

GADFLY

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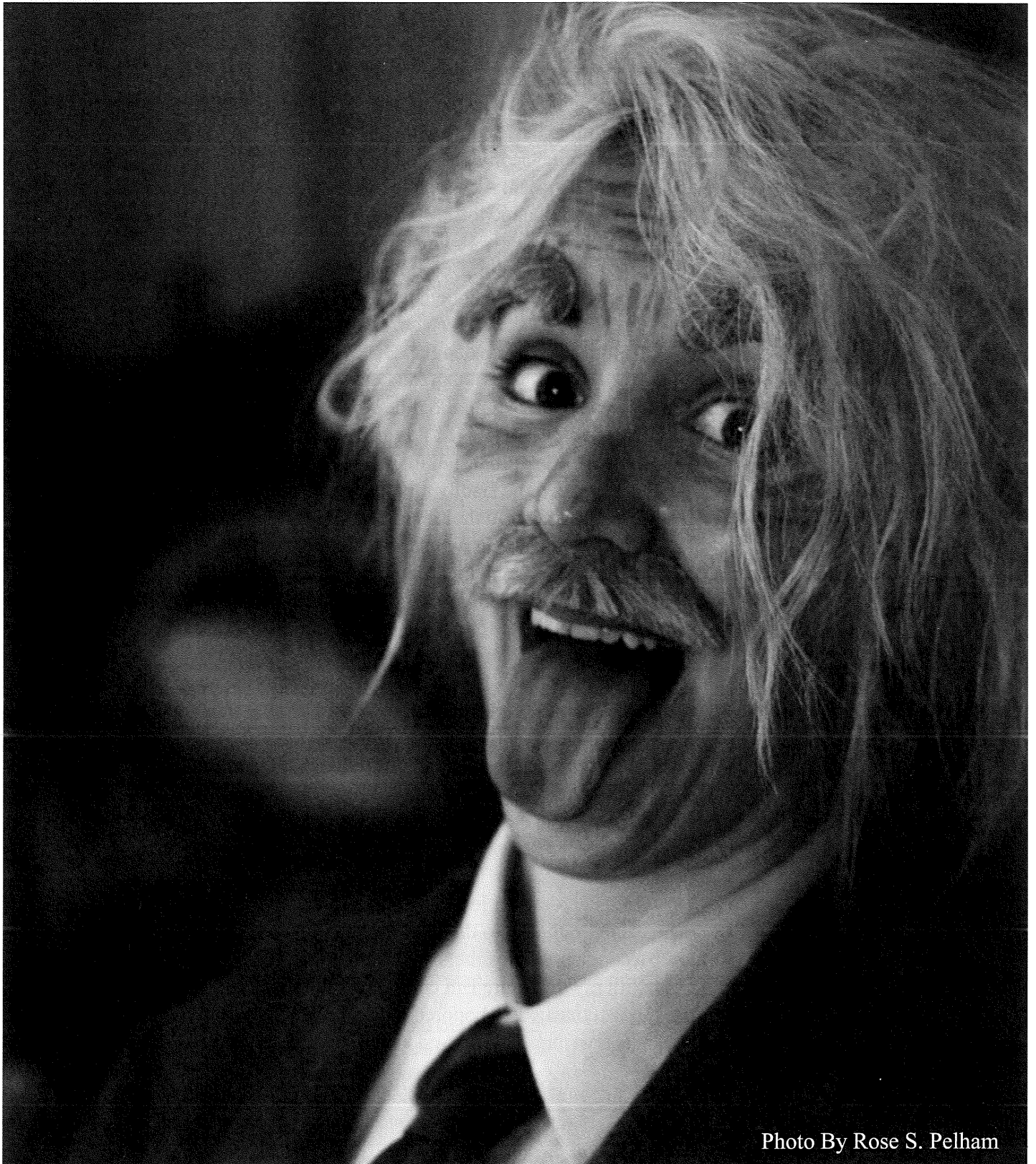


Photo By Rose S. Pelham

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER
OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

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Founded in 1980, the Gadfly is the student newsmagazine distributed to over 600 students, faculty, and staff of the Annapolis campus.

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The Gadfly meets every other Sunday at 7 PM in the BBC. We always need editors, layout designers, illustrators, and organizers. Contact us at sjca.gadfly@gmail.com for more information.

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From the Editors:

Dear Polity,

As some of you may know, this will be my last Gadfly issue as editor-in-chief. Ordinarily, I would cite senioritis as the reason for my departure — or at the very least Hegel — but the truth is that being editor-in-chief of the Gadfly was never part of my plan. As a wide-eyed freshman, I came to staff meetings thinking only about being a regular contributor. But as luck would have it, the entire staff that year — Ian Tuttle, Nathan Goldman, and Hayden Pendergrass — was about to graduate, and the paper would die if new people didn't take over. I agreed to learn Adobe Indesign in order to help keep the Gadfly alive the following year. In their final months, the seniors removed our training wheels and gave us a push. Before the end of the year, it was already apparent that then-sophomore Allison Tretina and I were effectively the only ones keeping the paper alive. This made us, by default, its co-editors-in-chief: something I (and, I'm sure, she) had never expected or necessarily wanted to be.

That being said, I'm glad that I've been able to help keep this paper alive as long as I have. I've also been able to make a few key changes in order to bring the Gadfly into the 21st Century. Most importantly, I redid our budgeting so that we could afford multiple copies of Adobe Indesign for the Gadfly staff, which has already cut down our production meetings from 4-6 hours down to 2-3 hours.

As I step down, I leave the paper in capable new hands. Our team is larger, thanks to the recruitment efforts of managing editor Kira Anderson. Its members are efficient, dedicated, and dynamic, and with my departure I'm confident that the Gadfly will enter a glorious new dynasty. I'm honored to have done my part to make this possible. Keep writing, Polity. And keep reading.

