

In Search of Happiness: Part I: Pankey Meets Aristotle

By Dr. Dag Zapatero



One of the special attractions of the Pankey Institute is a sense of community, which is produced by our common bonds in dentistry, and our pursuit of excellence. Our trips to Key Biscayne are part of a migration that the best dentists have made over the last 40 years. This would not have been possible if *A Philosophy of the Practice of Dentistry*, developed by Dr. L.D. Pankey, was not woven so tightly into the fabric of the Institute today.

One of the central pillars of Dr. Pankey's philosophy has been Aristotle's Cross of Life. When the Pankey Institute introduced me to Aristotle's Cross of Life, I was immediately drawn to the center of the cross and the word "Happiness." I immediately recognized the word "happiness," just as you did, and I thought I knew what it meant. After all "Happiness" is a universal feeling we can all recognize and aspire to. Webster's Online Dictionary currently defines happiness as "showing pleasure or contentment, or a pleasurable or satisfying experience."

Dr Robert Holden of the Happiness project in England has shown that we are all born with the ability to be happy but, by the age of thirty we have found many reasons why not to be happy. Was "Happiness" the secret Dr. Pankey had learned from his studies and chose to share with us? Was "Happiness" the prize we felt for achieving balance in our lives? As I have continued to study Dr. Pankey's philosophy of dental practice, Aristotle's Cross of Life and other writings, I have begun to wonder about my modern definition of happiness and if it accurately represents what Dr. Pankey meant by "Happiness."

Today we see our children running, playing, having fun and

see them as being happy. This seems like happiness, to me. However, Aristotle did not feel children could be happy since they did not yet possess the morals necessary to live a life that could produce happiness. Aristotle believed we can attain happiness as adults by living a virtuous life, and he argued that outside circumstances could affect whether an observer could say a person was happy or that they had lived a happy life. However, Aristotle did not go as far as the Greek statesmen poet Solon

what we do and succeed in doing, more so than how we feel about what we are doing. Dr. Ess points out that "Aristotle was very clear that being an excellent dictator, for example, might be developing a particular potential for cruelty, etc., but such capacities are hardly to be encouraged among the virtues / excellences of 'the good man' (or woman)." Our modern view is more subjective since we do not look at happiness as the product of a successful life, but rather the way we look at events, which took place during

Green's message to me is in italics and within the italics, Dr. Pankey's words are within quotes.

Dr. Pankey self described himself as a student of Philosophy. Due to Dr. Pankey's hearing loss, he went to Chicago in 1932 to see Dr. George Shambaugh, M.D. – who was and is considered The Father of Otolaryngology. At that time, my understanding was that if any treatment could be done for him he would have to be in Chicago for a period of time. He therefore enrolled in summer school at Northwestern and took a course on Oral Diagnosis and another course on Applied Psychology by Dr. George Crane, Ph.D., M.D. It was through Dr. Crane that he was introduced to the Cabot Cross which Cabot ascribed to Aristotle. Dr. Pankey wrote: "I had received my inspiration of the Cross of Life in 1932, through Dr. Edwin Kepler's work (an early Mayo Psychiatrist) and Dr. George Crane. Volumes have been written on the individual subjects of Work, Play, Love, and Worship. I have spent many years in the study of them by great authors of the world, including philosophers of all the ages. I commend to you a sincere study of The Cross of Life because truly it is what men live by and must abide by if they are to attain happiness. In a book on Socrates authored by Mars Hill, Socrates told us 'The supreme thing for which everything in life exists is Happiness.' Probably, there is no better way to attain it than through The Cross [of Life] and all of its implications. Dr. Cabot's book WHAT MEN LIVE BY came into my life in March 1964 through a participant in one of my 'A Philosophy of the Practice of Dentistry' classes. I wish Dr. Cabot's book could only be available to people at the maxi-

For Aristotle it was contemplation and for Dr. Pankey it was know yourself. These are the highest form of moral activity through which we can refine and discover virtues that lead us to reaching our fullest potential, Dr. Pankey's Happiness.

who said "Call no man happy until they are dead."

Aristotle did not use the word happiness in his philosophical discussions; he spoke about attaining eudaimonia, which roughly translates in English as conducive to happiness. Dr. Charles Ess of Drury University in Springfield, MO, provides an understanding of Aristotelian vocabulary by defining virtues as "excellence in the fulfillment of a particular function" and happiness (eudaimonia), as "a sense of well-being, resulting from achieving **excellence** in the fulfillment of one's functions."

Eudaimonia is really about "being all you can be" or fulfilling your maximum potential, neither of which evokes an emotional response the way the word happiness does today. The ancient view of happiness was a matter of

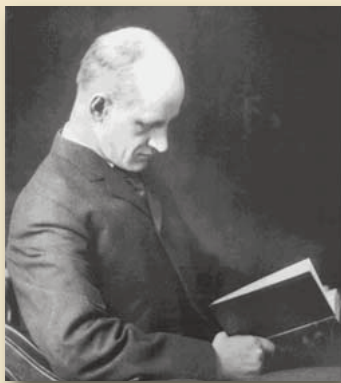
our lives and see those events as producing happiness.

Is it possible that Dr. Pankey had adopted the spirit of Aristotle's definition of happiness for his own *A Philosophy of the Practice of Dentistry*? In the writings of his original manual, Dr. Pankey talks about "Giving nothing less than your best" and living up to your fullest potential by becoming a "100 per-center." These ideas seem much more aligned with Aristotle's definitions, than one we might consider in today's definition of "Happiness."

