

THE ANCIENT SOURCES OF INITIATIC TRANSMISSION IN FREEMASONRY:
THE ROYAL ART AND THE CLASSICAL ART OF MEMORY

"The study of the Torah is greater than the rebuilding of the Temple" (Talmud, Megilla Treatise, 166).

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It is often said that every Freemason, at least once in his lifetime as an initiate, goes through a phase of self-doubt about his membership in the Masonic Order and his reasons for staying with it. "What am I doing here?"

What is the point of it all?" he asks himself, wondering whether or not he should continue as a Freemason. This period of self-questioning may be likened to a mood, and is fairly well known to be short-lived.

By contrast, I have always felt that for the rest of the time (and this fact is less often noted), Freemasons are not given to asking questions about the origins of their practices and, ultimately, about the deeper meaning of freemasonry and the experiences that they "live" within it. They remind me of church-goers who may know what is going on in the liturgy and have some vague notion of its meaning but no longer possess any idea of "why" there is a service, why one "goes to church", what exactly happens there and so on.

In other words, I have observed that the members of regular and traditional Freemasonry generally know the "meaning" of the symbols but are not aware of their whys and wherefores. Similarly, they have some broad knowledge of the ritual but cannot explain why rituals exist. They can often define "initiation" but are incapable of saying how it works. They cannot pinpoint the psychological mechanisms by which a process, generally regarded as being proper to the individual, can be transmitted at a psychological level from one individual to another and, at what might be called the level of the "group", from the lodge to the individual.

As to myself, I am of course well aware that I belong to this category of Freemasons. For it must be said that the historical origins of speculative Masonry (the birth of which, as is generally known, took place well before 1717 in the British Isles, and more specifically in Scotland and England) are as yet obscure. Moreover and although I have been seeking answers to these questions for well-nigh twenty years I have been unable to find any satisfactory ones, which is perhaps quite understandable, given the complexity and range of the problems involved.

These personal admissions aside, the problems are truly complex and, above all, basic. They involve a great deal more than my own Masonic research. At the same time, they bind us to a common and identical task of reflecting on our speculative origins. I might

summarise this task of reflection in a few questions that I have always been confronted with.

What is the nature of the initiation that is proposed and developed by speculative Freemasonry? What is it that is passed on? How is it passed on in this particular fashion, i.e. by the use of metaphors taken from the world of the building and construction trades? In other words, has the nature of our initiatic approach come to us by direct descent from its supposedly recent historical origin, that is, broadly speaking, from the "craft" Freemasonry which immediately preceded it? Or rather has it been derived by spiritual influence from an ancient tradition belonging to a far earlier age?

How and why is it that, in this system of metaphors drawn from the world of the building and construction trades, the image of the temple was established from the very outset as the central image of nascent, speculative Freemasonry in its three main forms: Solomon's temple, the Universal temple and the interior temple? How and why is it that the constant use of symbols and the effective practice of ritual have always been the established criteria of authentic Masonry?

And, finally, there is the issue of the degrees. Why is it that, no sooner had the first three symbolic degrees been set up and differentiated, a large number of additional ones were created in their wake? Our detractors speak of vanity and refer in a pejorative manner to a "multiplication" of degrees. I shall try and show that this is not at all the case. It is clear that all these questions form, together, an important issue.

Two recent books by non-Masonic British historians came to my attention just three years ago and have prompted further thinking on my part. Both have a standpoint on the historical origins of speculative Freemasonry. However, the honest and rigorous approach of these non-Masonic historians has prevented them from drawing every possible inference from their discoveries. Nor do they arrive at all the "masonological" conclusions dictated by these inferences. One of them limits herself to describing an essential but insufficiently appreciated element in Western civilization, namely "the art of memory". The other describes the relationship that existed between the art of memory and nascent, speculative Freemasonry in Scotland in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. However neither one (nor, as we shall see, French researchers like Alain Bernheim or Edouard Maisondieu) makes full use of his or her discoveries. They merely suggest that the art of memory might have influenced the formation of speculative Freemasonry.

The first work is by Frances Yates: *The Art of Memory*, London 1966 (French trans. *L'Art de la Memoire*, Gallimard, 1975).

The second work, which is more widely known, is David Stevenson's *The Origins of Freemasonry - The Scottish Century 1590 - 1710*, Cambridge University Press, 1988 (French trans., *Les origines de la FrancMagonnerie - Le Siecle Ecosais 1590 - 1710*", Editions TELETES, Paris 1993).

The first part of this paper shall therefore be devoted to a short description of the intention and main theme of each work and will seek to highlight its originality from the standpoint of the issues concerned here. An attempt shall then be made to explain and provide ontological justification for a hypothesis concerning the origins of speculative Freemasonry and to show why it is not wholly absurd to imagine that the art of memory (at least in its classical form in the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance) quite simply bequeathed its mode of operation to speculative Freemasonry, which was then in its formative stages.

In passing (and this will be the third part of the present development), an attempt shall be made, on the documentary and historical level, to argue for the likelihood of what can presently be, for lack of historical proof, only a research hypothesis.

For Frances Yates, writing in 1966, Masonic historians "have to leave as an unsolved question the problem of the origin of "speculative" Masonry, with its symbolic use of columns, arches, and other architectural features, and of geometrical symbolism, as the framework within which it presents a moral teaching and a mystical outlook directed towards the divine architect of the universe... I would think that the answer to this problem may be suggested by the history of the art of memory, that the Renaissance occult memory, as we have seen it in Camillo's Theatre and as it was fervently propagated by Giordano Bruno, may be the real source of a Hermetic and mystical movement which used, not the real architecture of "operative" Masonry, but the imagery or "speculative" architecture of the art of memory as the vehicle of its teachings" [Yates, 206, 304]. At the time when it was put forward, this thesis was an innovative one. However, it went relatively unnoticed and, above all, it was not exploited to the extent that I believe it should have been.

It was only in 1988 that David Stevenson added the following commentary On the above passage: "This is perhaps too sweeping; in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, obsessed with symbolism and imagery, any craft was likely to develop symbolism as arising entirely from the Renaissance art of memory is unconvincing. But through the Second Schaw Statutes the art of memory can now be directly linked to the development of Freemasonry, and the occult overtones the art had acquired contributed to the development of Masonic secrecy and ritual" [Stevenson, p. 96].

