

A Summary of the Trivium Method

- For Critical Thinking and Creative Problem Solving -

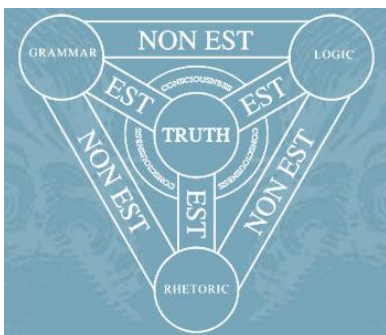
"For if you [the rulers] suffer your people to be ill-educated, and their manners to be corrupted from their infancy, and then punish them for those crimes to which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded from this, but that you first make thieves [outlaws] and then punish them."

- Sir Thomas More (1478-1535), *Utopia*, Book 1

Would you first break the legs of a lamb and then kick it because it could not stand up thereafter?

We are now witnessing the accumulating negative effects of omitting the three means of learning how to learn which constitute the integrated, Classical Trivium - the first three of the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences; the last four constituents are called the Quadrivium.

In a Classical Primary and Secondary Education curriculum, the components of the Trivium - general grammar, formal (Aristotelian) logic, and classical rhetoric - are presented to students to train them in learning how to learn and, concurrently, in validly thinking systematically.



IMPORTANT: The Trivium is presented to methodically gather raw, factual data into a coherent body of knowledge (grammar): then to gain understanding of that body by systematically eliminating all stated contradictions within it (dialectic or logic): and finally, to wisely express and utilize that valid knowledge and understanding in the objective, real world (rhetoric).

Once a student is conversant with this three-fold procedural pattern, he is now capable - and this is one of the great values of the Trivium - of teaching himself, with minimal guidance from an instructor or facilitator, how to learn any established subject such as mathematics, geometry, musical theory, astronomy (the Classical Quadrivium), physics, chemistry, history, philosophy, etc.; or of fully grasping any propositional topic he is motivated upon which to focus - like current socio/political issues, newly developing scientific hypotheses, historical and literary analyses, and so forth. In other words, through the process of learning how to learn, he learns how to critically and creatively think . . . for himself. That last sentence sums up the process.

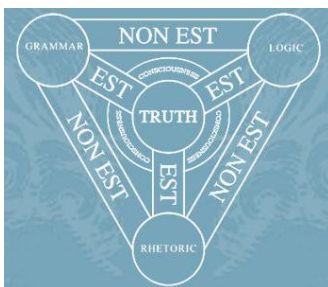
The first aspect of systematic thinking is to learn the elements of a proposition or subject in order to critically define a problem or an opportunity (this is done in the grammar and logic stages). Once defined, we use our creative thought capacity to solve the problem or find ways to take advantage of the opportunity (the classical rhetorical mode accomplishes this task).

This makes a person a first-hand, independent thinker rather than remaining a second-hand, dependent thinker. In not relying on his own organized thoughts, a second-hand thinker (usually one marked by low self-esteem) has his mental content filled by various so called authorities like the mass media and its advertising; professionals and politicians, some of whom may be unscrupulous; officials, both benign and despotic, in schools and in the work place. The first-hand mode - the Trivium pattern of organization - is in fact the way the human mind would naturally order itself for effective thinking if this process were not aggressively discouraged by various entrenched factions in society - those self-perceived and self-proclaimed guardians of convention. To state the process in its simplest form, the 3 steps in order answer the 5W's + How to identify knowledge and how it's inter-related in context of its surroundings, producing objective and verifiable understanding:

1. **Grammar (Knowledge of that which exists)**
 - a. Answers the questions of the Who. What. Where, and the When of a subject.
2. **Logic (Understanding of the interrelationships of that which exists)**
 - a. Answers the Why of a subject.
3. **Rhetoric (Communication of Grammar and Logic)**
 - a. Provides the How of a subject.

A major reason the one-roomed school house of the past (being taught by one instructor and upper classmen) and the home schooling movement now gaining traction was and is successful is that they use(d) the Trivium Method of Education.

