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THE PARADOX ISSUE

Dear Readers,

In his book *The Call of the Wild*, Jack London writes, “There is an ecstasy that marks the summit of life, and beyond which life cannot rise. And such is the paradox of living, this ecstasy comes when one is most alive, and it comes as a complete forgetfulness that one is alive.” As we live our lives, we often forget to take a step back and recognize the wonder of what is occurring in front of us. The truth is that the best experiences we live are unrecognizable in the moment and only become clear once they are over. The theme of this issue is “paradox.” Whether you discover your inner paradox through a poem, see reflections of yourself in an unlikely photo, or resonate with a conflicting political article, I hope you are inspired to accept the paradoxes you experience, to reflect on them, and to understand them as essential to finding your bliss.

Julia Moore
(Editor-in-Chief)

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"I AM A PARADOX"

I am a paradox.
I don't understand myself.

I am open-minded, yet so very stubborn.
Make so many plans- they always fall through.
Help everyone else, but can't help myself.
Know that I shouldn't, yet I still do.

Maybe it says something about society,
Such a hypocrisy.
Because right now there's this certain mentality,
Changing our minds constantly.

Say, be happy,
But hate those that are.
Say, love yourself,
But pick you apart.

I am a paradox.
I don't understand myself.

But the world doesn't understand itself either.

BY KIRA PAYNTER

IS DEMOCRACY REALLY DEMOCRATIC?

BY SELIN BASAK GUNGOR

ILLUSTRATION BY NIAMH O'SULLIVAN



The ancient Greek governing invention, democracy, can be seen all over the world in the 21st century as the preferred way of governance. But what is democracy really? If you look up the definition it would be something like ‘governance of the majority’ or ‘people governing people.’ Therefore, the term ‘democratic’ can be defined as following democracy and its principles. You can definitely tell why it is called ‘the best form of government.’ It gives people the rights they need to contribute and have a say in the society they live in. But is democracy really democratic?

The first thing I want to investigate in order to find an answer to my question is some of the elements within the structure of a democratic administration. There are three different types of democracies recognized in the world, but I will be taking the common features into consideration and provide a general overview, instead of a very in depth analysis. One element existing in every democracy is having fair elections to choose the government, followed by the creation and enforcement of the law by this assigned government. This concept already clashes with the dictionary definition of democracy. Voting maintains the ideology of the majority to be represented throughout the ruling parties in the government. However, with voting, people choose their ruler. So instead of defining democracy as ‘people ruled by people’ it is more accurate to say ‘people ruled by rulers that are chosen by the people.’ Thus, democracy is not democratic.

My second argument brings to question the extent of freedom of expression that democracies realistically grant. Giving everyone a say in the society automatically grants the freedom of expression. The new paradox this creates is, if democracy allows freedom of every thought, then wouldn’t anti-democratic thought be democratic? From this rhetorical question, it can be said that democracy is not infinite and that it exists within set boundaries in order to operate as an efficient governing system. The art of governance can be seen as series of games and democracy as one of the games. No matter how free you want to be, you still have to apply some rules to sustain order. This limitation in freedom draws the conclusion that democracy is not democratic once more.

There are other aspects of democracy that could be questioned or looked further into. The two paradoxes I have discussed are just small fragments in the large discussion of why democracy is not democratic. Democracy is complex but governance is intricate. A leader or a representative is needed to create organization and avoid commotion. Even though people aren’t fully governed by people, they can be governed by someone who listens and acts upon the problems that arise. This paradox does not make democracy bad. On the other hand, without freedom of expression, the anti-democratic opinions would not have a voice, so even anti-democracy can form democracy. Democracy can be questioned and can have flaws but as Winston Churchill once said, “It has been said that democracy is the worst form of governance except all the others that have been tried.”

