

INITIATORY SILENCE

Francesco Angioni

Initiatory symbology collects various forms of symbols: those that belong to an ancient tradition and that present themselves as a normalization of the past in a modernized key; those that derive from a pact between the members of the initiatory community and that guarantee the unity of the group, which are synchronized within the group itself; those that have the sense of projection to overcome the gnoseological limits of the group and its members, are traditional but through their character of semantic multiplicity offer new gnoseological opportunities. Silence is not part of the first category, because not all ancient or traditional initiatory groups used it ritually or considered it as a symbol and therefore could not have a normative function susceptible to modernization. It can be a crucial moment of the second when it is ritualized in the different phases of learning on the basis of an agreement connected to the creation of the ritual and forming itself as one of the synchronic fulcrums of the group, ensuring its unity. It can also belong to the third case when it takes on a traditional guise but having its own multidimensional semantics, in the communion of saying and silent pulses of new opportunities for initiatory growth.

Silence in the initiatory context is a specific linguistic form that characterizes the entire path of the initiates. Within the group, they elaborate the syntax of silence, the morphology of tacitly expressed symbols, without fully explaining their meanings. Each symbol, or sign in the semiotic sense, has different meanings for the different phases of the initiation process. Each one belongs to a different type of relationship with what it refers to: it has a relationship of "similarity" such as the design of a team and compass that illustrates operational objects, of "proximity" when it manifests the operation of measuring and relating the relationships for which the object is intended, of "concordance" if it refers to the object within the knowledge of an architectural rule. The symbol as a special form of sign manifests itself (first phase of learning), as in the example, in iconographic-descriptive mode containing a meaning "dictated". It is an initiatory *dictatio* to be kept in silence in front of the essoteric¹ world, of which the *initiating*² is still permeated, the symbolism must be evoked without making explicit its intimate meanings, it is described but not fully exposed. It is the evocative value, indeterminate and silenced, an evocation imbued with thauma, which it would be simplistic to translate with wonder. The silence of the initiator is thaumant (in its original meaning), it awakens the fear, the terror of the death of one's own profane being, of the unhappiness of losing the guidelines of one's own thinking and acting that guided life until the moment of the passage from profane to initiating. This thauma must stimulate the initiating in the search for meanings, of which one must understand their bearing past, the inherent tradition which, however, is not freezing in the image of the past, if it were so it would be nothing more than an inheritance and any use could be made of it.

The initiating with its silence of things that is soon to be said opens two ways to the initiated: the first is that reserved for the simple, for those who are not inclined to study but who have great sensitivity and research with passion esoteric knowledge in a maniacal

1 The terms essoteric and esoteric are used in the same sense as profane and **initiatory**.

2 The term "initiated" is used for the person who, generically, has been accepted into an esoteric group characterized by initiation rites, "Master" for who is Master of the initiatory path and "initiating" (in the form of a noun) for who is learning the path. Each phase of the path involves a gradual advancement of learning and then you are always apprentices under the guidance of a Master.

way, in the platonic sense, the second is that of study, of the disciplined application of intellect and reason, of the art of good thinking with the prudence of the hermeneutic. It is up to the initiating to make his choice, also according to his aptitudes and personality. The two ways are not antithetical and only formally can they be seen as oppositions, they have the same purpose, esoteric wisdom. Nothing forbids the initiating to pass from one way to the other without losing the Ariadne's thread of correct research and speculation. This choice is given by its thauma, by its ability to overcome the fear of the unknown that suspects in the indetermination of silence, indetermination that destructures the essoteric, its thought its categories, criteria and values, leads to the desert of essoteric meanings as a way to the ontology of initiatory language. It is a stage of waiting, of referral to another world. We suspect meanings that in the next phase begin to manifest themselves in a more precise *dictatio*, a functional *dictamen* to represent the concept of measurement in its multiple meanings where the measure is assumed as symbolic-conceptual abstraction. Continuing, the sign in the form of an object strips itself of any factual and existential reference, of the communication of an abstraction or conceptual ideation and unmask itself in its being an initiatory "rule".

It is assumed, therefore, that initiatory improvement passes through the understanding of the signs, an understanding that is increasingly deeper and more comprehensive and that is autonomous and independent of the signs of the exoteric world. With regard to the symbolic-initiatic language, learning, from the apprenticeship phase to the following phases, focuses on the study of the formal relationships of symbols within initiatory gnoseology, on the meanings inherent in symbols and on their relationship with the initiatory community. His learning is a new order, not an acquisition of meanings in its own right, therefore a distance with the appearances of the essoteric. It is a learning that confuses, that disturbs the initiating and that can create blame or exaltation but that still does not create sharing. There is a complex process to be developed with careful study and research that cannot be understood with immediacy or intuition. There is a need for the guidance and support of more experienced initiates who "dictate" to the less experienced the ways and rules of interpretation, consistent with the *modus* or gnoseological system of the community. The different phases of the initiatory process are a re-examination, an existential adjustment based on the linguistic-conceptual revision. The previous phases are not wrong or false but simply inadequate for the new perspective that is advancing. This is not a process that can be reduced to a simple relativism or to an existential scepticism because it implies a mobility of the intellect moved by the constriction of silence.

Silence creating indeterminacy does not clarify and does not fix meanings that will be discovered later, its meaning is to induce to discover in the self of the initiating of the firm inclination to face the initiatory process. It, silence, being a special form of initiatic linguistics, paradoxically in both indeterminacy delimits the initiatic world, is disjunctive *limen*.

