

Recognising and revealing knowers: an enhanced Bernsteinian analysis of masonic recruitment and apprenticeship

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The increasing opening of French freemasonry to lower social classes raises the question of how individuals from different social backgrounds can be assimilated into the practice of context-independent ways of speaking and writing. I address these issues by, first, describing a selection by existing members based on the dispositions already possessed by noviciates; a replacement of social hierarchies by a masonic hierarchy; and a cumulative experience for members. Using one dimension of Legitimation Code Theory, I redescribe this process of selection and apprenticeship as being one of recognising and revealing knowers. That is to say, it focuses less on specialist knowledge than on knowers. Finally, I argue that analogical reasoning and tacit pedagogy are central to the issue of how a socially diverse population is integrated within freemasonry. This form of apprenticeship enables members who may not be oriented towards abstraction to learn to engage in the manipulation of context-independent meanings.

Keywords: freemasonry; apprenticeship; Basil Bernstein; Legitimation Code Theory; tacit pedagogy; analogical reasoning

Introduction

One of the most significant insights offered by the work of Basil Bernstein is that pedagogy reaches far beyond the walls of formal educational institutions. Bernstein (2001) also argued that we are entering a ‘Totally Pedagogised Society’ where citizens are expected to change their occupational skills at a moment’s notice, constantly retraining and learning throughout their lives. Both these points highlight that education is concerned with both the reproduction and change of both individuals and society, and that these processes are widespread rather than confined to formal education. However, the sociology of education remains overwhelmingly focused on pedagogic processes in formal institutions and, with some notable exceptions (for example, Gamble 2001), Bernstein’s approach has been little used to address learning beyond

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the school or university context. This article uses a Bernsteinian framework to explore an example of pedagogic relations beyond education: apprenticeship in freemasonry, using the concepts of classification and framing. It draws then on Legitimation Code Theory, which integrates Bernstein's code theory to more fully describe and analyse issues concerning knowers, something particularly required for apprenticeship focused more on shaping learners' dispositions than on the explicit teaching of knowledge.

Freemasonry can be understood as an educational institution and educational practice. It involves the selection of learners (by a classification process between initiated and non-initiated people), their recontextualisation within a new hierarchy, and the learning of particular ways of thinking and acting that involve symbolic meanings. However, it differs from formal education in comprising an extremely tacit form of pedagogy that focuses less on the transmission and acquisition of knowledge and more on creating a new kind of knower: the freemason. Different pedagogies have different stakes: the stake determines for one part the method. A tacit pedagogy aims to reform one's ways of being in order to transform one as a knower. In this article I explore what this form of pedagogy involves and what it aims to (re)produce. I begin by setting this focus in its historical context and outlining the key questions for the research this article draws on.

Freemasonry in France: historical context

Contemporary French freemasonry is organised into 'lodges' and 'obediences'. Lodges are local organisations of freemasons that are officially declared in prefectures under the 'loi 1901'.¹ Although their exact articles of constitution can differ, they are generally described as philanthropic associations for the improvement of humankind based on the transmission of particular ways of being and knowing. An 'obedience' is a federation of lodges brought together under the same constitutions, also declared as association 'loi 1901'. Lodges are relatively autonomous from their 'obedience' but communicate several times a year with this central authority to determine, for example, one part of the common main themes to be addressed in the masonic practices of that year. These meetings reunite delegates from each lodge or each region to represent a biggest part of the masonic population. Most French obediences share the same founding texts, although there are differences in the rules and rituals they practice in their meetings. For example, the obediences *Le Grand Orient de France* and *La Grande Loge de France* refer to the same text, *Anderson's Constitutions*, but practice slightly different rituals.

In a similar fashion to western education systems, freemasonry during the twentieth century has been characterised by a democratisation of recruitment. Contemporary French freemasonry comprises more than 130,000 people for the five biggest obediences.² The distinguishing feature of this population is

its relative social heterogeneity, a paradoxical result of social and historical developments that began with exclusivity. Although the first forms of what is called 'modern freemasonry' or 'speculative freemasonry' (in contrast to 'operative freemasonry', which notably refers to cathedrals builders) are dated from the late seventeenth century, it was officially born in early-eighteenth-century Great Britain, and then imported as an institutional structure to France a few years later. The first French lodge whose existence has been historically proven was founded by English stuartists in Paris around the year 1725 (Galceran 2004). In France, this emergence is related to the Enlightenment and the emergence of what Habermas (1993) termed the 'public sphere'. Under the absolute monarchical power of Louis XIV, French masonic lodges offered a safe place for open critical discussion and debate (Koselleck 1979). Since this period, most masonic activity has focused on discussing such issues as philosophy, religion, politics, and other such public issues. At this stage, masonic recruitment was reserved for the social, educated elite: the aristocracy, the clergy and the well-read bourgeoisie (Galceran 2004; Bacot 2007).