*new light
(my own)*

I saw you today
In a way that I hadn't seen you before
Light creeping in through an unlocked door
To which you have the key
And I thought to myself
How calm the breeze feels as it blows through my hair
How tranquil the sea is when you're right there
Next to me
Something in me changed tonight
The way I saw you in another light
Almost as if the barriers gave way to the sea
And I let you completely surround every inch of me
I saw a part of you I have wanted to see
For quite some time
I never saw it until this moment
As my heart melts, wax dripping from a candle
and seeping into my skin
I thought about the way you speak softly
And the words you use so silky
Against my skin
The way you feel like clouds
From the inside and out
Crashing into me
Sometimes I imagine purple skies
And a world without heavy goodbyes
That sting like bees
It does not exist, it is not real
But you are and that makes me feel
Something
Pure and happy and blue and white
As bright as the day and as deep as the night
That shines with stars
I saw you today for the person you are
Past all the darkness and all the scars
You see as ingrained in you
But the simplicity of your words
Is all that I've ever adored
And still do
The birds in the morning sing their song
I wake up and sing along
Because I saw you yesterday
In a way that I hadn't seen you before



BY JULIA
MOORE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
DENNIS JANSEN

THE PARADOX OF THE OPEN BRAIN

One has only to scroll through Facebook comments on any given post to realize we are living in a highly polarized time. With the rise of social media, our awareness of opinions that contrast our own is higher than ever- yet our intolerance of other perspectives seems to have skyrocketed as well. One topical example is a post I scrolled past recently, “if u aren’t pro-choice, plz unfriend me right now.”

Somemightimmediatelybalkatthenarrow-mindednessofsucharequest.Othersmight haverecently posted something similar themselves. Both motives seem quite accessible to me. Who would want friends that don’t share the same values as them? On the other hand, who would only want friends that do? After all, shouldn’t we value open-mindedness, tolerance, acceptance of other views? But what if we find another opinion too radical or immoral to accept? Should this override the significance of tolerance? It’s a complex set of questions, yet, luckily, we’re not the first to ask. In fact, this puzzle has a name: the Paradox of Liberalism.

The Paradox of Liberalism describes the case in which the liberal democratic doctrine of moral plurality- no one worldview is superior to another- and moral autonomy- everyone should be able to act on their worldview- seems to conflict with democratic doctrine itself. What does that mean? Let’s set up a hypothetical. Imagine my worldview is fundamentally intolerant of another worldview; for example, I believe that those who do not follow my system of worship are heathens and I cannot serve them in my store. Therefore, as part of my moral autonomy, I should be allowed to deny you, a non-believer, service. Yet, as part of your moral autonomy, you should have access to all segments of a liberal democratic society, including my store. Due to the concept of moral plurality, neither of us is wrong. On the one hand, my fundamentally intolerant view has no place in a fundamentally tolerant society. On the other hand, the fundamentally tolerant society cannot exclude my view. This instance describes a paradox- a situation with self-contradictory conclusions. How can we realistically run our lives within liberal democratic societies? What do we do when we run into an opinion we find dangerous, if we are committed to accepting all ideas? Even this question lends itself to the paradox. One person, perhaps the writer of the Facebook post I read, might find it appropriate to close off friendship to those who disagree with their pro-choice view. Another might find that inappropriately closed-minded; ironically, this could, and often does, lead to an online quarrel between two people as to whether they should associate peacefully as friends despite their different views.

If our goal is to associate peacefully in democratic societies we need to move beyond such feuds. Yet that leaves us still with the question of how to make this happen. How tolerant can we afford to be of views that seem harmful or discriminatory to us? Any prescription would fly in the face of moral plurality itself.

Nevertheless, I’ll offer a simple option: to listen to the reasoning of others when our first instinct is to disagree. To hold off on moral judgement, recognizing that we ourselves are also subject to scrutiny. But to use common sense when discrimination is apparent, and to use respect when addressing it. The Paradox of Liberalism is, more than anything, an academic debate. In an actual and dynamic society, we cannot afford uninhibited tolerance. As the prolific humanist A.C. Grayling once described it, “We must have open minds, but not so open that your brain falls out.”

