

THE ROLE OF FREEMASONRY IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES: UNIVERSALIST PRINCIPLES AND VALUES IN THE CREATION OF AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY, SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL ETHICS

O papel da Maçonaria na contemporaneidade: princípios e valores universalistas na criação de uma sociedade inclusiva, solidária e ética social¹

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Abstract

One of the great challenges facing human communities today is finding solutions to establish a more solidary and inclusive society, where ethical issues prevail. How can Freemasonry make a unique contribution to this challenge? The objective of this work will be to review concepts and try to give an answer to this theme in contemporaneity. In this way, questions related to universalist principles and values, as well as the concepts of fraternity and tolerance, will be addressed. Since Freemasonry is a path of improvement carried out based on a commitment anchored in the desire and love of the Truth, it aims to create an alliance of humans who come together to work together in moral, spiritual, and intellectual progress. Being identified the problems of concretism of thought, as well as the tendency for each human and different group to isolate themselves in their dogmas and beliefs, harming existing human relationships, it proposes to counter this fact. That is, regardless of the different cultures and all the powers that have been instituted, the purpose of this Order will always be to bring humans together, bringing together the dispersed, without imposing or unifying.

Resumo

Um dos grandes desafios das comunidades humanas na atualidade, é encontrar soluções para estabelecer uma sociedade mais inclusiva e solidária, onde prevaleça as questões éticas. De que forma a Maçonaria pode oferecer um contributo singular neste desafio? O objetivo deste trabalho será rever conceitos e procurar dar uma resposta a este tema na contemporaneidade. Deste modo, serão abordadas as questões referentes a princípios e valores universalistas, bem como aos conceitos de fraternidade e tolerância. Tratando-se a Maçonaria de um caminho de aperfeiçoamento realizado com base num comprometimento ancorado no desejo e amor à Verdade, a mesma tem como objetivo a criação de uma aliança de Homens que se unem para trabalhar em comum no progresso moral, espiritual e intelectual. Sendo identificado os problemas do concretismo de pensamento, bem como da tendência para cada humano e diversos grupos se isolarem nos seus dogmas e crenças, prejudicando as relações humanas existentes, a mesma propõe contrariar tal facto. Ou seja, independentemente das diversas culturas e de todos os poderes instituídos, a finalidade desta Ordem será sempre a de aproximar humanos, reunindo o disperso, sem impor nem uniformizar.

Keywords: *Universalist Principles; Inclusive, Solidary and Social Ethics.*

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INTRODUÇÃO

"You shall know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free."
(John 8:32) Freemasonry from the past to our day...

When trying to write about what Freemasonry is, general traits can be considered as a school of progress, freedom and human fraternity, in accordance with the universal bases of its cosmopolitan constitution, free of any ties and defender of the liberating principles of humanity.

Its motto of Freedom, Equality and Fraternity is well known, and according to the perspective described in 1912 by Borges Grainha, "it should not descend into the ranks of party factions or the deification of personalities", but rather to a workspace where ideas are "explained in a developed way that all their followers understand, accept, love and practice them", with workers able to handle them in the store, "conveniently so that everyone is interested in them, discusses them and apprehends them" (Grainha, 1912).

But before addressing current issues, it will be of added relevance to go back in search of references in the past, and that is why a mixture of history and legend arises, to establish historical continuity. Of course, the vision we have of it dates back to the 18th century, but its origin dates back to the associations of cathedral builders, perfected and perpetuated since then – these builders and architects of these monuments had to be endowed with profound technical, scientific and artistic knowledge, consequently enjoying certain privileges and were protected by temporal and spiritual power.

1. FREEMASONRY FROM THE PAST TO OUR DAYS...

For example, Pope Nicholas III granted its members, in 1277, the title of free masons, which implied exemption from taxes, ordinary jurisdiction and obedience to municipal regulations and freedom of movement (Arnaut, 2009).

We consider the Regius Poem to be one of the oldest known Masonic documents, or also known as the Halliwell Manuscript, engraved in archaic English, with gothic letters on sheepskin, which can - through various parts containing legends, biblical episodes, descriptions of rules and arts - convey rules, regulations or statutes of the Freemason's craft and the corporation.

The respective text cited King Athelstan as responsible for creating these norms, calling a meeting of Freemasons to study and define the laws, rules and prices of the craft.

