

Republic and *Statesman* and Aristotle (384–322 BC) in his *Ethics*, *Politics*, and *Rhetoric* among others. In addition, it is well known that Socrates (470–399 BC) developed the **Socratic Method**, which is a form of teaching that used a question and answer format, to help his students see things for themselves using their own reason. His methods of teaching are still used to this day. Socrates was also teaching his students to come to realize first that «*Εν οίδα ότι ουδέν οίδα*» (“I know one thing, that I know nothing”) in order to subsequently use the **Socratic Method** properly and work toward the «*Γνώθι σεαυτόν*» (“Know thyself”) to achieve true knowledge of themselves. Also according to Socrates, “*Αρετή* (virtue) is knowledge”. It has been established that the ideas of the ancient Hellenic philosophers greatly influenced Christian thought and more information and discussion on that and the Greek systems of ethical thinking could be the topic of a future article. So, how could we now put all of the above together?

Ancient Hellenes regarded **healthy competition** as a virtue and even used a special term for it which is *ΑΜΙΛΛΑ* (AH-meelah). *Αμιλλα* was considered very important in ancient Greece. It was especially one of the core values of the spirit of the ancient Olympic Games along with the «*Νούς υγιής εν σώματι υγιεί*» (“A healthy mind in a healthy body”). The key to that was balance, a harmony between mind and body. And the means of achieving it was through self-discipline, training, and education in a diverse array of fields. The ideal athlete studied at length and trained hard, worked to achieve a moral character, played fairly, and performed his or her best. The athletes had to arrive at the site a month before the games to go through preparation in which they underwent spiritual, moral, and physical training while the judges supervised them. Only after that month of training did the judges decide if they were genuinely qualified to compete. The youth would be challenged to exercise *Αμιλλα* during the games, and athletes exhibiting negative attitudes would be disqualified and even disgraced. It should further be noted that competition occurred in conjunction with religious festivals.

We can also see examples of **healthy competition** in our own church as well. From the biographies of our saints, we learn that St. Basil (329-379 AD) and St. Gregory the Theologian (329-391 AD), two of the Three Hierarchs who are the patron saints of the Greek Letters, were very close and inseparable friends as well as fellow students in the University of Athens in Greece where they were competing with each other exercising *Αμιλλα*. As St. Gregory writes, “We are both competing but not in a manner of each wanting to receive the first prize award for ourselves as individuals but rather to offer it to the other. And each of us was regarding the progress of the other as our own progress”. Going back to ancient Greece, according to Aristotle, “*Αμιλλα* is the tendency or drive of one trying to reach or even surpass the achievements of another person that he/she admires without feeling any *envy* if that person surpasses him/her.” It is a fact that the *Αμιλλα* of the ancient Hellenes greatly influenced many philosophers and even economists like Adam Smith, among others, who introduced the concept of **co-operative competition** in his books *Invisible Hand* and *The wealth of Nations* upon which the modern free-enterprise and monopoly-free economic systems were founded.

From the above, we can glean clues and guidance regarding **healthy competition**. We learn that *envy* is probably the worst enemy of or the greatest obstacle to the virtue of *Αμιλλα* while the main objective is to focus on improving ourselves through the improvement of our competitors too. Thus, using self-observation and being sincere with ourselves, we can now start by using the **Socratic Method** to ask questions of ourselves and then make improvements following the Orthodox Christian teachings of our church:

- During the competition – Am I learning from the other groups performing rather than feeling *envious* of them? Am I focusing on my whole group performing best rather than just myself? Do I feel happy and excited with my own group’s good performance rather than the inferior performance of the other groups? Am I practicing Orthodox Christian fellowship with the other groups and if not why? Am I following the Orthodox Christian youth tenets and if not why?
- After the competition – What did I learn and improve on as far as the Hellenic Heritage and HDF objectives are concerned? Do I feel happy with what I learned and improved on rather than feeling overexcited with the award my group received or extremely upset and disappointed with the medal it didn’t win? Was I able to learn from and share what I know with the other groups? If I didn’t win an award, do I feel too disappointed to participate in HDF again? Did I have fun at the event and if not why? Did I practice Orthodox Christian fellowship with the other groups and if not why? Did I follow the Orthodox Christian youth tenets and if not why?

As Orthodox Christians, we are challenged in HDF as well as in our lives in general to find our way to healthy competition, to achieve the *Αμιλλα*. Because, as Aristotle was teaching, “**Where there is *Αμιλλα*, there is also a true win**”. A true win for all competitors

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