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The Devil and the Black Arts

The Age of Enlightenment has given mankind the belief that all events have rational causation, and that nature will progressively come under man's control. Hence, the existence of demonic beings and of powers of evil beyond the pale of human domination is challenged, for the devil cannot be shown to the eye. Mr. Winifree Smith attempted to show him to our reason.

Who or what is the devil? According to the Bible, Mr. Smith declared, the devil is a serpent in the Garden of Eden, man's tempter, and the cause of man's fall. But, while this account is fairly specific in saying what the devil does, it gives us no idea as to what kind of being he is. Later theologians evolved theories to explain this. The devil becomes the highest angel, the next highest divine intelligence committing the sin of pride. Cast out of heaven, he tempts man into the doing of evil because he envies him his blessedness. By committing evil deeds, man puts himself into the devil's bondage, into the service of a power which he cannot control. For his purposes, the devil has traditionally used various arts which have been called black. At this point, Mr. Smith began to speak of the liberal arts.

What is an art? In the "Ion," Plato speaks of the art of painting, of sculpture, of the charioteers, the general, the prophet, the arithmetician, the chess player as well as of others. The liberal arts are distinguished from the other categories of arts, the fine arts and the useful arts. Each art embodies a certain kind of knowledge. The fine artist knows how to make a beautiful thing good because of its beauty. The useful artist can manufacture a functional object and knows the technique of the manufacturing process. The liberal artist knows knowledge useful in itself, but which is perhaps also instrumental in understanding some other kind of knowledge. Thus, while a poet knows the rules of his fine art, he sings of things that he does not truly understand. And while a carpenter knows exactly how to make a table, he does not know the whys and wherefores of the actions necessary to make it. The knowledges of the fine and of the useful artist can thus be said to be only partially true, since they are but partially known and since that which is truly known is true. But the knowledge that the liberal artist possesses deals not only of the earthly but also of the divine and of the intervening space. A rhetorician knows the art of effective communication, an arithmetician knows the science of number, but they cannot be truly said to know these things, unless they know not only the operations necessary for their exercises, but also the reasons why they are exercised and the purposes they strive for within the realm of knowledge. In this connection, the liberal art of dialectic is especially important. For, while the practitioners of the six other liberal arts seem to have a craft with a higher meaning, the dialectician appears to deal only in the realm of the divine ideas. As a matter of fact, dialectic alone is knowledge for it alone can see all things, human and divine. Yet not often as ordinary mortals dialecticise truly. Mostly, the garden variety of dialectician may only achieve an earthly image of dialectic by directing the aim of conversation with his fellow men towards the same goal that he knows dialectic to attempt to achieve. But, since the devil can blacken all things, he can even make the liberal arts, black arts.

If man, through sin, has placed himself under the mastery of the devil, he will himself become diabolical. He will use all the arts he is able to practice for the wrong ends, and, as we ourselves look about this misuse is apparently common. It is hence somewhat presumptuous of St. John's College to purport on its seal that it makes free men out of children by means of books and balances. Perhaps it is the devil which prompts the reviewer to add here that the motto may be equally made to make children out of free men. It was suggested that divine arts, sacraments, are necessary to deliver man from the evil one's bondage, but perhaps the good use of the liberal arts suffices. For the sacramental arts can certainly be used towards the devil's ends in quite as strong a way as to assure man of complete damnation. Especially since the eighth liberal art of logic was added during the Middle Ages, the devil has become a logician, trapping men like Raskolnikov into carrying out logical conclusions from wrong and sinful premises.

Equally, since the seventeenth century, the devil has become a mathematician—for Plato's four arts of astronomy, harmonics, geometry, and arithmetic, once so clearly intelligible both within themselves and in the light of one another have fused into pure mathematics in the modern understanding. And pure mathematics are responsible for the bondage and servitude we labor in, within the realm of modern science and technology. Atomic energy and its uses are indeed children of this modern mathematics, and it would be platitudinous of the reviewer to state their importance and the danger with which they threaten us. "It is," Mr. Smith said, "as if the devil had placed into our hands this power which we are not good enough to use."

We find ourselves thus visibly enslaved by devil-work, and the question of salvation from it yet seems intricate. We need to arm ourselves with an art of arts that will cast out the devil from our midst. It seems that even Luther's inkwell did not suffice. Mr. Smith suggested dialectic. If we use dialectic against the devil, we must remember that in some accounts he himself is pure intellect. Also we ourselves have but rarely transcended to that world where real dialectic moves. Therefore it is necessary that we be very much on our guard when we attempt to dialecticise.

