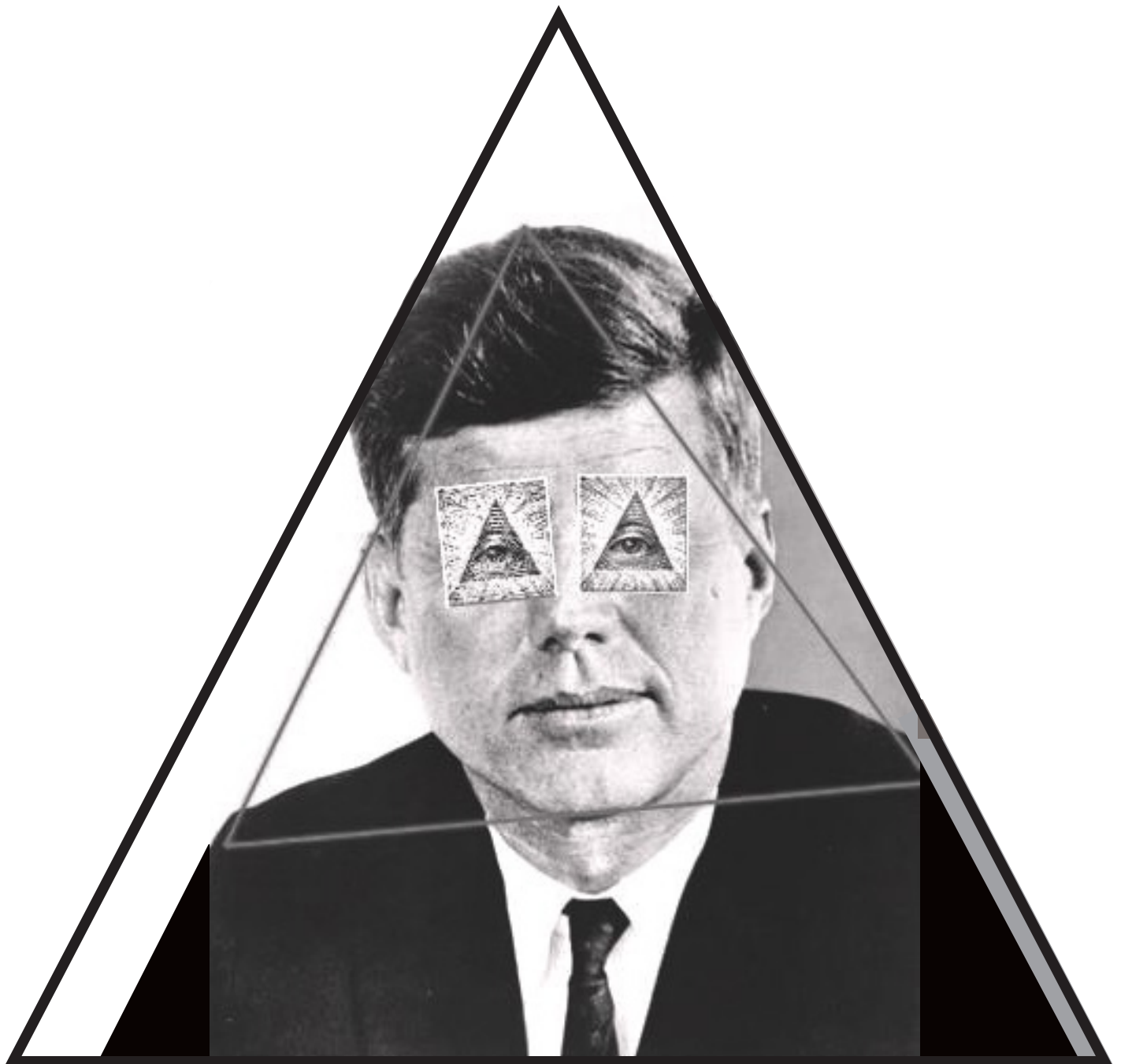


VOLUME XVIII | ISSUE III | DECEMBER 2014 | CIRCULATION 350

The Muckraker

Into the Woods • scientific analysis: the *brodybuilderius* • where do thoughts spring from? • JFKS FAQs

Illuminati Confirmed



The Muckraker

Speaks

Dear readers,

As cliché as it sounds, it is hard to believe that another year is coming to an end. It seems like just yesterday that we were cheering amidst the crowd as the German national team won the FIFA World Cup — before we even had to start worrying about the beginning of the school year.

