

Three growing questions about Masonry

Is Masonry a driver of change in society or is it a conservative power?

Is Masonry a secret society?

Do contemporary nations and people still need for Masonry?

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Abstract

Through three capital questions, this short essay tries to offer a general panorama and a better understanding of the proteiform complex body or Masonry. Through by a multi-level hermeneutic, this study get the ambition to be comprehensible both to Readers who are not used to this kind of literature and to the ones advanced and skilled in symbolic thought. The main important conclusion owes the *quality of the symbolic level*, which is the property to refuse a single interpretation: notwithstanding, this does not prevent from a clear historical and political evaluation of the phenomena under analysis, according the *methodologies of social sciences*. This political evaluability drives to the main valuable output of the essay, which concerns the anthropological statement that the logical label of Masonry, with this name or many others, it exists since always. Under the category of initiatory institution, we may consider the step between individual and society, and a society inside a larger one. Evolving from the needs of the individuals to the ones of social groups, the matter joins to the land of political sciences. The sociological meaning can be posed under analytic view in reason of the functionalist meaning emerging from the alternative couples *status-quo/emancipation* and *conservatism/progressivism*. Through by this perspective, anyway the theme seems not to reveal much more, because this “proteiform complex body” manifest itself as something too much complex in its inner core to be considered in a way or in another. *What remains is strictly symbolic*, with some theological and eschatological points that refuse to be posed under restrain.

Keywords: Masonry; Freemasonry; Rosicrucians; Enlightenment; secret; society, Francmaçonnerie; Charbonnerie; Carboneria; Alta Vendita; Stuart; Scottish; Templar; révolution; restauration; Lumières; philosophy; Egalité; Fraternité; Liberté.

Is Masonry a driver of change in society or is it a conservative power?

Try to answer to this first question is not easy, but it is not impossible. First of all, we should multiply the questions, in order to choose the perspective: are we talking historically? Or philosophically? From the point of view of the individual or from the one of organized and interchained social groups?

There is not a perspective which can be considered the “right” one. Anyway, a choice has to be done: and we will exercise ours, which is looking towards the historical perspective.

From this side, we may consider that Masonry emerges in European culture as a powerful driver of change, even if very often it represents itself as a force deeply melted with the same roots of aristocracy. This ambiguous duality, present since its early birth, it will be something always remarkable in the whole history of this institution.

Try to explain the complex nature of the inner nature of Masonry is a very interesting topic about a conception of history that is not mainly focused on individuals as real makers of the changes, but looking towards super-individual dynamics of the social movements.

Coming back to historical sources, we should start from the evidence given in English literature, where the first statement about the “Mason Word” happens in a poem where the line above identifies it as an external emanation of the Rosicrucian Society¹.

This statement implies several consequences, but not in a linear development. First of all, the Rosicrucian Society is a body, if possible, more enigmatic and anodyne than Masonry itself. A great line of interpreters are persuaded that an actual Rosicrucian Society never existed. Moreover, a main part of Masonic literature affirms the existence of Masonry since Adam or, at least, since the building of the Jerusalem’s Temple. We will say more on this topic trying to answer to the second question of this essay.

With reference to the present topic, we should note that the modern Masonry emerges as a driving force of the change that was going to growth in the whole Europe touched by the Reform. This point needs a more clear explanation, which starts from the statement that the real existence or not of the Confraternity of the Rosy-Cross is meaningless. According to a main conquest of historical hermeneutic, what is meaningful is the existence of some ideas able to change the behaviour of people². We are stating that the presence of a Rosicrucian literature³ that came before Martin Luther, whose early origins have roots into the Bohemian experience culminating with the holy Bible translated by John Wycliff as imported by Jan Huss⁴.

The Reform is the natural framework where the changing force of Masonry was conquering the European scene at the end of the XVII century; notwithstanding, this does not mean that Masonry appeared under Reformed monarchies. The experience

¹ See the fundamental chapter “Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry” in *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, Frances Yates, Oxford University Press, 1972

² *The Royal Touch: Monarchy and Miracles in France and England*, Marc Bloch, 1923.

³ *Fama Fraturnitatis, Confessio Fraturnitatis, Chymische Hochzeit of Christian Rosenkreutz* by Valentino Andreae, published in Germany, 1616 - even if these works have been said to be the door opened after the original opus of the XV century.

⁴ *Jan Huss: Religious Reform and Social Revolution in Bohemia*, Thomas A. Fudge, 2010.

of Rudolph II in Bohemia was nothing but a short experiment⁵, while in England Masonry growth under the Stuart's monarchy.

This last sentence needs a very strong and impressive clarification, because the inner nature of Masonry is condensed here. Masonry, which flourished under the benevolent approach of "enlightened aristocracy", but in fact was creating a very dangerous (dangerous for the stability of the hegemonic groups of clergy and aristocracy), a third pole, composed by people not yet represented: handicrafts, workers, bourgeois.

