

Pietro Negri: Knowledge of the Symbol (In 7 parts) (From Introduction to Magic: Rituals and Practical Techniques for the Magus) by Julius Evola and The UR Group {Including works by Arturo Reghini, Giulio Parese, Ercole Quadrelli, and Gustave Meyrink}

Part 1

According to Dante (*Convivium*, II, 1), “ texts can be understood and expounded according to four senses”: the *literal* sense; the *allegorical* sense, which Dante says, “is a truth concealed behind a beautiful lie”; the *moral* sense; and the *anagogical* sense. The anagogical sense occurs when “reading in a spiritual way a scriptural passage, which in its literal meaning and in the things being signified points toward the things of eternal glory”; in other words, it is the innermost meaning of a text that, even when it has a literal sense, deals with topics of a spiritual nature. This latter sense must be clearly distinguished from the allegorical and moral senses, which in comparison with the anagogical sense, at least from a spiritual point of view, have a secondary importance. In my opinion, the anagogical interpretation of the *Divine Comedy* still needs to be undertaken.

Dante calls this anagogical sense “super-sense.” *αν-αγωγη* (an-agogy) means “to lead” or “to carry upwards,” or “to elevate.” Moreover, when employed as a technical naval term, it designates the act of weighing anchor and sailing away. Metaphorically speaking, when it is referred to spiritual topics, anagogy therefore indicates spiritual elevation or a rising up from the earth. In the symbolism of “navigators,” it designates leaving that “earth” or *terra firma* to which human beings are tenaciously anchored, in order to hoist the sails and to find a strong current, heading toward the open sea.

Dante was referring to the writing of “poets,” although the distinction of the four senses may undoubtedly be applied to sacred and initiatic writings and to any means of expression and representation of spiritual facts and doctrines. According to this distinction, the “super-sense” in every type of symbolism is always the anagogical sense. The full understanding of symbols consists in the perception of the anagogical sense concealed in them; if anagogically understood and employed, they may even contribute to spiritual elevation. In this sense, symbols are endowed with an anagogic virtue.

Naturally, not all symbols are endowed with such virtue. By extension, sometimes the name “symbols” is given to mere characters and emblems that have almost exclusively the value of representation. Thus the symbols of mathematics and chemistry do not possess, as such, this anagogic virtue. It is possible in these domains to attribute the same sense to very different symbols. For instance, algebraic multiplication may indifferently be indicated with the symbol of a cross or a dot. But the word “symbol,” in its more proper meaning, has a very precise and complex meaning, as we can easily see from its etymological analysis.

In Greek, the term *συμ-βολη* (sym-bole) designates the act of joining, putting together; the related term *συμ-βολον* (sym-bolon) indicates agreement, and thus the *sign*, or mark. Both of these words consist of two elements: first the prefix *συμ* (syn; in Latin *cum*) merely indicates conjunction, while the latter designates and specifies the character of this conjunction. *Βολη* (bole) and *βολος* (bolos) indicate the act of throwing. They are terms connected to the verb *βαλλω* (ballo), meaning “to throw,” “to strike,” “to cast.” The verb and the analogous term *συμ-βολον* (sym-bolon; “symbol”) designate the act of reunion, while the synthesis (*συν-θεσις* [syn-thesis; in Latin *compositio*]) indicates the *result* of the action. The dynamic character of the symbol is opposed to the static, immanent character of synthesis. In regard to the effect of the action, the verb *συμ-βαλλω* (sym-ballo; “to reunite”) is opposed to the verb *δια-βαλλω* (dia-ballo; “to

separate, to oppose"); correspondingly, the *συμβολον* (symbolon) is the opposite of the "devil" (*δια-βολος* [dia-bolos; "transversal, adversary"]). The attribution of dynamic and magical virtues to symbols in order to overcome diabolical opposition and adversities is philologically obvious. And just as the symbol leads to a synthesis, its opposite, the "devil," is what leads to the opposite of synthesis, namely to analysis: in fact *αναλυσις* (analysis) is solution, breaking down, dissolution, death.