This quote clearly points to a major discovery by Stevenson concerning late 16th century Scotland, one that I shall come back to shortly. However, Stevenson also comments on the facts presented by Frances Yates and on her hypothesis, especially as put forward in her chapter 13 ("Last Works on Memory") which is about Giordano Bruno. The following passage from Yates establishes the link between the two authors:

"I have drawn attention in my other book to the rumour that Bruno was said to have founded a sect in Germany called the "Giordanisti", suggesting that this might have something to do with the Rosicrucians, the mysterious brotherhood of the Rosy Cross announced by manifestos in the early seventeenth century in Germany, about which so

little is known that some scholars argue that it never existed. Whether or not there is any connection between the rumoured Rosicrucians and the origins of Freemasonry, first heard of as an institution in England in 1646 when Elias Ashmole was made a Mason, is again a mysterious and unsettled question. Bruno, at any rate, propagated his views in both England and Germany, so his movements might conceivably be a common source for both Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry. The origins of Freemasonry are wrapped in mystery, though supposed to derive from mediaeval guilds of "operative" Masons, or actual builders. No one has been able to explain how such "operative" guilds developed into "speculative" Masonry, the symbolic use of architectural imagery in Masonic ritual...

I think that the answer to this problem may be suggested by the history of the art of memory, that the Renaissance occult memory may be the real source of a Hermetic and mystical movement which used, not the real architecture of "operative" Masonry, but the imagery or "speculative" architecture of the art of memory as the vehicle of its teachings. A careful examination of the symbolism, both of Rosicrucianism and of Freemasonry, might eventually confirm this hypothesis. Such an investigation does not belong within the scope of this article, though I will point to some indications of the lines on which it might be conducted.

The supposedly Rosicrucian manifesto or *Fama Fraternitatis* of 1614 speaks of mysterious rotae or wheels, and of a sacred "vault" the walls, ceiling and floor of which are divided into compartments each with their several figures or sentences. This could be something like an occult use of artificial memory. Since for Freemasonry there are no records until much later, the comparison here would be with Masonic symbolism of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and particularly, perhaps, with the symbolism of that branch of Masonry known as the "Royal Arch". Some of the old prints, banners, and aprons of Royal Arch Masonry, with their designs of arches, columns, geometrical figures and emblems, look as though they might well be in the tradition of occult memory. That tradition would have been entirely forgotten, hence the gap in the early history of Masonry.

The advantage of this theory is that it provides a link between later manifestations of the Hermetic tradition in secret societies and the main Renaissance tradition. For we have seen that Bruno's secret had been a more or less open secret in the earlier Renaissance when Camillo's Theatre was such a widely publicised phenomenon. The secret was the combination of the Hermetic beliefs with the techniques of the art of memory. In the early sixteenth century this could be seen as belonging naturally into a Renaissance tradition, that of the "Neoplatonism" of Ficino and Pico as it spread from Florence to Venice. It was an example of the extraordinary impact of the Hermetic books on the Renaissance, turning men's minds towards the *fabrica mundi*, the divine architecture of the world, as an object of religious veneration and a source of religious experience. In the later sixteenth century, the more troubled age in which Bruno passed his life, the pressures of the times, both political and religious, may have been driving the "secret" more and more underground, but to see Bruno only the propagator of a secret society (which he may have been) would be to lose his full significance.

For this secret, the Hermetic secret, was a secret of the whole Renaissance. As he travels from country to country with his "Egyptian" message Bruno is transmitting the Renaissance in a very late but a peculiarly intense form. This man has to the full the Renaissance creative power. He creates inwardly the vast forms of his cosmic imagination, and when he externalizes these forms in literary creation, works of genius spring to life, the dialogues which he wrote in England. Had he externalised in art the statues which he sculpts in memory, or the magnificent fresco of the images of the constellations which he paints in the Spaccio della bestia trionfante, a great artist would have appeared. But it was Bruno's mission to paint and sculpt within, to teach that the artist, the poet, and the philosopher are all one, for the Mother of the Muses is Memory. Nothing comes out but what has first been formed within, and it is therefore within that the significant work is done... For if Memory was the Mother of the Muses, she was also to be the Mother of Method. Ramism, Lullism, the art of memory - all those confused constructions compounded of all the memory methods which crowd the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries - are symptoms of a search for method. Seen in the context of this growing search, or urge, it is not so much the madness of Bruno's systems as their uncompromising determination to find a method which seems significant.

At the end of this attempt to make a systematic summary of Bruno's works on memory, I would emphasize that I do not claim to have fully understood them. When later investigators have discovered more about the almost unknown and unstudied subjects with which this book attempts to deal, the time will be ripe for reaching a fuller understanding of these extraordinary works, and of the psychology of occult memory, than I have been able to achieve. What I have tried to do, as a necessary preliminary for understanding, is to attempt to place them in some kind of a historical context. It was the mediaeval art of memory, with its religious and ethical associations, which Bruno transformed into these occult systems which seem to me as possibly having a triple historical relevance. They may be developing Renaissance occult memory in the direction of secret societies. They certainly still contain the full artistic and imaginative power of the Renaissance. They announce the part to be played by the art of memory and Lullism in the growth of the scientific method.

But no historical net, no examination of trends or influences, no psychological analysis, may ever quite serve to snare or to identify this extraordinary man, Giordano Bruno, "the Magus of Memory" [Yates, pp.302-307].

For my part, I feel that the historical and ontological hypothesis put forward by Frances Yates is worthy of consideration and, therefore, that it should be considered and examined. To put it briefly, she establishes a historical link between the appearance of the speculative, Masonic approach and Giordano Bruno, his influence and his English and German travels, and above all the imaginary and speculative architecture of the classical art of memory, as a medium of the teaching that Bruno is supposed to have bequeathed to Scotland. "Nothing comes out but what has first been formed within, and it is therefore within that the significant work is done" [Yates, p. 305]. However, this viewpoint clearly lacked the underpinning of facts proper to Freemasonry that could form a "Masonic missing link". This "missing link", and a properly Masonic one at that, was discovered in

1988 when David Stevenson identified it in the second "Schaw Statutes", the professional statutes of Scottish craft Masonry issued in Edinburgh in 1599.

