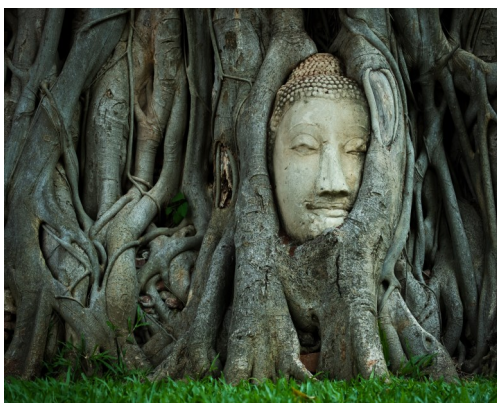




## Symbolic fundamentalism: a threat to Freemasonry



**Buddhism  
and Freemasonry  
A certain look**



**Why did Freemasonry  
born in England?**

# FIL<sup>Infos</sup> LINE LINEA

*Parce que le fil à plomb symbolise pour nous la rigueur, l'élevation et le désintéressement.*

*Because, for us, the plumb line symbolises rigour, elevation and selflessness*

*Porque para nosotros, la plomada simboliza el rigor, la elevación y la abnegación*

LINE—infos is published by the association of the same name. The English- and Spanish-language editions are available on the [webfil.info](http://webfil.info) website.

## To join the association:

Publishing director: Alain BREANT

Editor-in-chief: Thomas AYISSI

Contributors: Pauline LEON, Vanessa ZEMOURT, Odile GRISVER, Margarita ROJAS BLANCO, Magali AIME, Roberto CERTAIN-RUIZ, Ivan HERRERA MICHEL, Milton ARRETA-LOPEZ, Leo GOEYENS, B. SOREL, N. M. KALIFE, Gerard BAUDOU-PLATON

Layout: 7Sea, Mateo SIMOITA

Images: Adobe Stock

*La franc-maçonnerie rassemble dans une communauté les êtres humains désireux de cultiver les hautes valeurs morales qui permettent de vivre en harmonie dans la Paix et la Bienveillance !*

**La Massoneria riunisce in una comunità esseri umani che desiderano coltivare gli alti valori morali che ci permettono di vivere in armonia nella Pace e nella Benevolenza!**

*¡La Masonería reúne en una comunidad a los seres humanos que desean cultivar los altos valores morales que nos permiten vivir en armonía en la Paz y la Benevolencia!*

**Freemasonry gathers in a community human beings willing to cultivate the high moral values that allow to live in harmony in Peace and Benevolence!**

Die Freimaurerei vereint in einer Gemeinschaft Menschen, die die hohen moralischen Werte pflegen wollen, die es ermöglichen, in Harmonie in Frieden und Wohlwollen zu leben!

# SYMBOLATRY IN FREEMASONRY: THE DANGER OF SYNCRETISM AND THE DISTORTION OF SYMBOLISM

Speculative Freemasonry is based on the use of symbols as tools for moral introspection, philosophical speculation, and personal development. These symbols are designed to stimulate critical reflection and ethical growth, serving as a bridge between the individual and the higher ideals of the fraternity. However, in some Masonic spaces, a concerning phenomenon has emerged: symbolatry. This term refers to the practice of assigning religious, magical, and mystical meanings to Masonic symbols, which distort their original purpose and threaten to transform Freemasonry into a dogmatic and exclusionary system.

This article will analyze the nature of symbolatry, discuss its negative impact on Masonic practice, and explore the difference between the legitimate study of esotericism and the imposition of syncretisms and exogenous content as unquestionable truths within Masonic spaces.

## Idolatry and Symbolatry: A Necessary Distinction

It is important to distinguish between idolatry and symbolatry to understand the challenges that the latter presents within Freemasonry. Idolatry, in its classical definition, is the excessive veneration of idols or images, attributing to them a power that they do not possess. In contrast, symbolatry in the Masonic context is not simply an excessive adoration of symbols but manifests when these symbols are endowed with religious or mystical meanings that distort their original function.

Instead of being used as tools for moral reflection, philosophical speculation, and self-discovery, the symbols become objects of esoteric and dogmatic interpretations that lack a verifiable basis and stifle any activity of free thought. This not only trivializes Masonic symbolism but also transforms Masonic practice into a closed and rigid system, where any alternative or rational interpretation is suppressed.

## The Study of Esotericism vs. The Divinization of Rites and Symbols

It is crucial to emphasize that there is a difference between presenting a paper containing esoteric information and divi-



nizing Masonic rites and symbols. In a lodge, it is perfectly legitimate to study esotericism as a way to enrich the knowledge and understanding of Masons on broader topics. Esotericism can offer valuable perspectives on culture and symbolism that, in many cases, can complement Masonic learning.

However, the problem arises when this study turns into syncretism, where exogenous doctrines are imposed on Masonic content. When it is established, without question, that certain esoteric or mystical interpretations are unquestionable truths, there is a risk of creating a culture of syncretism that displaces the fundamental principles of Freemasonry. This not only undermines cohesion within the order but also establishes subjective patterns as absolute truths, which is detrimental to the speculative and open nature of Freemasonry.