Your last-time editor-in-chief,
Sebastian Barajas

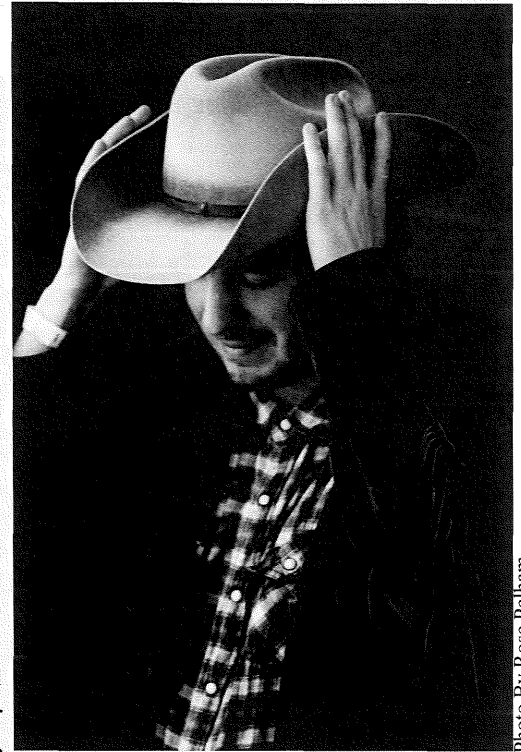


Photo By Rose Pelham

Reply to "Core"

Wesley Sonheim A'17

In general, I am of the opinion that people ought not date at all, as marriage is far more effective than dating at evoking long lasting havoc, discord, pain, madness, messiness, confusion, strife, and (what is the same as these) love. Knowing myself to be the member of the minority in this moment, I defer to the authorities on the matter. Mr. Ben Haas has made his position on the dating of members within one's own core very clear. I know of two occasions where he has said this explicitly: 1) in the introductory email alerting the Polity of his new column, and 2) as the first warning given to a poor soul about to "make an approach". (Exactly what sort of approach remains unclear, but I hope it went okay for everyone involved.) On both occasions, Mr. Haas's advice has been 'don't', presented by-the-way as one of those unprovable maxims of which societies are so fond. I will not question the veracity of this assumption at this time. Let us assume with Mr. Haas that dating a core member is a very bad idea.

While I will not question the maxim, I do wish to disagree with the explanation. Says Mr. Haas, "...but it's just really important that you don't have a falling-out with someone you see every day." I must protest. In my experience the only cure for awkwardness, disagreement, disillusionment, &c. has been to spend time with the offending object. In my experience, the surest way to get angrier at and more hurt by a person is to stew within oneself fearfully. Human relationships are based on contact between people; one cannot fix problems by cutting off interaction. On the contrary; it is always best to move on by moving forwards. In my opinion, the only way to deal with a falling-out is to rebuild, and rebuilding is only possible if one is given proper materials. Painful as it may be, core-mates are perhaps most likely to achieve healthy relationships following the splintering of romances.

Yet we still hold onto the maxim. Why, then, should core-romances be avoided? The answer is simple and counter-intuitive. Think about this rationally; if lovers are in core, they will have all of their classes together. They will be encouraged to do homework together. They will likely eat together, they will dance together, read together, and sing together. Some (unfortunately enough) will even end up sleeping together. All of this time in each-other's presence heightens romance and creates a homogenization of souls and energy all twisted together into a knot, reciprocal and incestuous, which rolls into itself and feeds itself with itself self-wise, until work and friends and love and family and place are all horribly and inseparably mixed. Individuality ceases, action becomes indistinguishable from inaction, history stops, moments merge, the sky melts into grass, linens turn into tarps. Without realizing, core-lovers find themselves a fiendish congealed knot of gluey tangle, incapable of sight and thought. If we as a Polity were to allow romance between coremates, we would be forced to share class with hideous and incomprehensible soulless monsters; those which occur when two people attempt to become one thing. ♦

Ben Haas Answers

On Shared Watching, Farewells, and Technology

I have a few questions. And I a few answers.

What should I watch on Netflix? *Luke Cage*, *Road to El Dorado*, and *Xena the Warrior Princess*, among entirely too many other things.

How should I pick what I watch on Netflix? While I tend to watch TV while writing out Greek, there are those who like to focus completely on the media they're consuming. Some people even like to learn things! If you're one of those, check out some of the more popular documentaries: *Blackfish*, *She's Beautiful When She's Angry*, and *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* all come highly recommended. If you're totally indecisive, though. There's always whatthellshouldiwathtonetflix.com, a very smoothly designed method of procrastination.

How should that decision-making process be altered by the presence of a friend or lover?

I generally try to agree beforehand on something to watch if I'm not specifically showing someone something. If you're not the type to share your guilty pleasures, maybe clear your Netflix queue before inviting someone over.

Is it important that we watch something that neither of us has seen? Not at all! Sometimes the best date is watching something you both know you love. There is always something to be said for a new shared experience, though.

If one of us has seen something and is essentially showing the other, does custom dictate that we alternate roles (like splitting a check)? That's my policy. Someone shows you *Star Trek: Voyager*, you show them *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and everyone goes home happy! If you're hanging out with someone who hasn't watched a lot of TV, though, it might behoove you to sound out their preferences through a wider and shallower approach to media.

What's the best way to say goodbye to someone you care about?

That is such a deeply personal question, I'm not certain if I can answer it satisfactorily or with the level of respect it deserves. I could take you to mean how do you say goodbye to someone you know you'll see again, but I'm suspecting that's not the case. Most recently, I said goodbye to someone I had cared about for a long time - there was neither pomp nor circumstance, but an ending of a friendship. The best way, if possible, is to say goodbye on even terms. If that's not possible, then a goodbye that leaves you feeling resolved is the best you can get. Tie up loose ends, try to get to a point where you're comfortable knowing you won't see them again. It's not an easy process, but it's a necessary one, sometimes. The hardest part is doing what you know is best for you, even if it's not best for them. Basically, take care of yourself over everything else, and you'll be OK.

How do you feel about taking a laptop class?

I'm seeing more this year people using tech in class, and while it seemed disruptive at first, my classmates and I have gotten used to the occasional iPad or laptop. An entire classfull, though, seems different - speaking only for myself, I find I can only focus entirely on reading off a screen or listening to someone talk, so following a discussion would be nigh-impossible. There may be something to be said for the ability to refine one's points by writing out and reading through quickly before making them, but if the benefit is enough to warrant bringing something other than your book, why not carry a notebook and work on your handwriting at the same time? ♦

The Last Don Rag

Scott Buchanan Founder

One of the founders of the New Program, Scott Buchanan, served as Dean of St. John's from 1937 through 1946. These remarks were made on May 31, 1958, at a party held in Briarcliff Manor, N.Y. in honor of Buchanan and Stringfellow ("Winkie") Barr, the co-founders of the New Program:

This occasion reminds me of an occasion some twelve years ago when Winkie and I were leaving St. John's. There was a farewell party given us by the students. Some of you may remember, some money had been collected and put on deposit with the bookshop, a fund for books on which we could draw if we got lonesome. We were each given a token book and we had to make little farewell speeches. It was a very moving occasion for us, and particularly for me because I casually opened to the first page of my book and read it: "Tell me, O muse, of the man of many devices, who wandered full many ways after he sacked the sacred citadel of Troy. Many were the men whose cities he saw and whose mind he learned, aye, and many the woes he suffered in his heart upon the sea, seeking to win his own life and the return of his comrades."

