

STONE FREE

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The Phoenix Rises

From the Ideological Matrix
Free from Cultural Indoctrination

Harm Timmerman

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For Free Man of Good Standing

Only for free thinkers

Not for the ideologically possessed,
easily offended
or faint of heart



Rule VI: Abandon Ideology

"I want to show you what it means for someone to be ideologically possessed. You can tell when you are talking to someone like that because - and this is something I learned from reading Solzhenitsyn - you can predict absolutely everything they are going to say. Once you know the algorithmic substructure of their political ideology, which is usually predicated on about five or six axioms, you can use the axioms to automatically generate speech content. You don't even have to hear the person, you can just predict what they are going to say and so that alleviates any responsibility whatsoever they have for thinking. And it also allows them to believe they have full control and full knowledge not only about the entire world, but also the capacity to distinguish, without a moment's thought, between those who are on the side of the good and those who are not. And that is where the danger really comes."

"Look, why don't you make yourself into an individual and get the hell away from the ideology? A lot of these kids are lost in the underworld, let's say, in nihilism, and they turn to these ideological solutions because they don't know what else to do. And they're angry. It's like, I have something better for them to do. Grow the hell up. And sort yourself out as an individual."

"Making happiness the key pursuit in life is just hopeless. It's just not a pursuit that's going to fulfil itself. Life is already complex enough to make us anxious, painful, disappointed and hurt: that's not a pessimistic viewpoint; it's the truth."

~ Jordan Peterson

STONE FREE

A metaphor in the context of finding meaning in life, working on oneself, and developing inner wisdom and strength.

Being liberated or free from the constraints and limitations that we impose on ourselves. In the context of personal development, this could mean breaking free from limiting beliefs, negative thought patterns, or self-imposed limitations that prevent us from reaching our full potential. It could also represent the idea of being free from external influences that hold us back, such as societal norms, cultural expectations, ideology, or peer pressure.

Achieving a state of inner strength and wisdom that is solid and unyielding, like a stone. This could mean developing a strong sense of self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and resilience that allows us to navigate life's challenges with grace and wisdom. It could also represent the idea of developing a deep connection with our inner selves and our spiritual nature, allowing us to tap into a source of inner strength and guidance that helps us stay grounded and focused on our path.

The process of personal growth and transformation, as we strive to break free from limitations and develop the inner strength and wisdom needed to live a fulfilling and meaningful life.

~ ChatGPT



Preface

*I'm like a nomad, travelling through the night
A rough ashlar to shape this inner fight
Some kind of mystic force inside of me
The Masonic mystery makes me wanna*

*Turn the key
To be what I should be
Can I know the unknown
Can't do it on my own¹*

For various societal and cultural reasons, there are many, especially young, men today who are seeking inspiration and guidelines to give meaning and direction to their lives. These seekers want to get to know themselves better, contemplate their interactions with others, and determine their place in life, where they can shape their life goals in a sovereign, authentic, and original manner. They are in search of meaning and require a roadmap, a map of meaning.

During this quest, these individuals often immerse themselves in various fields and disciplines. Sooner or later, some come into contact with the centuries-old, mystical, esoteric life school of Freemasonry: through a friend, a family member, a documentary, a book, or otherwise. Not everyone manages to find their way to the sanctuary of a Masonic lodge, due to unfamiliarity, ignorance, or for various other reasons. This publication is aimed at this group of men in search of meaning for whom Freemasonry and the associated lodge life in the 21st century, amidst ever-turbulent times, have much to offer.

There is a vast array of literature, podcasts, and YouTube videos that anyone can use to educate themselves about the history, background, and even the content of Freemasonry's rituals. In the pre-digital era, much information was difficult to access and only available after joining, but now, the truth is readily available to all. Nothing seems sacred anymore, yet everything is sacred at the same time.

¹ Freestone. (2008). Turn the Key. On The Temple of Humanity [CD].

This publication distinguishes itself from other books. It includes a selection of lectures delivered in the Lodge to which I belong. The topics, themes, and ideas are directly or indirectly related to my background in the Humanities and my personal experience and interpretation of symbolism and the philosophy of Freemasonry. They are linked to societal and cultural developments and the impact of ideology.

Among the various definitions of Freemasonry and descriptions of what a Freemason is and does, he is, first and foremost, a seeker. Searching for a personal truth or inner wisdom and inner strength to achieve an experience of inner beauty, as Freemasons themselves so eloquently put it. It's a personal quest that requires a significant degree of self-knowledge. Searching for something, and after overcoming internal and external obstacles and encountering challenges along the way, hopefully, also finding a seemingly lost but essential connection to a deeper reality and inner self for a meaningful life.

The Freemason uses rituals and symbols based on architectural and light symbolism for this purpose. These serve as allegorical tools to approach and interpret reality. The interpretation of these symbols and rituals is explicitly left to the individual Freemason. In their own way, they seek truth and independently construct their own self-image, view of humanity, and worldview. The relevant symbols and rituals serve as guidelines and sources of inspiration in this process.

Freemasonry has no fixed beliefs or dogmas. Freemasons enter their Lodge as "free men of good standing" and as free thinkers. The rituals do not specifically or concretely mention duties or tasks. However, members are encouraged to embody the inspiration they find in Freemasonry in society and in their families. The manner in which they do so is entirely up to them.

Lectures and Essays

Freemasons trust their personal reflections to paper. They regularly deliver lectures or presentations (masonic lectures) in their Lodge. The themes of these lectures vary greatly, often reflecting their personal interests or areas of expertise. It is natural for these individual interpretations to establish a connection with the principles, symbols, and rituals of Freemasonry. Members frequently give such individual presentations.

For example, a new member often delivers his "Apprentice lecture" in the first year of his membership.² Typically, he shares something about his background and the reasons that prompted him to join his Freemason Lodge. Everything takes place in confidence and within the seclusion and safety that is inherent to Freemasonry. It's a gathering of men who eloquently seek meaning in life together and often share their deepest beliefs, willing to critically examine them – where else can you find that these days?

During initiation into Freemasonry, a candidate takes a vow not to discuss events and the content of the rituals or what occurs in a Lodge in their everyday interactions. In the lectures included in this publication, direct references to events from Freemasonry rituals have been removed or rephrased. With these adjustments in tone and content, this publication is accessible to a broad and interested audience, especially for young men who may benefit from a life-oriented system like Freemasonry.

