

Veritas

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“Truth is truth to the end of reckoning”
William Shakespeare²

I have to admit at being caught off guard when I was asked by RWBro Jerry Kopp to submit a thesis on the subject of truth. To speak of truth, either Masonic or generic, I thought, could be a fairly straightforward assignment. However, the more I began to think about truth the less comfortable I was with what I knew, or rather what I didn't know. My interest began to pique and I began to observe *how* people tend to use the word truth. Were they cognizant of its import? For thousands of year's philosophers and theologians have tried to define what truth is. How do we *recognize* truth? Is truth really self-evident and eternal? Is truth a human invention used to justify ones position? Is any one religion the 'true' religion? Is anyone person's truth any less important than another's? Truth has sometimes been defined as the "agreement or congruence of the mind with reality."³ But what exactly is mind? And whose reality? Isn't reality dependant on what we *choose* to see? Are the truths espoused by Freemasonry out of step? Or do they offer us value in this age of change and liberal relativism? Indeed, what is the 'truth' of Freemasonry?

When I began to ponder the nature of truth my mind diverged into two streams of thought. First, that truth is objective — existing independent of any human feelings, wishes, hopes or fears, A is A and will always be A. But second, and almost paradoxically to the first point, truth may be subjective and relative — dependent upon an individual's, or society's, frame of reference. So the challenge, from my own humble perspective, was to investigate aspects of both the objective and the subjective. As well, I intuitively sensed that a model of truth could possibly integrate *both* orientations. Such an investigation would surely encompass a study of morality, philosophy, psychology, quantum physics and of course Masonic ritual of the Craft.

As a starting point I began to research on the Internet, in my own library and at bookstores. I began to ask non-Masonic colleagues at work and Masonic brethren who were Lawyers, Engineers, Doctors, Police Officers, and devout Priests or Buddhists what truth meant to them and what they thought. What did truth mean in different periods? I read the writings of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius⁴ and Greek philosopher Plato and the ancient Lawgivers of Egypt or Persia. I probed our own Masonic Rituals from Canada and from abroad. I found an interesting passage from our Second Degree lecture:

The winding stair has likewise a dual interpretation, divine and human. Thus the three steps of the first flight represent divine wisdom, power and goodness and also the human reason, will and emotion. The five steps of the second flight are the five natural forms of matter, fire, water, earth, air and ether. They are also the five human senses wherewith these are perceived, namely feeling, hearing, seeing, tasting and smelling. The seven steps of the last flight are the manifestations of the divine mind in the seven forms of life, lichen, vegetable, reptile, fish, bird, beast and man. They also represent the seven liberal arts and sciences with which a knowledge of these manifestations is comprehended, the mathematical, physical and moral sciences and the arts of rhetoric, painting, music and architecture. The great lesson depicted here is to use all reason, will and emotion, all sense and matter, all art and science, as steps by which to ascend to the sanctuary of truth.⁵

This very rich passage seems to inculcate Freemasons to employ objectivity *and* subjectivity, the human and the divine, to climb the 'winding stairs' of our reality to find truth. It would seem that objectivity (science, logic and reason) and subjectivity (the ontological, metaphysical or

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² *Measure for Measure*, Act 5, Scene 1, Line 45-6: Isabella to Vicentio, Duke of Vienna.

³ Surya, Das, *Awakening to the Sacred*, 1999

⁴ Aurelius, Marcus. *Meditations*. Originally written c.167 AD, published 1964 Penguin Classics.

⁵ *The Modern Ritual*, Scottish Ritual.

transcendental) are presented as components of a *continuum* between what is subjective assumption (temporal intuitiveness) and empirical reason based upon knowledge of objective reality (what is here and now and evident). Indeed Freemasons are implored to employ all manner of resources to ascend to the summit of truth.

I was further intrigued by what various Masonic authors had to say about the truth specifically. We find truth is considered only one of the three principal tenets of Freemasonry.⁶ We find “by truth is meant more than just the acquisition and qualification of inductive knowledge but that if we are to have permanent brotherhood we must be truthful in character and habit.”⁷ Thus a primary moral component exists in our Work. Masonic morality and truth are alluded to by UK Freemason Bro Julian Rees⁸ who states: “We have in our system the most precious of all precious stones — the Truth, not the truth of this or that moral virtue, but the absolute Truth. We try (with a try-square) our Perfect Ashlar to find out if it is true (straight, direct, unbending) or not. Our Masters-Elect must be ‘true and trusty’.” Bro Rees tells us that a number of meanings exist for the word *try*. Something which is ‘tried’ is ‘choice or elite’; it is ‘excellent’ or good’ and in joinery it is ‘quite true, correctly wrought’ (for which the joiner uses a ‘trying plane’); to try something is to ‘set it apart, to distinguish’ or it is to ‘ascertain by search and examination, to ascertain the truth of the matter.” And what is truth according to Bro Rees? “Truth, defined as ‘the quality of being true.’” And true? “Free from deceit, sincere, agreeing with reality, representing the thing as it is.”

