

The Gadfly

Unreliable Narrators Since 470 BCE

WEATHER: *Varies based on the mood, location, and disposition of the reader; generally sunny*

Serious [adjective] - /'sɪə.ri.əs/
"Not joking or trifling; being in earnest"

Example:

The Gadfly is a serious newspaper

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Issue #7

March, 2026

Five Dollars



The Widening Gap of Education

By Mateo Grgić
Citations on page 24

The Gadfly has examined the death of intellectualism many a time—to an almost overdone degree.¹ However, there's always been an ever-present, ironic lilt to our mockery: we make fun of TikTok, administration, and ignorant politicians, but more as an act of escape than a critique of some imagined intellectual regression; higher education continues to provide the same intellectual depth as it always has, even if the forthleading period of purgatorial waiting has diverged in rigour over time. Intellectualism isn't dead, not really. Anyone with sufficient grit can climb the ladder and ascertain the grandeur—the shape—of human knowledge; they could enter, live, and breathe academia.

Unfortunately, Doug Ford.

In late February, Ford's Conservative government announced two landmark decisions concerning education: funding for the Ontario Student Assistance Program (hereafter referred to simply as "OSAP," as per the official government naming convention) was cut significantly, and the tuition freeze that had been in place since 2019—over seven years—was ended.² The concept of OSAP was first introduced in 1966, with POSAP by Bill Davis—the

then minister of Ontario University Affairs.³ POSAP was a way for impoverished students to still get an education. After a loan ceiling—being \$150 back then—the government steps in, paying non-repayable grants; in other words, the government would pay for your education almost entirely in full.⁴ This concept—being that the government pays for the education of the students who are willing, but unable financially to go to university—remained for in excess of 60 years. Until the February cuts, OSAP would cover 85% of tuition in non-repayable grants, leaving only 15% of tuition to have to be loaned; allowing for a more accessible education for everyone.⁵ With the cuts to OSAP, Ford's government has flipped the script: now the government will only cover 25% of tuition costs, relegating 75% of the remaining tuition costs to loans subject to the usual interest & credit stipulations.⁶ This single action will make university unattainable for tens of thousands—if not hundreds of thousands—of Ontarian students.⁷

To add insult to injury, with reduced tuition coverage, Ford's government also raised the extant tuition freeze after "massive pressure" from starving universities.⁸ Seemingly going back on his former 2019 10% tuition price

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"If at any moment we may perish, so equally at any moment we might be saved"

slash, now tuition prices can increase by 2% each year going forwards.⁹ These combining actions—one reducing the coverage for poorer students, the other increasing the barrier to entry for all—bring higher education from being an egalitarian meritocracy in search of knowledge, to an institution purely for the job market, as per Doug Ford's explicitly stated motivations: "...A lot of the students, you know, you are picking basket-weaving courses and there are not too many baskets being sold out there. Go into healthcare, go into trades, go into jobs of the future... Those are where the jobs are."¹⁰

These out of touch perspectives are from a person—by his own admission—who wasn't smart enough to get into university, nor competent enough for college. *"Grade 13 was drawing to a close for me. I knew I didn't have the marks for university... [Doug rambles about a politician, then talks about entering business administration at Humber College] Right from the start, I didn't think it was for me. I was bored silly in the lectures, and there were no varsity sports..."¹¹*

Rightfully so, students across Ontario have been protesting what appears to be a move to effectively paywall education.¹² Even in the relatively small area of Kitchener-Waterloo, dozens of high schools and universities protested OSAP cuts in early March.¹³ Some marched up their respective town halls, gathering crowds of hundreds of people—significant percentages of their respective total student bodies. The message was clear: the students of Ontario will fight this law. At Laurel Heights, this occurred through a walkout—organised in the manner one organises any resumé-builder. Our protest was riddled with inefficiencies and kinks, from delayed planning, to a lack of collaboration, and more. Smaller schools like Saint Mary's had walkouts of hundreds of people.¹⁴ Laurel Heights, being the largest and most prominent high school in the WRDSB, understandably then, had a generously estimated presence of 40 people.

This is not to disparage those who walked out, for it's a miracle we even had that many people. Like with the organisational difficulties, the protest itself was fraught with errors. From propositions of violence—not the hallmark of someone protesting for a change, moreso protesting for a protest—to no clear leader or plan, the walkout

at LHSS was impressive when you compare the average household income of our specific area to the OSAP cutoffs, but disappointing in regards of sheer impact. We chanted; we marched. For what?

On March 11—the day of the walkout—it was rainy, and cold. At the end of 40 minutes, virtually everyone had left from the protest. A large proportion had left to go eat cake (I'm assuming to celebrate the resounding victory—surely Doug Ford would change the law later that day.). The numbers dwindled, until all who remained were us: the 3 co-founders of the Gadfly: Hassan, Lianne, and myself.¹⁵ Our protest was ineffective, but I have hope that the thousands of other students who actually marched to the offices of our members of government actually might've changed something.

The OSAP walkouts pose a powerful, and important lesson: civil service is important, and should be protected. Doug Ford's government is trying—and succeeding—to make education unattainable for non-well-to-do students. A handful of hours of your time could've potentially changed thousands of student's lives.

To Doug Ford—the man who tried to pass off Philadelphia creamcheese's Cheesecake recipe as his own—I ask this: why must you impose your mediocrity on the hardworking students of Ontario?¹⁶ Must you snatch learning and knowledge from thousands of the next generation, just because you couldn't pay attention in class?

Is it worth it?

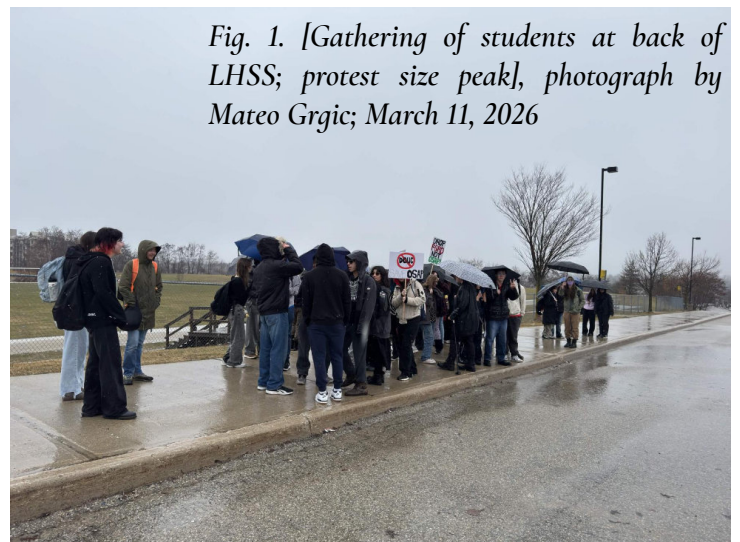


Fig. 1. [Gathering of students at back of LHSS; protest size peak], photograph by Mateo Grgic; March 11, 2026



LHSS Claims to Promote Responsible AI Use: Evidence Suggests Otherwise

By Hassan Ahmed
Citations on page 27

Fig. 1. Photographer unknown, [Laurel Heights mascot poses in a gymnasium], October 2025, WRDSB archives

Cliparts of Laurel Heights’ mascot have found their way on bulletin boards across hallways and foyers; all suspiciously missing an artist’s credit. These avatars coincide with marks of the Student Activities office. Despite the WRDSB asserting that many instances of independent student AI use constitute academic malpractice, evidence suggests administration routinely uses AI image generation to replace opportunities that could otherwise go to students. Does it break policy? No, otherwise some other newspaper would’ve gotten to this story already.¹ But it is insulting and shows where priorities lie for the people who set student policy.