Here Freemasonry was referred to as Geometry, for the employment of sons of nobility in Ancient Egypt, and the same document already made reference to fifteen articles and fifteen topics with their rules concerning moral behavior, proper learning, punishments, and the seven liberal arts.

Additionally, the Cooke Manuscript published in the 15th century corresponds to another document that structures the Rules of Operative Freemasonry. The same followed the tale of the sons of Lamech, from the book of Genesis. From these biblical characters, guidelines were built over the centuries. Thus, while Jabal discovered geometry and became Cain's Master Mason, Tubal-Cain discovered metallurgy and the art of forging, and his sister Naamah weaving, Jubal discovered music.

In this sequence, as a way of maintaining such knowledge and discovering that the Earth would be destroyed by water and fire, they inscribed such knowledge in two stone columns. After the flood, Pythagoras and the philosopher Hermes Trismegistus discovered such columns, and the seven sciences were transmitted to Abraham, through Nimrod - the architect of the Tower of Babel - who taught the Egyptians, including Euclid, as an instructive discipline. The craft is then taught to the children of Israel, and from Solomon's Temple made its way to France, and to St. Alban's England.

Later, with the emergence of a new vision contrary to absolutism and aristocratic and clerical power, efforts were made to cultivate the values of tolerance and universalism – in the wake of the utopian Bacon and Campanella – and Freemasonry was transformed into philosophical or speculative Freemasonry. That is, the scope of the Order ceased to be the construction of temples, in concrete terms, as was evident in operative Freemasonry, to become, metaphorically, the construction of the ideal temple, the building of a better, just and fraternal world (Arnaut, 2009).

Such a renovating movement was started in England. On June 24, 1717, the feast day of St. John the Baptist, the four lodges in London met together and decided to create a federating body, called the Grand Lodge of London, seeking to unify and preserve the Masonic spirit and values, as well as the regularities of the stores. This need came from an England that, after the Glorious Revolution of William of Orange, recovered and sought balance on the political, social and economic levels, with Freemasonry being

considered as a new space of sociability where “free and good morals” men could live together, with different political and religious options (Ventura, 2013).

On this path, the theologian and preacher James Anderson, was in charge of collecting the old regulations (Old Charges), in collaboration with the French pastor Jean Théophile Désaguliers, resulting in the publication of the work in 1723 known as Constitutions of

Anderson, that is, the Magna Carta of modern Freemasonry, in which “A Freemason is obliged, by duty of office, to obey the Moral Law; and if he understands the Craft correctly, he will never be a stupid atheist or an irreligious libertine.”

In ancient and medieval times, Masons "were obliged in every country to adopt the religion of that country or nation, whatever that might be, it is now thought more proper only to oblige them to adopt that religion in which all men agree, keeping their private opinions to themselves, that is, being good and loyal men, or men of honor and honesty, whatever appellation or conviction may distinguish them; hence Masonry becomes a center of unity and a means of reconciling true friendship between persons who would otherwise remain at perpetual distance” (Constitutions of the Ancient Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons, under the aegis of the Grand Lodge of London founded in June 24, 1717 – Anderson Constitution 1723).

FigurE 1 – Anderson Constitution (1723)



Source: A History of Freemasonry in Portugal.

Such a change arises with the Enlightenment and modern reforms, and on the specific subject of imposing religion, this indeed consists, in essence, of loving your neighbor, doing good, being a good man, of honor and probity. It is for this reason that Freemasonry considers itself the home of union between atheists, agnostics and people of the most diverse creeds, consistent with the Masonic motto *Deus meumque Jus*.

However, the Bible continued to be the “book of the Law”, although it emphasizes the reformist conception. However, the liberal branch or also called irregular, does not require belief in God, admitting only good and upright men, who follow the principles of universality, fraternity and tolerance. These values also consider the recognition and acceptance of women in Freemasonry Lodges.

In the national context, Freemasonry is also closely linked to the History of Portugal, especially in the last almost three hundred years. According to some indications, it is thought that there existed, in Lisbon, a Lodge composed of members of English and Scottish nationality, working from 1727 and introduced by the English Catholic William Dugood, owner, resident of Lapa and friend of Alexandre de Gusmão. It would be known by the Inquisition as the “Lodge of Heretic Merchants” because it was made up of English and Scottish Protestants, regularized in the Grand Lodge of London in 1735, first with the order number 135 and then with 120.

