

THE TRIAL OF DERECK CHAUVIN

May 25th, 2020, in the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota; forty-six-year-old George Floyd is accused of paying with a counterfeit bill when he goes to buy a pack of cigarettes in a grocery store. The store's employees ask him to return the pack while he is in his car, and after his refusal, call the police. Four police officers arrive: Derek Chauvin, Alexander Kueng, Thomas Lane and Tou Thao. An interaction between Lane and Floyd occurs, and ends with him being placed under arrest and subsequently offering to lay on the ground instead of being forced into his vehicle. Chauvin kneels on Floyd's neck for nine minutes and thirty seconds, during which Floyd calls out many times that he cannot breathe and says that he is

about to die. He is pronounced dead at the hospital an hour later.

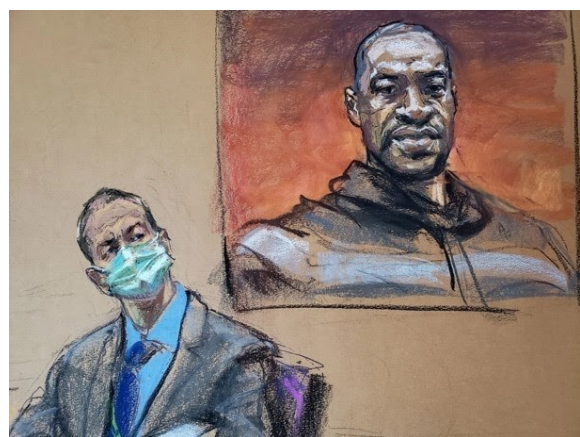
The four police officers are fired a day later, and protests erupt all over the country. They have been tied to the Black Lives Matter organization, which many perceive to be a singular entity with common goals; or as something emerging only as a response to this particular event. In actual fact, BLM is decentralized, meaning without a common leader or a strict doctrine. The common goal is putting an end to police violence, and any racially motivated crime against black people. The murder of George Floyd has since launched BLM into a much universally recognized and widespread movement, due to the protests for Floyd that were tied to each other very closely. These protests began on June 6th, with half a million participants at 550 places around the US. Soon afterwards, more protests took place, spreading to the rest of the world. Overall, in the US, there have been 15-26 million attendants, therefore it has been potentially the largest protest in US history.

When we turn to Derek Chauvin, the main perpetrator of the case, he is currently charged with second-degree murder (intentional and unplanned, "heat of the moment"), third-degree murder (unintentional

and unplanned, "manslaughter"), and second-degree manslaughter (continuing with a reckless act while knowledgeable of the risks). The other police officers at the scene have been charged with aiding and abetting second-degree murder and manslaughter and will stand trial on the 23rd of August 2021. On August 28th, 2020, the legal proceedings for Chauvin commenced. On that day he asked the judge to drop the charges against him, and October 7th he is released from custody with a bond on a 1-million-dollar bail. There is outrage over his release and protests continue.

The jury is selected on March 23rd, 2021, and the trial starts officially on the 29th of March. The defense argues that Chauvin was not aware of Floyd's health conditions, which were heart-related, and that he had drugs in his system. However, an autopsy revealed that his lungs and heart had stopped while Chauvin was kneeling on Floyd's neck, and a pulmonologist (lung doctor) testified that his death was a result of low levels of oxygen and that the drugs had no consequence. The trial is currently being televised online, so only time will tell us whether justice is going to be served.

SOFIA JELIČIĆ



Source: www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-simple-facts-of-derek-chauvins-trial

EDITORS' NOTE

Dear readers,

We hope you're all enjoying the power of the sun and feel the hope in the air as the trees bloom and the covid cases fall. For this edition, you may notice that all of our articles have a theme in common - wanna to take a guess?

Sofi elaborates on the legal aftermath of George Floyd's killing, Matěj gives insight into the past, presence, and even possible future of Kurdistan, while Áďa informs us about the inequality of the digital world, introducing us to gatekeepers, and Šárka uncovering the corruption present in the Czech Republic.

You might have guessed already that this edition of World News is all about justice. We hope you enjoy reading our articles as much as we enjoyed writing them!

JULIE SEDLÁKOVÁ
& ÁĎA ARCHALOUSOVÁ



Source: <https://www.vmcn.ca/t/files/halifaxtoday/images/environment/042120-earth-day-environment.jpg;w=960>

KURDISTAN CHECK

Kurdistan is a territory in Western Asia, which has struggled to gain statehood ever since it was falsely promised by the allies in the Treaty of Sèvres after World War I. The Kurds find themselves in the apex of the three ethno-cultural spheres of the middle east: the Persian, the Turkic, and the Arabic, which is in part the reason why securing statehood is of such difficulty. Historically, the Kurds were Persian, but they broke off culturally and politically in the 10th century at the dusk of the great Persian empires. While frequently a part of various empires and kingdoms, they have always reserved their degree of autonomy, until they were split between Turkey, Iran and the French and British mandates (today's Syria and Iraq respectively) at the end of the First World War.

Iraqi Kurdistan is presumably the most comfortable place for the Kurds. Not only do they have the Kurdistan Region (KRI) which is an *autonomous* region protected under the constitution of Iraq, but the region has an HDI of 7.5, which is barely short of China's. For 70 years following Iraq's independence, the Kurds had been in conflict with the government which cost the Kurdish community lots of lives.

Fighting halted in 1991 when the west started supporting the Kurds; however, the conflict formally concluded in 2005 when the new constitution recognized the KRI. In 2017 skirmishes broke out between the Kurds and Iraq, fortunately fighting ceased and peace talks resumed in 2019. Conflict is no longer the problem, and due to oil, quality of life never was an issue. So, you might think to yourself, this just might be great. However rampant corruption and unhealthy partisanship are efficaciously paralyzing the region leaving mere crumbs of what could be for the many.

