



GRAY LODGE 329

NEWSLETTER



What's going on at your Lodge?

January 2008

Happy New Year!

Please continue to send me your suggestions and I will endeavor to include your ideas and articles. send to: master@gray329.org

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January Stated Meeting: 1/2/08 @ 7.00pm

There will be an Open Program for this meeting. We have a speaker coming to give a presentation on Bro Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. On completion of the open portion, we will have the business portion.

We will be conducting this meeting in the EA Degree as per the recently approved Grand Masters recommendation. This means that all EA's FC's and MM's can attend. This promises to be a pivotal moment in Texas Masonic History as we encourage the belief among our newest initiates that they are an important part of our Lodge.



February

We will be receiving our new District Deputy Grand Master for our district of 30B, RW Wayne Huddleston, at this meeting. More to follow in the February newsletter.

3-IN-ONE!

Congratulations to Bro Charles Moore who was granted permission from Grand Lodge to receive all three degrees in one day this last week. His impending deployment to Iraq meant that he could not proceed through the degrees in a normal manner. A memorable event was made even more special as all three degrees were conferred by his father, Bro Michael Moore. As was mentioned to me as we walked out of the Lodge that night...this is what Masonry is all about! My thanks to everyone who participated...especially Bro Junior Deacon, Roberto Sanchez for getting the degree teams together.

Degrees

We have several new candidates and therefore a lot of degree work coming up. If you would like to participate, please contact our Junior Deacon (rmsh13@yahoo.com) and he will let you know what the degree schedule is. If you need to brush up on your floor work, contact the JW, Bro Darrin Pitts (dpitts36@yahoo.com) and he will inform you of our rehearsals and degree team instruction.

Line Officers 2007

WM: Lex Leckie
SW: Greg Weisinger
JW: Darrin Pitts
SEC: Michael Moore
TR: Doug Hissong
SD: David Cousins
JD: Roberto Sanchez
MA: Randon Reaves
MC: Paul Anderson
SS: Butch Boggess
JS:
CH: Craig Johnston
TI: David Woodard

FROM THE EAST

Brethren,

As you can see we are opening the business portion of our January Stated Meeting on the EA Degree. I hope to have as many of you attend with your friends and family for the presentation on Mozart and then make our first EA Stated meeting a busy one! As usual we have the culinary delights served up by our Senior Steward Butch Boggess at 6pm. As those of you who have attended the last few meetings can attest, we all have fun, and the fellowship is second to none!

May the Blessings of Heaven be with you and your families this coming New Year...

Fraternally, Lex Leckie, WM Gray Lodge #329.

Ethics: Science or Philosophy?

By
Rene Canales

During our initiation and preparation upon the different degrees we face in our path to enlightening, we constantly mention the words ethics and morals. These two concepts are usually mixed and in several occasions people try to define one by naming the other one. We need to understand that these are two separate ideas. It is true that every effective moral assumes certain principles, norms, and rules of conduct; however, ethics does not create morals. Instead, ethics is surrounded by social and historical experiences within the terrain of morals; therefore, starting with a series of effective morals already established, ethics sets the origin, sources, conditions (objective and subjective) of the moral act, functions of moral judgment, and the justification of such a judgment.

Freemasons are taught that by the interpretation of certain allegories and the symbolism of the same they build their morals and Masonic edifice. I have mentioned previously that Freemasonry is a peculiar system of morality and ethically Masons distinguish themselves in character from other men because of the embracing of such a moral system with absolute conviction that they are good men searching for perfection in order to become better men.

My questions are then, based on the paragraphs written above, are we born ethically with the conditions that set us apart when we become Entered Apprentices? Is it a philosophical experience or ethics, as other sciences, can be learned through a method that will allow us to discern true from false? Is ethics a natural condition of man or it is acquire by habit? In order to answer these questions we have to define ethics, find its objective, and its relationship with morals.

Etymologically the word moral originates from the Latin mos or mores, which means "habit or custom", so morals in this sense are a conglomerate of norms and rules acquire by habit. The word ethics originates from the Greek word ethos, which in its closest translation means "character or way of being." In other words a way of life also acquired by man. Thus, ethos and mos, "character and custom," is a type of conduct that does not belong to a natural condition of man, instead it is acquired or conquered by habit. These definitions do not provide us the actual mean of ethics and morals, but prepare the terrain to understand the moral behavior and separate what is naturally human and what is actually absorbed by man.

Ethics is the science that studies the moral behavior of men in society. In this definition the scientific character of this discipline is remarked. Therefore, ethics responds to a necessity of a scientific treatment to moral problems; hence, ethics has an object of study in which tries to discover its general principles following the steps of any other scientific method with concepts, hypothesis, and theories. Although for this type of science ethics starts with empirical data, its object of study is the existence of an effective moral behavior. With this empirical data ethics has to aspire to plenty rationality and objectivity in order to provide systematic, methodic, and verifiable results of that study.

As I mentioned above, ethics is the science that studies morals, thence studies one part of the whole human conduct. Morals cannot be subject to the same rigorous and coherent foundation that every scientific proposition has. Our historical experience tells us that morals lack compatibility within time and cannot be treated as science. Instead morals become the object of study of ethics. Here is the important distinction between ethics and morals. One can be treated as science and the other one is the object of study of that science.

This scientific and independent approach of ethics has several arguments that deny this position. Some scholars argue that ethics lack objectivity. For them ethics makes recommendations and formulates a series of norms and moral prescriptions. A system of norms, a moral code is not science. With this approach ethics is presented as an important piece within speculative philosophy. This position pretends to place ethics and morals in concordance with the philosophical principles of the universe instead of relating them with historical, sociological, and psychological events that can be treated objectively. Treating ethics purely as a philosophy, as in the past, reduces it to an absolute and aprioristic character of its affirmations about the good, the bad, duties, and moral values.

