

Portraying the Ineffable. The Growth of the Doctrine of Symbol in German Classical Philosophy, and Its Findings and Insights to Be Readopted

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§1. Introduction

LATTERLY, THE INTEREST IN THE PROBLEM OF SYMBOL has risen substantially. A vast space in the discussions is given to the nature of symbol and its part in human creativity. But despite a lot of publications on the subject, the obscure questions do not get any clearer, not to say become still more entangled. And the reason for that is, apparently, scant notice taken of the origins of the concept.

When looking through current works on symbol, it is difficult to get away from the impression that their authors rarely go deep into the past, regarding the views of it put forth earlier than the twentieth century as of little worth. So, in a book entirely devoted to the reconsideration of symbols and symbolism, there is no shade of ideas emerged of old. It addresses, for instance, the views of Freud or Levi–Strauss (Sperber 1975, pp. 35, 52). However, what they are traced back to remains a mystery.

Even those stressing the continuity between the classics and later thought rarely dwell on their legacy. A recent paper on the treatment of art symbols by some twentieth century philosophers begins by declaring that Cassirer based “his philosophy of symbols in part on an understanding of ideas found in the writings of idealist philosophers,” particularly Kant and Hegel (Carter 2015, p. 402). But what did the ideas he was inspired with consist in? Were they orderly conceptions or desultory thoughts? Which of them had been borrowed, and to

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what extent? These questions are not even set. Meanwhile, as posterior views grow out of their precursors, it is very hard to overcome today's discordances and one-sided approaches without mastering the classical heritage.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, symbol nowhere attracted so much interest as in Germany. No wonder, there was no country where philosophy gave more consideration to mythology, art, religion, and mystics. True, even German thought did not regard the symbolic as a topic of paramount importance. Nonetheless, it was a thread issue many addressed.

It was German classical philosophy that sketched out the first doctrine of symbol. As Tsvetan Todorov observes, until 1790, the word “symbol” did have “a meaning not a bit like that which was peculiar to the romantic age.” It either was employed as a “simple synonym of a number of other, more common terms (such as allegory, hieroglyph, code, emblem, etc.),” or denoted “predominately a purely arbitrary and abstract sign (mathematical symbols).” None other than Kant, in his *Critique of Judgment*, “overthrew this usage and brought the word ‘symbol’ to its modern meaning” (Todorov 1977, p. 213). In the sequel, his approach to symbol underwent a long, complicated, but, on the whole, fruitful development that spilled over into a broadened, though variegated and not always coherent, doctrine that provided the ground for further deepening the notion.

However, in spite of the weighty part the German classics have played in making sense of symbol, their contribution is now not in the focus of research. In a voluminous book claiming to be a comprehensive review of the heritage of German idealism, the problem of symbol is not even touched upon, though many other questions — concerning human spirit, cognition, and even aesthetic taste — are examined in details. The terms “symbol” or “symbolic” are used only several times and in contexts (guillotine as great symbol of terror or symbols as a part of religious ceremony) with little relation to the nature of the phenomenon and its reflection in philosophy (Pinkard 2002, pp. 83 – 84, 300). In another book dealing with the aesthetic tradition the German philosophers have handed down, no place is found for symbol as a central theme, too. Say, the author tries to reconstruct Schelling's vision of how individual consciousness comes to the identity with an object through “the harmony of conscious and unconscious activities” (Hammermeister 2002, p. 70). But he nowise exposes the role of symbol, which is, according to Schelling, crucial to the process.

Sure, it would be a bit of an exaggeration to insist that the German classical doctrine of symbol is entirely neglected. In some way or other, it is discussed in

a fair quantity of works in philosophy, aesthetics, mythology, artistic creativity, and related fields. In this connection, one should mention, first and foremost, a number of publications examining the sources and prerequisites of the classical doctrine of symbol and its links with the spirit of the age (Halimi 2007, Jurgensen 1968, Sørensen 1963, Urbich 2013). A complement to them is another group of works inquiring into the issue as applied to one of the principal philosophers — Kant (Axinn 2013, Meier-Oeser 2013), Schelling (Whistler 2013), or Hegel (De Man 1982, Hass 2013). And finally, this line of research is crowned by the smallest, but the most valuable circle of investigations. They do not confine themselves to scrutinizing the views of an individual thinker, out of touch with those of others, but subject them to comparative analysis in attempts to expose the interconnections between the “congeners,” and the inner tendencies of the doctrine. Among them are, in particular, an interesting juxtaposition of Schelling’s conception of symbol with Hegel’s (Galland-Szymkowiak 2007) and a revealing of Kantian and Hegelian motives in Cassirer’s philosophy of the symbolic (Verene 2011) as well as quite a thorough review of the notions of symbol in Hegel’s successors (Volkelt 1876). Together, these three groups of publications not merely enrich the understanding of how the classics treated symbol but also prepare the ground for synthesizing research. However, with all their merits and plenty of results obtained, they do not allow of building up a holistic picture. Putting aside the minor drawbacks, a number of serious flaws in them leap to the eye.

First, even so far as the views of individual philosophers are concerned, some crucial points have been overlooked. Fichte’s teaching is almost never discussed in the context of the symbolic, which makes an erroneous impression that it has nothing in common with symbols; Schelling’s vision of symbol as an anticipation of the path to the due — the genuine core of the German classic doctrine — is not spotted in an explicit form; and Hegel’s main contribution that consists in turning symbol into the primary language of creativity vague nascent ideas are formulated in remains in the shadow. Second, in most every cases Hegel is taken as a “terminus” beyond which nothing important has been added to the classical doctrine of symbol. Meanwhile, in writings of his “heirs” at least two key insights — into the subconscious origins of symbol and its personality “shell” — have been gained. And third, the growth of the doctrine as a relatively consistent and integral whole has never been traced throughout with the aim of elicitation of its key ideas as guiding threads for further research. That not merely impoverishes the picture but — what is more harmful to theory — inevitably puts in the shade or even consigns to oblivion a number of worth-while findings and revelations. Just to fill in these

gaps and reconstruct the classical understanding of what symbol is, where it is derived from and what task performs as well as to outline the attainments still in vigor and capable of giving clues for new breakthroughs is the objective of this paper.

§2. At the Very Outset

The problem of symbol haunted thinkers from the remotest antiquity. Even then, people were well aware of that behind attractive images taking on life in myths, some deeper realities were hidden an inquisitive mind could find out only if it was able to get feel of the “secret” meaning of the story told. Those images, or symbols, provided people with models to follow and gave them a touch of real being. As Mircea Eliade observes, in the ancients’ interpretation, “everything which lacks an exemplary model is “meaningless”” and therefore “lacks reality.” To regain his self a person must do after a due pattern (Eliade 1959, p. 34). And symbols just show him the way to it.

In the Middle Ages, symbols became the main guides for both individual and collective mind, but now put in a religious envelope. Even love for woman as a symbol of all the beautiful and lofty was thought to be divine, spiritual feeling permeating the universe (Petrosyan 2020, p. 112). But the questions related to the nature of symbol and the role it played in human life were even not posed as yet, for the concept of symbol as such (a generalized thought of it rather than applied to particular activities or tasks) had not been established.

The situation changed in the Modern Times when the notion of “rational” order of things took shape. While in the preceding ages, philosophical and, in the wake, scientific mind saw the world as replete with “divine traces” that were conveyed by symbols, and miracles hidden behind each of them, thinkers of the early period of experimental science sought rational underlying causes even in wonders. Sure, they reasoned, nature consists of marvels all over, but they appear to be manifestations of the order rather than its violation.