In past centuries, the social groups which were destined to have literacy, these were exclusively clergy and aristocracy. With its approach inclusive of new social classes and its need to perform rituals and expressions which need to be read, Masonry was creating a new social consciousness inside its circle. It is not by chance that main personalities (Isaac Newton, Theophile Desaguliers, Elia Ashmole) of the time were involved both in the Royal Society and the main important Masonic groups.

Is Masonry a secret society?

The early roots of Masonry are of course secretive. Still today the rituals, even if different according the peculiar tradition to be followed, are heavily marked with a brand of secrecy. If we consider the different evaluation of the philosophy that wears the practice of Masonry, especially thinking about the position of the Roman Church, the exposition of Masonry towards the Reform became a danger. Giordano Bruno, to whom Frances Yates⁶ recognizes a main part in the early spreading of the new philosophy, is the main example of what we are saying.

In England, the monarchy of the catholic Stuart was subverted with the meaningful support of Masonry (and free press, which was strongly interrelated with Freemasonry⁷).

Following the example of United Kingdom, through the whole Europe something was happening and was no more possible to stop it. In Germany soon appeared a group explicit referring to itself as "Illuminati", mixing the thought of the Reform with Jewish Kabbalah, reintroduced in continental Europe through the involvement of the Jewish, especially the oriental, Shabbatian doctrine, as renewed by Jakob Frank⁸ and transformed in a political doctrine and an operative system by Adam Weishaupt. They found some correspondent in Paris, where Moses Dobruska was implied in the first phase of Robespierre's revolution, while in London they were focused around the Moravian Church of the Fetter Lane Center, which hosted a inner "Kabbalistic College" under count Zinzendorf and the secret direction of the Baal Shem Tov, Shemuel Falk,

⁵ *Reformation Anti-Reformation in Bohemia and Germany*; C.A. Pescheck, D. Benham, 1845

⁶ *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, Frances Yates, 1999

⁷ *The Origins of Freemasonry: Facts and Fictions*, by Margaret C. Jacob, 2016

⁸ *Origini Occulte dell'Illuminismo*, by Davide C. Crimi, 2016

sometimes called “Doctor Falkon”. Here were raised intellectuals like William Blake, Emmanuel Swedenborg, and an anomalous mason as Martinez De Pasqually⁹.

It is to note that Swedenborg was a secret agent of the Swedish crown, sent there to investigate if there was some attempt to subvert the catholic hegemony as done before in London, and spread this all around Europe.

In fact, the court of the Stuart, former king of England, in exile in Paris, generated a new conception of Masonry. Until then, in fact, Masonry was composed exclusively by two degrees (Apprentice and Companion), which were completed by the degree of Master when the early fathers conceived Constitutions and Landmarks.

Notwithstanding, these three degrees were overwhelmed by the new reactionary doctrine of the Sturt in exile which, with the compliance of the prominent cardinal Fénelon and the soi-disant *ch valier* Andr -Michel Ramsay, created a new rite with degrees that were creating a super-structure over the three classical masonic degrees.

In this way a reactionary turnaround was going to happen, with the birth of the Scottish Rite, so called in reason of the legend that attributed to Masonry earlier origins, linked to French Templar’s Order¹⁰. Within this new composition, it is to remark that the national French Guard of the King was the R giment de Cond , inside which the main part was made by adept of the Templar Masonry.

According to some historian, when the French Revolution was accomplished by the emerging bourgeoisie and the support of progressive Masonry, the R giment de Cond , compelled by the reactionary Scottish-Templar Masonry, engaged a bloody fight, which caused the phase of “Terror”.

Following this line, we should consider that Masonry is not exclusively secretive, but that there are inside the single term “Masonry”, different sides which are completely different, and even fighting against each other, in some moments.

The two-headed eagle, which is a symbol of the 32° degree of the Scottish Rite, seems to be a perfect emblem of the impossibility to state that Masonry is compelled by one (just one) political component.

Napoleon, who believed to have the opportunity to drive Europe by driving Masonry, he had to pay the consequence of this misunderstanding. Mazzini, a leader personality in Italian Risorgimento and independence, in the first phase was supported by Masonry (through the branch of Charbonnerie), becoming the inheritor of the role that has been of Adam Weishaupt. But when he continued to affirm his idealism and

⁹ The organizer of the *Order of Knight Masons, Elect Kohanim of the Universe*, which tried to drive the radical ideas of Enlightenment coming from Weishaupt in something more evaluable by moderates.

¹⁰ Ren  Le Forestier, *La Franc-Ma onnerie Templi re et Occultiste*, 1970

spiritualism, he was abandoned by the leading forces, which preferred the materialist Marx. And when the International Socialist became too serious, the establishment preferred the reactionary forces of fascism and nazism, although they had to discover what enormous mistake this would have become.