BY JULIA HERNANDEZ

ILLUSTRATION "THE EXECUTIONER'S PARADOX"
BY ALEX KASTRISSIANAKIS





*Summer
Dusk*





an introduction to beauty

How would you describe paradox to someone who cannot speak English?
Would you love them and lie to them?

...

I'm at the barbers and I engage in the typical gossip with my hairdresser
What is Love? My barber asks me
I didn't expect this from Smiley, he's usually much more quiet
But like most people, you only need to ask
I told him "everything becomes her"
You think less of yourself, and more of her
When you laugh, you hear her in your laugh
There is someone for me like this
And at times I simply want to write about her
Like she is laughing through me
While listening to a sad song, with an echo of a feeling that doesn't feel mine
I don't know who is worthy of me and who isn't
Loving feels like rolling dice
Though it shouldn't, out of all things
But love is like a bakery
Love is like a shoelace
Love is like a wrinkle
Love's lessons come long and go so quick
Because when you roll a good number
Your heart is in the gamble
Now my heart is in your heart
And your name is its name
So every time they call for me, they call for you too, without knowing
Without knowing, they call for you
So please forget me, that I may forget you too
For loving isn't true as you thought it would be
Love is everything but itself
That's what love is Smiley
That's why we give names to wars but not to peace
There is now a silence inside my heart
Too far to be heard, even by me
Even by you
Always by you
A song is little without a story
And this story is my song
Has love become to cut off all those whom you wanted to stay?
Maybe the problem lies in wanting love to become something
to be
A paradox is just a veritable contradiction
Like loving you, when it shouldn't be
Because I know, loving you, is not loving me
So to know my heart can love again
I now must not love you

BY KINAN ALDAIOUB

PHOTOGRAPHY "THIS IS NOT A SUNSET"
BY ESA KASMIR
(PHOTOGRAPHY COMMITTEE)

AS BUZZ WOULD SAY... THEY'RE EVERYWHERE!

BY CLAUDIA VAN DEN BELD

'So, what are the paradoxes of your life?' It sounds like a most intrusive question and a definite runner-up for 'creepiest pickup line ever'. But if you think about it, here comes the paradox, people, aren't small things like nonsensical, embarrassing, and inappropriate inner paradoxes, the particles that make us who we are? If you've just read the previous sentence a second time to figure out what I meant by that and still don't get it, let me give you an example. If you'd ask me the opening question of this article, I would, seeing as how I'm not that socially deft to begin with, look at you funny, blush and mumble something like 'Ehm, dunno.' But if I'd take some time to think about it, it would be peanuts. Like, literally. I like peanuts, as a salty snack at the end of the day. I absolutely love peanuts in a dessert (I'll take you up for a piece of Peanut Opéra anytime, and there is no excuse for refusing a Snickers.) But peanut butter? Sue me, but I can't have that stuff. I hate it.

Let's move on, before people get too triggered by that previous statement. We all have our paradoxes, let's keep it at that. A year ago, I moved to this city, thinking I would find everything I've always been looking for: tons of friends, a pinch of alcoholism, and a side of good grades to go with it. Basically, everything I didn't have at home (aside from the grades, such a smartass...) But, here it comes again, paradoxically, when I sat in my little room after the final exams were over, sweating my buttocks off in weather unheard of in this country, on my own, I found myself thinking of home. And it wasn't Spui, Buitenhof, Grote Markt, or even Wijnhaven I was thinking of. It was actually the deserted little countryside village where I grew up, with more deceased inhabitants than alive ones, and where people's reactions, when you say you're moving to the Netherlands, are 'Huh, Netherlands? Is that somewhere in Germany?' My point, however random it may seem, is that we may want different things at different moments, or even at the same time. Paradoxes are to be found in everything we do, even if we don't necessarily notice them. They're not as elusive as you may think, yet they are well hidden (let me say it one last time, there's your paradox!)

