

A Brief Investigation of the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences - Origins, Masonic Relevance and Applicability in Modern Life

Doric Lodge 316 A.F. & A.M of Ontario, Canada - Committee of Masonic Education

Masonic teaching enthusiastically encourages its students to contemplate and learn from the seven Liberal Arts and Sciences¹ that originated in. At some point in our Masonic careers most of us will ask ourselves why is it that we find these seven specific areas to be more relevant than other disciplines, say geography or chemistry, or other forms of artistic expression, such as dance instead of music? Would the study of music or astronomy make me a better Mason? How? Why seven arts, and not six or eight or twelve?

Why do these arts always seem to be presented in a specific order, and are they inter-dependent upon one another? Are they equally important?

Where do they come from?

Without the answers to these questions it is *impossible* to fully appreciate the importance and beauty of the Liberal Arts and Sciences in a Masonic context. To expand our Masonic knowledge as we are instructed and truly value these arts, we must make an effort to seek answers. And such is the significance of the Liberal Arts and Sciences for the progress of human knowledge over the last 20+ centuries that, once found, these answers could become a superior foundation for our understanding of the Craft and our own place in history.

This paper is the result of a preliminary investigation about the Liberal Arts and Sciences conducted by the Education Committee of Masonic lodge Doric 316 in Ontario, Canada. Although the answers communicated here are not all-encompassing and do not conclude this study, they should serve to unlock the first few doors for those who wish to further explore this path on their own.

¹ Namely Grammar, Rhetoric, Dialectic (Logic), Geometry, Arithmetic, Music and Astronomy.

*Many years after, the good clerk Euclid
Taught the craft of geometry full wonder wide,
So he did that other time also,
Of divers crafts many more.
Through high grace of Christ in heaven,
He commenced in the sciences seven;*

*Grammar is the first science I know,
Dialect the second, so I have bliss,
Rhetoric the third without doubt,
Music the fourth, as I you say,*

*Astronomy is the fifth, by my snout,
Arithmetic the sixth, without doubt,
Geometry the seventh maketh an end,
For he is both meek and courteous,
Grammar forsooth is the root,
Whoever will learn on the book;
But art passeth in his degree,
As the fruit doth the root of the tree;*

*Rhetoric measureth with ornate speech among,
And music it is a sweet song;
Astronomy numbereth, my dear brother,
Arithmetic sheweth one thing that is another,
Geometry the seventh science is,
That can separate falsehood from truth, I know
These be sciences seven,
Who useth them well he may have heaven.*

- Regius Manuscript poem, A.D. 1390 ²
(British Museum / London)

² Translation from Old English by James Halliwell (1840).

What are the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences?

The starting point in our search will be to review what are these seven arts and what they teach. The seven arts are composed of two families containing three and, respectively, four arts – this “3+4” structure is critical to understand how these arts complement each other. We will establish the reasons for this division shortly, but first let’s review the seven classical arts and sciences.

The first family is composed of:

Grammar – defines the rules used to construct phrases, sentences, words, and connects these elements to communicate ideas in a given language. An understanding of this first art is necessary for all others to be learned.

Rhetoric – is the art of using language as a means to persuade. Once a student learns how to read and write properly, s/he is now prepared to manipulate words and sentences to express complex ideas. Mastering Rhetoric is an intermediate step before delving into the more complex domain of Logic.

Dialectic/Logic – is the reasoning which seeks to confront and contrast ideas, identify which is correct and which is not, remove ambiguity, and measure, compare, analyse, prove, and demonstrate facts with clarity. The word derives from the Greek logiké, feminine of logikos, "possessed of reason, intellectual, dialectical, argumentative", and from logos, "word, thought, idea, argument, account, reason, or principle".

Grammar is the mechanics of a language; rhetoric is the use of language to instruct and persuade; logic is the "mechanics" of thinking clearly, of comparison and analysis. Sister Miriam Joseph, PhD (1898-1982), a member of the Sisters of the Holy Cross and an author specialized in medieval education, described them as:

Logic is the art of thinking; grammar, the art of inventing symbols and combining them to express thought; and rhetoric, the art of communicating thought from one mind to another, the adaptation of language to circumstance.

Now we can proceed to second family that is composed of these four arts:

Arithmetic – (from the Greek word for “number”) is the oldest and most elementary branch of mathematics, used for tasks ranging from simple day-to-day counting to advanced science and business calculations.