The opening up of French freemasonry to members of the middle and working classes is a relatively recent development. Political and cultural changes since the French Revolution led masonic lodges to divide into different obediences and lodges, especially during the twentieth century. Financial and political scandals involving freemasons contributed to a decline in membership (Galceran 2004). In response, masonic obediences tacitly developed a new recruitment policy, encouraging members to recruit novices from a wider social milieu and, at least in some obediences, adopting policies of greater transparency and openness. This was the beginning of a social democratisation in access to masonic membership; at the same time, the democratisation in the access to education made it possible to integrate these new novices. In contemporary French lodges, middle-class members represent just over one-half of the population, and working-class representation is continuing to grow.³ In this article, I focus on three obediences: *La Grande Loge de France*, *Le Grand Orient de France* and *La Grande Loge Féminine de France*. These are three of the biggest obediences and have the most socially diverse memberships outside major cities.

Crucially for this article, while masonic recruitment has changed, masonic practices have remained fundamentally the same: reading, writing and speaking about abstract issues. As I discuss further below, central to the process of becoming and being accepted as a freemason is the preparation, presentation and discussion of short essays or 'planks' on a predetermined topic. These involve the selection, recontextualisation and evaluation of symbols. Moreover, apprenticeship into freemasonry comprises highly tacit pedagogy and involves the learning not of explicit states of knowledge but rather of ways of being, acting and thinking that freemasons are expected to carry through the many different social contexts of their everyday lives. In short, becoming and being a freemason involves abstract, context-independent forms of knowledge.

Research question

This raises a question that is also relevant to the study of formal education under conditions of educational expansion; namely, how actors from different social origins are accommodated within these practices. According to the tradition of research drawing on Bernstein (1973, 2007), actors from working-class backgrounds tend to be less predisposed or oriented to abstract meanings or ‘vertical discourse’. Given that masonic practices involve the selection, recontextualisation and interpretation of highly abstract symbols, the question is: how do actors who may not be predisposed to such forms of knowledge learn these ways of thinking, acting and being?

I address these issues by, first, describing how freemasonry involves: selection by existing members based on the dispositions already possessed by noviciates; a removal of social hierarchies (such as social class) and their replacement by a masonic hierarchy based on experiences of being a freemason; and a cumulative experience for its members. Using one dimension of Maton’s Legitimation Code Theory, a development of Bernstein’s code theory, I redescribe this process of selection and apprenticeship as being one of recognising and revealing knowers. That is to say, it focuses less on specialist knowledge than on the dispositions of knowers. Freemasonry, I argue, is more concerned with knower-building than with knowledge-building, and is experienced by its members as the revealing of an inner, pre-existing freemason. Finally, I argue that analogical reasoning and tacit pedagogy are central to the issue of how a socially diverse population is integrated within freemasonry. These forms of knowledge and pedagogy, I suggest, enable members who may not be oriented towards abstraction to learn to engage in the manipulation of symbolic relations and context-independent meanings. In doing so, I draw on analyses of official masonic texts, interviews with 39 male and female members and 80 ‘planks’ or short essays (4–10 pages), individually realised, that are presented (10–20 minutes) by the author and then discussed during meetings.

A structure to distinguish knowers: the social relation to the apprenticeship structure

An institution to create masons

Freemasonry has often been described as a closed club of vested interests or secret society (Taguieff 2005). However, freemasonry can be more fruitfully analysed as a set of institutionalised practices for the creation (or, as I shall discuss further below, the recognising and revealing) of freemasons. It is, in other words, an example of pedagogic relations outside formal educational institutions and of pedagogy based more on shaping the knower than on the transmission of knowledge. Constitutions of obediences state, for example:

Freemasonry is a traditional and universal initiatory order based on Fraternity [...] Freemasons respect other people's ways of thinking and free expression. [...] They are enlightened and disciplined citizens and conform their lives to their consciences' imperatives. (Constitutions of *La Grande Loge de France*, 1894)⁴

The founding texts of freemasonry in general and the local official texts for each obedience have in common the objective to create a special kind of person: the freemason, based on the respect of specific moral principles. The guidelines given in those texts focus on ways of acting and being beyond practices within the masonic lodge. For example, constitutions of obediences offer such guidelines as

BEHAVIOUR at HOME, and in Your NEIGHBORHOOD. You are to act as becomes a moral and wise Man; [...] you must also consult your Health, by not continuing together too late, or too long from Home, after Lodge Hours are past; and by avoiding of Gluttony or Drunkenness, that your Families be not neglected or injured, nor you disabled from working. (Anderson's Constitutions, 1723 – a British founding text for most French and British masonries, written in English)

Masonic guidelines thereby aim to shape the freemason both *inside and outside* the lodge: masonic knowledge and its practices are conceived as trans-contextual (lodge, family, work, friendship, neighbourhood). As one masonic interviewee put it: 'Freemasonry can change the way you are, especially in your life as a citizen, entertaining your critical mind and making you doubt' (Anne-Marie, interview). However, although freemasonry aims to form men and women beyond that symbolic space called the 'lodge', the latter is clearly distinguished from any other space – a strong boundary between *sacred* and *profane* (or, as I shall discuss later, *deprofaned* and *profane*). This classification is one of people – between freemasons and non-freemasons or initiates and laity – rather than of knowledges. This boundary extends to social stratification: social hierarchies beyond the lodge are symbolically not brought into the lodge. Instead, freemasonry creates a new hierarchy among its heterogeneous social body through the construction of a common language and equitable relations based on experience. It replaces social hierarchies with a masonic hierarchy. Once initiated, there are several stages of freemasonry: novices proceed from Apprentice to Fellow and then onto Master (and then through many 'degrees' within the rank of Master). Transition between stages does not involve formal assessment as such. Aspirants must write a text ('plank') on an abstract issue that they read in front of other members of the lodge and which is discussed by the audience, who serve not as critics but rather offer their own, individual interpretations of the topic. Everyone except apprentices can participate in these discussions, which have only some simple rules for organising the order of speaking.