This process of linguistic teaching/learning, which is essential in the initiatory process, is used with other forms which are signifiers of symbols and which have the function of more explicit interpretation of the meaning of the sign itself, whether it be symbol or gesture or posture, image or word. However, each of these signs is not necessarily referable to the initiatory path as a whole, some are starting and others are deepening. Whoever is starting the path of initiation, risky stage in human life, in his function of Master, cannot explain the signs belonging to a subsequent phase of learning. A founding element of initiatory language, silence, then, takes over. A silence that speaks, that says without saying, that stimulates and spurs the intellect, a provocative and perturbing silence, necessary to

unhinge the patterns and the gnoseological criteria acquired in the essoteric world, its essoteric *weltanschauung*, all the linguistic and conceptual apparatus that allows it to present itself and therefore self-describe itself to reality outside the initiatory sphere. In this way silence acquires a value of authenticity, has its place in the initiatory world, is reigning in the esoteric language and imposes itself imperative in the esoteric philological territory up to its most intimate dimensions.

The initiatory silence is pronounced by images and ritualistic objects with symbolic value, these figurations possess a semiotics of signs replacing verbal communication. They have the preceptual function of speaking silence, a silence in the form of figurations of thought denoted by the density of meaning. Symbologies, by their very nature and even more initiatic ones, have the value of verbal incompleteness, in the sense that each descriptive phrase of the symbol is not exhaustive with respect to the meaning of the symbol itself, since it has an emphasis, one more that remains alluded to. This process of significant density, incompleteness, reticence and allusion takes place in initiatory silence.

There is in such silence the Ciceronian figuration of *nolo dicere, non ausim dicere, nolo plura dicere*. We do not say what initiatic sharing allows us to know, it is a silence of reserved, esoteric value. Verbal incompleteness is not absolute then, it marks a world that is not the essoteric one and that in the initiating opens to a world in which the first uncertain steps are taken. The Master with his silence creates in the initiating the suspicion that there is one more than he can understand with a logical process or intuition alone. It is a suspicion that opens the mind to spaces that cannot yet be determined. This indeterminacy must disconcert the initiating because only with disconcertment, the confusion of reason and intellect, can the essoteric preconceptions be broken up, opening spaces to the initiatory ones. Initiatory silence is therefore an effective silence with a teleological value. The silence of the Master calls into question the initiating to understand himself as the creator of knowledge. It is not an abstract concept because the initiatory society, even in its esoteric confidentiality, prepares men. It is not a theoretical knowledge, not based on ancient or modern texts, but it is knowledge that faces reality, even essoteric, with modes of action in order to face reality itself.

The non-visible assumption, to be conquered, is that the initiate is not an individual in his solitary singularity but is the subject who makes history, who creates tradition and in this way is historical subject, he is the tradition that walks in the future; tradition is not freezing in the image of the past, is the happening of the future, the structuring of an "other" thought.

It is not that handed down by historical texts but that of a population and in the initiatory sphere that of a specific initiatory group that over time has structured itself as a scan of a way of being different from the essoteric. It is the establishment of a fixed point in the nomadism of historically determined events. It is always intimately connected to the esoteric community of which it expresses its intimate synthesis, it does not evolve independently of the community, because it is a collective historical "heritage" that does not have such freedom, it is the result of the intimate elements of collective dialogue in its *facere* and *dicere*. Every attempt to crystallize it in norms or in fixed syntax museificates it, losing any temptation of involvement. Since it is synthesis of the esoteric collective can change form but not substance, it is the essence.

Tradition, as an interruption of social wandering, is configured in silence that continues from initiates to initiates in a futurological projection of a hermeneutic research of teleological recovery of an already given, is the memory of the future, the initiatory mystery

that must be maintained, preserved in a perpetual awaited memory with the sense of secrecy reserved only for initiates.

When the Master speaks at the initiating, he loads the speech with silences in the form of symbolic and allegorical speeches; in the first phase he does not explain, he does not say, but "says" to the mind of the initiating, who is in a phase of literacy, which must not understand but memorize the initiatory speeches. The action of the Master is revealed as *ars dictanti*, a special way of saying without revealing, which dictates the rules to be followed to define the meanings of silence, the classic *sermo absentium*. The Master applies the rule of separation between the "precision" or description of the signifiers and the "amputation" or absence of explanations. It is a *dictatio* of instrumental value and for the moment without any purpose of effectiveness; only later will the initiatory symbolism be transformed from saying to saying, a translating saying into a moral figure, that figure which is the pivot around which the initiatory action moves. I mean the initiatory meaning of morality not as a superior or universal social morality or as an immediate religious morality, but in the translated sense of Qedushah, of sacredness, in the case of morality *sub domine sacri*. It is a morality that has more of the mythical than the magical, without the values of the forbidden; similar to *mana*, as a generative power of elevation beyond the historical sensible, it is the creator of a symbolic space and a system of internal ritualistic operations and justifying that space. At the initiating, silence opens the doors to many possibilities, while the Master has few possibilities. The purpose of the second is to eliminate in the initiating the possibilities that are not part of the esoteric path, so the silence is transgressed by simplicity by realizing the complexity of the few possibilities.

The Master proposes a gnoseological fracture between the power of speech and that of silence, reveals, *in absentia*, initiating with the hermeneutic roots of silence, leads to the paradigm shift from signifier to meaning. Initiatory silence makes sense because it is signified by an external entity, the initiate, and becomes the signifier of a gnoseological path of agreement between *dictare* and *dicere*, it is the imputable demarcation of a *fanum*, of an area circumscribed by inviolable esoteric walls, subtracted from the flattery of essoteric, without the religious drift of *sanctus*. The walls are the construction of symbolic rules that are learned, not being abstractions are not intuitable. The apprentice must be prevented from feeling any attempt at intuition because it is still based on essoteric criteria, on mental schemes not formed at the initiating. Every intuition would be a fallacy, an intuitive falsification of an esoteric concept on the basis of the exoteric interpretative schemes. Intuition is one of the faculties of the intellect, it shows intelligence undoubtedly, but to make something true intelligence is not enough there must be intention that the thing is true and intuition is not intentional.