Geometry – (Ancient Greek geo, “earth”, and metria, “measure”) is a part of mathematics concerned with questions of size, shape, and relative position of figures and with properties of space.

Harmony/Music - (from the Greek *mousike*, "(art) of the Muses") is an art form whose medium is sound organized in time. Music theory also relies considerably on mathematics, number theory and the laws of arithmetic.

Astronomy - (from the Greek words *astron*, "star", and *nomos*, "law") is the scientific study of celestial objects. Historically, astronomy has included disciplines as diverse as meteorology (study the weather), the motion of celestial objects, celestial navigation (in oceanic trade and exploration), the making of calendars and documenting historical facts, and even divining the future (astrology). In ancient thinking, it was considered to be the discipline of the motion of all objects through space and time. Astronomy/astrology was also critical to the study of philosophy and theology, as everything divine or spiritual came down from the heavens - without it what was left was considered as "earthly" and profane.

Why Three + Four Arts?

The first three arts (Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic) form the "three ancient arts of discourse", or Trivium (Latin for "Three Ways" or "Three Roads"). From ancient Greece to the late 19th Century, the Trivium was a fundamental path of education, used to train public speakers and writers to direct audiences to action with their arguments. Philosophers, lawyers, public servants, leaders, military officers and teachers relied on the mastery of the Trivium to perform their duties and influence people, the knowledge of discourse and persuasion coming originally from the schools of Aristotle, Plato and Socrates in ancient Greece³. As Napoleon Bonaparte said, "By our words we rule the world".

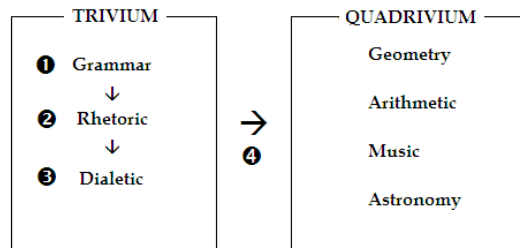
Later in medieval times the study of logic, grammar and rhetoric was considered a prerequisite for the Quadrivium (Latin for "Four Ways" or "Four Roads"), which was made up of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. The Trivium was the beginning of the Liberal Arts, and at many medieval universities this would have been the principal undergraduate course. The Quadrivium would complete the student's formal education⁴.

The Trivium does not address any specific subject, instead it teaches the student to read and write, debate, compare, analyze and make conclusions *about subjects*. The teaching of the Quadrivium assumes that the Trivium has been fully mastered - now the student is properly prepared to explore other sciences.

³ Some researches believe that the Greek philosophers derive their knowledge from Egyptian masters.

⁴ The contrast between the simpler Trivium and more difficult Quadrivium gave rise to the word "trivial".

Considering the rise in complexity from basic grammar to measuring the motion of planets, it is natural to conclude that the learning process must follow:



Or, “3 simple arts that enable you to master 4 complex sciences”, or still “3 arts to express, communicate and compare, which shall serve you as tools, plus 4 sciences that shall open the universe to be measured and understood”. About the Quadrivium, Proclus Diadochus said in *In primum Euclidis elementorum librum commentarii*:

Arithmetic is the Discrete At Rest
Astronomy is the Discrete In Motion
Geometry is the Continuous At Rest
Music is the Continuous In Motion

At many medieval universities, this would have been the course leading to the degree of Master of Arts (after the BA). After the MA the student could enter for Bachelor's degrees of the higher faculties, such as Music. To this day some of the postgraduate degree courses lead to the degree of Bachelor (the B.Phil and B.Litt. degrees are examples in the field of philosophy, and the B.Mus. remains a postgraduate qualification at Oxford and Cambridge universities)⁵.

To ignore this order would be the same as teaching advanced calculus before the student is familiar with basic arithmetic or knows how to read. This is the only way the student would receive formal education in ancient and medieval times, and this system has reflections echoed in our modern education system today. Once the seven arts and sciences were mastered, he would have completed his education path and would be a full or free man, able to better understand God’s creation and its mysteries⁶.

⁵ The subject of music within the Quadrivium was originally the classical subject of harmonics, in particular the study of the proportions between the music intervals. Music as actually practiced (i.e. producing or playing music as an artistic expression) was not part of this study, but the framework of classical harmonics would influence the content and structure of music theory as practiced both in European and Islamic cultures - *Wikipedia*.

