

# St. John's Collegian

Vol. LVII—No. 2

ANNAPOLIS, FRIDAY, APRIL 14, 1944

Price: 10c

## Trivium I

Mr. Kieffer's lecture on grammar was the finest on the first of the trivium that this writer has ever heard at St. John's. Essentially speculative in its outlook, it showed nevertheless the problems facing an actual grammarian in his attempts to talk about things, and about ideas.

The first problem to be faced was that of different languages and hence different grammatical forms. Here were two considerations. A common grammar is desirable as a common basis for understanding. But not, it was clear, the Nazi grammar, nor the Marxist, nor any other which made men subservient to an ideology. Between anarchy and tyranny lay the solution.

Now grammar is necessary to dialectic, but dialectical principles are necessary to the establishment of a good grammar. In the "Cratylus" Plato calls grammar the art of making symbols under the direction of dialectic. But since it is presupposed before the dialectic can take place, a vicious circle begins to appear; one which, the lecturer seemed to believe, can be only resolved in terms of Platonic myth.

What then is this art? The art of the making and use—*si distinguantur*—of symbols and of their understanding. It must then have principles and intelligibility. The understanding of symbols can be in reference to itself, or to something else. But symbols are not understood by themselves; only by reference to other symbols can there be intelligibility. Thus we must have logos; not a *word*, but a significant utterance. A word cannot be false, only a statement. A statement in the purest sense links a subject to a predicate. This it would seem is only possible as an indication of how things are, or rather as how relations between things are.

Perhaps the Categories of Aristotle **depend on relations** between things. If this is so, we have a basis for a grammar essentially logical in char-

acter. The language of Aristotle would seem to bear this out. The tendency was to the subject-copula-predicate form, as somehow distinguished from the free and rhetorical use of verbs by Plato.

As grammar becomes more formalized, however, the dialectical distinctions become verbal. Thus when we say that red runs, the form is clear; but we must not forget the highly analogous use of an accident as if it were a substance. It is the poets who keep a language a living thing; but the philosophers must not be misled by certain constructions, from considering to what the final reference is.

Grammar, strictly, has three aspects. First comes phonetics, the rule for combining and pronouncing vowels and syllables. Then the syllables combine into words. This could be the end. Certain primitive peoples have apparently nothing but words in their grammar. All Western languages, however, have gone further and developed syntax. Here the words are significant not only in themselves, but because a certain form is added, making them Parts of Speech, relating to other words. This is the end of grammar as itself. All the forms used in a class room are second impositional; what they refer to lies outside the field of grammar.

Mr. Kieffer, however, did not stop here. The very nature of a word as a symbol is that it should have both the first and second intentions. Discourse is valuable only as leading to recognition, and this involves always an element of remembrance. The function of grammar is to lead towards and to assist this recognition. With this understanding its scope broadens. There appears a grammar of science, of religion, and of politics. It may be, for example, that modern day science needs a better grammar; one which would concern itself with significations rather than with signs. Other examples are legion of the necessity for a better relation of the matter to the form in the arts and sciences.

Now many different signs are necessary because of the multitude and distinction of things, which, as the Angelic Doctor says, is from God. But a grammatical form ought also to pave the way to the other parts of the Trivium, so it must find unity as well.

The different ways of talking about things can be correlated with the Trivium; history, oratory and poetry would be exercises of grammar, rhetoric and dialectic, respectively. The increase of fictional literary devices may, he suggested, be due to our loss of the fundamentals of grammar. But he went further; there is, he said, a distinction between philosophy and literature. The one is from a superior to an inferior; the other between equals. We like to wonder whether this distinction would have been made by Plato.

Finally, we find at the end of the lecture a restatement of what appears to us rather to be to the lecturer almost a matter of faith. The superiority, that is, of the Platonic language to the Aristotelian. It is, to him, based on a belief in the superior intelligibility of ideas expressed in relational, functional terms to those expressed in the time-honored logical Aristotelian form. He does not deny the gain in clarity of analysis; it can best be summed up by a remark of his in the question period, which we at least will remember always as almost revealing the inmost beliefs of a great teacher: "I am perhaps saying that poetry is superior to prose."

And if it is, we may be sure that Mr. Kieffer, at least, would never undertake a demonstration, for to do so would be to contradict oneself. And only Mr. Adler has that privilege.

