



Nordic-Baltic Gathering Horsens, Denmark, 2015

Already the ancient Greeks ... well, they may have invented the rhetoric, but this isn't how to start a speech, I'm told. So I will refrain from it. After all, you are not supposed to fall asleep already, are you?

Did you know that we are at guild-historic ground? In 1953, representatives of 18 countries, 16 of them European, gathered here, on the ancient Bygholm Manor, for the very first IFOFSAF (now ISGF) World Conference. And they decided to incorporate our guild movement. Today, we are around 50 000 guild members in 101 countries. Hence, it is very appropriate for us to gather just here, on this – in many ways – historic venue, dating back to the 14th century.

However, my intention is to give you a few personal thoughts on the topic “You and me and the good meeting”, a theme from Denmark's *Guild High School 2010 – 2011*.

You and me during 3 000 years – that is a long perspective. We humans have always met each other, albeit the purpose hasn't always been the most peaceful. I would like to have myself a little wife to cook my food (considered singularly a female task at the time) and to give some children to support me when I grew old. So I went to the neighbouring tribe to find her. I bashed her over her head with my club and dragged her to our own cave with a good grip in her hair. Because this was how things were done in them days, you know! This encounter may well have caused a headache – of more than one sorts.

Then I wanted to have your grounds, allowing me to expand my fields or my hunting grounds. So what? In this meeting I simply killed you – which was very effective. To me, it was a good meeting – but perhaps not so for you.

Then came along a man, telling us that what we wanted other people to do to us, we should also do to them. And of someone boxed your ear, you should simply turn your other cheek and not box his ear in return. This presented quite a different philosophy concerning what constituted a good meeting!

The old man Aristotle considered man to be “a social animal”. This constituted a prerequisite for person to person interaction. Man is not suited to be alone. But we all know perfectly well that it is possible to be alone even in a pair relation – and also in greater contexts. A person needs to be seen and acknowledged. How do we receive the new member in our association? Do we pretend that he or she isn't there at all, and expect him/her to take the initiative to get into our circle? Or do we receive the new one with open arms and a warm welcome, including a presentation? How did you experience yourself in a context where no one “saw” you?

We are also supposed to be very “proper”. But then, who is so proper? And what does it mean to be proper? A Dane might say: “He's Swedish – and Swedish is incomprehensible, so we simply turn our back on him!” Well, it might surprise to know that the Swede might say exactly the same about the Dane! “I've heard that ... whatever it might be ... she simply doesn't fit in among us proper people.” We have, all and everybody, our own concept of what constitutes a proper person. The other side of that coin is to give the new one a chance to be seen, acknowledged and to tell us about herself. That may possibly require a little effort from your side, but perhaps that isn't so hard after all? And the new one turned out to be both interesting and fun to be with! A new friend!

Being a proper person also comes with some moral duties. We are supposed to – figuratively and perhaps also in practice – help the old lady to cross the street. And we are not supposed to tell a lie.



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That's what we have been taught. But what if the old lady really didn't want to cross the street? And are we always supposed to tell the truth? Could it be right not to tell the truth, after all?

Consider the situation that you have seen your good neighbour in a situation which proves that he is cheating on his wife. Is it your duty to immediately inform his wife about what you have seen?

In my little company, we do not have many internal meetings. The man in charge isn't too easy to deal with. It's yours truly. But the positive side is that he and I always agree on how to solve problems.

But I also have another boss, with whom I have frequent meetings. She doesn't always see things the way I do – but we are still married – going on 50 years by now. She wasn't subjected to the kind of meeting I describes earlier, and I think she's quite comfortable with that. But it was a good meeting, they have continued to be good, and I would like to believe that they have developed us both.

The good meeting of two people always have two receivers and two transmitters. In the good meeting, both benefit from in – albeit possibly not in the same “currency”. You will have the satisfaction of being able to help me, and I will have my problem solved or support in my troubles.

When thinking thoughts like these, one may also start thinking about what life is all about. That happened to me, and now I pass them on to you – quite unsorted.

Life is..... to follow the development of spring
of the leaves of the trees and the flowers of the fields.

Life is..... to be alone
and be bored to death.

Life is..... to meet the love of my heart
and experience “you and me”.

Life is..... to see my child being born
and grow up to be an independent human being.

Life is..... to see the happiness in the eyes of my child
when it discovers the wonders of nature.

Life is..... to meet my friends
and say “do you remember?”.

Life is..... to be there for a fellow creature
with troubles in her life.

Life is..... that in the bright time of summer
feel the warming rays of the sun on one's cheeks.

Life is..... to rejoice in the strong colours of the autumn
in nature's vast multiplicity.

Life is..... that in the coldness of the winter
be happy for the soft carpet of snow.

Life is..... to find a new friend
where least of all you believed him to be.

Life is..... to feel happy for the children playing
without regard for the troubles of daily life.

Life is..... to be “you and me”
and a proper person.

Life is..... simply to be.



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I want to conclude by reading lyrics written by a famous Swedish entertainer Lasse Berghagen: *Stretch out your hand*, very freely translated by your truly.

Sträck ut din hand / Stretch out your hand

Lyrics and music: Lasse Berghagen

Translation: Gjermund Austvik 26.04.2011

Gåtfulla jord, du gör mig förundrad,
frihetens tid lämnar märkliga spår.
Ögon av sorg söker himmelens stjärnor
som sprider sitt ljus på den väg du går.

Refräng:

Sträck ut din hand och finn en hand i din,
så gjorde jag, och fann en hand i min.
Sträck ut din hand och bygg en mänsklig bro,
vi bygger från land till land,
sträck ut din hand.

Öppna din famn för resten av världen,
du är en del av allt det som sker.
Sprid du ditt ljus så som himmelens stjärnor,
ge av dig själv så som stjärnorna ger

Refräng:

Sträck ut din hand och finn en hand i din,
så gjorde jag, och fann en hand i min.
Sträck ut din hand och bygg en mänsklig bro,
vi bygger från land till land,
sträck ut din hand.

Mysterious Earth, you surprise me,
the time of freedom leaves strange tracks.
Eyes of sorrow search for the heavenly stars
spreading their light on the path you walk.

Refrain:

Stretch out your hand, and find a hand in yours,
I did so, and found a hand in mine.
Stretch out your hand, and build a human bridge,
we build from country to country,
stretch out your hand.

Open yourself to the rest of the world,
you are part of all that happens.
Spread your light like the heavenly stars,
give from yourself as the stars do.

Refrain:

Stretch out your hand, and find a hand in yours,
I did so, and found a hand in mine.
Stretch out your hand, and build a human bridge,
we build from country to country,
stretch out your hand.