In the Introduction, I've formulated the central thesis that is recognizable in several chapters. They deal with significant cultural notions such as the influence of Romanticism (emphasizing freedom) and Marxism (emphasizing equality), the end of in length varying cultural cycles, changes in ideology and the spirit of the times, worrisome developments in society, interpersonal relationships, and so on. Connections are made between societal, ideological, cultural developments, and the significance of Freemasonry. In the Epilogue, I've expressed thoughts that have been brewing in me for some time and were somewhat rekindled during the reading – somewhat unstructured and jumping from one topic to another.

Ultimately, the lectures reflect a quest for ways to personally fulfil one's membership in Freemasonry, which is no small task in the turbulent times in which we live.

The Own Voice

The Freemason formulates his own unique life mission based on self-knowledge and an understanding of his own talents. He strives to be of service to his family and society in his own way, aligning with their capabilities. Serving Freemasonry through holding (leadership) positions is a part of this, while others may become involved in politics, run their own businesses, engage in charitable activities, manage funds, write books, or

² This is custom in lodges in The Netherlands. New members give a personal lecture in the first three years of their membership.

create music – all based on their preferences and domains in which they have developed a certain interest or talent. It's about finding one's own voice and ideally working on unique projects that only the individual himself can undertake in their specific, sovereign way.

The personal background of the author cannot be separated from the content of the lectures. They are based on personal observations, areas of expertise, work experiences related personal concerns, and personal interpretations of rituals and symbols. These lectures reflect my own interpretations. As every Freemason knows, membership in Freemasonry and the same Lodge implies a shared pursuit of meaning and like-mindedness, but it doesn't mean that members always hold the same opinions – not about what that pursuit implies (as it depends on various individual factors) and not about the subject matter that might be addressed in the lectures.

The content of the lectures and the opinions formulated therein are entirely the responsibility of the author and may not necessarily be shared by all other Freemasons. It is reassuring however that my own lectures touch on similar themes that are also present in those of other members. This is explainable since most Freemasons have a strong commitment to humanity and the world, possess an intellectual attitude, generally don't get carried away by the everyday buzz, follow current events but also critically examine them.

The lectures in this publication are written independently and can be read as such. However, they share a central thesis. This thesis concerning ideology, Romanticism, Marxism, cultural waves, etc., is not addressed in every chapter. In the final contribution after the Epilogue, an explanation is given about the layout of a Freemasonic temple. This is an adapted lecture for interested parties. The lecture with interpretations of compositions on the album *The Temple of Humanity* by Freestone has not been included. The interpretations of all twelve tracks on this concept album with pop music inspired by Freemasonry are already included in *Freemasonry in Popular Music - a musical introduction, an artistic contribution*.

As an appendix, there is a brief paragraph that defines the core of Freemasonry. There is also an overview of common logical inconsistencies and cognitive biases recognizable in rhetoric in media and politics, as a supplement to the related chapter “Know Thyself”.

Furthermore, the contributions cover topics such as the Masonic word, the red pill, education, books, Dylan, The Beatles, the importance of initiation, identity, Osiris and Horus, men, rough ashlar and cubical stones, self-knowledge and contemplation, Kabbalah, Tarot, hermeneutics, a white rabbit, truth and myth, (im)moral people, the Owl and the Phoenix, the West and The Matrix, temples, brotherhood, tools, et cetera. In short, it's about the Logos, critically reflecting on the Self, developing a culture-critical attitude, and being alert to the ideological origins of our thoughts and beliefs, as well as the atmospheric influences affecting our thinking, feeling, and actions.

Another theme addressed in several lectures is mentorship, how to make use of, and how to offer it to those who may benefit from it.

Mentoring Freemasonry and Its Value for Young Men.

Young people, both men and women, are on a quest to find new ways to give meaning to their lives. Ultimately, every individual aims to achieve a certain form of personal mastery in various life domains (I distinguish Career, Relationship, Family, Finances, Education & Training, and Physical Health). Mentorship is vital. Mastery requires Mentoring.

The contributions in this publication highlight that Freemasonry can still be of significance for men of all generations, even in the 21st century and in our turbulent era. It's not surprising that many, in their quest, come into contact with Freemasonry sooner or later.

I presented the question to ChatGPT: why is Freemasonry valuable for men between the ages of 20 and 40?

"Freemasonry provides a valuable platform for men between the ages of 20 and 40 to develop themselves and grow in their personal and professional lives.

By participating in the rituals and ceremonies of Freemasonry, young men can acquire skills in leadership, communication, and cooperation, as well as a deeper understanding of ethics and morals.

Furthermore, Freemasonry offers a community of like-minded men who support and encourage each other in their personal and professional growth.

Being part of this community allows young men to develop valuable networking opportunities and connect with people from various professions and backgrounds."

Freemasonry can be valuable for men of all ages and at all stages of life. Albert Pike suggests that all men, for various reasons and with diverse interests, can benefit from it: the learned, the illiterate, the young, the man of the world, the traveller, the worthy man in misfortune, the afflicted, the charitable man and all with a soul.

Masonry is useful to all men:

*to the learned,
because it affords them the opportunity of exercising their talents upon subjects
eminently worthy of their attention;*

*to the illiterate,
because it offers them important instruction;*

*to the young,
because it presents them with salutary precepts and good examples, and
accustoms them to reflect on the proper mode of living;*

*to the man of the world,
whom it furnishes with noble and useful recreation;*

*to the traveller,
whom it enables to find friends and brothers in countries where else he would
be isolated and solitary;*

*to the worthy man in misfortune,
to whom it gives assistance;*

*to the afflicted,
on whom it lavishes consolation;*

*to the charitable man,
whom it enables to do more good, by uniting with those who are charitable like
himself;*

*and to all who have souls capable of appreciating its importance, and of
enjoying the charms of a friendship founded on the same principles of religion,
morality, and philanthropy.³*

Freemasonry is not only for intellectual deep thinkers or those interested in personal enlightenment and the spiritual-mystical aspect. The emphasis is on self-improvement and finding the path that every man has to follow, but membership in a Lodge has multiple aspects; the house of Freemasonry has multiple rooms. However, it is true that men who are actively seeking a map

³ Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma* 6:20-21.

of meaning and are initiated at a relatively young age have more opportunities and time to give shape to those life lessons in their lives than men who only take action long after their retirement.

