

Issue No. 54

JAN-FEB

2023

NewAcropolis

Philosophy and Education for the Future

Symbolism of Football

Symbolic Imagination and
Magical Memory in the
Philosophy of Giordano Bruno

The Adventures of Pinocchio –
an alchemical tale of self-
transformation

The Journey of Individuation
and the Power of Symbols

Nature, Symbols and Numbers

**Special Issue
on Symbolism**



About Us

NEW ACROPOLIS is an international organization working in the fields of philosophy, culture and volunteering. Our aim is to revive philosophy as a means of renewal and transformation and to offer a holistic education that can develop both our human potential as well as the practical skills needed in order to meet the challenges of today and to create a better society for the next generation.

For further details please visit :
WWW.NEWACROPOLISUK.ORG

Editorial Team

Sabine Leitner - Director
Julian Scott - Editor
Agostino Dominici - Project Manager and Designer
Natalia Lema - Public Relations



What's Inside

EDITORIAL 04



Symbolic
Imagination and
Magical Memory in
the Philosophy of
Giordano Bruno

05



Heraldic Symbols of
Famous Cities

8

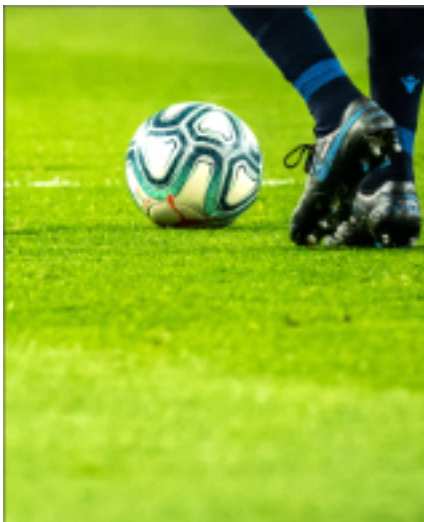
The Adventures of
Pinocchio – an
alchemical tale of
self-transformation

10



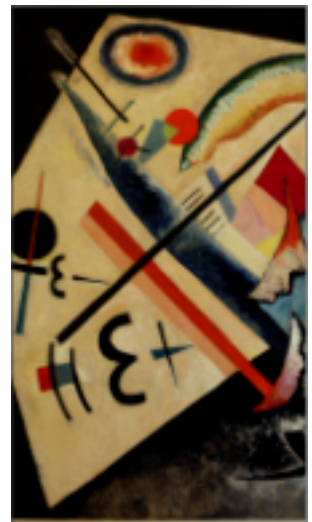
Symbolism of
Football

14



The Journey of
Individuation and the
Power of Symbols

16



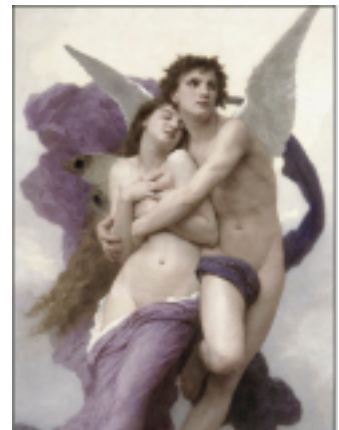
Nature, Symbols and
Numbers

18



Heroic Symbols of the
Feminine: the Myth of
Eros and Psyche

20



Editorial

This issue of our magazine is entirely dedicated to the 'Language of Symbols' – a topic that is not only fascinating but is somehow also related to the causes of our current situation. Most of our problems today are the result of human action. Every action reflects our thinking, our worldview, the 'story' we tell ourselves why we do what we do.

Our modern 'story' tells us that we are separated from nature, that nature exists as a mere resource to be exploited by us, that the economy is the most important thing, that having more things will make us happy, that the sacred does not exist and that myths and symbols belong to a primitive stage of civilization.

In addition, we have developed a very binary way of thinking where concepts, situations or problems are overly simplified into an either/or perspective. Things are either black or white, good or bad, and our technology constantly reinforces this way of thinking.

All this has given rise to a world where people are becoming increasingly polarized and societies more fragmented, where depression is increasing year after year, where the air, the soil, the rivers and the sea are polluted, where around 150-200 plant and animal species go extinct on average every day...

There is not much space in this editorial to explain in more detail the link between our current problems and the loss of symbolic thinking. But the economic, social and human crises we are facing today are, at least in part, a result of our disconnection from a dimension that has always been understood and expressed through symbols.

According to Mircea Eliade, the symbol is 'an autonomous mode of cognition' and an 'instrument of knowledge'. Symbols allow us to understand the complexity of the world and to arrive at a both/and conclusion. Let's have a look, for example, at the natural symbol of 'fire': Fire is both 'good' and 'bad'. It can burn and destroy, but it can also warm us, give us light and help us cook. Mircea Eliade said that symbols are 'multivalent' – they have many different meanings. Symbols allow us to overcome the contradictions of duality and understand that opposites are ultimately different aspects of the same thing.

Symbols can also help us to understand the world around us in a deeper way. When we start contemplating fire as a symbol, we can extract some universal laws and we can also

see that everything is relative, because if we ask whether fire is hot, the answer will be 'it depends'. For us, it is hot. But in comparison with the heat on the surface of the sun, it is cold.