On May 06, 2024, the Waterloo Region District School Board posted an AI generated promotional piece regarding the new focus on Indigenous studies for the Grade 11 English course. The post concluded with “This post was created with the assistance of AI, but is made better by humans!” The AI first, human second approach was criticised for being insensitive given the context of Indigenous studies.² The Instagram post was quickly taken down,

though as of April 06, 2026, the Facebook post is still on the official page.³

The WRDSB has since introduced measures to prohibit AI use in the classroom. Viewing independent AI use as a potential violation of academic integrity, schools across the board recommend progressive disciplinary measures to limit student reliance on AI tools.⁴ On the topic of AI innovation, a student writing for the WRDSB said on their website, “The Future Belongs to the Creators”.⁵ It is unclear whether or not the board has attempted to commit to the aphorism they themselves promote & disseminate.

The administrative team in Laurel Heights, through the Student Activities wing, has deviated from the WRDSB orthodoxy on the issue of AI. Though they maintain that many instances of independent student use of AI are violations of academic integrity,⁶ they have simultaneously proven themselves as willing & uncritical consumers of AI for administrative purposes. Despite students and administration being exposed to the technology at the same

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“Man has to suffer. When he has no real afflictions, he invents some”

time, their actions suggest an assumption that they exclusively hold the experience necessary to responsibly use AI uninhibitedly. The Student Activities office claims it is committed to responsible use for AI, though it is unclear where the line between responsible use and ethical dishonesty lies;⁷ it is just as unclear whose job it is to enforce disciplinary procedures if student activities crosses that line. On all three floors, to promote upcoming events, AI generated images of LHSS’ mascot have appeared. Additionally, the official photo of the mascot on the WRDSB website (pictured above) appears to have been enhanced with AI: the photo was taken in a gym with blue walls, an element missing from Laurel Heights’ gymnasium. Additionally, the inconsistent shadow and flat roof texture points to the background being at least refined by AI. There seems to be no record of consultation with the student body prior to the implementation of these AI avatars.

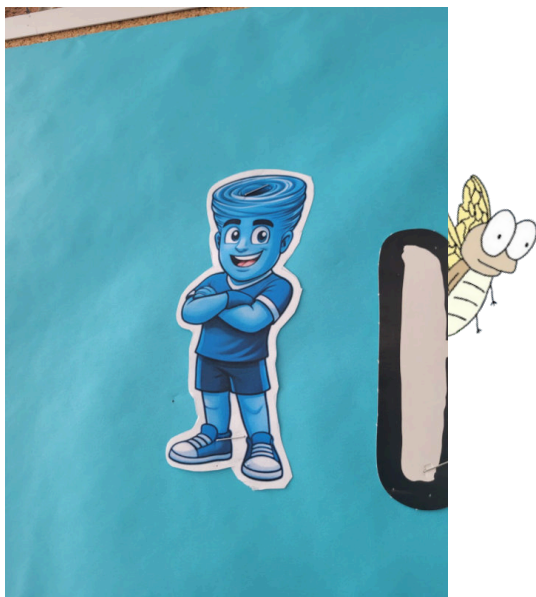


Fig. 2. [Photograph of alleged AI generated LHSS mascot], photograph by Hassan Ahmed; March 2026

Many permanent student art displays have a credited author somewhere; the lack of one here has made some suspicious as to its origins. The hard light shadows, excessively soft rendering, ineffective use of gradients, and an overabundance of film grain are all elements characteristic of AI. The complexity yet lack of direction and structure of the swirl is something that would be uncommon to see in a student made piece. Though it is impossible to say

without admission from the creators of these avatars, the evidence is consistent with characteristics of generative AI use.

When asked what they thought of this recent development, a grade 11 art student (who wished to remain anonymous) posed an interesting question: “why didn’t they just ask us to make these?”

In an environment that is meant to serve the education of youth, students are wondering why they are being sidelined in favour of AI generated images. Though students noted that the adoption of AI generative capabilities can be very convenient, some worry that it sends a harmful message to a generation uneasy about their future role in the world. If schools—places designed specifically to meet the challenges of educating children—do not have time for students, some worry that that public schooling is undermined. Public schooling is already under attack by government and voters alike; it is evident that its own staff undermining key aspects of its mission is not beneficial.

As a final note, it’s worth considering what mascots are meant to do in the first place. If Laurel Heights is being represented by an AI generated mascot, what does that say about the values that this administration is guided by? The use of AI by Laurel Heights faculty—and especially a group entitling themselves as student activities—is deeply harmful, as it sidelines the very students they ought to be promoting. It is a stain on an otherwise positive record of equipping children to be the very best they can be. Administrators must lead by example; if they wish to guide children away from an over-reliance on AI, they must abstain from the use of AI tools in ways that adversely impact the school environment and the very essence of public schooling. They have not violated any rules, of course; they are the ones who set the rules for themselves after all. Yet it is evident that they have no good reason to become reliant on LLMs in situations where student-led design would be more appropriate; students have proven themselves willing to take responsibility for school related events. Administrators just need to let students take initiative.

On Bill AB1043

By Mateo Grgić
Citations on page 29

Privacy is disappearing.

Governments have always sought control; this simple fact has remained a constant.¹ Each and every day, we are stripped of privacy just an inch more. There are countless examples, and any sane person would be driven to near-nihilism if they attempted to keep up with it all. I try to keep up with it all. Because of that, I firmly believe that with the way we’re headed, privacy as a concept will be all but dead before the decade’s out.

California’s Bill (AB)1043 will go into effect January 1st, 2027.² This bill puts into place a seemingly benign stipulation: all operating system vendors must have in place a signal that broadcasts the user’s age, and all software then must check this age signal and act accordingly. If you don’t follow the law, then the operating system distributor will receive up to a \$7,500 fine for each child that used the operating system.³

“Operating system provider” means a person or entity that develops, licenses, or controls the operating system software on a computer, mobile device, or any other general purpose computing device. — AB1043⁴

The \$2,500 for negligent [child] usage, and \$7,500 fines for intentional bypassing of the law would bankrupt nearly all community projects; Debian Linux receives ~\$15k in donations per year, Arch Linux something like ~\$20k, and more obscure projects like FreeBSD burn millions per year in deficit.^{5 6 7} A handful of children can bankrupt nearly every alternative operating system. The message is clear: either comply or geoblock, like the 32-bit version of Arch Linux (and others) have already begun to do—it’s textbook regulatory capture. Even this is hard to enforce, and is entirely preemptive. There is no “Arch Linux” corporation headquartered in California; the law wasn’t even designed to consider decentralised community-driven software.

What’s a Linux Distro?

Debian & Arch are examples of what is called a Linux Distributions (usually shortened to simply a “distro”). Linux itself is not very useful and can’t do much on its own; it’s what’s called a “kernel”, which is sort of like the brain of an operating system. All brains need a body, and distros ship complete bodies—basically all the other software that makes up your operating system: from the browser, to the UI, to low-level packages, and more. There are small differences between distros, but they’re essentially all the same (please don’t kill me if you’re a Linux nerd. I use Arch, I know that they matter to the hardcore, but they really don’t matter generally). FreeBSD is something else entirely, but in a word or two, it’s another alternative operating system.

“Application” means a software application that may be run or directed by a user on a computer, a mobile device, or any other general purpose computing device that can access a covered application store or download an application. ... provide developers with a digital signal via a real-time application programming interface (API) regarding whether a user is [in an age bracket]. — AB1043⁸

The concept itself is daft. Does the UEFI on my laptop need age attestation? It runs on my computer, and is directed to run software by a user. Does OpenWRT need to verify your age before you can use SSH? What about my HP Prime calculator? The people writing these laws know virtually nothing about computers; they’re the same politicians who don’t know the difference between Google & the internet.⁹ They’ve never heard of “the terminal”, and to them, software is magic—too bad it’s not the politicians who come up with laws.