The Master prudently creates an atmosphere of absence, *sed nolo plus dicere*, and the apprentice must lament this absence, from his lament can arise the seed of understanding. In these terms, the silence of the apprentice is also defined as a silence suffered by a lack of concepts materialized in the initiatory area, he discovers that among the many initiatory symbols, silence is the primary symbol of ontological value. The silence of the initiating comes to light, in its being, as a purifying disenchantment with the naivety of the sacrificial lamb. The aim of the Master is to teach that initiatory silence is not a kind of transcendental meditation or an unregulated intuition or an exaltation of the unconscious. It is only the appearance, in the mind of the initiating, of disillusionment: an entity enveloped in a network that binds the initiates and frees them from their preconceptions, mortal sins of the human being, and that is illuminated interiorly by the dim flame of the intellect. It is a network of learning and knowledge. It is that flame which marks the initiating when he is recognized as worthy of opening his sight to the light. Just like the statue of

Disillusionment in the Chapel of San Severo. Open your eyes to the initiatory light has the sense of finding the rightness of things, the task of a later stage; important is the understanding that there is righteousness in things, their righteousness moral and initiatory morality itself for an initiating is a void to be filled, an idea with its own modes of not serene flashiness but as an evening of dark clouds laden with the research implications of a speculation of what is in the initiatory reality given to speculate. The initiating does not know it, but it is on the way to *Lebenswelt*, the discovery of the self-evidence of the Cosmos. In the masonic esoteric world, *Lebenswelt* is represented by the symbol of the chessboard of whites and blacks, which do not represent the antagonistic duality but the relationship between esoteric reality and exoteric reality where one does not exist without the other if one does not want to fall into an abstract theology. The initiating is not led to understand that the esoteric world does not exist as a butterfly that dreams of being Buddha and that the only real reality is the esoteric one; on the contrary it includes the coexistence of the two worlds and understanding their difference can think of their relationships because there is no initiatory world if there was no non-initiative world. The two worlds are, they exist, in their relationship and not in their antithesis.

The Cosmos is not dominated by the antithetical formal dualism but by the combinatorial relations between sensitive and extrasensitive, humanly between symbol and sign, between historic and ahistoric, between immediate and problematic, between *bios* and *logos*, between perception of the sensitive and initiatory experience. An experience that by its nature of concept is not given by immediacy, by the paradigm of intuition or formal logic, but by the hermeneutically founded gnoseological progress.

In the initiatory silence one can find both the Hellenistic neo-Platonic meanings and the thought of Meister Eckhart. Silence as the abandonment of the historical self, the purification from determinism and the particularism of contingencies. *Veritas semper indaganda* can become a hindrance if it gives rise to the immobility of thought. The *γνῶθι σεαυτόν* (gnōthi seautōn) is refined in the *nullius cogito*. The initiating that does not think about anything in a deep silence, opens to a new capacity to think other than oneself and of oneself. The initiatory silence is *ἄσκησις* (askēsis), in the Greek sense of passing a ordeal, in an ontological key in the initiatory area. Renunciation of the self is not psycho-anthropological renunciation, it is socio-anthropological abdication.

Renouncing the profane self in an introspective, individualistic key, the way can only be the search for another modality of the subjective self, therefore always in the figure of the profane. The sacrifice of the profane ontological self occurs through an ontological-initiatic way. This is the initiatory *askēsis* that is realized in the following phases of the spiritual-initiatic development. In this apparently dialectical process there is no synthesis of contents in dialectical relation, because *pneuma*, circumfused with ontological absoluteness, cannot be related to *ψυχή* (psyche), circumfused with ontology of the particular; both are at different levels not interacting.

The silence of the beginning is the mute sound of detachment from the previous existence, from its *σῶμα* (secular man, of the here and now, profane). A renewing detachment for each phase of passage to a higher level. It is not *Lebensform* because it doesn't depend on the self, since it is freedom of the spirit tending to *veritas*. In this silence, as an exit from the anthropocentric self, there is a connotation of ecstaticity, not as a metaphor of abandonment from the profane experience, but as an absence of this experience, as its annulment. With the words of Eckhart, from certainties - *Grund* - the initiatory silence leads to the abyss - *Abgrund* - with *amor fati*.

Initiatory silence is a sensitive manifestation of space-time, as a network of relationships in dynamic hermeneutic progress that isolate from the causal chains and the demands of why; it is an object of spiritual connotation, almost an *sub species aeternitatis*. It characterizes the whole initiatory path, that is a path of study, more precisely of successive and more in-depth learning able to offer the initiate new opportunities, to create new forms giving light to the initiatory tradition of his group. The initiate entering the initiatory circle enters an architectural complex of already built wisdom that must examine with care, slow foot, a proceeding that does not imply urgency, removing feelings and emotions that do not give cognitive fruit. It is wisdom in the etymological sense, of rational and existential experience, a guide to new awareness, to being in itself.

The initiator, like a latin *silentarius* commanding *favete linguis! parcito linguam!*, regulates this procession, blocks with appropriate silences the neophyte impetuosity, making us understand that the esoteric path is first of all the approach to a different *civilitas homini*, different from the essoteric one *ad usum commoditatem*, contingent and historical. Esoteric symbology breaks into the psychic world of the beginning and he must capture the *concinnitas* of such architecture, understand that architecture is not form, that it brings messages without jeopardizing them with the formalisms of the saying, understand that the esoteric tradition must be master, dictator (in the Latin sense), with the power of the *rei gerundae cause*, to defend against the meddling of the esoteric with the Horacean disdain of the "*odi profanum vulgus, et arceo*", because the *profanum* enters the initiatory village to plunder it with his empty ideas. It is the *improbis labor* of whoever listens to the silence understands it and makes it the foundation of his philological proceeding in the initiatory field; silence becomes the picklock that deduces and translates. In a more specific and modern field, in Freemasonry, it is also applied to the FellowCraft and also to the inexperienced Master. In these two phases, silence is characterized by different degrees of *dictatio*, to the FellowCraft is dictated the concepts and primordial forms of the symbologies pertaining to the initiatory phase of the Master; to the newly appointed Master will dictate the semiotics of the linguistic-initiatic systems of the last phase of learning with progressive *dicere*. To the esoteric signs, and in a special way to the initiatory symbols, the initiate does not give a slavish, erudite formalization, or "superstitious" value, cloaking them with magical valences. They are in the esoteric saying the founding communicative texts that do not look to the past but pronounce the expressive *vis* of the renewed present.