## Symbolic Fundamentalism: A Threat to Freemasonry

Symbolic fundamentalism emerges as one of the most concerning manifestations within symbolatry and represents a direct challenge to the speculative essence of Freemasonry. This phenomenon occurs when certain groups, whether within a lodge, a philosophical body, or an obedience, embrace a dogmatic interpretation of Masonic symbols. This practice not only distorts the original purpose of the symbols but also transforms Freemasonry into a closed and exclusionary space, where critical thinking and diversity of perspectives are stifled.



It is important to emphasize that Freemasonry, as an institution, deeply respects the diversity of beliefs among its members. A Mason may be a practicing Catholic, an observant Jew, an agnostic, or an atheist, and in all cases, their position deserves the utmost respect. In fact, it constitutes a fundamental lack of respect when, within Masonic spaces, specific dogmas are imposed on others, such as asserting that “the truth lies in **angelology**,” “in Christology,” or “in the Kabbalah.” Such imposition not only dishonors the spiritual diversity of the brethren but also infringes upon the Masonic principle of freedom of thought.

Moreover, this symbolic fundamentalism becomes even more harmful when it is used as a tool to silence rational debate and the free expression of ideas. It is lamentable to observe how, in some philosophical bodies, when faced with any critical or rational discussion, certain Masons hide behind superficial responses like “**I believe in God, I am a Freemason**” to shut down the dialogue, disregarding the richness that diversity of opinions brings to collective growth. This attitude is not only hypocritical but also contradicts the spirit of fraternity and respect that should prevail in Freemasonry.

By promoting a closed interpretation of symbols, symbolic fundamentalism alienates those brethren who do not share such views, creating divisions within the fraternity. Instead of fostering an environment of inclusion and dialogue, this approach generates exclusion and confrontation, damaging the cohesion of the lodge and distancing it from its fundamental purpose: the moral and intellectual development of its members through free thought and critical reflection.

### **Symbolatry and Exclusion: Masonic Bullying**

One of the most pernicious effects of symbolatry is its tendency to promote exclusion and bullying within Masonic spaces. When certain groups adopt esoteric interpretations as absolute truths, they marginalize those who do not share their beliefs, creating an environment of intolerance that is incompatible with the principles of equality and freedom of thought that are fundamental to Freemasonry.

This phenomenon, which could be called “Masonic bul-

lying,” not only divides Freemasonry but also hinders the free exchange of ideas and stifles the intellectual and spiritual development of its members. Instead of being a space for debate and growth, the order becomes a hostile environment for those who seek to use symbols as Masonic tools.

### **Symbolatry and Freethinking: An Antagonistic Relationship**

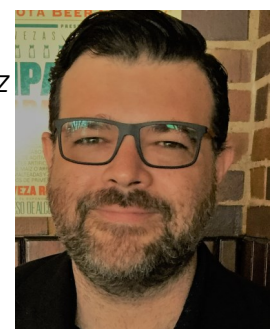
Symbolatry is, by its very nature, incompatible with freethinking, an essential value of Freemasonry. Freethinking is the ability to formulate judgments and opinions based on reason, evidence, and personal reflection, without being subject to pre-established dogmas. By imposing their mystical interpretations as immutable truths, symbolatrists deny this freedom, restricting the ability of brethren to interpret symbols in a critical and personal way.

This imposition of exogenous syncretisms over traditional Masonic principles not only distorts the purpose of the symbols but also prevents the order from functioning as a space for freethinking and open debate. This is particularly problematic in a context where Freemasonry should foster the moral and intellectual development of its members through free and critical reflection.

Symbolatry and speculative Freemasonry are irreconcilable concepts. While Freemasonry promotes the use of symbols as tools for moral reflection and personal growth, symbolatry turns them into objects of worship that distort their original purpose.

**It is essential that Masons reject symbolatry and any form of syncretism that imposes exogenous doctrines on the content of Freemasonry.** Only by reaffirming our commitment to Freemasonry as a space for the exercise of freethinking can we ensure that the fraternity continues to be a beacon of freedom, equality, and moral and intellectual progress for all its members.

*Milton ARRIETA-LÓPEZ*



# A SYMBOLIC JOURNEY IN SEARCH OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE FREEMASON'S SUBJECTIVITY

## INTRODUCTION

Freemasonry, from a Foucauldian perspective, is presented not only as an institution dedicated to the promotion of morality and spiritual development but also as a space where the subjectivities of its members are configured and reconfigured. Within this organization, Masons are called to “build their inner temple,” a process that involves both working on themselves and adhering to a set of norms and values that shape their identity and conduct. Masonic symbols, omnipresent in rituals and teachings, play a fundamental role in this process by acting as mechanisms through which Masons internalize these norms, thus configuring their subjectivity and moral autonomy.

This article proposes to explore, from this Foucauldian approach, how Masonic symbolism operates not only as a means of transmitting ethical values but also as a power device that shapes the subjectivity of Masons. The research seeks to understand how these symbols, far from being mere carriers of universal meanings, function within a framework of power relations that influences their interpretation and effectiveness in forming the moral identity of the initiates. This analysis will allow us to unravel the mechanisms by which the symbols not only transmit but also reinforce and consolidate these values in Masons.