The God has no need for leaving particular traces when the whole world itself is the greatest trace of Him. And by unraveling the mysteries of nature we get to know the God.

“The least part of it,” Leibniz notes in his letter of the 18th April, 1692, to Bishop Bossuet, “is, in turn, an endless world” that represents “all of what exists in the rest of the universe.” That surpasses our imagination, but, evidently, it must be so; and “this endlessly infinite variety revives in all these parts by means of more than endless archetypical wisdom.” It looks like “every substance acts spontaneously, as independent of all the other entities.”

Nevertheless, they “force it to adjust itself to them; so it may be said that whole nature is full of marvels, but marvels of reason that become marvels because of their reasonableness” (Leibniz 1692, p. 277).

Symbol throws aside any particularity and fortuity and, remaining a separate particular entity, becomes a necessary representation of the universal, an expression of the general order. In this regard, the rational joins the symbolical which acquires a peculiar meaning. The understanding of symbol sheds light on the cunning of the reason “put” in nature.

What was, in the time of Leibniz, passed for almost a revelation going beyond human understanding got perceived, a little more than a century later, nearly as triteness requiring no substantiation.

In 1825, Goethe began his work on weather with stating that “none of us is capable of knowing the truth with which the divine is identical, directly; we behold it only in gleam, in example, in symbol, in discrete and homogeneous phenomena; we discover it as incomprehensible life and, yet, cannot give up the desire to comprehend it.” Thereupon, he got at once to the point — without any argumentation and even explanation of the said (Goethe 1825, S. 247).

Goethe was completely sure that his words would be properly understood. This meant that the new approach to symbols cast deep roots in European philosophy.

§3. Brought under Concept

Among the first to formulate a coherent view of symbol was Immanuel Kant. He treated it as a “picture” tied to a certain form of knowledge.

Sensuous representation (“Hypotypose”) may be “of two kinds: either schematic, and then a respective sensuous rendition is a priori given to the concept that is embraced by the faculty of understanding; or symbolic, and then under the concept which may be thought only by reason and with which no sensuous rendition can comport, is brought such one with which the action of Judgment is barely analogous to what it observes in schematization, that is to say, only the rule of that action is made agree with it, not the sensuous rendition itself and, consequently, only the form of reflection, not its content.” Kant complained of the logicians who opposed the symbolic to the intuitive. Meanwhile, intuition, according to him, takes part in both schematic and intuitive modes of representation. Anyway, pictures are not “empty characterisms” denoting concepts “through accompanying sensuous signs that contain absolutely nothing belonging to the

sensuous rendition of the thing,” as words or “visible (algebraic, even mimic) signs,” but they somehow clarify (illustrate) concepts (Kant 1790, S. 211 – 212).

Therefore, intuitive knowledge should be opposed to the discursive rather than the symbolic, for the latter appears to be one of the forms the intuitive can function in.

Thus, symbol is, to Kant’s mind, a sensuous image brought under a concept, but not a schematic picture directly expressing the concept with which it is tied up. The concept gets stuck to the symbol through analogy that clothes the concept with available sensuous (“empirical”) features. The concept gets linked to the object of an image that is, thereupon, transferred to an “altogether different thing.” In such a case, the first thing turns out to be “only a symbol,” while the second, what must be made sense of and presented in a graphic form (Kant 1790, S. 212). Say, a monarchical state, if it is governed in accordance with its inherent laws, may be imagined as an animate body. But if it is swayed by one absolute will, the image of a machine (for instance, handmill) is most likely to arise before us. Both variants represent symbols. For, though there is no tangible similarity between monarchy and handmill, they are brought closer together by their internal structure and causal relationships.

Apparently, Kant himself felt the weakness of his construal and the feebleness of the arguments he adduced. To say nothing of the obscure mechanism linking an image to a concept “alien” to it, one is not quite clear about how analogy can turn an image into a symbol. While analogies are drawn at every step, symbols are found incommensurably rarer.

As to handmill, although it can serve as an illustration of a system of government, that alone does not make it a symbol. To deflect criticism Kant blames his troubles on that the problem has been poorly elaborated. “This matter,” he notes, “is explicated not sufficiently yet, while it deserves more profound studies” (Kant 1790, S. 212). However, many, including those sympathetic to Kant’s ideas, were aware of that the clue to the mystery of symbol should be searched for in a different place. Although intuition plays an important role in the making of symbols which imply certain parallels between various things sometimes having little in common, neither intuition nor analogy are able to account for how symbols originate and why they are so attractive to human mind.

§4. The Vestment for Idea

Kant's approach to knowledge was dual and therefore quite steady. On one hand, he recognized the independent existence of things-in-themselves and their influence on human perceptions, but, on the other, considered these perceptions to be so intimately and thoroughly mixed up with the ingredients added by the faculty of understanding (particularly imagination) that they could not be regarded as adequate images of things-in-themselves. Hence pictures of nature formed up by a person with the aid of his sensorium are related to phenomena, subjectively necessary appearances, while what is at the back of it all remains a closed book, without possibility to learn whether (and to what extent) a representation may be closer to reality than some other. This might be overcome in two ways — either by proclaiming human notions about things to be their authentic images or by insisting on that the world as it appears in notions is entirely begotten by the mind.

The first way had been chosen by Friedrich Jacobi. Regrettably, he rarely is favored with due attention, though in former times was regarded as a “deep and original thinker” (Gonzalez 1891, pp. 483 – 484). The Kantian notion of thing-in-itself was not to Jacobi's taste. In his view, images and diverse representations express reality and constitute the foundation of cognition. Though the process of their entering human soul from outside remains an impenetrable mystery, they bring with themselves immediate certitude as to the external world. The faculty of understanding does not produce sensations or feelings which are for it always ready made. As regards the ideas of reason (for instance, “things divine”) “just as our senses are a faculty by which we have an immediate perception of what in the province of corporeity (of bodies) has existence for us, so reason is that sense or faculty by which we have immediate perception of that which, in the supersensual sphere of mind or intelligence, has existence for us” (Chalybäus 1854, pp. 83 – 84). No wonder that he was the first to bring to light the creative function of sign.

Jacobi refuses to primitively juxtapose sign immediately with thing and shows that the image of a thing is not something pre-existent. It emerges and gets fixed in mind thank to the sign. According to him, “there always is found something between us and the true essence: feeling, picture, or word. We see everywhere only the hidden; but we see and tread it out as the hidden.” Without condensation, consolidation, and highlighting of a fragment of experience, it cannot be represented as a separate thing. Therefore “we assign to what is seen, trod out a word as sign, the live. That is the virtue of word.” By itself, it does not make a figure of experience and does not expose it, but “evidences the

revealing, reinforces it, and helps in diffusing the reinforced” (Jacobi 1801, S. 209). In this regard, sign is not something fortuitous in “making” a thing, but appears to be a “midwife” an insight can be neither conveyed to somebody else nor even represented as a several entity without.