After countless number of tests, quizzes, projects, and long Klausuren throughout this semester, hopefully you can look forward to Christmas break and finally relax as you flip through this last issue of the year. Though our intention was to publish an issue each month, due to the sporadic breaks in November, we editors have decided to print a combined issue of November and December articles to end this year.

We hope that these articles can enlighten as well as entertain you as they will answer some of the most frequently asked questions about the John F. Kennedy School and provoke you with the idea of the Illuminati lurking in our school.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,
The Editors



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The SC Speaks

Nearly four months have gone by since the commencement of the new school year. In each *Muckraker* edition, the Communications Committee (CoCo) will be regularly updating you on occurrences and decisions your elected student representatives make.

This is what your representatives decided on and achieved in the SC meeting held on December 9th:

1) The following projects were initiated or have been completed by the Student Council:

- The Fundraising Committee conducted a pizza sale. The SC has yet to decide what will be done with the proceeds.
- The Alumni Event Night will be held on January 5th, 2015. All 10th, 11th and 12th graders are welcome to attend.
- The Communications Committee is currently busy creating an app for your phones with which you will be able to access an individualized substitution plan, announcements, or your own schedule. Additionally, the CoCo is conducting a homework survey.
- The Spirit Event Committee has been organizing a variety of Christmas events including the annual Christmas Grams, a Christmas Spirit Day, and the Christmas tree.

2) Student representatives reported on department meetings they attended, including a meeting of the Educational Directorate (ED) to discuss two important matters:

- A possible change of the school's *Aufnahmekriterien*. In the past, siblings of JFKS students received priority admission to the school. This, however, interferes with JFKS's status as a public school. Since many German students find it increasingly difficult to attend this school, the ED discussed possibly abolishing this prioritization.
- The 10th grade Mittlerer Schulabschluss (MSA) exam may soon be undergoing a vast change. So far, all 10th graders at JFK took an American standardized test as their English exam, called the PLAN test. This test will no longer be produced. The ED discussed whether an alternative American test should be found, or whether students should take the original German English Exam. The SC voted upon this matter, and an overwhelming majority voted for the latter.

If you have any questions, feedback or concerns, please do not hesitate to approach an SC member.

The *Brodybuilderius*

The *commonus brodybuilderius*, usually referred to as the gym rat, has prospered in recent years and become the prevailing species in its habitat. This marvelous species flourishes amongst iron and its ripped cousins, the *jackedus brody-builderius*, under the fluorescent lights of its place of worship. Due to the *brodybuilderius*'s unique evolution, this species provides a fascinating object of study and may perhaps reveal some of the secrets of life that science so perpetually pursues.

The *brodybuilderius* can be found primarily inside its places of worship, known as "gyms". It spends most of its day either lifting or hogging the bench press. Sightings outside its habitat have been extremely rare, although the most recent scientific observations suggest that all members of the *brodybuilderius* species must leave their gym shrine once a month to replenish their supplement stacks.

Supplements are crucial to the survival of this unique species. Supplements, such as pre-workout, creatine, whey and casein build the base, the middle and the top of the *brodybuilderius*'s food pyramid. Although observers reported sighting a member of the *brodybuilderius* species eating whole foods in 2009, this report was eventually falsified. Reports of the *brodybuilderius* partaking of chicken breast have yet to be confirmed. The marvelous *jackedus brodybuilderius* specimens have been known to circulate the principles of Broscience with statements such as, "Brah, if you don't chug 40-60 grams of brotein plus 20 grams of BCAA within 7 seconds of finishing your last set of squat rack curls, you'll go catabolic."

