Symbol-emblem, symbol-code and mythical connotations

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Abstract

The study of the archetype specificity and implicitly of the symbolic character of the original world cannot be done without knowing the symbolic code, the signs and the symbols which are essential in the correct assimilation of the message sent by the archaic and traditional cultures and civilization. This paper is a study of the symbolic character of some elements that belong to the Romanian traditional world (gate, cross, icon, tomb stone) with a special character that determined the particular connotations within which a universal leitmotif transgresses from a general semantic meaning to a particular one.

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1. Introduction.

By choosing the theme of the universe of signs and symbols as an analysis framework, this paper also takes into consideration the pro-argument that involves knowledge of symbols archetype. The archetypal structures presented in the paper, together with the approaches imposed by the Romanian traditional culture’s space and time, aim to detach the elements of the archaic background from the traditional symbolic and esthetic main line with all the bio-psycho-creative structures that it has used and engaged in the complex process of argumentation by the signs and symbols of a world that belongs to the mythic, the archaic, and also liturgical, a world that combines the real with the dream, the unconscious with the supra-conscious, the terrestrial world with the cosmic one, the conscious with the trans-conscious, intuition with reason, the ontos with the logos. The signs and the symbols involve and presuppose visualization, materialization in images and forms, in gestures and language that bear messages already coded and which we hope we have decoded to a certain extent. We have stopped at this analytic segment related to the symbol mainly because it is part of present definition of the man who becomes “homo symbolicus” as Ernest Cassirer stated as well.

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2. The theme analysis.

Decoding symbols can get us gradually to the discovery of the significances hidden in a code, presented to the receiver as a sign, which becomes a symbol (Deely, 1997, p. 94). If our operational system regarded decoding signs and symbols (Deely, 1997; Benoist, 1997; Carnap, 1996; Foucault, 1997), that can become representative for the structural description of the archetype, then we, the receivers of the codified message, in order to understand the symbolized substrata, we need a specific code to decipher the symbols. The sign and the symbol have been presented as given; they have gradually constituted themselves and gradually have to be decoded. The only way of decoding signs and symbols meant a necessary return to the traditional, archetypal and structural universe that generated them. That is why we considered as necessary to build a global image for all archetypal components specific to our archaic and traditional cultural universe because we consider that aligning human being to the substrata of symbols cannot be performed at the periphery of the archetype or out of it.

Only by a mental implementation in the ab origine structures we could perform this thing, thus we can understand the significance of the symbolic codes that have existed illo tempore, lost in the original world time, but which, once known and decoded can become generic codes for the modern world. The codes included in the analyzed signs and symbols can reveal only as simple pertinent fragments of certain symbols undergoing a continuous formation. We can consider them only as a cumulative stage in the complex process of making a symbolism much more profound and broad than the symbolized area offered to us to the first reading of the symbolic images, or they can appear to us as a basic element in the creation of a modern symbolism.

Through the interpretation of signs and symbols from the polyvalent perspective, their decoding must follow an as much as possible correct and coherent stand in the interpretation of the informational substrata, which is essentially comprised in signs and symbols; this mainly because preserving signs and symbols in the area of the hermetic suppresses the purpose and the finality of the act of human creation that developed on the level of essential archetypes.

Archetypes constitute themselves as vitality of a world that manifests by the efficiency of symbols that presuppose a participation of the man to mystery, a co-naturalization with the invisible. The archaic and traditional symbols translate the specific of a world where man has a spirit that acts according to spontaneity; it is a spirit that creates symbols with an immanent logic that animates them. The symbol reveals a world of significances, but also an archaic reality; it communicates, sends significances through a coded language. The symbol reveals a profound reality hidden to the individual experience; it reveals a profound life, much more mysterious than the day-to-day reality. We will never be able to understand all the significances specific to the world of symbols, just because this universe has always been enriched by man with his capacity of imagining and developing the reality; through the symbol man accomplishes the orientation to a world that preserve itself at the level of spontaneity but also of discursive rationality; thus, the sign, the symbol remain for the archaic and traditional world the only valid realities. Here we can note “the revolt against the concrete, historic time, the nostalgia of a periodical return to a mythic time of origins, of the Great Time.” (Eliade, 1998).

