



“Being old is forbidden!”

This injunction, which would not have been disavowed by the students' movement in May '68, and which the present sycophants of transhumanism would readily adopt as their motto, was in fact uttered by Rabbi Nah'man of Bratzlay (1772-1810), a Hasidic master who always refused to be regarded as a Master.

The sentence was reported by Maurice Blanchot in an excerpt from *“Anacrouse” (Anacrusis)*, a fragment of *“Une voix venue d'ailleurs” (A Voice from Elsewhere)*. It permitted him to allude to the period of childhood *“which knows more because no answer will suit it”*.

For him, the Rabbi's interdiction is a warning to those who might be tempted by a complacent relinquishing of renewed questioning and by a resignation to be content with the one-size-fits-all answers of ready-made thinking which characterise senescence.

Indeed, human beings are ontologically “speaking beings” whom institutional dogmatism of all kinds tend to reduce to “spoken beings”. For the Freemason, the search for the lost word, at first collective and later individual, is the source of the emergence of the only worthwhile question, to be forever renewed by those who have not yet gone to the Grand Lodge Above, under the penalty of “being old”.

The question, for mankind, is in fact: “What is man?” and for individual men: “Who am I?” There can be no final answer to those questions because Freemasonry is not a place for ready-made answers. It is a place for questions to be formulated, even though, sometimes, it may be legitimate, even indeed lawful to ask.

In order to do so, it provides rituals which order individual as well as collective chaos, within the utopia which is the Lodge and the uchronia achieved by the hour of symbolic work. In those rituals, at most of the degrees, the Scottish Rite Mason is questioned about his symbolic age, which varies considerably as it ranges from one year and a century and more for those ages which are quantified. Even where the answers are qualitative ones, such as “I am very old”, “I do not remember” or “I do not count any more”, all Scottish Rite Masons who share the degree in question share that same symbolic age. By so doing, they relinquish any secular reference to time that passes as well as to time that lasts, they join together in a single common age, removed from secular age, excluding any kind of historical character and therefore any kind of aging.

At each degree, they also relinquish any secular or masonic identity other than that conferred by the degree. This common age is thus part of that shared identity made manifest by the similarity of the regalia they wear.

The whole process makes it possible for Scottish Rite Masons to journey permanently and in turns through the ages of life, from one year to one hundred and more, and from one hundred and more years to one year.

Thus, for each Scottish Rite Mason, “Being old is forbidden”.

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33rd

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