The greatest fear of all members of the *brodybuilderius* species is just that: going catabolic. The prevailing conjecture proposes that this is why the *brodybuilderius* spends his entire life in the gym. Although the *brodybuilderius* is customarily not aggressive, there are a variety of triggers that can infuriate these shredded specimens. "Do you even lift, Bro?", "Hey there chicken legs" and "Come at me, Bro" are just a few of the phrases that have been shown to result in extremely volatile situations.

When encountering this species, be careful to avoid these statements. If they are accidentally said, offering supplements, preferably whey, as tribute to the specimen may help reduce its anger. Also, keep in mind that while this species may contradict your social conventions, it is an extraordinary species in its own right. So perhaps, the next time you go to the gym, take some time out of your busy schedule to watch this truly fascinating creature go about its daily routine. You might just learn something for your own life.

But then again, probably not.

Into the Woods Jr.

As students could tell by the advertisements around the school, this year's musical was *Into the Woods Jr.*, an adaptation of the Broadway musical *Into the Woods* designed for a younger audience. Rehearsals began in September and the show premiered Friday, November 7th, including such characters as Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack from "Jack and the Beanstalk," and many more.

The story centered on a journey into the woods, where the baker and his wife desire a child. Meanwhile, Cinderella wishes to attend the king's festival and Jack desperately wants his cow to lactate. Soon the baker and his wife find out that they are unable to have a child because of a witch's curse, and embark on a journey in order to break the curse. The musical portrayed many wonderful, talented singers and actors that put a new twist on the fairy tales we have grown up with. To get a feel of the creativity and work that goes into the musical, we are going to give you a behind the scenes look.

After auditions in early September, the cast list was posted with a mix of the usual theatrical crowd and several new additions. Rehearsals were broken down into individual scenes, which were perfected before they were combined. It's a well-known fact that JFKS students cannot dance (generally speaking, of course), so a choreographer was brought in to train us for specific scenes. For each play or musical, the costumes take weeks of scavenging through the drama basement, stores, and closets to procure and afterwards are usually in need of modification, which a dedicated parent generously does for us.

A couple of weeks before the performance everyone involved had practice everyday after school from 10th period into the mystical 12th period. That didn't leave much time for homework. In the week leading up to opening night, the cast had full dress rehearsals, sometimes with full drag queen make-up (for girls and boys). When performing, your face literally feels like a canvas of fresh paint that never fully dries.

On another note, only half of the performance is seen onstage: the rest goes on behind the curtains. Making a scene look effortless takes hours of stress and rehearsals by people who are barely seen by the audience. These members of the tech and stage crew are just as involved as the actors themselves, but rarely receive any time in the spotlight.

Although it can be challenging to be a part of such a time-draining activity, any actor will tell you that nothing beats the applause of a full house after a performance.

Musical Review



"Once upon a time..." With these words, the curtains opened and the musical began. Since November, the drama department has spent a great amount of time and effort working on its production *Into the Woods Junior*, which premiered on November 7th.

The story begins with several characters from different fairy tales who live in the same town. For various reasons, each character sets off into the woods in search of something. Cinderella desires to go to the King's festival, Little Red Riding Hood wishes to visit her sick grandmother, and Jack must sell his cow, Milky White, which is also his friend.

Meanwhile, the witch in the story promises the Baker she will lift the long lasting curse on his family, allowing his wife to finally bear a child. She will only do so, however, once he and his wife bring her four specific objects, which can only be found in the woods.

The actors gave a very professional and outstanding performance. Their impressive singing and entertaining acting was a real pleasure to watch. One actress explains how the cast was a group of "inspirational, creative, and committed people." Another cast member summarizes the experience as "awesome ... and hectic!"