The second known Lodge in Lisbon, Casa Real dos Pedreiros-Livres da Lusitânia, was created by Irish Catholics in 1733. There was an attempt to regularize it in 1738 with the Grand Lodge of London, which did not materialize. In 1741, the Lodge of John Coustos appeared with about 300 members, which remained active until 1743, when several members were arrested.

The reasons that explain this short existence are due to the fact that, on April 28, 1738, Pope Clement XII published the bull *In Eminenti Apostolatus Specula*, condemning Freemasonry. That same year, on September 28, the date on which the bull was posted in Lisbon, the chief inquisitor Cardinal D. Nuno da Cunha e Ataíde published an edict that constituted the first moment of the persecution of Freemasonry in Portugal (Ventura, 2013).

This situation only improved with the ascension to the throne of D. José I, with the Pombaline government, although, in 1751, Pope Benedict XIV renewed the condemnation of Freemasonry through the bull *Providas Romanorum*. Names like

Marquês de Pombal, Gomes Freire de Andrade and D. Tomás Xavier Lima (Marquis of Ponte de Lima) were crucial in this phase (Matos, 2014). Being a time full of contradictions, it is thought that the Marquis of Pombal was initiated in London or Vienna, having as an indicator element his belonging to the Royal Society, dominated by Freemasons, as well as the visit of the Lodge Aux Trois Canons, in Austrian capital.

Likewise, the coming to Portugal of the reigning Count of Schaumburg-Lippe, Friedrich Wilhelm Ernst, at the suggestion of Great Britain, in order to reorganize the Portuguese Army, contributed to the strengthening of Freemasonry. As well as the officers who accompanied him were freemasons, the contact with the Portuguese military bore fruit, evident in the emergence of Masonic Lodges in locations with military garrisons, as in the cases of Lisbon, Elvas, Olivença and Valença.

Another new phase of persecution arose, with the death of King José I, on February 24, 1777, and with the fall of the Marquis of Pombal, influenced by the more conservative sectors of the aristocracy and the Church, during the reign of D. Maria I. Subsequently, the climate of general war that Europe has known since 1792, as a result of the French Revolution, ended up, paradoxically, boosting the development of Freemasonry in Portugal in the years that preceded the passage of the 18th century to the following century.

In historical terms, it is at the end of the 18th century, beginning of the 19th century, that the spiritual orientation of agnostic Freemasonry appears, based on the Grand Orient of France. It is also at this stage that autonomous Lodges effectively begin to exist, and in 1805 a book considered to be the first work on Freemasonry in Portugal was published – *Letters on Framaçoneria*.

Later, in the Masonic Congress of 1905 and in the Congress of Free Thought held in 1908, the bases of a future republican regime were discussed. This ideology had many supporters, as it was a progressive vision, which intended to overcome the hardships of the Fatherland and the decadence of the nation. Such proposed regime was based on the secularity of society, which manifested itself through the separation of the State from the Church, the abolition of the official character of all religious festivals, mandatory civil registration, public hospital assistance and public and mandatory primary education for all the children (Arnault, 2006; Ultimatum of Great Britain to Portugal in which it imposed the obligation to renounce a vast African territory, which connected Angola to Mozambique, would give rise to the revolt of January 31, 1891).

Thus, this moment is considered to be of increased relevance in the history of Freemasonry in Portugal, that is, the proclamation of the Republic. On October 5, 1910, Freemasonry and Carbonaria were decisive for the success of the establishment of the Republic, and other Portuguese secret associations played a very important role in the movement. However, Freemasons and non-Masons participated in the revolution.

If, on the one hand, Machado dos Santos allowed himself to be enthusiastic, stating that the revolution was due exclusively to Freemasonry, Magalhães de Lima was more rigorous in stating that the revolutionary movement was the work of Freemasons. What is certain is that there was no lack of those who displayed their Freemason status as a way of associating themselves with the new regime. A moment of full affirmation of the new regime that enshrines its martyrs, was the funeral of Miguel Bombarda and Cândido dos Reis, with the presence of delegations from Lojas with their banners and some members in regalia.

Following the coup d'état on May 28, 1926 and with the formation of the Estado Novo, Portuguese Freemasonry had a turbulent period. For example, the day after the publication of Law No. 1901 of May 21, 1935, Norton de Matos wrote the following to the Minister of War: «I come to inform Your Excellency that, due to this law, the association of Portuguese Freemasons dissolves, I cease to be Grand Master of Portuguese Freemasonry and to belong to an association that, in obedience to a State law, ceases to exist» (Norton, 2002). And under the Salazarist and Marcelist regime, Portuguese Freemasonry practically ceased to exist until April 25, 1974.

