

The Seven Liberal Arts Of Masonry

By Kevin Townley

The west is rich in its myth, pantheons and spiritual traditions, which incorporate the study of the relationship of man to his self, to his environment, and to the cosmos. Our elder brothers and sisters have created particular disciplines to assist us in our personal development. Beyond the personal development there is work that can be taken on to assist us in our group work. Perhaps the most significant tool that has been given to us is that of Masonry.

Although Masonry as an institution has strayed from its pristine intention, it still holds the secret of the mysteries and is in the process of resurrecting itself to its initial lofty position of custodian of the law and seat of initiation. The model of Masonry deals with both the personal training and transformation of the individual Mason as well as the development of the group consciousness.

As we know from the study of the seven rays, there are three primary and four secondary rays. In Magic, Alchemy, and Astrology, we express Rays 1, 2, and 3, respectively. As we move from these three primary rays to the full expression of the seven rays, we expand our studies from Magic, Alchemy, and Astrology to the Seven Liberal Arts. These tools give us a model in which we can develop ourselves spiritually, mentally and physically.

The seven arts are: Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy. Any and all of these Seven Liberal Arts can be seen as a means of spiritual development. These seven Liberal Arts are at the core of the training of Masonry.

Hercules, as tradition tells us, was a great warrior with tremendous strength. He was also versed in the seven liberal arts. The following

is a small explanation of these Arts.

Grammar

From a linguistic point of view, grammar is the ability to form sentences in a particular way which are very specific in their meaning. Grammar always follows the rules of the language being spoken. From the Occult point of view it is more specifically related to the exactitude in the execution of the Word Creative, which is now called the LOST WORD. This is more specifically related to the first chapter and verse of St. John when he says, "In the beginning is the word." The true initiate becomes deliberate in speech and does not allow any foreign aggregates into the creative word so that the initial act of intention is carried out through exact speech and exact action. This is summed up in, Right Thought, Right Speech, and Right Action.

Rhetoric

In today's political climate we hear the word "rhetoric" used frivolously to the degree that it has taken on negative connotations. Both Republicans and Democrats accuse each other of using noisy rhetoric that distorts and clouds the real issues. This is of course always a possibility, and has perhaps become the rule rather than the exception.

Rhetoric does have different applications. The negative application of this second of the liberal arts is that of confusion. If we can distance ourselves from this abuse, we can reacquaint ourselves with the sublime use of this most wonderful science. Rhetoric has the capacity to express the Good, the True and the Beautiful. The speaking or writing of prose, the use of figures of speech to illustrate a point, or the making of eloquent speeches that are

capable of inspiring and moving the people of a nation are positive applications of the science of rhetoric. This is the creative use of speech which is the poetic and liberal use of Grammar.

There is yet another application to rhetoric which is perhaps one of its most vital uses in terms of the use of speech in the western mystery tradition. This has to do with the art of debate.

Our understanding of debate as it is practiced today is the art of proving an individual to be incorrect, to embarrass them and to convince them of the error of their ways. The sublime application of debate is to express what it is that we know, discover the essence of truth, and expose the fallacies, glamour, and misconceptions that we, or our opponent may have. The intended result is the understanding of the point of view of our opponent and the aligning of either or both of us to a greater truth. As we employ the power of Rhetoric through the vehicle of debate, we must be ready to let go of attachments to a particular point of view and be willing to either demonstrate or receive the impact of a greater truth.

Logic

Our first impression of logic in today's world is perhaps an image of Mr. Spock telling Dr. McCoy, "That's highly illogical, Doctor." We can see the perplexed look on Mr. Spock's face due to some irrational and emotional action or statement given by Dr. McCoy. We can also see Dr. McCoy beginning to seethe with frustration at this Vulcan system of Logic. Logic has both a negative and positive side. The main flow of logic is that of following a train of thought that follows inferences that lead to a particular conclusion. According to Webster, "Logic is the science that investigates the principles governing correct or reliable inferences." We can begin to see how each of the seven liberal arts begin to weave together into one science. When we add Logic to Rhetoric and Grammar, the individual tools become more powerful in both expression and investigation. The

difficulty that logic can bring to bear is the possibility of following an incorrect inference. If the inference is incorrect, then the entire train of logic is doomed to be derailed. As an inference is proven to be true, then the following of that inference becomes a solid foundation to base logical conclusions upon.