It's certainly clear to the audience how much time and hard work was put into perfecting each part of the play. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who played a part in making the musical happen for the amazing show. We look forward to the next one!

The Power of the Illuminati

Over the past couple decades, the Illuminati has received more public attention than almost any other secret society in the world. Due to its embracement in books, music, television shows, and especially movies, the Illuminati is widely known for its conspiracy theories and for lurking in the background of any political, even non-political event.

As many may have noticed, the Illuminati has also become a pivotal gag, maybe even movement, on the internet. One many sites, memes convey the Illuminati's mystery and magic with a touch of satire and humour. Although these memes generally portray the Illuminati humorously, there are still numerous people who believe this society actually exists. Assuming this to be true, one must ask the following question: Does the Illuminati influence, control, or even exert power on our school? Taking a 9Gagistic approach, we provide the evidence:

The Illuminati's most well-known signature is the triangle or pyramid. These symbols have a much deeper and abstruse meaning than the geometric shape we usually perceive them to be. The Illuminati often conveys this pyramid to display its ideology, presence and power. Here is the JFKS running track:



The running track looks fine to the normal eye. However, let's take a closer look at it.



Triangles everywhere. Let's take a look at the architecture of the school:



Triangles everywhere.

Many people will still argue that its easy to draw triangles on all geometric shapes. In order to refute these claims and provide further evidence, we will investigate the name of our school itself:

John F. Kennedy School Berlin. Five words. Let us not forget that the school consists of one high school and one elementary school, so of two parts. Let's finalize that equation: $5 - 2 = 3$. A triangle also has 3 sides. A coincidence? I think not.

Still not enough? John F. Kennedy School Berlin consists of 24 letters. The school's administration consists of eight people. $24/8 = 3$. There is an endless amount of proof.

The Illuminati seem to be present everywhere in our school. On the other hand, similar to basically everything written on the internet, not every conspiracy theory is necessarily true. In the end, you will have to make your own judgement. Who really runs our school?

■ *Itani Mulli*

FAQs about JFKS

With students spending an average of 37.5 hours in school weekly, it is safe to say that our school is somewhat of a second home. Nonetheless, the amount we actually know about it is often limited to rumors or speculations. Collecting some of the frequently asked questions from the students, I met with Mr. Anderson to find the answers.

How are classes divided up in 7th and 10th grade?

Almost completely randomly. Occasionally the coordinators will consult with individual students' previous teachers, as at times certain combinations should be avoided. Also, native German speakers will generally be divided into the ABC classes whereas Americans/International students will find themselves in classes DEF.

What happens to tests when we give them back to the teachers and why do we return them?

This rule has actually been changed. In the past, teachers requested to have exams returned to them to hold on to for as long as they see fit. That way, they can continually keep track of the student's grades and improvements, and have reference when complications about scores arise. Additionally, some teachers used to use the test as a template for future exams, which could not be possible were they to return them to students. As of this year however, instructors are required to permanently hand back the tests so that the students can monitor their grades by themselves with their parents.

Why are the police at our school so frequently?

Generally, the police check up on all Berlin schools with the interest of being visible and being available for students if problems should occur. Since we are a high profile school with an American background the police visit our school frequently with the intention of keeping it safe and ensuring that no trespassers enter the school grounds without permission.

Why can't students take APs in 9th and 10th grade?

This is generally due to the limited number of staff members. Also, since APs are "college courses", they have are designed primarily for juniors and seniors, not for freshmen and sophomores. In most high schools in the United States, very few Advanced Placement courses are offered for younger grades, and so the system wasn't adapted at our school either.

Who's in charge of the snack machines and who chooses what's in them?

The school hired a company to be in charge of the snack machines, and there is a student hired by that company to restock it during school hours. The company also chooses what gets sold in the machines. There once was a request by parents of the high school student's to sell healthier food in the machines, yet the vast majority of students and staff showed no interest in changing the snacks.

Why do American teachers have to leave so frequently?