H. T. W.

April, April,

Laugh thy girlish laughter

## War Meeting

Last Sunday night, Mr. Buchanan talked on a "typically, radically, and exclusively modern" topic; "Adult Education, the Principle of the Republic." The title is an adaptation from Montesquieu's "Spirit of Laws," where government (so I am told) is defined in nature and principle. In such a scheme, the nature of a republic is defined as the many ruling themselves; the principle, according to Mr. Buchanan is universal education of every kind, all over the world and extending through the whole span of life. The emphasis of government becomes the medium and instrument of *intelligence*, not the exercise of a 51% majority. Stated another way, the theory of angels constitutes the perfect Republic, where learning ceases because everything is known by everybody. On the terrestrial plane, education is the medium of most nearly approximating such a state. This statement of the relation of government and the training of men is neither a novel nor a revolutionary theory. In a perverted sense it is recognized and put into (mis)use by those governments based on war and violence rather than discussion (ideally), and cloak-room conference (actually). The Hitler government, for example, approached the problem with energy and malice while we doted in sullenness and irresponsibility.

The "world wide" part of this statement is important. If we have learned anything about politics through the present world catastrophe, it lies in the fact that the fundamental differences in principles of government are not the "internal concern" of the nation involved. A "better" as well as a "worst" government elsewhere is a danger. Once there was a world government based on a common principle, the *Pax Romanum*, which was superseded by the Church of Rome whose remnants are still the reminder of such a scheme. But for practical purposes if we are to re-establish such an order we must carry through a "revolution."

Our God shall be the Intelligence which will be distributed among the many (preferably by the John Does, B.A., St. John's). We will need organization, either through a federal

department or an association of colleges and universities. We will need a special type of teacher, the only kind deserving of the designation; men devoted to truth, transmitters of traditions, with high ethical standards, and especially that charity of sharing the richness of one's self. Who is the authority to choose materials is a powerful question. The present St. John's curriculum, which has "Inspiration, Knowledge, and the Laws as its forms, and Man, the World, and God as its content," will have to suffice. We will also need money, which raises a host of other problems.

This is a rough outline of a plan to fulfill the Republic. It is painful to see how little there is to start from. There is no sort of over-all organization at present. Educational institutions are spread like varieties of polywogs in different parts of a marsh, and all of them cry and blow air bubbles in the spring. The teacher of today is a specialist with a Ph.D., who works in a closeted laboratory with the aid and encouragement of the President of the University. The curricula are chaotic and diverse; greed, and a spirit of "after I've slaved through to my degree, I will never open a serious book again," is prevalent. This usual inculcation against future learning is sufficient to deny colleges their *raison d'etre*. We have established compulsory education up to sixteen, a most extraordinary thing to do. In practice that means everybody learns a little, and very few learn very much. Our way must be to increase and improve that little, making our task a difficult one, indeed.

The question period was concerned with ways and means, for everybody had apparently been persuaded in the principle and desirability of this great example of what government by reason might be. Mr. Klein proposed to complete the square of the federal branches by the creation of an Educational Board, analogous to the Supreme Court in composition, which would constitute a responsible and dignified leadership. The C.I.O. and the State Education Boards were dismissed; the latter with some hope for their regeneration. The English Workers' Education Projects and the Danish School System were commend-

ed; and everybody felt that the United States was a very backward country. In the words of Mr. Barr, corrected in matter but not in spirit by Mr. Klein, "the United States is the only civilized nation on earth without a ministry of education."

K. E.

## Social

Sunday afternoon brings the first of the Cotillion Club's events for this term. It appears that there are quite a few things in store for turning the social life of a St. Johnnie into a much more colorful and exciting affair. Open house is devoted mainly toward meeting local girls, and banishing that prevalent feeling. It is also a matter of facing the opposite sex or eating supper elsewhere, the food being served in the coffee shop. In the words of the Cotillion Board's chairman, "It is a plan to banish the frigidness of half the student body by means of psychology."

On the twenty-second comes the movie-square dance. Those who have attended the previous movie-dances are familiar with the overwhelming coldness of the gym, the scarcity of dates, and the individual parties. The Square Dance is to be quite different. Everybody will dance, and while dancing will meet many others. Thus the above malefactors disappear. More Cotillion psychology! On the thirtieth comes an Art Show and a second Open House, differing from the other in that the girls will be from Goucher College and the Maryland Art Institute. The purpose is the same. An outdoor informal is staged for the thirteenth of April, being exactly what its name implies, dancing under the stars. The last bow for the term is to be the May Formal on the twenty-seventh—nothing new, but it is planned to have the same band from the last formal to help put it over.

The program is expected to be a success but of course it depends on the students' cooperation. It seems that this has been the Board's greatest setback, a lack of cooperation. Cooperation means merely interest in, an attendance, and an effort to make the dances a success.