The silent disco paradox

BY LARS LAURENT
(MUSIC COMMITTEE)

While reading this, the chances are high that you are listening to music through headphones. Or that this is also how you bike. Or when you go for a jog later tonight. No? Then look around: how many people do you see with headphones on their head? We live in the age of musical prevalence. Never have we seen such a diversity of music, which furthermore, is so easy to access. Spotify provides a catalogue of 30 million songs from all over the world right in your pocket. With a smartphone and 3G, it takes mere seconds to search for one of these 30 million wherever, whenever. And with noise-cancelling headphones that block out surrounding sounds, you can listen to the chosen song without being disturbed.

Although headphones are not a new phenomenon, the combination of unlimited access at all times and increasingly available noise-equalizing technology present some new questions. What does this access do to our way of listening? How does this undisturbed availability shape music in time and space? And can this way of blocking out surrounding sounds disconnect us from the real world? These questions end up in a phenomenon I call the Silent Disco Paradox.

On one hand, the access increases the ratio of hours spent listening. Research shows that the average American listens to 32 hours of music each week. For a music enthusiast like me, this is great news! It shows the importance of music in people's lives. However, we do not know in how many of these hours, listening served as the main activity. When is the last time you listened to a song, or an album without being interrupted by other activities? Lying on the couch while the deep bass massages body, feeling the beat tickling your eardrums, immersing yourself in the lyrics. Listening is like reading a book, in that it takes focus and concentration, but when you are in the moment, in the song, understanding the sounds, then you let the music affect you. In other words, has music become a sort of background activity, serving mainly as musical white noise? If so, is music losing its integrity?

Further, noise-cancelling headphones combine the presence of music in the private and public sphere. You can now walk through the central station, interacting in the public sphere, while at the same time, keeping the four walls of privacy around your ears. You can color the world around you with disco. Nevertheless, no one else has a clue what you are listening to. What if everyone put on their own headphones with their own disco? Firstly, we block out one of our senses, and main instrument of communication: hearing. Additionally, we might alienate ourselves from the sounds of the real world. In this sense, headphones are not necessarily risky because you increase the chances of being hit by the tram, but rather because you disconnect yourself from the real world. Turning normal voices to undesired buzz.

So on one hand, the prevalence of headphones gives us comfort and joy. It brings music everywhere. However, we should reflect upon our habits of listening. Maybe next time you go for a jog, leave the music behind, or take some extra minute to really dive in to your favorite music.



"PARA AND DOXA"
ILLUSTRATION BY
DANIEL BUWALDA

NEOLIBERAL CAPITALISM: *A NECESSARY RATHER THAN A PURE EVIL*

BY TIM ROZENDAAL

Being student of International Studies, you might have heard the word already too often. I am not referring to 'exam' or 'deadline', but to 'neoliberalism', the contemporary economic paradigm, often blamed for the disproportionately high levels of wealth and income inequality and other problems of our epoch. I argue, for all that, that such an approach is somewhat short sighted.

Firstly, the historic context in which neoliberalism gained the upper hand, often seems to be forgotten or neglected. Neoliberalism replaced Keynesian economics, the dominant economic paradigm since the 1930s, because it was inadequate to resolve the economic problems that emerged throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Neoliberalism was thus first and foremost a necessity. Even though neoliberalism is justifiably associated with Reaganomics and Thatcherism, it is important to realize that the Nixon shock of the early 1970s already painfully reflected the untenability of the reigning Bretton Woods system and can be considered a step in the direction of neoliberalization. Over the course of the 1970s, high levels of inflation exacerbated, among others due to the two oil crises of the decade. As a result, president Reagan inherited a situation of stagflation: high unemployment in tandem with high inflation. This could not be resolved by Keynesian counter-cyclical policy. In England, exorbitant inflation scourged the country as well and labor unions began to demand disproportionately high wages for their members. Reagan and Thatcher were overtime able to curb the inflated prices and managed to generate economic growth, paving the way for reduction of unemployment. In that respect, neoliberalization should actually be considered a success.

