

THE PRACTICING FREEMASON

ACCESSIBLE PHILOSOPHY FOR WORKING CLASS SCHLUBS



The Five Orders of Architecture - Part I

The Five Stages of Living a Well-Lived Life

The Five Orders of Architecture stand out in Freemasonry as the most direct symbolism in the Middle Chamber lecture and yet possibly the most confusing. While Freemasonry cloaks itself in symbolism taken from the operatives, it goes to great lengths to explain the symbolism of its working tools, at least superficially. The section of our lecture that finally covers architecture leaves us empty and scratching our heads on what it actually means and how we are supposed to incorporate that knowledge to improve our lives, beyond the simple benefit of knowing more interesting things to entertain others at cocktail parties.

If, however, we add the context of the Fellowcraft's working tools, and the rest of the Middle Chamber lecture, we can see that the main themes of these lectures carry through into the Five Orders. The working tools of the second degree are about how we best interact with others. We do so through having a sense of morality, an ethical code, and treating others with fairness. The Middle Chamber lecture is about how the universe has a natural sense of order and design.

There is a section in the lecture that speaks about it being to the Greeks and not the Romans to whom we are indebted for what is great, judicious, and distinct in architecture. This, of course, has a plain, surface meaning, but the interesting twist of Freemasonry is that many times when Masons use the word Freemasonry, they mean Geometry, and when they say Geometry they actually mean Morality. So could the "Three Greeks" in this case possibly mean not only the columns, but the three fathers of all Western Philosophy, Socrates,

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Steal This Idea

The Calling Card

I have to admit, the first time I ever saw a brother take out his card, which contained solely Masonic information on it, and hand it to someone he was just meeting, I cringed. I suppose it's the result of being raised in a hyper-dignity culture where we're all expected to be too humble to think that anyone should ever bother to learn our name.

But recently I was watching the *Gilded Age* on HBO and you know what? It's a pretty practical idea for Freemasons.

How many brothers do we meet who kindly give us their name only to have it go into one ear and out the other? They tell us their mother lodge, what appendant bodies they're in, an event they're looking forward to, etc., and we're so distracted with our dinners or starting the meeting that we miss it.

Our brains are so frazzled with a constant stream of radiant information from every direction, why do we make things so hard on ourselves by demanding of our brains that we memorize

Plato, and Aristotle?

Possibly, but from the lessons of the Common Gavel we know that a stone is a metaphor for ourselves or immortal soul, and that a building is essentially a social structure, and how we fit into it, creating sort of a single harmonious being, so rather than cherry pick a few lines here and there, can we apply this metaphor to the entire passage?

The Orders section begins in the following way:

By order in architecture, is meant a system of all the members, proportions and ornaments of columns, and pilasters; or, it is a regular arrangement of the projecting parts of a building, which, united with those of a column, form a beautiful, perfect and complete whole.

If we redefine our architectural terms as morality terms we can arrive at something like this:

By order in morality, is meant a system of all the reason, ethics, and virtues of a moral school; or, it is a regular arrangement of the self or society, which, united with a school of morality, form a beautiful, perfect and complete whole.

If you accept this translation, then what it's saying is that you can't be expected to support yourself or a society, unless it's grounded in a logical, reasonable system of morality.

Things like "it's my own truth," or "I do what feels right in my heart" don't cut it and is the architectural equivalent of building a castle on a swamp.

Freemasonry makes no secret of the fact that you should get your sense of morality from your Deity and religion. But anyone who's ever had a problem knows that while Religion certainly provides a font of wisdom and guidance, it has a hard time addressing specific problems. So while Freemasonry has no official opinion on the nature of Right and Wrong, except that there is right and wrong, the Five Orders of Architecture can be viewed as Freemasonry's opinion on what philosophical schools are best at getting you there.

The Five Orders are: The Tuscan, the Doric, the Ionic, the Corinthian, and the Composite, and while all five are described in Freemasonry, it is the middle three, those first created by the

Greeks, the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian, rather than the Roman columns, the Tuscan and Composite, that masons most revere.