The sign becomes essentiality that by symbols acquires significance. The unity sign-symbol brings into light both a semiotics of stability and of diversity that involves balance, change, invention, convention, where human appears as a continuum, hence the semiotic approach sign-symbol supposes elaboration, multiple and diverse perception, but not distorted and confused. Following these minimal considerations we have proposed this scheme that intends to decipher the relations between sign and symbol regarded both as an archaic and traditional code, and which aims to reach analytical conclusions that reveal “strong symbolic codes” representative for the Romanian traditional cultural space. According to this representation referring to decoding sign’s and symbol’s signification, we consider that all the successive stages that have been necessary to their creation as entities express gradually the levels that are followed in the process of constituting the symbolic code, a code that in time receives a high level of an abstract character, in the process of transgression from the archaic code to the traditional and symbolic one (see the semiotic analysis from chapter I).
Man is an ontos and logos unit; sense and sensibility have been expressed in symbolic structures that belong to visualization and verbalization. The sign becomes the fundamental element of sense and symbol becomes signifying. The two entities are reunited by the symbolic code that can exist on two levels: as an archaic code, ab-origin existent and as a traditional code, existent in history. The archaic code, re-signified and decoded becomes traditional historic code, transmuted by myth in history.

Thus, a different symbolism is shaped by the forms of expression, even from one archetypal group to another; at this level, the primordial semantic significances are regarded as “preliminary stage, the material area of the idea” (Meslin, 2007, p. 227), where the symbol is a dynamic system, already containing poly-semantic connotations, and functions as a “cover by which archetype, the unconsciousness structure, becomes perceptible either to the individual consciousness or to the collective one” (Meslin, 2007, p. 227). The archetype of the sign and symbol is a mediator between the unconscious and conscious and acquires in time a superior structure; it becomes a symbol- emblem, model-archetype, with a structural specificity that has deep mythical connotations. The myth, by its structure, is placed in complementarily relation with the symbol because: “The myth is by itself the result of a metaphorical act-revealing, shaped on the imagination level” (Blaga, 1987, p. 619). The symbol and the myth get into a relative correlation and not absolute, even though the myth generates symbols that become for the archaic world archetype-forms already analyzed by us. If we exemplify these aspects through a concrete symbol, for instance the anthropomorphic tomb stone, we get the following rationale:

- profound symbols become archetype images (anthropomorphic tomb stone in our exemplification).
- archetypes generate the basis of ideas for the myth, for instance the myth of passage, signified and marked by the tomb stones.
- the ritual actions related to the passage to the world beyond are marked on the ritual level by symbol words with connotations that belong to the mythic and magic.

We have considered these three stages, three levels necessary to define the archaic and traditional symbolism mainly because the symbolic transformation and metamorphosis is a defining aspect of the archaic world, it expresses the symbolic mystic that manifests in the symbolic creation and in the specific symbolism that is to be found in the traditional world as a liturgical form. In the archaic universe the creation of cultural values involves the symbol, the myth, images-archetype-generic, that constitute as a “…limited metaphorical revelation and stylistically restrained of the mystery … always equally close and far from the absolute (mystery)” (Blaga, 1987, p. 531), and in the traditional historic world, the hermeneutics (Vattimo, 1998; Marga, 1992) involves also the everyday life, the profane-existential, but also preserves the mystery specific to a world that set down into the sacred and absolute. The separation symbolic- archaic code, symbolic-traditional code, is difficult to make, and what we can notice is the internal “logic” of their conceiving and the hierarchy built up in time, a hierarchy that we aim to identify in the present study with the possible pre-Christian, Christian “accents” that have bloomed in the liturgical and have not stopped here.

3. Possible concluding landmarks.

The symbolic universe doesn’t involve only a simple accumulation of particular elements because any culture gets by its values to a level of symbolic saturation and generates universes that have as an attribute the symbolic consistency and the historic consciousness because the historic consciousness appreciates, affirms, rejects, denies, in general, participates to the getting out from the situation of “forgetting” nationality and to the establishment of new values and rationales, to man’s shaping.”

In this context the whole can be found symbolically transformed in each of the constitutive parts of one’s culture. There are always in the national culture elements, which by creation reflect symbolically the part and the whole, the specific and the universal, the particular elements that finally reflect symbolically the wholeness.

All these considerations aim to constitute themselves in a globalizing image of what traditional symbolism specific represents, expressed through the elements analyzed by our study and which are not the only ones to offer stability, specificity, particularity to a traditional culture, one that has been construed and developed in “graded circles, in some areas of” (Calinescu, 1982, p. 974), in real codes for our culture. These codes express the national
specific and belong directly to the human factor, that which expresses the vital substrata or the consistent substance of one culture.

In our study we aimed to discover such codes of cultural identity, starting with the search of the existent values of the Romanian traditional and archaic culture, values that include specific elements included in the archaic background and expressed by symbolic representations in the Christian strata, or contents resulted from the combination between archaic and laic elements.

References