Finally, the Carnation Revolution, by overthrowing the dictatorship, would restore democratic order and freedom. The triumph of this revolutionary movement unleashed on April 25, 1974, with the guarantee of freedom of association and assembly, caused a profound transformation in trade unionism, which had already been freeing itself from the corporate corset, generating associative movements of various types, generating a climate of freedom that gave Freemasonry the possibility of emerging in the light of day, after decades of secrecy.

On May 6, 1983, the first Portuguese lodge of female Freemasonry, União e Mãtria, was installed, with women initiated in France, being elected on March 29, 1997 the first Grand Master. The International Mixed Masonic Order Le Droit Humain began to work in 1980, having already existed in Portugal in the twenties of the 20th century, and in 2008 the International Masonic Order of the Ancient and Primitive Rite of

Memphis and Misraim appears, demonstrating Freemasonry in these three centuries of presence in Portugal, a living Freemasonry with a plurality of Obediences that reflect different ways of reading, assuming and living the Masonic tradition (Ventura, 2013).

In this line of thought, it can currently be considered that many of the ideals obtained after the victory of the liberals persist, namely the power of the State to be based on the equality of all citizens before the law, on the safeguard of individual rights, on private property and on the principle the separation of judicial, legislative and executive powers (Cravinho, 2013). Consequently, the values of fraternity, solidarity and justice are maintained, which influence not only its workers, but also the profane world.

It is currently considered and accepted by all Freemasons that the role of this Order essentially consists of a school of wisdom and virtue, its members being linked together by noble ideals, ideals of perfection, although they may differ between them, since they are free to adopt different religions. In the same way, they can and must freely express their thoughts, and for that reason Freemasonry should not be considered as a secret society, but a closed one, where in its Temple people gather behind closed doors who intend to teach and learn wisdom and virtue. It is for this reason, and only for this reason, that the Lodge is considered a sacred and protected space, in which symbols and emblems are visible, useful for personal improvement (Matos, 2014).

The language of symbols in Freemasonry points to the need that the Freemason has to recognize his own vulnerability, that is, he needs to become aware of his wounds, which represent the possibility of himself “getting sick” and suffering. It is through this awareness that each of us can put ourselves in the other's shoes in order to be able to assess his suffering and, in this way, exercise fraternity and solidarity.

1.1. Freemasonry in Solving Current Problems: Space for Creation and Response in Contemporary Society

As Freemasonry is an association of enlightened men, it can contribute today to the purpose it has always proposed: happiness of the human race. Such a goal will be devoid of political or religious interests. According to Jacques Ploncard D'Assac, it is “an association of enlightened men, having no other concern than the happiness of the human race – apart from all religious and political concerns – excluding only those without virtue” (D 'Assac, 1984, p. 8).

Freemasonry is an alliance of Men who unite to work together for the intellectual, moral and spiritual improvement of Humanity - and within it there are no social classes - there are degrees of knowledge (pillar of Teaching), executive functions (pillars of Economy with the Lodge Officers and the Worshipful Master or the Council of the Order) and jurisdictional functions with the Worshipful Master or the Grand Masonic Court. This path of improvement is carried out based on a commitment anchored in the desire and love for the Truth. Thus, Freemasonry is a school of virtue and wisdom, which operates through a "system of morals veiled by allegory and illustrated by symbols, and which is not based on a commandment given to us (...), but is based on on precise facts and laws of nature, about which there is no doubt." (GLSP, 2017).

In this way, it affirms itself as a "Family", a "Universal Family" in which being a Freemason is belonging to this family which is dedicated to the construction of the Temple of Truth, as mentioned above. For Luiz Silva (2016), one of the main elements that characterizes the family is welcoming its members and, therefore, family means "Welcoming". Often, in our daily lives, directly observing or being reported, we live with events marked not by reception and construction, but by rejection, exclusion, division and destruction (Silva, 2016).

One of the great challenges of today is the need to find new solutions to establish a more inclusive and supportive society. Everyone has the duty to get involved and follow the changes taking place in the world and seek to be in tune with their tuning fork, that is, based on what Immanuel Kant defined as a categorical imperative: the duty of each one to act in accordance with the principles and the values that you consider would be beneficial if they are followed by any other individual.