Article 13 of these statutes which were "operative" (but contain the seeds of the symbolic practices of speculative Masonry to come) states that it was the role of the warden of Kilwinning Lodge to test "euerie fallowe of craft and euerie prenteiss" in "the art of memorie and science thairoff" [Stevenson, p. 45]. In his preface to the French translation of Stevenson's work, the eminent French historian and specialist in Masonic studies, Alain Bernheim, provides an interesting description of the Scottish historians ideas. In passing, it might be noted that it was an easy matter for Bernheim to make short shrift of France's Yates albeit astutely and intelligently presented assumption of a link between the existence of spiritual and speculative architecture and "Royal Arch" Masonry. For Yates after all was not a Mason. The mistake in her assumption, which was hers alone, cannot be laid against Stevenson. This point, as shall be seen, has been noted by Bernheim himself. Here, all the same, is Alain Bernheim's excellent analysis of Stevenson's work in his penetrating preface (pp. V-VI).

"It is on page 17 of his introduction that Stevenson puts forward the central argument of *The Origins of Freemasonry*, which is that the Medieval contribution of craft organization and legend provided some of the ingredients essential to the formation of Freemasonry, but that the process by which these were combined with other ingredients did not occur until around 1600, and that it occurred in Scotland. Aspects of Renaissance thought were then spliced onto the Medieval legends, along with an institutional structure based on the lodges and the rituals and the secret procedures for recognition known as the Mason Word. It is in this late Scottish Renaissance phase that, according to the main argument of this book, modern Freemasonry was born. To support this argument, Stevenson quotes seven words taken from the second Schaw Statutes of 1599, "the art of memorie and science thairoff: [Stevenson, p. 49]. He believes that these words illustrate those "aspects of Renaissance thought: referred to by him in the introduction to *The Origins of Freemasonry*" and explains the matter thus: "Art of Memory was not merely a rather strange and clumsy term for what had been memorized as has been assumed in the past. It was a technique for memorizing things which had its roots in ancient Greece... becoming, in the Middle Ages and Renaissance something that was highly symbolic and even occult... the three simple words 'art of memory' may be taken as proof that from the first the Schaw lodges were at least dabbling in occult and mystical strands of late Renaissance thought." Stevenson acknowledged however that "it is not easy to understand the meaning of the statutes if they are considered in isolation. The interpretation of them which follows is therefore partly inspired by additional information from other sources, especially early lodge minute books and the early Masonic catechisms." [Stevenson, p.36].

In order to interpret these three words of the Schaw statutes, the art of memory, as the vector of a hermetic connotation, Stevenson relies on Frances Yates. For, in her book *The Art of Memory*, after having referred to the unresolved problem of the origin of "speculative" Freemasonry with its symbolic use of columns and arches and of geometrical symbolism as a framework within which it presents a moral teaching and a

mystical outlook directed towards the divine architect of the universe, Yates adds: "I would think that the answer to this problem may be suggested by the history of the art of memory..." [quoted in Stevenson, p. 96]. It hardly need be emphasized that the symbolic elements referred to by Yates were introduced into Freemasonry by Preston and Hutchinson in the second half of the eighteenth century and that there can be no way, barring solid proof, by which this introduction can be pre-dated by two centuries. The use of this quotation from Yates is a revealing indication of Stevenson's tendency towards syncretism. He follows the quotation with the following observation: "... through the second Schaw Statutes, the art of memory can now be directly linked to the development of Freemasonry, and the occult tones the art had acquired contributed to the development of Masonic secrecy and ritual."

On all these points, I must make it clear that I cannot share Bernheim's strictures against Stevenson's syncretism. Indeed and even if Stevenson, precisely because he is not a Freemason, does not appear to have exploited all the possibilities inherent in his hypothesis, Alain Bernheim does not seem to have grasped the full thrust of Stevenson's argument, nor has he examined it with the impartial and dispassionate approach called for by such a subject. Thus, for example, the notion of a Scottish nurturing soil on which his argument is based has long been known to many Masons. This is borne out for example by the following quotation from Goblet d'Aviella, *Des Origines du Grade de Maitre dans la Franc-Maconnerie* (On the Origins of the Master's Degree in Freemasonry, 1906, re-published Tredaniel 1983, p. 34):

"Finally, the general regulations of Scottish Freemasonry, the Schaw Statutes issued in 1598-1599, have come down to us and were used by Brother Murray-Lyon to write a masterly history of Freemasonry in Scotland with reference to the Edinburgh Lodge. It appears from this work that Master and Fellow Craft were equivalent terms in Scotland. An Entered Apprentice could not become a Master unless he had shown proof of memory and talent..."

But it is time now to address the object of this first part and explain the specific nature of this sophisticated system of artificial memory that historians call the "art of memory", the source (to a great extent in my view) of "speculative" or modern Freemasonry. David Stevenson briefly summarizes the art of memory as follows:

"The art of memory was a technique for improving the capacity of one's memory which developed in ancient Greece but is mainly known through Roman writers. It was held to be of particular value to orators and lawyers in memorizing long speeches, but was also seen as being of much wider application in the ages before printing, and indeed before widespread and cheap availability of a medium on which to write; a capacious and well-organized memory was regarded as central to education and culture. The Greek mnemonic technique was based on a building. The student of the art was instructed to study some large and complex building, memorizing its rooms and layout, and particular features or places in it. In doing this he should establish a specific order in which he visited the individuals rooms and places. When memorizing a speech, he should then imagine himself to be walking through this building on his set route, and in each of the

loci or places he had memorized he should establish images or images which were to be attached to each argument or point in his speech. The order in which the images were placed on the journey through the building should correspond to the order in which the points were to be made in the speech. These 'images' established in the 'places' should be connected in some way with points being memorized. The connection could be simple and direct (say a weapon to represent a murder or war) or indirect and convoluted, based on quirks of an individual's mind making connections between images and concepts which would not make sense to others. Very often the images were human figures, and it was thought that unusual and striking images - beautiful or grotesque, comic or obscene - were easier to remember than the commonplace.

When he came to give his speech, the orator would in his own mind walk through the building on his set route, and each image in its set location would remind him of the point he should come to next in his speech. While usually concerned with simply remembering the salient points to be made in the right order, there was also some discussion in the Roman sources of a far more intensive use of the art by the highly skilled, whereby virtually every word of a speech could be memorized...

The often human images which revealed their significance through their actions, dress and possessions may also be seen as being related to the figures of gods and the personifications of abstract concepts (such as virtues identifiable by their attributes) which were popular in the ancient world. In the Roman empire, for example, these were developed on the coinage into an elaborate 'form of symbolical references to almost every possible activity of the State' which was closely linked with popular belief through the tendency to regard the personifications as minor gods. Peace holding an olive branch, or Abundance holding ears of corn and a cornucopia could be called, in a very broad sense, memory images, and indeed many other kinds of symbolism can be seen in the same way, for symbols or images have always been widely used to remind the beholder of certain things... Above all, the art of memory was based on mental images which had no physical existence. It was usually based on real buildings and the real places within them, but the images assigned to these places were mental ones, and when using the artificial memory the building was visited in the mind. Moreover, many of the images employed in the art of memory were the inventions of the individual user of the technique, and would make no sense to anyone else, whereas the whole point of the iconography of personifications and saints was that the images should be understood by all...