So in addition to logical or objective truth, ontological or transcendental truth we also find another component — moral truth — defined as perhaps alignment to societal or social principles. A ‘truthful’ Freemason may therefore indicate one who has been introduced and adopted ‘constructive moral principles’ which altar a Freemasons physical, mental and psychical fabric thereby enhancing the individual and later society. But how is truth defined exactly? How was it viewed in the past? And how is truth integrated into the three ritualistic degrees of Freemasonry?

Truth as a Definition

Absolute truth is indestructible. Being indestructible is eternal.

Confucius, *The Doctrine of Men*.

The Chinese language is over six thousand years old. The word or character seen right denotes “truth” and it is a pictogram that, not unlike many other Chinese characters, incorporates several characters, and therefore meanings, in one. The pictogram truth *also* contains the word ‘transform’ alluding to the fact that truth transforms; ‘Pedestal’, for we place truth on a pedestal; ‘Eyes’, we see truth with our own eyes; And ‘hidden’ which denotes that the truth can be hidden. Thus truth is a composite word meaning many things.



The Latin word for truth, *Veritas*, means “truth or truthfulness; reality, real life; (character) integrity; (language) etymology.”⁹ Truth then deals with reality, the nature of how we think the world and the universe presents its nature to us and it also has application to people or their character, their integrity (Latin: *integritas*; meaning completeness, soundness, honesty). The ancient Egyptians held truth as the right way, balance, earthly and cosmic harmony as *maat* and the Hindus relate to the same as *dharma*. The Chinese philosopher Confucius over 2000 years ago offered his glimpse of truth very much like Greek philosopher Aristotle and consequently the 20th century objectivist Ayn Rand stated that “truth is truth,” A is A and will always be A. Objectivists will state that nature and hence eternal truth¹⁰ exists independent of subjective human hopes or feelings, and it is for human beings to determine what truth is rather than what truth should be. Thus the search for objective truth is made by the application of human will and reason to learn the truth of things.

So we may find a further distinction — logical truth vs. absolute truth. Logical truth can be reasoned or deduced vs. absolute truth that seems to be the final idea behind the appearance of things

⁶ Brotherly love and relief being the other two of the three.

⁷ Draffen, George, *The Making of a Mason*.

⁸ Rees Julian, *Truth, Relief and Brotherly Love*, Freemasonry Today, Issue 13, Summer 2000.

⁹ *Collins Latin dictionary*, pp 230.

¹⁰ Absolute truth- different from logical truth (reasoning/logic), subjective (ontological) or moral truth. Absolute truth may be thought of the reality behind an appearance or idea.

in nature: it is the ultimate mystery, in Masonic metaphysical terms ‘The True Word.’¹¹ But is a human being capable of perceiving absolute truth? Indeed our perception of life and the universe is sense bound and it seems our finite biological senses and technological limitations would prevent us from ever understanding or realizing the absolute.

The 18th century German writer & Freemason Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781) stated “Pure truth is for God alone”¹² telling us the impossibility of ever finding truth and the reason we should also seek it. The Great Cicero¹³ knew why humans must seek when he stated: “our minds possess by nature an insatiable desire to know the truth.” So while humans may be limited by their senses it is also recognized that we may be also be ‘wired’ or some fashion predisposed to seeking truth as a deep-seated psychological need so as to transcend our own physical natures.¹⁴

A True Inner Journey — Knowledge of Oneself

The modern ritualistic degrees of Freemasonry draw their inspiration founded in the Ancient Pagan Mysteries of Greece, Egypt and Persia that later found their way through an architecturally based tradition via ancient architects and societies such as the Romans Collegium Fabrorum into Medieval Christendom and the Medieval Guilds. The ancient Mysteries existed for the purpose of satisfying the desire of those who wished to know the nature of themselves and of their creator, their purpose in life, and what might come after life. Generally the Mysteries were closely connected with the religion of the society in which they evolved and were oriented to its Deity. The Mysteries can be traced continuously through the history of Western Civilization and further:

The Mysteries were a recognized public institution in the ancient world. Although they had been a major influence in Western intellectual life as recently as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they are difficult for us to understand today because they are based on a view of the world which is quite different from our contemporary scientific materialism. While our ‘universe’ is limited to the extent of physical phenomena, that of the ancient world was conceived as containing, in addition to all the material objects, vast non-material realms which were not available to ordinary perception but were still considered to be part of the universe as it was then understood. These were arenas for the exploits of the gods of ancient mythology. Events occurring within these non-material domains were considered to be governed by an extension of the same body of natural law which gave consistency to the world of ordinary experience; and those events were thought to have an important influence on the daily activity of human life. The Mysteries were schools which provided knowledge of those non-material realms and of the natural laws operating in them. Although their existence was widely recognized, they usually conducted their work in seclusion. Their knowledge was imparted by a process of development which was represented by advancement through a series of grades, and the instruction itself involved extensive ritual and an elaborate symbolic structure which was used to codify the principles as well as to communicate them. The objective was to train people to live in consonance with natural laws as they operate in the non-material domains. Although the laws were considered to be of Divine origin, the Mysteries were not usually religious. Generally speaking, they were more concerned with philosophy and morality than with theology and religion.¹⁵ [Emphasis mine — VP].