As Freemasons, if we try to adopt this philosophical idea of ethics, we will find several contradictions limiting our condition of freethinkers, open minders, and our flexibility to changes. Our point of view of the universe will be axiomatic instead of theoretic. We will accept concepts and ideas by imposition instead of treating them under an analytical method of judgment. Because of our different backgrounds, if we pretend to understand our ethics and morals from this philosophical perspective, we could not have a Masonic character of ethics. We could not talk of a peculiar system of morality because under this philosophical concept we cannot study or learn morals instead they are predetermined by a code of ethics. The moral behavior is proper of man as a historical, social, and practical being. Man transforms consciously the world that surrounds him. He transforms the outer world to his own measurement. Freemasons and their particular ethical behaviors are also participants of this world transformation. The philosophy that Freemasons should practice is a scientific philosophy and not a speculative philosophy as described above. But where do we find this effective moral, this object of study for our scientific ethics? We will discuss that later. Now let's focus on the co-relation of ethics and other sciences as well as its independency.

Ethics is related with other sciences that also study the different aspects and relationships of human behavior in the society. These other sciences help to elucidate a particular human conduct, which are morals. These moral acts are proper of the relationship of man with other men. These acts are in response to the social necessity to regulate the relationships of men in a certain direction.

Despite the moral conduct is socially influential, the moral activity has an internal process and is very subjective. Psychology helps ethics because place the laws that rule the internal motivations of human conduct. In other words, psychology contributes to clarify the internal and subjective conditions of the moral act. In the same manner, psychology and its analysis of irresistible impulses helps us understand when a human behavior becomes a natural reaction and escapes from a moral judgment. Therefore, ethics needs the information that psychology can provide to study the moral conduct. Conversely, if we try to overestimate this subjective aspect of human behavior and we forget the objective and sociological aspect, we reduce the moral activity to the psychic and ethics becomes only one more chapter in the study of psychology. This is called ethical psychology.

Ethics also maintains a close relationship with those sciences that study the laws that rule the development and construction of human societies. Sociology studies the human behavior as part of a society with relationships and organizations already established. In comparison with psychology, sociology does not focus on the subjective and internal aspects of human conduct, but the social forms in which the individuals behave instead. For sociology the moral act cannot have a pure individual character. It is social because men are born within a society in which some parameters are already in placed. This relationship between morals and society respond to a necessity of that society that is looking for some direction. Giving this, ethics also needs the objective information about the social structures, its institutions, and the relationship of the individual with them. However, as important as those relationships are, the individual moral behavior cannot be conditioned entirely by a society. In order to talk properly of the individual moral act, it is precise that the social factors that condition this behavior should be experienced personally; otherwise, ethics would be reduced entirely to sociology. This is called ethical sociology.

Social anthropology studies the formation and structures of primitive and disappeared societies while history focus on their process of insertion and succession within time. Both anthropologists and historians have established the co-relations between the social structure of a community and the moral code that rules for them in a determined lapse of time. What it was moral for them can be immoral for us. The conclusions of anthropologists and historians deflate the intentions of some moral theorists that disown this relationship and pretend to elevate certain norms and principles to the absolute plane and believe that those belong to a concrete social life. Some religious scholars fall within this category. Ethics as a theory of morals has to understand that human behavior changes and diversifies within time. However, this does not mean that moral acts from the past are just a bundle of ruins or they disappeared completely with those societies. It is important to differentiate which norms last and survive through time, and which ones change, enrich, and elevate to a superior plane.

Ethics is also related to other social sciences as legislature and economics. Men have a normative conduct within a society ruled by civil codes; therefore, law studies provide substantial information about human behavior so necessary for the study of moral acts. Economics also play an important role because the laws of distribution and production of goods state moral problems. Being more specific, the participant groups are segregated during the distribution process and integrated during the production one creating different patterns of moral conduct according to the groups that the individual belongs.

We see that ethics is close related with social sciences because the moral behavior is a specific kind of human behavior that is manifested in different planes: psychological, social, historical, religious, economic, and legislative. Nevertheless, this relationship with other sciences are based in the relationship of the different forms of human conduct and cannot deviate us from the independent and specific object of ethics which is the study of moral behavior.

Has been demonstrated that ethics is a science and should be treated as such, but how does this approach of ethics influence Freemasons? If morals are the object of study for ethics, where do we find those morals? Do Masons share a common view of the moral act? Freemasons as part of the

same fraternity share a common point of view of morals and also unfold themselves within their own circle guided by the tools provided to them during their different degrees. Those morals are immersed in the allegories presented to them by the symbolism that is character of that organization. The content of the allegory is common to all Masons and delimits the structure of their ethical behavior, but the interpretation of the symbol is independent and unique because it is attached with their subjective and cognitive experience of life. The Masonic ethical behavior does not respond to a necessity of directing society to a certain point instead is a response to the achievement of the ultimate goal of man, which is perfection. It is our natural condition of seeking truth or enlightening by reason and not forgetting that while we are building our Masonic edifice we are also setting the blue prints for future structures. Our obligation is with God, our brethren, and ourselves, but we cannot forget that we represent a society that is morally justified by the actions of the individual. Therefore, from the point of view of Freemasons, our moral conduct is regulated within three aspects: First individually, ethics treats our moral behavior while achieving our personal goals. Second, as part of the same spiritual building, we share common morals that distinguish us from other groups. Finally, never forgetting that we are part of God's universe and as architects we build and seek for beauty with an indispensable social responsibility. These three aspects are contained in the working tools of a Mason. The more we understand their significance it would be easier for us to understand the scientific process of ethics. Remember we are not who we were, but instead who we want to be.

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If you wish to contribute to this newsletter, please contact master@gray329.org