Continued on next page

New!

Cultural
Showcase

For this issue only, we’re introducing the Cultural Showcase!

We’re sharing art from all across LHSS and Waterloo, in leu of ads!

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“The more I seek to return to the zero moment from which I set out, the further I move away from it”

UEFI? OpenWRT? SSH?

UEFI stands for Unified Extensible Firmware Interface, it’s basically the operating system that starts up your laptop before the real operating system. It loads the user’s operating system into memory, and handles most fairly low-level hardware settings. My point is that nearly all parts of computers (which is a massive category; everything is a computer these days) are running small operating systems that run software controlled by a user; it’s stupid to expect all operating systems to verify ages. In my computer there are at least 5 distinct “operating systems” running at all times beyond my main one—the main one being Linux.

OpenWRT is a Linux-based operating system for wifi routers. SSH is a program for connecting to other computers and accessing the terminal/console. Virtually all computers have SSH.

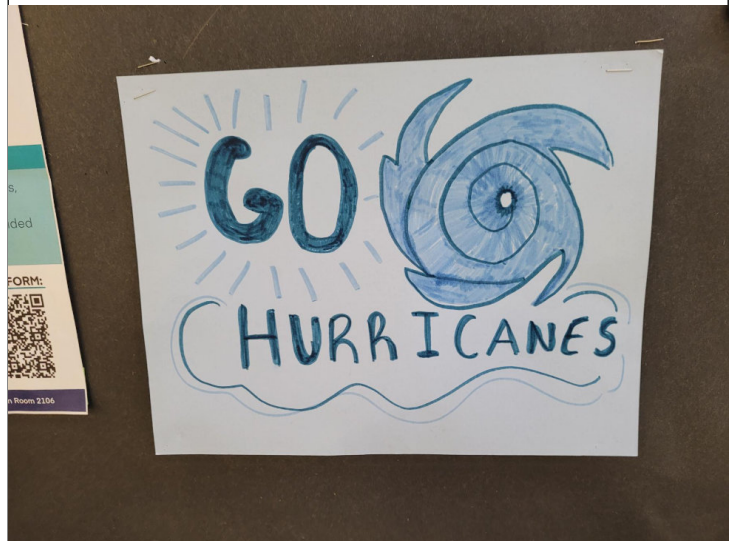
Naive age attestation will be spoofed. This bill will not work; it had no chance to.

But I posit this: it was never meant to work. It’s a metaphorical foot-in-the-door. For as ignorant as politicians are, the lobbyists know exactly the laws they’re proposing. More than two billion dollars in funding has been traced from Meta into the pockets of lobbyists and politicians, through the obfuscated guise of “child-saving” nonprofits, like the Digital Childhood Alliance.¹⁰ Meta is a technology company—but a political entity first and foremost; they spend billions lobbying yearly, and share vast swaths of data with global governance.¹¹ Meta employs the smartest people on the planet, it stands to reason that Meta is technologically proficient enough to realise exactly how these laws will be spoofed. There is no mistake here.

The front of “protecting the children” is as commonplace as it is hollow. When a large portion of the people in the American government have been found in the Epstein files, it is nearly impossible to claim some benevolent desire for child safety.¹² One must look past the surface, encroach upon and then breach the taboo, and analyse the reasoning. Today, the last place a corporation can hide behind is a child. There is nearly no defence against it; if

Cultural Showcase

This was found, ironically enough, near an AI generated image of the mascot.



you disagree with the law, your moral decency is called into play. “Don’t you care about the kids? Isn’t it worth it for the children? Much like the Patriot Act put a foot in the door under the guise of terrorism, this law puts a foot in the door under the guise of child safety. “Don’t you want to stop the terrorists?”

The law as it is written is designed to fail. Unintrusive, and easy to bypass, I predict that nearly every “hacker” child will just choose a random date that allows them to claim adulthood—say January 1st, 1970—and easily bypass the *carefully planned bill*. The bill as it is written now can be fooled with a text editor; in all likelihood the government will be forced to introduce stronger age verification measures to preserve the intent of the law—that goal being stated as protecting children online by not requiring every single app to collect a government ID, through the mechanism of a global operating system level API. It seems logical: when the simple approach fails, the jurisdiction of the law must be expanded. Instead of dozens of ID checks across all apps (since the law doesn’t work as written, and they need to protect the kids), why not have just one age verification check, and the operating system level, backed by government ID?

Continued on next page

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“Nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now”

Say Linux doesn't comply. Given the current fines, any distribution that continues to be available in compliant or similarly governed regions will instantly be decimated in terms of fees. Alternatively, Linux will be seen as the criminal's operating system, the year of the Linux desktop will never come, and mainstream software developed for a global market will not work on Linux.

I am touching so heavily on Linux for a reason: Linux is an allegory for computing freedom. In an age of Windows, macOS, iOS, and Android, Linux remains one of the few free places left. It is an artefact. Linux represents the digital infrastructure of the global internet, as does it represent true computing freedom. When Windows added forced copilot and TPM2 secure boot, when macOS added SIP, Linux stood alone in freedom. It is an extant aspect of freedom. Indeed, when sovereignty has disappeared from most of the world, when Linux dies, sovereignty remains solely in our minds, if there. I don't expect you, reader, to ever use Linux, but you absolutely should care about Linux. It is computing incarnate, is it freedom.

Already, SystemD—the init system used by nearly every single popular Linux distribution—has added the precursors for age verification.¹² They've added a seemingly benign age verification precursor, that the xdg-portal can later leverage itself; the birthDate field. So thick is the guise that we are fighting amongst ourselves—bending the neck before the sword is even proffered. Decentralisation was a founding postulate of open source, and through centralisation, Linux has become easy to regulate and control. Gone are the days where you can hang alone off grid; the time to legislate was more than 10 years ago, and now it's time to fight. SystemD isn't evil, but centralisation—a driving force in innovation, yes—is.

A bit on SystemD



SystemD is an init system. Init systems are essentially the part of the operating system that starts up other services. For example: If you want to have sound play in the background, on Linux there is a piece of software called PipeWire. SystemD will start up PipeWire in the background, and send to it whatever audio you're listening to. That's a very simple take on SystemD, which is also ever growing in scope (one of the points of contention in the Linux community).

SystemD adding birthDate could be perceived as “the end of Linux”, since systemD is both so widely used, and deeply interwoven in modern Linux architecture. That also depends on how much of a doomer you are. I am still in that happy idealist phase of my life where I can use whatever niche thing I want, and SystemD doesn't affect me as much as it might affect others.

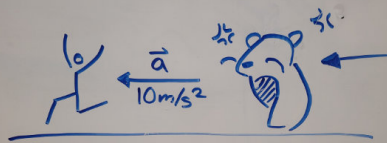
Will they ban the C compiler? It might seem silly, but there is a legal precedent: in the 90s the American government legally classified encryption as “munitions”—meaning encryption was likened to owning missiles.¹³ The result of this ruling decided that source code is free speech. I'd argue that by trying to restrict computing, this becomes an active attack on freedom of speech. That being the case, C is the language of operating systems. It is what every operating system is written in, and a good majority of software is written in. If computing gets to the point that there is mandatory age attestation in all operating systems, and all software applications must utilise the age of the user, will the C compiler be banned? With the GCC compiler, you can—with a great deal of effort for sure—write an operating system from scratch, and rudimentary software for your operating system and omit age verification, thus, breaking the law. While I realise that this is an extreme reductio-ad-absurdum class argument, the merit is, I hope, the same. Unless governments take incredibly draconian measures—amounting to banning computing on the whole—these laws are largely unenforceable at scale.