I have recalled this omen many times in the last ten years, particularly when I run into a St. Johnnie or two and in no time at all a conversation springs up, like fresh water from an old spring, in a world where there are fewer and fewer conversations. These years, as Winkie has just said, have been years of wandering and searching. I think we have returned to Ithaca many times, and yet have found that Ithaca is no longer Ithaca. You will remember that Odysseus finally was advised "to take an oar on his shoulder and travel with it until he found people who would not know it was an oar and would take it for a threshing flail." That has happened too. I am just now invited to a conference on educa-

tion next week, where the leaders of the discussion are to be Sidney Hook and Ernest Nagle and some so-called educators. They apparently think that I belong to that curious modern tribe who have never known the liberal arts. For a few minutes I want to stage a little tableau for you, a composite oral examination and don rag.

I have some questions I want to ask you, questions for St. John's graduates and questions for American citizens. As I understand the questions, one leads to another, and they all add up to: How are you doing? The first question is: Do you believe in and trust your intellect, that innate power that never sleeps? This is not a theoretical nor a dogmatic question, but rather one of experience. Do you recognize the action of this power as you live and learn? Many of you have gone on to graduate and professional learning, and, I happen to know, many of you have lived a lot in addition. You have fallen into the hands of scholars and into the grooves of practice. You have suffered the winds of doctrine, and have gotten lost in the jungle of ideologies. Latterly you have been stormed by scientific miracle and guess. In all these learnings and practices have you listened to the small spontaneous voice within that asks continually if these things are true?

Have you allowed this voice to speak louder and remind you that you do not know, that you know you do not know, that you know what you do not know? Do you believe that knowledge is possible, that truth is attainable, and that it is always your business to seek it, although evidence is overwhelmingly against it? This is the first question; I shall not just now press for an answer.

The second question seems to flow from the first. Have you, in the course of your life, before, after, or while you were at St. John's, become your own teacher? Perhaps this is not quite the

question that I intend. This may be better: Have you yet recognized that you are and always have been your own teacher? Amidst all the noise and furor about education in this country at present, I have yet to hear this question raised. But it is basic. Liberal education has as its end the free mind, and the free mind must be its own teacher. Intellectual freedom begins when one says with Socrates that he knows that he knows nothing, and then goes on to add: I know what it is that I don't know. My question then is: Do you know what you don't know and therefore what you should know? If your answer is affirmative and humble, then you are your own teacher, you are making your own assignment, and you will be your own best critic. You will not need externally imposed courses, nor marks, nor diplomas, nor a nod from your boss ... in business or in politics.

My third question is different from the first two, more superficial perhaps, but fateful, nevertheless. Under the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, have you persuaded yourself that there are knowledges and truths beyond your grasp, things that you simply cannot learn? Have you allowed adverse evidence to pile up and force you to conclude that you are not mathematical, not linguistic, not poetic, not scientific, not philosophical? If you have allowed this to happen, you have arbitrarily imposed limits on your intellectual freedom, and you have smothered the fires from which all other freedoms arise. Most of us have done this and come short of what that threadbare slogan, human dignity, really means. We are willing, and shamefully relieved, to admit that each has his specialty, his so-called field, and the other fellow has his, and we are ready to let the common human enterprise go by default. We are willing to become cripples in our minds and fractions of men in our lives. Some

Continued on page 5

of us are willing to crush the Socratic formula and say, I know nothing. The fourth question: Do you accept the world? This is reminiscent of Margaret Fuller's Yeasaying to Carlyle: "But I do accept the universe, Mr. Carlyle." I am thinking of a slightly different context in the Brothers Karamazov, when Ivan tells Alyosha that he finds it easy to believe in God, but that he finds it impossible to believe in the world. The second clause follows from the first in a crushed syllogism: Because he believes in God, he cannot accept the world. For most of us these days, the case is that we have believed in some things so weakly or fanatically that other equally or more real things have become absurd or impossible. This results from our crippled minds, our self-imposed limits on understanding, our deafness to the voice that asks: Is it true? I am persuaded that the cure for this sickness of mind is in some vigor-

ous and rigorous attempt to deal with that most puzzling and mysterious idea, the idea of the world.

It is not a simple idea, nor even a merely complicated idea. Kant called it an antinomy, an idea of speculative reason governing all other uses of the intellect. There have been other such ideas that have governed thought, the idea of God or Being as it puzzled and dazzled the ancient world, the idea of Man as it stirred and fermented the world from the Renaissance on. God and Man have not disappeared as charts and aids to intellectual navigation, but they are in partial eclipse at present, and the world is asking us the big questions, questions in cosmology and science, questions in law and government. They are not merely speculative questions; they are concrete and immediately practical; they are as much matters of life and death and freedom as the old questions were.

Most of us have made, with Ivan, a pact with the devil, an agreement not to face them and accept them — yet.

I am not going to mark you on any attempt you may make to answer these questions here today; we don't mark at St. John's. But I would guess that none of us, certainly including myself, would stand very high, if we tried. Perhaps we ought rather to ask whether these are valid questions. If they are valid, they may come somewhere near indicating a standard by which we judge our common intellectual life, and therefore our common education in this country. I myself think the questions are valid, and I draw a drastic consequence, namely that we need a national system of education, from university to kindergarten, from federal to local, and that it should aim at the intellectual confidence which would dare to act freely and go wherever it pleases, wherever it ought to go. ♦

Outside The Bubble: Thai King

M. E. Hommel A '18

On October 13, 2016, King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand died. The king's health had been in slow decline for some time, with extensive hospital visits the previous month. Bhumibol is remembered as a fatherly figure to many Thai people as the only monarch they have ever known.

He acceded to the throne in 1946 in the aftermath of the Japanese occupation during World War II. Bhumibol ruled over more than 20 prime ministers and many constitutional changes, political crises and a dozen attempted or successful military coups. He also helped the country navigate the terrors of the Vietnam War during the 1960s and 70s.