The proper end of dialectic is the knowledge of the truth. The devil has told some of us that there is no truth, but only contradictory opinions. Therefore, the skeptics among us will not seek to examine such opinions, and, hence, dialectic is useless for them. There are others whom the devil has made dogmatists, and who assert that the truth is already found and they possess it. For them, dialectic seems equally impossible. The dialectician and the philosopher are, however, essentially the same. They are not wise men, like the dogmatists, but men who love wisdom. It is still difficult for them to practice dialectic because it seems so difficult to preserve the knowledge of one's ignorance in the realm of opinion.

The devil, says Jesus, is a liar and a father ot lies that tries to tell us that there is no lie because there is no truth. And yet, Mr. Smith says, the dielectician must have opinion because a man without opinions is an empty-headed man. But, in order to be a good dialectician, he must be willing to have his opinions clash with others at any moment, and he must submit all opinions to constant re-examination. Another factor which hinders dialectic is an intellectual softness which makes the would-be dialectician accept a seemingly stronger opinion too easily. It seems that a dialectician must be both ignorant and manly. To combat both apparent knowledge and intellectual softness, it is necessary sometimes to be able to take both sides of an argument in order to see it clearly. Yet care must be exercised in this, lest one become a sophist who argues for the sake of argument.

In the reading of the authors on the St. John's list, it is hence necessary to be very careful to examine the author's meanings, without making the mistake of assuming that one author talks in terms of another whom we might like better. Also it is necessary to be manly in order to avoid being trapped by a single one. For only when we have found the true meaning of an author's opinions may we talk about their truth and falsity. This is often difficult because even on fundamental questions there are some differences among the authors of the Great Books—Plato, Hobbes and the Bible will not define the Good in the same manner. Some of the most important problems remain unsolved. But dialectics is still useful, in that we might come out with some opinions that are better than these we held before. And it is definitely a diabolic lie if men are told that they must inevitably be led astray when they use dialectic. Yet perhaps Plato himself would say this. On the other hand we would equally agree that there is probably no other way.

Within the light of Christian revelation, men do not have to know, in Plato's sense of knowing, because God has given them a revelation which they must accept by faith. For it is revelation, rather than the arts of the philosopher, that make up the ordering principles of God. Yet, even within Christianity, the liberal arts would still have the function of leading the near-dialectician to understand the revealed truth. It is perhaps fitting to close this review by quoting Mr. Smith's statement to a freshman in the questioning period: "You're always assuming that there is a solution to the problem."

—W. L. FLEISCHMANN

Awakening

The idea of the Good is the end to which everything is directed. Since the one who comes up out of the cave sees that it is perfect and complete and whole, why should he turn his back and go down into the cave again? Socrates says that such a person is a philosopher who has been taught by the state and owes his wisdom to the state, just as a river owes its water to its tributaries. But in Mr. Klein's story, the long journey out is the process of education and the question why should the philosopher leave the light is transformed to, why should the wise man teach?

The nature of reality can be revealed by the power of dialectic only to one who is disciplined in the quadrivium. A good memory is needed so that the material and the basis of the dialectic will be quickly given to the mind. The sluggish memory may present false coin to the mind with which, not the truth, but only opinion is acquired.

Because no man's memory is perfect, a constant renewal in the mind and restatement of ratio is needed, lest things once known but not recalled are lost.

Mr. Klein declared the man returns and teaches because he recognizes an exacting unity, to which both he and the chain gang facing the wall belong. Since unity implies similarity, he strives to put others in his position to look upon the sun. A corollary of the unity of being is the unity of knowledge perceived upon entering the light of day.

But the question arises, why should those in the cave follow the teacher, for their minds are in a Rip Van Winkle sleep.

Mr. Klein contends that they follow because they love the teacher and then after a time because they see the superiority of the reflections over the shadows

and the beauty of the animals and plants themselves. This love for the teacher loosens the bonds, turns them toward the fire and after perhaps a few false starts, carries them to the images which are being carried behind the rampart and finally under the sun.

But it is not so easy for the one who once gets outside and recognizes that it is better to be a miserable servant of a poor master than to be in the cave. When he gets back, he is ridiculed and called idler and dreamer. Although he cannot tell them of his experience directly for they could not follow his language, the good teacher will say to the sleepwalkers, perhaps *you* call it dreaming but,

Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises, sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
That, if I then had waked after long sleep, will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
The clouds, methought, would open, and show riches ready to drop upon me, that when I waked I cried to dream again.