Arts

This week we are prepared to meet all comers in open debate on the State House lawn; our thesis will be, "how many starlets can be impaled on the point of a pin?" And this is all because of the plethora of musicals brought to our colonial town, appearing to ease the icy gales of Spring. Hot on the gay heels of *Broadway Rhythm*, comes a period piece, *Shine On, Harvest Moon*. Dennis Morgan and Ann Sheridan and, happily, Jack Carson, have been put in this. Such frivolity make us cringe. It will run the gamut of emotions from Circle to Capitol for most of the week.

About *The Sullivans*, which follows at the Circle, something can be said only with difficulty. Hollywood's not unusual cheap capitalization on morbid sentiment is evident. We dare say that in fact the Sullivans were not the standard types they are made to appear as in the film. Again, an effort at simplicity has been botched up and turned into false pathos.

The subtlest murders for a long time can be found in *Phantom Lady*, starting Sunday at the Republic. Hop-heads, frightened gunmen, and a clever killer who is unseen for the first half of the picture. For some time, we have been waiting for a film to compare with *Night Must Fall*, but the journals have anticipated us. Franchot Tone and Ella Raines, retiring to the Capitol Wednesday.

Grace McDonald, *She's For Me*, at the same place Wednesday; and for all we care, you can have them. Friday will arrive, and with it Lon Chaney in *Weird Woman*. She might turn out to be an animal of some sort; anyway, it makes our blood run lukewarm. A new serial begins then, and for four months you can be tantalized by arson, murder, battery, and varieties of unique vice. This promises to be the most sustained performance since *The Perils of Pauline*. *Captain America* gives up the ghost first.

THE ST. JOHN'S COLLEGIAN is the official news organ of St. John's College, published every Friday during the academic year. Entered as second class matter October 15, 1919, at the Post Office at Annapolis, Maryland, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Friday, April 14:

3:00-5:00 P. M.  
3:00-5:00 P. M.  
7:00 P. M.  
8:00 P. M.

Athletics  
Recorded Concert  
Chorus Rehearsal  
Formal Lecture—  
*Thucydides*—John  
H. Finley, Jr., Har-  
vard College

Back Campus  
Book Shop  
Humphreys Hall  
Great Hall

Saturday, April 15:

10:30 A. M.-12:00 M.

Athletics

Back Campus

Sunday, April 16:

4:00 P. M.

*The St. John's Passion*  
—The St. John's  
Community Chorus

St. Anne's Church

5:15 P. M.

Open House and Sup-  
per—All members of  
the student body in-  
vited

McDowell Base-  
ment

8:00 P. M.

*World Federation*—  
Stringfellow Barr

Woodward Hall

Monday, April 17:

3:00-5:00 P. M.  
3:00-5:00 P. M.  
5:00 P. M.

Athletics  
Records by Request  
Dormitory Managers  
Meeting  
Chorus Rehearsal

Back Campus  
Book Shop  
McDowell 21

7:00 P. M.

Humphreys Hall

Tuesday, April 18:

3:00-5:00 P. M.  
3:00-5:00 P. M.  
7:00-8:00 P. M.  
8:00 P. M.

Athletics  
Records by Request  
Bible Class  
Mathematics Club

Back Campus  
Book Shop  
McDowell 22  
McDowell 21

Wednesday, April 19:

3:00-5:00 P. M.  
7:00-8:00 P. M.  
7:30 P. M.  
8:00 P. M.

Athletics  
Bible Class  
Boat Club Meeting  
Formal Lecture—*Psy-  
cho-Analysis*—  
Mortimer J. Adler

Back Campus  
McDowell 22  
McDowell 21  
Great Hall

Thursday, April 20:

3:00-5:00 P. M.  
3:00-5:00 P. M.  
7:30 P. M.

Athletics  
Records by Request  
College Meeting

Back Campus  
Book Shop  
Great Hall

Friday, April 21:

3:00-5:00 P. M.  
3:00-5:00 P. M.  
7:00 P. M.  
8:00 P. M.

Athletics  
Recorded Concert  
Chorus Rehearsal  
Formal Lecture—  
*Rhetoric*—String-  
fellow Barr

Back Campus  
Book Shop  
Humphreys Hall  
Great Hall

Saturday, April 22:

10:30 A. M.-12:00 M.  
8:30 P. M.

