

# Symbols and Symbolism

This issue, which has been compiled by Bill Anderton, is an attempt to bring together several different approaches to the use of symbols in the *growth* process. We examine the symbol structures of the creative artist, the psychotherapist (from Jung and Assagioli) and the astrologer.

The human race was using symbols even before the development of abstract thought. The first grunts of communication indicating food, danger or sexual desire soon developed into symbols of the food itself, the kind of danger and the act of coupling. Language is a symbolic representation of the individual's perception and construction of reality.

A mystic would go further and say that the reality perceived by the individual is again a symbol of another reality, and that of another one, like a series of concentric circles.

The use of symbols adds an immeasurable richness to communication and to thought. Symbols can be as simple and as natural as "my love is like a red red rose" and a ritual handshake between former enemies, or as arcane as the horned head-dress of a morris dancer.

Symbols can also be dangerous when they begin to take on an existence of their own - the Cross of the inquisition and the crusades, the Crown to medieval Kings, the statue of the Buddha, the unwashed hair and nails of the hippy movement.

Used in prediction, symbols have an history of more than four thousand years. The whole of human experience was mapped out in the ancient Chinese I Ching using symbols as meaningful - and as mysterious - today as they were four millennia since.

The I Ching. The Book of Changes is less a method of predicting the future, as a representation of the present situation. It is at the same time a powerful model of the human condition built on the basic eastern symbolism of opposing forces - yin and yang. Humanity is seen suspended between forces - large and small, hot and cold, sour and sweet, male and female, heaven and earth.

For present day materialists, this kind of symbolism will seem like airy fairy nonsense: but they will cross their fingers to avoid bad luck, and understand completely the symbolism of the communist's clenched fist or Harvey Smith's two fingered insult. Their use of symbolism is no less powerful for being unconscious.

As Francis Wickes writes (in *The Inner World of Choice*) "Myth is not invented; it is experienced. . . . To know the myth is to know the man. It is also to know the god worshipped by him in secret, the god of his dominant desire, his cherished value or his greatest fear, for that god rules the life that lives itself in his unconscious and strangely dominates the choices he believes are made by his conscious will".

**Vivian Milroy**



**Brenda Rogers.** *Diving and Flying*, Villers Publications 1977.