We coexist, but we often distance ourselves from each other and when that happens, we also distance ourselves from the world. We often live in conflict with the natural order of things and in disagreement with our biological dimension. We, by nature, have a need to explain what the world is and from this need modern science was born. We also need to understand who we are and who the other is, issues that lead us to subjective domains, such as: feelings, emotions, values and intuition.

By the way, in a modern society where consumerism prevails, most human beings have enough resources, not worrying about the sustainability of the system. Another inherent risk for humanity is posed here, that is, the global awareness of our place as a human person in this huge family. The detachment of isolating oneself, and not

contributing to the spirituality of others. Although the initiatory process is individual, despite taking place in a collective context, as studying, perfecting, meditating and reflecting to improve in your daily life can only be achieved by obtaining strength and sharing knowledge within the Lodge (Matos, 2014).

The essence of a community of “brothers” – such is what Freemasonry seeks to be – is the inclusion of the other. In this sense, given the contemporary challenges of building more inclusive and supportive societies, how can Freemasonry offer a unique contribution to this challenge? One of the possible answers can be stated as follows: it is necessary to reflect in order to rebuild. Faced with a culture in which Man is, at the same time, protector, product and by-product of a commodified society, it is necessary to question, understand and transform.

In our culture, linear thinking, binary logic, predominates. This way of thinking can lead one to believe that there are always antagonistic poles between which it is necessary to choose. The possibility of choosing is one of the foundations of freedom and democracy, values greatly exalted by Freemasonry, however, this is not that binary choice - it is either black or it is white - that limits the possibilities of exercising individuality, creativity and conscience. criticism.

A culture in which linear thinking / binary logic predominates creates minds that are prisoners of polarities, such as: either virtue or vice; either good or bad; or North or South, or East, or West. A thought strongly formatted in this binary logic hinders our perception of the diversity and complexity of the world, leading to poor communication between people, generating a logic of exclusion. It is true that the binary / linear model allows the creation of practical and significant results for the improvement of human life, such as those applied to mechanical, instrumental and operational situations.

What makes that model problematic is not its existence or the practical applications it creates, but the fact that it is seen as almost unique, exclusive. It is therefore important to complement that binary thinking model with a comprehensive/holistic thinking model, that is, thinking about the whole without leaving aside the parts. Silva (2016), in this regard, quotes the French philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623-1662): "I consider it impossible to know the parts without knowing the whole, as well as knowing the whole without knowing the parts in particular".

The motto “Thinking Well, Saying Well, Doing Well” should not indicate a reality on which we make a limited, narrow and fragmented choice between two opposite poles, but rather an unlimited choice, open to reflection, to weighting, capable of leading to the formation of a free and integral man, capable of thinking about the world in its complex nature. For this, we need an education that leads us to a balance between an objective and logical thinking model - essential for us to deal with the concrete, objective and quantitative situations of everyday life - and a thinking of a subjective nature, which includes feelings, emotions and intuition. It is in this sense that the terms "welcoming" and "complementarity" are very important in Masonic works, which are based on the construction of fraternity and egregore among the brothers, capable of being transferred to the profane life of each one.

That is, many of the problems that Freemasonry faces today come from its infidelity to this Truth that cures diseases and purifies, as well as the constant presence in a markedly concrete thought regarding its essence. The Freemason is invited and encouraged to know, desire and love wisdom, virtue and truth - these being life mottos practiced within each family, in their workplace, in their coexistence and consequently in society in general. At this point, the teachings of Freemasonry are fundamental, as wisdom and virtue do not serve to make the Freemason great, but to lead him to the Temple of Truth. And we know that there is no religion superior to the Truth, so there is no need for an institutionalized religion. According to Luis de Matos in his reflection on the Temple of Truth, he states that:

The Temple of Truth is the metaphysical place where the perception of truth disappears, the distortion caused by individual truth ceases and Indivisible Truth, as It Is, shines in all its splendor, Unmistakable, indistorting, ineffable.

To teach wisdom and virtue, Freemasonry works in a Temple. The meetings take place behind closed doors, in Loja, in a sacred and protected space, in which the symbols and emblems of each grade are visible. The word “temple” etymologically comes from the Greek *téménos*, from the radical “has”, which evokes a cut. In Latin, *templum* means “reserved place”, or “place apart”, a place separated from common places.