In silence inhabits a form "scriptural", with it exposes the transfiguration of *dicere* in teaching, in a knowledge to be discovered, according to the morphology of the *locutio per signa*.

If dictation is always a cut-off with silence, saying is not dazzling in its obvious flashiness, because it is not obvious, but it is a progressive enlightenment of knowledge in understanding. In this case, *dictatio*, with the severing of the explanations, has a value that becomes more evanescent, you start on the road of "precision" and the cut with silence assumes the aspect of complicity, without the implacability of the initial phase; emerges Ἔτσι, δὲν γνωρίζω, the knowledge of not knowing that it is also a way of knowing. *Dictatio* is not only a statement to be memorized, it has a deeper meaning, it does not mean following in the footsteps of tradition but understanding what is being sought. This research when carried out among Masters of different experience creates the proximity of the initiatory brotherhood, knowing that the proximity is not one of the purposes of the research, the research is the real purpose.

Clues, signs or symbologies, assume precision and silence is like spaces or pauses between a musical note and the other in order not to separate but to bind. From disconcertment and suspicion we pass to the progressive intuition under the control of the intellect, because the silence of the Masters and among themselves is a silent initiatory language, increasingly esoteric, as a regulated communicational experience it assumes the character of hierophany.

The silence of the Masters is *instrumental* (from *instrumenta*), it has values of solemnity in the initiatory air. The initiatory instrument, in whatever morphology it is expressed, has a sense of solemnity reserved for the initiates, it is not a qualification of daily life, of individual privacy. The Master is very attentive, in his *dicere* to the public brotherhood, to scan silences and linguistic-symbolic signs that not everyone understands but that must be memorized. We have the vocal *dictamen*, but to be understood, as we once said, as the *dictamen indiciale*, made up of clues, in the sense of symbols and allegories *in fieri* of initiatory intelligence.

To forge the esoteric language, it is fundamental the paradigm of silence, energetic model of the linguistic order of the esoteric group, indexical dictamen in the matrix of the esoteric-symbolic language. In the linguistic matrix of the esoteric group the communication between initiator and initiating is not based on words, symbols, allegories, metaphors understood as means, as instruments of formation, therefore manipulable, of the initiatory spirit; rather, this spirit must be signified through a formative act, representing and interpreting the initiatory spirit itself which, in its purity of esoteric absoluteness, is immanent to the structure of the initiatory dicere.

At any stage of the educational process, intuition is under strict control so that it is not altered by the knowledge of previous particular and incomplete learning that could give rise to premature awareness that does not fit into a completed gnoseological system or to errors or deviations from the carnal gnoseological system denoting the initiatory community. Initiatory intuition is not an explosion of knowledge but an implosion in not knowing: I know I don't know, the only way to true knowledge. In fact, an initiatory gnoseological system is to be learned in terms of the omni-comprehension of the initiatory communicative whole. This whole is a linguistic island determined by a semantic autonomy that is characterized by what is defined as "*clausola estrema*", so that a single code certifies the belonging of its symbols, which is like saying that each symbol belongs to a single code, so there are no possibilities to define new rules that create new meanings.

The initiatory communicative process is complex, consisting of more than one *medium*, oral written figural symbolic allegorical metaphorical regulatory gestural postural gesture. As an example, the gestural is a silent *medium* that takes on meaning both in the ritual as the gestures of the different degrees, and in the extra ritual as the handshake for recognition purposes. It is a silent *dicere* of precise and irrefutable sign-ritualistic content, of maximum effectiveness and with a complex semiological value that can be interpreted in the context of the phases of the initiation process, it has the sense of a subtle and arduous silent communication. Silence as hidden communication, reserved among the initiates, therefore has the efficiency of creating communion before communication. Communication alone does not create communion. Think of hierarchical communication, vertical from top to bottom, non-participative.

The creation of communion involves a leap from one way of thinking to another, it is a cognitive revolution based on the change of gnoseological paradigms, from the essoteric to the esoteric. The aim is the acquisition of symbolic and value elements, and also rules of their cognitive spelling, which illustrate a different approach from the essoteric one. This

revolution is not sudden but of progressive awareness. The silences, or rather the different silences of the different initiatory phases, mark this progressiveness.

The initiating acquires awareness, more exactly suspects from the silence of the Master that there is more to seek and discover and already this gives surprising results and with such surprise begins to feel aggregated, in communion, with the initiatory group. These are his first steps, he suspects the existence of enigmatic learning that can only be solved with the different paradigms of the following learning phases. Initiatory communion therefore has the function of revealing the anomalies of the esoteric world and, from the initiating's point of view, even before revealing the esoteric signs that are the revelators of the initiatory world. Silence has this function of cognitive shock that allows us to correct the esoteric paradigms in another key and to access the initiatory lexicon without which it could not understand the syntax of the esoteric symbolism, or signs. Communion and semantics are intertwined, the esoteric cultural communality contaminates the semantic contents of the language of the *initiating*, increasing the significance of the signs and giving rise to a new lexical structure and new symbols to be interpreted and to access a culture different from the esoteric one. Bearing in mind that each initiatory *corpus* has different rites and rituals, their lexicon also changes, the more alive the historical sense of the *corpus*, the stronger the communion of the initiates. This is the reason why, over time, a system of traditions has been created, expressed for the most part through shrewd mythologies and the addition of semantic overinterpretations. *Initiatory* mythologies are not the memory of the effective historical events that unites, but their mythologization. new myths are "invented" and a mythologemic system is created. These myths too are to be understood in their symbolic and allegorical meaning and therefore can suffer from the explanatory silence, a beginning of the passage from syntax to semantics that takes place at the cognitive level in new conceptualizations and categories of thought. The symbolic language is further articulated because the symbol is such only if there is the intention to symbolize something and also the silence is symbolic-intentional.