For various reasons. Primarily, it is because of the structure of the Kennedy school. By law, only 2/3 of the American teachers at our school are allowed to receive a permanent contract to teach here. This means that even if the teachers are superb, if there are no possible permanent contracts to be given, those instructors will have to leave.

What percentage of our school is actually German or American?

By design, our school should be somewhere around 50% German and 50% American, but realistically its more of a muddy picture. This is because many students have both citizenships or come from an even more international background. In terms of applications, we choose students with multiple citizenships based on the citizenship with the higher chance of acceptance at that moment.

Why are the 12th grade lockers upstairs, and who decided this?

Basically, the idea was to make it more friendly for the newest members of the high school -- the 7th and 8th graders -- for whom the high school is completely new territory. The blue spacious lockers were thought to make the adjustment a little easier for them. Our school's seniors are generally the most independent and the top of the social hierarchy, so their lockers were put onto the third floor. Since fall break, the ninth graders are on that floor as well, yet this is simply because of the new Chill Out Area.

Thanks Mr. Anderson!

■ Simona Koch

Adam Ross and the Meaning of Life



Over the years, every student gets tired of teachers trying to convey some obscure meaning of life through a variety of novels. However, it's another matter when the author of one of these novels comes to speak to students about the meaning of life and other important questions.

This was the case on Monday, November 1, when Adam Ross, author of the short story "Ladies and Gentlemen" and the New Yorker best book of the year, *Mr. Peanut*, sat down with 12th graders to discuss the meaning of being an author, the challenges of creating, and patience.

Ross currently resides in Berlin and has two children attending JFKS. He began his talk speaking about his life and how he began writing. During his childhood, he worked as an actor in television, TV and radio. Since high school in Manhattan, Ross has been interested in the creative writing process. However, it was not until college that he decided to pursue writing professionally.

For the next years of his life, he took "low-income" jobs and kept his early mornings free for writing. During this time, he also attended the then all-girls Holland College to take writing courses. In Holland College's "sea of females," he also met his future wife. After writing for almost 17 years, he published his first novel in 2010.

During his talk, Ross accentuated the importance of patience regarding life as a whole and especially the creative process. He pointed out that growing up in a world of instant gratification, where anything is just a click away, one must be careful not to become easily frustrated or to adopt a tendency to give up when success does not come instantaneously. After all, it took him 17 years to make a profession out of writing.

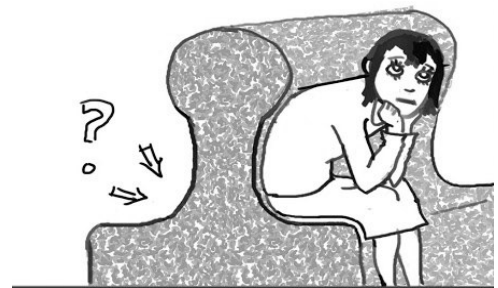
While answering students' questions, Ross mentioned the stress and hardship writing can cause. While he personally meticulously crafts the beginnings and ends of his

stories, he finds it difficult to create the fitting middle part. While this way of writing is his personal creative process, he stressed that each creative person, whether in writing or another profession, will possess a process that is unique to them. Also, it can take many years to find how exactly you "create".

Ross also touched upon his time as a child actor and what he took away from this time. He has always enjoyed the ways actors tell stories, often taking over tales other telling and recounting stories with pure passion and emotion; something he tries to intricate into his own storytelling and writing. In his final words to the 12th grade, Ross encouraged all that life isn't about striving for one career, but about discovering one's strengths and talents and figuring out how these can positively influence one's life and the surrounding world.

All in all, Adam Ross offered some incredibly unique and humorous insight into his life as a professional author, what it takes to create, the importance of patience, and why we should bother to "create."