In the ancient world the art of memory was classified as an aspect of Rhetoric, but Cicero - himself an advocate of the art - classified memory as one of the three parts of the virtue of Prudence (the others being intelligence and foresight). In the long term this had great significance for the art of memory, for the virtues defined by Cicero (Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance) became accepted in the Middle Ages as the four cardinal virtues. Thus in time the art of memory, identified with prudence, came to be regarded as an aspect of ethics. The work of St. Augustine added further significance to memory, for he regarded it as one of the three parts of the soul (the others being understanding and will), and taught that through exploring the memory men could find a memory-image of God embedded in their own souls. What had begun as a utilitarian technique for

improving the memory had come to be seen as being of importance in religion not just as a valuable method of imprinting religious truths on the mind, but also as something that in itself had moral value and would lead to knowledge of God.

The art, many varieties of which developed, was not always fully understood and was sometimes viewed with suspicion. Moreover, though in the Middle Ages it had a central place in the schemas of knowledge, it was nonetheless a minor place, and information about its development is scarce. Then, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the art became highly fashionable. Manuscript works describing and developing the art of memory in new ways proliferated, and were joined by printed treatises from 1482 onwards. These often included lists of images to be learned and pictures or diagrams of buildings with places in which images were to be put. The revival of the art of memory was in part an aspect of the general fascination with the legacy of the ancient world which typifies the Renaissance. But the art was usually interpreted through the work of Medieval writers, and this led many who despised the 'barbarous' immediate past of the Middle Ages to reject it in spite of its respectable classical origins. Moreover, the spread of printing was, by the sixteenth century, reducing the need for elaborate memory techniques. But one of the strands of the Renaissance thought to make the art of memory its own. Through Renaissance Neoplatonism, with its Hermetic core, the art of memory was once more transformed, this time into a Hermetic or occult art, and in this form it continued to take a central place in a central European tradition.

The first person to bring this new type of memory system to prominence was Giulio Camillo, who died in 1544. His activities aroused intense interest, especially in France and Italy, for he constructed an elaborate wooden model 'memory theatre', attributing remarkable powers to its workings, but refusing to reveal them to anyone but the king of France. Alas, the secrets were never revealed, but Frances Yates' reconstruction of the theatre reveals it as having been based on the classical theatre as described by the Roman architect Vitruvius, though with the addition of biblical influences, as demonstrated by the inclusion of the seven pillars of Solomon's House of Wisdom ('Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars' - Proverbs, 9.1). From the classical art of memory Camillo took memory-places and constructed wooden images to put in them. But these images were regarded as talismans which could summon the magical powers of the sun and the planets in accordance with theories derived from Hermetic writings. The utilitarian art of memory has thus been transformed into an occult method whereby man could understand the universe and harness its powers, the leap from an earthly building to the heavens being facilitated by the act that, though since ancient times the art of memory had usually been based on buildings, a variant of the tradition had sought its memory-places in the signs of the zodiac and the stars.

The other famous 16th century exponent of the Hermetic version of the Art of memory was Giordano Bruno (1548-1600). He joined the Dominican monastic Order, which had a long tradition of interest in the art of memory, and is said to have become highly qualified in the art at an early age. Of course his art of memory owed nothing to the example of Camillo, and differed from it considerably; the classical elements are less prominent, the occult and mystical are dominant. A number of his works were largely

concerned with memory, and they show that he saw the art as a Hermetic secret of the distant past primarily significant through the magical powers it could be used to summon. As compared with Camillo, he was infinitely more daring in the use of notoriously magical images and signs in the occult memory, for his ambitions as a Hermetic magus who sought to call on the powers of the universe were much greater than those of his predecessor.

Bruno's first work on memory was explicitly Hermetic; it opens with a dialogue in which a treatise on the art of memory is presented by Hermes himself. The art is seen as a revelation of Egyptian knowledge, and the ultimate aim of the system was to help the mind of man to ascend to the understanding of the divine and achieve oneness with it. The art had become "a magico-religious technique, a way of becoming joined to the soul of the world as part of a Hermetic mystery cult."

Giordano Bruno visited Paris in 1581-1583, and his first two works on memory were published there in 1582. He then moved to England, where his third work was printed in 1583, and almost immediately a controversy erupted over his ideas. During this controversy his cause was championed in print by a Scot living in London. Alexander Dickson had been born in Perthshire in 1558 and had studied at the University of St. Andrew's. Early in 1584 he published a treatise based on Bruno's first work, outlining the classical art of memory but setting it in a Hermetic Egyptian context much more openly than Bruno had done. This was quickly followed by two denunciations of the treatise (on religious grounds) by a Cambridge scholar, a defense of his work by Dickson, written under an assumed name, and a final attack from Cambridge." [Stevenson, pp. 87-91]

These two hypotheses put forward by Yates and Stevenson are unusual when it is realized that they can serve as a single and homogenous hypothesis. And since they are generally little known to French Masons and also since, or so it appears to me, historians have made little or no reference to them since 1988, I have thought it necessary to quote substantial passages.

These writers have led me to formulate a hypothesis, the terms and bases of which are drawn from these two works. This hypothesis is that there actually exists a very deep analogy of structure and mode of operation between the art of memory (in its classical form) and speculative Freemasonry.

In other words, in order to derive speculative Freemasonry by analogy from the ancestral art that preceded it, I would say that:

- the Masonic symbols are imagines, the images of the art of memory;
- the Masonic degrees are loci, the place of the art of memory, i.e. basically they are the rooms of the great edifice between which the subject making his way, moves about and goes forward in the keen process of understanding the lesser and greater mysteries;
- the Masonic rite (namely the totality of the open teaching proposed by Freemasonry) is the grand edifice in its entirety. In other words, to continue with metaphors from the

building trade, the Masonic rite is that great imaginary and speculative building or architecture of the mind within which the seeker moves as in a temple as huge as the universe and large enough to house and shelter the immensity of the Divine. At each step, the seeker memorizes his freely undertaken obligation to practice virtue or as the Latin has it: *ad colendam virtutem*".

