

Could Masonry Be Suffering from “The Tragedy of the Commons?”



Illustration of Aristotle (384-322 BC), a Greek philosopher and scientist, teaching Alexander the Great (356-323 BC). Aristotle is known for his contributions to logic, metaphysics, and philosophy of science in the Western culture. He tutored Alexander the Great from c.342-c.339 BC.

“The Tragedy of the Commons” is a concept introduced by the economist and ecologist Garrett Hardin, the Tragedy of the Commons states that in a system where a common resource is shared, with no individual responsible for the wellbeing of the resource, it will tend to be depleted over time.

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle pointed out the problem with common resources: ‘What is common to many is taken least care of, for all men have greater regard for what is their own than for what they possess in common with others.’

So, could it be that Masonry suffers because of this concept?

Consider these statements:

The common resource is Masonry.

Increasingly no individual responsibility is taken for the well-being of the resource

The common resource, Masonry, is being depleted over time.

Maybe it’s because some Brothers believe this:

“Masonry has survived for hundreds of years and I am sure there are many Brothers who are looking out for the well-being of Masonry so if I don’t participate it won’t matter. I am very busy with my career and my family. Masonry will be there when I have time. I just don’t have the time now.”

Or maybe you might hear:

“I don’t go to lodge because it is boring, I wish someone would do something about it.”

Or maybe just this:

“I supported Masonry with my time for many years, it’s somebody else’s turn.”

These statements reflect an attitude of disregard for the shared responsibility for the fraternity we all have as Masons. If we all think this way, our valuable, common resource, diminishes over time.

Might I suggest we all think about these questions:

“What is it, even if it is something very small, can I contribute to the Fraternity?”

“What small amount of time can I sacrifice to ensure the well-being and continuation of our common resource?”

“When can I begin?”

Have a Great Masonic Day!