## FUNDAMENTALS OF MASONIC SYMBOLISM

The evolution of Masonic symbolism can be seen as a process in which symbols have been reconfigured to adapt to the needs for power and knowledge in different historical contexts. The symbols that originally had practical meaning in the medieval guilds of builders, such as the square and compasses, were reinterpreted and re-signified as Freemasonry transitioned from an operative to a speculative organization. This process of re-signification reflects that symbols are adapted to new contexts and used to structure Masonic and social reality in a particular way that responds to the prevailing modes of relationship and intersubjectivity in a given social and historical moment.

Thus, in the Masonic tradition, symbols are not fixed or universal entities but should be understood as social constructions. Hence, Masonic symbols, like other cultural signs, ope-



rate on multiple levels, connecting the visible with the invisible and the known with the unknown (Todorov 1982). These symbols not only communicate ethical values but also shape the subjectivity of Masons, acting as devices that mold their identity and their relationship with the lodge and the world.

For this reason, Masonic symbolism does not only possess an “esoteric” value, understood as private or internal, but is fundamentally a pedagogical tool that operates within a framework of intersubjective power relations. Symbols allow the transmission of knowledge and values indirectly through a process of subjection in which the initiate submits to a set of norms that shape their conduct and moral identity but also, through intersubjectivity, affect how others also model their conduct and subjectivity. This symbolic pedagogy, as Todorov points out, facilitates the creation of a shared ethos within the Masonic community, reinforcing cohesion and mutual understanding (Todorov 1999).

## MASONIC ETHICS: PRINCIPLES AND FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

Based on what has been discussed so far, Masonic ethics from a Foucauldian perspective can be understood as a system of values that, although presented as universal, is deeply influenced by the intersubjective relationships that

configure the lodge. This ethics is not based on obedience to a fixed moral code but on the individual's capacity to constitute themselves as a moral subject within a framework of norms that regulate their conduct (Viton 2021). This process of self-constitution is what Foucault describes as "subjection," and it is here that the individual's freedom plays a crucial role in their relationship with the ethical norms of Freemasonry.

Among the most prominent ethical principles in Freemasonry are fraternity, equality, and liberty. These principles, far from being mere ideas or theoretical ideals, are deeply integrated into the ethical structure of Freemasonry, influencing how individuals belonging to this organization perceive themselves and relate to others, both within and outside the lodge.

First, fraternity is presented not only as a value that encourages support and camaraderie among lodge members but also as an operative principle that reinforces group cohesion. This concept of fraternity goes beyond mere solidarity; it becomes a social mechanism that ensures the unity and cohesion of the Masonic group, creating a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. Fraternity, therefore, not only unites Masons around a common goal but also establishes a framework within which social interactions and relationships within the lodge are structured and perpetuated.

Equality and liberty, on the other hand, are principles that, although presented as universal, are not applied in a homogeneous or immutable way. These values are always mediated by intersubjective relationships, meaning the way individuals relate and negotiate meanings in specific contexts. This implies that the interpretation and application of equality and liberty in Freemasonry are conditioned by the relational dynamics and social structures present in each lodge. Equality in Freemasonry is not simply the affirmation that all men and women are equal, but it becomes an ideal that is interpreted and applied within the concrete realities of each Masonic context. Similarly, liberty is understood not only as the capacity to act according to one's conscience but as a principle that is always in tension with the norms and expectations of the group and that requires constant negotiation and reconfiguration in practice.

In this sense, symbolism in Freemasonry not only teaches ethical principles but also acts as a power device that shapes the subjectivity of Masons, as symbols operate at a deep level where they mold the moral conduct of Masons through a process of subjection and self-constitution. This process is not coercive but is carried out through ritual repetition and symbolic meditation, allowing Masons to internalize the ethical values they represent and apply them in their daily lives (Chevallier 1982).



## SYMBOLISM AND INITIATION IN THE ETHICAL FORMATION OF MASONS

The Masonic symbolism of the rough ashlar and the perfect ashlar, two elements that metaphorically represent the personal transformation process that each Mason must undertake on their path toward moral and spiritual perfection, alludes to a transformation process that can be understood as an act of self-constitution in which Masons, through constant and deliberate work on themselves, seek to polish their moral identity. This process is neither linear nor conclusive; rather, it is a continuous effort, reflecting the dynamic and ever-unfinished nature of human subjectivity.

In Freemasonry, the rough ashlar symbolizes the initial state of the individual, filled with imperfections and undeveloped potential. This symbol represents the Mason in their "natural" state before being subjected to the process of refinement and self-education that the lodge promotes. This initial state can be interpreted as a form of being not yet disciplined by the norms and values of the group, a being that is raw, waiting to be shaped through the power of knowledge and ritual practice. The perfect ashlar, by contrast, symbolizes the ideal of perfection to which the Mason aspires. However, this state of perfection is never truly attainable in absolute terms; rather, it is a horizon toward which Masonic practice is oriented, a goal that drives the Mason to a constant process of self-improvement and critical reflection on their conduct and beliefs to better contribute to society.