His death was announced to the thousands of people who had, for days, gathered at Bangkok's Siriraj Hospital where the king was being treated. Many in the crowd prayed, sang the royal anthem and repeatedly shouted, "long live the king." They were dressed predominantly in pink, an auspicious color believed to restore health, and yellow, which is the color of the king. "Some outside the hospital said they didn't know where else to go for comfort," reports CNN.

In that aftermath of King Bhumibol's

death the prime minister of Thailand, Prayut Chan-o-cha, urged people to be vigilant for national security. "Everyone will need to be alert in every region and throughout the country to ensure safety," he said. He also urged citizens to remain calm, for the sake of the country's stability, and said soldiers would be stationed in "every area throughout the kingdom" to boost security. "Do not let anyone seek an advantage during this time of crisis." Meanwhile the public started a process of mourning that will last a year, a public holiday was announced, the flags of Thailand would be lowered for 30 days, and people were asked not to host any major celebrations for the next 30 days and to wear black for the next year.

The political instability many analysts fear that will come in the coming years is a result of the loss of the beloved monarch's unifying power with the Thai people. The King's portrait is everywhere: hotel lobbies, public offices, schools and many homes. King Bhumibol's use of his image skillfully put the monarchy at the center of Thai society, acting as a consistent central force for community and tradition.

The king's only son and named successor, however, Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn is seen by many as a playboy, living a jet-setter lifestyle in Europe. Many Americans may remember the skit the comedian John Oliver did in 2014. The reputation of the Crown Prince has many analysts speculating that the 2014 military coup may have been an effort to tighten its grip on the government before his accession and ensure a smooth transition. In the absence of a king, Prem Tinsulanonda, a former prime minister and the leader of the powerful Privy Council, will serve as regent pro tempore.

The military has already solidified their political power: in August the Thai people voted on a constitution, authored by the military, which "reduces the power of political parties and gives the military the authority to appoint members of the senate," reports the New York Times; whether that will, in fact, stabilize the country and safely allow the transfer of power over to Prince Vajiralongkorn next year sometime, we shall see. ♦

You Are What You Eat

Claire Racette A'17

Every once in awhile at St. John's, you come across an idea or write a paper that truly changes your life. This happened to me during my Sophomore year; my language tutor assigned us a paper on any story in Genesis. On a whim, I chose the story of Noah and had no idea what I would write on until the strangeness of these two lines hit me, "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood" (Genesis 9:3-4). After the flood, Man is allowed to eat meat.

My language tutor patiently helped me imagine the horror that greeted Noah and his family when they stepped off the arc; carcasses of both animals and humans, bloated with salt water, half decomposed, rotting in the newly appeared sun. This was what Man was offered as food. Man, having corrupted his nature and having turned to violence, had to eat the product of that violence. In fact, it was offered as a privilege. As if the horror of the scene was not enough, God instructs Noah to drain the blood of the animals before eating them. Now, instead of going into the field and picking a tomato off of the vine, people could choose to gear up for a hunt, take the life of an animal, watch as the draining blood pooled at their feet, skin the animal, prepare it, and they were left with a pile of bones. With this process, it seems impossible to ignore the mortality that life demands. The blood and bones left over after

the meat has been consumed are just like my blood and bones. What makes my body more worthy than the one I just destroyed in order to nurture myself? This realization, and the questions that came with it, hit me like a brick wall and have consumed my thoughts for the past two years. That saying "you are what you eat" has never felt more real.

I had to come to terms with the fact that I, as a thriving being, was single handedly accountable for the end of hundreds of lives; plant and animal alike. I cannot stop eating altogether and I cannot eat rocks and dirt, but I can find a way to eat and live responsibly and respectfully. All of a sudden, after realizing that by eating I deemed my life "worth" the lives that I was taking, there was a lot of pressure to be good and live well – to actually make my life worth it. Although this is difficult to remember all of the time, it does give me something to strive for and a very frightening consequence should I stop striving.

Not only was I inspired to be better and to make my life worth the sacrifice of my food, but I was inspired to try my hardest to have a relationship with the things that were giving their lives to me. The summer after my Sophomore year I interned at a farm. There I was surrounded by the vibrancy and joy of life, but saw too that behind all of it was the death of something else. By covering our greens to keep them healthy and safe from the pests, we were also robbing the cabbage moths of their much needed food source.

The compost that helped our produce grow so strong was just the extracted nutrients from the fruits and vegetables that were not so lucky to have spread their seed or made it into someone's stomach. This "circle of life" seemed so natural and inevitable to me that it seemed more appropriate to be respectful of it than saddened by it. All of my time and energy spent on the farm, and every sore muscle became a sort of sacrifice on my part to the plants I was helping grow, a testament to my care for their well being. It was my way of trying to give back to Nature what it gave to me.

Although it is difficult to maintain this relationship without a working farm, I feel lucky to live on a campus with the space for a garden and with peers enthusiastic enough to help care for it. Every other Saturday morning, Farm Club* meets at the garden behind the tennis courts to plant, weed, water, and discuss how our harvest should be used. Although this biweekly labor may not fulfill that self-sacrifice I felt while working on the farm, it is something. It serves as a nice reminder that the clean, packaged produce you see in the grocery store comes out of the dirt. It was alive, it grew, and it died so that its life could be passed on.

*If you want to develop your relationship with your food and the Earth, come to Farm Club on Saturday mornings between 10am and 12pm! We meet at the garden behind the tennis courts ♦

Safety Corner

Did you know that on October 20th, people in our region participated in the Great South East Shake Out by acting out "Drop, Cover, and Hold On?" This was an earthquake drill, which is simple to do and takes all of two minutes to complete.

Earthquakes may happen anywhere you live, work, or travel, and we are not immune in Annapolis, as we found out a few years ago when an earthquake hit in the region. It is important that you know the procedure to react appropriately during an earthquake.

"Drop, Cover, and Hold On" is how you should respond as you may only have seconds to protect yourself in an earthquake before strong shaking knocks you down or something falls on you. Once the shaking stops, get out of the building you are occupying and stand away from the exterior of the building. After an earthquake, you may encounter aftershocks, which can still cause damage and injuries, so stand way back from buildings to ensure you aren't struck by falling debris that may have weakened or shaken loose during an earthquake.