When does this stop?

Arguably more important than the real content of Bill

Cultural Showcase

The bear will catch you; it is accelerating.



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“Woof, commented the dog perfunctorily”

AB1043, is that it introduces a precedent. California isn't the only place pushing for draconian laws. It's something I covered in the very first issue of *The Gadfly*, being the UK's online safety act. It too aims to undermine fundamental privacies, though in a significantly less round-about method. It goes straight for the throat: encryption. Another area of similarity these two laws share is that they are written in entirely unenforceable methods. The point of the matter is that there is a global attack on privacy and freedom, all in the name of child safety. As a legal child myself (with 17 years of field relevant experience, might I add) I can assure anyone who might be reading this article, I don't personally find myself feeling safer on the internet from the actions of these laws; almost the contrary; safety for the “vulnerable” requires privacy. These classes of laws pose an existential threat for liberty, and even if posed with good intentions—which I wholeheartedly believe is not the case—provide an entry point for corruption and illegitimacy. Laws regarding security and privacy should be written in the language of the code itself: zero trust.

But what can we do about it? Frankly, to me it seems that Dylan Araps had the right idea, and I can only hope that I was wrong with this article. To me it seems like computing and privacy are dead or close to dying; they've won. But I doubt that's the answer you want to hear—and even I get tired of my cynicism—so I'll suggest a few things: try staying off the internet as much as you can; these days it's an AI-riddled cesspool of adverts and trackers; the old internet that was full of life is mostly dead anyways. They can't track you, can't coerce you, can't influence you, if you don't listen. Obfuscate data whenever you can. If the data is useless, poisoned, and changed, then there is almost no point to data collection. Fight where you can; the little things add up. Never let an injustice go, and fight for your liberties. Nobody will do it for you. But please, whatever you do, remember that privacy and freedom is important, and it's worth fighting for.

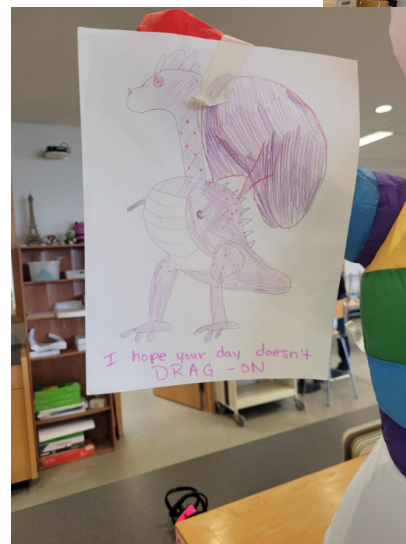
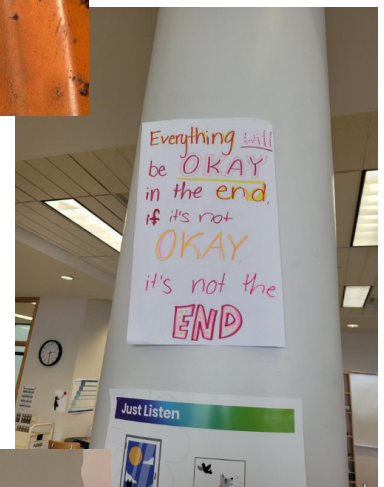
Update as of April 6, 2026: MidnightBSD was the first to fold—version 4.0.4 ships with age verification.¹⁴ While this is a BSD derivative, and not a Linux distro, it is still unfortunate to see another small community project sell out like this.

Cultural Showcase



I jumped after taking this picture.

Why is this column a better therapist than my therapist?



It certainly won't now!

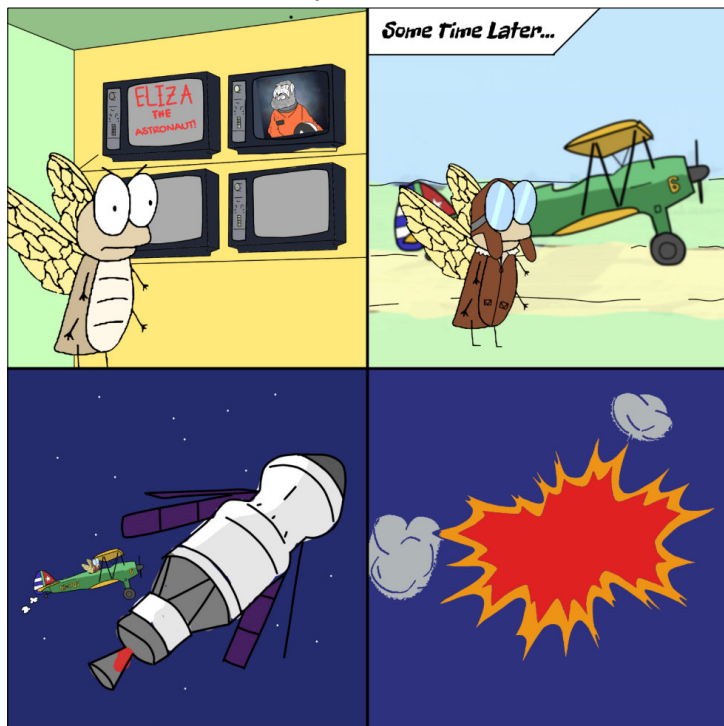
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Unreliable Narrators Since 470 BCE

"Don't haggle and nag them; you were so recently one of them yourself. They are so confident that they will run on for ever. But they won't run on."

Section of Fun

Space F(L)ight By Hassan A.



Ready for Re-entry? Artemis II has passed the moon, breaking Apollo 13's old record. These 4 brave humans have seen the dark side of the moon, and been the farthest away from the Earth than any other set of humans in history. With the crew coming back on the 11th of April, the Orion space capsule is going to have to prove it can handle re-entry; the last time Orion went to space, its heat-shield didn't hold up. If anything like Artemis I happens on this mission (the heat shield was catastrophically damaged upon reentry to Earth's atmosphere), it could spell catastrophe for NASA and the entire space-faring industry, globally. There's nothing that unites like the triumph of an Apollo-esque successful space mission—other than the tragedy of a Challenger-like space disaster. - Hassan Ahmed & Mateo Grgić

See if you can find the 10 hidden Gadflies throughout the newspaper!

There's one! →



"How do you feel about age verification bills like the one in California"

We asked four strangers their opinions on age verification bills.

Juan, 24: "While they have good intentions behind them all they end up doing is making shit harder while not preventing children from doing what they are not supposed to do"

Anonymous, unknown age: "I understand why they need them, especially in games for children and stuff. AND THOSE I AGREE WITH. But it is tedious. Its just extra safety which isn't bad."

Zainab, 3: "I don't know, I just a baby" [translated, may be some things lost in translation]

Griffin Tanner, 16: "Well obviously that's a very weighted question, as on one hand we want to protect our children from the internet as best as possible. But on the other giving the government access to that much info so early in their life and in general is not positive at all. I think we should have a modern phone ban for all children 12 and under, allowing them to use specialised 'child phones' which could be created similar to the mobile cell phones from the 90s so they can call their friends, their parents, and the police/emergency services may be a solution. that could be cool. Imagine seeing kids biking home while using a flipphone."