⁶ Generally there were two paths to approach God, one through praise and meditation, and the reading of sacred texts, the second through direct observation of God’s creation and manifestations (nature). The second path evolved into hermeticism, alchemy, and (later) scientific experimentation.

Why “Liberal”?

Those who were slaves or not completely free would never receive full education, therefore the curriculum was named the “Free” arts and sciences – *Liber* meaning free in Latin (same root used in the word *Liberty*). Alternatively, we could also consider that once one achieves such level of education he would be free from the chains of ignorance and allow a person to govern his own life (‘know thyself’ being a critical part of the learning process) instead of being governed by mere circumstance. In fact, Zosimo of Panopolis, a 4th century Egyptian philosopher operating from Alexandria writes that the spiritual and intellectual enlightenment could allow us to become free from fatalism (e.g. our fate is already written and there is nothing we can do about it); and from the power of the stars over the fate of men (astrological or zodiacal influences, accepted as a fact at that time⁷).

The learned man is a free man, *liberated* by the sciences.

Where do they come from?

(Enter Martianus Capella and the “Satyricon”)



Martianus Minneus Felix Capella was a pagan writer of late antiquity⁸ and is considered the founder of the Trivium and Quadrivium categories that structured Early Medieval education. Capella was a native of Algeria in the Roman province of Africa, and appears to have practiced as a jurist at Carthage.

Capella wrote a curious encyclopaedic work called *Satyricon*, or *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii et de septem Artibus liberalibus libri novem* ("On the Wedding of Philology and Mercury and of the Seven Liberal Arts, in nine books"). The style is wordy and elaborated, and loaded with metaphors and allegories. Capella's encyclopaedia was fundamental in the educational formula renovations that took place from the

⁷ Such that the stars or celestial abode would sometimes be referred to as “the lower (or inferior) rulers” (over the fate of man). The upper or superior ruler was, of course, God (who physically resides above the stars and everything else in the medieval cosmology).

⁸ Circa 300 to 600 AD, the transitional centuries from Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages.

Christianized Roman Empire of the 5th century until newly-available Arabic texts and the works of Aristotle became available in Europe in the 12th century. These writing formulas included a medieval love for symbolism, and communicates virtues and vices in human or animal forms or as mythical creatures – a dog can mean loyalty, a wolf heresy, an eagle royalty and so on, making their interpretation to modern readers very difficult. The book continued to shape European education during the early medieval period and through the renaissance.

Satyricon's allegory, in the first two books, relates the courtship and wedding of Mercury (intelligent or profitable pursuit), who has been refused by Wisdom, Divination and the Soul, with the maiden Philology (learning, but literally "word-lore") who is made immortal, under the protection of the gods, the Muses, the Cardinal Virtues and the Graces. The title refers to the allegorical union of the intellectually profitable pursuit (Mercury) of learning by way of the art of letters (Philology). Among the wedding gifts are seven maids who will be Philology's slaves: they are the seven Liberal Arts: Grammar (an old woman with a knife for excising children's grammatical errors), Dialectic, Rhetoric (a tall woman with a dress decorated with figures of speech and armed in a fashion to harm adversaries), Geometry, Arithmetic, Astronomy and (musical) Harmony.

The remaining seven books contain expositions of the seven Liberal Arts, representing the sum of human knowledge. Book 3 deals with grammar, book 4 with dialectics, book 5 with rhetoric, book 6 with geometry, book 7 with arithmetic, book 8 with astronomy, book 9 with music. The academic work was a complete encyclopaedia, written in Latin, of the liberal culture of the time, and was in high repute during the Middle Ages as a school text.

The seven arts structured by Capella in the Satyricon would encompass the totality of knowledge to be acquired during the classical and middle ages and the renaissance for philosophical and theological thinking. They were the path to rationalise and understand the universe and therefore the natural manifestations of God visible to the learned men (remember the Regius Manuscript from 1390: "*These be sciences seven, Who useth them well he may have heaven*"). They were a prerequisite to understand the divine creation and get closer to God – although the language used in medieval texts is allegorical, to a 14th century man the path of the 7 Arts to search for God is neither an allegory nor a symbolic statement.