Syrian Kurdistan 'Rojava' is on the contrary seemingly the least safe home for the Kurds. For a long time, the aversive was true. While quality of life had never been amazing, it grew significantly in the decades following Syrian independence from the French. But even more importantly, the Kurds were treated quite well: they were not particularly discriminated against on a systemic level, and they actually had political representation. Further, in exchange for keeping their activity outside, Kurdish militias could train and seek shelter in Syria without being prosecuted. This all changed in 2011, when

the Syrian civil war erupted. Since 2011 Rojava has been fending off the Syrian government in the west, the Islamic State in the south and the Turkish invading forces in the north. Their power is fading by the day as US support was cut short, and the government is getting stronger. Many have given up on the fight and sought refuge to the west. As of the time of writing the Syrian Kurdish population is only twice the size of the German Kurdish population.

Turkey and Iran are home to over two thirds of all the world's Kurds, whose condition is very suboptimal. Discrimination ranges from subtle repressions such as denying education in or even the existence of the Kurdish language to police brutality, executions, and political imprisonment. It goes without saying that devolution of power is not on the table, investment is scarce, and all Kurdish militias are declared terrorist organizations. To look at the bright side, crimes against humanity such as bombing of civilians, which have taken place in Syria and Iraq, have in all probability not been committed in Turkey and Iran.

There are two conditions under which the Kurds receive a state. First, all four

governments would need to acknowledge the Kurds independently, which could hardly be further from the truth, but even further these four governments would actually have to hold negotiations where they agree on something. Kurdistan receiving statehood is inconceivably unlikely if we're being optimistic. The name of the game for the Kurds in the upcoming years is securing basic rights within their respective states. Moreover, repressions might not even be the biggest problem for the Kurds, as many struggle to get food on the table. The Kurds hadn't known peace and stability for over a century and securing it is just going to get harder.

MATĚJ MAREK



Source: https://www.economist.com/img/b/1280/720/90/sites/default/files/images/2021/04/articles/main/20210410_fbp003.jpg

DIGITAL GATEKEEPERS

Tech giants such as Apple, Google, and Android have incredible control over the content on their platforms. Custom advertisements and other strategies are often employed to attract customers to use products and services of the tech companies. This gives a huge advantage to these firms and leaves smaller businesses and app producers at their mercy. This is why there has been introduced a new name for these tech giants, "Digital Gatekeepers", for they have complete control over various digital platforms. App producers have recently filed several lawsuits against the digital gatekeepers to the EU Commission and other such municipalities to end the discrimination against small producers in the tech field.

Epic Games, the creator of Fortnite, has been one of the major protesters, accusing Apple of prohibiting Epic Games from Appstore last year without a valid reason. This occurred after Epic Games wanted to present a new pricing system for paying Apple for the services connected to Appstore. After that, Apple blacklisted Epic Games from Appstore and refused to acknowledge the complaints filed by various app producers together with Epic Games regarding antitrust laws of the company.

A similar ongoing case includes Spotify, a music app, which accused Apple of prioritizing Apple Music over the other

streaming apps on Appstore. Apple has allegedly been promoting their own streaming service and requiring 30 percent fees from all app producers to be able to sell their apps on Appstore.

And Epic Games and Spotify are not by far the only cases, they have just recently been in the spotlight as the court case have begun. Smaller businesses often do not have enough resources to file lawsuits against the digital gatekeepers, and so are silenced and discriminated against by the tech giants without any power to oppose. In addition, the judges in both discussed cases have already made statements, that Apple policies are carefully written, and so there is little chance for app producers to succeed with their efforts.

On the other side, the cases are not black and white, as experts stress the fact that digital gatekeepers need high fees and strict policies, so that they don't appear weak to the competition. That is why in the past year, several countries began to discuss the possible solutions to this problem. No policies have been adopted yet, but there has been a collective effort between government bodies and digital gatekeepers, to make the market available and fair for all parties.

ADÉLA ARCHALOUSOVÁ



Source: <https://www.ft.com/content/00d8f8da-fce2-4331-a3ac-5437ad9e2ce7>

CORRUPTION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

One of the current increasing problems in our country is corruption - an abuse of entrusted power for private gain. The Corruption Perceptions Index published annually by Transparency International ranks countries on a scale from 100 (very clean) to 0 (highly corrupt). As of 2020, the current corruption index in the Czech Republic sits at 54, 8th lowest out of 27 EU countries. Furthermore, in 2019, according to an evaluation of 42 countries by the Council of Europe's anti-corruption unit, the Czech Republic was in the very last place when it came to meeting anti-corruption recommendations. So, what is the reason behind this less-than-ideal situation?

In large part, it all comes down to our prime minister, Andrej Babiš, who is in a conflict of interest. The billionaire has made decisions as a premier that benefited his agro-chemical conglomerate, Agrofert. The conflict of interest was confirmed by the European Commission on April 23, 2021. The Czech government is also non-transparent on this issue. It has not released any information on what aid it has given Agrofert during this period, but according to the Pirate party's analysis, the premier has unjustly received grants worth as much as 20 billion CZK in total. The Commission's final audit said the Ministry of Finance should now sue Agrofert to repay the funds, but this

will most likely have to wait until Babiš is no longer in power and is not able to block the process.

Another recent corruption scandal involves Chairman of ANO and Babiš's right-hand man, Jaroslav Faltýnek. Journalists managed to acquire his diary where he kept notes about his business, trades, and grants. He influenced public procurement as well as lobbied for subsidies for his acquaintances. They weren't small negligible trades either; this is about tens and hundreds of million CZK.

Despite the public concern, with politicians themselves being the ones in power, it is often hard to hold them accountable. Political corruption can therefore seem inevitable to a certain extent. However, they still need the consent of the governed. And as is often the case, political corruption of this extent helped undermine public trust in the government. It recently fell to just 19% - making it the lowest in whole Europe. With elections coming up in the fall, this signifies that it will be hard for the government to get re-elected, stay in power, and escape possible consequences.