Plato said that the object of the Mysteries was to re-establish the soul in its primitive purity, and to that state which it had lost. Clement of Alexandria stated that “what was taught in the Mysteries concerned the universe, and was the completion and perfection of all instruction; wherein things were seen as they were, and nature and her works were made known.” The early nineteenth century writer, orator American Freemason Albert Pike wrote of the Mysteries in his monumental work

¹¹ The True Word- to find the true word is the object of all Masonic inquiry, for as the Lost Word is the symbol of death, the True Word is symbolic of eternal life or Divine truth.

¹² Wolfenbüttler Fragmente: “Wenn Gott in seiner Rechten alle Wahrheit und in seiner Linken den einzigen, immer regen Trieb nach Wahrheit, obgleich mit dem Zusatz, mich immer und ewig zu irren, verschlossen hielte und spräche zu mir: Wähle! ich fiele ihm mit Demut in seine Linke und sagte: Vater, gieb! Die reine Wahrheit ist ja doch nur für Dich allein.” Translated: If God were to hold out enclosed in His right hand all Truth, and in His left hand just the active search for truth, though with the condition that I should ever err within, and say to me: Choose! I should humbly take His left hand and say: Father! Give me this one; absolute truth belongs to thee alone.

¹³ Cicero, Marcus Tullius. 106 BCE–43 BCE, the greatest Roman orator, famous also as a politician and a philosopher.

¹⁴ Pearce, Joseph Chilton, *The Biology of Transcendence*. 2002.

¹⁵ MacNulty, W. Kirk, *Freemasonry: a Journey through Ritual and Symbol*, p 5.

Morals and Dogmas: “Nature is as free from dogmatism as from tyranny; and the earliest instructors of mankind not only adopted her lessons, but as far possible adhered to her method of imparting them. They attempted to reach understanding through the eye; and the greater part of all religious teaching was conveyed through this ancient and most impressive mode of ‘exhibition’ or demonstration. The Mysteries were sacred drama [note: not unlike those dramas of Craft Lodge, Swedish, Scottish or Rectified Rite or the Holy Royal Arch — VP] and exhibiting some legend significant of nature’s change, of the visible Universe in which the divinity is revealed, and whose import was in many respects as open to the Pagan, as to the Christian.”¹⁶

The Mysteries also demanded complete adherence to silence among its adherents. This demand was taken seriously in the Greek Eleusinian Mysteries as failure to keep vows resulted in death. For this reason very little direct information exists concerning details of the Mysteries — the ritual, passwords, symbols and text. However a few clues do exist. Initiated into the Egyptian Mysteries of Isis, Lucius Apuleius of Madaura stated:

*...listen, and believe that what you hear is true. I approached the very edge of death and stood upon Proserpine’s doorstep, I returned home travelling through all the elements; in the middle of the night I saw the sun, a bright shining and glittering light; I entered the presence of the gods of the lower-world and the gods of the upper-world and adored them from close by.*¹⁷

*“His request for us to listen has a deeper meaning. The Latin word audi, translated as ‘listen’ has the further meaning of ‘to learn’ or ‘understand.’ Apuleius is challenging us to listen behind the words and symbolism to know the true meaning of this short ‘exposure.’ He traveled to the gates of death — Proserpine (in Greek, Persephone) was the wife of Hades, king of the Underworld. There in the middle of the night, he experienced the bright mystical light; he was humble in the presence of Divinity. Born again, he celebrated the next day as his birthday by a banquet with his friends.*¹⁸

A Roman structure unearthed in ancient Pompeii thought to be a ritualistic temple coined ‘Villa des Mysteres’ is described as having: “two columns in front, and the walls were decorated with interlaced triangles, the constant badge of the Masons. Upon a pedestal in the room was found a tracing board of inlaid mosaic. In the center is a skull with a level and plumbline and other symbolic designs”.¹⁹ Masonic Scholar and Past Master of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge of Research in London, the late Bro C.N. Batham, makes mention of this temple and the initiatory rites and practices of the time: “Candidates were required to identify themselves with the Divine by means of signs and mystical ceremonies, of which the last was the death, rebirth and spiritual renovation in intimate communion with the Divine. The Initiate became one with the Almighty and with Him passed from sadness to joy, from death to resurrection, the eternal drama of the traditional initiation ceremony.”²⁰