To anticipate the following point on modernity, we may answer ourselves if Masonry is really able to influence the internal dynamics of power. The answer is: it depends. This kind of answer may appear a joke and actually it is. The effectiveness of this statement is given by the real dimension of time and space. Something that may be valid in a country can be not the same in another country, and something that may be effective in a time can be no more effective in the same place just one year after. This is the reason of the defeat of Napoleon.

Do contemporary nations and people still needs for Masonry?

This question is not well posed. Definitely, it is not a question. What matters is that initiatory organization have been always part of the human social life. What should be discussed are the conditions for their evolution and the disposition towards spiritual advancement for humans. To enter inside this psychology, we need to discard a taboo, breaking the doors of the subconscious psychological level. Initiatory work is absolutely related with a strong symbolic mind-shaping. The pillars that give access to the Masonic Temple are the emblematic image to visualize the inadequacy of the binary logic of categories like good and evil. To the adept, the masonic doctrine demonstrates that the dual approach is the one of the external world, that is used to be obscured in his possibility of knowledge by inconsistent appearance, that applies in the main part the dual system of the couple of opposites, The Adept is therefore introduced to pass in between the pillars without support any kind of conditionnement, starting the path for the true knowledge, whose nature is intimately unitarian.

This approach has been always heavily contrasted by the ruling establishment, but this is not a resolute difference, as far as this reactionary attitude is not exclusively by the Ancien Régime, but also by new ruling powers (except the revolutionary phase, as noted in the weberian analysis of power¹¹). The hypocritical attitude of bourgeois conformism consists, in particular, of pretending that initiatory organizations do not exist. This kind of hypocrisy is stronger in the European countries which didn't know the Reform: Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece. It is quite different in the continental Europe.

The removal of this hypocrisis is not useful to the ruling establishments all around the world. The organizations seems to be oriented to the material power and the instrumental and illegal use of the secret, to favor the business for profit and dubious legality. At last, secretive practices always bring with them the risk of something over the borders of morality.

¹¹ *General Economic History*, Max Weber, 2007

Secret is needed by security. Otherways, secret is needed by doctrine. In the Middle East, secret is still a need. But we can not judge the need of secret in Europe, if we consider the inner core of the doctrine. Anyway this statement can not be used as a simplified justification. Cases confirming this theorem are always well received by the official chronicles, always protruding towards stereotype obliteration. Even a certain “politically correct” information area, pleased with its own “progressive” sense of belonging, is silly about these positions, whether it is sneer or bad faith.

It is possible to do it because of sneaking, for “deploying on the other side” requires the courage of those who jeopardize their career: to take position against the stereotypes constitutes woe to majesty with the Big Brother¹². It is more likely that this will happen in bad faith because it is not possible to be so foolish to offer to those who have no chance of social redemption and to build a better life, a model based on perbenism.

According to the stereotype dogma, television is still good at arguing the thesis for which initiatory organizations do not exist or are convergence sites of unscrupulous and criminal businessmen of every species. This blind approach forgets that initiatory organizations can be gateways of access to rational spirituality, gearing towards progress as material, psychological and metaphysical development.

Anyway, this kind of judgement cannot be exaggeratedly positive, as contemporary history shows that the main part of masonic practice doesn't demonstrate any bold character of the originary progressive push, turning towards the heavy role of watchdog of the ruling powers.

Regarding from this perspective, for those who approach Masonry through by the fascination of Enlightenment's philosophy can be really deceptive, as far is quite a desperate attempt to find footsteps of this originary imprinting.

If we try to look through by this shot, the theme is not new and should be posed under the reactionary attitude of the Scottish Rite had since its beginning. We have been talking about this above. Here we can just underline as Masonry has been a formidable experimentation field of modernity. The process of assimilation and change of meaning of words that can be considered “dangerous” by the establishment is perfectly described with the concept of “newspeak” in Orwell's 1984. “soft dictatorship” is a complementary concept elaborated by Aldous Huxley¹³.

Pathology is often (voluntarily) confused with the physiology of the system, reversing the parts. What is healthy is passed on to a sick person and what is ill becomes ordinary. In this way, the conservative and reactionary structure of society, an enemy of every

¹² 1984, George Orwell, 1949. See also, for the same definition of “Big Brother”, the seminal collection of the Jakob Frank's writings.

¹³ *Brave new world revisited*, Aldous Huxley, 1958. There is an edition which holds the letters Huxley had with Orwell, polemicalizing about the misunderstanding that Huxley sees in Orwell interpretation of his concept of “soft dictatorship”.

spiritual advancement and of every true conquest of freedom, imprints its mark on every existence.

