



UGLE Oration

The Journey Progresses

Index

The Seven Liberal arts and Sciences.

Summary

Through a study of the Seven Liberal arts and Sciences was itself a journey which completed the worldly man, who must first know his world, before moving to learn what lies beyond.

Keywords

Second-Degree, Seven, Liberal, Arts, Sciences

The Journey Progresses - The Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences

When we journey towards knowledge we not only gain information but we gain experience. It is this combination of information and experience which leads to wisdom. This is why learning is so much better approached as a journey; a journey which leads us to grow in stature rather than simply inflate with data.

As Freemasons, we are familiar with the idea of a journey towards understanding and learning. But beyond the walls of the Lodge such an idea is now unusual. Today, learning seems to focus more upon gathering and retaining data; the idea of a gradual journey of unfolding and growth has been lost somewhere in our theories of education. But this was not always the case. In the past all learning was a journey and residues of this ancient practice have been retained within Freemasonry revealing, incidentally, the antiquity and validity of the tradition to which we are the modern heirs.

In the Second-Degree, we are told that having learned the principles of Moral Truth and Virtue in the First Degree the candidate is now encouraged to research into the hidden mysteries of Nature and Science. And how do we do this? Further information is given in the Third-Degree: that in the second we contemplate the intellectual faculty and the principles of intellectual truth while studying the *'paths of heavenly science'* and *'the secrets of nature'*.

We follow an ancient path laid out by the wise; a path by which a man might grow familiar with the full extent of human discovery. A formal course of learning was devised by the ancient Greeks: Plato, writing in the early 4th century BC, held that the aim of education was to bring each person towards the recognition and knowledge of the One source of all being. This knowledge not being simply intellectual understanding but deriving from experience. Thus education involved the whole person - the body, the mind and the spirit. And, we would add, the heart, for any learning which is not infused with love is a learning which is unbalanced.

In medieval Europe the path to human learning was divided into seven sections, the seven liberal Arts and Sciences: Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy. The word 'liberal' comes from the Latin word *liber* which means 'free', the same source of the word 'liberty'. They were so called to distinguish them from the 'mechanical arts' in much the same way as speculative Freemasonry is distinguished from operative, even though the two are linked.

This shows that the understanding is moving from the literal to the symbolic; it is a stage towards understanding the way of reading symbolism and obtaining access to that truth which is both hidden and revealed by this diagrammatic or artistic means.

Our Second-Degree is a transition where we learn the intellectual basis of our symbolic representation of truth before we can move on to seek to experience that truth directly even though this may take a lifetime; at least we will know the direction in which to search.

Grammar teaches us to understand the writings of others in order that we may learn. Rhetoric concerns the skill of effective expression in order that we may persuade and teach. Logic gives us the ability to investigate and understand what we experience.

Arithmetic is the science of numbers, Geometry of measurement and form; Music teaches of time, tones and rhythm - these three all concern the harmony and proportion of the created world; they concern the multitude of forms which emanate from the One divine source - which we call the Great Architect of the Universe. And, Astronomy leads us into contemplation of the heavens that we might consider the infinite works of the Great Architect.

So when we are told, in the Second-Degree, that we should make a particular study of the seven liberal arts and sciences, we are being encouraged to use our mind correctly; to see the world we live in; and to know the complex nature of it; while at the same time discovering the harmony and order which lies beneath. In this way we are correctly preparing ourselves to move beyond this superficial understanding of our world towards that greater reality which lies behind it.

Passing through a study of these subjects was itself a journey which completed the worldly man. For a man must first know his world, both its dark shadows and its beauty, before moving to learn what lies beyond.

The task which confronts us all is to know and love the mundane world without becoming trapped by its attractions, without forgetting that it is but a mirror, a reflection of the greater and eternal Divine world. Freemasonry will never let us forget this for, having guided us on our journey through the world, having allowed us to enter the Middle Chamber and gain our reward, it begins to train us for that even greater journey which, eventually, we all must make; the journey which leads to the Holy of Holies and into the presence of Divinity itself.

##END##

Recommended use of Papers

Papers offer a simple, direct means of advancement in a particular aspect of Masonic knowledge. They can be used in a variety of ways:

- Read at home for private study
- Shared for pre-reading by members of a discussion group
- Read aloud in Lodge or Chapter, or in an LOI/COI/new members forum
 - Followed by 'any questions'
 - As a precursor to a discussion (*in which case much more time is needed, possibly more than double that allocated to the paper itself*)
 - Supported by audio-visual aids, if necessary.

They can be delivered by a single person or split into bite-sized pieces and read by multiple presenters (*in which case, the speaker(s) should have read and practiced the delivery of the paper beforehand*).

If the paper is to be used to introduce a discussion, the presenter will need to have thought about the material, done a little research, and prepared some open questions to engage with the audience. Kipling's dictum can be of help in preparing open questions, which should begin with one of his 'serving men', as follows: *'I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew). Their names are, What and Why and When and How and Where and Who'*.
Rudyard Kipling

If used as part of an event, the paper should be advertised and promoted by way of trailers, flyers and announcements, in summonses, letters, emails, notice boards, and on social media.

For further papers and other learning materials visit "Solomon" at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

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