In a way, the dynamic virtue of symbols is opposed to every analysis, and it acts as the instrument and as the means of arriving at synthesis. Just as in discursive knowledge one arrives at the thesis *conceptually*, in a logical way, starting from a hypothesis, likewise in the initiatic *endogeny* it is possible to arrive at a synthesis by employing the dynamic virtue of symbols, in a magical way, starting from the original human condition. These mere etymological considerations already allow us to see how in higher knowledge symbols have a corresponding role to that played by concepts in discursive knowledge. The correspondences between symbols (*συμβολοι*) on the one hand, and concepts (*con-ceptus, con-cipio*) and syllogisms (*συν-λογιξοναι* [syn-logixonai; "to compute"], on the other hand, is a perfect one. In Logic, the syllogism unites the word (*λογος*, logos) with the thought ([i.e., the act of "pondering," Latin *pensare*] from *pondus* = "weight"; to ponderate means to weigh), and leads in a discursive manner to consideration and to measurement (*mensura* from *mens*, mind, connected to *mensis*, month, and thus to the *moon*, which does not have its own light but a reflected one, or *reflection*). The symbol in the magical science or in the pure and purifying science of the Magi (Persian *majidan*, "purifying," through fire) works with the (bole), the irradiation, the projection, the fulguration. The *word* of logic corresponds to the operation, or the *action* of magic, just as the "Great Work" of the Hermetic and Masonic tradition corresponds to the philosophical *discourse*.

Part 2

Due to the very character of its composition, the symbol is different from and superior to the emblem, the insignia, the parable, the metaphor, and the allegory.

Emblem (from *εν-βαλλω* [en-ballo; "to throw in"]) and insignia have a representative rather than a noetic and spiritual character; the parable, the metaphor, and the allegory only partially possess the character of symbol. In the allegory something different is said (*αλλο-αγορευω* [allo-agoreyo; "to speak other"]) rather than what is really meant. The literal sense is the "beautiful lie," and the true sense is another, possibly in contrast with the literal meaning. In the symbol there is no contrast or true difference between what appears at first site and what is meant. Between the symbol and its meanings there is ususally a relation of harmony, analogy and correspondence. It is not a matter, as in the case of the allegory, of perceiving the true meaning without being misled by the apparent and irrelevant meaning, but rather (as far as mere comprehension is concerned) to go back from the evident meaning to the hidden ones, in order to understand the **full** meaning of the symbol, thus fulfilling (instead of overcoming) the initial meaning. Moreover, and properly so, the allegory is always verbal; this limitation does not apply to symbols, since there are many types besides the verbal ones.

The parable too does not have the value of symbol. This word [from *παραβολη* (parabole) and *παρα-βαλλω* (para-ballo), "to put things next to each another") is a mere comparison or similitude. Parables cannot lead beyond the term of comparison. Their successful employment by Menenius Agrippa and by Jesus shows that they are useful for plebians and for the profane masses. As far as the metaphor and the *tropos*

(metaphorical impression) are concerned, which are terms properly employed in rhetoric, we should note that they too refer to verbal expressions. They suggest that it is usually necessary to translate from concrete into abstract terms the meanings of words or phrases used in a metaphorical way. Metaphor (Latin *trans-latum*, “the carried over”) means “to carry away” [μετα-φέρω (meta-fero); Latin trans-fero] or “to transfer elsewhere.”

Thus the allegory, the parable, and the metaphor are not, properly speaking, symbols: they are figures of speech that can deal with symbols, as they often do; in this case the characters of an argument, or of the symbol, are found, at least partially, even in the verbal expression used. In this case, on the basis of a symbol or a body of symbols, or special symbolism, one can construct an entire allegorical language; thus, sometimes even a jargon or a secret and conventional set of sentences are constructed.