Overall, the masonic structure of apprenticeship can be described as involving three different but complementary orientations:

- A logic of *election*: typically one becomes a freemason by being invited, auditioned and elected by former members. The entering in the initiated sphere acts as a performative to create the masonic identity (Bourdieu 1982).
- A logic of *deprofanation*, whereby one's former social identity is transformed into that of a freemason and the structure of society (such as social class) is replaced by a specifically masonic social structure. Independently of a person's social status in his/her everyday life, new freemasons must first be an Apprentice, then Fellow before becoming a Master. As one progresses, one (re-)gains more rights. For example, apprentices do not have the right to take part in debates after the presentation of a plank but fellows do; fellows and apprentices are not allowed to vote on the admission of new masons: only masters do. Rather than a sacralisation or crystallisation of pre-existing social hierarchies, this graduation of membership thereby represents a symbolic decomposition and recomposition of social hierarchies. As I shall discuss, this is often discussed by members in terms of the notion of 'revelation' rather than 'change'. Freemasonry is conceived as a *method* useful to reveal masons, creating a masonic community by the practice of this method. The community is constituted by a common practice (Ramognino 2003).
- A logic of *improvement*. Grading through the stages of freemasonry is conceived as cumulative and experiential: one becomes a better freemason through the practice of masonic work (presentation of planks), which materialises in the passage through the ranks.

Theoretical framework: classification, framing and Legitimation Code Theory

Bernstein (1973, 1975, 2007) provides a sophisticated conceptual framework for empirical research into pedagogic relations that is proving extremely fruitful in a wide range of studies. However, as Maton (2010) argues, this framework is more insightful for analysing contexts where the knowledge being taught and learned is more explicit. For example, in Bernstein's (1975) analysis of educational knowledge codes, the basis of insight and identity is said either to reside in the possession of subject knowledge (a 'collection code', where boundaries between academic subjects are stronger) or to be less certain and require constant negotiation (an 'integrated code', where boundaries are weaker). Similarly, in his analysis of knowledge structures, Bernstein (2007) describes the basis of insight and identity in 'hierarchical knowledge structures' (such as natural science) as residing in their stronger internal relations among concepts and stronger external relations to data. However, in 'horizontal knowledge structures' (such as the humanities) where knowledge-based markers are less visible, the recognition and construction of legitimate texts is said to be more problematic.

As a tacit form of pedagogy, there are no explicit instructions or knowledge to be transmitted and acquired in freemasonry, learning is through modelling, and there is little explicit assessment based on the possession of skills. What is being learned is a particular ‘gaze’ or way of thinking and being in the world. To understand such forms of apprenticeship, we thereby need to develop Bernstein’s framework, so as to more fully understand discursive practices where knowledge is less explicit.

Maton (2000, 2004, 2010) has developed the notion of ‘specialisation codes’, which forms part of his wider framework of Legitimation Code Theory. One way of understanding how this subsumes Bernstein’s framework is to consider the concepts of ‘classification’ and ‘framing’. Bernstein (1975) defined *classification* as the strength of boundaries between contexts and categories, and *framing* as the strength of control within those contexts or categories. Maton (2000) builds on this by asking, in effect: ‘Classification and framing of knowledge or of knowers?’. He suggests that Bernstein’s concepts of collection and integrated codes (and of hierarchical and horizontal knowledge structures) highlight the strengths of classification and framing of knowledge. To this, one can add, he argues, the classification and framing of knowers. In conceptual terms, these become: the epistemic relation (ER) between discursive practices and that part of the world to which they are oriented; and the social relation (SR) between discursive practices and the actor, author or subject. Each of these relations can be strongly (+) or weakly (–) classified and framed (on a continuum of strengths) or, more simply, strongly or weakly emphasised. This generates four principal modalities or *specialisation codes of legitimation* (see Figure 1):

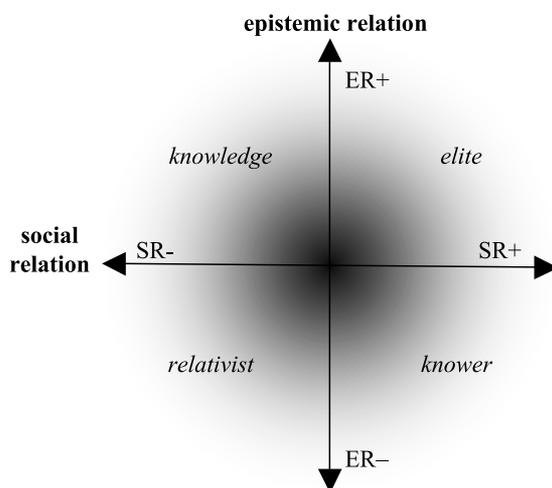


Figure 1. Specialisation codes of legitimation.