Early Christianity was itself influenced by the ancient Mysteries. St. Paul speaks of God speaking “divine Mysteries in the Spirit.” Baptism and Eucharist are referred to as “Mysteries.” The Christian philosopher Origen calls Christianity the *telete*, meaning “the initiation.” The writings of the early Christian Church, Father Clement of Alexandria, are full of terminology taken directly from the language of the Pagan Mysteries. He writes of the Christian revelation as “the holy Mysteries,” the ‘divine secrets,’ ‘the secret Logos,’ ‘the mysteries of the Logos.’ For Clement Jesus was the “teacher of the divine mysteries.” Clement further states “I am become holy while I am being initiated.”

The acquisition of Gnosis was central to the purpose of the ancient Mysteries. Gnosis²¹ or

¹⁶ Pike, Albert. *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, p 355

¹⁷ Baigent, Michael. Translation from *The Metamorphoses*.

¹⁸ Baigent, Michael. “The Mysteries.” *Freemasonry Today*, Issue 8, Spring 1999, pp 34–35.

¹⁹ *The Builder*, pp. 240-241, August 1927.

²⁰ Batham, C.N. “More About The Compagnonnage.” *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* Vol.19, pp. 242-246.

²¹ Gnosis — The goal of Gnostic spirituality is Gnosis or knowledge of the truth. “The word ‘Gnostic’ or ‘Knower’ was used in different languages, cultures and individuals who have realized Gnosis or achieved enlightenment and are often referred to as Knowers: Gnostikoi (Pagan/Christian), Arifs (Muslim), Gnanis (Hindu), or Buddhas (Buddhist).” Gnostics interpreted stories and teachings of their spiritual tradition as signposts beyond words altogether to the mystical experience of the ineffable mystery as opposed to literalists who believed that their scriptures were actually the words of God and take the moral teachings and initiation myths as factual history. “Gnostics saw themselves as being on a transcendental journey of personal transformation as opposed to literalists who saw themselves as fulfilling a divine obligation to practice particular religious custom as part of their national or cultural identity. Gnostics wished to free themselves from the limitations of their personal and cultural identity and experience the oneness of things.”

knowledge was what students of the Mysteries sought and instructed, this was knowledge of self — both moral and metaphysical. The Gnostic *Book of Thomas* stated:

*For whoever has not known himself has known nothing, but whoever has known himself has at the same time already achieved Gnosis about the depth of all things.*²²

The ancient Mysteries existed for the purpose of satisfying the desire of those who wished to know the nature of themselves and of their creator, their purpose in life, and what might come after life. Plato said that the “object of the Mysteries was to re-establish the soul in its primitive purity, and to that state which it had lost.” Clement of Alexandria stated that “what was taught in the Mysteries concerned the universe, and was the completion and perfection of all instruction; wherein things were seen as they were, and nature and her works were made known.”

Thus I recognized an historical framework preceding ‘modern’ Freemasonry (the Craft being approximately 600 years old) the basis of which stressed the search for truth:

- 1) Via exposure to sacred drama which taught philosophical or moral truths;
- 2) Through the study of practical truths related to knowledge of the world — mathematics, the cycles of natural world, astronomic phenomena and its predecessor astrology- the motions of the planets for example;
- 3) And the search for intuitive, Gnostic or absolute truth via the search for self knowledge or knowledge of Deity.

I also found that it may seem that the legacy of the Mysteries still pervade the modern rituals of Freemasonry as practised in Continental Europe today. We know that in Germany a Masonic candidate of initiation will first enter a Lodge and be asked to peer upon the Volume of the Sacred Law²³, for there, he is told, he will find all the secrets he desires, only to find a mirror reflecting back an image of himself. Indeed an ancient idea of the Egyptian Hermetic²⁴ or Gnostic Mysteries that all knowledge or truth is to be found by, through and within self.

The ‘True’ Journey of the Three Degrees

*The principal tenets of our profession are threefold, including the inculcation and practice of those truly Masonic virtues — Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.*²⁵