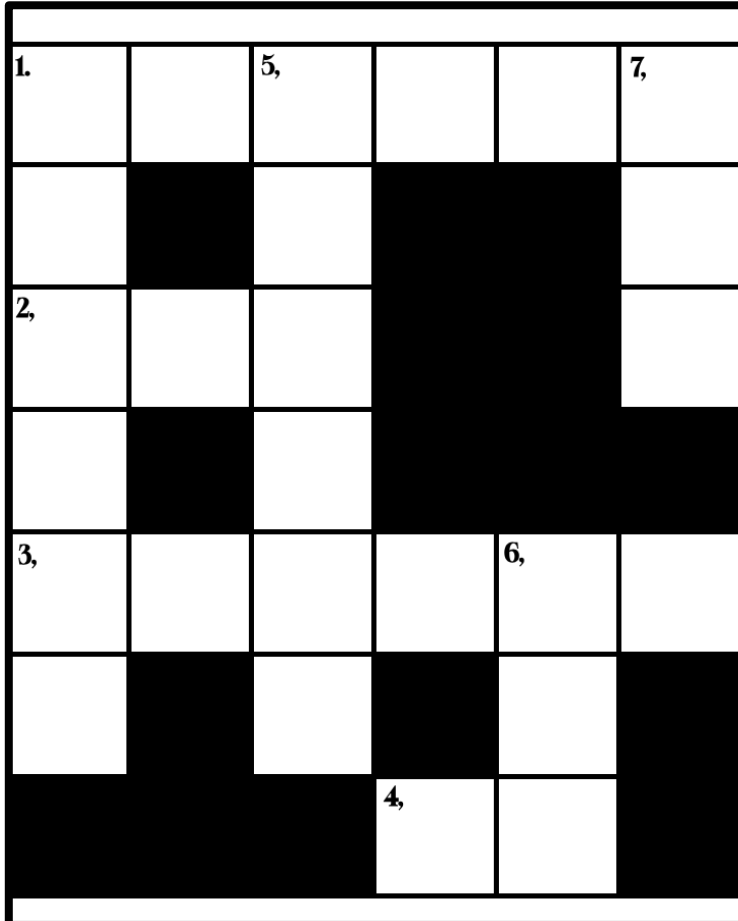
Government propaganda working as intended, it seems, for the majority. Griffin Tanner has a good idea with the hyper regulation of the cellphone for underage peoples.

Do you have a hot take on these bills? I would be genuinely interested to hear your ideas; contact me at our email address here: thegadfly.team@proton.me

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"He had never been so anxious for the arrival of a woman he did not want to see"

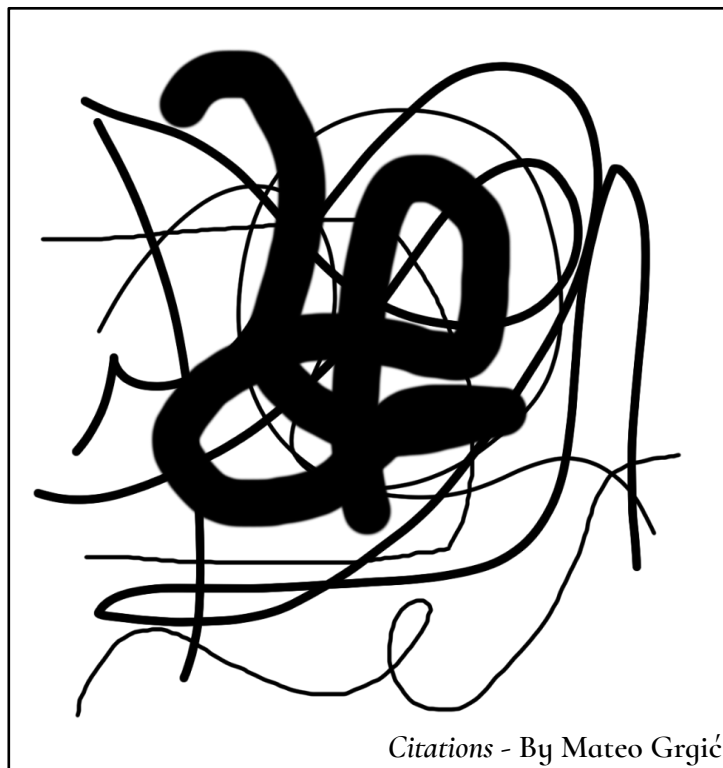


Across

- 1, *Quality of Manliness*
- 2, *Young Male Servant*
- 3, *Of The Bear Constellation*
- 4, *"All Correct"*

Down

- 1, *Of The Common People*
- 5, *To Set In Motion Again*
- 6, *To Burn In*
- 7, *Unknown, Related to 'Deer' & 'Reddish-Brown'*



Frogs Desiring a King By Hassan A.

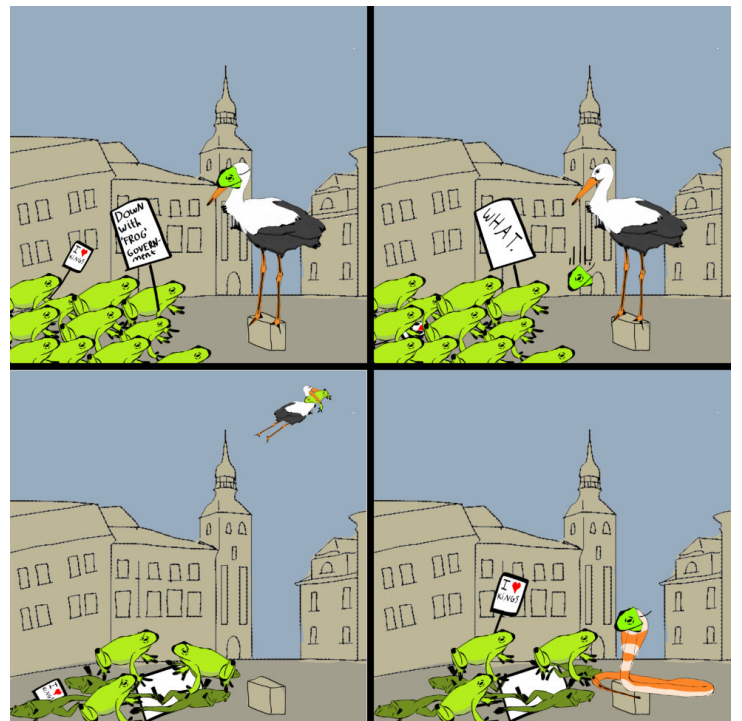




Fig. 1. [Frontside of 192 Strange Street, former home of Dumont Press Graphix], photograph by Hassan Ahmed; March 9, 2026

Undercurrent media today is scattered and disconnected; it exists in non-places completely detached from conditions on the ground. Creating alternative media is easier than ever before, but without the physical connection, these projects lack the relevancy that makes underground news & art so appealing in the first place. Modern alt-media must reclaim this material foundation if it wants to remain as effective in the 2020s and beyond. For much of the last century, counter-culture was rooted in physical and local places. Scattered across the KW region are still pieces and relics of many of these old news hubs. One of these lies just a few minutes' walk from KCI; an old, quiet, mid-twentieth-century house at 192 Strange Street. Forty years ago, this house was home to a workers' cooperative that became a staple of Waterloo's alternative news scene.¹ Though long forgotten now, the memory of this press-house lives on in the city it helped create.

The City of Waterloo itself is an excellent case-study into what this local-based counter-culture really looked like. Despite being smaller and younger than cities like Toronto & Vancouver, the region's alternative undercurrent was just as strong as its larger contemporaries. UW's Federation of Students (now the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association²) were just as bold against disenfranchisement brought on by the Canada Elections Act³ at home as they were against American interventionism in Vietnam abroad.⁴ As Waterloo's student movement

What Can LHSS Learn from this 70s Typesetting Co-Op?