To teach wisdom and virtue, Freemasonry uses the veil of symbols. Symbols are the rules of metaphysical language, of the linguistic code shared by all its students – in the case of Freemasonry, this language is its Judeo-Christian matrix (Matos, 2014, p. 26 et seq.).

In this sequence, it is in this order of ideas that the Gospel of John is opened in its first chapter in all the regular Lodges at work, as it is in this passage that words such as “truth”, “light”, “work”, “knowledge” and “liberation”.

But it should be noted that access to the Temple of Truth is not accessible to the simple curious, it is necessary to desire and love the Truth, as it exposes our weaknesses, exposes our fears, our visceral villainy. And in this sequence, its Mysteries are little more than its origin, foundation and purpose. Essentially, Freemasonry is an initiatory school, encouraging its elements to know, desire and love wisdom, virtue and truth, practicing them both in Lodge work and bringing them to society in general.

Some questions may arise at this point, such as: What is the purpose of Freemasonry as a whole? what does it propose to do and build such elements that compose it? And what is Freemasonry for? When trying to answer in an objective and utilitarian way, one loses the objectivity of understanding that it is an Initiatic School and nothing else, this is just what characterizes its essence.

Depending on each person, the answers differ in their reasoning, however there are no doubts about this Order as an initiatory path. And this initiatory aspect refers to the true desire for an inner transformation, and after this, through an action of formal mutation, inner transmutation. Only in this way, the question of the initiation of Man to work on his imperfections and ambitions, to confront with them, will later be able to be an equally useful element to society in general.

However, this is not the image that the general population has of Freemasonry, that is, there is a ruinous public image of this Order and the elements that make it up in several countries. This situation is due to the very elements that constitute it, by accepting into its bosom Men and organizations that insist on calling “brothers” and “Freemasonry”, allowing them to represent the Order. Such representation and image differs, and in the Nordic countries it still continues to be extremely respected. On the contrary, in countries where totalitarian forms of government prevail, it is persecuted because it is understood as subversive, capable of generating free thinkers, entrepreneurs and non-conformist leaders.

Freemasonry in the 21st century must not be the same Freemasonry that was experienced in the 18th century, despite the fact that what we are projecting today can only be solid if it is well based on the foundations of its entire past, because its past was also based on Judeo-Christian foundations of primitive craft Freemasonry (Matos, 2014). According to Scawn Eyer, Freemasonry itself preceded Christianity, but it was the Christian matrix that gave a deeper meaning to Freemasonry itself (Hackett, 2014; Eyer, 2016).

Specifically, to think about its role in contemporary times, it is necessary to start from the basis of the thought system or mental model through which we build our world. In general, that is a model that favors isolated parties, to the detriment of relationships. Contemporary societies are governed by a system of thought that favors non-welcoming, division and distancing: we live in a society of unknowns, of strangers. Silva (2016) states that lack of knowledge produces distrust, and this feeds fear and is amplified by it. If we are afraid to get in touch with our feelings and emotions, we end up adopting a worldview in which everything seems external and objective.

To put into practice the social objectives of Freemasonry it is necessary to change the mental model. This is a broad and profound change that cannot be achieved through superficial and short-term initiatives. In the Masonic tradition, a reflection is made around the statement of “Thinking well, saying well and doing well”. Silva (2016) states that in general, we feel before we think, or, conversely, what we think produces feelings. Thus, it can be said that feeling and thinking influence each other, that is, they are in a circular relationship.

In conclusion, and reinforcing this perspective described above, Kaplan (2014) carried out a study that sought to analyze the structure of collective intimacy using as a model the way in which Freemasons develop feelings of friendship and fraternity, as well as how these are experienced in their private sphere and public. In this study, a collective intimacy was naturally observed within their Masonic works, as well as this way of interacting with others publicly, and of communicating went beyond the level of national and civic solidarity, trust and friendship. There is a kind of chain of union, feelings of familiarity and reverence in their private connections and in the collective/community where they are inserted. Finally, such elements face the public sphere with the same values and attitudes that face their ceremonial meetings (Gaonkar, 2002; Kaplan, 2014). We can conclude according to the perspective of Rémi Boyer:

Within the container that the community represents, the seeker will learn to play with the ties, to make and unmake forms, without this causing internal hatred or tearing the energy in presence. He will become aware that what he believes to be on the outside is found on the inside and that, therefore, wherever he is found, the community, the lodge, the Order, the world, remain in him. He is his own world, his own creation (Boyer, 2017, p. 66).

