

St. John's Collegian

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Art Show

The Spring Exhibition, which opened formally at a tea given by its sponsors last Saturday afternoon, includes works of the same sensitivity and accomplishment as those which made it the subject of general remark last year. New artists have been called upon, since many contributors have left college for the services, but the committee of judges has not changed its standards in selecting, from among the many canvasses submitted, the exceptional works on exhibit in the Junior Common Room.

It is to their unique taste that we owe the prominent place given Mr. John's works in pastel and pen and ink, most noteworthy of the compositions. These pieces betray a considerable familiarity with the rules of composition and an acquaintance with current trends in contemporary art. More remarkable still is their use of the human body, which the artist presents not so much naturalistically, particularly in the dimension of perspective, as toward the projection of feelings which cannot achieve expression in other media. *Tatiana* is the best of his work and deserves praise for the neatness of its execution, which successfully approximates that of such works as Picasso's *Guernica*.

Less delightful, to be sure, than Mr. John's contributions are the two watercolors by Roger Tilton. Their excellence resides chiefly in the technical accomplishment with which the artist presents his conventional subjects. If we consider them as exercises in the techniques of watercolor, the propriety with which the weight and body of the subjects is ignored may become more apparent.

Next to these in mastery of their medium are Robert Arner's little studies in landscape and still life. The landscape, together with its frame, is, though pretending to be no more than a pattern in colors and textures, undoubtedly the finest piece in the exhibit; the still life would serve best as

a design in linoleums, with its bright reds and greens and studied flatness.

Other works in the group are less accomplished. Carl Hammen's cartoon of Mr. Bingley must be viewed close at hand; his amusing *Cat* has likewise of occasional interest. Not so Alexander Morse's studies for an oil. Here the subject is subordinated to the medium. The paint is applied with vigor, and we look forward to the mass of the finished work. Irwin Tucker's portrait of Mrs. Gorman, though, unfortunately proportioned, captures its subject's repose and lightness of spirit in calm and subtle colors—the only serious piece of imitation in the show. Gene Thornton's sketch for a cigarette advertisement is in the manner of John Steuart Curry, unlike Harry Rockey's courageous landscape, which is in no way imitative. James Huber's head is lifted in an attitude of scorn. Robert Mueller's construction may be included under whimsy. Giving body to the exhibition are four Chinese prints, sent by Sui Chi as a gift to the mother college, and a small case of models by Peter Kellogg-Smith.

The committee has included three works by Jack Landau, who, as director of the show, is in large part responsible for what has been done. His sets for *Lear*, though heavy with excitement as stage design, are somewhat turgid in their present form. His collage, however, is slight, perfect and delightful.

B. B.

War Meeting

In an attempt to remedy the lack of perspective democracies have in understanding totalitarian states, because of biased sources of information and the lack of convertibility between their standard of values and our own, Alexander Sachs journeyed to Annapolis where, 'till ten minutes unto midnight Sunday, he analyzed the most controversial political question of our community, *Russia's Foreign Policy*.

With the premise that the citizens of democracies are poorly informed because of bad reporting and desire for inside information instead of insight, Mr. Sachs had to review the history of the Soviet Union as a foreign state on the basis of information ignored by the public and interpreted in the light of a four-fold frame of reference. The first dimension of the frame is the Soviet dialectic that permits reversal of policy and apparent contradictions with the explanation that the new step is the higher position of the previous level; the new position is a synthesis of the preceding analysis. Plane two is the Apocalyptic or Messianic with the leaders of the revolution in Russia envisioning a world-wide breakdown of capitalism and the new state in Russia being just a transition to a decay of the state completely. To some, like Trotsky, a mission to create a world revolution was necessary. When Stalin seemingly contravened this policy, it was explained by the Soviet dialectic as an exploitation of the new conditions.

The rift between Stalin and Trotsky is serious but not nearly as significant as Westerners made it. John Dewey, as an American liberal who investigated the problem, is least able to understand the Marxian phase of Stalin's original policy of insulating Russia while the rest of the world fought and made a chaos out of which Communism could lead the world to a socialist order. The West denies such logic. Mr. Sach opined that Stalin does believe in a World Revolution and signed a pact with Hitler to keep Russia out of the path of conflict while the remainder of the world struggled.

The third understanding needed to understand the trend of Russia's policy is their negation of civilization and the values understood by the West. Czarist Russia had laws and courts that the West was familiar with, but the new Soviet lacks the concept of personal integrity with individual rights that the Western world values.