From time to time some thinkers would propose additions to the sciences like architecture and medicine (which were left out by Capella based on the argument that these two, although important, would "only touch earthly matters") or the visual and manual arts such as sculpture and painting as defended by Leonardo da Vinci and Leon Batista Alberti during the Renaissance. In Italy, and among Renaissance humanists, the academic matter was agreed upon around 1500, yet it required another century in Spain and England to be settled – at this time it was decided that the manual and visual arts, including architecture, would be embraced.

This later model evolved into the modern curriculum for Liberal Arts. In modern colleges and universities the Liberal Arts now include the study of literature, languages, philosophy, history, mathematics, and science as the basis of a general, or liberal, education. Sometimes the liberal-arts curriculum is described as the comprehensive study of three main branches of knowledge: the humanities (literature, language, philosophy, the fine arts, and history), the physical and biological sciences and mathematics, and the social sciences.

This painting was produced by Herrad of Landsberg, a 12th century nun and abbess of the Hohenburg Abbey in France. She was born about 1130 in the castle of Landsberg, the seat of a noble French family. When she was 35, Herrad had begun the work for which she is best known, the *Hortus Deliciarum* (The Garden of Delights), a compendium of all the sciences studied at that time. In this book Herrad delves into the battle of Virtue and Vice with vivid visual imagery.



(Right side - Herrad of Landsberg self-portrait, ca. 1180)

Philosophy - the Queen of the Arts



At the center of the inner circle we find lady Philosophy, to whom all the arts give service. She sits as queen of the arts, with philosophers Socrates and Plato under her feet. In the upper right corner we read,

"Seven fountains of wisdom flow from Philosophy, which are called the seven Liberal Arts. The Holy Spirit is the inventor of the seven Liberal Arts, which are: Grammar, Rhetoric, Dialectic, Music, Arithmetic,

Geometry, Astronomy."

Arranged around this interior circle, like spokes of a wheel, are the liberal arts:

Grammar



Grammar was called by the ancients the Janua Artium, the "gateway of the arts". Grammar holds a book and a rod (scopae) probably for punishing young students. Above Grammar, we read

Per me quivis discit, vox, littera, syllaba quid est.

Through me, everyone can learn the meaning of words, syllables, and letters.

Rhetoric



Rhetoric carries a tablet and a stylus. Above her ,we read

Causarum vires per me, rhetor alme, requires.

Thanks to me, my dear orator, your speeches will move the listener. St. Augustine (Augustine of Hippo) stressed the importance of

Rhetoric as a weapon to defend goodness and truth from the attacks of falsehood and lies¹⁰:

"Who will dare to say that truth is to take its stand unarmed against falsehood? Since the faculty of eloquence is available for both sides... [i.e. Good and Evil] why do not good men study [Rhetoric] to engage it on the side of truth?"

Dialectic



Dialectic, or Logic, points (perhaps to a debater) with one hand and holds a barking dog's head in the other. Some believe that the dog was used in opposition to the wolf typically associated with heresy. Above Dialectic it is written

Argumenta sino concurrere more canino.

My arguments follow each other rapidly, like the barks of a dog.

Music



Music is holding a harp, flanked by a lyre and an organistrum. Above her, we read,

Musica sum late doctrix artis variatae.

I am Music and I teach my art with the help of various instruments.

Arithmetic



Arithmetic holds a knotted string (an early form of abacus). Above her, we read

Ex numeris consto, quorum discrimina monstro.

I have faith in numbers and I show how they are related to each other.

¹⁰ On Christian Doctrine (book IV - AD 426)

Geometry



Geometry, the art of measuring objects at rest rightly is seen holding a yardstick and a compass. Above Geometry, we read

Terrae mensuras per multas dirigo curas.

With precision I measure the earth.

Astronomy



Astronomy holds in her hands a sort of magnifying glass or mirror and is observing the stars. Above Astronomy, we read

Ex astris nomen traho, per quae discitur omen.

I owe my name to the celestial bodies and I predict the future.¹¹

¹¹ Note the divinatory/astrological/zodiacal use of astronomy at the time, even by Catholic scholars.

Where did the Seven Liberal Arts go?

Understanding the origins and development of the seven Liberal Arts is one thing, while using this knowledge to our benefit and applying it to our lives is a different matter. Beyond our academic interest in the Liberal Arts, we should understand what they may have to offer to modern society. Our modern educational system is quite different from the classical and medieval systems that were once founded on the seven Liberal Arts. We may tend to think that this difference is the result of a natural evolution over time, and that our knowledge system must be far superior to that of medieval Europe – after all, we are much smarter than a medieval man - aren't we?