---BALDWIN

Mr. Klein Draws a Picture

Thursday evening, the course of nature was altered, when the college heard Mr. Klein lecture on "Plato and the Liberal Arts." Mr. Klein, who is now on sabbatical leave, replaced the usual seminar, to try to explain, with Plato's help, why we should be going to seminar at all.

By a series of explicit and implicit intentions he managed to talk to the whole college. That he could stay so close to the text and speak to the entire college body is surprising, when we remember that most of the freshmen have not yet read the Republic, and it is dim in the memory of most upper classmen.

It seems that there were two explicit intentions.

1) To discover, by means of two Platonic images, the seven liberal arts in education.
2) To illustrate a manner of reading Plato which could serve as a model.

Mr. Klein's implicit intentions seemed to have been:

1) To give content to the radical meaning of the word education (a leading out).
2) To give some meaning to the often neglected seal of the new program on the back of the college catalogue.

All four intenions were realized; the second, however, only four-sevenths so. The remaining three-sevenths, grammar, rhetoric and dialectic seemed too hastily passed over in a few remarks and several sweeping gestures at the blackboard.

It would perhaps be helpful to reduplicate some of Plato's patterns.

I) The pattern of the divided line.
II) Several links between I and III.
III) The ascent from the cavern image.

I

	Reason	Ideas
Intelligible Knowledge Being	Understanding	Hypotheses—(downward)
	Belief or Conviction	Animals, that which grows, that which is made.
Visible Opinion Becoming	Sense-perception	Shadows and reflexions

The relation between the parts can be stated in this proportion:
Being : Becoming :: Intellect : Opinion :: Reason : Belief :: Understanding : Perception

II

The connecting links seem to be two:

(a)

$$\frac{\text{Good}}{\text{Sun (child of good)}} = \frac{\text{One}}{\text{Many}} = \frac{\text{Known}}{\text{Seen}}$$

(b)

In this next pattern the middle term is a kind of mediator between the two extremes.

Sight ..... Light ..... Visibility
Mind ..... Good ..... Truth

III

Shadows of Images, Echoes (babbling) } Two dimensional — in Cavern

Fire illuminates → Images of Natural things, Voices (three dimensional) — at Midpoint

Sun { Causes; Illuminates → } { Shadows, Reflections, Natural Objects, Heavens } — Outside

We can make the analogy evident by means of a proportion:
Cavern : Outside :: World of sight : intellectual Understanding.
Becoming : Belief :: Belief : Reason :: Perception : :: Light of Fire : Sun :: Natural sun : Good ::

The image of the cavern is elastic enough to undergo alternations in the above proportion, e.g., placing the intelligible part of the divided line above the cavern and outside we have a triad; Hades, Earth, Heaven which are taken to mean, the places of beings who are only phantoms, shadows of the men that once were, then the land of living things considered as sharing somewhat of heaven which in turn is the realm of complete true being. Another triad might be: Babbling : Opinion : Knowledge or Death : Sleeping : Waking.

If the image is to be taken as the ascent of the soul from the visible to the intelligible, the question remains, "What is the role of the liberal arts in this education?"

In the beginning stage we have the need for counting; i.e., for distinguishing the shadows of images. If there is no perplexity about the number, then it is counting only. If, however, a question arises as to numbering, we must resort to questions about number per se. Thus we have the art of arithmetic. The counting, simply, would be distinguished by its practicality; it is useful in the market place. Arithmetic is practical or useful in that it leads toward knowledge of the Good. It is in this last sense that Plato calls a thing useful. However, both counting and arithmetic are necessary. Since the shadows on the wall are two dimensional, we must be able to distinguish shapes and figures. Hence we have plane geometry.

When a perplexity arises we must resort to the nature of figures. Then geometry is related to knowledge and another step is made. Likewise we must have a knowledge of solid geometry to distinguish the artifacts carried behind the wall from their two-dimensional shadows. Once out of the cavern we are able to regard the shadows of things then ordinary visible things. To distinguish between night and day, between the hours, etc., requires astronomy. Astronomy has a relation to things seen by the eye as Music or Harmony to things heard. Thus the quadrivium, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy are necessary steps in the ascent. The question of the *turning* of the soul is the most crucial situation in the cave.