Like Einstein, Mr. Sachs has a fourth dimension of time that binds the other three: Time as the factor needed to prepare Russia to carry on the world revolution outlined by Marx. This plane includes the period from the end of World War I to date. Hate for the Allies was engendered by their attempts at civil war against the new Bolshevik government. But during what he calls an "eclipse of sense" in the inter-war period the United States built up the Russian heavy industries of the first five-year plan by lending money to German industrialists. The Allies committed the colossal blunder of attempting to re-build Europe while ignoring Russia and Germany. Ironically we considered Russia untouchable and at the same time built up her industries through Germany.

While attempting collective security—all nations agreeing to guarantee the security of the others by treaties—from 1933 on, the Popular Front program of collaborating with fellow travelers and liberals to insure peace was looked on by Americans as a fight against Fascism. Mr. Sachs considers the cooperation as only a phase of aggressive defense tactics made by Stalin to force Hitler westward and not against Russia.

The purge in totalitarian states is not to eliminate potential fifth columnists as Mr. Joseph Davies naively wrote. Purges are a form of internal discipline to regulate all aspects of the individual personality in conformance with the creed of the state. In '38 Stalin saw that France and England were not united and a reversal of policy was needed to utilize the new circumstance. The West could not be galvanized against Hitler, maybe Hitler could be persuaded to forget Russia as an opponent. "Stalin not Hitler was the courting member of the pair." In a democracy because of private property opposing opinions can be presented and lead to the truth; in a totalitarian state there is not private property and dissent can not be made in the form of newspapers, leaflets and radio broadcasts. The majority is not right, it is just a way of closing debate and after the majority's opinion is followed, revision can be made and the minority may become the majority.

As illustrations of the ruthless at-

tempts to subjugate every element of society to the state's end Mr. Sachs pointed to the closing of the astronomy section of the Moscow Academy for allegedly not pursuing the anti-God propaganda work by utilizing astronomy.

Today the problem of Russia is to choose whether to exclude herself from the West or reintegrate her standards with ours in a Western order. As for the current controversy about the Polish-Russian border, it is not new. After the treaty with Hitler Stalin decided to rewrite the treaty of Versailles by annexing the Baltic states and parts of Poland useful as insulating defense zones.

Our problem is to understand the nature of the differences between Russia and ourselves, to recapture our self-confidence about our capacities to produce the materials and policies needed to make the Machiavellian politics of today resulting in chaos into an orderly program of federalism with assurance of peace and progress.

DONALD KAPLAN.

Mr. Eslick on Truth

The founding fathers who, in 1776, drew up the *Declaration of Independence*, were unabashed advocates of absolute truth. They recognized the proposition as self-evidently true that life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are inalienable rights bestowed upon men by their Creator. Perhaps it is not immediately self-evident that these are true and natural rights. It may require a dialectical process of some sort to establish that they proceed from first principles. In any event, the founders were emphatic in asserting that they are true—not mere opinion.

Not so the modern positivists. In the case of Dewey, "absolute principles are intolerant of dissent"—hence unscientific, undemocratic, and illiberal. But were not the founding fathers partisans of liberty, too, as are the present-day pragmatists and positivists who tremble at the tyranny of truth? We find that not only do the above-mentioned moderns deny the absolute nature of truth, but positivistic liberalism is at once one with totalitarianism in agreeing on the total depravity of man, and in denying

his essential rationality. Nominalistic empiricism can be traced back to the doctrine of Protagoras that man is the measure of all things. Another statement of this sophistical position is the proposition that knowledge is perception. Plato states in the *Theaetetus* that from this it follows "that there is no one self-existent thing, but everything is becoming and in relation; and being must be altogether abolished, although from habit and ignorance we are compelled even in this discussion to retain the use of the term." What appears, is, then modern science as regarded by the positivists, is very similar to the activity of the prisoners in Plato's cave, who, viewing the passing shadows try to predict the future by judging the order of the procession.

Mr. Eslick pointed out that relativism may have had the effect of introducing moral skepticism into modern liberalism. From moral skepticism to totalitarianism the distance is not very far. If moral truths do not exist, and one man's opinion is as good as another's, then, as Thrasymachus argued, justice becomes the interest of the stronger.

Modern sophistic liberalism is undermining our democracy. If we are to be free men we must rediscover the truth. Mr. Eslick proposes that we seek this truth—which is needed to restore and nourish freedom—in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition. The truth found in this system is contemporary in the works of Maritain, Gilson, Simon, Adler, and our own Lewis Hammond.