ŠÁRKA NEUMANNOVÁ



Source: <https://praguebusinessjournal.com/meps-call-on-babis-to-resolve-conflict-of-interest/>

This edition of the Open Gate Chronicle is dedicated to Mr. Petr Kellner, the founder and benefactor of our school. We will always be grateful for his generosity and support, which has made studying here a reality for so many of us. His commitment to our education and the opportunities he has provided for us will leave a legacy that is something to be proud of. Thank you.

– The OG Journalism Club



THE BEAUTY OF ANIME FILMS

The online movie streaming platform has grown rapidly since people were forced to stay at home for longer periods of time. However, after seeing hundreds of films with similar visuals and plots, the overall impression from them becomes repetitive. Yet there are still certain movies, that are exceptionally original not only in the way they are portrayed but even with their message, so they give the audience an outstanding perception. One of these rare masterpieces are the anime movies of Japanese creator Hayao Miyazaki. Generally, people's first thoughts, when it comes to anime, are about the extravagant introverted cosplayers, who are occasionally showing off with their fluent Japanese, which is hard to judge because nobody in our lands really speaks the language. Still, I believe that there is something more to those films than just this, as the spectator can get an authentic view of Japanese traditions, history, values and mythology while still being entertained.

Nausicaa of the Valley of The Wind

It is set in a post-apocalyptic era, when civilization was destroyed by a war and the remaining groups of people have to face the "Toxic Jungle," which is one of the many unfortunate consequences of the war and where it is impossible to breathe without a mask without suffocating. Similarly to many other movies from studio Ghibli, this story addresses the ideas of pacifism, environmentalism and the need symbiosis between humans and nature. This is all delineated by the main protagonist - Nausicaa, who wants to prove that nature is not the people's enemy, and that humanity can survive only when it understands its keystone.



Source: <https://www.brightwalldarkroom.com/2020/10/15/nausicaa-of-the-valley-of-the-wind/>

Princess Mononoke

Until the release of Spirited away, this movie was the biggest Japanese blockbuster, which made anime famous around the world. It is a unique piece of historian fantasy (plot set in 14. - 15. century of the late Muromachi period in Japan), which describes the adventures of prince Ashitaka, who is cursed by a demon while protecting his village. As a result of this, he is forced to leave his home and seek help elsewhere in the world. On his way, he encounters a group of people lead by the ambitious she-leader Eboshi, who built a prosperous industrial city, but to the detriment of the surrounding forests and their spirits. Again, there is an evident topic of conflict between man and nature, as the ancient forest and its inhabitants comes to an end when facing fire powder and steel. This gives

the movie its timelessness and makes the audience think.

Spirited Away

It is considered to be one of the best animated films ever made, with its immense popularity across the globe, and which also won 34 awards, including the Academy Award for best animated film. Not to mention the fact that it is one of the highest grossing films in Japan with top rankings on films databases in most countries. The main plot focuses on the story of ten-year-old Chihiro, who accidentally enters the magic world of Kami (based on traditional Japanese folkloric religion of Shinto) with her parents, who are turned into pigs because of their greediness. To save them and get herself and her family free, Chihiro must take a job as a worker in a ghost Bathhouse, where she works under Yubaba. The movie later explores several rather shrouded themes, for instance, apart from the already mentioned greed of the parents, which symbolizes the negative impact of western-style consumption on modern Japanese families, the issue of pollution is also presented, which is another significant problem of modern society. This is portrayed by a "Ghost of Stink", who visits the bathhouse and Chihiro realizes that he is actually a river spirit, who has become polluted due to all the human-made trash that is stuck in him.

Howl's Moving Castle

Another extremely famous and successful anime movie, which, as it is normal in these films, goes beyond the basic narrative and combines history, fantasy, drama and a moral lesson, thus creating another jewel of Japanese cinematography. As the main setting for the story, the conflict between the two kingdoms is accompanied by technology from the early 20th century, traditionally combined with magic. It tells the story of a young woman Sophie, who is turned into an old woman by a spell that a witch curses her with. Sophie later meets a young wizard Howl, who helps her to stop the war and revert the spell. As usual, the movie focuses on several topics such as pacifism (this movie was created as a critique of the US' invasion of Iraq), the lives of the elderly and the value of compassion, which all help the movie create its unique overlap.



Source: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/howls-moving-castle-2004-review-stunning-reaction-to-the-invasion-of-iraq-hgp3wt9l2>

NATHAN KRATOCHVÍLA

DIWHY

Tired of your **sunglasses** falling down to your nose, when you try to wear them on your head?

Try this **stylish** and **practical** **DIY**.

STEP 1
Tear off the layer covering the back side of a self-adhesive hook

STEP 2
Put the hook on your forehead. Push strongly enough so it attaches properly to your skin.

STEP 3
Hook up your shades any time you don't want them to protect your eyes.

You are done!
Now, just enjoy the pure **coolness** of this lifehack

DANIEL STRAND

Hi, should people in love look at age? I like someone 10 years older, and I wonder if you think such a relationship could work. Thank you.

From my perspective, age in the context of a relationship is just a social construct, which fluctuates with every time period and by its societal rigidity destroys potentially fruitful couples. Try to judge the future of your relationship from yours and your partner's point of view, not from society's perspective, and if you are both satisfied, go for it. It has become a kind of cliché these days, but still, you should do what you want and not what society and its "norms" expect from you - this way you will never be truly happy. If you pretend to be something you are not, you will not have the chance to recognize your needs in life, and hence never achieve your real goals and fulfil your life. I hope that you find this answer helpful, and good luck!

MILOSLAVA MACKOVÁ



Source: <https://gettotext.com/relationship-age-difference-how-big-is-too-big/>

MOVEMENT OF IMPROVEMENT

Searing streaks of sunlight, so sharp they cut our eyesight

Bright and clear yet you don't see what's near

I aim to grow, however "lazy" is better, it's been like this forever.

Should I eat now or never? This couch's better.

I heard there's people outside my window, although I feel more like a widow.

It was hoped for a year ago, though it's a second one already and all's slow.

I've been staring at my ceiling, feeling bored overhauled by no thought, my brain is drowning in a draught.

The ageless library of pages called the Mind of the courageous

Is tenacious with changes, indolence and its stages are contagious and dangerous.