To become a master of the art of logic requires a tremendous power of observation and the application of reason.

Arithmetic

The fourth of the seven liberal arts is in some ways the most simple. What it teaches to the observant student is the operation of the entire creative process of the cosmos. Not too shabby!

In an ancient Rabbinical text called the Sopher Yetzirah, there is an explanation of the creation of the universe by a being named **אֵל**. It is written in verse 1:1, that **אֵל** created the universe using numbers, letters, and words. Number is the first material used in manifestation.

Think for a moment about what has been developed over the past centuries concerning mathematics. Arithmetic in the modern understanding is the lesser or more simple compartment of mathematics. It is in fact arithmetic that is the foundation of mathematics. All the complex computations and derivations that have evolved in math have arithmetic as their fundamental essence.

To study arithmetic is to study the underlying qualities of creative forces and how they come together for the sake of creating complex forms. Arithmetic is a powerful tool in the development of logic.

The following is an example of how numbers are intimately interrelated.

Geometry

Webster defines geometry as, "The branch of mathematics that deals with the deductions of properties, measurement and relationships of points, lines, angles, and figures in space from their defining conditions by means of certain assumed properties of space."

Geometry is much more than a branch of mathematics. This branch of the seven liberal arts defines the qualities and functions of the various kingdoms of nature. The crystallization of galena in cubic form as opposed to the patterns in a plant cell that photosynthesizes light derive their differences through geometry.

It is interesting to note that certain relationships and conditions in geometry that create measurable and definable forms are themselves unknowable and at best can only be approximated. They are called irrational. From these unknowable and irrational qualities the world of name and form emerge in the various platonic solids. An example of such irrational qualities is the square root of 2, which is by estimation, 1.414213562... The pattern does not repeat itself and appears to be random yet it is through this irrational quality that the square or right angles are created. When the two diagonals of a square are equal, then the angles at the corners equal 90 degrees. How is it that such an unknowable quality can create a knowable form.

We find a similar situation with the number π , which is used in determining the circumference or area of a circle. The fraction of π is 22/7. Articulated as a decimal, it is 3.142857143... The numbers go on infinitely without repeating a particular pattern. Yet this irrational number is the unknowable quality that defines the circle that is knowable.

Once again the same phenomenon arises with the number. It is approximated with the decimal 1.618. In a ratio it is explained in the golden mean 3:5:8. This irrational number is the intelligence behind the formation of a spiral nebula, the proportions of the nautilus shell, or the distance from the center of a hurricane to its spiraling arms on the exterior.

Music

To the terrestrial man music is perhaps the most sublime of the first six of the seven liberal arts. Music encompasses all of the previous five. There are the ABCs of music or perhaps better stated the DO RE MEs which

would be associated with Grammar. Once one has an understanding of the basic tools of music, the rhetorical qualities can come forth where great beauty of sound can be displayed. There is a stream of logic that allows the building of themes and ideas with the composition of music. The relationship between various notes in harmony and intervals participate in both arithmetic and geometrical proportions. Music is truly the synthesis of the previous five liberal arts.

Astronomy

This is the science that deals more specifically with the extra-terrestrial. The science of Astronomy brings man into a bigger picture. Webster defines this science as, "the science that deals with the material universe beyond the earth's atmosphere." Beyond the earth's atmosphere? This takes humanity to a place where he is considering environments beyond his own.

In the Trans-Himalayan teachings we are taught that these heavenly bodies are centers of consciousness that extend their influence to each and every one of the individuals upon this planet.

Plato speaks of the music of the spheres. These are the vibratory soundings of the great astronomical bodies of which tens of thousands can be experienced by the human sense of sight.

As we take a closer look at astronomy, we can see that it truly is a synthesis of all the other six liberal arts. To the terrestrial human, this statement may be looked at as a daring falsehood. He may consider me not very sober to make such a statement.