Know Thyself from a culture-critical perspective

From the individual Freemason striving for self-improvement, it is expected that he examines himself. Inspired by the motto "Know Thyself," which is prominently displayed in every Masonic lodge, he has the duty to get to know himself. Here, too, the methodology employed for this endeavour is left to the discretion of each individual. However, it is reasonable to assume that most members have delved into (Jungian) psychology and sociology to some extent and have a degree of familiarity with philosophy. Many members also have a solid understanding of certain esoteric traditions and wisdom practices often related to Freemasonry, particularly the Kabbalah; probably the most important key with which the secrets and deeper understandings can be unlocked.

In the quest for the Self and in the long and intensive process of getting to know character and personality, it becomes evident that humans are spiritual beings who move throughout their lives in a physical form – the aging and changing physical shape and appearance they must also relate to. In that spirit, a complex narrative is ultimately constructed through which the individual approaches and interprets reality and which they use in human interaction and daily life. Their beliefs, opinions, ideas, norms, and values, among other things, are the result of various influences (genetic makeup, upbringing, education, the generation to which someone belongs, the spirit of the times, and related atmospheric influences). The formation of a personality is a complex process that people generally don't have much knowledge of or reflect upon in their daily lives; it's something that happens to them.

Many of these influences are directly or indirectly related to the culture in which people function. In that society, a dominant ideology prevails, shaping and determining how individuals interpret themselves, their fellow humans, and the world. This is the central theme that is further explained in several lectures in this publication. When a person, especially the searching person, wants to get to know themselves, they will inevitably have to critically examine, reconsider, and (under the influence of new insights and knowledge) maintain, adapt, or reject their own beliefs, ideas, norms, values, and so on.

Considering that these beliefs have their origins in culture and ideology, one should critically assess them, especially through the study of culture and history. Maintaining previous beliefs at a deeper level is not a problem for humans. By gaining more knowledge, we continue to find what we already believed. Adapting, providing annotations, and adding nuance is a greater challenge. But completely rejecting previous beliefs often seems impossible; it's something people are hardly capable of or willing to do. Under the influence of cognitive dissonance and confirmation bias, people continue to uphold their long-cherished viewpoints, entrenched beliefs, with all the stubbornness of humanity, sometimes against their better judgment.

People have a strong tendency to continue to use the personal ideology they have internalized over the decades, no matter what. The convoluted thoughts, the denial of facts and science – ideology penetrates everything and can hold people captive in ideas from which they can hardly or barely detach themselves, even though they do not always result in life decisions that benefit the individual.

Precisely because of the strong relationship with identity and the provision of frameworks with which people orient themselves in life, individuals find it difficult to distance themselves from their personal ideology, based on which their identity has taken shape. After all, if that collapses or is under pressure, it raises confronting life questions for which no longer a (satisfactory) answer is immediately available or offered by the narratives spread by institutions. The impact and all-encompassing presence of culture and ideology are themes that resonate in most contributions in this publication.

This human tendency or this strong human characteristic to cherish one's own beliefs and the resistance to review or reject them manifests itself in irrational rhetoric; specifically in cognitive biases and thinking errors. The person seeking Self-Knowledge will need to acquire knowledge about these cognitive biases and logical fallacies. These remarkable ways of reasoning are addressed in the chapter "Know Thyself."

Ideology and Memetics

Given the recurring theme of ideology, the second contribution defines this concept. An ideology is the more or less coherent set of beliefs, ideas, norms, values, and so on. The dissemination and perpetuation of these can be theorized using the concept framework of Memetics. The individual components of an ideology are memes, and the whole is a memplex. More on this in the relevant contribution.

Culture of Delusion

The contributions in this book are a first step toward the publication of a forthcoming book in which further theorizing is done that the current dominant ideology in Western society is predominantly Romantic and Marxist in nature, contains a narrative that contrasts with reality, and, precisely due to the strong human tendency to hold on to ideology, has resulted in a culture characterized as delusional. The argument in this forthcoming publication, with the (working) title *Culture of Delusion*, is based on a number of axioms; they are related to psychological, sociological, and cultural principles and are typically human and societal in nature. As an addition and a kind of cliffhanger, the introduction of this forthcoming work, in which these axioms are formulated in the form of aphorisms, is included.

Freemasonry as a School of Life

Finally, a Freemasons' Lodge is a place of labour in which individual members can excel in "all those qualities of mind and soul that can elevate humanity and individuals to a higher spiritual and moral level. It finds its application in the practice of the highest art of living."⁴ In the way Freemasonry operates, through the attainment of the degrees of Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master, as well as through holding leadership positions, members have ample opportunities to train themselves in these qualities, all within the confines of the Lodge. These degrees and positions, due to their specific nature, offer many specific, often challenging lessons that members can then continue in their work inside and outside the Lodge. Within the Lodge, this takes place in an atmosphere of trust and security. Thanks to these lessons, we can better navigate the world.

⁴ Translated from the Constitutions of the Grand Lodge of The Netherlands and similar to that of the United Grand Lodge of England.

The Liberal Arts

The Freemason is encouraged to excel in regularly expressing and, especially, putting into writing his thoughts and opinions. Writing a personal lecture (which can be an essay or column) is a first step toward that. Within Stoicism, the importance of putting thoughts on paper (keeping a journal) is also recognized. It aligns with the Liberal Arts.

References to the seven Liberal Arts (septem artes liberales) are found in various places within the ritual and history of Freemasonry; for instance in the rituals of the degrees of the Scottish Rite. The Freemason is encouraged to familiarize themselves with these fields of study. The Quadrivium consists of the four liberal arts: Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy, and Music. Writing personal lectures or essays provides an opportunity to further excel in the liberal arts of the Trivium: Grammar, Rhetoric (including logic), and Dialectic.