Initiatory communities do not immediately establish an esoteric *corpus* or an ontological status, however they do establish a *paradigm of origin*. Taking Freemasonry as an example, at the origin (end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century) it did not have a coherent initiatory *corpus*, even if it rigorously defined its esoteric, reticent, character. Organizational forms and rituals swarmed, but when a stable structure of organization of the various esoteric groups was created, a paradigm of common origin was defined with special rules (Constitutions 1723), and after three centuries this paradigm is still alive. It had as its backbone the sense of universal morality and the ceremony of acceptance as its door and as its cornerstones the Masonic values. These values, even if with the same phonetic morphology of the esoteric words, had a different semantic sense, esoteric, that is reserved only to those accepted in the structure. The original paradigm has remained alive for a long time, a sort of *koinè* of values, where silence is not a derived sub-paradigm but is an essential constituent of the original paradigm. The original paradigm was enriched by sub-paradigmas marked by historical events even if with weak historical awareness, mythologies translated from other contexts or even invented, values mediated by innovative forms of cultural thought or directly extrapolated from these modern ones; it was the further swarm of new Masonic organizations with an increasingly initiatory value that created the new and particular paradigms expressed mostly in allusive, metaphorical or allegorical form.

Silences also have a metaphorical value. The gestures and the posture of the greeting in the degree are very explicit gestures, they mimic situations of lively crudeness, they are not symbolic but metaphorical, they allude to something else by themselves. No one can

think that the gesture of cutting the throat or belly is miming an event that can happen in practice, are the metaphorical representation of a commitment (or oath) about initiatory things to be kept with strict secrecy. Secrecy is essential in every initiatory situation, every initiatory phase from the initiating to the Master is punctuated by silences that from wider to narrower, going from amazement to complicity. It is the difference between *loqui* and *dicere*, talking and saying. Each phase has its own effectiveness and in operational terms its own efficiency as it is declared by a teleological value, justifying the phase in itself as a projection to a higher level.

There is no clear separation between *dictare* and *dicere*, but a dialectical interlacing between the different expressive levels, symbolic linguistic and semiotic. From not saying not to explain to saying to make people understand, there is a succession of silent explanations that are increasingly intelligible, increasingly full of meanings. A little like between a fleeting but intense glance and the kiss that sanctifies the processuality of the sentimental relationship.

When the Master works, in any phase of the initiatory way, he dictates and says with shrewd silences. It is a silence with the function of a *medium*, the message is transferred instrumentally with the silences and therefore the silence in itself becomes a message. The *medium* becomes a message of learning at an increasingly higher level, transferring the message with different silent instruments. Paradoxically, the highest level is expressed by the gnostic silence, silence not only vocal but also symbolic, gestural, postural and so on, up to the gnoseological ataraxy, in the etymological sense of confusion. The accomplished, expert, Master lives a reality which, compared to the exoteric world, is one of total gnoseological disorganization because every gnoseological system is based on criteria and logical references and on peculiar values. You enter into the field of the spiritual which is independent of any contingency, it is the field of the sense of the sacred acultural, ahistoric, nondenominational. The relationship between Masters of great experience is characterized by the fusion of *dictare* and *dicere*, it is the most mature initiatory silence, the *indicial* one, with symbolic modalities of complete absoluteness that operates in the special gnoseological field of the search for truth.

Initiatic truth is a sense of absolute solitude in a world of particular truths, or rather of apodictic opinions that leave no room for doubt. The true truth, inasmuch as it is absolute, is the search to go beyond all doubt without pre-establishing an absence of doubt out of pure personal belief. The search for truth is the path that the Master pursues, but this is not the last stage of the initiate as we will see later. Every attitude or thought about truth before the due time is a judgment, and truth does not pursue the path of judgment, either factual or value judgment. The connection between silence and truth, in the initiatory field, is the same between lock and key, the two things have a meaning only in their relationship.

Initiatory morals don't judge. It is in silence that it expresses itself. The initiatory path is this run after the revelation of morals that is not expressed in words because words, *dicere*, are under the dominion of values and initiatory morals do not pursue values but truth. Therefore the way of initiatic morality is the *facere*, it is the initiatic action that takes place in the silence teleologically projected towards truth, which finds its circular explicative essence in morality. One gives meaning to the other. Words describe life, silence leads to explanation.

There are initiatory groups, Freemasonry is one of them, which consider the search for a universal truth the final aim of the initiatory path. In an esoteric framework, truth takes on a sense of absolute morality and one can therefore say that it is rather morality that guides this search, that gives meaning to truth. Morality, in the most general sense which includes

ethics, is a systematization of principles which guide the being and action of individuals and groupings and which, especially in initiatory ones, takes on a basic meaning. This systematization is declared in the language of both word and silence. The word must be under control because it can lead to unwanted results, control is given by the use of silence but it must also be watched over. Those who are in the early stages of learning and initiation must know how to watch over silence. The language risks revealing itself as a biblical sin for the initiating. Vigilance means entering the world of a special, initiatory morality, it means transforming the criteria of exoteric morality into criteria of esoteric morality and this means knowing how to respond to initiatory moral judgments. The Master, with the prudent use of silence, educates to a different moral/ethical from that learned in the exoteric world from the initiating, which in this way experiences a cognitive restructuring. To remain silent when one would like to speak is a *modus* that cannot be broken, it is also a way of acquiring the sense of *mensura* that inform behaviour in the initiatic community and also in the exoteric one; a *modus* and *mensura* that conform the internal relations of the initiatic community with the strategies of community life. The sense of union, brotherhood, solidarity, listening, collective deliberation are precisely these strategies.