The rationale for this is that the Greek columns were original, unique works, whereas the Roman columns were derived from the Greeks, those copycats. Hence, "it is to the Greeks, and not the Romans, we are indebted for what is great, judicious, and distinct in architecture."

What are these possible systems of moral thought, and why are the Greek schools so much more preferable than the Roman?

The Tuscan represents the philosophy of ROMAN STOICISM. Originating in Greece, Stoicism was most popular in Rome, and famously practiced by Marcus Aurelius. As a philosophy it is not unlike Buddhism, believing that the secret to a good, happy life is to be curb your desires, live a simple life of tranquility and be happy with what you have. This parallels nicely with the Tuscan, which is meant to be a modest column for solemn buildings where ornamentation would be superfluous, and, like Roman Stoicism, was derived from Greek works, namely the Doric, and presented in its simplest form. There are a lot of personal benefits to approaching the world with a Stoic's view. The less you care about hot button issues, like politics for instance, the less stressed you will feel, and the more friends you will keep on social media.

Now take note, caring about something less does not mean being less concerned about an issue. Being concerned means you are paying attention to something, and you're seeking a solution that improves the situation. Caring, in this sense, is about investing your ego, or your sense of self, in an issue. If you view yourself as strongly pro-life, for instance, pro-choice arguments will be absorbed not as a different idea, but an attack on your very identity. And an attack on your identity will be registered by your instinctive brain as an attack on your life. This will cause you to reject any opposing view as an offense to your life, and clutch to any aligning view as a shield, no matter how paper thin it may be.

Being able to detach yourself from your beliefs and recognizing that you and your ideas are two separate things, the latter of

Steal This Idea continued...

names as well. Even Freemasonry gives us objects and symbols to better remember information, why don't we follow suit?

Anyone who has ever been a Senior Deacon introducing guests can see the advantage of a calling card. Read off their name (with any phonetic pronunciation required), their past master status, their lodge name and number, and it all sounds much more professional. Leave your contact information on the card for the secretary so he can better list it in the minutes, for easy reference for any interested party.

HOW TO PUT OUT A FLAME WAR

CONVERSATIONS CAN GET HEATED

To cultivate our self-control, we need to focus and relax. This is impossible when you're metaphorically on fire.

Silence & Circumspection is the key to relaxed confidence.



STOP

START WITH SILENCE

Master your own stillness. You're both making so much noise, no one can hear you. Break the cycle by being the one to just stop and breathe.



DROP

LET DOWN YOUR GUARD

You've made your point. But have you listened to theirs? If so, listen again. Drop your guard and observe them. Listen, watch, and/or read.



ROLL

CONSIDER THEIR POINT

Roll it around in your head for a bit. You don't need to agree. But try to understand why this position is important to them.

which can be changed when necessary, will not only keep your anxiety down, but will better enable you to reason and solve problems.

The Doric represents the original philosophy of GREEK STOICISM, and can be viewed in a similar manner to other Greek philosophies of the time, like SKEPTICISM and CYNICISM, which we could throw in under the umbrella of the Doric, in that it didn't strive to improve through changing Man's nature or discovering the unknown. It accepted the world as it is and believed that unhappiness only came about when reality crashed headlong into surprise. It was thus the duty of the Stoic to remain strong, accept life for what it is rather than what you want it to be, and press on. It's a philosophy that is neatly summed up by Churchill when he said, "If you're going through Hell, keep going."

Man, the Stoics believed, had the inner strength to overcome their troubles, adhering to the *logos*, or divine structure which connects all people, through the adherence to the four cardinal virtues of Wisdom, Justice, Temperance, and Courage. Man cannot improve the world. Man can improve himself and that will improve the world.

The parallels to the Doric, the best proportioned and sturdiest of the Orders, modeled off the form of a robust male, are obvious.