- a *knowledge code* (ER+, SR–), where possession of specialised knowledge, skills or procedures are emphasised as the basis of achievement, and the dispositions of authors or actors are downplayed;
- a *knower code* (ER–, SR+), where specialist knowledge is less significant than the dispositions of the subject as a knower;
- an *elite code* (ER+, SR+), where legitimacy is based on both possessing specialist knowledge and being the right kind of knower; and
- a *relativist code* (ER–, SR–), where legitimate insight is ostensibly determined by neither specialist knowledge nor specific dispositions (Lamont and Maton 2008).

This framework allows us to make explicit that which is tacit; namely, the way in which freemasonry focuses on the person as a potential knower. I shall now use it to analyse the selection and apprenticeship of freemasons in terms of their strengths of social relation and epistemic relation.

Social relation: recognising and revealing masonic knowers

As mentioned above, the apprenticeship space is characterised by a specific logic of election of new members. Officially, anyone can write a letter to an obedience requesting to become a candidate for the masonic initiation. However, most of the time, former members invite novices to be initiated and supported during the early stages of their apprenticeship (or discover freemasonry because of a close relative already initiated). Analysis of observations and interviews shows that this principle ensures a ‘minimum legitimacy’. As soon as initiated, one has to produce his/her first work: ‘impressions of initiation’ (which is not a plank but narrative experience of feelings during initiation). Everything is as if it was the masonic institution (embodied by its members) that identifies a potential freemason. When one applies to become a freemason, one has first to submit to a series of three ‘inquiries’ and other ‘stages’. An ‘inquiry’ usually involves three different freemasons successively going to the candidate’s home to observe and determine whether she/he can become a potential freemason. Later, members of the lodge vote on the basis of these ‘stages’ reports to decide whether the candidate supported by a masonic ‘godfather’ can become a future freemason or not. The criteria for this decision-making are officially determined, and include such measures as: ‘Tastes, Distractions, Philosophic ideas, Morality, Religious feelings, Perfectibility, Courtesy, Family situation [...] If it is possible, one of the inquirers should observe the candidate into his family context’ (extracts from an official document lent by a member).

When someone becomes an Apprentice, their suitability is implicitly said to reflect the competence of the masonic institution itself. What are identified as ‘moral characteristics’ justify the choice of a profane individual by the masonic institution. Crucially, the focus on morality, religious feelings,

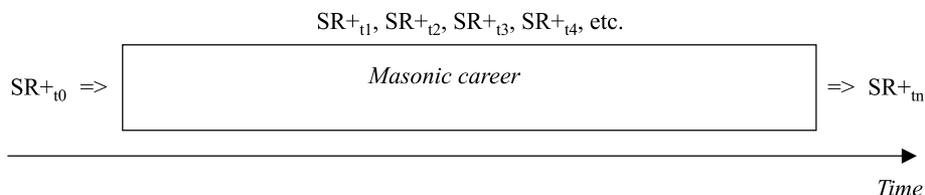


Figure 2. Evolution of strengths of social relation (SR) during the masonic career.

courtesy, and so on, are attributes a candidate must possess *before* becoming a freemason. The process of election of new members thus involves recognising a potential freemason within a profane actor. In other words, a freemason already possesses the attributes of a freemason before becoming a freemason: knowers are revealed by existing knowers. This, I suggest, can be described as representing a relatively strong social relation to the knower (SR+). The legitimacy of a member then becomes ever-stronger as they progress through the ranks of Apprentice, Fellow and Master; there is no process of downgrading. Given, as I discuss below, this involves a revelation of pre-existing masonic attributes, such that the higher one's status in freemasonry, the more one views this as based on who one already was prior to selection, we can trace the potential career of freemasons in terms of an increasing degree of legitimacy based on their attributes as a masonic knower (see Figure 2).

Novices are thus recognised as already possessing a minimum degree of legitimacy based on their personal attributes (SR_{t₀}). Through the course of their career in freemasonry expressed in terms of experience, this then grows (SR_{t_n}), as the aim of freemasonry is to help such potential freemasons to become more 'masonic', not only inside the lodge but in all the contexts and activities of their lives. Writing of educational knowledge, Bernstein (1975, 90) argued that 'Strong classification also creates a strong sense of membership in a particular class and so a specific identity'. This is also the case here, except that classification is of subjects or actors: a strengthening of the social relation.

The nature of this process of change is evident in interviews with freemasons when talking about what they were and what they are becoming. In the research on which this article is based, interviewees frequently described freemasonry as changing who one is in different ways. For example:

Freemasonry clearly changed the man I was. If I had not met freemasonry, I would probably be at best the president of the reading society of Saint-Rémy, because reading is my intellectual basis, it is my concern. But today, obviously, I only read what is linked to the evolution of our past. Today, I'm only searching about the evolution of our past. (Louis, interview)

Similarly, another interviewee described how:

Ten years later [after joining], a friend of mine told me ‘you have changed, I don’t know what you did, but you’re not the same any more’. So I think freemasonry brings something to people. (Andrée, interview)

This change materialises in different spheres of life. For example, in professional activity:

After becoming a mason, I changed the way I did my job, I tried to be more pleasant, more convivial with people. It was more comfortable for them, and more comfortable for me. [...] It changed my relationships with people. (Pierre, interview)

Or in the relation to the political sphere:

You always try to take distance, to move back from discourses to make your own opinion. (Catherine, interview)

However, this process is not typically described as one of re-socialisation or change from without, but rather of revelation, a revealing of attributes already possessed, a change from *within*. For example:

This is to say, a man changes his dimension and his proportion due to the ritual. The ritual didn’t change me. It’s more like it made me be in translation from the inside. (Louis, interview)

For the interviewees, this sense of revelation, of change from within, involved a strong sense of continuity, from their past to their current selves. For example:

Recently I was reading my first planks [presented 15 years ago]. And I really feel there is something common. I won’t tell you nothing happened during 15 years, but I think there is a continuity. (Jean-Paul, interview)

For these actors, the masonic knower was already there, within themselves, as potential, and apprenticeship has simply revealed this knower to themselves and to other freemasons. Thus, they describe this process as both change and continuity. For example:

So when freemasonry works, it acts like a catalyst, like a chemical reaction, but reactions are always the same ones. Maybe it could have happened before [...] but I think it doesn’t change things fundamentally. (Pierre, interview)

On the other hand, freemasons are classified through a logic of deprofanation (supported by the ritual) that organises freemasons themselves into a new hierarchy. Profane hierarchy symbolically does not count in lodges: everyone has to ‘start again from the beginning’. Meaningfully, this deprofanation process can drive to outclass people from their social relationships:

I saw academics listening to me, to what I had to say, although I am very far from university frame. (Louis, interview)

Masonry is the university for lower class. (Jean-Luc, interview)

In summary, the masonic structure of apprenticeship is based on a logic of election of members, whereby potential freemasons are recognised by existing freemasons. The strength of boundaries and control between freemasons and non-freemasons concerns the attributes of knowers – personal dispositions. The process of apprenticeship is then one of revelation: the pre-existing freemason is revealed through the course of apprenticeship, where experience is the key to progression. Again, this focuses on becoming (or revealing) a masonic *knower*. In short, masonic recruitment and apprenticeship can be described as emphasising the social relation to the subject (SR+) as the basis of legitimacy and achievement. I now turn to consider the epistemic relation.

Epistemic relation: masonic knowledge and abstract language

Compasses, set squares, plumb lines: analysis of planks

In common representations of freemasonry, the latter is often presented as mobilising both special people for special knowledge: this particularly inspired the mythologies about what is called the masonic secret (Taguieff 2005). This suggests masonic knowledge is strongly classified and framed from other forms of knowledge: a relatively strong epistemic relation. If so, this would mean freemasonry represents an *elite code* (ER+, SR+). However, analyses of planks, interviews, observations and official texts reveal that masonic knowledge does not appear to exist as specialised knowledge. Masonic knowledge is treated as if lacking any specific epistemological content or distinct *masonic* empirical referent; the masonic symbols used in planks (as I discuss below) can be used to discuss almost anything. Instead, they are considered to have the potential for axiological significance, or masonic *values*.

As I discuss below, planks are based on using a masonic symbol (such as the compass or an extract from a masonic ritual) as the basis for discussing something else. This theme can be almost anything: the focus is weakly bounded, or a relatively weak epistemic relation to the object (ER–). When creating planks, freemasons also have at their disposal an array of symbols and an array of symbolic relations. These can be either relations between two symbols or between a symbol and a function. For example, planks analysed for this article included discussions of:

- ‘the compass and the set square’, which refers to relations between two symbols;
- ‘the lever’ and ‘the plumb line’, which tacitly refers to relations between a tool and its function; and

- ‘symbolism at the Fellow grade’ and ‘from noon to midnight’, which refers to the masonic ritual.

To discuss these symbols, freemasons draw from a wide variety of fields of knowledge, often using academic or classical works. For example, issues discussed in a plank on ‘the lever’ included the lever as a tool, the lever as a masonic reference (symbolism), the quarrying of stone (history), the Atlas myth (literature and history), the etymology of the word ‘pride’ and its evolution from the Middle Age, the condemnation of ‘pride’ as one of the seven cardinal sins by the Roman Church (history and theology), censorship (history) and words as social link (philosophy); and references drawn upon included the Ligou dictionary (a masonic reference), the Littré, Robert and Larousse dictionaries (French dictionaries), an Ancient French-language dictionary, and Antoine Furetière’s dictionary (French writer and lexicographer).

In short, the focus nor the knowledge drawn upon to discuss that focus is weakly classified and framed, a relatively weak epistemic relation (ER–). Moreover, this epistemic relation grows weaker as freemasons progress through the ranks of Apprentice, Fellow and Master. It is the practice itself, experience as a freemason as demonstrated through longevity of membership within the lodge, that serves as the basis of growing legitimacy. As members progress through the ranks they are able to do more; specifically, they are able to criticise the lodge itself. Most of the planks involve a prescription or proposal for the lodge, whether congratulations or criticism of other masonic practices and work. More experience enables greater criticism and latitude of subject matter. For example, the following extract illustrates how one member discussed politics, a topic typically discouraged:

I’m not forgetting it is not much allowed to deal with politics in the lodge, but it seems to me the observation of some main points of our society are not to be forgotten by freemasons who pretend to promote men and Manhood improvement. (Plank, ‘Words or Ideas?’)