What I fear for is not the increase in disease, but the sloth and its deadly peace.

Once we get up from sleep, where rest cuts deep rather than heals,

Will we remember the source that endorses the return to our courses?

Have we grown accustomed to no adjustment, staying reluctant and disgusted by work?

We lurk in our homes, like catacombs, unknown

A human is prone to postpone until they're overthrown.

In conclusion to our confusion, physical function is the solution.

SERGEJ ŽUKOV

A SIEVE ON RELATIONSHIPS

Growing up with girls at the dormitory, I have often found myself in the position of a non-paid relationship expert and therapist. The strong feeling I got from our night chats that relationships are actually terrifying and difficult has multiplied thanks to Mr. Jan Vojtko from Charles University and his online lecture, "Relationships are a swot". Based on Vojtko's opinion, my own experience, and stories I have heard from others, I have realized one extremely important thing - at least for me: if you mix together a relationship, a concept associated with a natural struggle, and coronavirus, a concept provoking subconscious fear, you either get a "Happily ever after" or Armageddon. Overall, the coronavirus crisis can be perceived as an efficient sieve on relationships in determining their authenticity and firmness.

At the beginning of the pandemic, there appeared two very distinct predictions regarding the development of partner relationships - the number of newborn babies would either increase or the incidence of divorces would sharply rise during the one year period. To the surprise of many, the second case has proven to be statistically true. In this particular instance, the lockdown showed its destructive power as a sieve since it brought home couples that escaped their households through work responsibilities and they had to face their frequently neglected relationship issues. Some realized they do

not even know who their partner is as a person anymore because they have not been committed enough to finding out. Or simply the relationship became annoying and unbearable due to spending the past year with a single person who ignores your needs, does not give you enough attention or fills the dishwasher in a way that makes you frustrated. Coronavirus forced people to pause for a certain time and conduct an introspection. Some became happy parents as they finally had time for each other and used it efficiently, some abandoned a relationship that was toxic or unfulfilling. In both cases, the outcomes might be perceived as relatively positive in the long-term perspective.

From my own perspective, I have to confess that I myself experienced a very eye-opening moment not long ago in terms of relationships and I am going to utilize it as a good example for my next point. The prohibition of travel among regions separated many couples who were left to rely on virtual communication and I was not an exception. I have never thought of myself as struggling with communication nor expressing my mind. Yet for a good tennis game you obviously need two skillful and willing players. In my case, the other player star-



Source: https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/bDvTjlbTKYNOY30Cal2g74qLxt_05IRBpzlrCYjIXNKZKJJiTShnTiuhn-z9hGkueQiTA=s121

ted to skive off causing the game to suck and, on top of that, he left the court and only silence remained. The crisis, again acting as a metaphoric sieve, revealed who is a bad candidate for dating and who would qualify for the Olympics in relationships.

All in all, the pandemic brought couples together but also split up many others. Similar to how our grandmothers used the sieve to separate the grain from the weeds, the coronavirus crisis sifted all relationships. Divorces and breakups are associated with a negative connotation, yet one has to realize they happen for a reason and if we grasp these with a perspective of healing and self-worth, they can serve us only to our good.

JASMÍNA ŠVARCROVÁ

EDITOR'S NOTE

As time inevitably flows by and the winds carry with them a fresh summer breeze, it is nevertheless important to occasionally take a step back and see what has changed. Even small things can have a major impact, which is why the writers of the social commentary section devoted their articles in this edition to observations they made recently.

No two articles are alike, and this goes doubly so in this edition. Jasmína focused on how the lockdown was a challenge for relationships and how it left only the best ones standing, whilst Anne regards the past year from the perspective of an erratic musician. Josephine discusses whether introverts have thrived under the current conditions, and Nick looks at the role of cyclists in society. Lastly, Viktor discusses his predicament caused by the upcoming Czech election, and Calista shares her view on the digitalisation of our world.

Just due to the sheer variety in topics, the social commentary section includes something for everyone in this edition. Yet even if one of the titles does not sound appealing, I encourage you to give it a try. You might just be surprised by what you find.

NICOLAS WICHERT

VOTER TIME SADNESS

This year I will vote for the first time, and I do not know who for. Is it my fault? Upon observing the political landscape, I have concluded that it is utterly uninspiring. Politicians should be moral and spiritual leaders, but that does not seem to be the case. I expect from them a radical individuality and an extreme responsibility. Politicians should be motivated by more than "wanting to help". They should feel that it is their God-given mission to serve, that they cannot do otherwise but enter politics. Admittedly, my demands may be too high. Perhaps I would only trust one in a million people. So, should there not be at least 10? Is the current political make-up the best we can produce as a nation?

Looking at the previous paragraph, it appears as though I expect to watch the political scene as one does a cabaret. Such point of view shuns from individual responsibility. That can't be right. Democracy gives us not only the freedom of political participation, but also implies an obligation to be actively involved. If there are few inspiring people in politics, aren't the voters to blame for not providing sufficient platforms for true leaders? I should not be surprised that few people feel a God-given mission in the world's most atheistic country. It makes sense that politicians offer shallow visions for the future, if we lack a deep connection to our country and do not hold ourselves accountable to robust transcendental ideals. The clown I laugh at is my reflection.

OK, so let's say I want to take responsibility and make my vote truly count. What do I do? Yes, I will educate myself, and yes, I will take time to study what each party can offer. But that does not seem to be enough. Looking around me, I feel alone. How should a young person participate in the civic society other than by going to protest once a year and posting black squares on social media? How many even small actions add up to a noticeable signal - how can I make my voice be heard and worth hearing? And when I am at a loss, where can I share my uncertainties? There do not seem to be voices in the public discourse offering satisfactory answers.

So, who is at fault for my uncertainty? It could be the uninspiring politicians, my lack of engagement, or the insufficient support network for first time voters like me. It could be all three. What do we do with this information? While I do not offer an answer, in the spirit of this article I have yet another round of questions, this time for you. Do you feel represented by our politicians? Are you participating politically enough? Do you feel there are people or institutions you could turn to for help? My guess is that most answers will be negative. These questions are the source of anxiety young voters feel. Overcoming this anxiety is in my opinion the greatest unaddressed political challenge.