Opponents of neoliberalism, however, underscore the dismantlement of social welfare, the exaltation of consumerism and greed, soaring debt and probably most importantly: the creation of excessive inequality. I argue that it is misleading to attribute these developments exclusively to neoliberalism, for they are, strictly speaking, inherent in capitalism and not limited to a particular type of it. Social capitalism, invented by FDR's New Deal and dominant until the advent of the neoliberal era, sugarcoated the very cornerstones of capitalism: the accumulation of capital and the pursued of profit. Inequality, greed, and unfairness are in fact inherent to any type of capitalism, for capitalism demands individuals to acquire and subsequently expand their wealth, inevitably at the expense of someone else's access to capital. Regulation and government intervention can mitigate the most unfair traits of capitalism, but the nature of the paradigm remains intact. For Marx and Engels, capitalism centered on the class struggle between the dominant bourgeoisie, the owners of capital, and the proletariat, oppressed and enslaved by the upper class. They did not differentiate between any type of capitalism. Even though their theory was conceived in the nineteenth century, it is still strikingly applicable to our contemporary economic order. All in all, neoliberalism engenders problems that should not be underestimated. But in order to address the root causes of any of these, we should look critically to capitalism as a system, rather than to neoliberalism as a type of capitalism. Besides, it should not be forgotten that neoliberalism justifiably replaced Keynesianism because the latter was proven defunct. Neoliberalism should therefore be considered a necessary, rather than a pure evil.

DEAR NO ONE,

BY WARSHA AUTAR

Did you know that an alpaca hums while it breeds? They call it *orgling*. You can look it up on Youtube. I kinda fell into this "cute animal moments compilation" Youtube hole when I was spacing out during the lecture.

That's right. That was my opening. It was random, useless, intimate, and totally uncalled for knowledge which I decided to share with you. Quite often, my friends ask me how I am able to be so open with strangers, or rather, how I end up having had conversations with a lot of people on campus. The answer is simple: I ignore the awkward, tell them what I'm going through, and react to their response.

Simple enough, right? Well no. Unfortunately, a lot of people on campus try to be something they're not. Pretending to be a perfect human, instead of getting real and saying what's on your mind, seems to be the norm around here. Everybody appears to be the best version of themselves, rather than the stressed-out, coffee addicts I know they are.

The people who are expressing their thoughts and opinions are doing it as if their truth is universal. They truly bring out the "brutal" in brutal honesty. Those students argue their way through philosophy and politics, barely acknowledging or othering those with different ways of thinking. This makes it even harder for the rest of us to express our thoughts and opinions without feeling any pressure. This is how a airy conversation about a cultural interaction lecture can quickly turn into a heated debate about capitalism.

I feel like at times, campus can be an incredibly toxic environment. Everybody is trying to show off their academic way of thinking, rather than having open and honest discussions about life and how it can be hard at times.

Last year, I already wrote an article about how it's okay to not be perfect, and the importance of expressing your emotions, so I won't get into that too much right now. But I would like to use this letter to focus on the importance of shamelessly being able to have open discussions with others about your thoughts and feelings.

When starting a conversation with someone, people have a tendency to not discuss the real topics, such as struggling with maintaining your mental health, unexpected difficulties when studying, or even the homesickness you feel on your birthday.

I'm not saying that you have to bare it all and put all your secrets out in the open. I'm trying to tell you that you should break through the awkward and try to have more real conversations. Even small comments can help with that. For example, ignore the social stigmas and just tell that friend that you like their shoes without being worried about how "feminine" that comment might make you appear. An example of a bigger way to change the "realness" of conversations would be to candidly answer the question, "How are you?"

In my opinion there is no shame in saying that you're not okay, or that you are facing some difficulties. Yet, I find it very hard myself to openly admit this when talking to people, out of fear for awkwardness. Let's use this academic year to heal this unhealthy environment we've created on campus by trying to be our authentic selves, rather than the ideal images we so desperately cling on to.

To my third year students: I hope your thesis tutor will have mercy on your soul.
To my fellow second year students: let's all just huddle together and pray that this tri-weekly tutorial and essay madness will end soon.

To my first year students who are fronting a cheerful face whilst having at least three minor panic attacks a day: welcome to the International Studies lifestyle.

Don't worry, we'll figure this thing out.

Love,

warsha



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