In this extract, the author develops the topic of his plank to criticise the quality of the works in his lodge:

Men can free themselves by the Word if and only if words are used in their most precise, exact and sincere sense in regard to past and projection [...]. It is also for our ritual I say that, because examples of this aren’t rare [...]. I say that because I think this is particularly true for the masonic works of the current year. (Plank, ‘The Lever’)

Similarly, other planks emphasise how they are broadening the focus of discussion. For example:

You must be thinking I’m losing my mind and what I’m talking about doesn’t have to be considered in a masonic plank especially about my subject.

Nevertheless, should we be in our comfortable and relaxing lodges where obviously harmony and fraternity prevail to zone out [...]? Or should we consider we urgently have to remember this famous concept of ‘laboratory of ideas’ [...]? (Plank, ‘Words or Ideas?’)

The use of analogical reasoning

Rather than specialised knowledge of specifically masonic objects, it is the masonic ritual, what is called the masonic method, that serves as the basis of specialisation – the particular forms taken by masonic discursive practices. The ritual regulates the *form* of oral and written texts more than their *contents*. If the symbols and knowledge drawn on in masonic works are relatively arbitrary, this raises the question of the basis of these planks: how do freemasons mobilise symbolic relations in order to produce something personal, something that can show the masonic knower as a *good* freemason? Analysing the argumentative structures of planks highlights several common attributes.

Symbolic relations in masonic works are created through the use of analogical reasoning:

- masonic planks focus and draw on a wide range of knowledge domains (philosophy, religion, semiotics etc.), but hardly anything specifically masonic;
- the symbolic issue focused on by a plank is the starting point for a series of recontextualisations of that issue or symbol;
- ‘profane’ knowledge (i.e. non-masonic knowledge fields) are mobilised but always in an abstract form to create context-independent knowledge – narrative experience is excluded if not inscribed in an abstract demonstration and linked to anything before; and
- these relations are created through the use of analogical reasoning – that is to say, a relation of symmetry between two relations.

A simple example of this use of analogical reasoning to recontextualise symbols is shown by these phrases drawn from a plank entitled ‘From Noon to Midnight’:

From noon to midnight, from light to darkness [...]

But why ‘from noon to midnight’? [...]

In that hourglass what is above flows into what is down as the universal energy flows into Man.

The relation between ‘noon’ and ‘midnight’ is analogically reinterpreted by the author in different contexts (light, time, etc.). The relation between ‘noon and midnight’ is thus used symmetrically in different ‘universes’ linked by a recontextualisation support: ‘but why from noon to midnight?’. The symbolic

language's analogical potential for recontextualisation supplies freemasons with a means for demonstrating a competence to use abstract meanings. What is interesting here is the masonic basis of the plank is discussed by the author in order to create something 'original'; that is, something *personal*.

A second example comes from the plank entitled 'The Air':

In reference to the Verb, speech results from the air passing into vocal cords. [...] Obviously it calls in our mind the physiology of voice whose fundamental sound, according to Hindus, is the great mantra AUM: a real circulatory system, analogous to the blood circulatory.

The process is the same here: 'speech' is recontextualised in 'air', which is equivalent to 'voice' and 'blood', as 'vocal cords' is recontextualised in 'circulatory system'. The analogical reasoning transform the symbolic topic of the plank 'The Air' (as one of the four elements) into something else; it thus makes very different issues commensurable.

In the following extract, this process of recontextualisation is most explicit. Here, masonic references are recontextualised to address the political field. In this plank, the discussion of masonic references and freemasonry in general allows the author to do something forbidden in his obedience: talking about politics in the lodge is forbidden according to the constitutions of *La Grande Loge de France*. The plank is about words and ideas in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Ritual (AASR) (which is one common point of every lodge of this obedience):

We all know we have to look for the idea underlying the symbol, but maybe it would be better to begin by attributing ideas to words. The AASR has totally French origins ... and everyone can see everyday how much French people love words. It seems to me the Word is lost if it is just words. And as we are speaking about waffling, I have the feeling that our country clears forests everyday and freemasons aren't the last woodcutters.

In this example, the masonic reference is recontextualised in order to 'criticise' freemasonry itself. The masonic issue is transformed through two orientations: on the one hand, the plank criticises 'our country', which means the profane country; and on the other hand, it criticises freemasons themselves.

Analogical reasoning in masonic planks thereby enables freemasons to produce something that is logically argumentative and abstract:

- Masonic works are *logically argumentative* because they link things to each other through analogy. From this perspective, what freemasons call 'personal' means a personal ordering of analogies on the basis of the masonic symbols resulting in an 'interpretation'.
- They are also *abstract* because analogy is not context dependent: it is transcontextual by its definition. Even where a freemason offers a narrative in a plank, it has to have a link with what comes before and what

comes after. Narrative experience has to be recontextualised in an abstract way (context-independent) to be related to the plank.

This use of analogy is crucial for understanding how masonic apprenticeship can be extended to people from a wide range of social origins. The masonic knower must be one who can view 'from above', so to speak; for example, as one freemason put it: 'It's always the same thing. [Freemasonry] makes you stand back from things. You try not to understand things directly' (Cathy, interview). This orientation involves distancing and abstraction. Analogical reasoning makes it possible for freemasons to deal with abstract language without necessarily already possessing a competence for it. The analogical process consists of creating a connection between something known (the base domain) and something new (the target domain) and problematic (Vosniadou and Ortony 1989). It corresponds to a metaphorising abstraction, which gives to an author the possibility of creating abstract meanings based on something more 'common' (Grize 1997).