Why I'm Against Progress

Matthew Manotti A'18

Whether you like it or not, history is on our side. We will bury you!" — Nikita Khrushchev, Soviet Premier, 1956

Progress is more of a buzzword than anything with substance. It is easy to read history as a giant sweep from ignorance to knowledge, from barbarism to civilization. In some subjects, this view is viable. Math and sciences both have noticeably moved from darkness into light. We now know more about the natural world than our ancestors did, and we have more technology which can save us time and energy. However, when Obama, quoting Martin Luther King, says "the arc of the universe bends towards justice," he is not speaking of the arc of science. Obama is expressing a belief that the natural process of human civilization moves towards what is good and right. Not only are our cars better than they were before, but our civilization is better — our citizens are better people than the Ancient Romans.

There is quite a bit to this idea; it has in it a destructive process. If we are to find truth, we must first be skeptical of those untruths which we have so long accepted according to tradition. It is this that drives Descartes to doubt his teachers at the beginning of *Discourse on Method*. In order to make progress towards discovering clear and certain truth, he must tear himself down only to what he is most certain of. Only then can he build a better structure and a better system of knowledge than he had before. Much of the Renaissance and Enlightenment is built on this principle. Hobbes, when constructing his political thought, does so brick by brick. Like Descartes, he doubts the ancient idea that man is a political animal and from a series of definitions which he states clearly at the beginning of the text. His state is a creation of human rationality, not of human

instinct. In order to move towards truth, we must carefully reexamine that which we think is true, for fear that it may be false.

The question at hand is if man's nature can change and progress in the same way that science progresses. Can man be remade from a carefully applied process of rationality into a creature that is more just? How you answer that will probably depend on how you read history. Within the last two hundred years, have we successfully applied this method in America — have we become a more rational nation? Some would say yes, we no longer needlessly limit people's freedom based on race, gender, or sexuality, though we still have quite a ways to go. I would argue that while we have improved as a nation in those ways, we have yet to make man more just. In the past century, we have fought two world wars, and came close to destroying ourselves on several occasions with nuclear weapons. We are no better than our ancestors and are just as capable of good and evil as they were. While it is true that some societies are better and more just than others, no society is eternal; they all end and whatever justice they promote ends with them. History has no arc, there is no end towards which man slowly progresses. Our technological progress is merely a progression of more efficient tools, and because our nature is independent of our environment, no change that those tools make in our environment can entirely dictate the line between good and evil that runs through all of our souls.

Not only am I skeptical of history's arc, I am also skeptical of the place towards which mankind is to progress. Progression implies an end. If a man were to run a race not knowing where the finish line might be, he may have run backwards from his destination for all he knows. If his end was an infinite ways away from his current position, then he could

never say that he progressed; only that he moved or changed from the position he was in before. I am, however, unsure of what that end goal of mankind might be. There are many utopias, dreamt by many thinkers. For some, that utopia may be a society in which all people are equal, for others a society in which all people are free. Two hundred years ago, colonialism was a progressive idea; the West was raising people out of barbarism into civilization. Today, that is out of style. Colonialism is regressive. Today, even the claim that our end is in Truth is unacceptable. Truth, at the hands of some philosophers and social scientists, is now a regressive idea and has been replaced with relativist truth.

Until there is an end to progress that defies all social whims and fashions, all that progressivism can do is destroy. Our traditions are torn down and painfully examined in the name of a radical skepticism which no set of criteria can permanently satisfy. The end of progress is destruction, good things are destroyed in order that better things may be built upon their ruins, yet those better things are themselves destroyed by the next generation caught in this same mindset. To quote an article from GK Chesterton, published in the *New York Times Magazine*, to be progressive is to "prefer Thursday to Wednesday because it is Thursday." (2/11/23)

If there is an alternative to progressivism, it is one of careful change. We do not know what is knowable, so it is best to keep things the way they are until events force our hand. Our society must always move towards justice, but it cannot let that empty phrase be an excuse for undoing institutions whose social effects cannot and will not be known for generations. We will walk, but cautiously, and with reverence towards the path that has already been trodden by our forefathers.



She Forces Herself To Laugh So It Will Seem Like She's Happy

◆ Knödl and the Overcoats

In certain situations, it does not matter whether the laughter is forced or not because it is socially necessary.

Is it bad? Yes.

But she's forcing herself to do it because she wants to.

She might as well force herself to do something that she likes.

SCI Minutes 9:22

Ripley Stroud A'17

On Thursday, September 22nd, over lunch in the Private Dining Room, the Student Committee on Instruction held their first academic forum of the school year! The topic was "What Is the Instructional Committee?" Dean MacFarland and Mr. Chester Burke were in attendance, two individuals intimately familiar with the I.C. A summary of the conversation is as follows.

Mr. Hettler ('18, co-chair of the SCI) opened the forum by emphasizing the **efficacy** of the actions and responsibilities of the SCI. Conversation then turned to asking the I.C. members to present questions about their duties.

Are tutors on the IC? — Yes, there are six tutors, with staggered terms, elected by the entire tutor body. The Dean and President also sit on this committee, although the President is mostly a listening position.

What is the relationship between the SCI and the IC? — The two committees meet once or twice a year. The SCI brings a list of forum topics and concerns of students, informing the IC of what they might change. Dean MacFarland suggested the analogous "class evaluation form" that exists at other colleges as a comparison to this meeting. He stressed that conversation was a superior tactic at SJCA over those of forms.

Mr. Donnelly ('17, senior class representative) asked *if tutors have questions in mind that they would like to be asked by students.*

Mr. Burke responded that freshmen inevitably have a lot of questions about the school — good ones, and very, very hard ones — and that students that are currently enrolled are likely to give better responses because of their recent hands-on experience.

At the end of the year, tutors have tried asking their classes general questions such as "What has gone well?" and "What hasn't?" but it is impossible to ensure that these will be entirely honest. It is believed that when students talk to their peers, there is a greater freedom felt to speak one's mind.

Mr. Hettler stated that the SCI's intention for this year is to keep their forum topics more **dynamic** and **relevant**.

Mr. Multhauf ('18, junior class representative) asked *if the I.C. has the sole executive power to make changes in the Program or if it is shared.* Dean MacFarland said that it depended on the scale. To switch something around in the Junior math manual would be the Dean and the I.C.'s responsibility. However, if there were to be a larger change, e.g. adding a fourth year of Laboratory or reordering the way mathematics was taught, an "Instructional Proposal" would have to be filed, which is classified as either Minor or Major, depending on if it affects just one campus, or two campuses.