C.G. Jung coined the words 'archetype' and 'collective unconscious'. Jung thought that in the same way as there is a universal physical archetype for all human beings (e.g. two legs, two arms, one heart, two kidneys, a spine, etc.), there is also a universal psychic archetype for all human beings, which he called the collective unconscious. That would explain why there are so many universal elements in our myths, stories and symbols and why the symbolic heritage of ancient civilizations can still speak to us today.

Over the last 150 years, anthropologists, sociologists and philosophers have started to recover the value and importance of symbolic thinking and realised that the human being is intrinsically a 'symbol-making' being, a *homo symbolicus*, complementing the traditional *homo sapiens*.

Symbols have accompanied human beings since their remote origins and provided a means of understanding and communicating profound realities. Even in our modern world, symbols and myths have not completely disappeared and the continuing popularity of films like Lord of the Rings and the widespread use of symbols in tattoos are just two examples that the symbolic dimension is always somewhere in the background.

Symbols remind us that there are different ways of knowing. Plato made the distinction between *mythos* and *logos*. *Logos* as the rational, pragmatic and scientific thought and *mythos* as a way of knowing that was concerned with meaning, context, the timeless and the universal.

Maybe it is time to unite rational and symbolic thought once more, to understand that both languages are necessary, not only to give value to factual knowledge, but also to give value to meaning.

Symbols are the fundamental units of integrative thinking and if we understand symbols, we will understand life and ourselves in a deeper way. A restoration of the symbolic way of thinking could sow the seeds for a more holistic world view and even a more integrated world.

Sabine Leitner

Symbolic Imagination and Magical Memory in the Philosophy of Giordano Bruno

Imagination is the faculty that allows us to form or see images in our minds. Using elements from the physical world, imagination allows us to transcend it and build 'castles in the air'. But there is more to imagination than mere fantasy. It also allows us to perceive images which are the reflections of ideas. These are the symbols as containers of ideas.

In the sixteenth century, a philosopher called Giordano Bruno wrote a book entitled *On the Shadows of Ideas*. Like many Renaissance

philosophers, he was inspired by Plato's concept of ideas as archetypes. He was also inspired by a verse from King Solomon's *Song of Songs*, which contains the image of a woman who is happy to sit in the shadow of her beloved. Bruno, who was fond of mystical interpretations of texts, said that the beloved represents the good and the true, while the woman represents the philosopher. The philosopher cannot see truth directly but merely to sit in the shadow of its light can induce a state of delight.



Bruno explains that there are two levels of shadows: the first level is that of the shadows (or reflections) of ideas, while the second, lower level, is that of the shadows of the shadows. The shadows of the ideas are to be found in what he calls the 'celestial' world, the world of Sun, Moon, planets and zodiacal signs, because these are the symbols of ideas: the sun represents the spirit, the moon the psyche, Jupiter represents rulership, Venus love and Mars war. Each of the zodiacal signs also represents an idea. Here we see the richness of symbolic thought, because each of these symbols does not only represent a single rational concept, but an ineffable idea which can be translated into many different forms.

Let us take the Moon as an example: as an image it is associated with imagination, poetry, dreams, witchcraft and madness, and then again with cycles of nature, the feminine, the sea, tides, plants and healing, and many other things besides. We cannot define what this symbol represents in a single word or phrase, but we can intuitively understand it. The symbol is not irrational (because there is a logic of association), but 'para-rational', in other words, it transcends reason and enables us to understand ideas in a holistic way. Images operate by association and this is their great strength.

Below the celestial world is what Bruno calls the 'elemental' world, which refers to the world of the four elements (Earth, Water, Air and Fire), in other words, the world of Nature on Earth. In this world are the 'shadows of the shadows' of the ideas. Bruno explains that if we want to understand the ideas themselves, we will get hopelessly lost if we try to do this by looking at the shadows of the shadows, firstly because they are almost infinite in number, and therefore hugely confusing; and secondly because, being shadows of shadows, they are more distorted than the direct shadows. Therefore, to approach the ideas themselves, we should go to what he calls the 'star-images' in the celestial world.

On this theoretical basis, Bruno developed a memory system, which was not simply a system of practical mnemonics, but above all a way of practising 'reminiscence' – Plato's term for the ability to recall the innate knowledge of the Soul.

Memory systems were common in the Renaissance, which had inherited the idea from the classical world. The classical system is known as the 'Palace of Memory', where objects are placed in rooms of a house and the speaker walks through these rooms in his imagination using the objects as memory aids.

In the Middle Ages, Raymond Lull developed a more mystical type of memory system, based on divine attributes, which was also designed to be a system for unifying all known knowledge. The



Image from *The art of memory* by Ramon Lull, Valencia (1512)

illustrations to Lull's system also featured ladders showing angels ascending and descending, as if to show that knowledge can be exchanged between the mental, celestial and elemental worlds.

According to Frances Yates, in her book *The Art of Memory*, "Bruno's aim is to combine the classical art of memory with Lullism... His aim is to reach the One through the All."