A tacit pedagogy to transmit ways of being

As previously discussed, the masonic institution aims to create freemasons, but the pedagogy in this transmission is not explicit. There is no real training or rigid procedures to follow, no assessment, and one can become a Fellow and then a Master simply through extended membership of the lodge. However, although there is no explicit evaluation, there is a conception of what is acquired as one becomes a freemason, which results in a conception of progression and improvement. Masonic subjects for an Apprentice or for a Master are not the same: an Apprentice's subject for discussion is supposed to be easier than a Master's subject. Purely symbolic issues are typically reserved for 'young' freemasons, not in terms of age but masonic experience expressed by ranks. Freemasons of a higher rank are allowed to deal with less obviously 'masonic' subjects. This raises the question of how freemasons learn during their apprenticeship and how this creates individuals whose masonic nature is evident in their everyday lives. I argue that the use of analogical reasoning in freemasonry as an intellectual way of obtaining a mastery of abstract language can be understood as a form of tacit pedagogy. This apprenticeship is included within a conception of the knower in which practice in its wider sense (speaking, writing, listening) is the most important part of teaching. Obviously there is a pedagogy in freemasonry but it is neither an explicit pedagogy – because it does not explicitly transmit knowledge – nor an implicit pedagogy – because it does not aim to transmit ways of knowing. A tacit pedagogy aims to transmit ways of being: freemasonry is conceived as a 'method' for transforming people, for reshaping their dispositions or, as freemasons conceive it, recognising and revealing their pre-existing masonic nature.

Conclusion

In this article I have examined the structure of masonic selection and apprenticeship. Using Legitimation Code Theory, I argued that this can be conceptualised as involving a relatively strong social relation to the knower and a relatively weak epistemic relation to knowledges. First, potential freemasons are selected on the basis of their personal dispositions and this masonic nature is progressively revealed through a freemason's career. Masonic work aims to reveal something about the knower rather than the possession of specialised knowledge. Moreover, freemasonry aims at shaping the knower's dispositions so that they display this masonic nature throughout their everyday lives. The social relation to the knower is thus relatively strong and grows stronger during a masonic career. Secondly, there is little specifically masonic knowledge or objects of study. The centre of masonic practices in lodges, the plank, can be a discussion of almost anything and may draw on a wide range of knowledges as what might be called disciplinary borrowings. Moreover, as a freemason progresses through the ranks, she/he may address an even wide range of issues. The epistemic relation to objects and knowledge is thus relatively weak and grows weaker during a masonic career. Freemasonry can thus be understood as a *knower code* (ER+, SR-) and one that grows ever more focused on the knower through time. In short, what makes something 'masonic' is the freemason himself/herself; no matter what knowledge is mobilised in a plank, it simply must be the work of a freemason. A good masonic plank is a plank produced by a good freemason. Legitimation is based on the author more than the knowledge demonstrated by the written work itself. As a means of creating a special kind of knower, freemasonry can thereby be understood as a pedagogic process in which the knower is more important than knowledge.

This analysis stands in contrast to the way in which freemasonry is often constructed in common social representations (Taguieff 2005) as involving both specialised knowledge and specialist knowers – an elite code. Figure 3 shows both the representation of freemasonry as an elite code and its practice as a progressively stronger knower code.

This is not to say that masonic apprenticeship involves no specialised forms of knowledge, but symbolic language is the principal tool and analogical reasoning is the principal method. Indeed, these forms of knowledge practices are central to understanding the question of how a select group whose practices are oriented towards abstract, context-independent knowledge has expanded to include a widening social population, including actors whose backgrounds do not predispose them to abstract forms of meaning. Masonic works involve the use of analogical reasoning, which Bernstein (2007) describes as characteristic of 'horizontal discourse' or everyday knowledges, a form of discourse available to everyone. Knowledge is, he suggests, recontextualised from one context to another by use of metaphor and analogy. The use of analogical