And should this hypothesis prove to be historically convincing, I would say finally that the establishment of "the symbolic use of architectural images [in Yates, the *Art of Memory*] would fairly account for the phenomenon, a passage from purely mental realities (imagines of images or again memory/symbols) to their incarnation in the "method" constantly and untiringly sought by Giordano Bruno (but now discovered by the gentlemen masons, adepts of the art of memory). This is the method that we know today, in which "ritual and instruction" are imparted by a question—and—answer process. It is also embodied in the Lodge trestleboards which are unfolded at the opening of the Lodge and then folded when it is closed. What is still to be done of course, and this is what Frances Yates also suggests, is to examine Masonic symbolism in the light of the art of memory and determine, in specific terms, the extent to which the hermetist followers of the aging art of imagines and loci, in searching for the method, paved the way for the speculative framers of the Royal Art of thought.

At this point it must nevertheless be said that it is probably not quite necessary to take sides in the contemporary debate among English Masonic historians. This point has to be made especially in regard to an article by Colin Dyer on the origins of speculative Masonry, the conclusions of which closely approach the views put forward earlier by Eric Ward. Dyer believes that the movement which gave rise to speculative Masonry was a deliberate creation, very probably of a secret nature, that was not necessarily related in any way to the notion of building or to the building industry. Indeed, David Stevenson's research appears to establish the strong and constant presence, from 1599 to 1696, of purely speculative elements right within the Scottish operative lodges. This is a very important point for, whether or not these speculative elements have a hermetic origin and whether or not they are more or less related to the late expression of the Renaissance in Scotland, the fact is that everybody agrees today that the symbolic use of mental images arising out of the depiction of tools of the craft represents a mode, peculiar to speculative Masonry, of the individual, initiatic transmission of moral, metaphysical and spiritual teachings and of the duties that flow from there. Besides, this general agreement is particularly attested to in the article "History" (p 251) of the excellent *Dictionnaire Thematique Illustre de la Franc-maconnerie*, edited by Jean Lhomme, Edouard Maisondieu and Jacob Tomaso:

"It would nonetheless seem that the classical form of words in English Freemasonry, referred to above, i.e. "a particular system of moral teaching, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols" is a definition sufficient for our purpose, provided that the word "moral" is not given too narrow a meaning and provided that it is broadened to include intellectual and spiritual components (this observation also refers to present-day Freemasonry). We shall therefore apply the term "speculative" to a form of Masonry in which the technical elements of the Mason's craft (the tools, materials, disposition and

organization of the Lodge etc.) are cloaked in a symbolic meaning that conveys a teaching in the different registers referred to above, and this rule shall be followed regardless of the composition of this Masonry, namely whether its members are operative, speculative or both".

Such a traditional state of mind can therefore be found constantly in the declarations of principles of every regular Grand Lodge. Thus, for example, the Grande Loge de France, the world's first Masonic body to work in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, stated in article V of its declaration of principles on 5th December 1955:

V. With respect to principles other than those defined above, the Grande Loge de France refers to the Old Charges, especially as regards Compliance with the traditions of Freemasonry, and as regards the scrupulous and proper practice of the Ritual and Symbolism as the means of access to the initiatic content of the Order."

Let us now look at the symbols of speculative Masonry and examine their functions rather than their "meaning". Are they part of the art of memory? If so, what part? Conversely, does the art use symbols, and if so to what end?

Looking at the question from the viewpoint of the symbols of speculative Masonry themselves, there is of course no need whatsoever for lengthy discourse. The symbols, especially those borrowed from the building craft, whether in the first, second or third degrees, remind the Freemason of the goals and ideals to which he has subscribed and the moral qualities and forms of behaviour whose practice and observance lead to the achievement of these ideals. But above all, they work on the initiate as if their fixed and permanent presence (in the temple and in the texts) were intended to remind him of his duties: to shun vice and practise the virtues of brotherly love, relief and truth; polish the rough ashlar, bring it into due form and make it fit for use: subdue his passions and build a tomb for his vices.

But it might be asked, by way of an objection, whether this memory function, one might say this "calling to attention" of the Mason, echoes or corresponds in any way to the classical and ancient art of memory, and whether its elements might allow for the inference today that there probably was a direct line of descent (or for the least a direct line of spiritual influence) linking the nascent Masonic symbols to their immediate predecessors, the imagines (images) or intentions (intentions).

Frances Yates's work suggests that the answer may be affirmative. Indeed, this work highlights vital facts that point to the undeniable presence of the symbols (deriving from the "images") used as a means of remembering, and relates them to the images the value of which medieval scholasticism sought to foster and enhance (through the efforts of Saint Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus, working on the basis of a rediscovered Aristotle). A quote from Thomas Aquinas on his four personal precepts on art (quoted in Yates, p. 74-75) might be apt here:

Tullius (and another authority) says in his Rhetoric that memory is not only perfected from nature but also has much of art and industry: and there are four (points) through which a man may profit for remembering well.

(1) The first of these is that he should assume some convenient similitudes of the things which he wishes to remember; these should not be too familiar, because we wonder more at unfamiliar things and the soul is more strongly and vehemently held by them; whence it is that we remember better things seen in childhood. It is necessary in this way to invent similitudes and images because simple and spiritual intentions slip easily from the soul unless they are as it were linked to some corporeal similitudes, because human cognition is stronger in regard to the sensibilia. Whence the memorative (power) is placed in the sensitive (part) of the soul.

(2) Secondly, it is necessary that a man should place in a considered order those (things) which he wishes to remember, so that from one remembered (point) progress can easily be made to the next. Whence the Philosopher says in the book De memoria: "some men can be seen to remember from places. The cause of which is that they pass rapidly from one (step) to the next."

(3) Thirdly, it is necessary that a man should dwell with solicitude on, and cleave with affection to, the things which he wishes to remember; because what is strongly impressed on the soul slips less easily away from it. Whence Tullius says, in his Rhetoric, that "solicitude conserves complete figures of the simulacra".

(4) Fourthly, it is necessary that we should meditate frequently on what we wish to remember. Whence the Philosopher says in the book De Memoria that "meditation preserves memory" because, as he says "custom is like nature. Thence, those things which we often think about we easily remember, proceeding from one to another as though in a natural order."

Yates has her own comments to make on this recourse to images (that is, basically, symbols which, from the very origins of speculative Masonry, were a determining criterion of regularity). And since the period in question precedes the 17th century, her comments prefigure the psychological mainsprings at work in the process of initiatic transmission in Freemasonry.