I have mentioned that symbols come in a great variety of species. In practice, anything can constitute the basis of a symbol; however, there are obviously criteria for their being chosen or employed. Thus we have numerical symbolism, in which whole numbers (an abstraction per se) constitute symbols while their powers (Greek δυναμεις), their residues, or roots (ριζα) their simple relationships and properties constitute symbolically their analogical virtues. This symbolism was especially employed by the Pythagoreans, then the Kabbalists and Freemasons. We have the symbolism of the letters of the alphabet, which is obviously connected to the numerical symbolism that is at the basis of the Kabbalistic tradition. We can connect the geometrical symbolism of the Platonists and neo-Platonists to these symbols, and especially to the first one. Geometrical and numerical symbolism is connected to the symbolism of those sciences and sacred arts in which there are relationships, proportions, rhythm, and harmony, such as architecture, chants, music, dance, poetry, and painting (together with the symbolism of colors, etc.). Heraldry and emblematics are the emanations, derivations, and applications of these symbols in the social and political domain. From physical phenomena come polar, solar, and meteorological symbolism, as well as the Hermetic symbolism of transformation. Biological phenomena provide the symbolism of fermentation, putrefaction, and germination of the vegetal seed, as well as sexual symbolism, the symbolism of metamorphosis and resurrection, and the symbolism of spiritual foods and beverages (e.g., the Hindu *soma*; the Mazdean *haoma*; the Hindu *amrita*; the Greek nectar and ambrosia; the ancient Latin *anna peremna*; the Judeo-Christian “bread” and “wine”). From the various forms of human activity come the regal symbolism (Philothes’ royal palace; the royal or regal neo-Platonic and Masonic art; via regia; aqua regia; the Hermeticists’ royal wedding, the symbolism of war, especially the “holy war” (Bhagavad Gita); the symbolism of pastures found in both Hermes Trismegistus’s *Pyramid* and in the Gospels; the symbolism of cultivation of the “land” or Georgic symbolism; the symbolism of “navigation” (Homer, Virgil, Dante); the symbolism of the foundation of temples and cities and, in general, of “edification” (hence the title of “Pontifex” [builder of bridges] attributed to the Roman High Priest) and of “construction,” which is the foundation of traditional Masonic symbolism, naturally connected with architectural symbolism (hence the “Great Architect of the Universe”); the symbolism of custody and defense of sacred objects, temples and lands (Knights of the Grail and Knights Templar). Finally, some historical and legendary events, at both an individual and a collective level, may become the basis of and serve as symbolism (e.g. The Trojan War; Hercules’ labors; the Argonaut’s expedition; the life of Jesus). Myths [μυθος (mythos – “what is spoken”; Latin *tra-ditio* = tradition, custom)] and fable (*fabulare*, to speak) are just stories; mythology is the story of gods and heroes. Myths are not symbols, but can have a symbolic character and become the basis of a certain

symbolism. Thus, pagan mythology has supplied several symbols to Hermeticists, such as Michael Maier and Pernety. What I have presented here is a summary and incomplete list, though it should suffice to give the reader an idea of the breadth and variety of symbolism.

Part 3

For those reasons, verbal expression, even in its figurative forms, cannot compete with the vital, synthetic nature of symbols. The symbol transcends words, and even when we consider it merely as a means to express and communicate facts and doctrines, it still has one more advantage over language; words vary in time and space and they are liable to become worn out and undergo variations both in form and meaning and cannot achieve the stability and universality of symbols.

Nevertheless, word and symbol share a fundamental trait, namely the metaphorical nature that ties their concrete value to their abstract meaning. Both presuppose the acknowledgement of a universal unity, correspondence, and analogy; thus they implicitly admit the human "similitude." I said "similitude" and not identity or equality; I admit as a postulate that beings, and especially human beings, are similar among themselves from both the inner and outer point of view, and that the senses and inner organs of different people resemble and are equivalent to each other, just as the physical senses and organs are. Having acknowledged this, our inner experience transcends our individuality, and it can be expressed in words and symbols that can be understood by those who have an analogous experience. Moreover, our inner experience can contribute to induce it in those who have not yet experienced it. This is what happens in ordinary language in regard to common human experiences; when we talk about light, sound, color, we presuppose not only that the sound of our words is perceived by those who listen to us (just as we are able to perceive the sounds that meet our ear.), but also that our experience, expressed through our words, is understood by those who hear it, thanks to the comparison with a similar experience, known by and shared by those who are listening.