Expressing oneself somewhat eloquently, perhaps with some archaic language here and there, in line with what the liberal arts have to offer is indeed (like the art of memory) also a part of and one of the charms of the Royal Art. The chapters in this book are an attempt at that. I hope it provides new insights to the seeker of Self-Knowledge and awareness and can assist them in constructing their own roadmap for the journey of life, whether or not that path leads to a Masonic lodge.

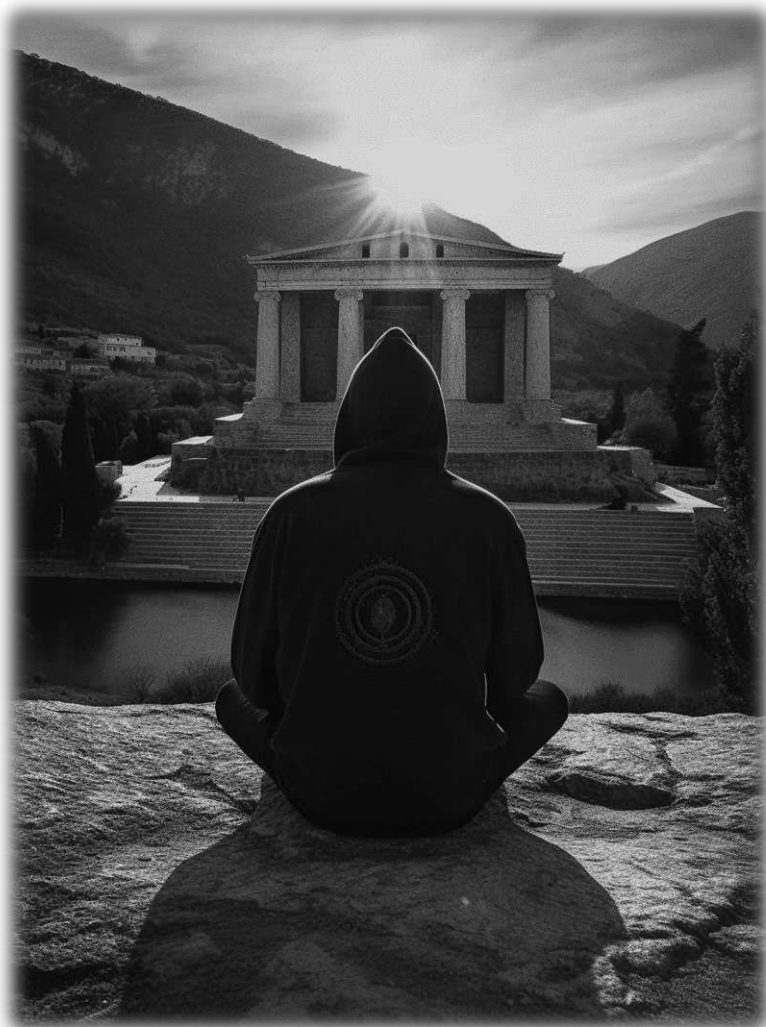
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Introduction

~ May you live in interesting times⁵

Who could have predicted how different the next working year would look around the summer solstice of 2019? Somewhere in December 2018, someone showed me a video on their mobile phone with surreal images from a city in China where large vehicles with enormous water sprays were cleaning streets and buildings; there was some kind of virus outbreak that was said to have originated in unhygienic conditions at an animal market. It was all far away and presumably nothing to worry about, which no one did.

The virus was not supposed to reach Europe, as reported in the media, but shortly thereafter, there was an outbreak in Italy. Disturbing images reached us through TV, computer screens, and mobile phones, and people began to worry. The early adopters, people who, for some reason, were afraid or susceptible to fear rhetoric, stopped shaking hands and kept their distance immediately; the rest would follow later. This concern was overshadowed by reassuring words comparing the virus's consequences to a common flu. The virus, now known as Corona, was not supposed to reach the Netherlands, as reported in the media. However, a few days later, there was a case of infection in the southern province of Limburg. Even now, it was downplayed, as the patient was a German who had since returned to Germany. Shortly thereafter, infections began to increase, first in Brabant, then in North Holland, and the virus slowly spread throughout the country and eventually the rest of the world. It seemed as if the people were being told they could "go to sleep peacefully" while something was indeed happening.

How different the tone became after the now-historic speech by the Dutch Prime Minister on March 16, 2020.⁶ There had been speculation for several days about closing all institutions and organizations where large groups of people gather, including organizations of a philosophical nature, such as Masonic lodges. The board of my Lodge had speculated about doing this in advance, but we were waiting for the official announcements from the Government and the national leadership of the Order of Freemasons. Ultimately, it turned out to be inevitable: for the first time since World War II,

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_you_live_in_interesting_times.

⁶ This is all well documented. All countries worldwide have had similar speeches by their political leaders.

Freemasons were unable to perform their work and could not meet in lodge buildings. The Lodge was closed. We were in a so-called intelligent lockdown.

For many, life started to revolve around a computer screen. Suddenly, many things were possible online, including education, meetings (using the Teams program), sports training, mentorship meetings, and even lodge evenings with lectures. It was far from the real thing and far from ideal: nothing can replace a physical gathering in the Lodge where we shake hands, listen to a lecture, and look each other in the eyes during a good conversation over a drink afterward. But with a positive and fresh spirit, we embraced the situation. Instruction evenings with the Apprentices also continued, albeit sporadically. Some members saw and spoke to each other regularly during informal outdoor meetings. Despite the strong sense of missing each other, brotherhood, and lodge gatherings in the lodge building, we, like the rest of the (actually the entire) world population, made the best of it.

References to the war

In the tone of conversations regarding the COVID-19 crisis, many references to World War II can be heard. Comparisons are made appropriately, but also inappropriately. The fact that, for the first time since that period, we cannot attend a Lodge is an objective observation.⁷ However, the war is a historical event with a different nature, the size and impact of which significantly differ from those of the COVID-19 crisis. During discussions about the virus, vaccines, lockdowns, the consequences of the measures, and so on, especially during conversations in which people have differing opinions, it is only a matter of time before one of the conversation participants relates it to WWII. This peculiar phenomenon is known as Godwin's Law: the longer a conversation about any subject goes on, the more the likelihood increases, eventually reaching 100%, that one of the participants, regardless of their viewpoint, will make a connection to World War II.⁸

Who are the heroes, what is good and evil, how should we act, who stands on the "right side of history," what is the correct moral code, and ultimately, how do we give meaning to our lives? Time and again, reference is made to World War II and related political and societal developments. This narrative has thus acquired the function of a foundational myth of our society. The original foundational myth of Western society (and therefore the Netherlands) has

⁷ Like in many other occupied countries during WWII, masonic Lodges in The Netherland were forced to close.