Although we may never know the fullness of Dr. Pankey's definition of "Happiness," his original manual and written correspondence adds to our understanding. In an email communication with me, Dr. Rich Green shared some of Dr. Pankey's written correspondence. Dr.

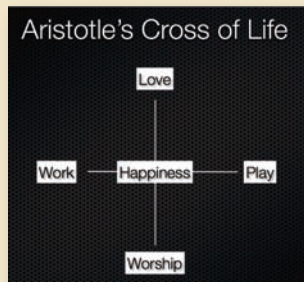
mum price they could afford to pay, so that they could and would appreciate its contents.”

Dr. Richard Clarke Cabot's book *WHAT MEN LIVE BY* is still published and available on Amazon. I did not find it to be an easy read but helpful in understanding Cabot's perception of the interplay of Love, Worship, Work and Play in producing a good life and good health. (Cabot was also a physician writing about "stress and disease" that he saw reflected in his "Industrial Age" patients. Cabot saw works as important as food in the full recovery of a patient's total health. Cabot also demonstrated his strong Christian faith in his writings and beliefs that a good life is a virtuous life as defined by Aristotle's Cross of Life.



Cabot's book and Dr. Pankey's appreciation to be all you can be, gives credence to my theory that Dr. Pankey held a deeper, more ancient meaning of happiness than the one we share today. It does not seem prudent nor satisfying that we, as dental professionals, seek momentary pleasures of life.

To Aristotle the practice of virtues would lead to happiness because we would bloom or flourish to display the best version of us, that we can be. To Aristotle, virtues were an act of achieving balance and moderation. I think Dr. Pankey put these two concepts together in his Cross of Dentistry, which professes fulfilling our potential, while keeping our lives in balance and thus virtuous.



For Aristotle contemplation, and for Dr. Pankey know yourself, was the highest form of moral activity through which we could refine and discover virtues leading us to reaching our fullest potential or happiness. Aristotle believed that knowing the right course, but failing to do it, was the greatest misdeed. Dr. Pankey's shorthand for Aristotle's belief is his reflection on:

Scrupulous and Competent
Scrupulous and Incompetent
Unscrupulous and Competent
Unscrupulous and Incompetent

Though the seeds of this philosophy can be found in ancient Greece and Aristotle, they definitely influenced both Cabot, and Pankey. I would urge you to think about your own meaning of happiness and your thoughts about excellence. Use the information in this article and apply it to your own journey in dentistry and life. Seek an understanding of what "Happiness" is to you, and how you, too, have been influenced by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle.

An excerpt from *WHAT MEN LIVE BY* (Dr. Richard C. Cabot, copyright 1914) deals with health in the Industrial Age. He wrote, "To learn to work is to train our imagination that we can feel the stimulus from distant futures... In all work and all education, the worker should be in touch with the distant source of interest, else he is being trained to slavery, not to self-government and self-respect."

I would like to thank Dr. Charles Ess, Dr. Irwin Becker, and especially Dr. Rich Green for their encouragement and help, as I struggled to write this paper. Thank you. ■

Dr. Gary E. Heyamoto Receives Lifelong Learning and Service Recognition from AGD

On the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Midway, in a prestigious convocation ceremony, Dr. Gary E. Heyamoto has become one of four dentists in Washington State to ever receive the Academy of General Dentistry's Lifelong Learning and Service Recognition Award. He received this award on Jun 30, 2007 after completing over 1,800 hours of continuing education in the 16 disciplines of dentistry, including 700 hours dedicated to hands-on skills and techniques. He has given more than 100 hours of service to the community.

Dr. Heyamoto earned his DDS degree from the University of Washington in 1980. Since that time, he has been in private general practice in Bothell, WA.

Dr. Heyamoto currently is a member of the Academy of General Dentistry's Dental Care Council and is on the Washington State Dental Association's Budget and Finance Committee. He is also currently the chairman of WAGD's Continuing Education Committee, Past President of WAGD (2004-2006), Past Secretary of Seattle King County Dental Society (2006), and is active in several study clubs.

Dr. Heyamoto has received the following additional honors in his professional career: Fellow of the AGD (1997), Fellow of the Pierre Fauchard Academy (1997), Master of the AGD (2002), State of Washington Dentist of the Year (WAGD 2005), Fellow of the American College of Dentists (2005), Fellow of the Academy of Dentistry International (2005), and Fellow of the International College of Dentists (2006).

Dr. Heyamoto is one of our Pankey Institute mentors. We congratulate him on his most recent award and a lifetime of prestigious service. ■

Forever Grateful!

What a sublime surprise to be honored at the Pankey Alumni Meeting, receive the first "Ozzie Award" and realize that the award will have an ongoing legacy at the Institute.

Webster's Dictionary defines grateful as an appreciation of benefits received! I have been a part of The Pankey Institute for 30 plus years, and honestly I never consider those years as "what I gave to the Institute" but rather as benefits I received.

The legions of folks that I have been privileged to share time with has provided an unbelievable wealth of spiritual and intellectual memories. To all of you, "Thank you."

A special thanks to the Pankey Scholars for giving initial life to this award and for bestowing this professional honor.

—Warmest regards, Donald C. Asbjornson, D.D.S. ■