■ Florentine Friedrich



Jakob Eckhardt

Lichtgrenze



Amidst a chaos of people they stood bright and peaceful. Replacing them twenty-five years ago was a tall, concrete wall separating a nation. The 8,000 incandescent balloons lined along the former border between East and West Berlin were an elegant tribute to the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The idea for the Lichtgrenze, from filmmakers Christopher and Marc Bauder, took seven years to realize and was meant to provide a powerful visual of living near such a barrier. Although the balloons hardly barricaded passerby, cars and other transportation were affected by them for the three days they stood tied down. Each balloon had a personalized message attached to it for its finder.

On the evening of November 9th, as Beethoven's triumphant "Ode to Joy" was performed, 8,000 citizens temporarily united and, given keys, unlocked the balloons, sending them floating into the air, one by one drifting out of their straight line into the freedom of the night sky.

■ *Elsa Kienberger*

How Do You Celebrate Thanksgiving?

The John F. Kennedy School has always celebrated both German and American holidays, but does everyone celebrate them? Thanksgiving took place just a few weeks ago, and many discussed how they celebrated Thanksgiving in different ways. We have asked a few individuals who are either German, American, or German-American to see what their Thanksgiving traditions are.

For most Germans, Thanksgiving does not include the festivities typically associated with the holiday in American culture. One of the Germans we asked said their typical tradition is spending the day in bed, realizing that there is no school, and enjoying the long weekend. In the past they have gone on short day-trips as well. Another responded saying that her family never really celebrates Thanksgiving or just spends the whole day sleeping.

Americans spend this holiday weekend quite differently. One person said they celebrate the day partying, eating junk food, and going drinking with friends. Others usually make big feasts including a turkey, pumpkin pie, sweet potatoes, etc. Sometimes they invite people over and might watch some football. Another person also enjoys big dinners with turkeys, mac and cheese, and so on and then the family goes to sleep early or stays up late waiting for Black Friday to start. Other times, the family just gets together and eats regular food that is usually not associated with Thanksgiving.

The German-Americans we questioned spend Thanksgiving celebrating with their family. One said they celebrate Sunday, because their parents have to work on Thursday. They invite family and eat a turkey, and are left with weeks of leftovers. Another said they go out for a picnic and their special Thanksgiving tradition is grilling the turkey, which doesn't leave your house smelling like turkey until Christmas. Another answered that they spend Thanksgiving with family, have a big meal and break the wishbone, ending the evening with a movie.

It doesn't matter if we are German, American, or German-American. We all have our own Thanksgiving traditions, whether we spend Thanksgiving celebrating with family and a big meal, drinking with friends, or sleeping in and enjoying the long weekend.

■ *Alexandra von Anhalt & Aqueena Crisp*

Mister E's Mullings: Where Do Thoughts Spring From?

These poems were submitted under the name HCJ as inspiration for Mr-E's Mullings.

Stroke or Strike

Please, Mr. E., lets mull again
about two words that can affect us suddenly
and unexpectedly they menace us alike:
it's stroke or strike,
can either paralyze one person or us all.
Is stroke an act of God
and strike the right of some
to paralyze all others,
schoolchildren, even teachers, innocents and mothers?
Is strike permissible and wise
to paralyze and penalize
us who are not responsible at all?
-HCJ

Untitled

Please, Mr. E., let's mull again
about the thoughts, thousands of thoughts
that cross our mind each day.
What is a thought, where does it spring from?
Is our brain the garden,
offering hundred different ways -
and who decides which one to follow?
Are thoughts the seeds or are they flowers,
are words their image or their tools?
What is the difference between wise men and fools?
-HCJ

Dear HCJ,

Where do thoughts spring from? Sometimes they spring, but they also slip from us, they suffocate us and badger us, they haunt or escape us, they pop – blast – explode – and disappear. If the brain's the garden wherein all of this takes place, then we are like that loveable fool Candide, meant to work in it. Because of this then it is us who decides and this is the thing that separates us from our predecessors. We can decide.