Morals and truths are not separate entities, they do not have their own fulfillment, to give them a justification serves a final purpose, humanly ontological: the tension to the sacred, tension that is the last stage of initiatory research. Universal morality or ultimate truth are inconsistent abstractions if they do not find unification in the tendency to the sacred. Initiatic silence has the archaic depth of the *sacer*, it has anagogic tension. In its being a symbol it has no sacred value, it is the hierophysical aspect of the *sacer*, it is *sermo humilis*, manifesting itself with the labyrinthine multiplicity of interpretative intentions and challenging every synthesis by disseminating the signs of its essence in a gnoseological a priori that constitutes the gnosticism of the initiates and to be considered as an Erlebnis, the experience of the experience of a historical subject. Silence is a library of books/knowledge written by unknown authors in many languages that are not known, arranged according to an unknown order and purpose. The library, however, is given by an intention, by an intelligent order that offers signals. Moral research does not leave freedom of choice, there is no good or bad morality, just as there is no free will if the aim is truth. The individual does not exist as a researcher but only as a human entity in the way of research. Truth is a code understood as a universal constant to arrive at the primordial concept of the *sacer*.

The initiating is discovering in the initiatory silences the archaic polysemantics as were the light and the dark, the sky the earth, life the death, all a symbolic cosmogony that will be discovered in the rituals of the initiatory phases in its subjectively historical progress. However, silence is not a personal transcendent, an individualistic fulfillment, on the contrary it is an access to the realm of the initiatory mysteries of the collectivity, mysteries that, as Schleiermacher said, are "infinitely different".

In his silence the initiating person observes the initiatory world, he cannot and must not ask himself questions or give answers. He is suspended on the silent abyss and can only observe, learn the initiatory signs, those present in the specific phase of his path, memorize them and wait to understand them. Silence decrees the impossibility for the esoteric language to access the Initiatic Word and therefore the need to acquire a different language composed of signs (words, symbols, allegories, images) that do not belong to the esoteric world arises because of the beginning. The mysterious, the ineffable, the elusive is not hidden in the initiatory silence. The hidden knowledge in the silence is hidden from the non-initiated, not from the initiates. Initiatory silence is a

condition that can only be experienced by the initiates. It is an experience of transition, like the leap of a chasm from the bank of a non-knowledge to another bank of knowledge again, a knowledge of how to behave towards the essoteric world and towards the esoteric world.

Initiatory silence is not an absolute entity, it does not belong to the sphere of metaphysics or mysticism, nor can it be reduced to a behaviour to be adopted in certain situations, rather, as said, it is a mental attitude with a process of research. What is not said at a certain stage will be understood later, this means that unsaid things are not inaccessible, outside the human intellectual and rational capacity to understand. The true mysteries, the true secrets are those that no one knows and therefore are non-existent for the human being, just as gravity and its laws were non-existent for man in the second century AD. Ironically, one could say that gravity was invented by man in the 17th century, when that "non-existent" mystery was revealed as a non-mystery.

There was talk of individualistic completeness: if, in a first phase, priority is given to the *quis*, the one who speaks and the one who is silent, with the increasingly precise definition of the path the *quis* from subjective becomes collective; the initiating discovers that his "self" is such only if it is part of the community and that it is this that gives full meaning to his "self". Not understanding this transformation means unconsciously putting oneself out of the community; overestimating individuality in the initiatory community denies values and effectively initiatory proximity, the individual at his own risk can follow a path that is not that of the community. It will be the progressive understanding of this relationship that will make the initiating a initiate in the path of mastery, allowing him to know how to choose in appropriate cases between word and silence. The Master's task is to educate to *modus* and *mensura* in the delicate balance between self and the community. This balance is functional to the superior understanding of the hidden meanings of signs. In the initiatory path one learns that the sign is something that has a determined meaning for those who perceive it. Its necessity is to be comprehensible in its evidence by someone who knows the linguistic code to which the sign belongs. It is an act of direct communicative relation, conventional, synchronic and without interpretative mediation. However, the sign can deceive those who are not masters of the right interpretative code. This happens in the initiatory context for those who are still in the early stages of the gnoseological process and rely on intuition, because the referent, Master, is still far from the initiating and at this distance makes up for silence as a bridge. The initiating must immediately understand that this silence, his and the Master's, is decisive for the path to be taken, that it must interrupt any attempt at understanding, wait and not accept the logic of the "Wait! - No, I can't". Silence is waiting, a momentary suspension that does not break the process of teaching/learning communication, it leaves traces in the psyche as it leaves its mark, but in a more indelible way.

Symbolic language defines at each sign the value of "meaning" necessarily connected with a single "signifier", so that each sign in the symbolic language finds a specific explanation, avoiding linguistic ambiguity. The silence of the Master is the signal that symbolic language is a form of representation that is independent of the senses, overcoming the senses one goes into the field of abstract gnoseological representations where representative and represented are disconnected. Initiatic silence, meaning it as a "sign", is not equivalent to the other forms of silence present in exoteric communication. The known meaning dominates over the signifier sign.

Symbolic language is a complex expressive apparatus that allows members of the community to communicate effectively with each other. Silence prevents any ambiguity.

Both of course that the sign, symbol allegory gesture and also silence, and its meaning, do not have a direct relationship, there is the referent or *medium referenziale*; "who" interprets the sign, without which there would be a lack of communicative effectiveness. In fact, the same sign without a referent would have no meaning, being the vehicle between the concept in itself and what it represents, the *per se*.