Our journey as modern Freemasons begins as Entered Apprentices. It is here we are first exposed to the psychological metaphors that are geared towards undertaking internal work. The symbolic chequered black and white ground floor²⁶ of King Solomon’s Temple may be interpreted as the physical world from where we begin. And “...since a stable situation in ordinary life is a prerequisite for interior work, the Apprentice is taught the appropriate manner in which to relate to events and persons [in] the world. Masonic symbolism uses the Cardinal Virtues²⁷ for this purpose.” As Masonic author and Freemason W. Kirk MacNulty posits that in order for us to work effectively in our lives we must apply truth to analysis which provides us with *justice*, the application of truth to passion provides us with *temperance* in our behaviours, the application of passion to one’s actions produces *fortitude* while the application of analysis to one actions produces *prudence*. To maintain emotional integrity and balance we have these cardinal virtues as guideposts not least of which includes the ‘application of truth.’ MacNulty further suggests: “by labour in the First degree the apprentice is expected to do five things: (1) Discipline himself and hold his interior experience close. (2) Identify and take control of his capacities for passion and analysis. (3) Ensure that it is his Self and not his ego that determines what is admitted into his consciousness. (4) Practise the Cardinal Virtues; doing so will produce a life with the sort of internal stability, which is required for further advancement. Lastly (5), it seems to me that the fundamental objective of labour in the Apprenticeship Degree is placing the Inner Guard

²² *Book of Thomas the Contender*, 138:18.

²³ Volume of Sacred Law (VSL) is the book of faith placed in the centre of every Masonic Lodge. It may be the New Testament to Christian Masons, the Torah to Jewish Masons or the Koran in Muslim Lodges.

²⁴ Hermeticism-derived from the Arabic Idris, the Greek Hermes or Egyptian Thoth, also known as Thoth-Hermes, Hermes Trismegistus, or Thrice-Great Hermes. Thoth was an Egyptian god who was believed to have discovering the arts & sciences- invented writing and who is portrayed as a scribe, teacher, and the soul’s guide to the underworld. Hermeticism is defined as an ancient philosophical tradition that emphasizes the importance of inner enlightenment or Gnosis, rather than that of pure rationalism or doctrinal faith.

²⁵ Ancient York Rite, Entered Apprentice Degree, p 78.

²⁶ Symbolic of the dichotomy of the world — light & darkness, good & evil.

²⁷ Referred to in the Masonic first degree, they are temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice.

under the command of the Junior Warden; i.e.: the individuation of the Self in the sense that the term is used in Jungian psychology.”²⁸ Thus truth and its moral implications are the foundation of the Entered Apprentice Degree and truth is demonstrated as the foundation of all virtues.

Interesting as it may be, the philosophy of objectivism seems to be congruent with Masonic philosophy expressing reason over superstition, observation over intuition. Objectivist founder Ayn Rand depicted man “as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute.” Essentially positive and constructivist in nature objectivism like Freemasonry essentially imbues the initiate with the spirit of reason and of building his mind for the benefit of, first, himself, and then second, for the benefit of society. A happy, capable and response-able person is not only a benefit to himself but for the moral good of his fellow man.

Objectivist Nathaniel Branden, in a section of a splendid article, which may be applied to objectivists and Freemasons alike, “The Keys to Self-responsibility” suggests:

To reach your full potential, you need to take responsibility for your actions in meaningful ways...

Consciousness. *You have a choice — you can pay attention and be fully present when you are making critical decisions, such as working on a project, reading your performance review or deciding whether to have another drink. Or you can be physically present but mentally absent during these activities. Either way, you are responsible for the level of consciousness you bring to any occasion — and you are responsible for the results.*

Decisions and actions. *It is tempting to “disconnect” from our choices — to insist that someone or something is driving us to behave the way we do. Other people don’t make you talk or act in certain ways. You are responsible for how you speak and listen... whether you act rationally or not... whether you treat others fairly or unfairly... whether you keep your promises or break them. Once you recognize that you are the source of your own decisions and actions, you are far more likely to proceed wisely — and to act in ways that will not cause embarrassment or regret later.*

Fulfillment of desires. *A major cause of unhappiness or frustration is imagining that someone will come along to “rescue” you — to solve your problems and fulfill your wishes. A self-responsible person recognizes that no one is coming to make life right or to “fix” things. You acknowledge that nothing will get better unless you do something to make it happen.*

Beliefs and values. *Many people are happy to reflect passively what others believe and value. Or they assume that their ideas arise naturally out of their feelings — by instinct. Self-responsible people work to become aware of their beliefs and values... to critically scrutinize them... to seek out people who see things differently... and then to make up their own minds.*

Setting priorities. *The way we spend time and energy is either in sync with our values or out of sync with what we claim is important. If you understand that the way you prioritize your time is your own choice, you are more likely to correct the contradictions. Instead of being overwhelmed or neglecting people and activities that are important to you, you re-examine your values or set priorities that make more sense.*

Choice of companions. *You can blame and resent others when they repeatedly hurt or disappoint you. You can feel sorry for yourself. Or you can recognize your responsibility for choosing with whom you spend time... and make different choices.*

Actions in response to feelings and emotions. *When you’re angry, you have the urge to lash out. When you’re hurt, you may feel like sulking. When you’re impatient, you may want to drive too fast. But you don’t have to act on every feeling or urge. When you accept responsibility for the actions you take, you act more thoughtfully, less impulsively and with better results.*