Another serious consequence of relativism is the denial of real causal efficacy. Without this there can be no truth—at least about the *why* of things. The classic attack on causal efficacy is found in the writings of William of Ockham and David Hume to whom causality did not seem to be derived from sense data, but to arise from our frequently experiencing similar phenomena and habitually regarding it as causally connected. Kant saw that this removed the foundation from Newtonian physics, but in his attempt to restore it, he retained the postulate of Hume about the experiencing of causality. While he rescued the science of physics from the hands

of the empiricists, he denied its existence in the real world. The Kantian "manifold of sense" and the magic lantern show of contemporary philosophers are outrageous fictions of bad metaphysics. Aristotle and the philosophers of the middle ages—the true empiricists and pragmatists—never doubted that we experience causal efficacy—which we may call reality. An aspect of being *as such* is the communication of being or causal action. The formula of St. Thomas: *causa importat influxum quemdam ad esse causati*. The being of the cause passes into the being of the effect.

Truth for St. Thomas is the real adequation of thing and intellect. Our bad Cartesian habit of proceeding from thought to thing, has led us into the error of believing that this involves us in a process of comparing the representation of a thing, with the thing apart from representation. Not only is this impossible, but it is preposterous to suppose that this is what St. Thomas intended. One explanation of this formula is that truth in the intellect begins with the conformity of fact between being and intellect as in the case of the eye where there is a conformity of fact between the eye and a perceived color. Because knowledge is founded on a real relation or adequation, there is no question of its relation to reality.

By not comprehending an adequate concept of abstraction, two otherwise diametrically opposed traditions—nominalistic empiricism and Platonic realism—have alike fallen into error. The positivists on the one hand, have us living each in his own private relative world. There is no common characteristic of these many worlds, and universals are merely confused sense images. For Plato on the other hand, genuine science is of the forms alone. In neither case is a science of sensible objects possible. Aristotle and St. Thomas hold that a science of the real world is possible by means of abstraction. Herein lies the chief difference between Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy.

The nature of abstraction needs clarification. We may define abstraction as the reduction of material differences to continuity. A continuum is defined as that which has ordered

potentiality for division and specification. Potentiality then, gives intelligibility to matter. The essential nature of the universal is continuity. The *categories* and the *infima species* are the opposite poles of determination. The *genus* functions as intelligible matter in relation to the *differentia* as defining form. The *categories* afford us a measure of the sameness and difference of things.

Abstractions give us truth about the real world because we derive them from it. They are not empty as the positivists maintain, nor do they reside in a Platonic blue heaven.

Like all truths, moral truths are founded upon being, but in a unique way. The good is being in relation to desire. Man's conscious desire is a right or natural desire when the object desired is a good required to perfect his nature. Hence moral truth is founded upon our conception of the nature of man. Thus knowledge presupposes psychological and metaphysical orders of truth.

Extreme nominalistic empiricism and extreme rationalism must both share the guilt of the present error of totalitarianism—the former for destroying any absolute criterion of moral judgments; the latter for engendering the myth that the state is an organism greater than the individual.

Without truth there cannot be freedom. Moral and political truths depend upon philosophical knowledge. Man can attain to truth and freedom through philosophical knowledge if he is truly a rational animal. If we try to gain freedom by avoiding the authority of reason, we shall have to accept the authority of the bayonet.

Nigger in woodpile:

Major: The denial of absolute truth is skeptical cynicism.

Minor: Skeptical cynicism is evil.

Conclusion: The denial of absolute truth is evil.

VERNE SCHWAB.

College Meeting

The Dean concluded his talks on the parts of the program by discussing examinations last night at college meeting. Before stating the purpose of the oral and written tests we are about to take he said that, because of the jamming of schedules brought about by

the new summer term, orals and don'ts may have to be combined into one session. This has never been done before and is not desirable, as the two are distinct and should be kept apart, but may be necessary, and if so will be announced.

Although there are no provisions for exams in the *Republic* they may be needed by imperfect tutors to correctly diagnose the condition of the student's intellectual soul. The techniques are listening to the student's dialectic as test dives into his soul, and oral tests that show reactions different from the written exams with specific questions for a student to run away with as he chooses. Learning is the aim of the process, not graduation or the accumulation of credits towards a degree. All forms of tests check previous judgments made on other occasions and help the tutor not only to aid the student but also to improve his own teaching.