By Hassan Ahmed
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was in its infancy, the women's rights movement would see a rebirth in the form of the second wave.⁵ Yet the social agitation movements lacked something that their institutional enemies in mansions possessed; they couldn't control the narrative. Mainstream media was and still is owned by the few; people who have the most to lose if democratic and egalitarian movements like the aforementioned were to succeed. 'Impartial' media did its part to limit the growth of these undercurrents, and any reporter who deviated from the orthodox position would soon find themselves out of a job.



Fig. 2. Photographer unknown, [Feds protest disenfranchisement], September 1965, Kitchener-Waterloo Record Photographic Negative Collection, University of Waterloo Archives.

Foreshadowed by the 1969 National Conference of Canadian University Press at UW, Dumont Press Graphix was founded.⁶ Dumont Press, and groups like them, filled a role desperately needed in the Region's social realm; by providing the infrastructure for independent journalism,

radical groups needed not sell out to corporate power. Different papers and causes were forced to rely on the same production lines, the same distribution networks, and the same shared spaces in order to continue printing. Dumont Press, unknowingly, forced a transaction of ideas. Contrast this to modern undercurrent media: free from limitations and burdens, it has jailed itself in a prison of wasted potential by forgoing the networks that helped old groups thrive. Even if we wanted to, it is hard to replicate Dumont in a fragmented online space.

Because these movements shared the same physical media infrastructure, their ideas inevitably intersected. Just as the 70s and 80s were a time of women’s rights activism, so too were they important years for the civil rights, Indigenous rights, and the queer liberation movement. The intersectionality that would come to define third wave feminism in the early 2000s found its start in places like these. While electoral “left-wing” policies still favoured small incremental changes, Dumont helped pull an otherwise reluctant Canadian population into the future. Intersectionality became a logistical necessity rather than an ideological preference. Today, it is no longer a matter of short-term survival, but a lack of intersectionality inevitably results in the slow decline and death of many social movements otherwise worth championing.

What can Laurel Heights learn? Waterloo in 2026 finds itself in a remarkably similar position to where it was in 1966. We are still plagued by foreign wars and domestic scarcity. We still face down existential threats and the condescending fatalism of the adults in our society. Fatalism is a fool’s drug, but it would be a lie to say that we are on the right path. The story of 192 Strange Street & the Dumont Press Graphix is not just about what once existed, but about what we have lost. Today, movements can reach thousands within minutes, yet fail to keep people coming back and build the durable, local organising that sustained our forebears. The house on Strange Street reminds us that it’s not just the size of the shade a tree can cast which matters, but the strength of its roots that anchor it to the place it’s trying to change.



Fig. 1. [Canadian and tattered Ontarian flag flying], photograph by Mateo Grgić; March 8, 2026

Democracy For Whom?

By Hassan Ahmed
Citations on page 33

As bombs continue to fall over Iran¹ and now Lebanon,² the chief question around the world appears to be: Representative Democracy or Repressive Dictatorship? Our leaders—bosses of the free world—clamour for the former. To protect the Iranian citizens, western governments appeal to bombs and tanks to destroy the Islamic government; they aim to replace theocracy with a system better for the people.³

The conflict in Iran is an emotionally charged situation and may be uncomfortable for some readers at first, so let me express my position with a regime closer to home: the one that sits on Westminster Hill. Canada upholds a clear moral divide between its own government and the Iranian one. We have been told that Iran is a “principal source of instability and terror throughout the Middle East” in the same breath that “reaffirms Israel’s right to defend itself”.⁴ There are three different assumptions that inform the position of secular superiority over the Islamic governance: that Iran is a dictatorship, that Canada is a democracy, and that there is a moral difference between the crimes committed by the western bloc and the ones

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“The man who has no sense of history, is like a man who has no ears or eyes”

has made great advancements in literacy, healthcare, and education since the 50s; sometimes even rivalling its much larger and richer neighbour to the north.

There exists in the minds of western audiences, a closed-off and reactionary view of what it means to be a democracy. The definition that guides the United States and its proxies is informed by the foundation of those countries; the free market and the rule of property. This is something that I will touch on later. We cannot just say that a country is undemocratic because it fails to meet the requirements brought on by the liberal tradition. That is not to say that all democracies are equal, or that they even represent the will of the people in a satisfactory manner. Democracies today exist in many countries, yet in few countries, is there a universal democracy: a system that equally represents all actors in a society. The fundamental question we must ask ourselves is, *democracy for whom?*

The End of the Shah & The Three Revolutions

I start with Iran precisely because it will be easiest for western readers to point out the flaws in the Iranian democracy. The foundation of the Iranian system, as admitted by its own constitution, is the Shariah as interpreted by the Ja'farī fiqh.¹² In other words, it is based on a specific interpretation of Islamic law. All other things, including any participatory elements, will be informed by and be subservient to Islamic law. The Shariah is a complex legal framework that cannot be done justice in an article such as this. It is more complicated and nuanced than most western analysts would lead you to believe. Of the three major “denominations” in Islam, the Shia sect is the majority in Iran. The specific jurisprudence (referred to in Islamic law as a fiqh) is the one postulated by the sixth Imam (Imam in this case being roughly equivalent to the Catholic pope for Shias¹³): Ja'far al-Sadiq. This jurisprudence considers four sources of law to be valid, in order of precedence:

1. The Qur'an. The direct word of God as interpreted and explained by the Imams
2. The Sunnah. The teachings of the Prophet Muhammed and the first eleven Imams

3. Aql. The use of reason to find a solution that aligns with God's will

4. Ijma. The consensus of scholars to verify traditional teachings

Iranian democracy is subservient to these four sources of law. I promise to lay off the theocratic education, but it is important to establish a base understanding of the Shariah before moving forward. From The Constitution, The Iranian state has an elected President, a 290 member parliament, and an 88 member Assembly of Experts. The Assembly's job is to advise and inform the Ayatollah on religious matters, whereas the President and Parliament carry out most governance. From such a level, it seems strange to call the Iranian government undemocratic. Yet of course our theoretical view lacks material grounding. How then does the Iranian state live up to its constitution in practice?

Not very well, just as in most other democracies. Following in the footsteps of the Shah following the western backed coup d'état, the Ayatollah consolidated power and collapsed participatory authority which sidelined liberal and marxist definitions of democracy. Both Tudeh (Iran's mainline socialist party) and the National Front (Iran's mainline liberal party) were repressed. Tudeh officials in particular were subject to arrest and even execution.¹⁴ The revolution that overthrew the Shah—caused by the Shah's economic development outpacing political development¹⁵—was initially a democratic exercise. The coalition of Liberals, Marxists, and Islamists that ended the Shah's reign soon turned into a struggle for power. The ineffectiveness of the National Front and Tudeh in gaining support from the workers and peasantry played a significant role in Khomeini's rise to power.

“The fourth element explaining Khomeini's success among the urban working class was the vacuum created by the regime when it systematically destroyed all secular opposition parties. Whereas the clergy were permitted to go to the poor, the opposition parties were constantly prevented from establishing any form of labour unions, local clubs, or neighbourhood organisations. Twenty-five years of repression placed a heavy handicap on the secular opposition ... Thus class consciousness among the poor did undermine the regime but it did not necessarily

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“Everybody is identical in their secret unspoken belief that way deep down they are different from everyone else”

strengthen the radical intelligentsia. Of the many secular parties active in the last stages of the revolution, only the Tudeh managed to make any inroads into the working class—especially in the textile mills of Isfahan, the oil installations of Khuzistan, and the large industrial plants of Tehran.”¹⁶

Despite periodic protests like the 2009 Green Movement gaining real concessions at times, the Ayatollah’s position has been largely stable since the defanging of Tudeh in the decades following the Revolution. The 1983 banning of the Tudeh Party, as well as the 1988 executions of Tudeh members, consolidated power in the Islamic Republic.¹⁷ It would be incorrect to say that all democratic processes were destroyed. Despite the role of the Guardian Council in vetting (and censoring) candidates, elections still do occur.¹⁸ This point is important, and will be expanded on with the section on Canadian democracy.