Happiness. *If you believe your happiness is primarily in your own hands, you give yourself enormous power. You don’t wait for events or other people to make you happy. If something is wrong, your response is not, “Someone’s got to do something!” but “What can I do?”*

One’s own life and well being. *In taking responsibility for your life, you will recognize other people’s rights to do the same. Other people do not exist as means to your ends, any more than you live in service to their goals. People may choose to help me another — voluntarily. Life is usually more pleasant when they do so. But no one is born with a right to other people’s assets or energy — despite the attitude of entitlement that is so relevant today.²⁹*

²⁸ *Kabbalah and Freemasonry*, Scottish Rite Research Society, Vol 7. 1998.

²⁹ <http://www.dailyobjectivist.com/Spir/itsyourlife.asp> It’s Your Life So make the Most of It.

The First Degree of Freemasonry inculcates us “to be good men and true” aligned to virtue and principle³⁰, being truthful to oneself in terms of abilities and actions, congruent in thought and in speech to others. Thus, it would appear that there are commonalities which pertain to truth in both the philosophy of objectivity and Freemasonry. Moral truth was one aspect but I kept asking myself where might the subjective component of truth fit? I found a conflict to the idea of objectivity:

Scientific objectivity is a delusion. There is no such thing. The gathering of data may be relatively ‘objective’ (though deciding which data to gather is not). Thereafter everything is a matter of interpretation; of perspective.

For objectivists the concept of intuition, synchronicity, metaphysical consciousness or God is denied and irrational. Thus objectivity in and of itself, while ‘true’ in many respects may be limited by its denial of the intuitive. The ‘truths’ of Freemasonry’s degrees include so much more than the objective, logical and deductive. The great Canadian intellectual thinker John Ralston Saul speaks brilliantly in his new book, *On Equilibrium*, about modern society’s tendency to deny intuition. He points out that our civilization is obsessed with education and structure imbued with linear progress. “Progress presented as a function of knowledge, proof, understanding, verifiable truth.” Yet Saul points out “the scientist Henri Poincaré used to say that intuition is the instrument of invention.” Intuition as a non-linear, non-rational quality (indeed a priori) that may “appear and reappear at any stage of the creative process.” The great psychologist Carl Jung seemed to understand the non-linear quality of intuition when he stated that “the primary function of intuition,” is to “transmit mere images or perceptions of relations and conditions which could not be transmitted by any other means or only in very roundabout ways.” As Saul comments “these are not mere images or perceptions. They are the fruit of our imagination and reason with common sense and ethics, in order to produce policies, products and theories, paintings and music.” Jung states further: “Intuition seeks to discover possibilities in the objective situation.” “...it is also the instrument which, in the presence of a hopelessly blocked situation, works automatically towards the issue, which no other function could discover.” Saul points out that intuition then seems to be “the instrument of need and of limited time.” The issue in our compartmentalized and segmented society currently remains that we tend to marginalize the quality of intuition from our technologically driven society. As Canadian hockey star Wayne Gretzky once stated, “you must skate to where the puck is going, not to where it is.”

It seemed by my own reasoning that the concept of intuition coupled with human reason *both* seemed important elements in a continuum of truth. From Freemasonry’s Second Degree we find that we must incorporate the characteristics of the three steps — divine wisdom (what can’t be seen or measured), power and goodness and also the human reason, will and emotion with that of the five steps (the second flight representative of the senses — feeling, hearing, seeing, tasting and smelling) to search for truth. The Second Degree inculcates Freemasons through its symbolic metaphors to continue the journey of their adult lives to explore with power and reason, intellect and senses the objective truth of our world and that of the world *beyond* our senses, the transcendental or metaphysical realm. Indeed, the typical Masonic Second Degree tracing board³¹ of the early nineteenth century depicts the sun *within* the middle chamber, a metaphysical metaphor representative of the divine light within each person — an ancient Hermetic or Gnostic concept. In an uncertain universe that is in constant flux the only thing we can be sure of is our own perception which itself constantly evolves.

The journey of Freemasonry takes us through the First Degree that teaches us truth as the foundation of several virtues; the Second Degree teaches us we can find truth through the Liberal Arts and Sciences³² — through education and the senses. The Second Degree not only speaks to the value of knowledge — which makes us competent — but also the value of experience — which makes us wise, wisdom itself defined as having knowledge of the way things are in the world. To be happy in a

³⁰ Principle — popular organizational psychologist, author, CEO, Dr. Stephen R. Covey in his opus *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* defines principles (p 35) as “deep fundamental truths that have universal application. They apply to individuals, to marriages, to families, to private and public organizations of every kind. When these truths are internalized into habits, they empower people to create a wide variety of practises to deal with different situations. Principles are not values. A gang of thieves can share values, but they are in violation of the fundamental principles we’re talking about. Principles are the territory. Values are the maps. When we value correct principles, we have truth — a knowledge of things as they are.”