In absolute terms this proposition may be correct, as we do hold more information than a medieval man. But let's consider the same picture in relative terms – the amount of data projected at us in mere 24 hours is far superior to that received by a medieval man in his entire lifetime. Information about everything imaginable is received through our senses whatever we like it or not: from the news, text and images on our TV screens; paper publications, magazines and books around us; ads, signs and commercials that compete for our attention everywhere we look in our cities; the music in our cars, homes and personal devices; direct and indirect messages in our cinema and media; Internet and email communications, and so on. Our society has become extremely complex, and information of both good and questionable quality is so easily produced and disseminated that we get constantly bombarded by it.

The lecture presented by Dorothy Sayers at the University of Oxford in 1947 ¹² is relevant here:

For we let our young men and women go out unarmed, in a day when armor was never so necessary. By teaching them all to read, we have left them at the mercy of the printed word. By the invention of the film and the radio, we have made certain that no aversion to reading shall secure them from the incessant battery of words, words, words. They do not know what the words mean; they do not know how to ward them off or blunt their edge or fling them back; they are a prey to words in their emotions instead of being the masters of them in their intellects. We who were scandalized in 1940 when men were sent to fight armored tanks with rifles, are not scandalized when young men and women are sent into the world to fight massed propaganda with a smattering of "subjects"; and when whole classes and whole nations become hypnotized by the arts of the spell binder, we have the impudence to be astonished.

¹² In this essay ("The Lost Tools of Learning"), Miss Sayers suggests that we presently teach our children everything but how to learn. She proposes that we adopt a modified version of the medieval curriculum for new education methods. During World War II, she lived in Oxford, and was a member of the "Inklings", a known literary group that included Oxford poets, philosophers and authors such as C.S. Lewis ("The Chronicles of Narnia") and J.R.R. Tolkien ("The Lord of the Rings"). By nature and preference, she was a scholar and an expert on the Middle Ages. It is interesting how she is "searching for an ancient treasure of knowledge" that went missing, to save a corrupted society from itself.

Miss Sayers' grim analysis of the state of education in Europe after WWII is nothing compared to the little understood impact of the information revolution (i.e. Internet, computers, online games, social networks, SMS text messages, *iPods*) on our youth.

Since 1947 the study of grammar has been greatly reduced in public education, and is usually associated with the very basics of the official language of the country we live in. The study of dead languages is not even considered and usually laughed at as a joke, even though the basics of Latin could greatly facilitate and accelerate the learning of all Latin/Romance languages - allowing one to communicate with 800 million people in our planet who use dozens of these closely related languages. Just a rudimentary knowledge of Latin greatly reduces the effort of learning almost any other language, and it is the key to the vocabulary and structure of all the Germanic languages (such as English), as well as to the technical vocabulary of all the sciences and to the literature of the entire Mediterranean civilization, together with all its historical documents.

Rhetoric is usually limited to the writing of academic essays, and communicating meaningful ideas in an elegant manner is insufficiently emphasized on in schools. Dialectic has become almost entirely detached from the rest of the curriculum, and is usually practiced irregularly and outside school hours.

The results of these phenomena are quite evident today in the communication skills of the average teenager, who goes home after school and is bombarded by sexually-oriented pop music, watches "trash-TV shows" and plays commercial video games. A medieval student living in 14th century Europe could enter university at the age of 15 and would leave it knowing several languages and having the ability to name the stars, understand the arithmetic relation between the harmonics, read and write music, use plants to heal, know sacred texts and their meanings, and master several crafts. In spite of (and because of) the massive amount of information being created and projected at us today, one could argue that the old knowledge (and liberation) offered by learning the Liberal Arts has never been so missed as during the 21st century.

Applying the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences to Freemasonry

The following are some passages from Masonic sources that the authors find relevant to this discussion.

Speculative Masonry continues homage to these seven liberal arts and sciences and, they are an important part of the second degree. So when the Fellow Craft is learning of these seven liberal arts and sciences there is a connection between the operative Masons of the Middle Ages and today. Those operative Masons held a laudable ambition to elevate the character of the craft above the ordinary standard of workmen.

- History of Freemasonry

http://www.halpaus.net/public_html/Seven.pdf



The close connection between Operative Freemasons and the Arts and Sciences has long been a puzzle. They considered themselves apart and above the populace, which was illiterate. Even the clergy was mostly uneducated. And among the prelates only a few could read and write. The majority of the kings, princes, and upper nobility knew so little about books or studies that they almost knew nothing; even as late as 1700 Louis XIV of France, the Sun King, the Grand Monarch, could only with great labor sign his name or spell out a few sentences.

The answer to the puzzle is that the Gothic Freemasons who built the cathedrals, priories, abbeys, etc., practiced an art which of itself required an education; education was an integral part of it. To be such a Freemason was to be an educated man. Thus the connection between Freemasonry and the Arts and Sciences was not a factitious one, but a necessary one. In a period without schools an education could not be called schooling, college or university; it was called the Liberal Arts and Sciences. Since the Freemasons employed the phrase merely as a name for education, the fact that the classical curriculum had consisted of seven subjects is irrelevant to their history, and has no significance for interpretation of the Ritual.

After the system of Speculative Freemasonry was established in the Eighteenth Century the emphasis on education as not only retained but was magnified, and it was called by its old name. The two pillars were retained; a prominent place was given to the Arts and Sciences in both the Esoteric and the Exoteric portions of the Second Degree. Twentieth Century Freemasons feel as by a kind of instinct that education inevitably and naturally is one of their concerns; they take the motto, "Let there be light," with seriousness and earnestness.

This is a striking fact, this continuous emphasis on education by the same Fraternity through eight or nine centuries of time! The memory of that long tradition, the sense of continuing now what has been practiced for so long, is alive in the Masonic consciousness. Masons have seen education persist through social, religious, political revolutions, from one language to another, from one country to another; they are therefore indifferent to the labels by which education is named (else they would substitute "education" for "Liberal Arts and Sciences"). They are likely to believe, as against pedagogic experimentalists and innovators, that the imperishable identity and long-continued practice of education means that at bottom there is the curriculum, not countless possible curricula. [What is "it"?]; it universally consists of the language, as it is written or spoken and is its structure, of mathematics, of history, of science, and of literature; an apprentice in life must begin with these; what else he learns in addition is determined by what art, trade, or vocation he is to enter.

The fact that education belongs essentially to the nature of Freemasonry and ever has possessed a critical importance for the history of the Craft; is one of the facts by which the central problem of that history can be solved. There were hundreds of crafts guilds, fraternities, societies, skilled trades in the Middle Ages; a few of them were larger, more powerful, and far more wealthy than the Mason Craft, and they also had legends, traditions, officers, rules and regulations, possessed charters, took oaths, had ceremonies, admitted "non-operatives" to membership. Why then did Freemasonry stand aside and apart from the others? Why did it alone survive the others? Why did not they, as well as it, and long after the Middle Ages had passed, flower into world-wide fraternities? What unique secret did Freemasonry possess that they did not? It is because it had in itself, and from the beginning, had so much for the mind; so much of the arts and sciences; its members were compelled to think and to learn as well as to use tools.

It possessed what no other Craft possessed, and which can be described by no better name than philosophy, though it is a misnomer, for the Freemasons were not theorizers but found out a whole set of truths in the process of their work; and these truths were not discovered or even guessed at by church, state, or the populace. When after 1717 the Lodges were thrown open to men of every walk and vocation, these latter discovered in the ancient Craft such a wealth of thought and learning as must ever be inexhaustible; and they have since written some tens of thousands of books about it, and have expounded it among themselves in tens of thousands of speeches and lectures. Furthermore they found that from the beginning of Masonry, education had never been considered by it to be abstract, academic, or detached, a luxury for the few, a privilege for the rich, a necessity only for one or two professions, a monopoly of the learned, and something in books; they found that education belonged to work; this connecting of education with work, this insistence that work involves education, was not dreamed of in Greece and Rome, was not seen in the Middle Ages, and would have aroused a

sense of horror if it had been, and even in modern times is only beginning to be seen.

The uniqueness of this discovery explains in part the uniqueness of Freemasonry then and thereafter.

- Source: Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry

<http://www.masonicdictionary.com/arts.html>



Relate to specific roles in Lodge, to make it more relevant for everyone:

It is no mere coincidence that, just as there are Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences, there are seven Officers in the Masonic Lodge.

The hierarchy of Masonic consciousness and the seven steps by which a man may progress from Tyler to Worshipful Master of a Lodge by considering each office of a Lodge in the context of one of the seven Liberal Arts and Sciences (MacNulty 1991).

