

Editorial

ON PLAGIARISM

Among the academics (sic) here at UPEI there is a common agreement that an act of plagiarism on the part of a student (or anyone) is in very bad taste, warranting a severe reprimand (lecture on honesty) or dismissal from the institution. It is thought to be wrong because it indicates that one is either too lazy to do original (or honest) work, or that one is attempting to obtain some measure of praise or glory for "impressive" ideas not one's own. What gives rise to this situation?

We would have to begin with the early Greek thinkers; most notably, Plato & Aristotle. Both thinkers gave rise to a mode of thought which has dominated Western civilization for 2500 years. St Augustine (neo - Platonist) and, especially St. Thomas Aquinas, (neo - Aristotlian) among a host of other, lesser, disciples, have cultivated and integrated Idealism (Plato) and Classical Realism (Aristotle) into man and his history. In the case of Aquinas and Aristotle, reason was thought to be the highest, most sublime phen-

omenon in the universe. Matter was thus subjected to mind -- the ideal philosopher was he who could denounce the heavy world of matter -- things, the desires, etc. (witness the lone monk in his cell devoting his life to thought!). This duality between mind and matter is still prominent today!

However, academic activity was, and still is, the most important function because it is (was) thought to be the sole guide for human progress. An error could be dangerous.

It became (especially among academics) quite respectable to denote oneself the task of developing and refining ideas; and it did (does) not matter whether you are from a foreign culture and thus used to a different proxis; if you know the basic principles of this thought you can participate. Meanwhile, the realm of practical activity is either ignored or is expected to conform to metaphysical principles. When reason is dominant & not seen as integral to practice -- indeed, dependent upon practice -- it is then easy for 2,500 year old thought to still be

dominant today!!

In the case of a student whose thought is an attempt to reflect the concrete reality, there can be no plagiarism, since it is truth (not a person) he emulates not some philosopher in an ivory tower. He cannot be accused of plagiarism because there is no one to object to his thought being used -- as if anyone had a monopoly on a thought! He cannot cheat because there is no one on whom he can cheat. Reality cannot be cheated successfully

because unless his thought is brought into conformity with reality, it will be exposed for what it is -- wrong!! So, no one else need worry whether or not he is cheating; if he is, he will be exposed indubitably!

Furthermore, in this competitive society where thoughts can be bought and sold like any other commodity, the impetus to plagiarize -- like the impetus to steal -- is created by this very same society. Success is a highest goal, alongside money and status and, since someone must fail in order for another to succeed, plagiarism is inevitable for he who has not the natural ability but has internalized the "need" to succeed -- (an internalization created by this competitive, capitalist society). Education on Prince Edward Island (like the rest of North America) creates the very problems it seeks to overcome -- intellectual dishonesty, bad citizenship, alcoholism, crime, general and definite unhappiness in all.

My fellow students: if someone else's thought is of purpose to you in your genuine growth and development, then use it -- and forget the footnote! (Mind you, I do not mean to imply that a lazy student arbitrarily use quotations to get higher marks or a degree -- it must be thoughts that are helpful to your own in your own development and personal destiny).

If you're going to play the System's game, then use the System's rules. If, however, you come to see that you must live in accordance to concrete reality, then you must use the rules of concrete reality.

All problems manifest today (e.g., the oil crisis) are traced to man's refusal to live in accordance with the totality of concrete reality. We have not as yet become sufficiently secure to go beyond the Greeks!

Stan Dalton

Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor,

I would like to respond to your statements about Christianity which appeared in the Jan. 22 edition of the Cadre.

Christianity does not teach that all men are inherently evil and must not engage in political or liberating activities. On the

contrary, Christianity teaches that man is the highest of all God's creation. Man is the only created being that is destined to share in the life of God himself. "You have made him a little less than the angels." (Ps. 8)

The whole point of Christ's coming was to liberate man; to make him free. Every Christian is called to this freedom and to help free his brothers and sisters. Yes, men are sinners because we have not always responded to the high expectations Christ has for us. Nevertheless, the basic message of Christianity is liberation; liberation from our own sin and apathy and a call to get involved in liberating all peoples.

If we root out the doctrines that Christianity has taught us, we will find that they are very human because they call us great heights of freedom and dignity. "...the world itself will be freed from its slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God." (Rom. 8:21)

Maureen Larkin