

Geometry. In Geometry, we move from numbers to shapes. The word itself means ‘earth measure’ and it deals with the properties of points, lines and angles, surfaces and solids. An operative mason uses the science of Geometry more than any of the others, while the speculative mason finds it a reasonable way of applying mathematical principles to his morals. The importance of Geometry is stressed in the Charge after passing, when the candidate is informed: *“The study of the liberal Arts, which tends so effectively to polish and adorn the mind, is earnestly recommended to your consideration, especially the Science of Geometry, which is established as the basis of our Art”*.



Music. There is a mathematical structure to music and it was probably perfected as a science by Johann Sebastian Bach whose fugues and counterpoint were mathematically worked out in such a way that he knew they would sound harmonious even without listening to them before he wrote down the sounds. One writer describes Music as ‘the concorde of sweet sounds’; as Music elevates the generous sentiments of the soul, so should the concorde of good feeling reign among the Brethren.

Astronomy. Astronomy is the science which embraces not only all the earth but also all the heavens. We do in fact recognise the Great Architect of the Universe as the one we look up to. Suffice it to say that we are part of the greater plan and even we on this tiny planet in a small solar system in a minor galaxy can play our part in bringing peace and harmony to our fellow beings.

So, how many of these liberal arts and sciences will lie within the compass of your attainment? Perhaps it is just as well that we are charged to ‘study’ them and not expected to understand them all – but after all that is what a ‘daily advancement’ is all about.



District of Cyprus Mentoring Programme

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Making a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge

The Liberal Arts and Sciences

In the Second Degree you were told by the WM “...you are expected to make the liberal Arts and Sciences your future study that you may the better be enabled to discharge your duties as a Mason and estimate the wonderful works of the Almighty ...”. There are seven liberal Arts and Sciences in number and these are named as Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy. Scholars in the Middle Ages divided these Arts and Sciences into two groups, three in one and four in the other. The Arts group of Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic became known as the *Trivium* or ‘Way of Three’, whilst the Sciences group of Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy formed the *Quadrivium* or ‘Way of Four’.

Because the Trivium group of Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic had to be learnt first it was considered by some to be a sort of preparatory study and therefore inferior to the Quadrivium group of Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy, and those who had progressed to the mathematical sciences tended to look down on those first three as if they were unimportant; so much so that the word ‘trivial’ came to be applied to any matter of little importance and we still use the word in that same sense today without realising that we are slandering three of the Liberal Arts!



THE TRIVIUM

Grammar. One dictionary defines Grammar as ‘the science of language from the points of view of pronunciation, inflexion, syntax and historic development: the art of the right use of language by grammatical rules.’ In other words it is important to know how to read, write and understand good English; and we as Freemasons are fortunate that the ritual of the Craft became standardised at a time when the English language was at its clearest and most intelligible. Some of the words may seem old-fashioned to modern ears but the meaning still comes through without difficulty.

Rhetoric. We must be able to speak that language fluently, accurately and with meaning. Rhetoric, is defined as ‘the theory and practice of eloquence; the whole art of using language so as to persuade others.’ In many cultures there are story tellers who recite the history of their species, and these stories are passed down from generation to generation. Unfortunately, this does mean that the stories do not remain constant and change with time and lapses of memory. Our ritual is of necessity written down, to ensure it remains constant throughout the ages, but, like poetry, it is actually designed to be spoken. We are telling stories to candidates and rhetoric allows us to do so in dramatic form. The word ‘Rhetoric’ is derived from the Greek *Rhetor* who was a public speaker or ‘town crier’ of old. Clarity of diction therefore, with good use of grammar, is the object of Rhetoric.

Logic. So, we learn to read, write and speak our language; then we must learn to reason; we must apply logic. The word ‘Logic’ comes from the Greek *logos* meaning ‘reason’ or ‘true word’ and appears in the Old Charges of masonry as ‘the art that teacheth to discern truth from falsehood.’ The dictionary calls it ‘the science and art of reasoning correctly.’ Logic enables us to speculate on our ritual and to find the hidden meaning. Logic is a tremendous subject with proper rules that must be followed to be sure of coming to correct conclusions. Far from being ‘trivial’ in the modern sense, Logic is the basis of all sound argument, and without it the other sciences could never be properly understood.

THE QUADRIVIUM

Arithmetic. Having learnt how to deal with words we proceed to dealing with numbers and the first of the sciences – Arithmetic. The Greek word for ‘number’ is *arithmos* and the Greek for ‘art’ is *techne*, so our word Arithmetic sums up the arts and sciences of numbers. In its simplest form arithmetic is no more than straightforward counting and the four regular exercises of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division; but we must remember that it also includes more complicated disciplines such as Algebra, Logarithms and Calculus. It is therefore possible to make a daily advancement in Arithmetic and yet still have more to learn!