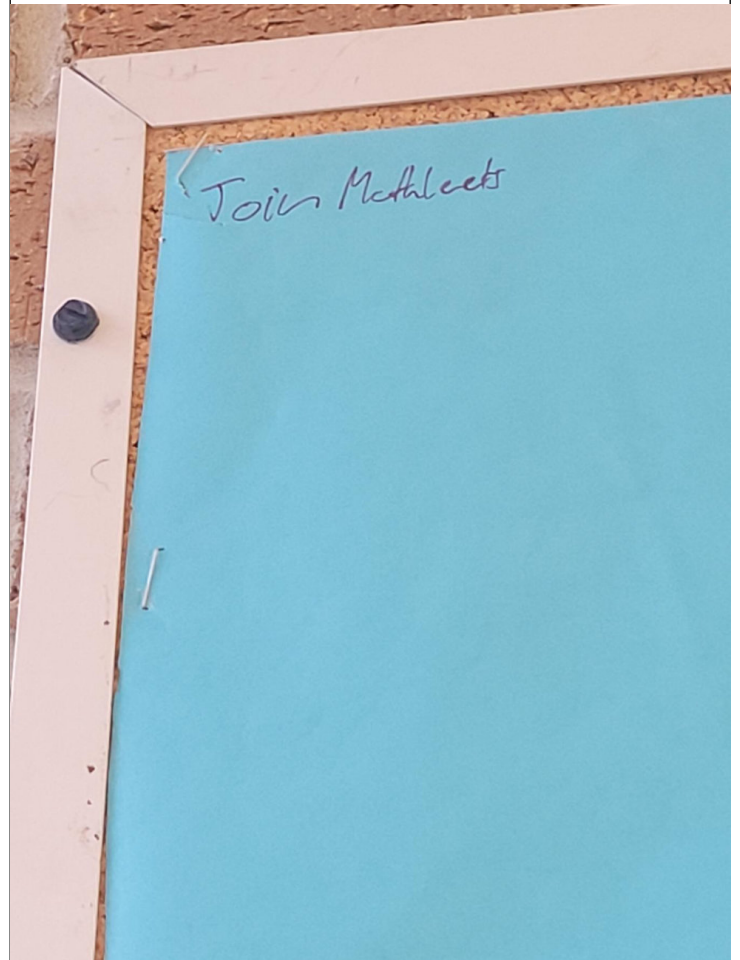
A brief and cursory glance at the conditions Iran faced during and immediately after the Islamic Revolution show an explosion and then repression, yet not a complete extinction, of participatory politics. The Revolution created a democratic environment hitherto seen in the nation’s history; or at least since the US backed coup d’état which reinstalled the Shah into power.¹⁹ Compare the modern Iranian system with the alternative being pushed by Israel. A return to the Shah that Iran has already dropped twice?²⁰ Any illusions of this being a war for democracy should be cast aside when the Israeli government is willing to take the easiest and most dictatorial opportunity to replace the Islamic Republic. It should be clear that Iran’s current system is going to be more democratic than anything that will immediately succeed it.

The Democracy of Canada



To try and justify the relevance of this article to a western audience, it is necessary to connect the tragedy of war occurring in the middle east to a western²¹ nation; Canada is as good as any. Just as Iranian democracy is built on a foundation of Islamic law, Canadian democracy is not the bedrock of the system. And just as Iran’s Islamic foundation supersedes democracy whenever the two conflict, the same can be said about Canada’s foundation and its own democratic system. What is the foundation of the Canadian government? What is the filter through

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I won't

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"If they can get you asking the wrong questions, they don't have to worry about answers"

which Canadian democracy is viewed? Whereas Iran has codified Islam as the base, western nations have implicit, invisible drivers that guide their respective nations. To find the Canadian foundation, we need to determine what Canadian democracy cannot do. Whom does this democracy benefit? Canada's foundations are built upon two basic pillars:

1. Individualism. The view—based on works by English philosophers John Stuart & Harriet Taylor Mill²²—that liberty is best actualised through the individual, rather than the collective.²³

2. Property. Based on the positions of English philosopher John Locke: the belief that individuals should be able to own property for their own use, and that no other individual can interfere except with consent from the owner.²⁴

To question any of these two points is to threaten the very essence of the Canadian state. But where do I derive this from? Iran's constitution specifically states that Islam is the ontological base of the nation. By comparison, Canada's constitution has no such reference to any specific creed other than the Crown, whose role in Canadian political decision-making has been fading ever since the Statute of Westminster. Instead of dwelling solely on the constitution, we can take a quick look at the debates in provincial legislatures & the three confederation conferences in the lead-up to the signing of the British North America Act in 1867. What we find is a focus on the English liberal tradition:

"The founders referred directly to Locke only occasionally. But their speeches were peppered with references to his heirs, the American founders, and to Burke, Blackstone, and other authorities in the tradition of British constitutionalism. They cited John Stuart Mill, especially Mill's Representative Government, then recently published (1861). They read European constitutions; they compared federal systems. They cited clauses in the American Constitution, the Constitution of the secessionist South, and the constitutions of the individual American states."²⁵

The liberalism that had taken root in England and America was adopted by the new Canadian union, filtering the young democracy by restraining what it could and could

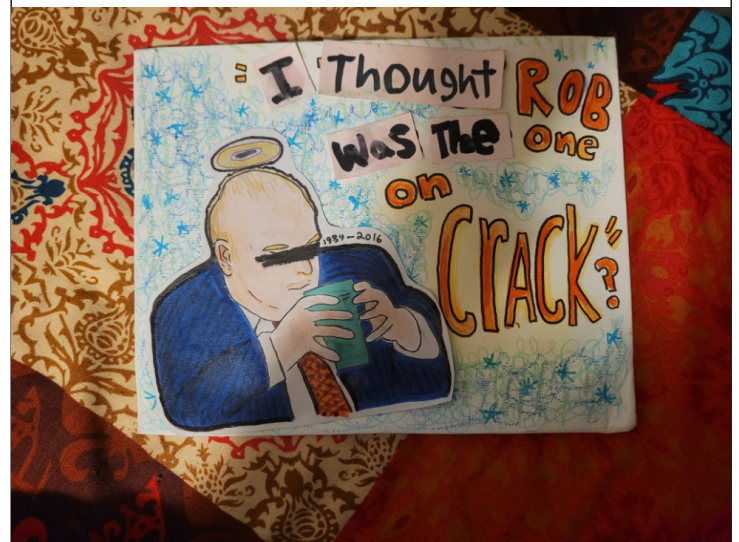
not exercise power over. It is important at this point to make a clear distinction between the modern Liberal Party of Canada and liberalism as a philosophic tradition. The Liberal Party is obviously a liberal party, but so is the Conservative Party. As are the New Democratic Party, the Green Party, and the Bloc Québécois. Even nominally illiberal groups like the Christian Heritage Party and democratic socialist Quebec Solidaire operate under liberalism and respect the fundamental principles of individuality and property.