[Click on the link to read more](#)

*Roberto CERTAIN-RUIZ*  
*Respectable Mixed Lodge "Workers of*  
*Liberty" No. 11*  
*Colombian Federation of Masonic*  
*Lodges*



# A Certain Perspective on Masonic Symbols and Rituals

For more than thirty years, I have followed two spiritual paths that seem complementary and somewhat unusual to me: Buddhism and Freemasonry. I encountered Buddhism long before Freemasonry, and both paths seem similar and very complementary to me. They are two spiritual paths that, each in its own way, aspire to the Universal, propose a liberation of the Being, and exalt Wisdom. Both aim to achieve a return to an Uncreated and Eternal Principle.

Both propose: – a tradition and the transmission of Knowledge – self-knowledge – an initiation – a search for truth with a non-dogmatic approach – tolerance and ethics.

What attracted me to Buddhism was a key phrase from Buddha: **"Do not believe because I tell you so, but because you have seen and practiced my teaching for yourself, and you have seen the results for yourself."**

This non-dogmatic approach is truly about free will. I am supposed to "think and exist" for myself, and these words resonated deeply with me.

The pragmatism of Buddhism is manifested in the question: How do I do it? Through meditation, in particular, we learn to see from within, to overcome dualism, to understand that the Other is myself, and that if I harm my neighbor, I harm myself.

Although both paths are complementary, they cannot replace each other. I continue to attend Lodge meetings and works while practicing certain Buddhist disciplines: meditation, teachings, recitation of mantras... In the light of Buddhism, I can, in a way, see the work in the Lodge from a different and more open perspective.

The recitation of a mantra is a means to protect the mind from discursiveness. Mental calm allows for the opening of the heart and mind.

Freemasonry has developed a set of doctrines, rites, and symbols that are the very spirit of the best of the Western tradition – the learning of working together, in particular, is relatively specific and, in any case, relatively new compared to meditation techniques.

A rite is composed of symbols that I would group into three major families: – gestures or postures, which include the signs of order of the Freemasons or the mudras of the Buddhists – words or sounds: such as Buddhist mantras or Masonic invocations – figures or objects: Buddhist mandalas and the Lodge tracing boards This classification corresponds to the attitudes of the body, speech, and mind.



There are also similarities concerning the symbols: the use of the symbol is based on a natural analogy that gathers and synthesizes where analytical thought dissects and fixes. The symbol refers to multiple meanings, hierarchically superimposed and, above all, that do not exclude each other, as happens in conceptual thought, which always functions through oppositions. The versatility of the symbol makes it the vehicle par excellence of metaphysical teachings, which are always mutilated by univocal and flat language, while symbolic language does justice to the living complexity of the superimposed planes that constitute the world.

The symbol, pragmatically, has the precious property of expressing rich and complex intellectual data and of animating affective and instinctual elements. When used well, it can thus realize the unity of the human being.

[Click on the link to read more](#)

Ida Radogowski



# Discovering Capoeira: Between Water and Iron



“Are you coming? Bring some sportswear and water. What? Where are we going? It’s a challenge, dear neighbor.”

We get in the car, heading towards Saint-Lô. We drive over hills and valleys along a familiar route. We arrive in the city, then at a gym. But it’s not a regular gymnasium. The ceiling is too low. A few people are there, wearing white pants and white T-shirts. Their attire is unique: a thick cord serves as a belt. And they are barefoot!

“Hello. Are you here to try capoeira?” the instructor asks us.

And so, unintentionally, at the age of 43, I discovered this unique sport from Brazil: capoeira.

The sound of the word suggests a dance. Indeed, capoeira is an ancient discipline, and it was in the form of dance that it survived through the centuries before being revived as a sport in the 1960s.

Capoeira comes from Angola. It is a combination of attack, defense, and movement techniques inspired by the movements of wild animals. From the 16th century, when the Angolans were enslaved and brought to Brazil, despite the suffering and uprooting, they did not forget these gestures and steps. However, their new masters obviously did not allow them to train for combat. The Angolans then transformed their discipline into a kind of graceful dance, composed of numerous slow, ground-level movements, alternating with rapid aerial and rotational movements in an upright posture. The hunting bow was transformed into the berimbau; its string, beaten and attached to a gourd, produced

three sharp notes. Barrels were turned into atabaques, a type of tall drum that produces rounded, soft bass notes.

Singing and clapping their hands to the rhythm of the berimbau and atabaque, the slaves dressed in white—the color of servants—formed a circle. In the center, at the call of the capoeira master holding the berimbau, two people stepped into the middle of the circle and began a strange choreography of mirrored gestures. The kicks intended for violent strikes became graceful movements, almost like wings. The evasions turned into unexpected bows to the earth, full of humility. The movements to advance or retreat became surprising acrobatics. And there was nothing dangerous left that the masters could forbid.

Slavery ended. Capoeira then survived in the form of street fights among delinquents. It had a bad reputation. In the 1960s, the capoeira masters Mestre Bimba and Mestre Pastinha called for the official recognition of capoeira as a living heritage. And capoeira became the national sport.

Depending on the place and tradition, capoeira is a sport with several ranks, from beginner to master. Today, it takes at least twenty years of practice to be recognized as a master.