The conversation then turned to the topic of the I.C. in Annapolis vs. the I.C. in Santa Fe,

and how they interact with one another. The question arose of how it might be possible to shrink the academic gap for transfer students — e.g., Maimonides is read only in Fe Sophomore year, which creates a particular issue for Spinoza seminars; Junior year, Maxwell is approached more mathematically in Fe, where in Annapolis there is more emphasis placed on his analogies.

Near the end of the forum, the group began to discuss how much power the I.C. has over tutors. For example, there are some tutors that have their Sophomore Language classes read Nietzsche's *Birth of a Tragedy* second semester, and there are some tutors that rearrange the Goethe reading in Freshman Laboratory. Does the I.C. have a final say in whether or not this is okay? It turns out that tutors have the jurisdiction to go pretty far astray from one another.

Several other questions were pursued, and they might become inspiration for forum topics down the line: *Why do Sophomore Language classes diverge so much from one another second semester?* How much does the IC pay attention to synchronization between separate classes? We on the SCI hope that the Polity continues to show a great turn-out for these forums! Please feel free to let Mssrs. Zachary Gold, Shane Hettler, and me, Ripley Stroud, any forum ideas you would like to see happen ♦

Description of St. John's by the Baron La Rochefoucauld Liancourt on his tour of North America

The college is another very considerable building. It has an endowment of five thousand dollars, which is raised by certain duties of the state, such as licences, fines, &c. but of the west part of Maryland only. There are a hundred scholars there, and it is said that the masters of it are very good. The English, the learned languages, the French, the mathematics as far as astronomy, some philosophy, and some common law, are taught there.

4

♦ Ivan Romanovich Syritsyn

As I lay my head down at night to sleep,
The memory of my day keeps me awake
By forcing me to think of what had been
And to relive each step that I would take.
Sometimes I know it's better not to speak

And so I wait and act a passerby.

When I do act, I plan for every kink
That nothing I will do may go awry.

Yet silent or in motion I remember
Each step I took to build my life each day.
Awake, I ponder them. Through dreams, I wander
And see how I'd have gone a different way.
How much I wish my life was like a game
That one could live, and choose, and try again.

The Descent of Debates

Nicholas Thorp A'20

For those prospective demolition-derby professionals, remember that you can always fall back on politics. At least this was my impression based on how dinged, dented, and destroyed the American Electoral System appears after the past three Presidential Debates. It has probably been the most exciting election cycle, with more October surprises than Trump can count on his two small hands (provided that he can even count that high). With all of these scandals, the debates descended from the hyperbolic “lesser of two evils” schtick into Beelzebub versus “literally Hitler.”

The first debate set the mood for the rest: loud and chaotic. Clinton lies with every other word out of her mouth, and Trump is too incompetent to respond. There are some that say that Trump lies more, often citing Politifact showing more than half of his statements to be false. This ignores the question of how nonpartisan Politifact has been on rating what either candidate says. Also, it ignores the nature of what each is saying. Trump, in the few times where what he says makes coherent sense, ignorantly says the verbal equivalent of chain-letters, not caring for any fact checking. Clinton, on the other hand, sifts through all of Trump’s professional history to find events that she can remove from context to accuse her opponent.

She brought up a forty-five-year-old case about Trump’s company racially discriminating, but left out how they maintained their innocence, that the evidence pointed

to specific lower-level employees, and that Trump counter-sued for false accusation. What she said was not technically false, but carefully worded in order to demonize her opponent and manipulate people into ignorantly voting for her. She would have to know all of the background information but doesn’t give it. To be fair, Trump was too incompetent to bring any of this up either.

Going into the second presidential debate, Clinton slacked on her preparation. With the release of the tape of Trump discussing his own sexual assault of women, Clinton seemed to think she didn’t need anything else. She was wrong. Trump apologized with a “locker room talk” excuse that his supporters could accept (not to say that it actually excused anything) and transitioned immediately to pointing out that Bill Clinton had been accused of sexually abusing several women. Four of them were brought to the debate by Trump leading to some quality screenshots of the former President’s shocked face. In addition to this, Trump was able to appear calmer than usual and was more prepared to discuss policy. Despite his best efforts, he still fumbled by making his same old absurd statements and incoherence. Clinton was the winner of the debate but not by enough for her trademark of smiling longer than is considered socially acceptable.

The final debate was Trump’s best performance. He was able to bring back his calmness from the previous debate and seeming prepared. He did a decent job of attacking Clinton, bringing up how her campaign (although not Clinton herself) had hired people to create fights at his rallies. He still lacks a lot in the policy department.

The biggest statement he made was refusing to officially accept the outcome until after the election. Knowing Trump, this means if he loses it isn’t because he doesn’t know the first thing about politics, but instead because it was “rigged” against him. Clinton jumped on him about how that shows his lack of faith in democracy. To be fair though, the Democratic Nominee in 2000, Al Gore, didn’t accept the outcome after a recount of the votes.

The main thing lacking in any of these debates, though, is actual policy. The few times foreign or domestic topics came up, they were answered vaguely without any background or explanation for the audience. Instead Trump and Clinton would ignore the question to talk about e-mails or tax returns. This isn’t entirely the fault of the candidates. The system of debates is set up with extremely short periods of time for them to answer incredibly complex questions. They barely have enough time to explain what the problem is, let alone how to actually solve it. The format is instead designed to get high ratings — they succeeded with four million more viewers than the previous record. However, this is at the expense of the average American voter who has to make a decision at the polls based on a very limited amount of knowledge. The people that end up on the ballot worked their way to the top not from their own knowledge of economics, sociology, or foreign relations, but because they looked the best while trying to talk about them. ♦