VIKTOR ŘÍHA

INTROVERTS, REJOICE! (OR NOT?)

Back in the days when restrictions laid heavily upon the country, when the vile virus sowed fear into people's hearts and when our minister of health wasn't yet the man who wants to vaccinate people with uncertified Russian substances, that is when one weary person sighed and said: "I'm tired of this. I miss people."

This person was one of my friends and although she was the first one whom I heard address this issue head on, her sentiment was no doubt shared by many throughout the whole nation and the world. It is no surprise after all that people felt isolated when we were in a period called social isolation. During this time, our social circles were forcibly shrunk and unless you were to break the rules, the only allowed and meaningful face to face contact was with those that one lived in a shared household with. We had adapted to this situation, somehow, but it still took a toll on the mental health of many. So many people felt alone, hopeless, without a will to do anything save the bare minimum needed to survive.

Some said that this was the golden age for introverts, an age when they are finally not forced to interact with too many people every day, when they can comfortably do everything from home. They said that introverts do not suffer from this crisis that much. This claim is partially true, in that people who wish to can comfortably do everything from home. Nonetheless, presuming that introverts would be at their happiest during this period would be simply wrong. Not only does every human being

need at least some interaction with other human beings in order not to go mad, but people, even introverts, usually prefer having a choice instead of being forced to something. Additionally, we must not forget that social media play a big role today and while they may not be a sufficient substitute for face-to-face contacts, for some these may be enough to feel content with their level of social interaction. Some people I know, who themselves claim to be introverted, have indeed been happier in this period, in part due to the fact that they can chat with their close ones on social media. Other introverts have suffered just as much as those who would call themselves extroverted.

This whole situation, the issue of being or not being content in the face of forced social isolation, provokes a question in my mind. The question is, is there even something like a "true" introvert? And by true introvert I mean someone who truly enjoys being in contact with only a minimum of people, someone who would not suffer mentally if forced to stay in one household with the same two or three people for a prolonged period of time, without having any means of contacting anyone outside the household. Is it possible for such a person to exist? One would think that this crisis would reveal the answer to this question, but as it seems, it has rather served to confuse the matter even more.

JOSEFÍNA DUŠKOVÁ

ARE CYCLISTS BAD PEOPLE?

Cycling is undoubtedly one of the most popular ways of recreation and transportation around the world. Nonetheless, that does not mean it is appreciated by all. Those most hateful towards cyclists are generally seen to be drivers, having to maneuver around them on many commutes. Yet even those just taking a casual walk, especially if they have never actually driven a bike themselves, might be annoyed by cyclists zipping around them constantly. But given the many bike-enthusiasts swearing by it, can cycling truly be called a hindrance to society? As someone who has held all three of these views, I shall attempt to answer this age-old conundrum.

I have long had a rather tense relation with the bicycle. Never having successfully learned to ride one for 18 years, it is unsurprising that I found it hard to appreciate its qualities. In the cycling-obsessed Czech Republic, it is difficult to go on a calm summer's noon walk without being constantly harassed by the breeze of passing cyclists. This did (and occasionally still does) bother me, especially on narrow forest paths where being run over by a bicycle often seems only a hair's breadth away. Whilst most cyclists are far from reckless, this problem still exists, being worsened by the reality that few pay attention to it.

Now, I doubt there exists anyone with a driver's license who has never made at least one hostile remark about cyclists.

This is caused primarily by a group of them which sees the road as their personal property, thinking it perfectly acceptable to cycle a meter from the curbs in heavy traffic. Admittedly, there is little that feels worse than being forced to drive at 10 km/h because someone's great-grandfather decided to do some early-morning cycling. Whilst such behaviour is infrequent, it still happens often enough to represent a problem.



Source: <https://www.forestholidays.co.uk/thorpe-forest/cycling/>

It is about time to say something positive about cycling. It is fun *and* healthy. Those two qualities alone make it incredibly valuable. In terms of speed, it occupies a middle ground between walking and driving. Like walking, it is eco-friendly, as it takes its energy not from dead dinosaurs, but you, and in cities, its speed can often match that of cars in congested traffic whilst avoiding the many

frustrations of daily commutes. All in all, even though it is easy to complain about cyclists, it is imperative to remain aware of the many benefits of cycling, of which there are too many to list here.

In retrospect, it seems clear that the problem is not cyclists in general, but only some individuals who remain ignorant of their negative effect on others. Unfortunately, prison is too extreme a punishment for their sins, but regardless,

a better solution exists - cycling paths. Whilst not a new invention, they are sorely lacking in most countries across the world, even though they allow cyclists to have their own space where they do not inconvenience others. As a bonus, they are appreciated by all cyclists, not just the irresponsible ones. Whilst not a panacea for this societal disease, it is time to put an end to the bilateral hostility and instead

focus on providing cyclists with the same infrastructure as has been granted to pedestrians and vehicles.

NICOLAS WICHERT

LESSONS LEARNT FROM AN ERRATIC MUSICIAN

Finding an escape from the reality of these unusual times seems to become harder and harder with each lockdown and government scandal. While all the other avenues — reading, Netflix, learning Irish, you name it — have overtime failed, music remains the lone winner of my ongoing game of escapism. Besides much needed consolation, listening to and performing classical music led me to an interesting observation: our government's handling of the pandemic resembles the style of a whimsical musician and we can perhaps all cope with it better using some of music's most important lessons.