It has sometimes been a matter for surprised comment that the age of scholasticism, with its insistence on the abstract, its low grading of poetry and metaphor, should also be an age which saw an extraordinary efflorescence of imagery, and of new imagery, in religious art. Searching for an explanation of this apparent anomaly in the words of Thomas Aquinas, the passage in which he justifies the use of metaphor and imagery in the Scriptures has been quoted. Aquinas has-been asking the question of why the Scriptures were imagery since "to proceed by various similitudes and representations belongs to poetry which is the lowest of all of the doctrines". He is thinking of the inclusion of poetry with Grammar, the lowest of the liberal arts, and enquiring why the Scriptures use this low branch of knowledge. The reply is that the Scriptures speak of

spiritual things under the guise of corporeal things "because it is natural to man to reach the intelligibilia through the sensibilia because all our knowledge has its beginning in sense." This is a similar argument to the one which justifies the use of images in the artificial memory. It is extremely curious that those in search of scholastic justification for the use of imagery in religious art should have missed the elaborate analyses of why we may use images in memory given by Albertus and Thomas [Yates, 78-79].

However this art of memory, in its classical form in the medieval period, was not merely a technique of memorizing, a method of artificial memory, a mnemotechnic device. Fostered by the Dominicans, of whom more shall be said below, the art established image-symbols and mnemotechnic signs, conceived before their time, to give men the desire to "shun vice and practise [Masonic] virtue" As Yates puts it:

It is extremely probable that Albertus Magnus would have known of the mystical rhetorics of the Bolognese school, for one of the most important of the centres established by Dominic for the training of his learned Friars was at Bologna. It is unlikely that there should have been no contact between the Dominicans at Bologna and the Bolognese school of dictamen. Boncampagno certainly appreciated the friars, for in his *Candelabrum eloquentiae* he praises the Dominican and Franciscan preachers. The memory section of Boncampagno's rhetoric therefore perhaps foreshadows the tremendous extension of memory training as a virtuous activity which Albertus and Thomas (who was of course trained by Albertus) recommend in their *Summae*. Albertus and Thomas, it may be suggested, would have taken for granted—as something taken for granted in an earlier medieval tradition—that "artificial memory" is concerned with remembering Paradise and Hell and with virtues and vices as "memorial notes."

Moreover we shall find that in later memory treatises which are certainly in the tradition stemming from the scholastic emphasis on artificial memory, Paradise and Hell are treated as "memory places," in some cases with diagrams of those "places" to be used in "artificial memory". Concompagno also foreshadows other characteristics of the later memory tradition, as will appear later.

We should therefore be on our guard against the assumption that when Albertus and Thomas so strongly advocate the exercise of "artificial memory" as a part of Prudence, they are necessarily talking about what we should call "mnemotechnics". They may mean amongst other things, the imprinting on memory of images of virtues and vices, mad vivid and striking in accordance with the classical rules, as "memorial notes" to striking in accordance with the classical rules, as "memorial notes" to aid us in reaching Heaven and avoiding Hell.

The scholastics were probably giving prominence to, or reviewing and re-examining, already existing assumptions about "artificial memory" as an aspect of their review of the whole scheme of the virtues and vices. This general revision was made necessary by the re-discovery of Aristotle, whose new contributions to the sum of knowledge, which had to be absorbed into the Catholic framework, were as important in the field of ethics as in others fields. The Nichomachean Ethics complicated the virtues, vices and their

elements, and the new evaluation of Prudence by Albertus and Thomas is part of their general effort to bring virtues and vices up to date.

What was also strikingly new was their examination of the precepts of the artificial memory in terms of the psychology of Aristotle's *De memoria reminiscencia*. Their triumphant conclusion that Aristotle confirmed the rules of Tullius put the artificial memory on an altogether new footing. Rhetoric is in general graded rather low in the scholastic outlook which turns its back on the twelfth-century humanism. But that part of rhetoric which is the artificial memory leaves its niche in the scheme of the liberal arts to become, not only a part of a cardinal virtue but a worthwhile object of dialectical analysis" [Yates, pp. 60-61]. Here is Frances Yates on the rules put forward, before 1323, by the Dominican Bartolomeo da San Concordio:

(On order)

Aristotle in *libro memoria*: "Those things are better remembered which have order in themselves." Upon which Thomas comments: "Those things are more easily remembered which are well ordered, and those which are badly ordered we do not easily remember. Therefore those things which a man wishes to retain, let him study to set them in order."

Thomas in *Seconda della seconda*: It is necessary that those things which a man wishes to retain in memory he should consider how to set out in order, so that from the memory of one thing he comes to another.

(On similitudes)

Thomas in *Seconda della seconda*: "Of those things which a man wishes to remember, he should take convenient similitudes, not too common ones, for we wonder more at uncommon things and by them the mind is more strongly moved."

Thomas in *Quivi medesimo* (i.e. loc. cit.): "The finding out of images is useful and necessary for memory; for pure and spiritual-intentions slip out of memory unless they are as it were linked to corporeal similitudes."

Tullio in *Terzo della nuova Rettorica*: "Of those things which we wish to remember, we should place in certain places images and similitudes." And Tullius adds that "the places are like tablets, or paper, and the Images like letters, and placing the images is like writing, and speaking is like reading" [Yates, p. 87].

Yates here immediately raises a question which is, at the same time, an observation couched in the form of a personal commentary on the text. She tries to describe the psychological reaction of the practitioner of this form of art to the spiritual intentions put in words that could have come straight out of a Masonic instruction.

"What are we, as devout readers of Bartolomeo's ethical work, intended to do? It has been arranged in order with divisions and sub-divisions after the scholastic manner. Ought we not to act prudently by memorizing in their order through the artificial memory the

"things" with which it deals, the spiritual intentions of seeking virtues and avoiding vices which it arouses? Should we not exercise our imaginations by forming corporeal similitudes of, for example, Justice and its sub-divisions, or of Prudence and its parts? And also of the "things" to be avoided, such as Injustice, Inconstancy, and the other vices examined?" [Yates, p. 88].