³¹ Tracing boards are visual representations Freemasons use to highlight principles exemplified in each Masonic Degree.

³² The seven Liberal Arts and Sciences comprised the curriculum at Medieval universities- *Trivium* contained the Arts- Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic while the *Quadrivium* contained the Sciences- Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy. The 47th Proposition from Greek philosopher “our ancient Brother” Pythagoras is the symbolic emblem.

complex world we must have the ability to comprehend but we must also have the ability to deal with life situations that we have never encountered before; The Third Degree however is a step beyond the Second, for the Second Degree may have us employ either subjective or objective knowledge in the experience of life but the Third Degree prepares us for the final journey of the human experience. We learn that:

The symbolism of the First and Second Degree was for the most part designed around the art of architecture; their purpose was to teach you to be a builder, in the First a builder of yourself, in the Second a builder of society. In the Third Degree the symbolism takes another form, although its background continues to be architecture, and its action takes place in a Temple; it is spiritual symbolism, cast in the form of life and death of the soul, and its principle teaching is that if a man has permitted himself to be buried under the rubbish heap of his sins and passions and lusts, it is possible for him, if he has learned the secret of the spiritual life, and with the help of God and of the Brotherhood, to rise again into a new life.³³

Thus the central truth of the Third degree, the culmination of the Three Craft degrees of Freemasonry could be interpreted as symbolic renewal. Man may be raised from “a dead level to a living or renewed perpendicular.” He can choose to die to his old life and be symbolically reborn into a new one aligned through faith and conscious activity. And while we may learn of several different truths in our degrees, truth as underlying virtuous principles, objective or subjective truth we also learn the limits of discovering truth in an absolute sense:

Observe the dormer window, emblematically admitting the revelation of divine truth; but it is one of the most beautiful, and at the same time one of the most mysterious, doctrines of Masonic symbolism, that the Freemason, whilst always in search of the truth, is destined never to find it in its entirety. That teaches him the humiliating, but necessary, lesson that the knowledge of the nature of God, and of man's relations to Him, which knowledge constitutes divine truth, can never be acquired in this life. Such consummation only comes to him, when he has passed through the gateway of death and stands in the court of life, with the full light of revelation upon him.³⁴

Truth, Relativism and Freemasonic Tolerance

Truth is perceived, rather than experienced directly. The validity of truth depends on the accuracy of perception, relative to that which is perceived.

Unknown

If we accept that by our own nature we are limited to the perception of truth via our five senses and or our intellect then it follows all human endeavours might be mere temporal interpretations or assumptions. If we are to reason that if we understand the incompleteness in our views might we also alternatively accept others interpretations rather than our own in the investigation of truth? A rationalist might say that their data or views support X while stating that your own view, Y, may be incomplete, therefore we would have to concede their interpretation or conclusions might be more comprehensive. This logic then might force us to change our notions of reality, of the way things are, and be willing to accept others thoughts and ideas — indeed a mode towards acting and thinking with tolerance. If we accept a notion of relativism — that no idea or concept is final or complete and based on data ‘at this moment,’ then it might follow that *no* human institution, culture or society has a monopoly on what the absolute nature of truth and of God is, that they are all merely temporal human constructs then we may begin to see the inaccuracy of religious ideologies based upon perception and interpretation. We may begin to see the value of difference in understanding and seeking truth. That there are many ways to identifying truth based upon perception and consciousness. We should take note of Freemasonry’s distinct bias towards the practise of tolerance as foundational to harmonious functioning:

That positive attitude in its most general sense takes the form of the great masonic ideal of toleration. Tolerance has always been one of the Principal Tenets of our Order. What do we mean by tolerance? We do not mean that one belief is as true as another, or as valuable as another; we do not advocate a general indifference to all beliefs; nor do we hold that all differences of opinion should be melted down into a drab grey of compromise. As believers in

³³ Draffen, 1978, p 133.

³⁴ Third Degree ritual, *The Modern Ritual*, Scottish Jurisdiction.

toleration we take the opposite position; we believe that one belief is truer than another, that one opinion is better grounded than another; and we want the truth to prevail. But we know that the truth can never emerge unless each man is left free to see the facts for himself, to think for himself, to speak for himself, to confront life's realities for himself. Let each human mind have a fair deal; let it be left free to observe the world for itself. This, we believe is the only way in which the truth about any of the great subjects of human life will ever be found.³⁵

Any true, progressive, or just society cannot endure without practising toleration that respects the rights or beliefs of its individuals. Indeed tolerance forms the basis of democratic societies³⁶ and Freemasonry itself as an organization recognizes the importance of toleration based upon differing interpretations and perceptions therefore the Craft as an organization has itself grown, or evolved to accommodate difference and universality.