Like Lull, Bruno developed a system of concentric wheels that were designed to be rotated, giving a large number of combinations (some scholars have referred to it as a primitive computer). They include vowels, letters (in Latin, Greek and Hebrew) and images – of celestial bodies, animals, plants and

minerals, amongst others. At the hub of the wheel is a sun, the emblem of Bruno's inner striving to arrive at the One Light. The unity of the All in the One is, as Bruno says, "a most solid foundation for the truths and secrets of Nature."

Bruno himself had a prodigious memory and presented his memory system to King Henry III of France, who was so impressed that he granted him a post as a lecturer in the Royal College. Bruno's book *On the Shadows of Ideas* is dedicated to the King.

What are these 'shadows of ideas'? To take just one example, one of the seven images of the Moon is described as follows: *A horned woman riding a*



dolphin; in her right hand a chameleon; in her left a lily. The horns represent the extremities of the lunar crescent; dolphins (in Greek mythology) are associated with water (emotions, the return to the formless origins) as well as being seen as guides of souls to the afterlife and saviours of mortals (in the manner of the Greco-Roman Isis). The chameleon, by its well-known ability to change colour, represents the constantly changing nature of the moon, while the lily is a symbol of purity, associated with the Virgin Mary. Thus, the Moon becomes the

expression of a 'synthetic' (in the sense of 'synthesis') idea, as explained earlier.

In what way do these images help us to ascend the mystical ladder towards the Ideas themselves, beyond the stars? By reflecting upon them and imprinting them on our mind-memories, combining them with each other, they could lead the student to a deep and intuitive understanding of the principles of life. With the understanding of these principles (which are the Ideas), the student could then apply them to the Elemental world of Nature and understand everything that exists. This memory symbolism can be seen as a system for contemplation, like the Tibetan mandalas or the Tarot cards, which are also used to achieve an intuitive understanding of reality.

The view of Renaissance magic was that everything is connected in a system of correspondences (from the Hermetic maxim *As above, so below*). By understanding one part of an interconnected system (i.e. any of these shadows, or a combination of them by rotating the wheels) one can understand the whole, the one idea behind the whole. Bruno's whole philosophy can be summed up in the phrase 'Unity in plurality' and his ultimate aim was always to seek the One behind the many.

True philosophy is a harmonization of *mythos* with *logos*, subjective and objective, intuitive and rational, because these two factors represent the two sides of reality.

Julian Scott

Bibliography

Yates, F.: *The Art of Memory*

Yates, F.: *Theatre of the World*

Yates, F.: *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*

Boulting, W.: *Giordano Bruno: his life, thought and martyrdom*

Heraldic Symbols of Famous Cities

Heraldry, nowadays an auxiliary science of history, was once connected to armoury and the art of war. The name derives from the heralds, the officers of arms, who were originally messengers of the monarchs (ancestors of the modern diplomats), as well as the organizers of tournaments. This title still exists, even today. Heralds also have major roles in the coronation ceremonies. They used to be responsible for creating, registering and maintaining heraldic symbols and rules. Chrétien de Troyes, the French poet who compiled Arthurian stories, also mentioned the heralds, who took an active part in tournaments, where they recognized the

shields, advising the knights what they should wear, or what coat of arms they could use. The art of the heralds was kept secret and their knowledge and titles were often handed on to their children. The heralds did not have weapons, their function was intermediate and representative.

Although there were thousands of symbols that represented an individual or a group of people in antiquity, modern heraldry developed in the Middle Ages. One of the first preserved records is from the Bayeux tapestry, representing the Norman invasion of England in 1066. It shows various types of shapes of shields; some of them



are plain, while others are decorated with heraldic figures, such as dragons or crosses. From the time of the Norman conquest in England, all official documents had to be sealed, and seals had a heraldic character.

Not only kings and noblemen had their own heraldic symbols, but communities and cities too. These heraldic achievements consist of a shield or coat of arms that is supported by a crest and helmet or crown on the top, supporters on the sides, and a compartment at the base. Below the coat of arms, a motto or slogan is often depicted. The heraldic symbols could use a limited amount of colours, called tinctures, also the shapes and patterns should be in order, as all of them have a distinctive meaning.

Venice in North East Italy was built on dozens of islands and once had a major role in the trade of Europe. The settlement was inhabited in Roman times, but it took on a leadership role later, in the Middle Ages, and had become a powerful maritime empire by the 12th century. In its peak period, from the 13th till the 15th century, it ruled the Adriatic Sea, and because of its strategic position, the commerce of half of Europe. The heraldic symbol of this port city depicted a winged lion that holds a book with the following text: 'Pax Tibi Marce Evangelista Meus'. The meaning of the text is 'Peace be with thee, O Mark, my evangelist', referring to Mark, the evangelist, who is patron of the city. The lion is associated with Mark, and the colours, the red and gold that were used in the flag of the city, were the colours of the Byzantine Empire, the previous rulers of the region.

The City of London, which is the financial capital of the United Kingdom and a district of London, has a famous blazon too. The arms consist of a silver shield with a red cross and a red upright sword in the first quarter, representing the saints of England and London, as the cross refers to St. George, often depicted as a crusader knight. There are also two dragons as supporters on the sides, decorated by crosses on the undersides of their wings. The crest is a

dragon's wing bearing the cross of St. George, borne upon a peer's helmet. The dragons are closely connected to the legend of St. George and the Dragon. The motto on the bottom proclaims 'Domine dirige nos', which means 'Lord, guide us'.



Paris's blazon shows a silver ship sailing in the sea on a red field. The chief is blue decorated with golden Bourbon lily, the Royal emblem. At the top, a castle that looks like a crown. The motto of the city is in Latin: 'Fluctuat nec mergitur', which means: 'Tossed by the waves, but does not sink.'

Madrid's coat of arms goes back to the Middle Ages. In it, the shield is argent and in the middle, a black bear supported on a strawberry tree. There are seven stars around this image, in a blue frame. On the top, a golden open royal crown can be seen with precious stones. The bear represents the militias of the council, and the control of timber. At that time, in Madrid and around the city, there were forests. The crown is also used for territorial and municipal arms.

Istvan Orban

The Adventures of Pinocchio

an alchemical tale of self-transformation

I am sure that many people will be familiar with the Italian children's story, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, a 19th century novel written by Carlo Lorenzini (pseudonym C. Collodi), which became the most translated Italian book ever (it has been translated into as many as 260 languages worldwide!). The novel tells the story of a little marionette who wants to become a real boy.

Collodi's story begins with Mastro Ciliegia (Master Cherry) and his piece of rough wood. Not an ordinary piece of wood but one which is animated and full of life potential. What will be the fate of this piece of wood? A table leg, the fireplace or something else?

Very soon, the piece of wood will end up in the hands of Geppetto, a carpenter who has already envisioned its fate. He will turn it into a marionette.

Thus Pinocchio is born, a puppet of wholesome morals, but not fully formed, and therefore liable to be led astray by the lures of profane life. From this moment on, as the creator identifies with his work, Geppetto and his creature live almost symbiotically. They suffer from each other's sufferings, rejoice in each other's hopes, and face the same hardships, though in different ways and places.

As soon as the puppet has been finished and Geppetto teaches him to walk, Pinocchio runs out of the door and away into the town. From this moment on, Pinocchio (as well as Geppetto) will

go through many adventures. Pinocchio will soon fall in with a variety of bad characters, particularly the Fox and the Cat, who, disguised as assassins, will hang Pinocchio in order to steal from him five gold pieces. Twice he will begin attending school, and twice he will allow himself to be led astray, the second time resulting in his becoming a donkey and being thrown into the sea. After further adventures,



Drawings and engravings by Carlo Chiosso, and A. Bongini, Florence 1902. Wikimedia PD.

Pinocchio will be swallowed by a terrible shark where he will find Geppetto living in the fish's belly. Eventually Pinocchio will rescue his father and thereafter will take care of him.

An important part of the story includes the several encounters that Pinocchio will have with a Fairy with turquoise hair. Many times she will come to his rescue and towards the end of the story she will reward the marionette, transforming it into a real boy.



Geppetto finishing carving Pinocchio's head

In a nutshell, this is the main plot of the story. A story with many twist and turns, full of symbolic characters and teachings which go beyond moral and pedagogical lessons. As a matter of fact, Collodi's words take us much further than just a conventional children's tale. They take us through an initiatory journey which will culminate in self-realisation.

I invite everyone to read the original story, which contains many gems of spiritual literature. As an incentive for those who are really intrigued by it, I am going to give few keys of interpretation¹ based mainly on the hermetic and alchemical tradition.

1. I owe many of the interpretations presented here to the insights of the alchemist Giammaria Gonella. See his book *L'Alchimia questa sconosciuta*.

The transmutation from lead into gold, from a wooden puppet into a human being.

- **Master Ciliegia** (Cherry): the true giver of life. Pinocchio's natural and Geppetto's spiritual father.
- **Geppetto**: an aspect of Pinocchio as the alchemist and *artifex* (creator of HimSelf, his true Self). Geppetto is also the father, the old king, the personification of the alchemical Tradition in the figure of Hermes Trismegistus.
- **The Rough Piece of Wood**: the prima materia, the all-important starting material required for the *Magnum Opus* (the Alchemical Great Work of inner transformation). The rough *Ashlar* (i.e. stone) in the tradition of Freemasonry.
- **Pinocchio the marionette**: the name is derived from the Tuscan language and it means *pine nut*, the edible seed found in pine cones. Hidden in this name there are various esoteric allusions : the pine tree as a symbol of immortality, the pineal gland (or third eye), a pine-cone crowning the two intertwined snakes in the caduceus of Hermes.
- The **School Book** (spelling-book): the alchemist's working alphabet, which is just a dead letter if it is not put into practice.
- **The Bestiary** (the various animals appearing in the story): instinctual aspects in Pinocchio's nature. They can also be seen as aspects of man's 'natural intelligence', thus as 'allies' along the journey.

The **Talking Cricket**: in one key, it is the voice of conscience. At a different level it is the personification of those behavioural and social norms that guide us towards a socially acceptable but spiritually sterile life. In fact, the early part of the story shows clearly a rebellious Pinocchio, who wants to free himself from social conventions and moral codes.

- **The Puppets and the Puppet Theatre**: the world where human beings are seen as puppets, a metaphor for man's inner slavery (see Plato's *Myth of the Cave*). The conception of the human being, as a puppet manipulated by strings from a hidden being that composes the script of life, goes back to the Upanishads. In the Mahabharata, the analogy

consists of the reference to wood as the raw material from which the world is made; thus, the creator (the *Demiurge*) is a *carpenter*.