Success, in this context, is in producing appropriately critical, creative, self-sufficient individuals who become equipped to attract intellectual abundance into their lives as well as that which naturally follows from it -material abundance in moderation, not in excess.

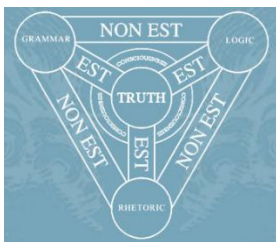


IMPORTANT: If a person has not been exposed to this method, it is difficult to communicate to him the serenity-of-mind and self-assurance (i.e., the spiritual abundance) caused by this competence to appropriately validate one's own thinking as well as the thinking and doctrines of others. (It must be experienced)

No amount of personal counseling or therapy can generate the self-esteem of having the ability to orient one's body and mind in the world through what is his most distinguishing attribute: that of his own rational thinking applied in a systematic manner. The pattern of the Trivium is the foundation of this system which produces an intuitive means to learn new material, not only during periods devoted to formal instruction, but over an entire lifetime.

As the study and practice of music allow the hands to intuitively and immediately produce melody on a piano, for instance, so the study and practice of the Trivium produces intuitive and immediate critical/creative thought.

In being the method to know a subject rather than only to study a subject, it is truly the most fundamental preparation for the leading of a successful life -a gift every child, adolescent, and adult should be presented to elevate him to the dignity of self-determination.



IMPORTANT: It is stressed, the Trivium forms a habitual and methodological pattern-of-mind of how to think effectively, not what to think. It gives one's mind an ever-improving map, which corresponds to the terrain, and is always improving itself; for the purposes of your survival and satisfaction in life.

As an added bonus, this is a serene pursuit. Because this is a method devoted to the "how" of thinking, it is not controversial. It is in the topics of "what" to think -religion, literature, philosophy, and modern science -where controversy reigns.

The problem is, "General Education" has not been the focus of the contemporary schooling establishment but, rather, social engineering . . . it is a vile and protracted form of mis-education.

After adopting the Prussian Education method (see addendum) in America in the middle to late-19th century, this fault in educating our nation, from the perspective of the general citizenry, was compounded by applying the dangerous tenets of the Pragmatic Philosophy devised by William James and John Dewey. The "party line" is that children need to be surrounded by their peers in order to socialize properly in preparing them for life. Socialization is a natural process to people, it need not be taught to them; or, more to the point, programmed in them.

Children need to be around family, neighbors, and a few close, genuine friends when younger; and participants in church, social, civic, and charitable organizations in adolescence. Friends and organizations just described have their time and place in a young persons' life - they are not all-consuming intrusions as modern primary and secondary schooling establishments try to make themselves.

There are self-serving, domineering social entities which perceive a gain from having general populations presented with only the protocols of a field of study and to have withheld the rationale of that field of study. The knowledge of the rationale of subjects for understanding, and the protocols for the expression or application of those subjects comprises what is addressed in a "General Education".

The "rationale" provides the all-important understanding as to why a subject or proposition is integrated and self-intelligible by presenting the entire thought process (the validated arguments) behind the rationale's conclusions. The "protocol" is a set of instructions spawned by that consolidated understanding (of the rationale) with which to manifest an expressed outcome.

By presenting only protocols, outcome-based education (which is, in reality, mind control or "programming") is the openly stated goal of public schooling, not general, understanding-based education. Our country is populated by the products of this policy of having "only" protocols presented and committed to memory. These "products" are designed to be obedient soldiers, pliable employees, imprudent consumers of goods and services, and otherwise uncritical servants of established corporate and statist interests.

In not being trained to think critically and creatively, students are programmed in reading and thinking only to the level of abiding to instructions (e.g., reading a procedural manual or slavishly following edicts from "on high" issued by so called authorities).