Let us allow ourselves a brief but useful digression on the distinct signs in various typologies. The gesture is a sensitive sign sent by someone to someone else, it has a meaning that must be interpreted according to a predetermined code, code in a broad cultural or more restricted among the members of a group, so the code has broad or narrow understandability. The linguistic one differs from the sensitive conventionality: the allegory expressed in a saying in the form of an analogous figural is always the result of an interpretation. Taking the historical introductory part of J. Anderson's Constitutions, it obviously has no value as historical documentation, it is the interpretation of historical events linked together in an arbitrary way; therefore, it can only have an allegorical sense, its elements have no symbolic value. In the pseudo-historical discourse, facts and events have immediacy, but the sense they are intended to give is separated from them. The same process occurs for all the other forms of pseudo-history created to justify an a priori interpretation, such as in Freemasonry the legend of Hiram or the many formulations without historical-documental foundation such as the legend of the Templars who founded Freemasonry or other origins of Freemasonry itself, all to be grasped as allegories, that is, translations of a sensitive reality into a predetermined conceptual reality. There is the relationship between narration and the pages of paper on which it is written.

On the contrary, the symbol contains within itself a sensitive indeterminacy; the multiple sensitivities are given meaning by means of "original" figurations, from which the symbol has more sense than the simple iconic sign or verbal or gestural, is an *enigma* for its multiple interpretative possibilities, does not declare but suggests, does not explain but arouses suspicion that there is more to understand. The sensitive plane of the symbol remains unaltered and unavoidable and relates to the plane of its alterable and prescindible meaning, both are necessary for the recognition of both. What is important are not the two elements of the sensitive and the meaning in themselves but their relationship, their bond of recognizability or analogical. A bond that is lacking in any form of arbitrary interpretation. The symbol is irreducible to the rules of logic and initiatory silence belongs to this category. Silence in itself has no meaning because it has countless, it acquires it with respect to those who produce silence and to those who are directed to silence. *Non dicere* is relation, if A is silence and B what is not said does not exist equality and inequality is always production of knowledge that develops along the hermeneutical analysis. Silence overcomes the paradox of expressing an idea by denying the listener to think of it. When the Master expresses silence he also imposes silence at the initiating and the relationship of silences between the two has a conventional value, it has meaning only within the initiatory context: "The skull has a meaning that I cannot say", but this does not enable us to think of a pirate flag, a funeral monument or anything else that does not belong to the initiatory linguistic code and consequently the silence of the initiating is first and foremost a cognitive silence. The silence of the Master initiator and the silence of the initiating is instant motionless, because neither of them can say what they could say. Silence is the breath that blows out the candle of the chains of questions and answers.

The initiator with the indeterminability of silence leads the initiating not to give meaning to the unspoken but to silence itself, to understand its symbolic meaning and therefore to introduce it into the linguistic system of symbols. The complexity of symbolism and its depth must be interpreted: the confused, the ambiguous, the mysterious upsetting the

initiating must lead him to find the inner energies of survival in order to set out on the path of hermeneutic interpretation of the meaning not so much of the individual symbols but of the entire symbolic apparatus. The symbol itself, even silence in its singularity, does not produce the hermeneutical search for meaning, it has meaning only within the esoteric linguistic context, showing the urgency and philological legitimacy.

The initiating, in the first phase, must understand that silence must be given a circumstantiated meaning, which contains a precise message, enclosed in a specific cultural context and, like any symbol, has a hermeneutic value because it has the linguistic character of the experience, the interpretative reading of the center of the word; from the senses of the sensitive and exoteric world the initiates return to the primary sense, the first signifier of their esoteric research.

It has been said that silence has a qualitatively different symbolic-initiatic value towards those who are destined, therefore in the different phases of the initiation process there are differences in the perception of the meaning of silence, in other words silence is a form of pervasive metalanguage within the structured initiatic linguistic system, it describes the belonging of silence to a code to be learnt progressively by means of an agreement. In turn, the symbol, with an indeterminate meaning from silence, not because it has not been explained, loses its meaning, it is inactive for that moment, in that phase of learning.

The symbolic sense of silence finds its meaning in the same interpretative plot of the sense, in that relationship between the particular initiatory sense and the more complex gnoseological sense. It is in this game of concealment and revelation that the relationship between Master and initiating is realized. The discovery for the initiating that hermeneutics is indispensable to him for his figuration as an expert in knowledge is a tragic moment. He must go to the centre of the word, ignore the transience of human history and project himself into the futurological paradox of achievable utopia. The symbol is revealed not only as a representation of something other than itself but as a "sense" to be interpreted. The symbol is sense, it is gnoseological archè, thus demonstrating its character of esoteric ontology. Silence is of the category of signs but is distinguished by its "intentionality" to refer to something that is not determined but still exists. It is not as a symbol an abstraction, it is sensitive, it manifests itself when it is expressed. Being a form of language it is a concrete manifestation, but precisely because it is a linguistic form it has a multiplicity of meanings that are specified in the initiatory path, it works by analogy and therefore belongs to the field of control and not to intuition or the unconscious.

Unconscious understanding, not produced by intellectual elaboration, or accidental illumination, do not make us understand the "meaning" of silence, do not advance on the path of the search for the *sacer*.

With esoteric silence there is a *katastrophé*, in the Greek sense of "upheaval" which does not imply annulment but the passage to a new beginning, the "dramatic" and destabilizing distinction between historically determined individual and individual subject of the history of mankind. It is a distinction in which the astorical subject claims his dignity, from the ethical-moral stamp to the recomposition of the *eleos* and *phobos*, recomposition intimately linked to the mastery of the essence of the esoteric way. In this dimension silence is reflective understanding, an act of appropriation of the initiatory essence. Through the experience of silence and its indeterminateness and hermeneutical complexity, the initiating begins in the initiatory symbology, experiences new spaces of consciousness that cannot be dominated but that are rooted in its being in progressive development, in the path of an achievable utopia, developing an esoteric thought that sees in the improbable the possibility of accessing a totality in an esoteric world randomly governed by an experience that is imperfect by its nature. On the contrary, this thought is the unveiling of the invisible, a

medium that places the initiate in the Cosmos, making him emerge from his state of nature, as a measure of the fragility of human relationships.