Reason, as distinct from the understanding that deals immediately with experience, “is directed exceptionally to the supersensual and supernatural;” it works in the area of “incomprehensible actions and entities” and, consequently, meets with “miracles” (Jacobi 1801, S. 218). If to bereave it of this, nothing else will remain of it. As a fantast, reason takes to itself the credit for elevated ideas, but in reality feeds on idle fancies of the brain. Fancies hold reason back and hamper it, but contaminated by and replete with them, it imagines that has to do with something substantial. It “dresses” and reworks the fantasies and, absorbed in them, merges with them more and more. Thus “understanding loses understanding” and moves completely away from the sensual (Jacobi 1801, S. 219). In turn, reason shows the faculty of understanding that the latter “has only hands, but no eyes.” For, understanding sees with the eyes of reason whose “picture” precedes the work of understanding and serves as a lens through which sensuous material is passed. From this, there is but one step to construing the symbolic as an order put by reason into the chaotic data of experience through shaping them into images, that is to say, presenting in a form natural and accessible to the faculty of understanding.

§5. Creatures of Fantasy

The contrary way had been taken by Johann Fichte. He assured that there was in his works no point going beyond the Kantian philosophy. But in reality, Fichte’s doctrine turned out to be its cardinal revision. He proceeded from the assumption that all the variety of human experience can be put down to representations which, in turn, are products of the mind.

Fichte was focused on subjectivity, its constructive nature. The world perceived by a human is not something certain and given to him. One has to deal with the chaotic impressions arranged and ordered by his mind.

“Nothing persistent exists anywhere,” Fichte wrote, “neither outside me nor inside me, but only incessant change. I do not know any being around me, and even my own.” But what does the mind encounter, then? “There are pictures; they are the sole thing that exists, and they know themselves as pictures, — pictures that hover, without there being something over what they hover; which, by means of the pictures of pictures, get tied with each other; pictures without anything impressed in them, without meaning and without purpose.” Man himself is, in Fichte’s words, one of them, “a confused picture of pictures.

All the reality turns out to be a miraculous dream, without any life that is dreamed and without any spirit dreaming it, — a dream that weaves itself into a dream of itself. Beholding is the dream; thinking, the source of any being and any reality which I imagine, of my being, my ability, and my strivings, — is the dream of that dream” (Fichte 1800, S. 245).

Therefore, there is nothing but knowledge. And knowledge is not reality — at least because it is just knowledge. But now then, how does it originate?

According to Fichte, reason is not the power that draws the picture of the world; nor is it sensuousness that adds to that picture graphic features. The crucial role is played by creative fantasy without which people “would have no single notion.” Moreover, “all the work of human mind stems from the power of fancy” (Fichte 1794, S. 284). It not merely combines and brings together what is given to it but also begets and forms its own contents.

The part of productive imagination consists not in making a bridge between feelings and reason, as it was thought in former times. Those imputing the knowledge of essence to a particular spiritual intuition separate the latter as a recipient of supersensual data from fantasy. Even Kant from whom the term “productive imagination” has been borrowed means by it the ability to put the products of reason in sensuous garments. Unlike him, Fichte places fantasy in reason that builds the world within itself in compliance with its concepts.

According to Fichte, the self-sufficiency of active man manifests itself just in that he fabricates his world, concocts it by fusing the inner representations and, therefore, appears to be, first and foremost, creative in goal-setting and not obedient in volition. Otherwise, “intellectual contemplation” becomes a “creative power of imagination.” And in this regard, knowledge coincides with artistic (particularly, poetical) thoughts which Kant has named “ideas of imagination.”

But is there a place for symbols in such a picture of the world?

If things are mere representations made by creative imagination they should contain nothing that runs counter to the original design. A sensuous image devised by a subject which is thought to be a general notion formulated by the same subject looks at best as an artless game of mind. Consequently, symbol may bear only fictitious character. For, any other (“nonintrinsic”) meaning of the image, be such one found out — even to the surprise of the subject himself, — turns out to be what has already been, albeit unconsciously, put into it. In this sense, a work of art, when being “consumed,” is mentally reconstructed,

built up over again rather than “decoded,” and therefore, nothing more will be found in it than what its “consumer” can discover.

Does it mean that Fichte’s doctrine is altogether alien to the symbolic?

Indeed, it appears as though Fichte avoids employing the very term “symbol”. So, in his “Letters to Constant” enunciating his understanding of the philosophy of Masonry, where he must seem to express an attitude towards symbolic forms, the term happens only once, and even that in a context far from its meaning proper. Fichte simply remarks in a footnote to the fifth letter that some Masonic symbols apparently point to that the goal of the mankind is to be united in a single great organization like Freemasonry (Fichte 1802, S. 42). As to terms derivative from “symbol” or closely related to it they are not at all alluded to. However, paradoxical as it may seem, nothing can be farther from the truth than the conclusion that the symbolic is extrinsic to Fichte’s philosophy.

In actual fact, fictitious symbols are the same real symbols, but turned inside out. The search for their meanings is akin to the revealing of the ideas put in things. But a thing carrying an idea is just what symbol is. Fichte’s view is reminiscent of artist’s vision of making a symbolic picture as an artwork. It is actually a peculiar doctrine of symbol, but expounded from the standpoint of creator rather than “consumer.” That is why his ideas influenced almost all the subsequent German classical treatments of symbols, though many did not acknowledge or even realize that.

§6. A Kind of Synthesis

By far more substantial and elaborated was Friedrich Schelling’s vision of symbol. As a connoisseur of mythology and art, he closely associated them with creativity. Schelling not merely grasped the core of symbol as a connecting link between knowledge and experience, an embodiment of thought in sensuous material but also showed its place among like forms of the mind’s self-expression — scheme and allegory. And thus he laid the foundation of the first orderly doctrine of symbol.

According to Schelling, sensuous images get involved in the process of thinking due to the power of judgment. Contrary to the wide-spread opinion that in judgment one concept is contrasted with another, Schelling takes judgment out of the sphere of pure thought. He asserts that the separation of a subject from a predicate “is at all possible due to that the former represents a sensuous rendition, while the latter, a concept” (Schelling 1800, S. 508). And

consequently, judgment elates a concept to an image. Otherwise, with the aid of judgment, an element (figure) of sensuous experience receives a mental characteristic. Furthermore, the very contrasting and subsequent equating of the subject with the predicate imply an intuitive approach to them, for a property is found out in the object rather than mechanically ascribed to it.

However, contemplation in judgment essentially differs from usual one, since it deals not only with experience. Verging upon the concept, on one hand, and the thing, on the other, it represents “the schematism everyone gets familiarized with by his own inner experience” (Schelling 1800, S. 508). This is a form of “vividization” of concepts which makes them commensurate with experience and affords an opportunity to immediately compare one with the other. Without such a form, it would be very hard to link thoughts with feelings, intellect with reality.

Scheme as a portrayal of a thing from the standpoint of a concept is to be neatly distinguished from the picture to which high certainty and “realism” close to identity is peculiar. Picture greatly exceeds scheme in richness of content, but it is of external nature and describes rather than construes a thing. As regards scheme it is very poor (limits itself to a small quantity of parameters), but, instead, comprises “the sensuous rendition of the rule a certain thing may be begotten by” (Schelling 1800, S. 508). In essence, it exposes a plan of practical recreation of the thing.

Thus, scheme is the intermediate link on the way from concept to practice. As Schelling states, “it pertains therefore always and necessarily to an empirical thing, either existent or to be fabricated” (Schelling 1800, S. 510). To elucidate this he refers, as an example, to the mechanical craftsman who proceeds from a certain notion about his product, which, however, cannot help him immediately in work. Rather, before his mind’s eye, a graphic image hovers that serves as a guide for him. This is a sketch of the thing, adjusted to the task being performed. Without such an outline, no single action, more or less complex and branched, can be carried out.