SPOTLIGHT ON THE GREENFIELD LIBRARY INTERLIBRARY LOAN REQUESTS

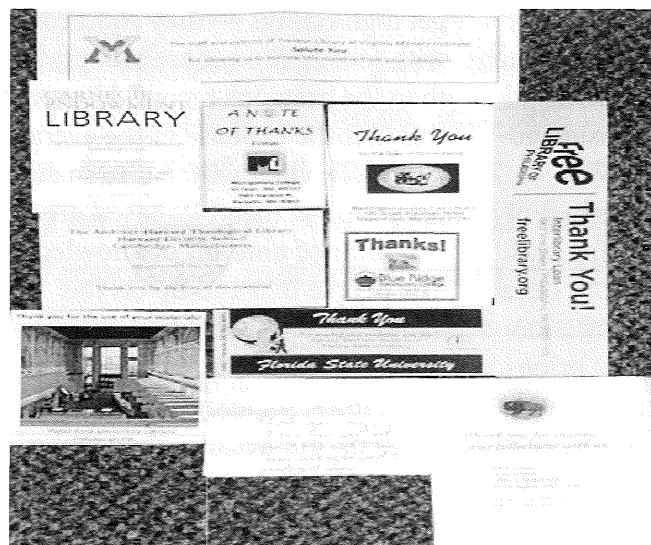
Elizabeth Akhvediani A'17

Dear Polity,
Let's all take a moment to appreciate the wide range of materials that the Greenfield Library offers. (Talk about all those banned classics we own that were on a display two weeks ago!) We have rich Western Philosophy and Great Books collections, but like everything else in this world, the Library is not perfect and owns only a portion of all materials published. To make up for the rest of the materials that we do not own, the Greenfield Library offers the interlibrary loan request service. This interlibrary loaning is the process through which the Greenfield Library borrows materials that are not part of the collection, from academic, public, and private libraries throughout the United States. The service is available to St. John's faculty, students, and staff. You may use the service to request a book or an article. Our Library staff will make a special effort to request music scores, DVDs and other educational material for you. Book requests usually take one to two weeks to arrive (scanned articles arrive typically in one to two days). Patrons can pick up requests at the Greenfield Library's circulation desk upon receiving notification; PDF versions of articles will be sent to patron's personal email address.

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Mike Pence is Truly Absurd

Rose Pelham A'20

Contrary to popular belief, Donald Trump is not, in fact, running for president. As the New York Times reported back in July, Trump intends to give the presidency to his running mate. More specifically, his vice president "would be in charge of foreign and domestic policy" while Trump would "[be in charge of] making America great again." Obviously, then, Trump would do nothing, but worry not, for if he were to win the election, Mike Pence would be in charge, and that man is actually worse than Trump, somehow.

Now, to be fair, Trump is not going to win the election. The probability of him doing so is now nearly equivalent to that of a student getting through all four years of St. John's without reading a single seminar book, which is to say not impossible but highly unlikely. At least, I would bet on the existence of unicorns, dragons and a host of other magical beasts before I would on a Trump presidency. But this all besides the point: in opposite land, where things fall up, and the U.S. is allied with a fully-clothed Vladimir Putin, Trump could win the election and crown Mike Pence king. So, in opposite land, what would be our new king be like? The answer is very strange, very strange indeed.

If his Wikipedia article is to be believed, Mike Pence entered politics in 1988 with a failed bid for congress, which he then followed up with another failed bid in 1990. The second time around he decided to use campaign contributions to pay his mortgage and for golf tournament fees. He had also decided to run a blatantly racist attack ad, depicting a man dressed in stereotypical middle-eastern garb and with a fake middle-eastern accent praising his opponent, a decision that did not help him either. Pence later apologized for attacking his opponent, but not for the racism or misuse of campaign funds. At this point, having likely been thoroughly dissuaded from any further attempts at gaining legitimate political power, he chose the next most politically powerful office to that of congressperson, and became a radio talk show host in 1993.

By 1998, Pence started to get weird again. By this I mean he went on an all-out pro-smoking crusade in an attempt at blocking any regulations on tobacco. According to the New York Times, in that year he called warnings on cigarette cartons "hysteria," and documents from as late as 2001 still exist on the Internet, permanently detailing the extent of his commitment to the cause. In an editorial titled "The Great American Smoke

Out,” Pence claimed: “Despite the hysteria from the political class and the media, smoking doesn’t kill. In fact, 2 out of every three smokers does not die from a smoking related illness and 9 out of ten smokers do not contract lung cancer.” In effect arguing that because smoking only kills at least a third of all smokers it can’t be that bad. I mean, only 17.7 million people died from smoking between 1964 and 2012 according to *Popular Science*. It’s not like any of them were my grandfather or anything. It’s not like I’m sore about it or angry with the Tobacco Industry as a whole for its deceptive practices resulting in the exploitation of millions of people for profit at the cost of a few million lives, that of my grandfather included. They were clearly acceptable losses, just “decreasing the surplus population of the Earth” as Scrooge would say. But I digress; to this date Pence has taken in \$100,000 in campaign contributions from cigarette companies, according to *Think Progress*, and I imagine that you can infer why. Then again, Pence’s support for tobacco is not the strangest position he has ever taken.

In 1999, during his pro-tobacco crusade, Pence was also trying to force women out of the military, by attacking *Mulan*, the Disney movie. As he wrote on his website: “For those who have not yet been victimized by the McDonald’s induced hysteria over this film, *Mulan* is a fictional account of a delicate girl of the same name who surreptitiously takes her father’s place in the Chinese army in one of their ancient wars against the Huns.” Did you think that was bad? Good, you have a conscious. But wait! The misogyny becomes even more palpable with the next sentence: “Despite her delicate features and voice, Disney expects us to believe that *Mulan*’s ingenuity and courage were enough to carry her

to military success on an equal basis with her cloddish cohorts.” Yes, Pence said that. No, he has never recanted that statement. And no, I’m not going to unpack it because it should be pretty obvious. Mike Pence just hates women; it’s there, the writing is on the wall, and has been for most of two decades. It has not been painted over, removed, or classified and blacked out by the CIA. The only reason it has not been brought up in the more mainstream media is that Trump, of course, has somehow managed to be worse, but unlike Pence, Trump will not be president even if he wins the election.

In 2000, Pence re-started his political career with a successful campaign for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. Although he would eventually become the third most powerful Republican in the House, his time there was distinguished by a unique brand of mediocrity owing to his inability to compromise and burning desire to de-regulate cigarettes that made it impossible for him to achieve anything. According to the *New York Times* he was in congress for 12 years, during which time “he introduced 90 bills and resolutions” and none passed. After his third term in congress, he was elected governor of Indiana, and stirred up a new, equally fruitless controversy.

In 2013, Mike Pence declared war on LGBTQIA+ people. He began by making it a felony for a same-sex couple to file for a marriage license. Any same-sex couple that applied for a marriage would face up to a year and a half in jail, and so would any clerk that agreed to grant them the license, according to *The New Civil Rights Movement’s* website. In that year, he also supported calls for a constitutional amendment in the state of Indiana permanently banning same-sex marriage. Then, to follow up on his radical anti-gay agenda, in 2015 he passed a law legalizing discrimination against same-sex couples, according to the *New York Times*. According

to the newspaper’s analysis of the bill, it would have allowed for businesses to deny queer people from getting service, potentially creating segregation along the lines of sexual orientation. This later law created a media firestorm, prompting a host of economic sanctions to fall upon the state from various companies. As the *New York Times* reports: “The national firestorm generated by the law was so fierce that sports leagues, trade groups and technology companies threatened to boycott Mr. Pence’s state, forcing him to revise the law in a compromise that infuriated both sides of the debate.” And this brings us back to the present.