1.2. Universalist Principles and Values: Inclusion, Solidarity and Social Ethics

Proposing Freemasonry to achieve universality, fraternity and tolerance, the question arises right from the start of knowing how such an objective will be possible if it encompasses several obediences and rites. Just as some obediences reject women and brothers for their political, religious, philosophical options or for belonging to other Masonic families. According to Corneloup, it is “the Order that can realize universality and the Obediences that betray the Order”.

In this line of thought, its pretension of universality can also raise doubts, because when we consider Freemasonry as a living structure, it will have to adapt to the environment that surrounds it and reproduces within itself the fractures that it intends to solve, and that in certain point intends to regulate according to times and places.

In fact, in each country and over the centuries, different and numerous statutes have been promulgated, however, this does not prevent Freemasonry from having a certain number of basic principles, accepted by all the elements that make it up in all parts of the globe. Such a condition enables acceptance, the universal fraternity of Freemasons, their condition as a great family within Humanity, which centralizes the thought and action of the Order. Including, one can speak of a set of institutional characteristics common to all Masonic families that allows their identification (Lázaro, 1996).

Its universality is based on the principle that all men are equal before an entity that he calls the Great Architect of the Universe, and all the temples of the Freemasons are dedicated to humanity, tolerance, the most intimate union, the most perfect and unlimited and unconditional fraternity (Apprentice Manual, RAPMM, GLSP, 2017).

That statement of the universality of Freemasonry is anchored to a political and legal construction, whose production dates back to the 15th century and, mainly, to the 17th century. At the time of the Enlightenment, there was no consecrated affirmation of human rights, universally valid for all, but only regional or national rights, specifically designed for some humans, as was the case with human rights, which were part of the Declaration French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, 1789 (Grubba & Staffen, 2017).

Freemasonry welcomes in its bosom Men "free and of good morals" - and good customs are diverse customs - recognizing that cultural diversity plays an important role in bringing men together, and through dialogue it is possible to create advances in the protection and implementation of rights humans.

Despite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 having declared the universal character of human rights, since its inception the applicability of those rights has been discussed. Relativist, localist or cultural rights arguments were asserting themselves against the idea of a possible or necessary universality of human rights. In this way, they considered universalism to be a "Western cultural attempt at imperialist imposition of a single way of being in the world with dignity" (Grubba & Staffen, 2017).

Defenders of cultural relativism maintain that each culture has a vision of fundamental rights and that there is no universal morality, due to the pluralism of cultures in the world. These discourses question the universalist premise, considering that the attempt to universalize rights, a priori, is incompatible with other non-Western and non-capitalist ways of cultural life (Grubba & Staffen, 2017). In contrast, universalists argue that cultural pluralism cannot serve to cover up violations of human rights.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, referred to by Pottumati (2014), argues that multiculturalism would be a precondition for a balanced relationship, which in addition to strengthening the link between local legitimacy and global competence, would also represent a counter-hegemonic policy of rights humans.

This discussion highlights the need for dialogue between the parties, in order to avoid monologue, fundamentally on the part of those who "defend the radical preservation of cultural values or traditions, which may have been forged based on manipulations to maintain power" (Pottumati, 2014).

Universalism seeks to encompass cultural localisms and protect the right to difference, including respect for human rights, when there is an attempt at culturalist imposition regarding the choice of religion or belief. We can also consider that universalism is not an attempt at cultural imperialism, but, on the contrary, the attempt to prevent possible cultural imperialisms.

It is important to consider that this dialogue between universalists and relativists should not only take place in academia, but also within political, economic and socio-cultural structures.

The Masonic Works are spaces for debate and creation of value through the Art of welcoming multiculturalism as a condition of human universalism, which is why - regardless of cultural, religious or political ties - the values that aim to protect human dignity are fraternity.

In this sense, Freemasonry is unique in its objective of “gathering together the dispersed”, without imposing or even standardizing, always exposing the most impertinent questions, demonstrating its own independence from all powers, its rejection of any identification with a political model or specific religion, and its respect for plurality, which makes life richer and more evolved.