Conclusion?

Only one thing is certain — that is, nothing is certain. If this statement is true, it is also false.

Ancient Paradox

In the final analysis on truth, perhaps there is no, nor can there ever be any *final or absolute* conclusion. Rather we should think of truth as being a concept that is holistic, grand and encompassing in the widest possible sense. We can perhaps identify a continuum to which truth has various sub groupings that include moral (acting in alignment with society), objective (empirical, rational), subjective (intuitive, transcendental), and absolute (what lies beyond or behind the nature of things) categories in its framework. Upon examination we can find moral truths imbedded in Freemasonry's doctrines as foundational to the alignment of the individual — to live a more successful life — but to also support the Freemason in becoming a positive contributing member of any given society in which he lives. Objective truth may help us reach logical or measurable conclusions relative to something at a given point in time.³⁷ Indeed it seems almost enigmatic that we may think we may know a particular truth only to discover later that it is replaced or supplemented as part of something larger or indicative of something else altogether.³⁸ I am in fact reminded of the wisdom of the Greek philosopher Aristotle who stated the more that he knew, the more he realized how little that he knew, and that in the final analysis he knew nothing!

Rational truths then, coupled with the relentless pursuit of knowledge of the physical world, ever changes based upon human beings need to know. It should also be distinguished that no matter how much rational knowledge or truth is unveiled, that it will always be incomplete and therefore an attitude of tolerance is required to balance what may be known to what is unknown. Subjective truth seems more focused as a practise of extending the boundaries of knowledge through intuition and imagination of self, of the physical realm, but also of creation and God. However absolute knowledge seems to stretch the very capabilities of human understanding and awareness and it is recognized in Masonry that one can aspire to know absolute truth but only gain a tiny fraction of it. We also may recognize historical allusion to the search for truth via the moral dramas and transcendental methodologies of the ancient Mysteries which themselves seem to linger within the philosophy and ritualistic practises of 'modern' Freemasonry.

Indeed we may find that the Craft's Three Degrees seem purposefully designed to incorporate truth in all its various forms. The First Degree stresses the importance of truth and of truth being the basis of correct living — living a virtuous life in alignment with principles of society and with Deity. The Second Degree stresses the importance of truth revealed through the application of the arts and sciences and through the five senses. Finally the Third Degree offers us a glimpse of what may lie beyond ourselves, a transcendental glimpse that perhaps we can know more about ourselves and of Deity. The Third Degree offers us a chance to psychologically reinvent ourselves to cause growth and new awareness where before there may not have been an opportunity.

³⁵ Draffen, 1978, pp 42-43.

³⁶ There has been a long, recognized historical relationship between Freemasonry and the rise of, or perpetuation of Democratic thought and idealism.

³⁷ One example being that the speed of light has until recently been thought of as constant however Canadian physicist John Moffat has been recognized as proving that the speed of light is variable. Canadian *Maclean's* magazine, March 24/03.

³⁸ The idea of seventeenth century Newtonian physics being supplemented by twentieth century Quantum physics comes to mind. For further reading see *The Tao of Physics* by Fritjof Capra and *Dancing Wu Li Masters* by Gary Zukav.

Will the various ritualistic dramas espoused by Freemasonry ever be 'out of tune' with the times? I am inclined to conclude that although words may change through additions and deletions in our ritual, a long standing practise since the earliest beginnings of the Craft — as long as Freemasonic dramas relate to principles and virtues and incorporate archetypical concepts related to truth³⁹ then I would state that it would be the changing fashions of society and not the eternal or divine principles of Freemasonry that would be out of step. I must further conclude that as long as Freemasonry upholds and respects the rights and thoughts of its members Masonry will ever remain a 'true' society to its craftsmen, to society and to God.

TRUTH: As Masons, we are committed to being honest and truthful with other people. The Masonic Fraternity teaches a man to be faithful to his responsibilities to God, his Country, his fellow man, his family and himself. The Masonic principle of Truth also teaches a man to search for wisdom and understanding. For only in this way can he grow and become a better person. The pursuit of knowledge is at the very heart of our purpose.

'Gnothi Seauton' or 'Know thy Self.'

Ancient inscription on the Greek Temple of Apollo at Delphi

Respectfully submitted by WBro Victor G. Popow
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³⁹ Archetypical dramas as represented in the ancient Pagan Mysteries — the central allegory consists of the dying and resurrecting god- the Egyptian Osiris, the Greek Dionysus, and later the Christian Jesus the Nazarene or the Masonic Hiram Abiff- all serve as examples of eternal dramas that illustrate life, death, growth, change or divine symbology. For more reading see *The Jesus Mysteries* and *Jesus and the Lost Goddess* by authors Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy.