

NEWS OF THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE

FEBRUARY

1972

SECOND SEMESTER BEGINS

The freshman class at Thomas Aquinas College began its second semester on January 31, after a generally successful week of examinations. The Theology Tutorials continue with Sacred Scripture. Philosophy is deep in Aristotle's logical texts. The Mathematics Tutorials are in Book IX of Euclid's Elements; the Language Tutorial is advancing rapidly in Latin grammar and in Science the measurements laboratory has just begun. The Seminar is midway through The Peloponnesian War.

NEW CLASS TAKES SHAPE

Numerous applications have been received for September's freshman class. In January posters were mailed to all Catholic high schools in the United States and this already gives promise of generating even more applications.

INTERESTED STUDENTS INVITED TO VISIT CAMPUS

Students interested in attending Thomas Aquinas College as freshmen in September of 1972 are invited to visit the campus for up to two days. They may attend classes and live with the students so as to obtain a good idea of what the academic program and the College in general are like. Arrangements for such a visit may be made by calling Mr. Peter DeLuca at the College.

Space in the freshman class is limited. Interested students are urged to begin the application process early.

NEW BULLETIN PUBLISHED

A new edition of the College Bulletin is now available. This is essentially the same booklet as before except for the addition of photographs showing the campus and illustrating classes. The Bulletin and other descriptive literature are available on request from the College office.

GRANT RECEIVED FROM RASKOB FOUNDATION

During the fall semester a \$2,000 grant was received from the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities in Delaware. It is for the expansion of the Thomas Aquinas College library.

JESUIT PRIEST JOINS FACULTY

Father Thomas McGovern, S.J., formerly of Canisius College in Buffalo, New York, has begun active work as a tutor at Thomas Aquinas College. Those who have not had an opportunity to meet Father McGovern are invited to read his article, "Ragged in Spirit," in this issue which gives some insight into his views on education.

DR. RATNER APPOINTED TO BOARD OF VISITORS

Dr. Herbert Ratner, prominent Catholic doctor, spokesman for pro-life forces in America, Director of Public Health in Oak Park, Illinois and editor of Child and Family Magazine has been added to the Board of Visitors of Thomas Aquinas College. Dr. Ratner lectured at the College and visited with the students during the fall semester. He was subsequently appointed a Visitor by the Board of Governors. His new duties include visiting the campus once a year and advising the Governors and the faculty.

PRAYERS REQUESTED FOR MRS. SIDENFADEN

Dr. Ronald P. McArthur, President of Thomas Aquinas College, has requested all friends of the College to pray for the repose of the soul of Maxine Betty Sidenfaden who died December 14, 1971. Through their timely generosity, Mrs. Sidenfaden and her husband, a Governor of the College, have been a major factor in the founding of Thomas Aquinas College.

AUXILIARY NEWS

Thomas Aquinas College Auxiliary officers met last week at the home of Auxiliary President, Mrs. Edwin H. Shipstad, to discuss the forthcoming Champagne-Brunch which will raise scholarship funds.

They decided to hold a continental breakfast planning session at Mrs. Shipstad's home in Bel Air. Auxiliary members and friends of the College are invited to attend. Please call for details if you wish to do so: 472-6152 or 986-1439.

WINTER LECTURES ANNOUNCED

The regular Friday evening lecture series will be continued during the spring semester. The following are some of the speakers:

February 4	Dr. Elmer Gelinas
	"Socrates and the Existentialist"
	Professor of Philosophy
	St. Mary's College of California

February 11 Fr. Barnabas Hughes, O.F.M.
 "The Beginnings of Geometry
 and Greek Analysis"
 Professor of Mathematics
 San Fernando Valley State College

February 18 Dr. Richard Berquist
 "Law as an Expression of Freedom"
 Professor of Philosophy
 College of St. Thomas,
 St. Paul, Minnesota

February 25 Father Martin D'Arcy, S.J.
 "Changes in Theology"
 Author, Lecturer

March 3 Dr. Russell Kirk
 "Reviving the Moral Imagination"
 Syndicated columnist, Editor,
 Essayist

March 10 Mr. Hamish Fraser
 "The Magisterium and Social Doctrine"
 Editor --Approaches

April 14 Dr. George Tennyson
 Poetry Readings
 Professor of English
 U.C.L.A.

RAGGED IN SPIRIT

THOMAS A. MCGOVERN, S.J.

Institutions denominated Catholic Liberal Arts College once dotted this green land of ours. In recent years not only have schools of this type tended to disappear but the very title itself is scarcely heard in our land. Indeed at a meeting last spring to revise the curriculum in one of those schools that was formerly Catholic and Liberal Arts, it was proposed that the "liberal arts" be ignored altogether since no one knows what the phrase means anyway. Moreover, no one can because, it was said, the term is meaningless; in proof of which was offered the omission of any discussion thereof in the Encyclopedia Britannica.

However cynical and skeptical current educational opinion may be regarding the liberal arts, Thomas Aquinas College is insistent in all its literature on identifying itself unequivocally as a Catholic Liberal Arts College. Moreover, this identification rests, on the part of its founders, on a rather clear understanding of just what the phrase "liberal arts" means, of the purpose of an education in these disciplines, and of its irreplaceable and indispensable character.

Actually, "liberal" in the context is derived from the Latin adjective liber, meaning free, and the denomination was from the end of such a program: a course of studies could rightly be denominated "liberal" if it consisted of a body of truths knowledge of which was calculated to make a man free and without which he could not be free.

The idea implied by this designation is, of course, that human freedom depends on knowledge. If this appears startling in an age when we are so insistent on freedom as a birthright of all men, then let us recall that Christ, our Lord, explicitly stated this same correlation. On one occasion, speaking to "those Jews who believed in Him," He declared, "...you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8/31). Between being wise and being free there is a causal connection.

The Jews appeared puzzled by the words of Christ. As "children of Abraham," they "never had been slaves to any man;" they already were free. Infinite Wisdom knew this. He also knew that, according to one meaning of the word free, all men are so: all are endowed with an intelligence with which we can judge what is good and a will with which we can, with no compulsion from within or without, adhere to the objects of these judgments. But He also knew that there is another meaning of the word according to which freedom is neither an endowment native to all, nor the aim and effect of any political system, but a value unattainable without knowledge of the truth. The ancient coiners of the phrase "artes liberales" knew the same.

Freedom we claim for man alone among the beings of this natural world and what it means for man to be free emerges more clearly when we compare ourselves with the other beings that compose this material universe: of all, man is the only one that is self-directed.

Each individual being of the sub-human world has as its goal its own material perfection, and through this, the contribution it can make to the order of the universe and, ultimately to man's good. The actions, or means, by which it is to attain its end are pre-fixed by, and contained in, its own inner nature; to attain its goal, it needs to know nothing.

But, in our own case, to be free means to be self-directed. For us, too, the ultimate end is predetermined. But we, through the judgements of our intelligence and the options of our wills, must direct our own activities to that end. In this way, the free man is he who can rightly direct his own activities to his end. Freedom, so taken, is man's singular privilege; it also implies awesome dangers and responsibilities. It was freedom so understood that Divine Wisdom had in mind when He declared "the truth shall make you free." Freedom, so taken, lies also behind the phrase artes liberales.

The Jews by their response to Christ-- "We have never been slaves to any man.." showed that they recognized the contrareity between freedom and slavery. If they are not yet free, then they must be slaves; if knowledge of the truth is requisite for freedom, then ignorance implies, in some sense of the word, slavery.

Anyone who has ever owned an automobile while knowing nothing of its parts and their workings, is aware of a certain slavery; being unable to judge himself, he is at the mercy of any mechanic whose word and services he depends on. And so it is in all particular matters; knowledge always brings some freedom with it.

The situation is similar regarding the most general and most important matter of all - the ultimate end. In this matter also ignorance means slavery. The man ignorant of the most fundamental and basic truths is unable to judge and is at the mercy of error and sophistry. Moreover, the pull of the lower appetites is mighty and unless he sees quite clearly good reasons for controlling them, he will be a slave to them, rather than self-directed.

To liberate himself from such slavery as this, a man must know some truth. This knowledge is not provided by nature; it is hard to come by. This notion is implicit in the words of Christ, and the body of disciplines that constitute this knowledge is what is known as the artes liberales.

Since the truly free man must be able to direct his own activities to the end, he must, of course, first know both that end itself and then, in general, what kinds of activities are conducive to that end, and what are not; this, of course, is the scope of ethics. But to the extent that all this depends on a thorough knowledge of human nature, what we call philosophy of man is an essential part. To be free, man must know himself. Thus, in general, what we have come to label philosophy today ranks as major in the liberal arts program. This is not just another course offered by a college, to be placed on the same level with all the others, but is rather, in a sense, the course, since it is here that is contained that knowledge most necessary for freedom, and as most

necessary, most basic and fundamental for man. In fact, the very question itself, "What should be taught in the schools?" is one to which only a solid philosophy can provide a right answer.

Since man is material body as well as soul, complete knowledge of that same nature includes as well what today we call the natural sciences.

To the extent that good literature touches on the same questions that philosophy does, but in a fashion more imaginative and more enjoyable, but less formal, less scientific, and less conclusive, but none the less uplifting and ennobling, the ancients always saw this as a necessary part of the liberal arts program - an indispensable propaedeutic to philosophy. In general, since the appreciation of the beautiful disposes for truth and virtue both, the fine arts have their proper place early in the liberal arts program.

Christ, our Lord, in the passage quoted earlier in this article, informed the Jews that He had come that they might know the truth that would make them free. There is, in other words, a body of truth that man could not know had He not come. This is the truth which is both revealed and beyond the reach of man's unaided reason, and this is the subject matter of supernatural theology. Such knowledge God Himself deemed essential for human freedom and so revealed it; let no man call it irrelevant.

If a liberal education is thus one calculated to contribute to man's genuine freedom, then this is, in a general and incomplete sort of way, what it should embrace. Most men see only proximate goals - more accurately, perhaps, only one proximate goal, material well-being - and it is such that they envision as the end of education. The effect of education for such goals as these can be good technicians, good economy, good health, and material prosperity, but not genuinely free men.

President Nixon, in his inaugural address, described our nation thus: "We find ourselves rich in goods, but ragged in spirit; reaching with magnificent precision for the moon, but falling into raucous discord on earth." Whether the president sees any connection between our educational system in general, and this spiritual raggedness, he does not say. Certainly others do. An education that fails to perfect the spirit must certainly leave it ragged.