What is the difference between Roman and Greek Stoicism, and why should we follow the Greek? Roman society was much more community-based, being a rather large empire with a complex political structure. The need to work together as one harmonious unit is reflected in their philosophies. Greek philosophy seems to lean more toward rugged individualism. Whereas Roman Stoicism focuses on the *what* Greek Stoicism focuses on the *why*. What you want for your life depends on your needs and tastes, but the *why* is something that interests most philosophical Freemasons.

The Corinthian most closely aligns with the EPICUREAN school, which posits that the best things in life are those that bring the most pleasure. This was not meant in the hedonistic sense, rather a utilitarian one in which costs and benefits are weighed and the right is that which creates the highest amount of overall happiness. As beauty is dependent on its evoking of uplifting joy, the parallel is obvious. In modern times this is called Utilitarianism.

Making choices for the greater good of the majority is why Spock sacrifices himself to save the Enterprise in Star Trek: The Wrath of Kahn. It's why Gandalf took the leap in Fellowship of the Ring, and Obi-Wan took a dive in the Death Star so Luke and company could get away.

Utilitarianism doesn't always mean someone has to die, of course. Sharing a pizza instead of wolfing down every slice, holed up in the bathroom, even if that is what you really, really want to do, is a form of Utilitarianism. It's not always fun, and practitioners are prone to martyrdom, but it's usually pretty defensible. Bringing happiness and satisfaction is a great thing.

The Composite aligns well with the philosophy of VIA ROMANA, or the Roman Way, a constructed school of philosophy popular in late Rome. It was not so much a school of reason as it was a declaration that certain values are superior and should be sought. As the Composite is an amalgam of previous orders, so too is Via Romana an amalgam, or conclusion, of previous schools of philosophy. In a sense, Via Romana can

still be found in modern times. For example, the Twelve Points of Scout Law, of being Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Reverent, or any other system, typically taught to children, that clearly spells out the way we should be, can be viewed as Via Romana, though Via Romana was considerably more robust.

Via Romana consisted of fifteen personal virtues: spiritual authority, humor, mercy, dignity, tenacity, frugality, gravity, respectability, humanity, industriousness, dutifulness, prudence, wholesomeness, sternness, and truthfulness. And twenty-six public virtues of a society: abundance, equity, remembrance, clemency, concord, happiness, confidence, fortune, Spirit of Rome (think The American Way), mirth, justice, joy, liberality, freedom, nobility, wealth, endurance, peace, piety, providence, modesty, safety, security, hope, fertility, and courage.

That's a lot, but that was its strength. Thinking is hard. Especially when it's accompanied by worrying and anxiety. Human beings are, frankly, not well equipped to reason their way to good choices. You may not have the time and attention to work out why being loyal is better than being only out for number one, or why obedience is better than independence. These can be hard thoughts. But to align yourself to a code, because you know those who live by that code are great people and seem reasonably well off, is frankly good enough. Because in the end, it's less important that you have good thoughts and intentions, and more important that you do good.

The Ionic, which I purposefully saved until last, is described specifically as a mean order between the Doric and Corinthian. This can be viewed as representing Aristotle's NICHOMACHIAN ethics, also known as Virtue Ethics which demonstrates that the ideal action is that which is derived from the medium virtue of two vices. For instance, courage is the median between foolhardiness and cowardice.

Thus, it is to the Greek schools and not the Roman to which we are indebted for our reason and ethics, as unlike Stoicism and Via Romana, which were more like ways of living, the Greek schools were a process of reason. Freemasonry is founded on a belief that goodness is a matter of circumspection and practice. There's no magical ritual or secret that levels you up, rather a constant reminder to yourself to think about why the things that you do are good, true, wise, and promote beauty. You need systems to guide you. You need a methodology so you can be assured that your choices are not just manifestations of your selfish desires, but are rooted in reason, and take account of observable realities, and consider the needs of the many.

Matthew Gallagher

Practical Freemasonry

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AND IF YOU'RE NOT WILLING TO MAINTAIN YOUR HONOR, WHAT ARE YOU EVEN DOING HERE?