[Click on the link to read more](#)

**B. SOREL**



# THE METALS OF THE FREEMASON



So they say, *“Brethren, we are no longer in the profane world. We have left our metals at the door of the temple. Let us lift our hearts in fraternity and our eyes towards the light.”*

I have seen them, I swear, say these words with great ceremony. What many people call being fraternal consists of choosing Freemasonry and staying there for a while to observe. They choose it, I swear, I’ve seen them. As if one could choose in love, as if it weren’t a lightning bolt that splits your bones and leaves you pinned down in the middle of the lodge. You’ll say they chose Freemasonry because they love it; I think it’s the other way around. You don’t choose fraternity, you don’t choose equality, you don’t choose liberty. You don’t choose the extraordinary emotion of that primordial moment of the trials, when you taste bitterness in your mouth.

*“We are no longer in the profane world.”* A powerful phrase, an incantation that promises a clean and illuminated space, vastly different from the one just left behind. A chimera! A delusion!

But what if what really happens is that we find new metals in the lodge? Different metals, heavier, darker, metals that fill voids, metals that mimic those of the “profane world,” metals that seem precious but are merely gilded.

And what if the light is that of those new, corrupt, and heavier metals?

In Freemasonry, there are metaphorical symbols that primarily represent material attachments, base passions, prejudices, and are referred to as “metals.” The main reason for identifying them is that in order to advance, the Freemason must leave them behind, outside, or at least far from sight.

Metals are often dense, like the anxiety caused by the desire

to possess material goods and wealth in general, and they are tremendously distracting because they prevent focusing on the inner work, which ultimately is what gives us true peace. Borges said that it is very sad to love things, because things do not know that you exist. Attachment to things is one of the densest metals with which the Freemason is confronted.

Prejudices also form part of the Freemason's metals, and unlike attachment, these are not so dense, but rather rigid, not very malleable, and inflexible.

That opinion or prior judgment about something or someone, which is generally not based on knowledge or reason, but on preconceived ideas, stereotypes, or assumptions, is a problem not only for the Freemason, but it is a part of the human condition, which is why the Freemason must remain constantly alert, not to be carried away by the biases that at a given moment swirl around their thoughts. A stereotype leads to generalization, and every generalization is violence.

[Click on the link to read more](#)

Margarita ROJAS  
BLANCO



# WHY AND HOW WAS FREEMASONRY BORN IN ENGLAND?



The so-called “speculative” Freemasonry (an Anglicism meaning “philosophical,” composed of the mind) is this great school of thought, established in London in 1717 and later regulated in 1723 through Anderson’s first Constitutions, which aimed to be “the center of union of good and loyal men” with the goal of contributing to the well-being of humanity by seeking the truth of all things within a framework of general tolerance and freedom of conscience, promoting universal brotherhood. By tracing the history of English philosophical thought concerning societal issues, we will see how England was predisposed to give birth to this group of humanist thought and action, aimed at liberating man from his prejudices and serving the general well-being.

## THE FIXED PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT OF THE EUROPEAN MIDDLE AGES

In the Middle Ages, the European mind was tamed by the singular thought of the Church Fathers. All medieval art and all meditation of the spirit could only serve to consecrate the same Faith, devoted solely to the glorification of God in Christ. All philosophical thought was then limited to conforming to the precepts of the Holy Scriptures, considered the divine revelation of the only Truth that could exist. Reason, therefore, always had to serve a single Faith, controlled by the Roman Papacy.

However, in the 13th century, following the numerous Latin translations (which was the common European language of publication until the 17th century) of works dealing with Aristotle’s thought, read and appreciated by the learned

religious figures of the time, there arose the need to harmonize this new, highly enriching but profane thought with that of the Church Fathers. It was then that the greatest theologian of the Roman Church, Saint Thomas Aquinas (1226-1274), succeeded in integrating Aristotelian rationality into his famous “Summa Theologica,” which still serves today to define the theology of the Catholic Church. He notably adapts the Aristotelian distinction between essence and existence, arguing that in God alone, essence is included in existence, whereas it is God’s intervention in the essence of man that justifies his existence. This allowed Thomistic scholasticism to surpass the reasoning of Saint Augustine (354-430), who had subjected reason to the service of Faith. Thus, the secular philosophy of Aristotle was recovered to become the servant of Christian theology.

Nevertheless, intellectual doubt remained always condemnable by Roman Catholic orthodoxy, through the inquisitorial interrogations or the Index of forbidden books with dubious philosophy starting in the 16th century. There was always a threat to the progress of philosophy under the inquisitorial eye of Rome. Consequently, when England became Anglican in 1534, it gained a certain ideological independence for its thinkers, unlike France, from which even Descartes had to flee in 1637 to take refuge in Holland, a Protestant and tolerant country, after his work “Discourse on the Method” advocating “systematic doubt” was placed on the Index.



## THE ENGLISH EXCEPTION AND THE SPECIAL STATUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

A seemingly trivial cultural exception marked the genesis of English thought right after its conquest by William the Conqueror: the arrival of the first Jews who accompanied the Duke of Normandy. Among them, in 1073, was an astronomer, Pedro Alfonso, who would conduct his research without being subjected to the Christian ecclesiastical censorship that controlled all sciences of the time. And Pedro Alfonso, a non-Christian, introduced into the young kingdom of England a new tradition of scientific research, freed from the constraints of the Ptolemaic conception of the world, dating from the 2nd century and placing the Earth at the center of the universe, under a closed sky in a half-shell housing the fixed stars, where only the Sun and the Moon revolved around the Earth. He inaugurated a new way of thinking about astronomy with measuring instruments and mathematical calculations.