⁸ Initially, Godwin was referring to debates taking place online, but this principle also applies to media and personal conversations. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Godwin%27s_law

gradually been replaced by another. It is a symptom of a larger, more comprehensive phenomenon: the inversion of a culture.

Foundation myth

Every society requires a foundational myth: the tale of a hero or heroes who form the cornerstone of the civilization we inhabit. Such a creation story serves an essential purpose. It acts as a touchstone and reference point for daily actions, the interpretation of reality, and the role of human beings. In these narratives, the protagonist, or hero, embarks on a specific journey—a journey that individuals within that society can emulate in their own lives, albeit likely in a less grandiose manner. This story serves as the cohesive force that binds the individual elements of a society together. It is advantageous when everyone shares similar thoughts and holds comparable ideas about life, morality, good and evil, and so forth. It precludes quarrels, conflicts, and constant disagreements when the right course of action is assessed based on shared principles rooted in a collective narrative.

Whether the details of this story are factually accurate is only relevant to a certain extent. A myth speaks to the imagination; it is an allegory with deeper layers that can be interpreted and understood at various levels. Depending on the need for depth, intelligence, comprehension, and the available time, individuals can explore these deeper layers to uncover the implicit and explicit messages and moral lessons, applying them to daily life. Children can grasp the stories in a simple, childlike manner, while intellectuals can delve into the underlying mysticism and the esoteric and philosophical literature associated with it. Ideally, the foundational myth equips everyone with tools and principles to evaluate their actions, define what constitutes a good life, interact with fellow humans, and contextualize the present within the framework of the past. It provides clarity about our origins, our destination, and what we must do in the present to continue the journey.

The Hero's Journey

The foundational myth often tells the story of the founder of a society through the narrative of the Hero's Journey. Fixed elements can be distinguished in that story. The pattern of the hero's journey is extensively discussed in the fascinating work of Joseph Campbell, "The Hero with a Thousand Faces" (1949). Campbell explores the meaning and function of myths. See also the chapter "Winter is Coming."

Campbell examines the theory that mythological stories often share a fundamental structure. The similarities between these myths led Campbell to write his book, in which he intricately describes the structure of the monomyth. He calls the motif of the archetypal story 'the hero's adventure.'

In a well-known passage from the introduction of 'The Hero with a Thousand Faces,' Campbell summarizes the monomyth as follows:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won; the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.⁹

The Hero's Journey comprises several key components: the prospective hero begins with an ordinary life. Often prompted by an event perceived as a calling, he is urged to embark on a mission. Initially, there is resistance. Along the way, he encounters a mentor and several allies. Typically, the mentor meets a tragic end, precipitating a crisis that leads the hero into a period of isolation and introspection. During this phase, temptations arise, attempting to divert the hero from his calling and personal mission, as pursuing it entails considerable pain and sacrifice. Ultimately, the hero accepts his responsibility and commits to his mission for the greater good. He makes a significant sacrifice, often at the cost of his own life. In the end, life resumes, but on a higher, transformed plane.

Filmmakers and storytellers are well-acquainted with these phases and construct them in films and TV series, such as Star Wars, Harry Potter, Pinocchio, The Chronicles of Narnia, and more. When you enter the Storyworld exhibition at the Groninger Forum, The Netherlands, one of the first things you see is a visual illustration of this Hero's Journey using the movie The Lion King; all twelve phases of this journey are present.

Not all stories are as clear and literal as The Lion King's, but we can recognize these phases in older stories from human history. Elements can be found in the oldest known literary epic, the Epic of Gilgamesh (circa 2100 BC). We can also see the hero's journey in Homer's Odyssey, the myth of Romulus and Remus, and in the story of Osiris and Horus. The overlap between Horus and Simba from The Lion King is striking; they are almost the same stories, just with different characters and costumes. In every story people tell each other, regardless of the medium, phases of the Hero's Journey can be identified.

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hero_with_a_Thousand_Faces

They are stories about people and events that are recognizable to everyone. The foundational myth of Western Civilization in which elements of this narrative can be recognized is, of course, the life and passion of Jesus Christ. The phases of The Hero's Journey are also recognizable in the myth of Freemasonry, which is central to the Master Mason degree.

Christianity as foundation myth

Jesus is conceived immaculately (similar to Anakin Skywalker in Star Wars), comes to Earth under special circumstances, and initially leads a normal life. Except for his birth and the visit to the Temple in Jerusalem, nothing is mentioned about Jesus' life before his thirtieth year (which is a source of speculation). Only then is it brought to attention that he has something to do with his life. He is initially hesitant about it. He meets twelve friends and a mentor in the person of John the Baptist, who indeed loses his life. Jesus withdraws to the desert for 40 days, where he confronts his deepest fears and is tempted not to start his mission (knowing what it will mean for himself). He gains insight, completes his mission, sacrifices himself for the greater good, and thus lays the foundation for a civilization. The physical person Jesus of Nazareth dies, but the spirit of Christ lives on. This account serves as the foundational myth of Western society. The New Testament stories provide us with sufficient guidance and tools to indeed judge our actions and lead a meaningful life in a society that also offers the opportunity to do so.

A core element of Christianity is the recognition of evil within ourselves; after all, humans are sinful, fallen beings. We first acknowledge the evil within ourselves that must be overcome. We are primarily self-critical or encouraged to be so. When we are hurt, we turn the other cheek, knowing that responding to violence with violence leads to nothing. When assessing reality, interpreting current events, and aligning our own behaviour (toward others), there is always a Biblical story that can be applied. Many stories in the Bible have multiple meanings and can be interpreted allegorically to discover deeper, symbolic layers. The historical reading is often just one interpretation. These are stories with a wise lesson hidden within, a lesson we must learn to work on ourselves. Who still does that, who still practices it, and who even has knowledge of these stories, their meanings, the deeper layers, and their practical applicability?

Replacement of foundation myth

Many biblical stories are often disqualified, and due to ignorance of their deeper insights, they are dismissed as outdated. The original foundational

myth of Western society is receding into the background. Judging by the numerous references to the 1930s and World War II, it appears that the original foundational myth of Western civilization has been replaced by another, one with fundamental differences. Perhaps the most significant difference is that evil is no longer acknowledged within ourselves but in others. We no longer point at ourselves, but in all our 'vigilance,' we point a probing finger at the world to identify a target, 'another,' as the embodiment of evil, as someone who is morally flawed. How often is this other person associated with having questionable (ideological) views? References to "a dark page in our history" are frequently on our lips. We must be vigilant to ensure that "the war" can never happen again, and this vigilance is primarily demonstrated by having the right intentions and by identifying evil in others. You only need to pick up a newspaper or turn on the television or radio to see it.

This tendency to identify evil in others often takes absurd forms and extends to other fields and topics. They are variations on the same theme. Someone talks about the influence of Marxism in our culture (a fairly logical observation, well-documented historically), and they are associated with Breivik. What is overlooked is that there is a Breivik, a Stalin, a Mao, and a Hitler in all of us, just as Christ resides within us: the extremes on the spectrum of good and evil, the tendencies in every human being. Few people will come close to these extremes in their life choices, but we can still strive against one and aspire to the other.

Godwins

Freemasonry is a Western European cultural and esoteric phenomenon largely based on Greek philosophy, Judaism, and Christianity. It is related to the original foundational myth of the European Tradition with roots in the mystery cultus and religions, which closely resembles the hero's journey undertaken by the central figure in Freemasonry's central myth. Therefore, it is peculiar that this replacement of the foundational myth, as seen in most domains and societal institutions, also manifests within the Masonic Lodge through references to the war when interpreting reality and understanding various societal developments. It is a profane, ideologically driven phenomenon that has permeated every aspect of society and is recognizable. Initially within institutions such as education, media, politics, and the arts, but eventually also in religious organizations, families, and even in organizations like Freemasonry, which, by its nature, was initially a safeguard for independent thinking free from dogma and ideology. It's a

classic example of a meme that proliferates in the realm of the intellect and in the domain of the mind.¹⁰

This brings a phenomenon occurring in society or prevailing ideas into the Lodge, rather than the other way around (i.e. giving the inspiration provided by Freemasonry a place in society). This, of course, is not limited to the issue of the foundational myth but applies to other societal trends that often infiltrate Masonic life too easily. For clarity and to avoid misunderstandings: it is not inherently irrelevant to refer to events from the previous century, quite the opposite; historical awareness is important. Some historical parallels can indeed be drawn, and often, mentioning them and placing current events in the context of WWII is justified. Also, our history is important, and commemorating it is essential to remain aware of possible developments, etc. (Although, in the case of Remembrance Day, a concerning divide in Dutch society seems to be emerging.)

Evil within ourselves and in the other: Reductio ad Hitlerum¹¹

The gradual replacement of a society's foundational myth is a symptom of the replacement of the entire ideology: the original Greek, Judeo-Christian ideology (related to a Protestant Calvinistic work ethic) has been replaced by Secular Humanism. At least, that's what it's called, in fact it is an ideology with Romantic and Marxist characteristics.

Although rooted in the 19th century, since the Romantic (and thus Marxist) revolutions of the 1960s and the discourse of Woodstock, this new ideology has increasingly become the central way of thinking and interpreting reality. One significant difference lies in the recognition of evil within ourselves (as called for by the foundational myth of European civilization) versus being vigilant and identifying evil in others. In these references to WWII, what we don't want to be and what we need to be vigilant against, is emphasized, not so much within ourselves, but in 'the others.' It encourages us to point fingers at possible external threats.

This is in contrast to the foundational myths of both Christianity and Freemasonry, where it mainly emphasizes what we potentially could be, depending on the effort (i.e., sacrifices) we are willing to make. A holiday recess like Christmas (the winter solstice) brings hope for better times. The most important day of the Christian year, Easter, illustrates what happens to

¹⁰ This is explained in the chapter on Memetics.

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reductio_ad_Hitlerum

a person who fulfils the calling to give oneself for the greater good (the crucifixion is a phase in the Hero's Journey). It mainly illustrates what a person is capable of, both for good and for evil, and how a person can be manipulated by worldly (Pilate), religious (Caiaphas), and populist (the people) forces. Christianity, and Freemasonry, which is closely related to it, primarily look for evil within the human being. It is indicative that Christmas is hardly about the birth of the Light anymore.

On Netflix, Disney, and Amazon, you will search in vain on Christmas Eve for "The Nativity Story" or a film about the original Christmas story. Instead, you will find an overabundance of films about Santa Claus and a blasphemous film about Jesus. No one seems to have a problem with offending Christians. For Easter, the same applies: it has become a spring day to visit furniture stores and hunt for "hidden eggs." As a compensation, there is still some attention in the margins for the "Matthew Passion," but ironically, it primarily attracts those rooted in Protestant Calvinistic culture. These are signs that indicate the diminishing significance and function of the foundational myth of European Tradition. There is little attention and knowledge.

Where in the past, there was always a Christian reference available for the assessment of reality, interpretation of current events, and individual conduct, there is now always a reference to those dark pages of our 20th-century history that have taken on the role of a foundational myth. We are no longer encouraged to strive for what we could potentially be (like Christ), but we are running away from what we do not want to be (a collaborator, someone insufficiently vigilant, a dictator who personifies evil). This manifests itself on both individual and collective levels. Individuals suggest that their beliefs would have placed them in the resistance during WWII or that they would have hidden Jews, as they believe they have identified evil in the form of contemporary Nazis in other people and political parties. We all think or hope that we would have been that one person, that principled individual in a crowd of thousands at a Nazi gathering who, out of conviction and inner morality, does not raise their right arm to show loyalty to the Nazi ideology.¹² However, in all our so-called vigilance against an overly prescriptive government, and with all our feelings of moral superiority, the average person all too easily goes along with prevailing narratives, submits to dictated expectations, and the evil is done before we know it.

¹² It likely concerns August Landmesser, who refused to give the Nazi salute.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Landmesser

On a collective level, this tendency to primarily locate evil in others, even in historical perspective, has resulted in a culture of shame: we are running away from and are ashamed of our colonial past, the perceived apathy and cowardice of the Dutch during the occupation, and more. It is clear what we do not want to be. But what can we individually and collectively strive for, what are a country's ambitions, what makes a country's culture attractive to want to be a part of?

The question is whether emphasizing that past dystopia is constructive, desirable, and justified. What are the consequences on both the micro level (individual actions) and the macro level (the character of society as a whole)? What matters is that this new way of inclusion and exclusion, the way of defining good and evil, does not serve as a foundational myth. As mentioned, it is a symptom of something more extensive, but a significant difference is that we no longer have to search for evil within ourselves. Humans are not inherently sinful beings and do not need to work on themselves critically. On the contrary, most people are decent; in us resides the noble savage, and we only need to be alert to "the other" who is not good. The other (or a distant ancestor) is a Nazi, a fascist, has a questionable past, and so on. We are all human, but somehow, some people are good while others are not, and this can be demonstrated by labelling the other as a bad person. It is exhausting, but also frightening. No conversation, especially no political debate, can be conducted in a normal way. You stigmatize the other and then walk away. It has a paralyzing effect. People feel reluctant to express their opinions. People feel unheard and unseen, forming a breeding ground for anger or worse.

Cognitive dissonance

The disqualification of the European Tradition is a complex, collective way to reduce cognitive dissonance, the tension between our beliefs and our actions. This tension between word and deed is constantly invoked by Christianity. It is the logical consequence when we pursue a higher ideal: we are constantly corrected (by ourselves). The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak, so we naturally want one thing but are not allowed to and must adhere to something else (dictated by any authority, religious or otherwise). Reason is called upon to guide behaviour and to adhere to our own morality. This creates resistance, both in the individual and in society as a whole.

Although we ideally should resolve this cognitive dissonance by adjusting our actions and elevating them to a higher level, the reduction often occurs by changing not our behaviour but our beliefs to bring them back into alignment; morality proves to be flexible. This occurs in individual actions,

but with the replacement of the original Christian foundational myth, it has happened on a collective level. Therefore, we no longer work on ourselves, the Rough Ashlar, because we assume we already have sufficient self-knowledge. This is evident from the way I believe I should work on all those other stones and judge and condemn my fellow human beings with various qualifications. Hell is the other.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the events associated with it are also contextualized within the framework of the war and the related terminology. Whether we will talk much less about '40 - '45 and more about '20 - '2? in the future remains to be seen. (Dutch historian and America expert Maarten van Rossem (1943) is convinced that the COVID-19 period will prove to be just a ripple on the surface of history. However, this statement, along with his claim that 'all Republicans are bad people,' cannot be separated from his generational perspective and exactly that ideological basis on which the narrative must and will be sustained, allowing millions of people to be disqualified as such by a scientist of all people. It is illustrative of the very ideological reversal of that foundational myth; evil is the other). It is clear that we live in turbulent and historic times. It is also clear that these times do not come out of nowhere and do not just happen.

The central thesis in the lectures: Romantic Marxist Ideology

Why does this introduction begin with a brief account of the function of a foundational myth for a society and the assertion that there has been a shift or replacement in that regard? Such a foundational myth is associated with an ideology that is dominant in a society. The replacement of that foundational myth is thus also related to shifts in beliefs and cultural transformation in particular. Several lectures in this publication delve into this.

It becomes evident that, apart from the Coronavirus, there is another virus haunting Europe. It is too one-sided and overly simplified to state that the determination of good and evil, the judgment of reality, and our place in it are solely based on references to the war and the 1960s. It is rather a symptom of something else, something much more fundamental. This phenomenon is more of a part, a symptom of a more comprehensive ideology: a complex, more or less coherent set of beliefs, ideas, opinions, norms, values, tropes, and attitudes that guide our thinking and actions. An ideology can be summarized through a limited number of often not overly complicated (and thus understandable to most people) principles (axioms) that can easily and

quickly be projected onto various human behaviours and societal phenomena and developments.

In several lectures, I argue that the dominant ideology in Western society is fundamentally Romantic in nature (with influences from Marxism). Just as the original Christian foundational myth of the West has been replaced, so has the associated original Greco-Judeo-Christian ideology. We can see and hear this in the terminology used to express the prevailing ideology in today's zeitgeist. This terminology is also fundamentally different and permeated with Romantic and Marxist themes and the pursuit of authenticity that resonates within it and can be recognized in all aspects of our culture. Logically, this new ideology opposes the previous ideology that is Greco-Judeo-Christian in character (or more generally the European Tradition, which I will elaborate on later).

The frequent reference to World War II as a frame of reference for good and evil and for interpreting the present is just one aspect of this new ideology; it is the rhetorical, dialectical aspect through which this new ideology is affirmed and sustained.¹³ It is recognizable in ways of reasoning during discussions and debates. However, it is illustrative of a waning historical awareness that seems not to reach back further than the 1930s, at most the Roaring Twenties or World War I. Only a few individuals still have an understanding of the societal and cultural developments of the 19th century and know that the French Revolution has been decisive and formative for our current way of life and thinking. Something related to the Enlightenment and the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity or something like that.

In general terms, it can be stated that within the Romantic, Marxist ideology, there is a prevailing consensus that 2,500 years of Greek and Judeo-Christian thinking have yielded nothing but pessimism and solely black pages. And since one judges the tree by its fruits, this justifies the disqualification of both that thinking and the society and culture that have emerged from it, so it seems: from the Dark Ages, witch burnings, Crusades, suppression of all kinds of minorities, patriarchy, the Inquisition, to religious division, exploitation, slavery, systemic racism, and ultimately Hiroshima and Auschwitz.¹⁴ Expressions and consequences of the evil that others are

¹³ In the chapter "Know Thyself," I delve further into cognitive biases and thinking errors that humans employ in discussions and ways of reasoning.

¹⁴ This is the thesis that is recognizable in many debates, and many people have internalized it in their conception and interpretation of reality. However, this reasoning originates from "Dialectic

capable of, and which is all too easily assumed that we would never have contributed to; an assumption that arises more from unfamiliarity with the evil within ourselves and resistance to exploring and acknowledging its presence and operation in ourselves. So, if this Greek, Judeo-Christian, and corresponding way of life has resulted in this, then everything must change. Not the rulers, the bourgeoisie in power, but imagination, a new ideology.

