

KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL EUROPE
XVII NATIONAL CONVENTION
TAORMINA NAXOS 1-3 JUNE 1984

KIWANIAN ETHICS

A SPEECH BY
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1.SETTING THE THEME: LIFE IN SOCIETY AND PRINCIPLES OF SELF-DEFENCE

Every association or social grouping at its inception proposes goals which are consistent with the civilization and culture at the time it is formed. Its long-term prosperity hangs on the content of the goals, namely from the possibility that these individual contents can retain value over time. The realization of these goals and purposes impose on all those that join and on the organisation itself a specific juridical way of acting but essentially requires the acquisition of a human and social conscience, composed of awareness, a sense of responsibility and availability. From the existence of these conditions and these presuppositions, the specific Ethics is born.

The theme of - " Kiwanian Ethics " can be validly viewed from a general point of view, and from a specific point of view. From a general point of view, Man and his characteristics cannot but be kept in mind; while, under the second, one cannot fail to analyze the purpose of our Organization, its structure, its principles, its action, its composition.

The general situation of the civic world imposes a serious consideration on the use of human, material and technical resources. Therefore, it requires a careful approach to relations between men. The relationships express necessity, meet needs, realize expectations or hopes. If properly set and regularly checked in their implementation phase - that is, if the reason and presumptions of reality are carefully evaluated, if their genesis and functioning are legally valid and if they are consciously directed towards a socially useful and personally lawful end should:

- prevent the emergence and spread of injustice, enmities, hatred, delusions or degradation;

allowing the social balance and the achievement of those satisfactions that bring in themselves gratifications, consents and serenity, that is, pleasure.

Men, given their nature, cannot refuse the life of relationships as they cannot eliminate their desire to improve, that is, to have civic and social progress.

The necessity of these relationships and, therefore, the maintenance of relationships cannot prescind from precise rules of conduct , which, before receiving validity and guarantee from positive law, find inspiration and affirmation in principles that originate precisely from human nature, express both the feeling of self-preservation, that is the self-defense of the individual man, and the need for order, that is self-defense of the rational and social Man.

2. DEFINITIONS OF ETHICS

The set of these rules that make the rational and social evolution of humanity possible constitutes ETHICS. Therefore, it is universally argued that Ethics can be considered rules of conduct, in that it requires respect towards the Self, towards the Other and for Creation, respect is expressed precisely in social life, but that exists before and beyond this, as it is part of and lives in the very essence of man.

But Ethics can be defined even better-it is the science of conduct.

There are two interpretations that have dominated the history of thought and which are together known as the conception of the end and as the conception of the motive.

The first conception, as a science being the end of human conduct, observes and evaluates the means used to attain the goal, as well as the quality of the end itself. Therefore, it speaks the language of the ideal to which the conduct of Man should be inspired.

The second conception, as a science of the motives of human conduct, seeks out and identifies the motive (the cause or the force) that drives man to act, that is, which suggests or advises both action and behaviour. Therefore, it speaks the language of the positive, of the material, of the facts.

The diversity of the two conceptions reveals much sharper when these define good; in fact, while for the first conception good is "what is", that is, the perfect reality or the real perfection, for the second, good identifies itself with the object of a desire, of an aspiration, of a hope, that is it is the object of an desire.

For the first, Man tends to happiness. that is reality or perfection. This is Ethics for Plato and Aristotle: for the stoics; for St. Thomas, Codeworth, More: for the idealists Fichte and Hegel and the romantics; for Rosmini, Green, Croce, Gentile, Bergson, for Scheler, Hartmann, Nietzescche. They strive to define Man, to understand his nature and to identify the end first with the Being or the Absolute, then with the spirit, and with Knowledge.

For the second conception, Man habitually and constantly acts to attain pleasure (desire or will to survive or utility). This is the ethics for Aristippo, Epicurus, Lorenzo Valla, Telesius, for Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz, for Hume, for Kant, for the positivists. for Bentham, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, Comte; for English liberalism and for political liberalism, Spencer, Bertrand Russel, Dewey .

As Nicola Abbagnano observed in the context of temporary thought, while there is a general theory of law that develops the technique of coexistence, there is no general theory of morality that develops a technique of conduct. This situation, if on the one hand, makes each construction weak, on the other it leads to the search for positive facts or acts and to speculation.