Universal analogy is at the basis of symbolism and also at the basis of metaphorical language; therefore it is likely that symbolism conforms to determinate norms, just as the shift from the concrete to the abstract sense obeys the rules of semantics. The "Emerald Tablet," attributed by the Hermetic tradition to Hermes Trismegistus, (46) begins with the solemn affirmation of this connection and universal analogy: "*Verum sine mendacio, certum et verisimum: quod est inferius, ad perpetranda miracula rei unius.*" (True, without falsehood, certain and most true: what is below is like that which is above; and what is above is like that which is below, for the accomplishment of the miracle of the one thing.)

There is an analogy between the physical and the metaphysical, between exteriority and interiority, and between man and cosmos. Because of this, man is potentially God, and microcosm is potentially a macrocosm. God, the Bible says, created man in his own image and likeness. The analogical relationship that connects one thing to another makes from each thing the natural symbol of things corresponding to it; hence the concept and the use made in magic of the "*signaturae rerum*" (signature of things). The similarity between the thing and its symbol, between the object and its image, may be direct or inverse. In the first case the relationship is similar to that existing between a note and its octaves; one ascends from the symbol to what is signified through an analogical transposition. In the second case, the relationship is similar to that existing between an object and its reflected image; one ascends from the symbol to what is being represented through reflection and inversion. It is necessary to take this factor into

account when interpreting symbols. The two similitudes, moreover, are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Thus the solar light, refracting and reflecting itself in droplets of water, gives rise to the phenomenon of two concentric rainbows, in which the colors of the spectrum appear to be arranged in an inverted manner. Descartes's theory explains the formation of the inner rainbow as the simple reflection of the ray of light, and that of the concentric external rainbow as a double reflection. Analogously, a double inversion or one repeated an equal number of times brings back the second type of symbols to the type of mere transposition. Conversely, one might think that in the symbols in which the correspondence occurs through transposition, the inversion of the symbol is not perceived simply because it is repeated an even number of times. The meteorological phenomenon of the rainbow, due to the dispersion of the "solar" ray into the "waters," thus has the value of a natural symbol of the process of universal analogy itself. Just as in pagan mythology Iris was the messenger of the gods, the special envoy of Jupiter and Juno, because the rainbow was the symbol of the union between heaven and earth, likewise the similitude between the procedure of the analogical inversion and the procedure of inversion in the optical reflection indicates in the analogy the connection uniting heaven and earth, spirit and matter, interiority and exteriority, the divine and the human.

(46) The text of the "Emerald Tablet" was presented first by Jabir ibn Fayyan (Geber), who claimed to have received it from the Pythagorean Apollonius of Tyana. (See E.J. Holmyard, "Chemistry in Islam," *Scientia*, 1/11 [1926]). According to Hermetic tradition, quoted by Albertus Magnus (*De alchemia*), the *Tabula Zaradi* was found by Alexander the Great in the sepulcher of Hermes. According to this tradition, after the "Flood" Hermes found the tablets that the ancient wise men and Enoch had chiseled prior to and in view of the deluge, in order to perpetuate the tradition. The Masonic tradition attributes the discovery of these tablets to Hermes and Pythagoras.

Part 4

The analogical character intrinsic in the symbol confers on it an ambiguity and an indetermination of meaning, which on the one hand makes it rich and fertile vis-à-vis the precision and the determination of the word, while on the other hand makes its penetration and use less simple and easy. Even in words, the awareness of the etymological meaning and ties with related word-forms allows one to perceive their hidden meaning, and thus opens the way to greater knowledge. But in the case of symbols, the analogous process presents a very different breadth and depth. The understanding of a meaning is the step towards the conquest of further meanings in collateral and higher domains. In this case, one is not forced to abandon the constant overcoming of the mystery of the ultimate roots of language, which is unavoidably present at the basis of every etymological analysis.