Inside the cavern, the indistinctness of the shadows causes perplexity. It is this very perplexity which turns the soul and forces it to knowledge and hence gives the arts their liberal quality. Thus in the upper part of the divided line "problems" serve as perplexities to raise us from Understanding to Reason. Dialectic comes at the crown of the quadrivium. Grammar and Rhetoric seem to precede Dialectic. As far as the cave analogy goes the place of these two is questionable. Yet it seems that we are using grammar and rhetoric when we find terms in an analogy and state their relation, as Socrates has done when he developed the proportion between the divided line and the cave.

What Plato and Mr. Klein have shown is that, if the Good is the object of education and the sight and mind are faced with those things described in the cave and out, then (a) *the liberal arts* must be practiced to arrive at knowledge, (b) the quadrivium and trivium have a necessary order, (c) that they are not ends in themselves but rather means to an end.

It is interesting to note Socrates' insistence that this picture is only an opinion. The burden of Socrates' remark seemed to weigh heavily on Mr. Klein's shoulders during the question period. Several questions were raised concerning the nature of the good and why and how it draws the soul to it. Whether knowledge of the good is the object of the soul, whether that is the requisite of true being and several questions of the same order were not made the subjects of dialectic. This was understandable, since Mr. Klein seemed to be more interested Thursday evening in giving us some insight into what Plato was saying rather than questioning the truth of Plato's opinion.

—CANTOR

The Idea of the Liberal Arts

Mr. Kieffer proposed to explicate the legend "Bachelor of Arts," and the relationship of the liberal arts to education, look at their history, and examine in their light the traditions that constitute the Western tradition of the great books.

Education is a tension between knowledge and ignorance, the individual and society and between man as animal and man as rational. The child moves from knowledge to ignorance, from the truths of immediate sense perception to the ordering of them first by myth and later by analysis. The education of the child is a movement from the clarity of immediate sensation, through the confusion of change, to the clarity of ordered confusion that is the achievement of intellectual balance and ultimately a state of happiness. Man has an individual end, and education is his progress to that end.

The liberal arts are the skills by which man achieves both self-knowledge and a political community under the idea of the Good. They are the practical means for man to perfect his human powers but also the Way to the knowledge of truth. The Scylla and Charibdis are exclusive pursuit of individual ends and self-effacing adjustment to society, embodied perhaps in Alcibiades and Aeneas. As the individual operates with memory so the society operates with tradition.

Until the 5th century, communication was dominated by myth. Then there was a shift from mythical to conceptual thinking. Thought was given to causes and consequences, counting and arranging and the ordering principle of number and shape was found. Euclid displaces Homer. The seven liberal arts were passed from the Aristotelians to the Alexandrians. In medieval society, Martianus Capellus' pallid allegories introduce them as the Muses of the approaching age. Rhetoric dominates, as the art of preaching. The "learned Thomas" ground out to the last detail the grammar of theology. Geometry becomes further abstracted through Descartes.

Names are mythological and allow memory and imagination to operate. Analysis of the mythical way of naming things leads to the ordering of names as parts of speech. Grammar becomes a mirror of all possible relations among named things. Rhetoric provides the principles for the best operations of symbols. Logic supplies principles of syntactical arrangement. The relating of the trivium to the quadrivium is best done by Plato. His dialectic was the fruit of the union of mythology and mathematics, and there is perhaps where the liberal arts reached their high-water mark.

The liberal arts are techniques to help you go from sensations to an understanding of the world. The liberal arts are not a magical token to crack the world's problems, but identify the problems and our roles in meeting them. The world's emphasis is on action and power rather than thought and understanding but perhaps action is mythological and there is another kind of world. The idea of the liberal arts is one idea and encompasses all ideas.

—HAYDEN

A Summer Afternoon

A man in town has died.
I don't know who it is,
But across the street
The sleek black motored mausoleum waits
To lead like a serpent's head
Through the city streets,
While nervous drivers wait
At crossroads to go home.
Chevys and Fords coast like gentlemen
To a parking spot.
And elderly women with thick ankles
And bunioned shoes
Pass,
Their heads bobbing in quiet manner,
Their lips pursed in modulated tone.
The dead man used to laugh
But he has cast his spell now.
Meanwhile the sun shines,
And a marigold bows to me in the breeze.

—L. S. LINTON

Community of Responsibility in a Community of Learning

The arrangement for student government here at school has long been subject to criticisms—and there is a basis for some of them. Perhaps it is time to formulate a defense of the polity, rather by restating the general idea, which is essentially good, than by defending past achievements.