While the government's execution of law and order often resembles the transcription of Liszt's La Campanella in



Source: Collage created by the author

both incomprehensible virtuosity and chaos, classical music helps us develop empathy and bear with its (hopefully) last swan song. Given that classical music mostly doesn't make use of words, much like our president in the matter of supporting the nation, the interpretation of its intentions remains open. Consider the inspiration for Rachmaninoff's Prelude in C-Sharp Minor Op.3, No.2. Young Sergei once had a dream of attending a funeral. He starts walking to a distant coffin with increasing speed, finally opening it in horror to discover his dead body inside. Empathising with the description of that very specific emotional experience on paper is nearly impossible. Listening to the piece he composed to depict it however adds a new-found layer of meaning to something so imperceptible, demonstrating classical music's power in enlarging the limits of our ability to tune into the feelings of others. And so, next time you feel like you do not understand the newest government restrictions which "limit your freedom on nonsensical grounds", listen to Mozart's Lacrimosa to empathise with the feeling of death's proximity experienced by patients in crowded hospitals, and perhaps discover meaning in them after all.

No regrets, no turning back. This notoriously annoying saying, and seemingly the motto of our government these past couple of months, must have been invented by a musician, a really reckless per-

son, or likely, both. The first lesson every music student learns is that once you make a mistake, you act like it never happened. However counterintuitive it may feel, musicians are encouraged to always move over mistakes. No regrets, no turning back. Instead of meddling in mistakes past, no turning back can often lead to a more stable trajectory moving forwards. And for those questioning the learning benefit of this rule, rest assured that both musicians and politicians are still painfully aware (or made aware) of the mistakes they make. Crucially, the experience of the audience or the spirit of the nation remains collected.

Overall, it seems to me that our government has dealt with the pandemic like an erratic musician. The never-ending staccato of press conferences and changing of health ministers at a higher frequency than Schubert's changing of keys undoubtedly made the government sink down in the nation's chart. Classical music's lessons in empathy and moving over mistakes may however help us all persevere through its future debacles. There is one last musical lesson which might assist us in that endeavour: repetition. After all, practice, in music and covid politics, makes perfect.

ANNE-MARIA MATEJAS

DIGITALISATION

Over the past year, throughout lockdown, the world has adapted to face covid 19. Although it had a very negative effect on us and the way we function, it has also brought many positive ones, such as the modernisation of society or a complete change of our lifestyle.

From kids to seniors, we have been exposed to technology from a very young age. It didn't play a massive part in life until the past year, with covid hitting us. There has been a massive increase in technology ownership during the lockdown, with people having to buy computers, phones to fulfil their job, school work. Yet, we still managed to find a way to practice normal activities in a slightly formatted version and a way to keep up with our life prior to the lockdown. We still get to go to school, work, or perhaps even sports via the online world. When we look more into the school world and how it works, we can acknowledge the progress we made in the project making area. Society managed to find a way to make mind-maps, posters, or presentations using a computer or other mobile device.

But with digitalisation came a new threat: tracking, which is a big problem within modern-day technologies. There are plenty of users concerned about their safety online and their privacy being intruded upon. Although there are many websites that are safe and do not track your information via cookies, for example, there are plenty of others that do. Whether it is for statistics, the company's needs or to keep track of all its users, it does not provide users with a sense of safety.

There are many ways to prevent that from happening, such as downloading anti-virus softwares, not interacting with any sketchy websites or keeping your account private. Often, these methods are pretty efficient, but there have been many cases where people can break into your pc and collect all your data. A few hacker groups have not only targeted hospitals, companies but government officials as well.

In my opinion, digitalisation has evolved society in certain aspects, but it has come with many obstacles that need to be solved. On one hand, it is fascinating to learn about the technologies we use to travel to space or just go to school, but on the other hand, I and many others are very concerned about our safety and the safety of others. But digitalisation will also evolve in a way nobody imagined it would. Either it will be used for learning, discovering, exploring new planets, perhaps, or it will be weaponised and used against people.

CALISTA MAŘÍKOVÁ



Source: <https://www.smart-energy.com/news/why-digitalisation-is-a-key-enabler-of-the-energy-transition/>

MUSE OF REBIRTH EMOTIONS ARE LIKE WEATHER

Dear readers, welcome to the first (and likely last) part of Miki's view into literature. In this (probably non-) recurring rubric, I would like to focus on different literary genres, styles, forms, etc. providing you with a quick overview of the subject and more importantly an example of my own creation. This time, we will be looking at lyric prose. Lyric prose is a lovely type of prose, the form of text which we most commonly read, as it encompasses mainly the writer's (or lyrical subject's) feelings. As opposed to epic texts which focus on telling a story, developing plots and characters, lyric texts give the author space to pour their heart out. This applies to both prose and poetry. The wonder of lyric prose, as opposed to poetry, is that the author is not confined by any form or template they should stick to. While writing poetry, we often get the sense that we have to follow a certain structure (which could not be farther from the truth) which can often limit us in our language and expression. Writing in prose gets rid of this feeling, as it is just plain text and, therefore, gives us all the freedom we need to express ourselves.

In the wake of Aries' birth, I found myself lost in a strangely wonderful, wonderfully strange land beset on all sides by the Muse of rebirth. Wandering the dreamy place, reality warping around itself as if every single cell was bound to change, I was taken aback by the gurgle of a nearby babbling brook. The moist dirt wrapped around my feet as I strolled through the land of incoherent isles of matter led only by the friendly banter of the stream. Thereupon, I met my distant friend, eye to water, water to eye, in an exchange of ideas dominated by one side and one side only, the brook. As it spoke to me through the tears of a forest, I found a white rabbit laid down on the ground in an embrace of death with the earth that fed and killed it. Its fur laid still in the sudden burst of steam except for a few hairs, almost hidden under't. Therefrom crawled a little ball of black and white, no larger than an olive grown on the hills of sunny Crete, and looked upon my very soul, laid bare in the morning wind. Unable to bear the pleading look upon my soul, I took the ball of fur and dipping it in the brook left the land, oh, so wonderfully strange, strangely wonderful, with the Muse in hand.

MIKULÁŠ ŠKORPIL



Source: Photo provided by the author

But is the weather like our emotions? Think of yourself as the clear blue sky. Each day different circumstances pass us, just as clouds spread and travel through the sky. Luckily, they always "come and go". No emotional state, extreme as it might be, is temporary and neither is the weather. What a deep thought-provoking introduction to set the atmosphere, but have you ever before wondered how similar are we to these atmospheric conditions?