By virtue of constant meditation, the symbol ends up being imprinted on the mind, and with its constant presence it is always ready to inspire it, to suggest to it the analogical relationships that it has with what it, from time to time, the object of thought. Independent of references to various ideas, the symbol, on the basis of the analogical relationships contained in it and also due to its intrinsic syncretism, supplies the mind with elements to work on, and fertilizes it, so to speak, by bestowing a creative power upon it. In this sense, symbols constitute modes of motion and action, factors of endogenesis, that push, guide, and lead to conditions of consciousness not yet experienced, and thus to an effective, direct, significant knowledge. From the hidden meaning found in the signs it

is possible in this way to ascend to conscious possession; thus what one gains through signs is also a practical teaching. (47)

This fecundating, magical action of the symbol over the mind corresponds perfectly to the similar action of symbols in politics and religion, as everybody can ascertain. Think of the waves of enthusiasm, the heroic determination that can be induced in individuals or in the masses through a hymn, a flag, a national or political symbol; think of the enthusiasm and fanaticism that a religious symbol can provoke, and you will understand how in Magic, too, the symbol can have a similar energizing virtue, a similar stimulating power, and the virtue of spiritual elevation. There is, however, an essential difference. In politics and religion the symbol appeals to love of country, to partisan spirit, to religious faith and prejudice, namely only to sentiment that the symbol stirs and manifests. But in esotericism, the symbol never appeals to sentiment, but rather to the mind and spirit's higher faculties of understanding and creativity. Sentiment, beliefs, theories, and any idea of adaptation or subordination to the masses are just human elements; it is a mistake to rely on them or to compromise with them when trying to rise above the mortal level and to ascend from the human to the divine. Magic, and with it all initiatic traditions, is perfectly coherent when it replaces the dogmatism of religious and philosophical faiths, or the mere representative verbalism of some sciences, with the symbolic teaching, or with the spiritual process that, with the help of symbols, makes the inner experiences and conditions understandable, and thereby enables the direct perception and comprehension of transcendence.

(47) The author makes an untranslatable play on words here in the original. The Italian word for teachings is *insegnamento*, which also literally can be read as in-segna-mento, "in-sign-ment." He then remarks, "It is very interesting, both historically and philologically, to note how language uses a word with such a meaning to characterize teaching."
(Editor's note)

Part 5

This magical use of symbols is typical of Hermetism and of the rituals of some organizations that have been partially influenced by it. It grafts itself onto the practice of *ritual* that leads to the fulfillment of the *Work*.

The Hermetic tradition that states that only *one* vessel is sufficient to complete the Work, or at most two (as apparently happened in Flamel's case). This vessel, the "Philosophers'" athanor, needs to be sealed hermetically or, according to Hermetic ritual (the expression "hermetic sealing" has remained to this day to designate the corresponding chemical operation), in order to be able to operate within it, after isolating it from the outside. According to a well-known Hermetic saying, "*Visita interiora terrae, rectificando invenies occultam lapidem*" [Visit the interior of the earth. By rectification you will find the hidden stone] (Basil Valentinus, *Aurelia occulta philosophorum*, 2nd ed., 1613; it can also be found earlier in a slightly different form). The vessel, the *grasale* or chalice of the Holy Grail, is in fact of "earth"; but "earth," according to an archaic symbolism found in many languages, is the human body. Human beings (from *humus*, "earth") are earthly, terrestrial creatures; their body is molded with the mud of the earth (see the etymology of *Adam*), which is their dwelling place (see the German term *Boden*, "ground"; and the English terms *body* and *abode*). By visiting the inside of this vessel and *rectifying* (another technical term retained in chemistry to designate the corresponding operation) one finds the "*Philosophers' Stone*."

Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) says (*Opera*, Basel, 1563, p.632) that the master *descends* from Jerusalem to the rough mountains of the desert in order to cut

and shape stones for the holy edifice (the place for beholding the gods), and that the soul, chosen as the bride for the son of God who dwells in immortality, adapts itself to the transformation *sicut lapides poliuntur* (as stones are polished)--- that is, as the stones were smoothed that were to be employed in building the Temple of Jerusalem in which the theophany occurs. This *edifying* symbolism of Nicholas of Cusa corresponds precisely to later Masonic symbolism, in which the workers (the “fellows”) polish the stones, square them, and form the *cubic stone*, or perfect stone, in the “inner chamber.” Dante at the beginning of his *De vita nova* says: “*Truthfully*, I declare that the spirit of life resides in the most secret chamber of the heart.” If the Hermetic vessel and earth are none other than the human organism, then the interior of the earth, the “heart” of the organism, can only be the heart. The heart is the sanctuary or *crypt* of the temple, portrayed as *beneath the ground* in the crypt of ancient temples. We can understand why an ancient anonymous French alchemist explained the name of the Saint Graal with the incorrect, though significant, etymology of *sang real*, or “royal blood.” Such a connection of the vessel with the heart can be traced all the way to ancient Egypt, since the ideogram of the heart is a vase with two *ear-shaped handles* (the ears of the heart); the similarity between heart and *athanor* is interesting, especially when we recall the Egyptian origin of the Hermetic tradition.

Part 6

We have talked about the *descent* into the earth’s interior. The symbol we have employed is so widespread as to go unnoticed. We know very well that our consciousness is not an object found *inside* the body; that there is no above or below; that it is absurd *to pray* to God, lifting one’s head toward a hypothetical “heaven” and putting on the pitiful and beseeching expression of a dog waiting for its owner to hand him the leftovers (not without the vague fear of a kick). The sinking sensation of the consciousness in its innermost recesses cannot be expressed in human language other than by resorting to analogous sensations of material human life. The origin of many important and ancient symbols (if we can talk of origins), and thus of their interpretation, is to be found in the need to express inner sensations through analogy (an analogy that *really exists* and that the human mind can recognize and employ) between these sensations and the sensations of ordinary life. The entire symbolism of the “descent into hell” is connected to it. Thus, in Egypt, the *subterranean world*, the *netter khert*, the dwelling place of the dead, is called “Amenti,” from the word Amen, meaning “invisible, occult.” Thus, the Greek Hades is likewise $\alpha\epsilon\iota\sigma\eta\delta$, invisible. It is necessary to descend into this underground, invisible world, illumined by the hidden sun, or *Amen-Ra*, the “Midnight Sun” of the Isaac initiation. This descent must be made without losing self-consciousness, without drinking or feeling the *lethal* effects of Lethe’s waters. On the contrary, one should drink from the fresh source of Mnemosine, the giver of immortality in Orphism, or from Dante’s waters of the river Eunoe. Mnemosine, memory, re-calling (from *corda*), who is opposed to Lethe and conquers him, is the *Mother of the Muses*; correspondingly, truth in Greek is *a-letheia*, and learning is none other, Platonically speaking, than anamnesis, or a remembering.

Even the symbolism of the stone, the *occultum lapidem*, that is found by rectifying the interior (or inferior, as it is written in the later variations of the Renaissance Hermeticist Basilus Valentinus, and now we can understand why), derives (though not chronologically) from an inner sensation. This at least appears very likely. Although an initial and uncertain sensation of sinking into the inner recesses of consciousness is easily accessible, in order to reach the sensation of “petrification” it usually needs a long