Sure, Fate or Freewill is a really old idea. I have a hard time believing that in all of ancient Greek civilization there wasn't at least one guy sitting in the woods, racking his brain over the choices he's made. Can you imagine this freak? All of his neighbors and buddies are like, "Dude, don't be a Dionysian Downer!" or "Why ask why? Try Bud Dry!"

Now, because of Quantum mechanics we can reconcile this age-old conflict and say anything is possible. In a *Scientific American* article, George Musser states, "Quantum mechanics is indeterministic, in that the outcomes of measurements are chosen at random from the slate of possibilities."

The "slate of possibilities," is our garden. This means we aren't destined for anything, but at the same time, a person could make all the "right" choices that would lead him seemingly in the "right" direction, yet never reach his intended goal. But something is happening in our collective streams of consciousness that's simultaneously being discovered by quantum theory: "Quantum physics is time-symmetric, so we are as justified in saying that our choices set the cosmic initial conditions as much as the other way round" (*Scientific American*).

In this idea, we are the masters of our fate. Imagine the guy who's been making all those "right" choices to no avail. He's relentless in his gardening. Forever nurturing the fruits and vegetables that will feed him. In our shifting idea of Fate and Freewill everything is happening, everything is possible. Maybe his intended goal isn't where his fate will lead him, but the collection of his choices lead him somewhere nonetheless.

This is the beauty of our choices: they are the collective culmination of what we've decided upon and they take us to our righteous destiny. The intention is a reflection of the spirit of our choices, and not an idealistic version of our goal ... where we inevitably end up depends on the choices. Intent is irrelevant and critical simultaneously. It's the paradox of quantum physics. I have a hard time with this notion because I'm from the 20th century, but soon, this "everything theory" will be seemingly innate and people's thoughts will be their guides and take them wherever they wish.

This isn't new ... the power of positive thinking has been around for a while. I remember in middle school, I was at a school assembly and this group of actors came and performed a little power-of-positive-thinking-skit. I remember two things iterated from their play. "Tomorrow you'll wake up and be 35," and "Wake up, clap your hands and say, 'Today is going to be a great day!'" But these were only hopeful ideas. Based on the unreliable science of psychology. Now, because of Quantum theory, exclaiming today is going to be a great day can be a real truth – a real destiny.

continued on pg. 9

Mister E's Mullings: Where Do Thoughts Spring From?

continued from pg. 8

As for the difference between wise men and fools ... I recognize this as the rhetorical device it's masquerading as. We both know, HCJ, there isn't any.

As I read your poem, "Stroke or Strike," two thoughts occurred to me. The first was a professor I had in college ... Professor Jacobs. This guy could recite poetry, prose, theory ... anything at an astronomically prolific rate. He had this weird quirk. He constantly pushed up on his lip. He had a mustache and with the tips of the fingers on his right hand, he'd push up on the right side of his upper lip ... it always seemed to me he was fidgeting with his mustache.

A couple years later I was sitting in a bar having a beer with a friend of mine with whom I knew from a class we'd both taken with Professor Jacobs. She told me that he'd suffered a stroke and the lip/mustache tic was a resulting side effect of the stroke.

The other thought that came to me was the recent strike in Berlin. I have a new son and he still lives with my soon to be wife/mother ... that's "baby mama" for all you South Central homies out there ... down in Slany, a small town about forty clicks north of Prague. I go down every weekend to be with them. They will be living with me here in Berlin by the time this article is published, but the point is, I rely on the trains. When the strike hit was the same weekend that my week-long October break fell. I got stuck in Berlin, and when I saw these lines...

Is stroke an act of God
and strike the right of some
to paralyze all others,
schoolchildren, even teachers, innocents and mothers?

I couldn't help but attach my own personal experience to this. I'm a teacher, *meine Frau* is a mother, and my boy is innocent. I considered this line and its exact relevance. I thought it was too unbelievable ... but then it dawned on me, HCJ has had a long life and that it's just a metaphor. Nonetheless, the thoughts blossomed – they rattled around for a while – then moved on.



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to find out about meetings and to
submit articles!**