

Philosophy in Masonry

WB Eugenio Padua, PM (51)

At his "passing" from EA to FC, the seeker is taught a very beautiful philosophy of life: To examine his every action by "*the square of morality*" and to see that no presumption shall cause him to transcend "*the level*" of propriety, and no vicious propensity shall swerve him from "*the plumb line of rectitude.*"

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle defined a happy life as one of self-control guided by the principle of the "Golden Mean."

The Golden Mean means moderation, harmonious satisfaction, a sense of proportion, a guide to virtue, a road to excellence in our daily conduct.

It is the middle course of two extremes... If, for instance, danger approaches us, we can meet it in one of three ways: (1) the extreme way of impetuous recklessness or bravado; (2) the extreme way of dastardly fear or cowardice; (3) the middle way of calm determined courage of a man who is so clear and firm in his grasp of some worthy cause or end that he will take his chances on life or death if taking such chances is the best way to serve that cause or end.

The Golden Mean between wasteful extravagance and miserly stinginess is "judicious liberality;" between insolent arrogance or pride and servile humility, "dignified modesty or self-respect;" between moroseness and buffoonery, "good humor."

The Golden Mean must be "neither too much nor too little" for a given person in a given situation in relation to a given thing.

It is not like the absolute or mathe-

matical mean, which is an exact average of two precisely calculable extremes... The collateral circumstances of each situation must be considered.

Guided by a sense of proportion, we must always seek the "relative mean" — the Golden Mean.

On the wall of the temple of Apollo at Delphi, there was engraved the motto "Meden Agan" (Nothing in Excess)—in an attempt of the Greeks to check violence and impulsiveness.

Aristotle's ideal man "does not expose himself needlessly to danger" but he is "willing, in great crises, to give even his life."

An ideal man is, or should be, "of a disposition to do service to others" though not expecting to have a service done to himself by others... "To confer a kindness is a mark of superiority; to receive one is a mark of subordination."

"An ideal man," Aristotle said, "bears the accidents of life with dignity and grace, making the best of his circumstances, like a skillful general who marshals his limited forces with all the strategy of war."

Aristotle believed that happiness is the highest good and that it is attained only through good works, wisdom, moral virtue, moderation... Well-being comes from well-doing, he said.

Unhappiness is the result of bad conduct which is the result of ignorance... Happiness is the result of good conduct which is the result of knowledge...

The completely happy man is the

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that may come to another brother or any member of his family. If some accident befell a brother or a member of his family, gets sick seriously or dies, the brethren should be the first group of people to come and share with the sorrow and to offer financial help automatically, because this is a part of our sworn obligation before the Altar. When every Master Mason does his sworn obligation to all concerned, more especially to a brother, we encourage everybody to be active in the Lodge and be conscious of their duties.

11. A well-to-do or much-better-off brother having a car, a pick-up or a jeep, should go out of his way to find out if some brethren are ready to go to Lodge meeting and can be accommodated in his vehicle. This, in-

deed, is an ideal which we might call real Masonry in action and a fine gesture of brotherly affection and love existing only among individuals with such a close fraternal relations. No doubt this system will improve and promote attendance in Lodge meetings.

Brethren, how about giving a try of these solutions to poor attendance enumerated above? Is it not inspiring to hear and to note that in some Lodges, attendance is "overflowing" so to speak, and that if some brethren happen to be a little late in coming, seats and spaces become a problem? If it can be done in other Lodges, why can it not be done right in our own Lodges, too?

Brethren, here is a real challenge for you and me. As for me, I accept the challenge. Do you? △

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complete gentleman... And the complete gentleman is the man passionately devoted to friendliness... When you see two friends, you see two bodies with a single soul.

The 13th century philosopher and theologian Saint Thomas Aquinas maintained with "pagan" Aristotle (4th c. B.C.) that "every man has within him the form, or the urge, to turn himself into an angel, just as every acorn has within it the form, or the urge, to turn itself into an oak tree."

Saint Thomas played a central role in the assimilation of Aristotelianism in Christianity. There was a time when Church officials warned against the teaching of the Aristotelian treatises — probably because of the Mohammedan route by which it had come. Eventually, they decided that the thing to do was not to outlaw Aristotle or to burn his books but to study him with all due care. Thus, Christianity has been enriched with his philosophy since the thirteenth or fourteenth century. △

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To both Religion and Masonry, therefore, the altar is indispensable, it being the pivotal point and source of divine light for all the activities in both. It symbolizes the throne of the Supreme Being, whereupon He presides over and oversees all the labors taking place around Him. Finally,

it will undoubtedly be for the best interest of the Order, if only the brethren, especially those whose interest in Masonry are waning, will come to recall what they pledged before the altar of obligation, that they may once more fully realize the important duties they owe to God, country, the Lodge, the brethren and mankind. △