Thus, despite the individual characteristics, ideas or peculiarities of the Freemasons, as well as the cultural and societal differences described above, they develop their work always with the permanent humanist requirement and equally shared by all the elements that make up such Order, based on the values of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

This humanism is attainable through tolerance, which is one of the great virtues of the Order, better said, through active tolerance, which implies accepting the diversity of the other so that he accepts our own sensitivity, and also creating platforms of understanding, through ethical values. common, inalienable heritage of universal Freemasonry (Arnaut, 2009).

There are three traits that allow us to consider that Freemasonry harbors three major currents of thought: spiritualist, social and esoteric current. In the first current, it is assumed that the sacred is consubstantial with humanity, which seeks the “primordial man”, who through the Masonic tradition, tries that each Mason is a mediator of his own projection towards the universal and original purity. The social current emphasizes human activity, in which such elements participate in this family of thought and seek to participate in all activities of social and political life – privileging spirituality over materialism. Finally, the last current favors the search for psychological and paralogical “powers” through specific rites and initiations, values, knowledge and esoteric practices (Bannel, 2006; Eyer, 2016).

In reality, Freemasonry carries a concept of the world, based on a potentially universal system of representation and organization. According to Yves Bannel it has “a hermeneutic function of the world we live in, because the mere fact of believing that man obeys laws of a universal nature is not neutral and expands the field of action of reason”

because “the modern world does not limits to a country, a republic, a specific monarchy, but tends towards the construction of a universal temple, an unreachable horizon, but always present in the minds of the utopians that we are” (Bannel, 2006, p. 50 and 51).

Essentially, his orientation focuses on and analyzes new challenges of modernity, to work on the evolution of minds and behaviors, both individual and social, and propose values and ideals without historical or ideological connotations or manipulations.

As for the values proposed by it, the first corresponds to freedom of thought, that is, that which resists all forces that shape society. Thus, “truth” and “light” that Freemasons seek are a way of assuming universal freedom, whenever the deep sense integrates those moral values that allow its elements to combine reason, fraternity, free will and the path guys. And the second proposed value is the moral requirement, as it tends towards universality. That is, as Kant demonstrated, it is always universalist at the very least, especially when Masonic morality is a true ethics, which is based on reason and its values of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

Another universalist element of the Masonic message to consider is ethics. According to Comte-Sponville, ethics is a morality enriched by love. This fraternity sought and assumed by the Freemasons, which is nothing more than the love of humanity in its full diversity, in search of true solidarity, perfectly illustrated by the association of the two terms: equality and fraternity. Being able to keep an open mind to others and to changes, to the strange and the unforeseen and unknown are part of this Order, which seeks to forge and indicate a path, away from the formalistic and ankylosed need of the present, and from misunderstanding itself (Bannel, 2006).

According to Marques (1995) this moral improvement comes along with the intellectual one, so that the Masonic hierarchy is often interpreted as a gradual rise in the refinement of moral qualities, knowledge and love for one's fellow man and in overcoming any and all prejudice.

2. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This work of improvement and reflection materializes in action, at the philanthropic, political and social level, in which the Freemasons have been important in the stages of intellectual refounding of Europe. These, since the Reformation, have participated in the elaboration of values and the human and organizational project of

society, as well as in the creation of institutions that continue today to structure our framework of life and thought.

There may be those who intend to denigrate the image of Freemasonry and its importance in the past and as an essential element for a moral, ethical and humanist future. There may be those who do not classify it as a single Order that intends to place man in the very heart of man, but the works that it develops will continue against all adversities and impediments. The ethical and moral scale of the great figures of Freemasonry, and their contribution to the construction of a freer and fairer society are a pledge of the noble Masonic principles (Arnaut, 2009).

This was already the case when, through its elements, it sought and managed to create the Red Cross, the League of Nations and the UN and many other organizations, notably: the large mutualist structures, the implementation of ideas in terms of the abolition of slavery, end of the death penalty, secularism, equality between men and women, educational reform, creation of large training structures, mentoring and monitoring in terms of Family Planning, NGOs, Alcoholics Anonymous, etc..

In conclusion, guided by its civic, citizenship commitment, with special attention to the problems of each era, and clearly an initiatory path, by nature incommunicable, it is a true nature over time and its fundamental proposals are fully reveal. General traits, as mentioned by Yves Bannel, contribute to the idea that “being human is becoming aware of your dependence on others and knowing how to transform this dependence into freedom” (Bannel, 2006).

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