Unfortunately, this is a mind numbing action which becomes insidiously habituated. To be under the rule of task masters; to be dictated as to what to think by others or via the media; to labor under the illusion of being a well-informed individual; to become a stillborn adult, a life-long adolescent -these are the results of our century old institution. The ideal of self-determination is trampled mercilessly and in its place grows self-alienation.

In being aggressively indoctrinated not to think . . . that is, in being programmed against our very nature, is it any wonder most of us live in a constant state of low-level fear and are anxiously disoriented in an ocean of chaos without the ability to judge as to what are appropriate and beneficial goods and values? Man cannot long live or maintain health without his primary means of survival; the exercise of his rational thought.

If one is trained in the use of the Trivium Method, not only can he learn topics on his own; deduce particular rationale from particular protocols (and, of course, the inverse); but also develop intellectual and value judgment of a high order. Through the efficient attainment of knowledge and understanding, one's intellectual capacities are awakened. He will be comfortable at all levels of intellect -lower, higher, and subtle. He can look at the world, or anything else, with clarity and discernment.

Then he can act accordingly and with assurance. Said simply, he can thrive in the living of life. One of several tests to show if an individual is reaching this awakened state of education is when he can thoroughly and critically entertain various ideas without necessarily embracing them (i.e., he comes into possession of a truly open mind: he frees himself from his own opinions and prejudices). The nature of some other tests is quite surprising (those will be discussed elsewhere).

Because of the universality of its application, the Trivium, as it has for the last six millennia (at minimum), provides its adherents effectiveness in responding to most questions and situations encountered in life.

The Liberating Arts, Books, and a Free Mind (Liber, n. = Book, Liber, v. = Free)

The Trivium is comprised of:

- [1] General Grammar
- [2] Formal Logic
- [3] Classical Rhetoric

The Quadrivium is comprised of:

- [4] Arithmetic
- [5] Geometry
- [6] Music
- [7] Astronomy

The Trivium and Quadrivium comprise the 7 Liberal Arts.

The Trivium (which pertains to Mind)-the elementary three, which means: "where three roads meet", those "roads" being a metaphor to describe: Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric; in that specific order.

[1] **GRAMMAR** (discovering and ordering facts of reality comprises basic, systematic Knowledge)-not only the rules developed and applied to the ordering of word/concepts for verbal expression and communication, but our first contact with conscious order as such. This is the initial, self-conscious technique used in properly (discursively or sequentially) organizing a body of knowledge from raw, factual data for the purpose of gaining understanding (through logic) and; thus, also organizing the individual human mind. It is the foundation upon which all other "methods of organization and order" are built. Special grammar properly relates words to other words within a specified language like English, Russian, or Latin. General grammar relates words to objective reality in any language and applies to all subjects as the first set of building blocks to integrated or fully mindful, objective knowledge. A body of knowledge which has been gathered and arranged under the rules of general grammar can now be subjected to logic for full understanding, which, emphatically, is a separate intellectual procedure.

[2] **LOGIC** (developing the faculty of reason in establishing valid [i.e., non-contradictory] relationships among facts yields basic, systematic Understanding) it is a guide for thinking correctly; thinking without contradiction. More concisely, it is the art of non-contradictory identification. The work of logic is proof. Proof consists of establishing the truth and validity of a concept or proposition in correspondence with objective, factual reality by following a self-consistent chain of higher-level thought back down to foundational, primary concepts or axioms (i.e., Existence, Consciousness, and Causality). It is a means of keeping us in touch and grounded to objective reality in our search for valid knowledge and understanding. Logic brings the rhythm of the subjective thoughts of the mind, and the subsequent actions of the body, into harmony with the rhythm of the objective universe.

[3] **RHETORIC** (applying knowledge and understanding expressively comprises Wisdom or, in other words, it is systematically useable knowledge and understanding)-to explore and find the proper choice of methods for cogently expressing the conclusions of grammar and logic on a subject in writing and/or oral argumentation (oratory). The annunciation of those conclusions is called a statement of rationale; the set of instructions deduced from the rationale for the purpose of application (of those conclusions) in the real world is called a statement of protocols.

