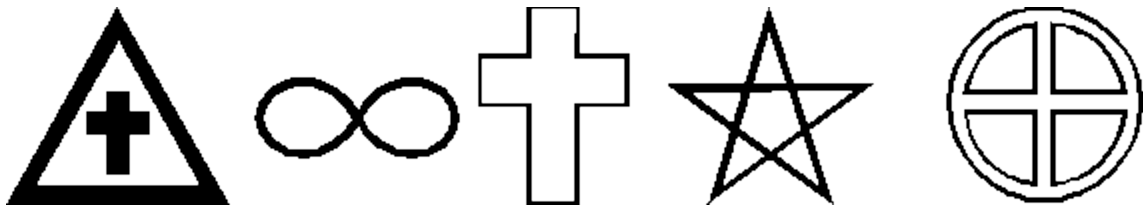




THE SECRET LIFE OF SYMBOLS

by Paul A. Clark



The Western Mystery Tradition of initiation, spiritual awakening, and enlightenment utilizes (as do the Eastern traditions) various evocative symbols, both to convey meanings and also actually to elicit the aspirant's spiritual growth and understanding. Many of you who read this will already have had the experience that some symbol (perhaps one of those above) has set your "stream of consciousness" going. What, for

example, do you associate with the commonly known symbols  and ? What do you connect with the color **red**?

Symbols can be approached two ways. First, as we have done above, the symbol itself can be the starting point for a train of thought, letting the mind find and follow its associations. Second, circumstances in our lives can get us thinking about an issue or a difficulty, and as we seek to understand the principles involved, the symbol will begin to connect to our thinking. Whichever way is more comfortable for you, be assured that as you use it, you will also develop skill in the complementary way. Most people, however, begin their training in this process by using the symbol itself as the starting point.

As an example of the second way, where circumstances and the desire to grasp their meaning evoke the symbol into consciousness, I would like to share with you the process by which the Equal-Armed Cross "sought me out. I was a very new aspirant as my mother approached the end of her days, and I asked one wiser than I about how, and whether, to do healing imagery for her. I was told, "Yes; if it is time for her to leave her body now, imagery will aid that process and not retard it," and that I should image her standing, and healthy, with light surrounding her.

Well, her physical condition was definitely horizontal, and not vertical. So I was continually shifting from seeing her as she was physically to seeing her as she was in the image I made of her. Illness, and death, we think of as negatives-and horizontal seemed appropriate to the idea of negative, and I began to have a new sense of what the minus-sign (-) means. But then, we also use that sign as a dash -- moving from one idea to another. So there is an added implication of a kind of time-line.

But illness and death and sleep (also horizontal) and time aren't truly "bad," so maybe "negative isn't bad either. And so how does "negative" become positive?

Well, how DOES it? How DOES minus (-) become plus (+)? In the math symbols, the process of making that change suggests further thought: the addition of a New Element, a vertical line, (|) is what changes (-) to (+). And so my mind began a quest for what a vertical line symbolizes: The pronoun I; an exclamation point; the number 1; a lightning rod which attracts, and localizes, and grounds electrical energy; and since the

number I stands for wholeness, and oneness, and since the pronoun I stands for self-awareness, then might it be that it is the conscious awareness that I bring to any given situation which, intersecting Time (-) with Awareness (I), changes a so-called Negative to Positive? And, that point at which Awareness intersects Time (dividing the horizontal into past and future) -- would not that be what the word **Now** means? If **Now** is that point at which Awareness intersects Time, there is new meaning for me in the term "Eternal Now." And I begin to understand how it is that Awareness (and therefore meditation) actually changes the character of my life: Awareness is HOW the Eternal can access my experience, can interact with it, and can transform and transmute my life and my very self.

Going back to the idea that a horizontal line (-) represents "negative" and a plus sign (+) represents "positive," - What IS the business about negative and positive, anyway? Negative ions, positive ions; negative pole of the magnet, and positive; "negative" as a play on words: a negative attitude "drags people down (like gravity? horizontal? so is gravity negative? maybe the negative pole of something? if the earth has gravity, then is the earth the negative pole of something?) and whatever else we associate with the term "negative" - and then, of course, what-ever we associate with the term "positive"!

This process of the symbol seems to have a life of its own, and continues, in its own way and at its own pace (and sometimes, it seems, for its own purposes!), at times more consciously and at other times less consciously. The symbol in question may seem to go inactive from time to time, and then surface again weeks or even years later with additional information or a new twist. For example, it was 9 years later that I began to wonder how all that raw energy (the + made up of the vertical and the horizontal) can get contained and utilized. Only then did I begin to explore the symbol of the Circle Cross (the far right symbol at the top), but that's another paper!

And as you track the process of the symbol in yourself, you begin to find that you and the symbol seem to inter-react, seem to be carrying on some sort of conversation that changes your perspective, even your beliefs, and also changes your conceptualization of yourself in relation to your life. As a result, your attitudes, feelings, behavior, and choices are adjusted to yield a richer, fuller life and a more meaningful and useful one as well.

This process of interacting with symbols is inherent in all of us, as our capacity for dreaming suggests; but like the capacity for math or a sensitivity to color differences or even chewing, it is developed by exposure, example, and specific training. (Did you know that children who are born blind have to be taught to chew? And did you know that you can, to some extent, train even your dreaming? Just so, learning can also affect this process of our interacting with symbols.) One of the most effective and safe ways of learning to utilize symbolic processes in this deliberate way is handed down through the training of the Western Mystery Tradition. Their Schools use a number of avenues to activate this and other related capacities - avenues such as meditational Tarot, esoteric astrology, alchemy and the various uses of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life.

There are a number of such Mystery Schools alive and well in the Western world, one of them being the **Fraternity of the Hidden Light** (Fraternitas LVX Occulta) which traces its direct lineage back to the Golden Dawn. As a School, F.L.O. offers an entry-level training system to sincere aspirants through correspondence lessons which include both didactic and experiential instruction from even the earliest lessons. It is the intent of this Order to make that training available to those who wish to develop the spiritual side of

their nature and to keep it in relation to the other aspects of their nature, so as to promote a balanced, well grounded and well-integrated self. Many who are drawn to this Order will already have begun this work consciously; others may be just beginning this enterprise. Your interest is sufficient; whatever your current level of experience, work on this Path offers you this balanced type of development so necessary to successful completion of the One Goal of every spiritual path.