If I would be to dive into this topic through the factual side, worldwide research prove that people exposed to more sunlight and warmer temperatures suffer from fewer mental problems, lack of motivation, and emotional lability. Exposure to sunlight triggers the brain's release of the hormone serotonin, which is associated with feeling focused and content along with boosting your mood. Nevertheless, even the common sense hints us that with nice weather around we are more likely to be more physically active, socially involved, and overall, creative and joyful. Consequently, someone looking for proof and cause of their psychological problems might just easily state that they are depressed due to the climate in the area they live in.

However, one famous influencer, who transforms his powerful speeches into music, correctly stated that "You might be experiencing depression, but you are not depressed". Just as I introduced us

through the simile of the sky, this influencer says "Depression, frustration, sadness... these are passing clouds, but they always come and go and even though they seem like it, they are NOT the sky." Therefore, like the sky, we never leave when emotions go, "we are always there." The main statement he tries to make is that we are just "a witness and a perceiver of a depression", but we are not depressed. Now even though, these bold opinions might seem disrespectful towards the ones who are medically diagnosed with some psychological condition, the aim is to stop using these true diseases as labels to excuse our bad mood. Additionally, it focuses on getting rid of it through positivity and change our outlook on feeling down. So, "never identify with that which comes and goes".



Source: <https://blogs.umsd.edu/news/2018/06/07/prince-ea-2/>



Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/pelesfury/2820208740>

After all, how come that even without the knowledge of the scientific link between our emotions and the weather we all tend to believe it? How come we associate our behaviour with something so common as the sky? Maybe it is due to the fact it is so common and none of us in the world would not have it around. And maybe because the sky is the thing we look up to when we search for hope when we are finding it in ourselves. In the core of our minds, we all thrive to achieve happiness, but what most of us do not realize is that happiness is not to be achieved but is to be lived. So, look up to the sky, standing tall, to remember that YOU are always here.

MICHAELA RENDLOVÁ

THE GREATEST SPORT WITHOUT PEOPLE

The title of this article may seem a bit cryptic, but I assure you that you have already experienced it. It may have appeared in your YouTube recommendations as a part of the algorithm, you might have seen a tweet talking about it. You have maybe even already watched it once! I am of course talking about the best sport humanity has ever created: Marble racing. Okay... let's back up a bit here. What am I actually talking about?

Marble racing is a sport where you create a course for small marble balls to race in. There are two main ways of doing this: physically or virtually. Physically making courses is exactly how it sounds like. You build out a track in real life. A popular way is to dig out a long track in the sand, with some twists and turns. A much more visually pleasing way to make physical tracks is using construction toys and building something not too distinct from a real racing track. The absolute kings of this genre are Jelle's Marble Runs. They build intricate, amazing tracks that lend themselves to give a new sense of legitimacy to these races which they wouldn't have otherwise.

Virtual races, on the other hand, are usually created in a program called Algodoo, which is a program meant to teach physics, but here it's used for much more useful activity. One advantage of virtual marble races is that they don't have to necessarily conform to the standards of reality. The balls can be made as

light as possible, making it possible for them to make jumps which would not be possible in real life. Another positive feature of these races is that you can get a bit more creative with their concepts, like the elimination race, where marbles race normally, but the marble in the last place is always eliminated by a minute-long timer. Due to how accessible this genre of marble racing is, there are a lot of great choices to pick from. You have MIKAN, Jack Spero, RapterSonic, and the self-appointed Marble Race King.

Now, you're probably still not convinced that this is a very fun sport to watch, and I understand that. It's admittedly a hard sell. So, I will pull out my last card: A comeback story for the ages. I've already mentioned Jelle's Marble Runs as the kings of physical marble races, and they have an annual competition named

"Marble League", where teams of marbles compete in many events and accumulate points to see who is the best team. The 2017 edition of the league had the Savage Speeders completely dominate the competition, going into the second last round with a 25 point lead. But, by a stroke of luck, they managed to finish in the bottom half in the last event, giving enough leadway for the second team, the O'rangars, to finish second in the event and win the entire league. These are the kinds of moments that make a sport sport, and they happen relatively commonly in marble racing. They are the moments that will make you emotional... over some marble balls. And if that isn't a mark of a perfect sport, I don't know what is.

IVAN PAVLOVEC



Source: <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/03/why-marble-racing-is-so-popular-online.html>



WHAT IS LAB LIFE LIKE?

Recently, I had the opportunity to ask one scientist from a lab where I intern a few questions. Masha talks about how she got to work at the Academy of Sciences (Institute of Molecular Genetics, IMG), her daily routine as a worker in a lab, as well as her own research project and areas of scientific development that she is hopeful about...

Hi Masha, how are you, and what has made your day today?

Hi Vojta, thanks for asking. I'm fine. Considering the fact it's weekend, I've been cooking and cleaning all day, and I made my very first pumpkin gnocchi... in return, they made my day :).

I don't recall ever tasting those, thanks for the tip! Could you briefly explain to our readers how did you even end up at IMG? Were you always interested in science?

Since I was a kid, I enjoyed biology at school. I come from a family of doctors, so naturally, I was considering either becoming one too or taking the biology or chemistry path. And then, when I was sixteen, I fell deeply in love with chemistry... and ever since dreamt of becoming a chemist...

My plans changed a bit again after moving from Russia to the Czech Republic. Eventually, I studied Analytical Chemistry together with Biochemistry at VŠCHT, followed by working at the Czech Centre

for Phenogenomics for some time. Thankfully, my supervisor was very passionate about her work, which later inspired me to continue with my studies for a PhD.

Glad to hear that! So, what would you normally do at the Institute (apart from giving interviews like this)?

I can tell you how Monday at my work usually looks like: I come at 9 am and plan work for the upcoming week in advance (after having some coffee with my colleagues). Then I follow with the experiments. Another fundamental part of my daily routine is checking on our mouse models, making sure they have the right conditions (all of this while wrapped up in a crazy-looking suit, to maintain the sufficient hygiene standard). At the end of the day, I try to analyze the results to decide on the next step in terms of the project.