This allowed, in the following century (12th century), particularly Robert Grosseteste, to apply mathematics to all the natural sciences while practicing observation and experimentation to test the advanced hypotheses. Thus, empiricism was born in English research. This nascent empiricism was further strengthened in the 13th century by the practical work of the English Franciscan monk, Roger Bacon (1214-1294), one of the most enlightened minds of the Middle Ages, considered the ancestor of experimental science. He authored several works on optics (which served astronomy, the foundation of modern sciences) and on his chemical discoveries, including the formula for gunpowder. His memorable phrase speaks volumes about his methodological contribution: "The proof by reasoning is not enough; experimentation must also be added."

In the same 13th century when Thomistic philosophy was being consecrated in Rome, the Franciscan monk Duns Scotus (1265-1308) was teaching in England how to distinguish the domain of faith, not subject to dialectical reasoning, from the secular domain, which must benefit from answers without mysteries.

In the 14th century, another English Franciscan monk, William of Ockham (1285-1347), strongly opposed the Pope's interference in temporal affairs. He preached the separation of the domain of faith from other human domains, where common sense alone should be used to decide the right choice.

Finally, it is worth noting that the spirit of individual liberties had asserted itself very early in England, as evidenced by the "Magna Carta" of 1215, where King John recognized the nobility's right to oppose any new tax levies without prior consultation.



All these methodological advancements in English thought predisposed the University of Oxford, from its creation in the 13th century and even before the Anglican Church's reform in 1534, which permanently freed English politics from the pressures of the Inquisition, to welcome, long before other countries on the European continent, all the works of antiquity and Arab civilization that were censored by the Church. Thus, the University of Oxford quickly became the largest European research center, heralding the future blossoming of the Newtonian scientific revolution and the great mechanical inventions that would lead to the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, contributing to England's economic supremacy over the rest of the world.

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE "ACADEMIA" OF FLORENCE TO RENAISSANCE THOUGHT

While in Europe, the teaching and dissemination of new ideas were severely controlled and subjected to the Inquisition, a unique event occurred during the Council of Reconciliation of the two Churches of the East and West, held in Florence in 1439, financed by the great patron Cosimo de' Medici. This event allowed Cosimo to obtain the Pope's authorization for the free circulation of Greek works, particularly those of Plato, the Neoplatonists, and other authors of Hermetic philosophy that had previously been banned. He immediately took advantage of this to create in Florence, with the help of the learned Greek Plethon, an "Academia" modeled after Plato's. This "Academia" was directed by Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), who translated all the ancient Greek authors teaching the union of the human soul with God through contemplation and ecstasy.

[Click on the link to read more](#)

N.M. KALIFE

R.°.L.°. « PTAH », GLDF, Or Lomé.

Reading impressions :  
**THE INITIATORY GARDENS  
OF THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES**  
(JEAN ERCEAU ED SELENA 2021, 322 pages)



This book may first appear to be a guide, perhaps even a tourist guide, but one that speaks to tourists who do not simply wish to visit but to truly LIVE. To LIVE the Gardens of Versailles, to walk through the paths where “Louis no longer comes” (Albert Samain), to feel the presence of the statues as if they were animated—what could be more captivating?

Indeed, this book is also a “page-turner,” a narrative that one cannot easily put down, as it teems with anecdotes, references, and scholarly memories. The stories, drawn from various traditions, are rendered so vividly that one cannot help but be “called” by them, drawn in by curiosity, and engaged by this grand unveiling, which, like any true initiatory journey, only reveals what one is ready to hear, understand, and learn.

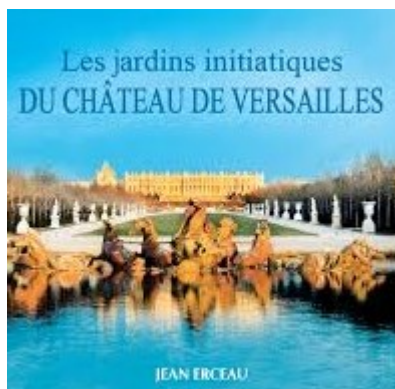
Finally, as its title suggests, this book is an initiatory journey, an alchemical journey, and therefore a philosophical one. It begins with V.I.T.R.I.O.L and leads us to the Philosopher’s Stone, though, of course, it is not material gold that one discovers, but rather self-knowledge, which is both the object and subject of the quest. Journeying within oneself is a necessary prerequisite, and to do so, as in any initiatory process, one must engage per-

sonally and intimately. “Know thyself, and you shall know the Universe and the gods,” according to the Oracle of Delphi. There is no theoretical teaching; everything is experiential. The experimenter, which is the unique aspect of the initiatory method as opposed to the scientific method, is both the subject and the object of the experiment.