So, in 2016, Donald Trump won his party’s nomination, and chose Mike Pence to be his VP. Pence was not his first choice, that was the avowed enemy of Trump, John Kasich, but he fit the qualifications that Trump laid out. Most importantly he didn’t outright refuse to join Trump’s doomed campaign, like so many other potential running mates had. Since then he has proved largely loyal to Trump and not without reason. As I wrote earlier, a Trump victory would go to Vice President, not the President. Thus far into the campaign we have little reason to believe that Trump is actually fit for office, simply upon a technical basis. Not only does he lack experience, he also seems to lack any detailed policy position whatsoever. Pence, by contrast, is a seasoned politician, albeit a reactionary and backward one. Pence, with all his pro-tobacco, anti-women, anti-queer dogmatism would become the de-facto president if Trump wins. In an age where the majority of the population has come to accept queer people as a part of daily life, women make up a significant proportion of troops in the military, and tobacco is universally acknowledged to be unhealthful in the extreme, this man could become a kind of president. As Euclid would say: “That is absurd.” ♦

Annapolis Spotlight: Jason Liggett

Jonathan Grauberd A'18

We at St. John's love our bubble. It keeps us focused on our discussions, social dramas, and various other hobbies. The bubble also keeps the big bad world away from us, but unfortunately it also keeps us away from the outside world. So we at the Gadfly decided that we ought to bring in some of the outside world into our beloved Polity. For our first Annapolis spotlight, we met with local artist Jason Liggett.

For most interviews we have we sit in one place and talk, but Jason had a different approach in mind. We started at the City Docks down at the end of Main Street, and from there we started walking around Annapolis while Jason told me about his life and career.

Born in 1982, Jason grew up in the naval yard, where his mother was an aide to the commandant. He spent his entire childhood in Annapolis, where he came to an understanding about the town: "It is a node, a node in the central nervous system of the world." In Jason's worldview, everything is connected, and at certain points, certain "nodes", everything comes together. These nodes are junctures where history, culture, and people from all walks of life intersect.

Jason's view on nodes was fortified during his long backpacking trip in Mexico. After serving in the Navy, he went out to Mexico for several months in 2012. This trip came after many years spent traveling the world, while in the service of U.S. Navy. It was during this trip that he realized that the place he was meant to be in, the place where he was going to grow, was back home in Annapolis.

Before he returned to Annapolis, he established "The Move Mountains Project." When I asked what "Moving Mountains" was, Jason said, "It is everything that I do, and everything that I am." The name, of course, is a reference to Matthew 17:20, where Jesus tells his supporters that if they had the faith of a mustard seed, they could move mountains. For Jason, this verse is a statement of purpose — "When you are doing something that fulfills your purpose as a being, green lights happen."

We moved up and sat at one of the tables in front of the State House Inn. There, Jason

told me that he was planning to set up a time lapse video of the installation of an industrial printer. This project was not just one that he was doing for fun; it is also used to be his day job, which he recently left in order to pursue his artistic endeavors full time. Jason makes his living installing factory machinery, and while most would separate their passions from their labor, Jason thinks differently. His belief in the work he does as an artist permeates every facet of his life. The way he sees it, his passions are his purpose and his every action is ruled by them. This means that tasks which should be simple, such as the installation of said printer, become an opportunity to experiment with new forms of art.

When asked about his early work as an artist, Jason mentioned his childhood fixation with the human body, specifically the power of anatomy. "I loved drawing muscles," he said, citing his earliest works where his fascination with the movement of the body inspired his drawings. That fascination continued on as he grew up and studied animation. He mentions the 2007 film adaptation of the epic poem Beowulf as an example of an art form that managed to fully capture the strength and power of the titular character — regardless of the unpleasant intrusion of the uncanny valley.

As we moved from the Inn to Jason's studio, he stopped us before a massive metal statue. Instead of focusing on the statue, he pointed towards a triangular roof on a building off Church Circle. For him that brick-bound triangle is a small detail, one that can be easily overlooked in the presence of the imposing iron statue. But this small detail could speak volumes about the thought that went into designing the building, and moreover, it could tell about the philosophy of those who designed it — "There is a connection between architecture and philosophy. Between having a mental view of the world, and making it physical."

From there, we walked down West Street, where we stopped at a parking lot a short distance from Jason's studio. There, Jason explained to me a little about the art scene

in Annapolis. He and many artists alike form something of an underground art scene in Annapolis, and as a group they often find themselves at odds with the Annapolis historical preservation society. To illustrate his point, Jason pointed to the wall of the lot we were in, singling out the brick and plaster walls. "This brick is old, and it has a lot of history. We know that. But that the plaster? It's nothing, there is nothing special about that. When we paint, we know the difference between the two."

The basic conflict between artists like Jason and the preservation society can be boiled down to two incidents. The first involves a mural Jason himself put up. The preservation society agreed to let him keep it up, and he responded by taking it down. His reasoning was very straightforward and simple: "I am an artist. They don't get to tell me what I can and can't make."

When we arrived at Jason's studio, Jason showed me the second incident. Above where he lives, there is a giant mural that stretches up three stories. According to Jason, the owners of the building love the mural, while the preservation society has been trying to get rid of it for years, which has resulted in hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees for both parties.

Once we entered the studio, Jason laid out for me the general philosophy that guides moving mountains. "No one gives you freedom. You create your own freedom." While we talked about many other things, I think that one phrase best defines Jason and his projects. Freedom is not a thing to earned; it is a thing that is created.

If you want to see more of Jason's work, you can check out pictures of his murals in this article. Also, he has a feature written about him in UpStart magazine, and he has his own podcast, Naptown Underground, available on YouTube. He would love to have Johnnies come and contribute. If anyone wants to get in touch with him, this is his email: jason.liggettmail.com, and his twitter handle: @jason_liggett

On the Benefits of Reading the *Parmenides* In Situ

Peter Kalkavage Tutor

"I went to the Kerameikos to look at a pot,
And now I know why the One is and is not."