However, this is not the most astonishing aspect of the work. Frances Yates devotes a major, well-documented part of it to the intellectual and spiritual origins of this classical conception of the art of memory. In particular, she establishes the fact that most of the great thinkers who championed the art were Dominicans who had founded a world-renowned school. She mentions Thomas Aquinas of course, as well as Albertus Magnus, Peter of Ravenna, Johannes Romberch, Cosmas Rossellius. And, of course, she also refers to Jacobus Publicius whose work on memory, the *Oratoriae artis epitome* (1482), printed in Venice, was the first treatise on this subject. An interesting sidelight here is the fact that the hand-written copy of a work by Publicius, *Ars oratoria*, lies in the British Museum, the copy having been made in 1460 by Thomas Swatwell who was probably a monk in Durham.

Naturally, it is for others to argue (and perhaps reach conclusions) about whether the Dominican Friars, as a preaching order in the late Middle Ages, ultimately made a contribution around 1640-1696, to the foundation by "gentlemen masons" of an initiatic practice. I refer here to an initiatic practice that we continue to call "speculative Freemasonry."

However, I would say that if this were to be the case, then the impulse that led to the creation of speculative Freemasonry was threefold. There was firstly the Dominican conception of the Art of Memory, secondly the arrival in London, between 1583 and 1586, of the prestigious Dominican Giordano Bruno and thirdly the contemporary teaching of this art as the Scottish Court. The last-named fact is attested to, in different ways, by the presence of Robert Schaw, Alexander Dickson and William Fowler at the court of King James VI and his queen.

To conclude these remarks on the birth of Masonic symbolism, I would finally add that we perhaps have proof today of the importance of the art of memory in this event. This proof lies in the important and quite special place occupied by the liberal arts in several degrees of Freemasonry (especially in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite). For we know that one of the seven arts is rhetoric, and we also know that one of the parts of rhetoric, according to Cicero, is memory.

"Invention is the excogitation of true things (res), or things similar to truth to render one's cause plausible; disposition is the arrangement in order of the things thus discovered; elocution is the accommodation of suitable words to the invented (things); memory is the firm perspective of the soul of things and words; pronunciation is the moderating of the voice and body to suit the dignity of the things and words." {De Inventione, I VII, 9, quoted in Yates, pp. 8-9].

To introduce the next part of my paper in which (and here it is Speculative Freemasonry that is concerned) I shall examine what is perhaps the most important part of the hypothesis that I am now developing, namely ideas of the Lodge and the Temple, it would not be out of place to look at the rules that were formulated (between 1298 and 1314) by the Dominican Giovanni di San Gimignano, in an enormously popular work for users of the art of memory:

--There are four things which help a man to remember well.

--The first is that he should dispose those things which he wishes to remember in a certain order.

--The second is that he should adhere to them with affection.

--The third is that he should reduce them to unusual similitudes.

--The fourth is that he should repeat them with frequent meditation

[Summa d exemplis..., VI 42, quoted in Yates, pp. 85-86].

Let us imagine that this advice were to be transposed into a purely "speculative" framework and applied to men whose chosen goal was to transmit knowledge in an initiatic manner (in other words, an esoteric manner) and follow ethical and spiritual rules in the conduct of their lives and actions. Without question, they would be faced with a problem or method. They would have a choice of several possible approaches. For example, they might choose to use symbols or allegories to represent moral values. Then the simple evocation of these symbols, made conventionally without any excessive recourse to conceptual language, would remind them of the primary goals, the commitments made in regard to the practice and observance of these values. In their choice of a homogeneous register of allegory and symbol, they would also have to take into account the precepts of the ancient art of memory. They would need to choose corporal symbols and materials that were obscure and striking enough to hold the attention of trusted adherents, and yet consistent enough with the goal in view so that their application would not discourage the candidate from any possibility of spiritual advancement and constructive progress. Finally, to perfect their method, these men would have to find a place in which to work together and think in a discreet atmosphere of peace, silence and recollection. They would decorate this place (this "locus") with carefully chosen symbols, give it an orientation and finally order it so as to relate it with its human purpose and facilitate its study. Finally, they would periodically and regularly meet in this place and, in an atmosphere of order and mutual benevolence, they would celebrate the reasons for showing to the outside world a model of sociability based on love of one's neighbor, harmony and justice.

I believe that this method, if applied, could lead these men to the Creation of speculative Freemasonry by borrowing the vectors of the symbolism proper to the practitioners of craft Masonry and making use of these vectors.

My hypothesis here is that the earliest speculative Masons acted in this way to found our Initiatic Order which, to quote Frances Yates, they set up at the very outset in the form of "vast interior cathedrals of memory". Otherwise, I cannot very well see how to explain the fact that the Temple has been a founding and central figure of speculative

Freemasonry since its very origins. In particular, and to put it very clearly, the presence of Solomon's Temple in operative Masonry and in the craft tradition cannot by itself explain the extraordinary role of the Temple as a multiform and protean figure in speculative Masonry. For, in its diverse forms, Solomon's Temple is used as a moral and physical framework for the degrees. It reminds us of the Temple of the Universe. We speak of "building our interior temple", with a semantic transfer of the word "Temple" to the structure that houses the lodge and finally to the lodge itself, and so on.

At the same time, it must be said that this hypothesis (apart from the arguments that have been put forward) is not entirely a novel one since David Stevenson laid, to a great extent, the foundations for it as early as 1988:

The features of the classical art of memory which made it seem particularly relevant to the Mason craft are obvious. The art was based on moving through an elaborate building, and it was an art which was believed to give great powers to the adept by vastly increasing the capacity of the human memory. Thus this powerful art which, like other arts, believed it could enhance human capabilities and easily take on occult overtones, was in a sense based on the skills of the architect/mason. Frances Yates, though not aware of the reference in the Second Schaw Statutes to the art of memory, suggested a connection between the art, which used an architectural framework in the search for wisdom, and Freemasonry.

What did Schaw and the Masons use the art of memory for? The general striving for mystical enlightenment is doubtless present, but, as has already been suggested, it was probably also employed for more mundane purposes such as memorising the Old Charges. The two are not entirely separable, however: the search for knowledge of the divide was based on Hermetic theories of ancient Egyptian knowledge, and Hermes and Egypt have an important place in the Old Charges. Finally, and most excitingly of all for an understanding of the emergence of Freemasonry, it will be argued in the next chapter that the seventeenth-century Masonic lodge may have been, in one sense, a memory temple, an imaginary building with places and images placed in it as aids to memorising the secrets of the Mason Word and the rituals of initiation. William Schaw's injunction that Masons must be tested in the art of memory and the science thereof has been read by generations of Masonic historians but the significance of it has never been noticed. Yet that single short phrase provides a key to understanding major aspects of the origins of Freemasonry, linking the operative Mason craft with the mighty strivings of the Hermetic magus [Stevenson, 95-96].