A Synthesis of the Seven Liberal Arts

We need only to look at what the Chaldeans held concerning the letters of their alphabet and the heavenly bodies. The Chaldeans of Persia held one of the most expansive cosmologies, which was able to take in all of the relationships of Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy. This alphabet is a vehicle that

explains the workings of the cosmos.

The Chaldean alphabet, one of the most complex of symbol systems, offers us an application of the seven liberal arts in the most profound of ways. The entire western tradition can be accessed through this letter system. The letters themselves give us the written word and the actual grammar that is used in mundane speech. This speech can be elaborated into an art through the science of rhetoric. As one studies the letters and the system in which they work, one will find an unflinching logic that will lead the student into an exciting journey in the discovery of the self.

Each of the Chaldean letters holds a numerical value that gives the entire basis for arithmetic. Differential equations and algebra are not the focus of this system but simple number relationships and functions. Each of these letters has a particular musical note. This gives us the entire Pythagorean music scale of 12 notes. Beyond this each of the letters represent either a sign or a planet. This brings in the seventh of the liberal arts, Astronomy.

If we take a close look at the seven liberal arts, we can begin to see that each of them deals with relationships. Relationships to words as seen in Grammar, and Rhetoric; the conclusions drawn, due to certain relationships through the power of reason and logic; the relationships of numbers in arithmetic; the relationships of solids in time and space as studied in geometry; the relationships of sound and vibration in music; and the relationships of the stars and planets as they course through the heavens.

There are seven liberal arts. They each, however, represent $1/7$ of a circle. This presents a very peculiar situation regarding a balance of adeptship in each of these arts. Being master of just one part of the circle is insufficient to become a master of wisdom of the entire circle.

Using the science of Geometry we find that the number 7 is the only whole number from 1 through 10 that will not go into 360 evenly. Not only will it not go in evenly it is actually

an irrational number of 51.42857143... This offers us a great mystery since the number 7 is used frequently to describe certain principles or facts in our tradition.

There are the 7 chakras, the seven sacred planets known to the ancients, the 7 rays of initiation, and the 7 metals of alchemy. The list does not end here.

The actual balancing of the number 7 is accomplished through intuition and the state of Grace. There is no logical way one can describe the process of inscribing the 7 within a circle yet the form itself, the heptagon~ exists.

As we tie all of this together, we see a tradition in which certain universal truths may be communicated to the student of that tradition.

A Call to Action

Since the announcement by the Hierarchy of the reappearance of the Christ, the need for disciples to answer the call to service has been sounded. If we fancy ourselves as disciples, and most of the readers of these pages either are or are very close, then it is time to take up the work of service which we all applaud but tend to leave for the other guy. The full implication of our spiritual tradition is not resting in great libraries nor in the caves in India. It resides within our bodies, minds, and souls, and they are being called to action. It is indeed joyful to muse about great masters and group work or speak blissfully of devas and angelic beings present in our midst. The time for musing and talking is over. The time for action is at hand. We must come together in thought, word, and deed and not in platitude alone.

The window of opportunity is open to us. Unless we move into action we will be left with a missed opportunity and must wait for yet another cycle to take on the group work that is so greatly needed. This service, this group is the true work and essence of our western spiritual tradition, in which Masonry plays an important part.

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*Kevin Townley has been a lifelong student of Western Hermeticism. Early on in his studies, he became drawn to the writings of Dr. Paul Foster Case and has been a member of the B. O. T. A. for 11 years. Kevin is currently the Vice President of LPN- USA, an esoteric organization dedicated to the study and practice of **Qabalah and Laboratory Alchemy**. His studies have led him around the world seeking original Rosicrucian and alchemical texts, as well as those individuals who practice this Royal Art.*

*Kevin's book, **The Cube of Space, Container of Creation** (Archive Press, Box 11218, Boulder, CO 80301; paperback edition available) gives detailed information about the expression of the seven rays through the model of the cube. Kevin's has a new book titled **Meditations on The Cube of Space,***