This Romantic Marxist ideology can, of course, be described in great detail. But it is fascinating that based on a limited number of characteristics, it can be precisely determined how to reason when any random phenomenon in society, culture and in the news arises.

I will provide an initial overview of this in the following chapter. Based on these accepted assertions as a foundation, it is established how these phenomena should be evaluated and how judgments of good or evil should be made. It is stifling because individuality or independent thinking is hardly present anymore. This dominant Romantic Marxist ideology provides axioms that are considered self-evident. In summary, this ideology revolves around the pursuit of authenticity, following your feelings, and being yourself. These Romantic views can be found everywhere. The justification for any behaviour is based on the right to be ourselves and our individual freedom. The influence of Marxism is recognizable in its emphasis on equality, particularly the absence of equality and therefore the emphasis on victimhood/oppression of many minorities and the oppressor.

What applies to every ideology also applies here: it influences life decisions and life paths. Much of the societal problems, which are also manifest in the lives of many (male) representatives of young generations, can be related to the cultural (i.e., Romantic Marxist) upheavals from the 1960s and the associated ideological transformation. Life decisions are made based on various factors. Upbringing, intelligence, character, and more play significant roles, but the generation one belongs to and the prevailing ideology during the phase of identity construction (adolescence) have a profound, if not determining influence. Given the impact of ideology on individual lives, a reversal of ideology implies a reversal of consequences in life.

of Enlightenment" (1944) by Horkheimer and Adorno. It is an interesting illustration of the process by which certain views that are prevalent in everyday social discourse and are part of a dominant ideology have their intellectual foundations in the academic and intellectual domain.

Boomer Bashing

The impression might be given that I am engaging in what is commonly referred to as "boomer bashing": accusing representatives of the so-called Baby Boomer generation of being responsible for everything that's wrong in society. This generation is criticized for espousing the new ideology that they claim to support but haven't applied in their own lives, and therefore haven't experienced the negative consequences. This is particularly true for cultural carriers and role models. They have had the wind at their backs throughout their lives. Many societal problems will become more complex and unsolvable and be cumulatively presented to future generations. The various current crises demonstrate that this is already the case. Consequently, this generation is accused of lacking empathy for younger generations.

So, it's not "boomer bashing," and not just because my parents and many Freemasons belong to that generation (although I have to admit that I've whispered the telling phrase "Ok, Boomer" to someone sitting next to me during a lecture after a Baby Boomer had conformed to the stereotype of their generation with the usual references to WWII and "the sixties, you know").¹⁵ It's interesting to recognize that not only is this generation strongly represented within Freemasonry, but logically, so are the views and attitudes that are representative of that generation. This applies to society as a whole as well: the post-war generation is dominant in terms of numbers, which means they also dominate the public discourse and the narrative that echoes through it. In articles, talk shows, and lectures, you hear echoes of Rousseau and Marx, and many contemplations are illustrated using the vocabulary of the Romantic and Marxist ideology and references to the war (whether or not the person in question is aware of the historical and cultural origins of their views). Discussions all too easily become bogged down in what is or isn't "truth." The impression is given that thoughts are exchanged on equal terms, but between the lines, you can discern an ideological discourse representative of a generation and a zeitgeist; a zeitgeist that has now passed and no longer aligns with the present. An ideology in which one can become entangled because, as often happens with long-cherished personal beliefs, that ideology can ultimately become dogma; there's no room for doubt. Exactly the development a Freemason is supposed to be aware of in his thinking: Freemasonry does not have dogma's and the individual mason is doubtful toward his own convictions and points of view

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OK_boomer. "Okay, Boomer" is typically used as a dismissive or sarcastic response to older people, particularly baby boomers, who are perceived as being out of touch with modern attitudes and culture. It's often used in response to comments or opinions that are seen as outdated, conservative, or insensitive.

In any case, it's futile to be indignant or angry at something as abstract as "a generation" or "a culture."¹⁶ It's not only futile and somewhat disrespectful, but it also overlooks a historically realistic perspective, that is, a philosophy of daily life. Some nuance is appropriate. In general, life unfolds as it does. Not everyone is equally preoccupied with current events and zeitgeist, but rather more focused on the everyday aspects of existence: groceries, work, school, children, community activities. And although we all seem to be concerned and claim to be engaged with global issues, we ultimately have very little influence over them, and genuine empathy often falls short. The causes of these cultural and ideological shifts also run much deeper and need to be placed in the context of a historical and cultural perspective. So, it's not about bashing the boomer generation but rather the prelude to a sociological analysis of cultural waves.

Cultural waves

The fact that these shifts in ideology have occurred is more related to cultural and sociological patterns (although it must be noted that the upheavals in the West since the 1960s, their consequences, and impact are exceptional due to the demographic size of the baby boomer generation). This natural process is explained through the myth of Osiris and Horus in the chapter 'Winter is Coming.' The occurrence of these patterns is connected, among other things, to a natural resistance of a young generation against the (merits of the) previous, old generation; a normal phenomenon and a timeless one. This is a complex sociological, cultural, and psychological process that is, in fact, expressed in pre-scientific language and symbolism in the myths or allegories of Isis and Horus and those of Freemasonry. The Master degree of Freemasonry, in which this process is discussed, has both a psychological, individual, and a sociological, collective meaning.

In the transmission of a culture, ideally, only the bathwater is thrown out, no matter how strong the inclination of the young generation is to attribute the parts of a culture that need replacement and renewal and are no longer relevant to the baby (i.e., the original foundational myth and ideology) and only want to demolish them. Ultimately, after critical reflection on culture, its

¹⁶ In the lectures, it is indirectly addressed that the awareness of the long-term effects of the ideals from the cherished and now mythologized 1960s on the lives of young people and society in general may sometimes be lacking. There is a tendency to downplay the challenges that arise in certain life stages by relating them to the time when they themselves were in that stage, overlooking the fact that it was a very different time back then, with a completely different culture and many more opportunities to build a sustainably fulfilling life.