The Dean advised us to keep the coming examinations in this context, to eliminate passing or failing as criteria, and to consider instead learning and not learning. They help the instruction committee revise the program and plan new material for tutorials. Past language examinations showed that the weight of traditional language studying and methods has not been removed by the language tutorials. Students persist in grammar school habits of memorizing forms of verbs in a manner that would insure Plato's continual revolution in his sepulcher.

This year the annual advice given at the end of the year to departing vacationers can not be given. They were told to go home, have fun, forget all you learned this year and come back to take an examination next year. Now too much of what was thrown at you will be thrown back to the tutors so try to forget as much as possible before taking any examination. Go to an exam as you go to a medical examination, and you may do well by seeing a movie the night before.

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Arts

It is easy and safe to conclude that Mr. William Saroyan's incessant springtime is displayed to its best advantage on the stage as opposed to the screen. At the Circle today and on Sunday at the Capitol is *The Human Comedy*—a long film at least. It's all about everybody and everybody is good. The hero (well, one of the heroes) spends a half-hour with the rich girl he is about to marry telling her that life is good and he loves, not her but everybody. There is a mad fruit grower who regrets the fact that his trees are not ripe so that the kids can swipe the fruit. Against all this is the fact that we so seldom come across any good dialogue in movies (Diction being one of the six constituent parts), that more of the film seems better than it is than is. All of the scenes with Mickey Rooney in them luckily have someone else around who can act.

To start things off with a bang next week, the management of the Circle is presenting *White Savage*, "thrills untamed," exclamation point. You know who's in this—Sabu. A lot of old Technicolor film being reused plus a spare earthquake.

Elissa Landi, one of our favorite actresses about the time of *The Sign of the Cross* (guess that pretty well settles us for eternity) has returned of late to the idiom of the film in *Corregidor*, at the Republic on Sunday. With her returns Otto Kruger, also late. *Corregidor* is about *Corregidor*, as *Wake Island* was about *Wake Island*. *Corregidor* reminds us of *Wake Island*. *Wake Island* reminds us of *Wake Island*. *Corregidor* reminds us . . . into the mist of memory.

The Eve of St. Mark persists at the National for the rest of the week. Starting on Monday is *The Merry Makers*, vaudeville with 12-Big Acts-12. More information available but unprintable.

Calendar

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

Fri., May 14—Sat., May 22, 19

Friday, May 14:

8:30 A. M.
2:00-3:15 P. M.
7:00-7:45 P. M.
7:00-8:00 P. M.
8:00 P. M.

Chapel Service
Military Athletics
Chorus Rehearsal
Bible Class
Formal Lecture—*Pales-
trina's Missa Brevis*
—St. John's College
Community Chorus

Great Hall
Gymnasium
Humphreys Hall
McDowell 21
Great Hall

Saturday, May 15:

8:30 A. M.
9:30-12:00 M.
10:30 A. M.

Chapel Service
Athletics
Faculty Meeting

Great Hall
Gymnasium
McDowell 24

Sunday, May 16:

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

Recorded Concert
*Revolution: War and
Peace. Series II, No.
12*

Humphreys Hall
Woodward Hall

Monday, May 17:

8:30 A. M.
2:00-3:10 P. M.
7:00-7:45 P. M.

Chapel Service
Military Athletics
Chorus Rehearsal

Great Hall
Gymnasium
Humphreys Hall

Tuesday, May 18:

8:30 A. M.
2:00-3:15 P. M.
5:00-6:00 P. M.
7:00-8:00 P. M.

Chapel Service
Military Athletics
Recorded Music
Bible Class

Great Hall
Gymnasium
Humphreys Hall
McDowell 21

Wednesday, May 19:

8:30 A. M.
2:00-3:15 P. M.
7:30 P. M.

Chapel Service
Military Athletics
Cotillion Board Meet-
ing

Great Hall
Gymnasium
Paca Social Ro

Thursday, May 20:

8:30 A. M.
2:00-3:15 P. M.
7:30 P. M.

Chapel Service
Military Athletics
College Meeting

Great Hall
Gymnasium
Great Hall

Friday, May 21:

8:30 A. M.
2:00-3:15 P. M.
7:00-7:45 P. M.
7:00-8:00 P. M.
8:00 P. M.

Chapel Service
Military Athletics
Chorus Rehearsal
Bible Class
Formal Lecture—*The
Periodic Table*—
Anthony Standen

Great Hall
Gymnasium
Humphreys Hall
McDowell 21
Great Hall

Saturday, May 22:

8:30 A. M.
10:00 P. M.-2:00 A. M.

Chapel Service
Senior Ball

Great Hall
Iglehart Hall