Out of the things you are working on at the moment, what excites you the most? And on the other hand, are there some less great aspects of your job or studies?

My research involves two ongoing projects which fascinate me. The focus of the first one is finding new genes responsible for the differentiation of hematopoietic stem cells (HSC, cells responsible for giving rise to all the mature blood cells) into mature granulocytes. Newly discovered genes can help us to better understand how some blood diseases occur and how

we can possibly treat them in the future. The second one is related to how HSC mobilization (meaning cells leaving the bone marrow and going to a periphery) is affected by a chronic inflammation condition. In clinics, mobilization is used to gain more of the hematopoietic stem cells from a healthy donor to later transplant them in the recipients. Therefore, it's important to understand how mobilization is affected in patients suffering from such kinds of conditions (cancer, diabetes, or arthritis, for instance) and what mechanisms are responsible for the mobilization itself.



The author's photo of Masha's research group from the Laboratory of Haematology (led by Dr. Jordà, Masha is the third from left).

I would say for sure that especially PhD is not for everybody. Those who consider becoming a scientist must keep in mind that in many aspects, doing PhD is a lot different from studying at a university. During your PhD, you need to become even more independent, trying to think widely, and never be scared of failing (since there are going to be many fails dis-

couraging you from continuing with the program). All that I'm trying to say is; you really need to be in love with science to enjoy your every day at work as well as during the studies.

To conclude this interview on a slightly different note, looking even outside of your field, where do you see the next big steps for science? What areas of development are you most hopeful about?

There is a lot of amazing scientific development ongoing in the research society, so it's hard for me to pick just one. Certainly, throughout the past few years, one of the biggest steps made was the development of CRISPR, the (almost) easy and universal technology of future genome editing. It's a really promising tool not only in basic research but in clinics as well. It was already applied in several gene therapies, in one of them the patient received its edited bone marrow cells in order to cure a blood disease. This, I think, is the most promising tool for treating more diseases in the near future.

That sounds rather promising to me, to say the least! Thank you for introducing us to your experiences in research. Hopefully, it inspires more people to follow their passion for science, or pretty much anything.

VOJTĚCH PAVROVSKÝ

ONE YEAR AT HOME: AN INTERVIEW WITH MYSELF

In the first half of March, it has been a year since Open Gate shut down and since then, I have not been there for more than a month. I have already interviewed my sister about how she studies online in the Netherlands (via autumn edition), but I have not had time to reflect on my year, so I decided to interview myself to find out how did my life changed over this period.

PART 1: SHUT DOWN

Today, I have an interesting guest here with me, can you shortly introduce yourself, please?

I am Adam Chára, I am 16 years old, and I study at the Open Gate School.

Firstly, let us go back one year into the past. What happened on the day the whole school closed?

It all happened so quickly. I remember being in our history class with Mr. Kašpar that day. In the middle of the lesson, the school radio made a sound, but nobody thought it would be something special, but the voice of the deputy headmaster said that, because of the government orders, all the schools in Czechia were closing immediately and that we should contact our parents to take us home. Some people cheered, some did not. Mr. Kašpar could not believe it. Unfortunately, it was the last time I saw him in person.

How were the first couple of weeks online?

They were hard, especially because people were not ready for studying online and we were experimenting with different platforms, such as Webex, Google Meet, and Zoom. Many people did not have a stable internet connection and I can only imagine how hard it had to be for them as well as the teachers that were not so skilled with technology. I had found it easy and I did not do much at that time.

PART 2: REINVENTION

With so much time away from your friends at home, what did you do to prevent yourself from getting bored?

I played football in the garden, but I was never a good football player. Although it wasn't something I was particularly good at, it lasted me a month and a half. I also did much more exercising, and I did it all with my dad which made it even more fun and fulfilling. It was only after that when I started playing basketball.

How did you get to playing basketball in the first place?

Before we left school for online learning, we played basketball in PE lessons and though we played it every year, suddenly I felt different about it and it was much more amusing than before. So, I decided to build a basketball hoop in my garden with some old PVC pipes. I also started watching videos on YouTube on

how to play. It took some time but I felt good playing it and little by little, it became my favourite sport.

How did your basketball career evolve before the summer holidays?

The career did not evolve that much because of Covid 19. I was playing and at the start of May, I signed up for a basketball team in Prague. I had a couple of trainings with them, and I was ready to get even better over the summer to catch up with the skills of other players. I knew that because of the regulations, we were going to be at home a lot over the summer which made it perfect for training.

PART 3: CRUTCHES

Although you had big plans, it ended up very differently than you wanted it to, didn't it?

It did. I was playing a pickup basketball game in Moravia against some guys when I was at my grandmother's, and in one play, I planted my foot badly and twisted my ankle. It hurt badly, and in a few minutes my ankle got two times bigger than it was. I had crutches for 2 weeks and then we went home.

But that was not all. It was painful when I ran so we went to an expert and it turned out that I had a torn ligament in my ankle, so the 2 weeks with crutches did not help at all and I was given a cast on the ankle. They gave me crutches for

another month. But I knew that health comes before sport.

PART 4: SECOND LOCKDOWN

You came back to school at the start of the school year for a month before another lockdown. Was the second one any better?

Most definitely, because the school united on one app, Microsoft Teams, and teachers were already prepared. The transition was very smooth, and it did not catch anyone by surprise. I had some training with the team before they shut down and I knew how to train and how to achieve the goals I set for myself.

How did you celebrate Christmas in these hard times?

In all the chaos and regulations, Christmas was the only thing that remained the same. We celebrated it as we do every year and that gave us the sense of good old days and patience to believe that it will eventually end.

PART 5: REFLECTION

How is 2021 going for you so far?

It is better than the previous year. I enjoy school much more than before and got used to being at home. I have a plan for every day, so life is good again. I am still hoping that we will renew the training and school as soon as possible.

ADAM CHÁRA



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