3. HUMAN ACTIVITY AS A PRESENCE OF ETHICS

The two traditional conceptions, although different in the setting and interpretation of the object of the Ethics, concern the active Man, that is the Man who acts under the impulse of a motive or in function towards an end. Therefore, it can be said that Ethics presupposes human activity to create happiness in Man himself: happiness which in turn derives from the pleasure produced by the ego. After all, Ethics gives strength and motivation to the intelligence of Man and to the knowledge that Man himself has of things; one and the other provoke commitment, which expresses will, ability, genius, determination, but also love, desire, hope, trust. In the end the conception of the ends and the conception of the motives are complementary to each other, since "Good" is at the same time the goal to reach and the motivation of human action. The happy man is an active man, that is, aware of good and engaged in pursuing it, he is a positive, that is, aware of the reality and able to suggest action and to find or identify the appropriate means, is a concrete man, that is, strong willed and constructive. A man who is not active cannot be happy because he does not act, because he does not produce anything, because he is immobile and immobility is not a quality but rather a state of inertia; he can only have an ephemeral, animal enjoyment, not entertaining any relationship with the outside world; the space he occupies and the time in which he lives vegetatively are simple material references.

4. INDIVIDUAL AND EXECUTIVE COMMITMENT

The single commitment solicits collaboration and this establishes a form of common, socially relevant activity. Also the individual interest, which solicits a personal commitment, directly or indirectly affects the sphere of the common and the social, as it involves other individuals, stimulating the interest to act favorably or unfavorably, or provoking positive or negative attitudes. The possibilities of adequately assessing the aims and motives or sensitively sensing their existence increase or decrease the commitment, can cause perplexities or degradations, negative determinations or opposing patents, but can create - independently of

material satisfactions - spiritual pleasures and, therefore, happiness. It is neither the economic profit nor the quantitative advantage which quantitatively can appraise the object of the Ethics as having acted for good (his own or that of others).

The ethics of association, which draws greater expression from the union of more individual men, lies precisely in the awareness that the commitment that unites more people or more means can facilitate the attainment of happiness for oneself or for others. Here too, happiness is a pleasure to be useful and to realize useful spiritual and material usefulness. Obviously, this position presupposes an open associative form, that is based on a moral conception that gives up every impulse of renewal and that proposes to collaborate enthusiastically and responsibly in the affirmation of every initiative, innovative or completely new, that leads to an improvement, immediate or gradual, of the human condition. No new ideals or principles are necessary, but actions, conventions and determined behaviours, that is, committed to accomplishing old ideals and universally accepted principles with different instruments (activities and means).

5. RESPECT FOR YOUR NEIGHBOUR

Ethics as a science of conduct requires consideration and evaluation of one's fellows. The consideration determines a more or less open and cordial behaviour, while the evaluation:

- if positive, allows the establishment of emotional ties, of co- allegiance, profession, good neighbourly relations or mutual assistance, etc.
- if negative, leads to indifference or enmity or grudges and, not infrequently, to attitudes of superiority that are manifested by acts of pseudo -charitable compassion.

Respect, the result of profound convictions on the human condition, makes everyone available to forgiveness, which in turn, as an act of love, brings us closer to Good.

" Do to others what you would like others to do to you" is the golden rule of Kiwanis: it solicits understanding, consideration and respect among men. The maxim stands for the Kiwanian as an imperative, that is to say, with Aristotle and with the Stoics -as an unconditioned and unconditional logical proposition or conviction; it is a categorical imperative. Therefore, it constitutes the maxim of the will inspired by morality, the maxim that commands a " good thing for itself " (Kant), in as much as it expresses the preservation of order and civil evolution, i.e. existence and affirmation of reason, and self- preservation of man, that is, defense of Man and therefore repulsion of every form or logic of destruction and violence on or in Creation.

The relevance of this moral maxim is obvious; but it is important to have awareness. The preservation of order, of civilization, of liberty, of the human condition, and of the World is not the result of ideological contingents with a sociological background, but is the condition of progress and civilization. We do not progress and we live neither with terror nor with the presence of forces which want to express power; one lives, one moves forward and thrives only if one recognizes the ethical freedom of every man and every society of men. Terror and strength can play a temporary role, but do not pursue Good; they can make men of little spirit happy, not men who want good and who aspire to social progress and individual. Good is progress, but it is the implementation of the Kiwanian maximum which is based on the self- conviction of the validity of the principle of " *neminem laedere* ", foundation and guide of every civilized Man.