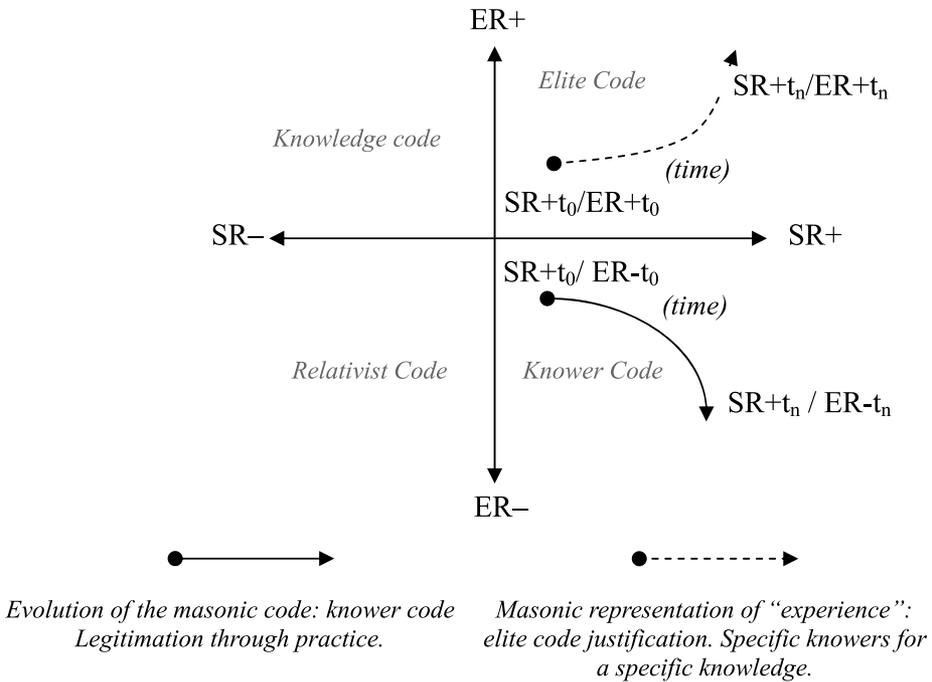


Figure 3. Masonic apprenticeship process: representation and practice.
 Note: ER = epistemic relation; SR = social relation.

reasoning in the case of freemasonry enables the generation of a discourse focused on abstract symbols in a manner that is universally accessible to actors. The lack of specialist knowledge also enables actors without academic backgrounds to become part of the masonic community. Once they have been selected – once their knower status has been recognised – apprenticeship then reveals their nature as a freemason; this refers to the rebirth as Weber described in his analysis of deliverance religions (2006, 313–314): ‘a quality of mind aptitude [...] one must acquire and prove in his everyday life’.

The internal masonic hierarchy is not the same as the hierarchy of society: the logic of deprofanation depends on experience at the ritual – the integrative principle is one of experience. The focus of its tacit pedagogy is the knower, the dispositions of members. Thus, the knower code of freemasonry enables a widening social demographic of membership while maintaining strong boundaries around the institution.

I conclude by arguing that it is important to explore such non-academic forms of knowledge-building, ones that focus more on knowers than knowledge, if we wish to more fully understand pedagogic relations. As Bernstein argues, pedagogic relations reach far beyond formal educational practices and institutions. This extends to a wide range of issues, from other forms of apprenticeship, in which extended experience is crucial to the acquisition of

competences. As pedagogy is intimately linked to the idea of change, we have to explore not only what but also who is being changed. As Maton conceptualises, we must examine the classification and framing not only of knowledge but also of knowers (Maton forthcoming). In the case of freemasonry, practising a certain form of reasoning is a way of revealing freemasons. Knowing how to do something as a freemason, one is then supposed to act as a freemason in one's everyday life. An analysis of planks shows that freemasonry comprises a certain way of perceiving social reality not in terms of differentiation but in terms of putting contexts together. Through the practice of symbolic interpretation, individuals must bring together different contexts in order to do something original, something personal that will be considered masonic. A knower code creates the conditions for a non-knowledge-based evaluation. Thanks to this form of apprenticeship, knowers cannot fail. Where a knowledge code is specialised by virtue of the mastering of a certain kind of knowledge, a knower code is specialised by virtue of the selection of people. Of course, not everything can be said in a plank, but the skill concerns form more than content. What can be said must be said in a particular, recontextualised way.

From this perspective, masonic recruitment and apprenticeship can be considered an exemplary object of study for the sociology of education: its concern with knower-building reveals how apprenticeship into oral and written practices can transform actors within society, creating and re-creating common worlds (Ramognino 2005). The practice of a transcontextual way of reasoning is a first step to understanding how actors from different social origins can be assimilated together in freemasonry. This point refers to a wider question about language: how can actors create something common although they come from different socio-cultural groups? And more precisely, how can they act together in writing and speaking, mobilising an abstract language commonly reserved to specific social groups? These are the issues I have addressed in this article.

What is presented in this paper is the first stage of an ongoing research project. This wider project focuses on the question of access to knowledge and social acting. Freemasonry not only proposes knowledge to members, it proposes ways to express this competence beyond the lodge. As a place dedicated to the practice of oral speaking, it is also an apprenticeship for a general experience of 'having a voice'. The next issue is thus how this competence is carried into everyday life, and how and where it changes actors within wider society. If knowledge and its institutions of transmission are linked to the reproduction of society, pedagogy is always linked to a process of change of individuals. A sociological analysis must, therefore, bring together these complementary approaches: the reproduction of groups may create individual change. If 'art results from the autonomisation of the aesthetic dimension in all activities, and moral philosophy and moral doctrines from the ethic dimension of action' (Ramognino 2007, 18), what we can analyse in masonic lodges is the creation and recreation of a collective normativity by individual *practices*, mobilising a ritualised symbolic sphere for moral discussions.

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Notes

1. An association 'loi 1901' (Law of 1901) is a non-profit-making association of people, legally declared in prefectures.
2. Official statistics declared in prefectures by obediences, available on obediences' official websites.
3. I especially focus here on lodges in Southern France (Arles, Avignon, Marseille and Nice).
4. With the exception of *Anderson's Constitutions*, all quotes from constitutions, interviews and planks have been translated into English by the author. The constitutions are available on obediences' websites.

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