“**The Initiatory Gardens of the Palace of Versailles**” is a reprint. The first edition dates back to 2006 and was completely sold out, much to the dismay of enthusiasts. The book was in high demand, and the copies still in circulation were selling for a fortune. For passion knows no price. Passion for the Palace of Versailles itself, passion for its gardens meticulously designed by the greatest minds (master builders) of the time, passion for art, for sculpture, for fountains, passion for the Grand Siècle, for the Sun King, passion for mythology, passion for the initiatory method, for the Great Alchemical Work and its secrets, in short, passion for entering this mysterious world of “Knowledge.”

[Click on the link to read more](#)

Odile Grisver



# SEMIOTICS FOR THE FREEMASON

**When a person is initiated into a Masonic Lodge, they generally discover during their first instruction that everything they will learn from that point forward will be symbolic and allegorical. They understand that this is how the Order conveys knowledge and inspiration, but they do not find an institutional conceptual framework or an invitation to personal training that would prepare them to interpret and correctly understand what a symbol, an allegory, or a ritual truly is.**

Semiotics is the discipline that studies systems of signs (among these are symbols, which do not have an intrinsic but rather a conventional relationship with what they represent), their processes of signification and communication, and the way meanings are created and transmitted. In Freemasonry, this constitutes the backbone of the entire edifice. Therefore, for a Freemason, it is not an optional subject but a fundamental and essential discipline for the proper construction of their Masonic life. It is essential when it addresses the semantic dimension, which studies meaning; the syntactic dimension, which deals with the relationships between signs; and the pragmatic dimension, which concerns how they are interpreted.

Since ancient Greece, Plato had already reflected on the concepts implicit in signs, Aristotle studied the representation of words in his work *"On Interpretation,"* and the Stoics classified them as "natural" and "conventional." Later, John Locke in England analyzed their nature in the *"Essay Concerning Human Understanding,"* and the Swiss Ferdinand de Saussure, father of modern semiotics, concluded that a sign is composed of its form (signifier) and the ideas or concepts it represents (signified). The correspondence between the form and what a symbol represents depends on conventions, which in our case are those of Masonic tradition.

Through the interpretive function of semiotics, a Freemason has the opportunity to find underlying meanings with greater rigor, depth, understanding, and assimilation. For example, they can discover in the symbolism of the Gavel, the Chisel, and the Rough Ashlar ethical and philosophical principles to guide their own life and influence society, while also uncovering meanings in the way Freemasonry invites the instrumentalization of this symbolism. Similarly, semiotics will provide them with valuable tools for understanding the various forms in which Masonic content is communicated: words, marches, charts, postures, objects, garments, contacts, etc.



Semiotics is not an optional subject for a Freemason but an essential one that offers the necessary theoretical framework for the correct interpretation of symbols and, through this path, for the proper preservation and transmission of Masonic Tradition when confronting the symbolic corpus with someone prepared for it.

This matter is not trivial. By encouraging the study of semiotics in the Lodges, the preservation of Masonic traditions, usages, and customs is facilitated. Freemasons can not only grasp the essential teachings of Freemasonry more deeply and effectively from the beginning, but also later transmit them, thus reducing their vulnerability to the interference of foreign conceptions that distort their practice.

Moreover, an educated and appropriate perspective on symbolism strengthens the capacity for analysis, reflection, and the broader search for meanings in Masonic life, and through it, in social life.

This is not a matter of little importance in an increasingly pluralistic era.

*Iván HERRERA MICHEL*  
*Past President of CLIPSAS*



# Money, Power, and Humanity



*In our modern society, money and power seem to dominate every aspect of life. In France, this reality is particularly evident through various recent events. The question then arises: what is the place of humanity in a world where money and power reign supreme?*

## **The Importance of Money and Power:**

*The 2024 Olympic Games in Paris are a striking example of the significance of money and power. The preparations for this global event have led to colossal expenditures and intense media attention. The Minister of the Interior even wrote to law enforcement to emphasize the importance of their role, as “the eyes of the world will be on you.” This illustrates how crucial image and prestige have become. Why create so much debt? For what reason?*

*Financial scandals and accusations of corruption are also frequent and often go unpunished, while daily assaults are on the rise. For instance, Abbé Pierre, an emblematic figure in the fight against exclusion, has been accused of sexual violence. These accusations highlight how power can be abused, often to the detriment of human values.*

## **The Impact on Humanity:**

*The primacy of money and power has direct consequences on human relationships and well-being. Social and economic inequalities are deepening, creating a chasm between the rich and the poor. Social tensions are increasing, as evidenced by numerous strikes, protests, and the rise in crime in France.*

*Mental health is also affected. The pressure to succeed financially and socially can lead to high levels of stress and anxiety. Human values such as compassion and empathy are often overlooked in favor of material and personal success.*

## **Human Values in Decline:**

*In this context, human values often seem relegated to the background. Solidarity and mutual assistance, once pillars of French society, are becoming increasingly rare. Recent events show that personal and financial interests often take precedence over collective well-being.*

*However, there are still examples of resistance and solidarity. Social movements on platforms like TIKTOK, which remains relatively free, and community initiatives show that the human spirit is not entirely lost. It is essential to promote these values to rebalance our society.*