At least we should have the courage to know. It is not a simple coincidence that the motto of Enlightenment is "*Sapere Aude!*" (dare to know): to know is at the basis of every act of freedom. The anthropologists, since Claude Lévi-Strauss, Marcel Mauss and Margaret Mead, are well aware of the necessity of ever-existent organizations of initiation, in every society. If we would have the courage to know, we would be more aware of the occult origins of Enlightenment.

Rinascimental Enlightenment produced a new attitude to knowledge. The *Siècle of Lumières* and the *Age of Reason* generated the promise of a world where human beings should be delivered by the tyranny of hard work, as mechanization allow to people to increase their spiritual freedom.

This promise, as I wrote in my former essay appeared on ISJ¹⁴, was repressed by two world wars. It came back when economic conditions allowed a new rising of collective consciousness, during the '60. In a further essay dedicated to music I will try to demonstrate the importance of the black slaves in America and their musical expression, the *Blues*, as an inspiration force for the protest of the generational fight during '68 and following years.

Masonry appears in popular culture especially through the poetical and philosophical work of an author as Aleister Crowley who was recognized by one of the most important witness of the so called "psychedelic revolution", the magazine *International Times*, as "The unsung prophet of the beat generation", in reason of his deep influence over groups such as the Rolling Stones, the Beatles, the Doors, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd and many others, which explicitly referred to him and his poetry. This has been called in literature as the "revival of magick"¹⁵.

Even if Crowley's work remains controversial, we cannot imagine modern times without referring to his instance of democratization of what was once "secret knowledge" and, whatever can be the opinion about the man, it is undeniable his apport in diffusing the rituals that were formerly reserved to occult organizations.

The reactionary turnaround happened with a famous document, *The crisis of democracy*¹⁶. Promoting this reactionary *manifesto*, the commitment given by the establishment to the authors was to give support to the idea that democracy is not efficient, causing waste of money and ungovernability. These sentences are impressive,

¹⁴ *The rising of cosmopolitan personalities*, by Davide C. Crimi, International Scientific Journal, n. X/2014

¹⁵ *The Revival of Magick*, Kenneth Grant, 1972

¹⁶ *The Crisis Of Democracy*, Michel Crozier. Samuel P Huntington. Joji Watanuki. Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission, 1975.

finding easily their way to remain into the mind of masses, giving basis to the '80, with the substitution of the Keynesian economic system (based on conversion of save in investment with the warranty role of the national state) with the Von Hayek monetary system (where saving has no more importance, because consume takes the whole of the incomes)¹⁷.

The advancement of privatization, loss of solidarity, increasing competition, reduction of civil rights standards are the visible effects of this change of paradigm. This kind of approach has been not a simple tendency of the flowing river of history. In many way it has been piloted. Huxley, that we quoted above, gave us several reason to not undervalue some phenomena that he foresaw. Among these, the repression of the role of music as emancipatory force. This aspect will be the object of a specific analysis.

Here we may end saying that the reasons we exposed drive us to the statement that Masonry, an originary force of change in XVII and XVIII century, gradually loosed its progressive attitude, becoming more and more a reactionary force. Enlightenment itself became a fantastic (and depressive) example of the use of newspeak techniques, dramatically changing its originary meaning (to find individual liberty through direct knowledge and use of own reason) in something completely different: the Enlightened (that should be the ones who are predestined to rule the world, with Masonry as a driving force to recognize and select them).

The contemporary paradox of Masonry is that the esoteric aspects of its doctrine are hugely forgotten, both from a "right" and from a "left" political glance. From the right, Masonry has become more and more the guardian of a tradition that is not understood in its symbolic implement, starting from the names of the pillars and the implements of the Temple¹⁸. From the left, there is a complete loss of the spiritual knowledge, since historical materialism became the hegemonic interpretation of Marxism, eliminating every possibility for the people to gain access to education and education as a way to spiritual awareness. This kind of vision goes far beyond the traditional division of political *agorà* in "right" and "left", which are obsolescent terms that were not true even in XVIII century.

In this post-modern contemporaneity, that has been defined "liquid society", something more happened, giving the new opportunity of the internet, through by people got now a technological easy and cheap method to get in touch each other and potentially re-flourish the psychedelic revolution and/or the "revival of magick" we have been talking about. Workers and/or people who share interest against the establishment may find their way to aggregate. Unfortunately, this seems to be not so easy, and the main part of this pretended revolution reveals to be another illusion.

¹⁷ Keynes Hayek: *The Clash that Defined Modern Economics*, Nicholas Wapshott, 2011

¹⁸ We should open a reflection on the mystic doctrine of Israel, but this will the object of a further and separated analysis.

Finally, this is not but the confirm of the idea expressed in the R+C manifestoes: life in this world is a cross inscribed in a ring, with all symbolic implications of the image.

All in all, the spiritual approach of idealism remains still today the only true source for the possibility of an authentic progress of the pneumatic destiny of human beings.

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