period of assiduous practice of the ritual. An Italian text of the sixteenth century entitled *The Practice of Philosophical Ecstasy*, perhaps by Campanella, and published by D'Ancona alongside his work (Turin, 1854, vol. I, p. cccxxiii), says that at a certain stage of practice one becomes "as still as a plant or a stone." This confirms how spontaneous and exact the comparison of reaching such a condition is to the recovery of the stone. According to the Rosicrucian Michael Maier, the Philosopher's Stone is the very stone that Cybele forced Saturn to swallow, in order to save Jupiter, Saturn's own son, from his father's voracity; thus Jupiter was able to escape from time and become King of Olympus. The "black stone," a symbol of Cybele, was taken to Rome and preserved on the Palatine by the Romans, who had owned and venerated another "*lapis niger*" for centuries in the Forum, at the beginning of the "via sacra" (sacred road). This stone had fallen from the sky and was called "*abadir*" by the Romans and "*betyl*" by the Greeks. According to Rene Guenon (*le roi du monde*, 1958, p.76) the word "*betyl*" is the same as "*Beth-el*," "house of God," which is the name given by Jacob to the stone that he used as a pillow when he saw the house of God and the gate of heaven in his famous dream. It was also the name given by Jacob to the city near the place where he had his dream. Interestingly, according to Genesis the original name of that city was *Luz*. But *luz* in Hebrew is the name of an *indestructible* little bone to which the soul is connected after death until the day of "resurrection." *Luz* is also the name of the almond tree. Near the city of Luz there was an almond tree, at the base of which there was a hole through which one could access an underground passage that led to the city of Luz, completely hidden. Thus we return to the symbol of the underground passage, which was associated with the symbol of the stone. The entire symbolism of the "spiritual building" employed in the Gospel and the typical of Masonry, as well as the symbolism of the "Philosopher's Stone," is a development of this fundamental symbol that cannot be understood (nor taught) until the "hidden stone" has been found.

Part 7

We have seen that we are dealing with a *lapis niger* (black stone). We could make further observations and comparisons concerning the importance of *black stones* in ancient Rome, in the Muslim tradition and in the tradition of *Agartha*, the subterranean world mentioned by Saint-Yves d'Alveydre in his *Mission de l'Inde*, by Ossendowski in his famous *Beasts, Men and Gods*, and by Guenon in his *Roi du monde*. The fact that this hidden stone, which can be found by descending to the "infernals" or in the "dark kingdoms" underneath and within the "earth," is necessarily black may simply seem the logical consequence in the development of this symbolism. However, if we recall how much it may be connected to the full flowering and fruitfulness of the symbolism, it seems to us that even this symbol may have a specific reference to the sensation of the Hermetic *black, blacker than black*. We should not forget that the "hidden stone" is the Stone of the Philosophers and not the philosophic stone: in other words, it is the matter employed in the work, and not the matter of the work's perfection; when the stone is found, the sensation of "petrification" goes together with the sensation of utter blackness.

Once this condition has been attained, the understanding of the symbol becomes effective; from it the sense of the further symbolism is illuminated, thus being able to suggest what needs to be done and to lead a further phase of the work. The identification of the references and the determination of the symbol, besides, are not left only to the mind's eye. As one proceeds, the inner voice (the "voice of the heart") and the inner ear (the "ears of the heart") are activated. Thus, hermetically and literally, the transmission of the symbolism takes place. At certain times this voice answers a

question that the mind asks about a given state or sensation; at other times it directly intervenes at the right moment and reveals a secret. Let us be clear about it: this is not the "voice of conscience," the "categorical imperative," or similar eruptions of what Nietzsche called "petty morality," nor mediumistic voices or phenomena. These are inner senses to which people usually pay no attention, since they are deafened by external noises and unable to perceive and to distinguish the subtle inner impressions. We can truly say with Jesus: "*oculos habent et non vident, aures et non audiunt*" (They have eyes and see not, ears and hear not). This inner voice and hearing can work during both the waking state and sleep, as well as in the various stages of consciousness attained during the practice of the *rite*. Simultaneously with their action, sometimes real, tangible phenomena occur, such as to dispel any skepticism. These phenomena often possess a manifest symbolic character, and sometimes display an incomparable beauty and nobility. We could relate some examples, but we have hinted at this topic only in order to mention facts that are impossible to confuse with *ideas* or hallucinations, as one might be inclined to believe in the case of inner voices and perceptions; we have also hinted at this topic in order to suggest that the symbolic character extends to these manifestations as well. The symbolism is innate in them, too, so as to become a sort of universal or initiatic language, which finds one correspondence and expression in the initiatic language (through signs, gestures, or "universal words") employed by some organization more or less connected to the initiatic tradition.