THE SYSTEM:

- 1] Discovering and arranging Knowledge (a body of knowledge) under general grammar
- 2] Fully Understanding that Knowledge under formal logic; and
- 3] Wisely expressing and using that Knowledge and Understanding under classical rhetoric, are three distinctly different but inter-related disciplines which yield, when applied as an integrated unit -- Objective, Verifiable, Truth.

ESSENTIAL TERMS

[1] **Existence** - Every entity, action, attribute, and relationship that is, was, or ever will be.

[1.1] This definition describes every noun, adjective, verb, etc. in the English language.

[1.1.1] It encompasses all word-related concepts in objective reality.

[2] **Identity** - That which an existent is; the sum total of its attributes or characteristics.

[2.1] As opposed to that which does not exist, the arbitrary and un-substantial.

[3] **Consciousness** - The faculty of awareness of that which exists.

[3.1] **Questions**, i.e. "thinking" is the sign of consciousness in human beings.

[3.1.1] **Descartes questioning his existence** results in (Existence exists, I observe existence with my 5 senses and think about it, therefore I am conscious of my existence); or "I think, therefore I am." (cogito ergo sum)

[4] **Validation** - The process of establishing an ideology's relation to reality (existence).

[5] **Law of Causality** - An entity must act in accord with its nature. This is a corollary to "Identity" mentioned above.

[6] **LOGIC** - THE ART OF NON-CONTRADICTIONARY IDENTIFICATION.

[6.1] The method by which we can validly think for ourselves.

Authors can use the discipline in two senses. In its most fundamental form, Systematic Wisdom is the art of efficiently passing thoughts from one person to others.

In its most effective form, it is the art of passing "validated" thoughts from one person to others. This is the *essence* of cogent communication.

The internet is a valuable adjunct to the concepts presented above. A simple word search on any of the technical terms listed should suffice to bring the proper clarification needed to implement a useful rhetorical dissertation.

A SUMMARY OF WISDOM / RHETORIC

1. The work of Wisdom is the cogently expressed communication of Knowledge and Understanding. It leads to higher levels of knowledge and understanding: the knowing of Knowledge and the understanding of Understanding.
2. The effect of Wisdom is to demonstrate the usefulness of Knowledge and Understanding. That is, it is to display the insight -the thought process -in an article of persuasion or in the formulation of an outcome.
3. Through the skilled use of rhetoric, all planned human activity can be communicated and directed. This is a two edged sword. Rhetoric / Wisdom can be directed to beneficial or to malevolent goals.

Let us end by reviewing some of the personal benefits which are inherent in the Trivium Method. The following will be most efficiently and effectively realized by using the trivium to train the mind for critical and creative thinking:

- [1] The path to a challenging, productive livelihood can be intelligently defined.
- [2] Sound physical health, a judicious ethical standard, a high level of self-esteem and the sense of well-being can be optimized.
- [3] Rewarding personal relationships will manifest through the cultivation of beneficial ethics and well-being.
- [4] The astuteness to best discern the issues (i.e., the quality of information) regarding security will be developed.

That is only the beginning. An adherent of the Method can acquire elevated levels of penetrating insight which would otherwise not be available. Through that insight he can also self-teach the contents of a propositional argument or of an entire, formalized subject of knowledge if he chooses to bring his -likewise -heightened focus to doing so.

When a culture's government, education systems, and news media are not corrupt, the constant need for "fact checking" is not as critical as it is during the periods of dis-information and propaganda like that which we are currently experiencing.

The Trivium is the premier method for independent fact checking. The next two benefits of insight are corollaries:

[1] A person is truly educated in that he can now thoroughly entertain any idea without necessarily embracing it; and,

[2] Traveling somewhat in another direction, he becomes free from the prison of his own prejudicial opinions ... he obtains an open mind.

Because the Trivium introduces equilibrium and balance through subjective thought with objective reality, he could, in fact, develop new and original propositional arguments and entire bodies of knowledge as competently as those respected people who have preceded him.