The symbolism as it reveals itself in its hermeneutical and gnoseological construct reveals new fields of experiential potentiality, of reinterpretation of the paradigms of origin hidden but always present in the essoteric reality that manifest themselves in the archaic polysemantics mentioned above. These paradigms of genesis already present in protohuman symbolic languages were dissimulated in the passage from the culture of the *sacer* to the culture of absolutizing institutional religiosity, then in turn submerged by the social processes of desacralizing laicalization.

In the *sacer* there is a unitary and transcendent sense, a sense that translates into myth, the protective entity of man. When the community, strengthening itself quantitatively, is structured in hierarchies and many roles, the transcendent of the *sacer* is organized in religion and the gods break into myth by taking possession of it, the divine particularizes the transcendent and makes it inconstant historical aspect and in the final analysis frustrates the alienating value of myth. At the initiate this divine is not enough, if there is a cause beforehand there must also be a cause before the god and this can only be the *sacer*. It is not the divine as the truth shown to reason, the god of myth is as unreliable as the reason that claims to be truth.

The symbolic language of origin, teleologically pulsating with meaning of the *sacer*, potentially re-emerges in the initiatory symbolic language. This complex proceeding that lies between the *dicere* and the *facere* of the initiatory action cannot be declared with vocal formulas, they would be sounds incomprehensible to reason and to the intellect of the initiating that still moves within an essoteric conceptual grid. Such a process, if declared in an explicit saying, it would translate into pseudo-concepts, into dogmatic formulas, confusing the *sacer* with the *divinus*, which is motionless intuitive instant in its comprehensibility as an act of faith, of the translation in certainty of what in itself is doubtful, while the *sacer*, not being subsequent to an act of faith, needs a long process of recognizability, of spiritual intelligence that overcomes the *limen* placed by the historicity of fideistic dogmas. The esoteric *tacere*, which is not the absence of sound, has a formally tropological meaning, manifests itself as a symbolic figure, and also in an anagogic sense, makes one intuit or foreshadow (*indiciale momentum*) a reality of a higher level.

The initiatory silence is permeated by the more or less conscious search for the Truth. This is its teleological tension.

In an esoteric sense the truth is a human absolute, without having a metaphysical meaning. The esotericist seeks the truth that the human being can access, not as an absolute entity, extrasensitive or deified. If it were such, the human being would live it with great dissatisfaction and unhappiness, not being accessible, similar to the concept of virtue as an ideal that contradicts human nature itself. Instead, it is the tension to the truth that characterizes the initiate, it is the tension and not the truth in itself that distinguishes him. This search cannot be a casual, fortuitous experimentation of the intellect like intuition, but to be carried out with the use of human faculties like the intellect guided by reason; otherwise it would be an empty intellectualism. This research is *inquisitio*, in the sense of the pleasure (*philos*) of learning, of knowing how to do and thinking; it is energy, in the Lucretian doctrinal sense. Initiatic truth is not an end in itself because it tends towards a specific purpose. Just as music, which marks the action of every initiatory community, is an ordered recomposition of the dissonance that is always present, the nontruth is as present as the truth. It is this disturbing presence of the untruth, of an *inadeguatio*; of the obscure and mysterious and of the secret that hides the light and

clarity, aletheic, of the true, that pushes to the investigation of the true, to the search for a human truth without the condescending appearance of the essoteric truth. Silence then makes it possible to start from the opposite, not from the supposed knowledge of contingent truths but from the factual experience of truth and universally human justice.

The initiator with his silence pushes the initiating in search of an aletheic condition, in search of the light behind the shadows of the essoteric with a *semper indagandum*. The initiator must understand that there is no *auctoritas*, a secret master, nor an unconscious inner master, because these figures dictated by an ultra-human vision are the presumption of a knowledge unreachable by the self and baptized by an other human being, real or imaginative. To *auctoritas* the initiates oppose *curiositas*, the "cure" of research, the investigator *vis*. The initiate, when he studies the ancient esotericisms in order to translate them into the key of his current being, works with *curiositas*, with hermeneutical and philological care without getting carried away by the emotions of idealization. It is a "eager greed" to immerse oneself in the unknown, in his stupefying needs that animate and unite the cosmic experience. The search for initiatory truth, for every initiate, initiate or initiating that he is, is to push oneself to see in the darkness of the unknown if there is something miraculous. It is not the darkness, the mystery that from the darkness reveals, but the miraculous that becomes *altetheia*, that appears without shadows, as a provocation of energetic reform of the social contingent in human universal, a universal devoid of any laudatory rhetoric, of fixed and hierarchical anthropocentric vision but, escaping from determinisms, turns to a *skepsis* where doubt is the hinge of initiatory gnosis; but not in the sense of a sterile relativism, rather in the sense of a "know yourself for what you want to be", a Pichian "*id esse quod velit*".

The initiator speaks and hides in silence at the initiating the truth that is always to be probed, *semper indagante*, his aim is to make people understand that the initiatory path is an abyss without definitive determinations and calculations, an evanescent conquest like a mirage. The initiating is projected to a vision of the effected truth, without the determinisms of revelation. If the initiating includes this *thaumazein*, if it is struck by wonder then it is ready to a cognitive level crossing, to plunge into the abyss of esoteric wisdom, into the enigmatic essence of gnosis.

In Masonic initiatory thought, the last facies of ancient esotericism, the initiate is characterized above all else by "freedom", the sacred *dràma* of his being there, a supreme experiment, training in elevation to extra-essoteric levels. For the initiate is a plunge into the dissonances of his initiatory and profane experience. The primordial sound that punctuates the dissonances, that makes us understand the antinomic essences and at the same time reveals their co-presence; it is the silence, his and the initiator's silence. The moment will come for each initiate when silence expresses the participation of the dissonances in the same harmony, the moment of complete initiation. It is the moment of the fateful question whether the gnoseological and spiritual "ascension" is a practicable impossibility.