The **Tyler**, in his position without the door of the Lodge, is the only officer (indeed, the only member) of the Lodge to have direct contact with the physical world outside of the Lodge. Early 18th century records show that the Tyler was paid a fee to deliver the summonses to Lodge, and that he was often called on to introduce urgent messages into the summonses, relieving the Secretary of that duty (Jones 1950; Wells 1991). In some cases, it was the duty of the Tyler to give lectures in the degrees as well (Wells 1991). There is an operative, historical logic, therefore, to the fact that the Tyler is associated with the Art of Grammar, the Art originating in Greece which sets out strict rules for the structuring of ideas in order that they can be communicated and recorded in the physical world (MacNulty 1991; Encyclopaedia Britannica 1963, VIII).

The **Inner Guard** (once known as the Inner Tyler: Jones, 1950) stands as counterpart to the Tyler within the door of the Lodge. In that position, the Inner guard is the point of contact for the highly symbolic and more spiritual world within the Lodge and the physical world outside. No wonder, then, that the Inner Guard is associated with Logic, the Art which teaches rules for rational analysis. For Logic, as introduced by Aristotle, is an Art which is at once highly structured and extremely philosophical or somewhat removed from the physical world (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1963, XIV).

The **Junior Deacon**, a messenger between the Senior Warden and Junior Warden, is associated with Rhetoric, the Art which teaches persuasive and impressive writing by involving the feelings of the reader. Our earliest references to Rhetoric as an Art in itself is from Aristotle, once again, who considered it an offshoot from Logic (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1963, XIX). In terms of levels of Masonic

consciousness, the position represents an awareness near the threshold of ordinary consciousness, which relates to the capacity to recall events from memory (MacNulty 1991).

The **Senior Deacon** is a messenger between the Worshipful Master and the Senior Warden. He is associated with the Science of Arithmetic, a subject used for training in the manipulation and representation of abstract ideas (MacNulty 1991; Encyclopaedia Britannica 1963, II). The Senior Deacon stands, thereby, at the level of awakening.

The position of **Junior Warden**, the "ostensible Steward of the Lodge," arose from the old practice of having the (Senior) Warden serve for a full year before having been qualified for the chair (Jones 1950). The Junior Warden is associated with the Science of Geometry, a Science whereby we find out the contents of bodies unmeasured by comparing them with those already measured (MacNulty 1991, Encyclopaedia Britannica 1961, VIII). The word, geometry, means literally (from the Greek) "earth-measurement," but the ancients saw earth not as a physical planet, but as the primordial substance out of which man was created (Wilmschurst, 1980). Geometry is, thereby, synonymous with self-knowledge, the understanding of the basic substance of our being or consciousness of the soul.

The **Senior Warden**, second only to the Worshipful Master in both literal and figurative elevation, is associated with the Science of Music, which had a broader and more spiritual meaning of old than it does today (MacNulty 1991). The Greeks defined it as the culture of the mind as distinguished from that of the body (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1963, XVI). Greek Philosophers valued Music both in the ancient, general sense and in our modern, restricted sense as an educational element in the formation of character. In our modern sense, Music is based largely on the proportional arrangement of notes, distinguished by their frequencies, to form a concord of beautiful harmony. In terms of Masonic consciousness, the Senior Warden can be seen to represent the level of the soul; his association with Music being an allusion to the harmoniousness of the soul.

The **Worshipful Master**, elevated both spiritually and physically above any other Officer of the Lodge, is associated with the Science of Astronomy (MacNulty 1991). In ancient Greek and earlier Egyptian times, Astronomy was largely based on philosophical thinking and was more due to what we know today as astrology than to the Science of Astronomy (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1963, II). Masonically, Astronomy is the Science by which we are taught to read the wisdom, strength and beauty of the Almighty Creator.

The seventh level of Masonic consciousness, represented by the Worshipful Master is in intimate contact with the Spirit, and completes the continuum between the contact with the physical world by the Tyler and contact with the Great Architect of the Universe.

http://www.workingtools.ca/mason/A_and_S.htm

Jumping from Complete Ignorance to the Modern Quadrivium - Or How We All Became Short-sighted Specialists

After the industrial revolution in the late 18th and early 19th centuries our society has revolved around the values of individual drive, competitiveness and productivity (as they are associated with the generation of wealth)¹³. These values create a tendency towards intellectual specialization - generalists are definitely not in vogue today. Our education curriculum is structured around very specialized fields - Biology, Mathematics, Physics, Law, etc -a modern-day Quadrivium that includes tens of disciplines. Thus, when told about the seven Liberal Arts and Sciences in our Masonic education, we naturally ask the question “why these fields are more important than others?” and “what possible tangible and material benefit can I get from studying Rhetoric or Logic?”