*The implications of this situation are profound. If we continue to prioritize money and power at the expense of humanity, we risk creating a society that is increasingly divided, unequal, and aggressive. It is crucial to rethink our priorities and promote human values in our daily actions.*

## **Why have we come to this point, and what is the ultimate goal?**

*In conclusion, while money and power dominate our modern society, it is possible to restore balance by emphasizing human values. France, with its rich heritage of solidarity and social justice, can lead the way in restoring humanity to its rightful place.*

*I hope this reflection will be useful! I believe that every little thing or action has the power to change the course of events.*

Daniel WIRTH

# FREEMASONRY AS A SYSTEM FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

It was the esoteric podcaster, Greg Kaminsky, whom I first heard say that if nothing else, Freemasonry teaches you how to dress well and to show up on time. As much as we exalt how being a Mason supports your spiritual life, we give very little attention to how it serves us in developing into well-rounded, high-functioning individuals. This could be overlooked because our underlying message is to eschew the lowly material in favour of higher ideals, but the truth, given that the square and compass are both fundamental to our symbology, is that you cannot be anchored in the spiritual unless you are grounded in the physical.

The Indian chakra system demonstrates this very clearly. The lowest three bands of energy represent aspects of our physical world: the first, our own bodies and family units, groups and societies that we belong to such as this Lodge, the second, our relationships with each other, and the third, our work in this world.

These layers form the foundation needed to access the highest of the seven main bands relating to our spirituality. Which is why when a Brother's physical world is disrupted or out of balance, they cannot retain their focus on higher matters.

This relationship also manifests elsewhere: you could say that the religious person is one who sees God as separate because of his over-attachment to the profane.

The spiritual person might be one step closer to the truth, but he or she is so caught up in trying to understand God, that they cannot see what is staring them in the face. The mystic, on the other hand, has experienced God and knows that no words are adequate to describe that presence. So the language they use is deeply rooted in the physical. Mystical poetry, especially that from the East, revolves around yearning for God like you would a lover, because mystics have come to the realisation that the reason we came to this planet was to laugh, to love, to smell, to taste, to feel joy and to remember that which we came from.

Freemasonry imparts valuable life skills, and every office the opportunity to develop our personalities, should we choose to receive it. There appears to be an in-built system for social mobility that perhaps is the legacy of Operative Freemasonry, but one that offers transferrable skills allowing for our physical foundation to be strengthened in support of the



spiritual. Every Brother learns to be conscious of how they sit or stand, walk and carry themselves. We are impelled

to improve our diction and how we enunciate the words of the ritual, how we frame our ideas around a certain topic or participate in discourse, and listen with respect to the opinions of others. The Outer and Inner Guards learn to fiercely protect their interests through their office, while the Deacons learn about teamwork; the Wardens learn to handle authority with grace, while the Master learns to listen, in order to lead.

What we need to watch out for is confusing the spiritual for the physical. The danger is not in pursuing materialism, per se, but the bigger trap that is spiritual materialism. It often goes unchecked in spiritual communities and arises when your power is ungrounded in the physical. When your Masonic journey becomes about acquiring regalia, or when your rank is used as a measure of superiority over a Brother. In the spiritual, there is no performing good deeds or service to collect brownie points for the afterlife: there is only one measure that we are being judged against, and that is how pure our hearts are in each and every moment.

To accompany this Piece of Architecture, I want to share a beautiful passage by the 17th century English mystic Thomas Traherne which captures the beauty of that connection between the spiritual and the physical:

‘The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reaped, nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting.

The dust and stones of the street were as precious as gold: the gates were at first the end of the world. The green trees when I saw them first through one of the gates transported and ravished me, their sweetness and unusual beauty made my heart to leap, and almost mad with ecstasy, they were such strange and wonderful things: The Men!

**O what venerable and reverend creatures did the aged seem! Immortal Cherubims!**

And young men glittering and sparkling Angels, and maids strange seraphic pieces of life and beauty! Boys and girls tumbling in the street, and playing, were moving jewels. I knew not that they were born or should die; But all things abided eternally as they were in their proper places. Eternity was manifest in the Light of the Day, and something infinite behind everything appeared which talked with my expectation and moved my desire. The city seemed to stand in Eden, or to be built in Heaven.

The streets were mine, the temple was mine, the people were mine, their clothes and gold and silver were mine, as much as their sparkling eyes, fair skins and ruddy faces. The skies were mine, and so were the sun and moon and stars, and all the World was mine; and I the only spectator and enjoyer of it. I knew no churlish proprieties, nor bounds, nor divisions: but all proprieties and divisions were mine: all treasures and the possessors of them. So that with much ado I was corrupted, and made to learn the dirty devices of this world. Which now I unlearn, and become, as it were, a little child again that I may enter into the Kingdom of God'.

Ishwariya Rajamohan,  
Lodge St. Germain No. 904

## **Five values for Masonic living :**

- Benevolence,**
- Respect for freedom of conscience,**
- Spiritual quest,**
- Ethical and responsible living,**
- Commitment to developing the Universal Fraternity!**

**If you share these values, join us!**

**Contact: [fil.infosloge@gmail.com](mailto:fil.infosloge@gmail.com)**