Athletics  
The Film Club Presents  
—*All Quiet on the  
Western Front*

Back Campus  
Iglehart Hall

# St. John's Collegian

## Timeo Danaos

Mr. Finley's lecture on Thucydides opened with an outline of the program which consisted of three parts: (a) the form of Thucydides, (b) his style, and (c) his subject matter. His introduction to this program was an interesting parallel, similar to those of Spengler, which compared the Hellenic civilization with that of the Romans. Both civilizations after having periods of decline in the Mycenaean and Ravanaean ages, respectively, were overwhelmed by the onslaught of hordes of invading barbarians. This onslaught, in both cases, introduced a so-called "dark age." To continue his parallel, he compared the "Illiad" and the "Odyssey" to "The Song of Roland" and "Beowulf." In both groups the author was looking back upon a glorious past, while he himself was living in a "dark age." He pointed out the rebirth that both civilizations underwent; the rebirth of the Greek civilization being the "Golden Age," and that of the Roman, the world of these last three hundred years. This rebirth was in both cases marked by a rise of patriotic or nationalistic feeling. The product of this feeling was, in the one case, the city state, and in the other, the national states of today. The comparison was made even more clearly, since in both cases, the component parts of these reborn civilizations grouped together and made alliances; the Delian Confederacy, and the European alliances.

The style and form of Thucydides were strongly affected by the literary developments preceding him. Since early Greece had little or no science, and a highly unorganized religion, compared with today's, the poets and poetry held a much higher position than in any other comparable period of history. Consequently, Thucydides, although he was writing prose, imitated poetry a great deal. This poetic background also caused Thucydides to generalize his events and happenings. He has often been called the first scientific historian, but actually his ac-

curate observation was only the means to the end of generalization. Basically, his style was one of antithesis, the major contrast being the differences between Athens and Sparta. Woven into this main theme are many other contrasts, some moral, some tragic, and some political. The tragic contrast would be the potentiality of Athens, and what she actually realized in the war. The moral and political ones could have been in the description of the strife at Corcyra. Another point which was mentioned in connection with style, was that of the intelligibility of Thucydides to his contemporaries. If Pericles had given his funeral oration as Thucydides records it, the Athenians would have been bewildered, much the same as Shakespeare's contemporaries were supposedly baffled by his speeches in certain plays. The lecturer was inclined to disagree with this view and stated that Thucydides represented the trend in Greek expression, and therefore his version of the funeral oration would have been intelligible to Athenians.

The third and final part of the lecture was a summary of the history, done in the light of what was set down earlier in the lecture, and with an attempt at discovering the political implications of the various events. The main theme of the history is the greatness and weakness of Athens, the greatness being shown by her innovations to warfare, and the weakness, by her strategic shortcomings. Foremost among the Athenian innovations was the new type of sea warfare which she inaugurated. She also introduced the hoplite which was primarily an economic creation. The reason for this was their value in attacking and retaining farm land, of which there is so little in Greece. The Athenian discipline was based on a system of granting privileges for meritorious service, thereby increasing daring and initiative among the troops. This was in direct contrast to the Spartan system of rigorous barrack life along a conservative pattern. As to the war itself; in the beginning, Sparta was the leading

power, and seeing the rising force of Athens, she made war upon her. The Periclean policy was to carry on the war in a defensive manner, thereby defeating the hopes of the Spartans; but when Athens took the initiative at Syracuse, her fortunes began to crumble, resulting finally in the collapse of Athens and the Athenian culture. This fatal expedition was compared to the German attack on Russia.

A question was raised in the discussion period as to the interpretation which may be placed on the funeral oration in particular, and on the implications of the book, in general. It was pointed out that the ideal democracy which is eulogized in the oration was not in operation in Athens at that, or at any previous, time. *Thucydides* is thought by some to have been deeply ironical in his account; and in the despair and destruction at the defeat of Athens to realize the pathos of Athens and Sparta, victorious and defeated; and to take as his hero, *Alcibiades*.

The historical analogy, which may be drawn with the present, was presented; and similarities were described between the participants in the ancient and modern wars. Perhaps the irony which Thucydides discovered in the political conditions of his time may also be found in ours. For are we "lovers of the beautiful, yet with economy," and "we cultivate the mind without loss of manliness"? If we do, then we are certainly the objects of a pathetic name, and of a *History*; if not, then we are, perhaps, unworthy of such an irony.

If we are to have an Alcibiades, the lecturer might say, we should hope that the inexpressability of our pathos might be lightened a little by our works. For in the words of Pericles: "Such was the end of these men; they were worthy of Athens, and the living need not desire to have a more heroic spirit, although they may pray for a less fatal issue. The value of such a spirit is not to be expressed in words."

M. V. R.