Taken by and large, the great difference rests in where the emphasis is placed within the two education systems. Modern education concentrates on teaching specialized subjects (skip the Trivium and jump to Quadrivium, accelerate specialization and increase productivity), leaving the method of thinking, arguing, and expressing one's conclusions to be picked up by the student as he goes along. Medieval education concentrated on first forging the tools of learning, using whatever subject came handy as a piece of material on which to doodle until the use of the tool became second nature.

Are there any lessons that we can take from this?

Although it is undeniable that a complex and dynamic society demands specialists (after all, we still need neurosurgeons, astrophysicists and PhDs in applied economics), excessive specialization also creates silos. We meet brothers in our lodges who do not work in the same profession as we do, and sometimes that makes initial contact difficult. Misunderstandings abound in modern communications, when face to face contact is a luxury we can hardly afford (how many times have we seen a well-intentioned email attempt to clarify a misunderstanding, only to make it worse?).

Most of us are specialists in some field of knowledge. However, being a specialist does not mean to have a closed mind. As Masons and leaders (of our communities, families, businesses) we need to keep looking for what we have in common, as opposed to what makes us unique and different from everybody else. Our competitive society associates the term ‘differentiator’ with what makes you better than the rest (a concept very often confused with that of ‘leadership’). In a collaborative environment (such as a Masonic lodge - and supposedly human society) we should leave ‘differentiators’ behind us, and look for ‘connectors’, or what makes us belong to the same group.

¹³ Should these values have been so pervasive when Freemasonry evolved we would probably have witnessed a very different type of fraternity today. In fact, Masonic teachings - such as the study of the Liberal Arts - sometimes sound like distant echoes from the past, which insist in teaching that different values were once upheld by our ancestors - and are still important today.

A common denominator between two numbers is always lower than the highest denominator of one of the two¹⁴. That means that to connect with someone else we need to lower our expectations, disarm our defences, stop comparing and judging, and hope that the other person will do the same. These conditions for success have been mathematically proved in the fields of Number Theory, Optimization and Game Theory, which are employed today to develop complex negotiation models used in international trade, politics and diplomacy. Even primitive animals and plants follow these protocols when interacting with others, else they would not survive.

Plato, Socrates, and the scholars of antiquity intuitively knew about the relationships between all sciences, for they were also generalists and could read the “Book of Creation” – Nature. They understood that all sciences communicate how God’s creation works, as they all talk about the same fundamental things.

The collaboration/connector way of thinking is critical to establish dialogue and cooperation, and is often forgotten by Masons and non-Masons alike - it is quite hard to forget that we do not have to be better than everybody else, all the time. Human nature is judgemental and defensive. Once we are allowed to leave the status of a mere apprentice and we have spent enough time humbly studying the arts of logic and debate, examination and analysis, we become able to think beyond the small horizon of our current position in our lodges, our day-to-day problems and the tiny self-centric universes we live in. Beyond acquiring deep specializations, we improve our ability to control our emotions with the tools of reason.

The Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Masonic teachings *enlighten the same things*. They communicate the same ancient knowledge and urge their students to better know themselves and the universe around them. As Masons, or ‘good men being made better’, we find the Liberal Arts and Sciences to be important tools that help us shape the rough ashlar into the perfect shape.

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- Comments are most welcomed and should be sent to rnetges@yahoo.com.

¹⁴ Unless we have a prime number, in which case the *only* common denominator is One or “Unity” (a Pythagorean term). One needs to study the liberal science of arithmetic to fully appreciate the divine beauty of these numbers, their mystery still unrevealed to modern science and their rich philosophical implications.



A theme raised but not fully developed during the research of this essay is that of a theoretical society which would (1) have access to all the technological and scientific wealth available today, (2) have its citizens educated using the model similar to that proposed at Oxford in 1947, and (3) be governed by classical values. Such theoretical model would be close to a modern version of that proposed as a perfected society by Plato in his "The Republic", or other utopian societies outlined in literature.



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