As soon as Pinocchio the puppet can move, he realises that he is pulled and dominated by passions, instincts and desires. He begins to feel hunger, thirst, cold. He does not want to do what he does not like, etc. It is in the Puppet Theatre that Pinocchio comes to realise for the first time his existential condition, that of a puppet!

- **Mangiafuoco** : In one key, as a terrifying image, he is the personification of *fear*, the guardian of the threshold barring the way to the spiritual traveller. In a different key, he is the 'awakener', a being of fire and light, the personification of willpower. And it is in front of Mangiafuoco that Pinocchio makes his first *act of will* by offering to sacrifice himself in the sacred fire. Thanks to this selfless act, he is rewarded with five gold coins (metaphors of inner gold/inner fire).
- **The Cat and the Fox**: masks or aspects of the persona Pinocchio. As the assassins, these are forces which try to lead Pinocchio astray from walking the straightforward path (see the beginning of Dante's *Divine Comedy*). In their positive role, they represent the initiators who push Pinocchio to overcome his fear and limitations. For instance, they



Pinocchio hanged on a tree



Pinocchio and Mangiafuoco in the puppet's theatre

lead him through the dark forest into the first initiatory trial.

- **Pinocchio Hanged on a Giant Oak Tree** :

Pinocchio's first death trial. Alchemically speaking, it is a leap into the abyss, the entry into the *Nigredo* phase. The act of hanging transforms Pinocchio into a different being, as it re-connects him to the root of his life, the Great Oak Tree, which lifts him up from the ground (the material plane).

This image reminds me of the Hanged Man, in the Tarot cards. Only through a radical change of perspective and the complete abandonment of an obsolete mode of being, can self-transformation occur.

- **Field of Miracles**: the alchemical soil within the alchemist who is himself fertile soil for the Great Opus to take place.

- **The White House, the City of Catchfools, Toyland, the Island of the Busy Bees**, etc.: all these metaphorical places are parts of the *inner landscape* of Pinocchio the alchemist.

- **Solve et Coagula**: this hermetic formula is at the base of the alchemical work. What is gross has to be made subtler and what is volatile has to be made fixed. In short, each element involved in the transformation has to be continuously purified so as to acquire greater and more noble qualities. In the story we find various images referring to these

purifications or *alchemical cleansing*. The fire burning Pinocchio's feet. The woodpeckers which land on Pinocchio's elongated nose and start to eat it. The fishes which eat away the skin of Pinocchio, the Donkey, etc. All these stages of purification are connected to one of the four elements (Fire, Water, Air, Earth).

- **The Growing Nose of Pinocchio:** represents his *libido* and it is probably connected to the controlling of the *Kundalini* force.



Pinocchio and the Fairy with Turquoise hair

- **The Donkey:** the most basic and instinctual elements in a human being. The inertia and stubbornness found in matter and in the material condition. What hinders and limits the human being from realising his higher aspirations. As a Saturnian symbol, it also represents the means that Pinocchio has to learn virtues such as obedience, humility and patience.

- **The Fairy with Turquoise Hair:** a magical element which symbolises the various aspects of Pinocchio's soul in its stages of growth: little girl, sister, lady, baby goat, and heavenly bride. Towards the end of the story, her kiss is Pinocchio's 'kiss of death' as a puppet.

- **The Giant Shark:** This image appears in connection with Pinocchio's final initiatory trial in the *underworld* (in the depths of the sea). To be

swallowed by the shark means to get in contact with those aspects of oneself which are hidden or have been forgotten. It is to conquer the dimension of the *unconscious*. The dark belly of the shark also symbolises the oneiric and mythological dimension. One's place of origin, where the vision of one's True Self can be glimpsed. Interestingly this is the place where Pinocchio encounters again his father Geppetto.

- **Pinocchio the child:** the outcome and completion of the alchemical *Great Work*. The *Philosopher's Stone*, the *Philosopher's Gold*. The final words of the novel stress the idea that this was not simply a transformation but a transmutation, the 'creation' of a complete 'new being'. When Pinocchio asked Geppetto: 'And where has the old wooden Pinocchio hidden himself?'

'There he is', answered Geppetto, and he pointed to a big puppet leaning against a chair, with its head on one side, its arms dangling, and its legs so crossed and bent that it was really a miracle that it remained standing.

Pinocchio turned and looked at it and after he had looked at it for a short time, he said to himself with great complacency: 'How ridiculous I was when I was a puppet!'².

Agostino Dominici

2. See chapter XXXVI of *The Story of a Puppet, or: The Adventures of Pinocchio* (1892), translated by Mary Alice Murray.

Symbolism of Football

As the year ends with Argentina crowned as being the World Cup winners, it brings the 21st World Cup to a close. One that will be remembered for many firsts: the first time the tournament has been hosted in the Arab world, the first time it has been held in a Muslim country, the first ever winter World Cup, the first time women have been allowed to referee in the men's World Cup tournament.

One of the questions that I often hear asked is, "I don't get it, why is it that so many people get so excited about 22 sweaty men running around after a ball?"

