. As far as we know chimpanzees, whales, nor even dolphins conceptualize. Through conception we attempt to influence each others reality to more closely coincide with our own. Through manipulations of language and logic we have created the field of Philosophy which has achieved equal standing with natural science, although they are two streams of knowledge flowing parallel and there is no hope in uniting them to explain an ultimate reality. With all of the advances we have made in knowledge within philosophy and the natural sciences over the past 500 years we have not become better human beings. We are still incomplete.

Before we proceed with the next dimension in perceiving reality, let's briefly look at what happened historically. Emerging from the Middle Ages, the Renaissance period was victorious in freeing Western man's mind from the oppression of Religion and advanced scientific discovery. But in doing so, Science separated the "Divine", or spirit, from the "Natural". Now natural law became what was measurable, supported by mathematical certainty; the world became seen as orderly, perfect, simple. God, the Creator, became the Great Architect of the Universe and through scientific method we would discover the truth of physical reality because natural science is based on what is knowable and discoverable. The spirit became the unknowable, otherworldly, distant, mysterious. Do we all see the paradigm shift during this period and how it still exists today?

With the separation of spirit from nature, man now had to assume responsibility for his environment. No longer could blame be transferred to a deity's influence (that is unless, of course, you are an insurance company and can avoid coverage on "acts of God"). Man lost his intimate connection with the Divine. However, as the Age of Enlightenment was progressing there was also an occult movement

afoot. People became fascinated with the unknown and mysterious. Eastern mysticism and previously suppressed works from the Arabic regions became available. Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, Martinism, plus hundreds of other organizations emerged. Freemasonry is a Western Mystery Tradition; have you considered what that means? It means we are investigating the mystery, the unknown.

So far we have discussed the reality of the body and mind, specifically conscious motivation. We know that there also exists another dimension to reality which are experiences of the psyche, or in other words, every single thought that goes on within our brains. Psychic experience is the only category of existence which we have immediate knowledge since nothing can be known unless it first appears as a psychic image. Think of a purple sock; see how your psyche just created an image in your consciousness. Nothing in the physical world exists in our consciousness until it passes through the filters of psychic experience. Psychic experience by far has the greatest effect on our view of reality and our world model. Our childhood development influences our views on what constitutes a mother, father, teacher; we establish values according to relationships with friends, family, religion, etc.

We have a constant internal dialogue with ourselves. But there are things that happen within the psyche that are not produced by conscious intention; they possess a life of their own. We actually have more than one personality that we can recognize. There is the "I" that is my identity and there is also an unseeable numinous guide within, a constant companion in every waking and sleeping moment; a more knowledgeable, more moral, better version of who you could be; a higher self. Carl Jung recognized these 2 personalities within himself at a very young age and eventually gave them the terms Ego and Self. The Ego is at the center of consciousness and emerges early in development; it is your identity; but it is not the true "you". The Self is unconscious but is the central nucleus of the personality, the source of libido, or psychic energy / life force which moulds personality development (libido doesn't just refer to sexual energy, as Freud attempted to restrain the term; it refers to all forms of psychic drive). The Self is often visually represented as a Mandala, usually round with quaternity, or divided into 4, with a deity at the center; primordial images of wholeness or totality. A familiar mandala is the sand paintings built over considerable time by Buddhist monks. I would even consider our Mosaic Pavement and the Lodge itself with the letter "G" in the centre to be Mandalas. Eventually the Ego realizes that it is subordinate to the Self. "For there are higher things than the Ego's Will and to these we must bow".

Jung states that the purpose of life is to realize one's own potential and to follow one's own perception of the truth and to become a whole person in one's own right. Individuation is an expression of that biological process by which every living thing becomes what it was destined to become from the beginning; to

become complete. This sounds exactly what we are attempting to do within Freemasonry. How does Individuation do this? It does this by integrating the unconscious Self with the conscious Ego which in turn stabilizes the personality and creates higher consciousness. In other words the individual comes to know thyself.

The Self has it's own language which to us can appear as symbols and can manifest in emotions. So how do we communicate with the Self? We can't directly because it is unconscious. Through the process of Individuation Jung states we must circumambulate the Self. When you consider that I interpret the Mosaic Pavement and the Lodge itself to be Mandalas, or symbolic representations of the Self, that is a very interesting parallel to Freemasonry with an interesting choice of words. At this point we will stop and at a future time I will further explore how our dramatic ritual assists us to become better men, or in other words to actualize the potential to become the individual you were meant to be.

**Written and presented by Steve Hampton
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