6. MORAL MAXIMS AND KIWANIS AIMS

" Do to others what you would like others to do to you " is an ancient maxim, born with the presence on earth of the first two rational beings, a maxim that expresses - as we said - respect of the others, which

presupposes the love over others, but requires deep awareness and a high sense of responsibility. The maxim incites to action, as is the case with the list of aims that Kiwanis pursues.

The affirmation of the supremacy of human and spiritual values on those matters, the encouragement of respect for one's neighbor and the maintenance of healthy conceptions and noble ideals which lead to the increase of the principles of dignity, of fidelity to homeland, the encouragement to adopt objectives and suitable means to achieve a higher qualification and professional efficiency, the solicitations of disinterested collaboration for civil and economic progress through the affirmation and strengthening of friendships are moral guidelines that demand active and coherent behaviours.

As can be seen, the Ethics that Kiwanis realizes is nourished and supported by common principles and universal ideals. What does not the affirmation of friendship, freedom, dignity and honesty require? These are principles or qualities that express a moral open to the world, not sectarian, non-exclusivist, suitable for all men of good will who come together to better realize them and to better qualify.

7. ETHICAL FRIENDSHIP AND KIWANIAN FRIENDSHIP

Ethics as a science of conduct is fully realized in Kiwanis, as this solicits and strengthens the bonds of friendship and, therefore, solidarity among members.

Ethically and Kiwanean-minded friendship does not want to be confused with the company or with association, since it is based on solidarity, while the company and the association are supported by the alliance and the occasional nature of work or common activity. The company like fellowship mean material interest or socio-economic usefulness, the interests and utilities that can only satisfy only states of tension or more or less declared competition. Individual support based on solidarity, that is on friendship, is free and dignified, honest and impartial, always balanced and constant; the individual support required by the

alliance or the link is ephemeral or allied, being subject to contingent valuations, always prompted by economic or utilitarian interests; evaluations and interests that express self-interest and selfishness, jealousy, hate, submissions, hopes of slavery .

Friendship requires the existence of choices that are superior and foreign to the economic value of the object, being based on ideals or, if desired, on mutual personal respect and not on the venality of possible material advantages. The basis of friendship is mutual understanding and not trade exchange, trust and not the compensation of selfish interests, affection and not mercantile comparison. The saving of friends is always disinterested; although it may sometimes be prompted by feelings of gratitude, not intended to meet any legal requirement, being felt and volunteered for moral commitment and self-gratification, that is, for one's own personal pleasure.

8. CIVILIZATION AND CULTURE FOUNDATION OF KIWANIAN ETHICS

The purposes of Kiwanis lead to the development of civilization and presupposes the presence, in the members, of a high culture. It is essential, in fact, that every Kiwanian possesses a complex of knowledge that makes him aware of the world in which he lives both through the knowledge of the past and through an updating of ideas and perspectives for the future. Such a culture expands the power of judgment, directs behaviour and operational decisions, refines the taste, motivation, giving motivation to the individual, to the club, to the association in general. The Kiwanian, as a cultured person, does not live passively, but, knowing how to reflect can be master of a situation and knows how behave.

The aims pursued by Kiwanis increases the capacity and the feeling of humanity, promoting themes that bring Kiwanian to master himself and nature, to direct all available forces towards social and humanitarian purposes. In this sense, Kiwanis expresses a civilization and culture,

since it directs men- based on the universal friendship - towards peace, the understanding of multiple cultures, to overcome all discrimination, be it social, racial or confessional. Culture does not make the Kiwanian proud; he possesses it and cares for his own edification and for the edification of others, that is, for his own dignity and for love for his neighbour. Understanding of different cultures does not require their unification, which would lead to the violation of the many historical and geographical actions in existence in the world; it is rather a conscience reflected from reality, a source of orientation that expresses from time to time the lively geniality and the composed kindness of the Kiwanian. Moreover, Kiwanis, if it were to unify itself, would end up being a culture itself, would lose sight of its purpose expressed by its golden rule and would betray all the goals of friendship, honesty, dignity, freedom, of fidelity towards the homeland instead of realizing them. The variety and the novelty of the individual lives and of the different social complexes as well as the heterogeneous composition of the association enrich the individual Kiwanians and above all Kiwanis , which represents a valid means of spreading good initiatives the meeting environment of the various cultures; in a word, Kiwanis is a service club that contributes to the civil progress and moral elevation of the members and of all men. As such, Kiwanis has its own historical identity, which it takes care of - given the validity and universality of its ethical feeling and work - to act on condition that its members have aware and coherent wills in life and to achieve the goal that are set.