What could possibly cause a group of men and women to spontaneously gasp in shock, burst out in explosions of rapture and at the same time hurl pint glasses into the air when a goal is scored. Bizarre, right? These events are full of chants that protest and taunt the opponents and songs that express joy and admiration. And for the losing team

we see grown men and women alike reduced to puddles of tears when their team has lost.

To the apathetic it makes no sense, perhaps they even find it slightly unbelievable.

So why the fascination? Sport presents a safe space for competition and conflict. A place to battle through obstacles and overcome trials. This is something that we all understand. Perhaps there is less competition on a daily basis, but conflict and obstacles are always present in life. Whether it is at work, at home with the family, or at school standing up to the bully, deciding what to choose for GCSEs. Or how to get to work if all my trains are cancelled.

The game of football is simple, two teams battle and compete within the same space and must adhere to a set of rules. Score one goal more and victory is yours.



Photo by Mario Kasser on Unsplash

What distinguishes football from life is that football takes place within a pitch – lines which mark the boundaries of a football pitch. Creating a space for the game to take place where the game can take place. And not a millimetre or foot outside the space. The modern game of football has ‘video assistant referee technology’ (VAR) to ensure these rules of football are upheld. Multi-millions of pounds are spent on stadiums – the modern sporting temples where football is played within this sacred space. Within this space the two goals represent the most sacred part of the pitch for both



Photo by Emilio Garcia on Unsplash

teams. It is where victory can be achieved if goals are scored or defeat can be inflicted if it is not carefully protected.

And what does the ball represent? Most modern-day sports use some form of spherical shaped ball. Football, Rugby, Snooker, Golf, Tennis etc. The ball represents the ‘centre’. The centre is here and it can be everywhere. In many proto-Indo-European cultures it marks the beginning¹. The beginning of the game is marked when the ball is kicked from the centre of the pitch. Each time a goal is scored, the ball is returned to the centre, representing the end of a cycle of play, a reset and the beginning of the next period. Every player wants to be connected with the ball and to be at the centre of the action. It represents opportunity and progress. With the ball you have the possibility to create openings, movement, momentum and most importantly score goals.

Scoring a goal represents progress whereby you can evolve your game, give yourself time to think and re-evaluate your strategy.

From a player’s perspective it is important to connect the individual’s centre with the centre of the ball. Only when harmony has been achieved can man and ball be at one, where the ball is at his command.

One of the interesting symbolic aspects of football, and of all sports, is its connection with the eternal conflict, the battle between light and darkness, Yin and Yang, good versus evil. This dance between the two forces is projected through the game of football. Your team are always the ‘good guys’ and your opponents are always seen as the antagonist. The victory of your team represents victory for you. Losing, on the other hand, marks a symbolic death, the completion and end of the conflict. However, the next game is like the phoenix that rises from the ashes. The losing team has another opportunity to rise again, recover from its injuries, adjust its strategy and participate in the eternal conflict again.

For those watching the game, they are not just watching a game. They are ‘in’ the game, ‘playing’ the game. Having the same experience as the players. Scientifically, this is called neuron mirroring, where the person watching the game is firing the same neurons as someone who is playing the game. This was first discovered by Giacomo Rizzolatti and his team in 1992². This is why, whether you are in the stadium, in the pub or at home watching the game, you feel connected and part of the game – the pain of the opponent’s tackle, the near miss of a goal and more most importantly the joy and satisfaction when your team has scored a goal.

The game of football has touched the hearts and minds of many people around the world and allowed us to unite under the common language of football. But perhaps it’s not just a game but a shared understanding that football means much more, a recognition that it can reflect our daily struggles and give a voice to our inner conflicts that can be expressed in this beautiful game called Football.

Jim Pang

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_egg

2. <https://grantland.com/features/this-your-brain-sports/>

The Journey of Individuation and the Power of Symbols

A whole new fascinating world to explore opened up when the notion of the unconscious was discovered. The human being turned out to be not such a straightforward mechanism as had been thought before. And a major role in understanding the importance of the unconscious and its role in shaping human personality and life was played by Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung.

Jung developed a concept of individuation – the psychological evolution of an individual, a journey of discovering one's true self. This process involves the expansion of consciousness and the development of an increasingly differentiated

personality. Individuation is about actualizing that psychological map of growth we carry in our unconscious, integrating different parts of the unconscious into consciousness and becoming a more fully realized individual. One key aspect of individuation lies in understanding the language of symbols, because symbols are a bridge between unconscious and conscious.

The unconscious cannot directly communicate with the conscious part of ourselves, so symbols come to help. When exploring a symbol, an individual is led to “ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason”.

Unlike signs that denote objects, symbols are used to represent concepts that cannot be fully rationally



Wassily Kandinsky, *White Cross*, 1922. Wikimedia

defined or grasped. In addition, symbols bring psychological energy, as they also appeal directly to our emotions and feelings. According to Jung, symbolic understanding is constructive as it enables comprehension of the meaning and purpose of multifaceted structures within our psyche, as opposed to reductive explanation provided by signs. For example, the symbol of a tree might represent the concept of life and growth, with its roots



representing the foundation and its branches representing the potential for expansion. This symbol could be explored and understood on a deeper level, leading to insights about one's own growth and development. In contrast, a sign denoting a tree would only represent the physical object, without any deeper meaning.

Symbols are an important tool in helping individuals make sense of their experiences and

connect with their deeper selves, both on a personal and transpersonal level. Along with the symbols connected to our personal experiences, there are also universal structures manifested through symbols and myths that are shared by all people – archetypes. They belong to humankind collectively and are the shared experiences and inherited knowledge of humanity. In addition to the personal unconscious, they form another deeper layer of the unconscious of a human being – the collective unconscious. It is in this collective unconscious where one finds their map of psychological growth and can follow the path of individuation.

Emerging from the collective unconscious, that map is expressed in the unconscious of each person through symbolic language and figures, manifesting itself in various forms such as mythological narratives, artistic representations, religious texts, tales, stories, and dreams. Where does this map lead to? The final goal of this path is not external, but at the very centre of a human being – the self, or the "forgotten god", as Plato described it. The symbolic language of myths, such as those of Arjuna in the Bhagavad-Gita, Hercules and his labours, or Theseus and his fight with the minotaur, shed light on the journey and its challenges. On the path towards one's centre, an individual progresses through various stages and overcomes various challenges, gaining a higher level of knowledge and understanding of their true self in the process. Along this journey, he or she works to bring light to the darker, chaotic aspects of their being, known as the shadow, and to integrate their opposing forces, such as the anima and animus. Jung likened this process to alchemy, in which the human being is transformed from lead into gold, uniting their soul with the soul of the universe.

By exploring and working with symbols and myths, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world, as well as become a mythological creator of their own life.

Nataliya Petlevych

Nature, Symbols and Numbers

It is no surprise to anyone in our modern world that mathematics is a powerful tool to describe and even predict certain natural phenomena. From the simple cooking recipe to the launch of a rocket into space, mathematics and numbers are used and help us achieve our goals. As far back as antiquity mathematical equations have been invented or should I say, discovered, that represent the physical world. Mathematics and numbers seem to be present in every aspect of manifestation. They are

shared by all civilisations and mankind, they are universal.

Numbers are not just an abstract representation of the physical world; they also carry a symbolical meaning. And that meaning is not only shared by a specific group of people or culture, but are also shared with all of mankind. For example: the number one represents unity or the divine; two would represent the duality in Nature, the positive and negative, the masculine and feminine; three



Photo by Pixabay: <https://www.pixabay.com/photo/orange-and-white-seashell-on-white-surface-33234/>

would symbolise the spiritual through the trinity, the son, the father and the holy spirit, or Osiris, Isis and Horus. We could go on until the number ten which represents the end of the cycle and restart with the number one again.

Geometry is often used to represent these symbols as it is universally recognised and easily depicted. Nature itself uses almost perfect geometric forms to harmonise its structures: such as the hexagon used by bees in building their hives or the hexagonal shape of snowflakes; the fivefold structures of petals or seeds of trees and their fruit; or the cubic, hexagonal, and rhombohedral arrangements of atoms of minerals and metals. The examples of beautiful geometric shapes in nature are countless and I invite you to look for them.

The growth patterns of minerals, plants and animals follow geometric series or sequences. These series give birth to more complex numbers. A very common example is the so-called Fibonacci series: where the next number of the series is the sum of the two previous numbers ($F_{n+1} = F_n + F_{n-1}$) giving the sequence: 0,1,1,2,3,5,8,13,21,34,55,89,144, etc...

From this sequence is born the so-called golden proportion or golden ratio, by simply dividing one number of the sequence by the previous one ($\frac{F_n}{F_{n-1}}$).

The further you go with the sequence the closer you get to the golden proportion: 1.61803... Like another important irrational number, Pi (π), the golden proportion has no end and can only be approached. Such is the fate of Nature, as it tries to reach perfection but is never able to attain it totally. The golden proportion is the most common hidden number in nature, as it defines what we would consider harmonious proportions. From minerals to plants, animals and of course human beings, the golden proportion is found when comparing the length of stems or body parts to each other. All shapes and sizes follow the same rule. This number was recognised long ago and used in the construction of our most sacred edifices, from the Great Pyramids of Egypt to the great cathedrals of Europe. And as it is so permanent in Nature, we use it consciously and unconsciously to design our most common objects, from a simple sheet of paper to the credit card in your wallet.

Florimond Krins

Number	Symbolical meaning	Representations
0	The absolute	God, the cosmic egg
1	Unity	Divine father, the Sun
2	Duality in Nature	Polarity, good and evil
3	Trinity, harmonisation of opposites	Equilateral triangle, Threefold Logos
4	Manifestation	The four elements, Square
5	Man acting upon Nature	The five-pointed star, Da Vinci Man
6	Harmony and Balance	The six-pointed star, honeycomb, snowflake
7	Perfect order	Music, Planets, sins and virtues...
8	Cosmic order	Octagon (interlacing of two squares)
9	Related to the trinity	The Muses, 9-month pregnancy
10	Return to unity	Perfection for the Pythagoreans

Heroic Symbols of the Feminine: the Myth of Eros and Psyche



In this article I will look at the archetypal hero's journey with particular reference to its feminine aspect and symbolism. Symbols resonate on all levels of nature, meaning that feminine does not refer only to gender or biology (although there might be some relevant keys) but rather the understanding that the feminine is a principle that subsists in all humans, in all living things and on all levels from the psychological to the universal and archetypal.

In general, we tend to be more familiar with heroic images of a masculine nature. However, the feminine principle has its own set of related archetypes and trials to face in the heroic and spiritual journey. With their emphasis on intuition, assimilating with the invisible world, of opening-up and of sacrifice, these feminine symbols are useful for us all.

I will refer in particular to the journey of Psyche in the Myth of Eros and Psyche. Myths have their roots in now forgotten

activities of ancient mystery schools and their images and symbols can work within us and provide depth and support in life's difficult moments and decisions. Psyche represents the soul (which was often referred to as feminine in antiquity) in its journey to unite with divine love, Eros. This journey towards the divine describes a process of individuation and of the awakening of consciousness.

The story begins in the ordinary world, what in Tolkien's vernacular would be called 'the shire'. This is the home which the hero or heroine always has to leave in order to set their journey in motion. For Psyche it is the oracle that initiates her departure and the wedding-funeral with her unknown husband. Whilst the town laments, Psyche is steadfast in her acceptance of what has been ordained. This is one of the first lessons, the acceptance of divine will and the surrendering of oneself to certain necessary encounters of fate.

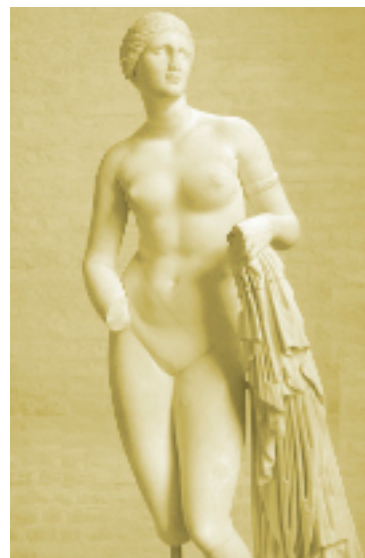
After being left upon a high cliff, Psyche is taken to the fairy-land palace of her unknown husband. He comes to her every evening but she is forbidden to look at him directly. Psyche could perhaps stay in this ignorance and bliss forever but the union she shares is an unconscious one. At some moment she takes the decision to look at him when he is asleep. Upon seeing him, she knows him to be the God Eros and at once loses him, the palace and everything with it; the illusory union has gone. Whilst outwardly the soul has lost everything, it has also rejected ignorance and instead gained a true vision of divine love, Eros. This moment to reject comfort and passivity is important in all hero myths and is present in the feminine archetype too. With seeing Eros, the flash of inspiration, Psyche (the soul) gains the insight which confirms the continuation of the journey to unite with the divine and come out of illusion. Once we leave 'the shire' we will be tested again many times and the rejection of ignorance brings with it a lot of pain, suffering and loss which are feelings often associated with the heroic feminine.



Psyche, by Bertel Thorvaldsen (d. 1844)

From this moment on, Psyche must face Aphrodite herself, the Goddess of Love and the mother of Eros. Her trials begin with 'sorting the grains' in Aphrodite's storehouse, where a huge mixed pile needs to be ordered and separated into each of their own kind, an impossible task. Aphrodite knows that no mortal could complete it but, in the myth, the ants come to help Psyche, as do several other animals in her following trials. Psyche (the soul) is receptive, both to help but also to harmonisation with nature. In this trial the soul harnesses the forces of promiscuity (symbolised by the grains) that create disorder and chaos. In her next trial, a water nymph gives Psyche the necessary instructions to safely take the golden fleece from the charging rams, and we now see that the soul is listening to and understanding the different rhythms and cycles of nature, in order to complete her task at the appropriate time. In her next trial the eagle of Zeus hovers over her head, swoops down into the impossible river and fills her cup. We are reminded here that in the heroic journey, the soul often has to take a leap up to the heights of heaven in order to see a solution or way forwards. The appearance of the eagle suggests the soul's ability to connect with divine guidance in order to make progress.

The final trial, the descent into the underworld, Psyche does alone, for the journey to awakening consciousness is often made in darkness. The soul is better equipped for the journey, having assimilated the qualities symbolised by the different animals, the expansion of



Aphrodite of Knidos, Roman Copy, 4th century CE

consciousness outside oneself, the development of intuition and the connection to divine guidance. In this last trial Psyche almost makes it, but curiosity causes her to look into the casket of Persephone and take some beauty to prepare herself for meeting Eros, but this is not beauty, rather a terrible sleep... Yet having done all she has along on the journey, divine love, Eros comes to meet her and wakes her from her sleep, symbolising that the divinity also makes a movement towards the soul in its desire for expression. Together they are united and married in heaven, the soul and its divine counterpart.

The inward movement towards the world of the soul is often connected with the feminine principle within us, the intuitive and receptive qualities that bring gifts and insight from worlds unknown. During the moment of the trial when we feel the greatest despair or loss, by going within we might learn or see something in a new light which helps us to overcome difficulties and transcend material limitations along our own heroic journeys.

Siobhan Farrar



NEW ACROPOLIS
INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

PHILOSOPHY
CULTURE
VOLUNTEERING