

# 24 Hour Token



# *Gnōthi sauton* — “Know Thyself”

Pronounced *gnōthi sauton* (or *seauton* — “au” as in “ouch!”)

Translated “Know thyself!” (*gnōthi*, a command form, = “get to know,” “become acquainted with,” “learn [about],” “know”)

Γ Ν Ω Θ Ι  
gamma nu omega theta iota  
Σ Α Υ Τ Ο Ν  
sigma alpha upsilon tau omicron nu



Appears in Roman text 1539; original Latin pronounced “NOS-keh tay IP-sum” *Know Thyself*

The July 1947 Grapevine

Message #1550

Grapevine, July '47

The Clip Sheet: Excerpts from the Public Press

Wilmington, Del., "News": "'To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man,' was the quotation used by a speaker and member of A.A. when he addressed an open meeting of more than 300 persons here last night. The speaker, a resident of Massachusetts, alighted from a train here when he heard of the local group's meeting and attended as a spectator. However, he was requested to speak when a speaker scheduled was unable to attend. The theme of his talk, 'Honesty with One's Self,' was brought out when he said, 'Sincerity means the difference between those who accomplish their aims in A.A. and those who don't.'"

And another AAHL message pointed out, for those who did not already know this, that the phrase was a quote from Shakespeare:

Hamlet Act 1, scene 3, 78–80 Polonius:

"This above all: to thine own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

But remember, Polonius was a self-serving old palace politician, and what he meant by this in that passage from Hamlet was that being "a man of truth" meant looking out for yourself first at the materialistic level. If you did that, then technically speaking, you were still being "a man of truth" even if you were lying to everybody else around you -- and cheating and manipulating and conning them all the time -- as long as you were doing it in the pursuit of your own TRUE selfish material self-interest.

So it's best to soft pedal the Shakespearean reference, and think instead about the truly unselfish and totally honest good old timer who gave you that coin -- that was the man or woman who understood what that phrase was truly supposed to mean.

As the Akron good old timer Ernie Gerig said to young Larry W. (the man who first introduced GLENN C. to the AA program) *and one of the original 100 members in AA*

"Larry, you don't ever have to betray yourself again." That's what "to thine own self be true" means to us AA folks, not what Polonius was saying it meant.

*In the fall 1941 Bill Wilson came to Toledo for three days and spoke at the YMCA to a professional group of doctors & lawyers. He also visited and spoke at the Downtown Group. Ernie Gerig, Eddie Evans and some A.A. friends started what became the "South End Group" and held their meetings in the shelter house at Highland Park. [1](#)*