It was stated at the beginning of this paper that there are grounds for extending the analogic hypothesis developed herein to the Masonic degrees, and for examining the extent to which they may be considered to have originated from the "places" (the Latin *loci*) of the ancient art of memory.

I believe that this question is a very complex one. Indeed, some people will probably find it simplistic to assume that nascent, symbolic Masonry, in the manner of the classic art of

memory which located each thing and each image in a particular place in the great edifice, was able to allocate its symbols in groups and formalise the separation between groups through the construction and establishment of the degrees. A man of Goblet d'Alviella's stature, seeking the origins of the master's degree (cf. p. 86 of the 1983 reprint) referred to this kind of difficulty:

"Doubts may be raised over the existence of the Rosicrucians in the 16th and 17th centuries as a closed society using quasi-Masonic forms and professing a secret philosophy cloaked in symbols whose knowledge was reserved for adepts. But what cannot be contested is the existence, in the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance, of hermetic and "cabalistic" groups that transmitted doctrines, symbols and practices dating back to the first centuries of the Christian era, in a language that was intelligible to their initiates alone. It is no less an established fact that, at a given time, these groups entered Freemasonry with everything they possessed. What really has to be ascertained is whether their action was limited to the introduction of those higher degrees which bear the mark of a hermetic origin, or whether they had already had an effect on the development of speculative Freemasonry."

It may be observed, however, that such an analogy is not wholly devoid of interest, if we look at the way in which events transpired (on the Master's degree, in addition to Goblet d'Aviella, cf. Jean Rigaud's very relevant work) and to the constituted and established degrees.

It is known that it was a long time before the first three degrees, known as the symbolic degrees, took the form in which they are known today. It is also known that in the period described in Stevenson's book, Master and Fellow craft were still one and the same (there was as yet no corresponding degree for the Master). However it can be seen that when the degrees got differentiated, they were allocated symbols (especially related to the building trade) that were specific to the degree. It can also be seen that even if the Master's degree was the only one to be given a legend and even if, as is the case in the English rites, all the operative symbols can be found in the three degrees, it is only in the degree for which it is specifically designed that a symbol has its meaning explained, revealed and commented upon.

This mode of structuring of each symbolic degree cannot be explained solely by the fact that the founders of our speculative Order sought to put up obstacles against warped "disclosures" by society and, at the same time, preserve and transmit secrets, particularly by tightly sealing and partitioning the degrees from one another. On the contrary, I believe that the deeper explanation of this fact is still visible today to every Freemason. In the continental brand of Freemasonry, this explanation is constituted by the Lodge trestleboard in which all the symbols proper to the degree are traced, summarized and memorized. In English rite workings, it is the tracing board on which the teachings are painted (very beautifully as it happens). These teachings, the Candidate for advancement must render to his brethren by rote and in their entirety. The fact is that even today we are not very far removed from the art of memory of our origins. This is why I believe that the most important act in a Lodge (and the most important act in its

ritual) occurs at the opening when the tracing board or floor-cloth is unfolded and at closing, when it is rolled up again. Between these two gestures, each and every Freemason obtains confirmation of the initiatic and psychological genuineness of his long-standing commitments. Between these two gestures, he recollects the close, "ontological" correspondence, which is also a moving correspondence, between the two structures to which he has eternally submitted his will, namely the structure of his interior temple which is also that of his wisdom and his joy, and the structure formed by the "vast cathedrals of memory" of the Masonic Order.

Another element of our symbolism (naturally, I do not consider this brief list to be an exhaustive one) points even today to the mnemonic and mnemotechnic character of our speculative origins. In 1875, at the Lausanne Convent of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, Freemasons drafting the instruction for one of the first three degrees suggested the following approach to the tracing board:

Question: What does the tracing board represent ?

Answer: It is the emblem of memory, that precious faculty which is given to us to form our judgment in preserving the trace of all our perceptions".

For a full and methodical development of my ideas, I must still ask one question. Is it true that this broadly sketched hypothesis, in its essence, substantially answers the major questions raised at the outset? Does it also account for the existence and mode of operation of these Masonic degrees which are placed after the Master's degree, mainly of course in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite?_

I would say in this case that the resemblance with the classical art of memory is even more disturbing for the first three degrees, even if the date of 1801, when this rite was established in degrees that are still known today, is far later than the period studied by Stevenson. For as Michael L. Segall has first explained, these degrees were set up as the repositories and guardians of ancient initiatic and esoteric traditions. Without these degrees, these traditions would have been lost and would have vanished from the universal consciousness.

Each of these degrees is furthermore committed, in particular through the use of numerous facts inspired by the Bible, in the Volume of the universal and Sacred Law, to the preservation of moral laws and spiritual values (cf. Henry C. Clausen) and to reminding Freemasons of them.

To this end, each degree is constituted by commentary, exegesis and the putting into practice of the ritual around a legend that is quite specific and proper to this degree. The evocation of this legend, in the manner of the "Urszene" or "primal scene" in psychoanalysis, acts on the plane of the initiate's moral approach in the same way as the "imagines", "intentiones", "res" and "verba" of the art of memory practised by the Dominicans and Giordano Bruno.

Each of the 30 degrees is thus designed so as to represent one of the loci of the edifice in which a part of the total teaching lies in a segmented and separate manner. Albert Pike called it "morals and dogma", that is, to put it exactly, ethics and knowledge. This was in 1871. About fifteen years ago, I believe it was in 1980, I was party to a conversation in which the philosopher Henri Tort-Nougues compared the A&ASR to a large mansion or, more precisely, to a castle. This castle he said, had 33 rooms and each of them contained a treasure. In the manner of this philosopher and friend, I would say, for my part, that the Masonic initiation consists in going from one room to another and, at each step, "in remembering" as Gerard de Nerval put it in a famous letter.

This is my deep and intimate personal conviction today, after having long meditated on the discoveries made by Frances Yates and David Stevenson. Modern Freemasonry is a prestigious continuator of the ancient art of memory practiced around 1590 at the court of King James VI of Scotland, and owes this status partly to Giordano Bruno's arrival in the British Isles in 1583.

And if, withal, this hypothesis should prove one day to be mistaken and be countered by new facts, there would still be something left to me, that something of which the Russian poet Chalamov spoke in regard to poetry after twenty years in the Kolyma prison: "In winter, it is my fortress".