However, sensuous rendition does not confine itself to scheme. Allegory appears to be, according to Schelling, another way of graphic representation. As distinct from scheme in which “the universal means the particular” or “the particular is beheld through the universal,” in allegory “the particular means the universal” (Schelling 1803, S. 407). Otherwise, it is the same scheme, but “turned inside out” (Schelling 1803, S. 409). In this regard, allegory not merely does not oppose itself to scheme but also complements it.

Allegory conveys ideas “by means of actual, concrete pictures.” But what is portrayed in it “is something other than it itself means” (Schelling 1803, S. 549). For instance, rose denotes not itself, but silence. Schelling refers to an ancient epigrammatist in whose words, “Love handed over the rose to the god of silence, Harpocrates, in order to hush up the licentiousness of Venus” (Schelling 1803, S. 554). In the same way, at parties, the ancients hung roses over the table as a sign that all it should be kept among friends, in secret. The fate was personified by Lachesis who turned the spindle, sitting on a comic mask and having before her a tragic one, what hinted at the tragicomedy of life, while early death, by Aurora taking away a child in her arms. The resuscitation of a body by putting spirit into it was an abstract thought. But it, too, could be conveyed in an allegorical way. Prometheus shaped clay into a human, while Minerva held a butterfly over his head as an image of soul. So by means of allegories, thoughts rise to the level of the supersensuous. However, they have no self-contained meaning and only render, with the aid of images, the concepts already solidified in mind. The mission of allegory consists in making what is thought out by one, accessible to others through appealing to their experience.

Symbol is very close to allegorical portrayal. It appears, too, as a sensuous embodiment of thought. However, “neither the universal means the particular nor the particular, the universal” in it. Although symbol is opposed to both scheme and allegory, it contains them as components, subordinate parts, presenting their synthesis. So mind has at its disposal three forms of sensuous rendition begotten due to the power of imagination. But symbol overtops the two others as an “absolute form” (Schelling 1803, S. 407). As opposed to them, it does not vanish into what it denotes, but retains its particular, self-contained (“intrinsic”) meaning independent of that.

This distinction is crucial to the understanding of symbols and casts more light on the nature of myths. As Ernst Cassirer notes, Schelling “replaces the allegorical interpretation of the world of myths by a tautegorical interpretation, i. e. he looks upon mythical figures as autonomous configurations of the human spirit, which one must understand from within by knowing the way in which they take on meaning and form” (Cassirer 1955b, p. 4). And that not merely allows him to debunk the wide-spread approaches to myth as legendary history or primitive explanation of nature but also provides the key to symbolic expression.

In mythology as an embodiment of the symbolic, which is “to all later free creations” a kind of “primordial poetry” (Schelling 1856, S. 241), a figure “is to

be taken as what it is” and “just therefore it is also taken as what it means. The meaning is here, at the same time, the being itself passed into the object and made one with it.” As soon as the figure is forced to mean something, it loses its own identity. However, reality in symbols coincides with their ideality, what implies also that “their idea, their concept, gets destroyed as well, since they are not thought as something actual.” Taken in their pure form, without any relations, as “absolute in themselves,” symbols “allow the meaning to show through.” When using them, people do content themselves with neither “bare senseless being” nor “bare meaning.” That is why the object of an “absolute artistic portrayal” must be “as concrete, equal only to itself, as picture, and yet, as universal and meaningful as concept.” Not in vain, Schelling considers the German word “Sinnbild” (sense picture, picture with a sense) to excellently convey the essence of symbol (Schelling 1803, S. 411 – 412). Its two perspectives — idea and life — come together and coexist as inseparable from each other. As soon as the meaning is over-emphasized, symbol turns into an allegory. But if the stress is laid on what denotes, symbol degenerates into an ordinary picture behind which no meaning is hidden.

§7. The Path to the Due

The core of symbol is, according to Schelling, idea that should be distinguished from concept appearing as a scheme. In his words, scheme “is for concepts exactly the same as symbol for ideas” (Schelling 1800, S. 510). In a symbol, an idea (say, of beauty or eternity) takes its sensuous shape and becomes accessible. Such incarnation is far from being absurd, since “the infinite searches for the finite to manifest itself as visible to people” (Jankélévitch 1933, p. 256). So the visible becomes the symbol of the invisible.

But what is idea, and how does it differ from concept?

In Schelling’s view, idea is a product of imagination, something “hovering between finiteness and infinity,” living practice and abstract thinking. It arises due to desire (striving) that moves in the circle outlined by the awareness of one’s own freedom (infinity) and the necessity to keep to the object to be dealt with (finiteness). That is to say, idea pertains to the realm of theoretical reason, what is proved by that as soon as it turns out under the sway of the faculty of understanding, begets at once insoluble contradictions (antinomies) which have been embarrassing Kant (Schelling 1800, S. 558 – 559). But as the products of imagination ordinarily have more visible and graphic shapes, Schelling makes a reservation that he names the power engendering ideas, imagination only for want of a more suitable word.

Regrettably, Schelling nowhere provides a plain definition of idea. And one has only to guess whether he implies by it something quite distinct. The point becomes even more complicated through that the philosopher introduces into the relationship between an object and the idea it is embodied in a third element whose nature, too, remains somewhat vague. For a human self to be able to accomplish “a transition from an idea to a definite object,” something intermediate must exist which “is for action just the same as symbol for thinking in ideas, and scheme, for concepts.” It is the ideal that appears to be the missing link. From its opposition to the object (“contradiction between idealizing and beholding selves”), “an impulse to transform the object as it is into the object as it must be” springs up. And if this is a success “a restoration of the abolished identity of the self” occurs (Schelling 1800, S. 559 – 560). The ideal appears to be the best example (absolute model) to which the object being transformed is to be similar much as possible. But then, what does its distinction from idea consist in?

Despite the ambiguity and confusedness of Schelling’s formulations, it is contextually understandable that an idea is not a “descriptive” notion of an object, or the pieces of generalized knowledge of it brought together, but a general plan of its making, a “technological project” which enables to pass from a mental picture to its practical accomplishment. In turn, the ideal represents the most desirable image of the final result expected, showing how that must look under the most favorable circumstances and with the utmost efforts applied. While a concept exposes how an object is arranged and how it functions, and an ideal, what it is to be according to the subject’s will, an idea outlines the way the object should be altered in, or more precisely, sketches the program of its reconstitution in line with the ideal.

Returning to the symbol, as a sensuous form of the representation of an idea it embodies in itself the project of rearranging what exists and bringing it to the ideal rather than a thing or its mental image. “Symbolic picture,” Schelling notes, “implies an idea as preceding it, which becomes symbolic owing to being historically objective, graphic in an independent way” (Schelling 1803, S. 555). Thus the path from the existent to the due the mind has discovered gets expressed in the symbol.

Sure, it would be an exaggeration to name Schelling’s doctrine of symbol wholly integral and consistent. So, when accentuating the difference between idea and concept, he uses sometimes the words denoting them, as synonyms. Moreover, speaking of ideas, he adduces, as examples, general concepts (beauty, eternity, etc.). Even if to put aside the indistinctness in definitions and

poor elaboration of details, one cannot but notice that the relations he draws between ideas and concepts look to be not only unconvincing but also contradictory and confused.

Say, allegory, according to Schelling, expresses the universal in the particular. What is that universal, and what is the shape taken by it? Evidently, he considers it a concept as a product of pure thought. Scheme, to the contrary, is an embodiment of the particular in the universal. How does what is sensuously beheld turn into something universal? That occurs due to that a concrete thing rather than a concept is related to it. With regard to the particular, any generalized image looks like universal. Consequently, this categorization has no “common denominator.” In one case, image embodies a general thought; in the other, an individual thing.

It comes out that, for the sake of symmetry, Schelling arbitrarily juggles and forcibly drives categories into the “cells” designated for them. He becomes a hostage of his own formalism. The yardstick with which he approaches the things not so much expresses their natural relations as imposes on them a *modus vivendi* with nothing in common with either their nature or what really happens to them.

This manifests itself conspicuously when Schelling tries to classify sciences and arts, basing on the categorical hierarchy devised by him. In his opinion, arithmetic allegorizes, as denotes the general by the particular; geometry schematizes, expressing the particular through the general; and philosophy appears as a symbolic science. Likewise, music uses predominately allegories; painting, schemes; and plastic arts, symbols. But such a structuring looks most incongruously in respect of poetry: lyrics are the realm of allegories; epics, of schemes; while dramatic works are permeated with symbols. At that, Schelling adduces no single reason in favor of so rigid and unnatural construction. However, that did not hold him back from insisting on its conformity with live artistic practice.

And yet, despite all the gaps, flaws, and discrepancies in Schelling’s doctrine, one cannot but admit that it has succeeded in laying two cornerstones of the doctrine of symbol. On one hand, a certain idea is embodied in it — as a design of begetting the due. And on the other, in denoting the idea, symbol retains also its own “intrinsic” meaning. Otherwise, symbol is a self-sufficient thing (image) in existence, not a mere container carrying inside itself the notion of the due. It does not hint at the due, clarify or illustrate it, but appears as a standard to embody it — a sensuous image opening a view of how to

approach the due. Apparently, Schelling was the first to find to what symbol owes its central part in the human world — from mythology to art.

§8. Capturing the New

That the sense of symbol is brought out in direct confrontation with that of sign, by Georg Hegel's time was nearly a common place. They both speak not in their own name, but fill in for other contents. However, while in sign, an "alien soul" indifferent to its specificity is placed, symbol is an image "whose own distinctness is, by its essence and concept, more or less the content that it as symbol expresses." Symbol is similar to what it denotes in the respect that their meanings overlap. As regards sign the content of its image and "that whose sign it is have nothing in common." Such are, for instance, words in languages or colors on flags. That is why "as denoting the mind evinces more freedom and power in using an image than as symbolizing" (Hegel 1845, S. 338 – 339). Providing a thing with a sign is determined by attendant circumstances rather than its own nature.

To the contrary, for becoming a symbol, an image must, one way or another, conform to the thing by nature. Say, a lion may be a symbol of power, while fox, of slyness. But it is so only because both of them "possess the property whose meaning they must express." What symbol means is contained in its own existence. That is why it cannot be an "indifferent sign" and represents not itself as "this concrete particular thing," but the "universal duality of meaning" (Hegel 1842, S. 383 – 384). However, overlapping with its object, symbol, nonetheless, is not completely adequate to it, for comprises also other properties which may essentially differ from some of those peculiar to the object. This gives rise to the multiplicity of symbols for the same thing.

Power is personified by not only lion but also bull. In turn, bull may appear, as well, as the symbol of a number of other qualities. Therefore, symbol always remains fundamentally ambiguous and fraught with possibilities unexpected to both one perceiving it and its author himself. Moreover, the very problem of identification of symbols ("Should or should not one take an image for a symbol?") is far from being simple. The point is not only and even not so much that it is not plain what precisely a symbol embodies (sometimes several meanings at once are attached to it). As it expresses, first and foremost, itself, the observer inevitably falls into abeyance: must he understand such an image in its "intrinsic" sense, in its "intrinsic" and "nonintrinsic" senses at the same

time, or only in its “nonintrinsic” sense, as it happens, for instance, to figurative expressions of a language? (Hegel 1842, S. 385). So the transformation of an image into a symbol results not from the image itself, but from the attitude of one construing it. If the image appears before him as something entirely self-sufficient, it remains a “bare picture” carrying no other meaning besides its own.

It may seem that Hegel merely keeps to Schelling’s line or, at best, somewhat extends his ideas. However, it is not quite so or, to put it more exactly, not a bit like this. Despite all the sketchiness of his reasoning and the formalism of the doctrine he has built up, Schelling is a transcendental idealist and, one way or another, reckons with the “living material,” while Hegel’s idealism is absolute and, therefore, when facts are at variance with his view he considers the discrepancy to be so much the worse for them.

Schelling regards symbol as a higher form of creative thought than allegory that is of explicative rather than “penetrating” nature. As to Hegel his view is opposite to that. In spite of the opinion that his understanding of the symbolic is “very like the standard Romantic concept of allegory” (Crisp 2005, p. 329), he had a clear notion of symbol distinct from both that of other thinkers of the time, and allegory, which, yielding to Schelling’s in serendipity and profundity, excelled it in comprehensiveness and elaborateness. In allegory that Hegel names “comparison, parable,” general notion and specific image meet with each other. But if thought is unable to advance so far as to combine them it is fain to content itself to symbol in which the sensual image is not separated from the meaning as yet and makes with it a single whole. Just in this, according to Hegel, “the difference between symbol and comparison” consists (Hegel 1842, S. 386). As contrasted to allegory where “the meaning is expressed for itself or usually is already plain,” a symbolic picture acquires its sense only after its meaning has been revealed (Hegel, 1842; 387). That is to say, it becomes understood what idea is hidden there.

Everything that is “to serve as symbol can at most,” according to Hegel, “stir up anticipations of and consonances with the concept; but if one seeks to express and learn the concept this way then the outer nature of all symbols is not suitable for that.” Furthermore, “what in symbol is a consonance of a higher definition” gets in reality comprehended only “through the isolation of the sensuous impurity” that makes a symbol something dim and vague (Hegel 1841b, S. 58). And if symbols contain “a deep wisdom, deep meaning” then “it is just the task of the thinking alone to do so as to make the wisdom that lies only inside them ... come out.” For, “in symbols, the truth is, as yet, turbid and

screened because of the sensuous element; it becomes entirely obvious to the mind in the form of the thought; the meaning is the thought itself” (Hegel 1841a, S. 240 – 241). Hence symbol turns out to be just the same allegory, but “underdeveloped,” a germ in which the two main constituents — the sensual image and the notional meaning — stay in an unparted unity, not opposed to each other.

Not in vain, Benedetto Croce insists that, in Hegel’s interpretation, “the artistic activity is distinct from the philosophical only through its imperfection, only because it apprehends the Absolute in a sensible and immediate form, whereas philosophy apprehends it in the pure medium of thought.” And therefore, art “is practically reduced ... to a philosophical error.” It conveys “a past, or survival of the past” (Croce 1915, pp. 129 – 130). But it would be more exact to say that in Hegel, symbol ceases to be the essence of art. Rather, it turns into a rudimentary form of artistic creativity, whose prevalence is characteristic of early rather than mature stages of development.

As regards “the classic in art,” Hegel claims, “its nature is not symbolic, but in itself throughout intelligible and clear” (Hegel 1842, S. 389). Symbol cannot be at the forefront where, “instead of uncertain universal abstract notions,” the focus is on “the free individuality of content, and the form of representation.” As a product of activity of a subject a piece of art combines in itself “the meaning and the sensuous representation, the inner and the outer, the thing and the picture.” The two sides do not differ from each other and are not “barely similar,” as in “the symbolic proper,” but appear to be “a whole in which the appearance has no other essence, and the essence no other appearance outside itself or beside itself.” In this way, what manifests and what is manifested rise to the level of “concrete unity” (Hegel 1842, S. 394). In a mature piece of art, there is, for a sophisticated mind, nothing to unravel.

The idea put in a work is, according to Hegel, immediately expressed in the image and, though is not exactly the same as the latter and can be “husked” if necessary, coalesces with the image so strongly that gets easily identified through it. No wonder that symbolic forms, “recollected patterns of thought from the philosophical, religious, and mystical traditions” such as “the triangle (triad, or trinity), the square, the ennead, and the circle,” were employed by Hegel «as illustrative metaphors or images» (Magee 2001, pp. 99 – 100). Such use of symbols is closer to a kind of analogical reasoning than to Schelling’s insight and reminds of a hermetic “memory magic” (Magee 2001, p. 122). Therefore, there is no need for “switching on” fantasy to “retrieve” the idea, basing on the picture beheld.

One may agree with that symbol is, in Hegel's understanding, "not a completion, but barely a transition, not an instant of fullness, but the initial moment of a search." For, "the mind immersed in the present reality at first distances itself in an "obscure" and "instinctive" way from this reality or abstracts itself from this experience" (Galland–Szymkowiak 2007, S. 340). And only subsequently it finds increasingly more perfect congruence between the sensuous image and the meaning to be portrayed.

Sure, artistic creativity, be it in line with Hegel's "classical" ideal, would be an extremely flat and tedious pursuit. In reality, both the "consumer" of a piece of art and its author himself are incapable of explaining the whole of what it represents and what the meanings to derive are. Nevertheless, strange enough, a deep insight into the place of symbol in human cognition owes just to the lowering of its role as a way of artistic comprehension.

Hegel depicts symbol as the initial form an idea coming into being, but so far not standing on the firm ground of experience, takes on. In his words, "the idea has not yet found an adequate shape" in the symbolic. Moreover, the thought is presented "as striving and fighting with the figure." With no opportunity to order and organize the empirical material by giving it a distinct, "chiseled" form, the mind uses a symbol as a template or mould with the aid of which a thing is "cast." And the gap between the content of symbol and its meaning — that which symbol is confronted with — shows that "the infinite form is not yet obtained" and "not yet known," and it has not yet realized itself "as free spirit" (Hegel 1845, S. 444). Otherwise, the symbolic appears to be a kind of preconceptual way of cognition and representation of things. As soon as they are embraced by a concept, symbol as a cognitive tool becomes needless, played out. Where it is still kept in mind, its mission consists in being ancillary to concept, adding vividness to it, making it more compact. But symbol brings to concept nothing essentially different from what it already contains.

§9. Enlivened Pictures

The Hegelian notion of the symbolic was widely discussed and commented by his adherents. However, most of them barely repeated and, at best, explicated and elucidated his views. Few made appreciable add-ins that went beyond the known, and grasped the peculiarities which escaped the philosophical mind theretofore.

Among those to enrich and extend Hegel's conception was Friedrich Vischer, an almost forgotten author. Not only general public but even the great mass of narrow specialists in philosophy or literary criticism is unfamiliar with

his ideas. On the eve of the last third of the past century, Walter Bruford, a British expert in German literature, began his paper on Vischer's legacy with the statement that he "is merely a name to most *Germanisten* [Germanists] today" (Bruford 1967, p. 1). And since then, regrettably, little has changed. Meanwhile, the philosopher deserves to be commended at least for his perhaps small, but, nevertheless, conspicuous contribution to the understanding of symbol.

In Vischer's "Aesthetics" where he, first of all, systematized Hegel's ideas and brought together what was scattered over the latter's works, were outlined also additional traits that, coupled with each other, formed a new perspective to view the symbolic from. The coincidence of a thing with a vague idea, Vischer notes, is due to the work of "unconsciously blending fantasy." Thus is emphasized the role of the latent mechanisms that Hegel only implies. But Vischer also has noticed that the affinity between the idea and the thing is secured by a picture external to both of them which serves as a bridge from one to the other. Therefore, the coincidence is not absolute, and the same fantasy begets divergences as well. Even if they are not realized by an imagining mind, it at least dimly feels them (Vischer 1848, S. 417 – 419). To him, the symbolic provides the leading strings for faint anticipation (Vischer 1848, S. 438 – 439). And fantasy turns out to be not so much an instrument of building the beautiful as a means of searching for the truth.

Furthermore, Vischer tried to build into Hegel's teaching the "kernels of sense" spotted by his precursors. And that lent the concept of symbol some more tinges. The Romantic line of imparting organic character to things, which endowed nature with freedom and duties and was inherent, to a certain extent, also in German classical philosophy.

This attained a climax in Schelling who stressed that "the bare philosophy of reflection that seeks only for breakdowns is never able to develop, whereas the pure contemplation or, rather, the creative imagination has invented long ago the symbolic language" that allows the human mind to present the creatures emerging from its "impassable darkness" as a junction of nature and spirit. It begets anticipation "in which the contemplation and concept, the form and object, the ideal and real are primordially one and the same." And "nature is the more comprehensible to us the less we think of it by barely reflecting" (Schelling 1857, S. 47).

In Cassirer's view, "this idea bridged the chasm that seemed to divide the unconscious growth of nature from the conscious creation of the spirit" (Cassirer 1955a, p. 154). However, he slightly magnified its part and

significance and passed the desirable for reality. Even Schelling, though he sensed the organic substance of symbols, did not yet explicitly attribute to them a personal dimension (soul) and, therefore, could not see in it their marrow. It was just Hegel's disciple that took this decisive step.

Vischer points out that in Indian or Egyptian mythology several parts of body, and particularly generative ones, are exaggerated out of all proportion; the number of arms, legs, breasts, and heads is multiplied. In many cases, actions of a god represent not something essential that accompanies his emotional impulses, but a train of mere symbols (Vischer 1848, S. 421 – 422). However, the god “rises above the bare simplicity of meaning.” He “feels, thinks, desires” and, through becoming the driving force of a story, forming a myth that embraces “the symbol explicated at work,” manifests himself as a personality, a self-sufficient active entity (Vischer 1848, S. 467, 476 – 477). The content of a myth not merely explains the meaning of the god as a symbol but also expresses it in bodily forms, movements, behavior. As Gadamer has justly observed, “the further he departs from Hegel, the more he extends Hegel's concept of symbol and sees the symbol as one of the fundamental achievements of subjectivity. The “dark symbolism of the mind” gives soul and significance to what in itself lacks a soul (nature or phenomenal appearances)” (Gadamer 2006, p. 69). The personality introduced into the image enlivens the picture, turning it into a symbol.

§10. A “Shell” for Personality

A further attempt at deepening these ideas had been made by Hermann Siebeck. He continually focused on that in the picture of a phenomenon, the sensuous and the mental are closely interwoven with each other. Idealization, that is, the reduction of an imperfect datum to the perfection of its essence is made “by means of a mental intuition” that confronts an object with its ideal as “an eternal and therefore perfect model.” But a specific expression of such an ideal implies the coalescence of the mental with the sensuous. In Siebeck's words, artistic view represents the datum “not in its objective naturalness and reality,” but “reveals in it something more.” It actually makes the thing up by “unconscious additions” (Siebeck 1875, S. 103 – 104). The sensuous material gets filled with mental constructions that organize and direct it, depending on the task being performed.

Artistic object is not so much perceived as apperceived, that is to say, reconstituted from the notion of it. In its image, soul and spirit show up through sensuous finery, which agrees best of all with Schiller's expression

“Freedom in self–manifestation”. Each of individual elements implies some others as its complements and forms together with them an integral whole. The aesthetic apperception is due just to what behaves as a character which, regardless of whether it exists in reality, makes an “impression of self–revealing personality” (Siebert 1905, S. 501 – 502). This happens unwittingly as the learnt rules of grammar get actuated without conscious control.

A thing, even inanimate, is presented as a personality in visible outlines, and thus it comes out that under the “sensuous appearance,” a soul is hidden (Siebeck 1875, S. 67 – 68). Hence, “any aesthetic contemplation consists in nothing but unconsciously and unwittingly performed symbolization of the essence” of this soul (Siebeck 1875, S. 186). At that, the content behind the picture, including its personal “filling,” is identified with it.

When comparing a bird with a tree, the smallness of the former is commonly opposed to the mightiness of the latter. That is to say, the likeness or, on the contrary, dissimilarity is judged by some features, though substantial and peculiar to the objects, yet external to them. Otherwise stand matters in artistic, symbolic representation. Here more important is “the impression that the notion of a bird on a branch creates;” the way in which this picture appears before us; and, above all, the “mood” that it produces (Siebeck 1875, S. 44 – 50). By interpenetrating, the two representations make the same “picture of mood.” Say, the bird sitting on a branch evokes it by that the self of the observer as if gets placed inside the tree and the bird, with a vague and prophetic sense of pliability and permeation, up to the coalescence with them. But this becomes possible because there exists in mind a stratum nearest to the unconscious — the area of obscure, blurred, and passive consciousness, — which transfers into things a part of human personality. These representations in themselves, however remade, are unable to go into the subconscious and evoke there a vibrant feeling named mood. As distinct from both consciousness and the unconscious, dim subconsciousness appears as unclear, tangled disorder and never brings to something pellucid and easily explainable which would unavoidably undermine the ineffable ground of mood and turn it into a conscious attitude.

Siebeck has not formulated distinctly and definitely his view of symbol. His remarks regarding its nature were scattered, frequently scrappy, and not always persuasive. There were also serious flaws there. To the fashion of the time, Siebeck was keen on associations and tried to tie them to all what implied relations with other things. As many of his predecessors, he sought to put symbolization down to analogy, for the reproduction of representations occurs

by identity or proximity of not only their contents but also the forms and connections implicitly coming together with them (Siebeck 1875, S. 49). Finally, the language by means of which he described his subject, if to make use of the term employed by Hegel in regard to Kant, could be named “barbarian.” Take, for instance, his division of “objective representation” into “constant and variable sides.” The former is “material” and comprises the content of representation that exists irrespective of its relation to other representations, while the latter is “formal” (how representation appears), determined by its combination with them (Siebeck 1875, S. 48). Nevertheless, through the mass of Siebeck’s thoughts being yet in the stage of “fermentation” and confused formulations, cores of good sense were peeping out which looked to be a noticeable addition to the notion of symbol developed within classical German philosophy.

First of all, the inner structure of consciousness is such as to imply, besides the unconscious and the conscious, one more level that is characterized by their tight interweaving and interpenetration. It is just what seems to be the key element of symbolization. Further, creative fantasy works predominately through intuition. It does not try, as thinking, to pull the mental kernel out of the sensuous shell or present the sensual contemplation only as something outer. In fantasy, the inner never comes as purely inner content. It portrays itself to be inside the outer that appears as a mere manifestation of the inner. And finally, as soon as an object rises before one’s mind’s eye, which is apperceived as containing in its mental content something sensuous, the subjective impression of the apperceiving person penetrates into it and “reformulates” the image as a self-contained personality “living” in conformity with his inner inducements. Just such an “outside” thing separated from the “observer”, but endowed with particles of his will and soul, or his reified personality, even if placed in an already animate body (of animal, man, or god), is the symbol expressing not only itself but also the one who has put into it a “bit” of his own self.

§11. By Way of Conclusion: The Framework of the Doctrine

Classical German philosophy never advanced a comprehensive and complete theory of symbol. But it gradually formed up an integral portray of the symbolic and thus paved the way for more branched and sophisticated teachings on it. And to cast them into obscurity or show disdain for them amounts to removing the cornerstones from under the contemporary attempts to understand symbol.

What are the basic ideas of the German classics that are capable of guiding the work of today's researchers?

Kant considered symbol to be a sensuous image combined with another by analogy based on a general concept. For instance, lion may serve as a symbol of hero, because it, as well as hero, possesses boldness, bravery, and strength. However, the meaning of lion as a symbol is not the hero, but the quality that is transferred to him.

Sure, analogy cannot beget a symbol, since, through confronting with each other two things similar in some respect, it merely extrapolates to the second the features of the first which have not yet been observed or used as applied to the second. Meanwhile, symbol expresses a quality of something else that does not coincide with it and allows of grasping and giving shape to what slips the mind and gets not fixed and consolidated in concepts. Nevertheless, Kant's view prepared the ground for more profound understanding of symbol.

According to Jacobi, on one hand, idea manifests itself in symbol. Looking at symbol through the eyes of reason, the faculty of understanding reveals what is hidden deep under the sensuous shroud. And on the other, the idea found in a thing reproduces to a lesser degree the nature of the thing itself, and to a greater, what reason seeks for. Strictly speaking, the subject discovers not so much what is contained there as what he himself introduces into it.

Fichte's thing "reconstituted" by the mind is, in essence, a symbol, for as a sensuous image it bears in itself the design of one who has thought it up. Not all of what is put in it is realized, and therefore, the subject may, unexpectedly for himself, discover there some additional tinges or overtones he had before no sort of inkling of. Just as well, an artist looking at his own picture some time later or a writer reading his novel again finds by far more (or sometimes less) meanings than initially kept in mind. However, any turns and twists in understanding, even sharp and abrupt, are, one way or another, offshoots or perspectives of the original intention.

In Schelling's view, there are two sensuous forms expressing concepts: scheme and allegory. Both of them give concepts graphic shapes. The first serves as an "intermedium" from thinking to practice and, therefore, draws a generalized picture of a thing one has to deal with (for instance, the image of rectangle replaces with itself the outlines of a house to be built), while the second, on the contrary, embodies in realistic sensuous material some general concept. So, the expression "Demeter and Iasion give birth to Plutus" means that the combination of tiller's craft with fertile land creates wealth. Symbol towers over both scheme and allegory; it represents a sensuous embodiment of

an idea as a project of making a reality, which implies a coming into picture, though not yet quite distinct, transition from the existent to the due. At the same time, unlike other signs, symbol remains a self-sufficient entity whose role is not reduced to its meaning. Even those having no notion of what is hidden behind the myth of Heracles or of what is the idea Rafael has put into his “Madonna” admire them — in the first case, as a beautiful story and in the second, as a splendid portrait. What makes something a symbol consists just in such integral interweaving of the “intrinsic” meaning with the idea “denoted.”

This is a fundamental point. It allows of distinguishing symbol from both allegory and mere emblem. Say, mythical Themis, the daughter of Uranus and Gaea, and the second (after Methida, the goddess of wisdom) wife of Zeus, who has born three Ores, Eunomia (“good order”), Dike (“fairness”), and Eirene (“peace”), is a symbol of justice. However, it would be incorrect to say that a blindfolded woman, with a sword in one hand and scales in another, symbolizes justice, for she in herself means nothing and appears only as its allegoric meaning. Her portrait is no more than a sensuously perceivable form of depicting the main principles of justice: impartiality (does not see who is before her, of what status or wealth), sensibility of reasons (weighs them, assesses for both reliability and persuasiveness), and resoluteness (readiness to impose penalty on the party at fault). Just as well, the emblem and flag of a state cannot be its symbols, as separately from it they represent nothing. They are bare badges, that is, compact portrayals of the idea of a specific state rather than severally existing images expressing, inter alia, that idea. Meanwhile, symbol is, first of all, a “living” (self-sufficient) image that carries the idea of an object, but is not reduced to it. Though denoting something else, it retains, nevertheless, its own (“intrinsic”) meaning.

Hegel emphasizes some aspects of Schelling’s view of symbol. First, there exists something in common between a symbol and the idea it denotes; and second, the symbol does not coincide with the idea. Due to that, it becomes possible to symbolize different ideas through the same image and, on the contrary, the same idea may be embodied in various images. However, as distinct from Schelling, Hegel considers the self-sufficiency of symbol, its existence alongside with its meaning and independently of it, as an indication that the sensuous image and the general notion keep, as yet, unparted unity. That is why he sees in symbol a mere germ of a future allegory where the “intrinsic” meaning opposed to the idea combines with and vanishes into it, becoming a mere bearer. But although this lowers the role of the symbolic and pushes it out to the periphery of artistry, symbols paradoxically turn into the

primary language of creativity in which a vague, not yet quite shaped idea is formulated and made accessible to other people.

Why does allegory stand in Hegel's hierarchy higher than symbol? Allegory illustrates, exposes a mature and well-established concept, while symbolic picture expresses not a grasped and understood essence of a thing, but only its anticipation, an indistinct sketch out of which a concept may have grown up. Nevertheless, symbol appears to be more valuable than allegory. While the latter adds nothing to already available knowledge and only explicates and enables to learn it, symbol paves the way into the unexplored, outlines a future concept.

Between a thing and its idea, Vischer puts a picture (generalized image) as a product of creative and largely unconscious fantasy. It is this picture that transfers to the thing as symbol the unclearly anticipated idea. At that, a personality (more exactly, a "morsel" of it) is introduced into the image of the thing which thus gets endowed with a "living" soul guiding its behavior and actions.

At last, by presenting idealization as embodying mental constructions in sensuous material, Siebeck highlights the participation of creative fantasy and intuition in making symbolic pictures and accents the special role of subconsciousness as the intermediate stage between the unconscious and the conscious. The role of personification in the creation and recreation ("reading") of symbols, that implies "getting" into the thing (its image), emphasizes that feeling ("mood picture") must perform a central function in symbolization, since it relates a thing to another due to the affinity of impressions they make. Any sensuous image becomes a symbol solely when it is emotionally perceived as an external manifestation of the personality "sitting" inside it, as something possessing its own will and soul.

Thus, Kant and his immediate followers prepared the ground for the doctrine. Schelling formulated its main posits for the first time. Hegel extended and brought them into a systematic shape, while his successors gave the doctrine the finishing touches. With all the diversity of their approaches to symbol, they were unanimous in that it spots and represents something anticipated, but inexpressible in concepts.

What are the basic ideas worth taking up and working into the current discourse?

1. Symbol is a sensuous image (thing) appearing as a sign whose meaning is a general notion, while the referent, another sensuous image (thing) to which that meaning gets transferred.

2. An idea (concept) seen (“discovered”) in a thing (image) expresses not so much its own nature as what reason seeks to find in it or, to put it more precisely, introduces into it.

3. Anything created (recreated) in a sensuous shape appears to be a symbol, for as a perceptually-based representation it bears in itself the intention of the mind “devising” it. Not all of what has been put in it is realized, but even the most “unexpected” turns out to be, ultimately, a variation of the initial design.

4. Symbol represents a perceptible embodiment, “reification” of an idea as a project of a reality that implies a found by groping, though not quite clear-cut, transition from the existent to the due. But, as distinct from other signs, symbol remains also a self-sufficient entity interweaving its own meaning with the idea signified.

5. The symbolic is the primary language of creativity in which a vague, not mature idea is formulated and made accessible to other people and expresses a blur sketch of a thing rather than its grasped and comprehended essence. Therefore, symbol opens up a new vista into the unexplored and dimly delineates the framework of the future concept.

6. The “picture” (generalized image) that mediates the relation between a thing and the vaguely anticipated idea related to it is the product of largely unconscious activity of creative fantasy. The idea is transferred to the thing just with the aid of the “picture” endowed with a soul governing its behavior.

7. Imagination and intuition that beget symbolization owe their efficiency very much to the subconsciousness enabling the creation and recreation (“reading”) of a symbol by “getting” into the thing (its image), filling it with emotional impetus, and presenting it as an external manifestation of the personal will “living” inside it.

This is a reconstruction of the key features of the German classical contribution to the understanding of symbol. They constitute a framework to use as a prism to look at the nature of symbol through rather than a “monolithic” and coherent theory. However, it provides a necessary conceptual basis for any further theoretical analysis and a guiding thread for today’s scholars and, moreover, can serve as a “gold fund” whence they may draw inspiration and bucket up cues and hints for their own research.

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Retratando lo inefable. El crecimiento de la doctrina de los símbolos en la filosofía clásica alemana y sus descubrimientos e ideas a readoptar

La filosofía clásica alemana esbozó una primera doctrina de símbolos que, sin embargo, raras veces se sujeta a escrutinio. Sus ideas y descubrimientos se pasan por alto por completo o se mencionan de manera pasajera. El objetivo del presente trabajo es llenar ese vacío y señalar el entendimiento clásico alemán de lo que es un símbolo, de dónde viene y cual es la tarea que cumple. Se muestra que Kant y sus seguidores directos, Jacobi y Fichte, prepararon el camino para tratar los símbolos como un arropamiento sensorial del pensamiento; Schelling vio en los símbolos encarnación de ideas trazando la ruta a lo debido; Hegel imputó a lo simbólico la función del lenguaje primario de la creatividad, mientras que sus discípulos Vischer y Siebeck enfatizaron en la simbolización el papel de la personificación y del subconsciente y emocional. A manera de conclusión se presenta un relieve de sus logros fundamentales que aún son vitales en la investigación actual de los símbolos.

Palabras Clave: Simbolismo · Idea · Encarnación · Creatividad · Personificación.

The Growth of the Doctrine of Symbol in German Classical Philosophy, and Its Findings and Insights to Be Readopted

German classical philosophy has sketched out the first doctrine of symbols which, however, very rarely becomes a subject of scrutiny. Its insights and findings are either missed at all or touched upon in passing. To fill in this gap and outline the German classical understanding of what symbol is, where comes from, and what task performs is the aim of this paper. It is shown that Kant and his immediate followers Jacobi and Fichte paved the way to treating symbol as sensuous vestment for thought; Schelling saw in symbol an embodiment of idea tracing out the path to the due; Hegel imputed to the symbolic the function of primary language of creativity, while his disciples Vischer and Siebeck emphasized the role of personification as well as of the subconscious and emotional in symbolizing. In the conclusion, their basic attainments still vital to today's research of symbol are presented in relief.

Keywords: Symbolism · Idea · Embodiment · Creativity · Personification.

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