No one will undertake to plead for maintenance of an ineffectual mechanism of study democracy designed simply to give the appearance and outward motions of self-government. No case can be made for a superficial political organization without real function, artificially contrived only to "give students practice" in self-government or the "feeling of responsibility." Students will learn good judgment

rather by not wasting time on sham politics and meaningless formality. Some may feel that the polity has in the past tended in this direction; certainly the difficulty of obtaining quorums has shown that many have judged the Assembly not worth the time required to attend meetings.

There is a certain point of view (the "incubator" theory) which supposes that students have no proper share of responsibility in administration of the college. Everyone grants that decisions must be made, regulations formulated, discipline maintained, here, as in any compact and active group. But it is argued that the administration is older and wiser than we, and that it is paid to do the job while we aren't, and that students need take no part in the real responsibility of community government. In the extreme statement of this point of view, we would simply use what facilities it occurred to the administration to provide, obey what rules the Dean's office laid down and answer to the Dean for violations, and pay the Treasurer regularly for services rendered. The student would loose a minimum of time from the search for Truth.

That was an overstatement, of course. It is perfectly clear that students do and ought to assume administrative function is dispersing funds and providing facilities for the newspaper, film club, and other college activities. But it is not alway recognized that this assumption of responsibility is a particularly good and important thing, not as artificial training, but on the contrary, as escape from the artificiality of having no responsibility.

St. John's is conceived by all of us, not as an institution of teaching, on the "incubator" pattern, but as a reasonably mature community of learning. It is not that, there is room for dreaming. Where the Administration is not distinct in person from the Faculty, and the Faculty and students are sharing the experience of learning, there is no place either for absolute division of responsibility.

To come out of the dream, we have at present, a number of established student organizations recognized, or waiting recognition, by the student body. They will handle a large part of the administration of community activities, but that part only which is traditionally accepted by students in all colleges. Beside these, there is the Court, which has, possibly, as much responsibility in matters of student discipline as it wishes to assume, as well as other functions not clearly defined. The Court joins each week with members of the Administration in a meeting, conversational in character, which in turn plans College Forums conceived as conversations between the student body and the Administration. These activities are aspects of the Student Polity, of which, the much-maligned Assembly, the student body acting in legislative capacity, is only one phase.

Last year, the student body undertook, entirely on its own initiative, two administrative concerns. A committee appointed by the Court made a study of the Laboratory, reporting its conclusions in College Forum at the same time to the Administration, Faculty, and student body. The reception of the report did not seem encouraging; perhaps the report, though seriously prepared, was somehow inept. In any event, this action of the Court in reflecting on the curriculum was not the violation of a sharply drawn line of responsibility, which it might have been in another school. In the St. John's community, it was a proper offer to share an essentially common problem. Another especially significant action of the Polity last year was the resolution on the admissions policy.

These may serve as some kind of example of the responsibility a mature student body ought to assume. Evidently, initiative and sound judgment are required on the part of students, as well as assent from the Administration—assent which is, however, certainly in line with our tradition of a college community. The aim is not, primarily, elaborate formal organization (though some changes in the constitution currently under discussion, seem well advised); least of all it is the kind of zealous but meaningless politicking sometimes found on campuses. Rather, we ought to aim for the sensible community of responsibility which belongs to our dream of a community of learning.

—T. SIMPSON

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Between the music and the jukebox is
Between the monolith and the maelstrom dream
The psyche's tall hypotheses redeem
The demiurgical epiphanies;
Below the cliff along the transiencies
The hero Son flees Clytemnestra's scream,
Prince Hamlet waits until the verities seem
But seemings . . . or the seemings verities? . . .
There on the beach of paradox the soul
Constructs her shifting stasis, deling time—
Her stroboscope that jells the flux, and stair
Toward speech, the burning asymptotic goal
The Deity bequeathed—her paradigm
He also gave, of what men do and bear.

—BALLARD

———o———

Writing comes hard at St. John's because the curriculum is a journey through critical rapids. One feels an immense strain when one endeavors to put his ideas on paper. John Sanborn felt that the poetic instinct was slain by the sort of intensive work in analysis we do here. On the contrary we beleive that poetic inspiration is not crushed by dialectic but can take on this very form of expression.

Although this is a predominately lecture-review issue, the aim of the paper is to refract ideas radiating from the seminars and further to encourage interpretive writing.

THE STAFF