The point of all this is to establish that Canada—and by extension other liberal democracies like the UK and the US—are not 'democracy first'. They place things outside of political debate just as the Iranians do with their democracy. There are further truths that can be drawn out from these two principles. In order to maximise individual liberty & protect individual property ownership, liberal philosophers in the decades leading up to confederation argued for the importance of a reasonably free market economy. John Stuart Mill was in favour of minor restrictions on an otherwise independent market system. Mill was also a supporter of competition, and the concept of money as a means of exchange can be found in writings as far back as Locke's.

Continued on next page

Cultural Showcase

There are at least two reasons Rob is not in Heaven despite the halo; it doesn't exist and Rob did crack.



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“You may never get to touch the Master, but you can tickle his creatures”

A contention that is often brought up when taking a structuralist view of nations is that it ignores the decades (and centuries, in the case of Canada) of uninterrupted growth and change from that initial starting point. It would be insane to argue that nothing had changed since the days of Macdonald. Yet everything that has been covered: Individualism, property, markets, and money, are all factors outside the control of democracy. They are the base; the pre-political aspects of Canadian society. Democracy, being the mechanism of political change in Canada, can not repeal these fundamental truths. It may try to redefine aspects of the base, but it cannot meaningfully change it from the top. The only way to change these would be through an organised effort outside the means of acceptable political expression. Something that will be covered when we compare the advancement of the rights of women in Iran & Canada.

A Brief Comparison Between Democracy & Dictatorship

To sum up what has been established & argued thus far, this section will aim to quickly compare the two nations discussed and dispel any confusions about the virtues of this or that system. Both Iran and Canada consider considerable aspects of human existence as pre-political; they cannot be changed by their respective democratic systems. Canada’s liberalism is only liberal in the sense that it places more things in the hands of democracy as compared to Iran.²⁶ A significant factor to this is that the democratic system that Canada inherited has existed for over hundred years longer than the Iranian. As economic and political development continue, more and more aspects of the base are placed into the democratic system.²⁷

What Canada has seldom had to account for, however, is the continued threat of American intervention. Iran famously had a liberal democracy, which elected a liberal socialist. When the Iranian democracy attempted to serve the Iranians who had elected them by giving them the nationalisation the people had been promised, the United States attacked; the US preferred a liberal dictator over a socialist president.²⁸ We do not have to question what a more liberal Iranian country would look like; it would be an American vassal. Canada of course has benefited from the subjugation of the poorest nations, though it has rarely overtly supported the subjugations themselves. First under Britain and then under America, Canada has never had to worry about an immediate existential threat destroying the nation: not the Germans, not the Soviets, not the Afghans. The greatest threat to a liberal Canada has always come from inside the nation.

Any comparison between the west and the Islamic world brings with it a conversation about the rights of women. For many centuries, European scribes complained that Islam was far too progressive in its laws. Today, western pundits hail the incredible strides of the feminist movement in the 20th century as a victory of liberalism over backwards Islamism. Two questions must be asked in relation to this fundamental question: How dire is the situation of women in the Islamic world? And who fought for basic women’s rights in Canada? The first question I will not answer definitively. To not include it would be intentionally dishonest, but the question itself deserves more time, thought, and space to be explored. I will say that there is a possibility that the condition in Iran is not as bad as the west may assert. Comparing the current gov-

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What if I said
"Your mother"?
Would you cry?



So they say...

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“And you’ll miss me more as the narrowing weeks wing by. Someday duly, oneday truly, twosday newly, till whensday”

ernment to its alternatives, Iran has managed an impressive growth in women’s literacy and university education. More on the question, I cannot say. As for the second question, it is worth noting that it was very rarely the liberal democracy that expanded women’s rights in Canada, but the revolutionary tactics of the socialists in the early 20th century, and the new left in the mid to late 1900s that advanced women’s rights the farthest. The topic itself is not the focus of the argument so I will leave most of the elaboration to the attached sources.

War Serves Property, not Democracy

The final section here will be largely opinion-based, jumping off the facts established previously. As the war against Iran drags on, we must dispel the notion that this war is anything but a war of interest. Israel recognises Iran as its most existential threat and the US is run by the same interests that led it to overthrow the last democratic movement in Iran. This war serves liberalism and the pillars of property & western individualism. The same logic that upholds the liberty of all people in the west, is starting wars and bombing schools in Iran. If this was a matter of protecting worldwide democracy, then surely the Americans would have voted to start the war before it began? Instead, it was a liberal leader who unilaterally decreed that an Islamic leader had to go. This serves no one who could hope to change things through the vote. Is there an option beyond all this that follows democracy while protecting the interests of the most people as the foundation? Perhaps there is.³⁰ But this war will not create that system. This is no war of liberation. The people will not be liberated.



Fig. 1. [The ugly and empty parking lot behind Laurel Heights Secondary School, where there could be flowers instead of concrete], photograph by Mateo Grgić; March 21, 2026

Unused Potential

By Oskar Deneau
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The Laurel Heights school grounds cover approximately 23 000 square meters, excluding the field. Of this space, 16 000 square meters are covered in pavement or bare lawn. These metrics make clear how underutilised our spaces are. Though much of this space is necessary for transportation, the small islands of lawn in front and behind the school can be re-imagined to serve students and the surrounding ecosystem.

One of the best ways to use up lawn space is to populate it, specifically with native species like white trillium, butterfly weed and cardinal flower. We already have gardens outside the front entrance so this is not a monumental task for the administration. These flowers add life and colour into otherwise drab spaces.

The benefits of planting native flora go beyond aesthetics. Access to greenspace is shown to significantly improve people’s mental health and even physical wellbeing. In various studies, subjects who live in, and around green spaces for prolonged periods experience significantly lower stress levels compared to a control group.¹



I "lowk" agree.

The Gadfly

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“The difference between the novice and the master is that the master has failed more times than the novice has tried”

These mental health benefits will be felt among the student population, especially as Ontario's students experience a rise in school related physiological issues. Drug use has risen significantly among students, especially girls ages 14-17. These students cite that stress from work and school contribute to their substance use.²

The school admin's role is to provide the best possible experience for students. If they want to achieve this, an easy and effective measure would be to invest in the planting of native flowers. It takes up dead lawn space and significantly improves the well being of students and staff alike.



Fig. 1. [Ominous door in dark room] Photograph by Hassan Ahmed; March 6, 2026

Peek Behind The Door, LHSS

By Hassan Ahmed
Citations on page 40

If you only looked at grade averages, current high school students are wiping the floor with older generations by a mile. In the 80s & 90s, an 80% was honour-role worthy; now it's an average grade. A poor mark used to be a 50, the equivalent to that today is a 70.¹ But if you asked universities, employers, or anyone outside of high school, they'd tell you: kids aren't doing so well. They

can't read at high school levels, they haven't developed strong work habits, and they struggle with independent work. The Engineering Faculty at UW has to adjust grades down by up to 20% or more depending on the school.² Evidently, higher grades are not reflecting higher ability.

To maintain their prestige, high tuition, and to attract the best professors, universities set high bars for students. But a combination of parental pressure and administrative malpractice has forced teachers to raise grades far above what they should be. Now, students have to try very hard in order to fail. It seems that we have forgotten the value of complete and debilitating failure. Who does this current arrangement help? It does not help parents get their kids into university; universities are well aware of grade inflation and adjust for it. It does not help administrators; everyone knows the numbers are skewed. And it does not help students, who are falling further and further behind without realising it.

There are many factors behind this, but one stands out at Laurel Heights: students aren't allowed to fail. Without failure, there is little that divides those who put in the work and those who do not. When students are consistently shielded from failure, they are also shielded from the skills they need to function outside of school as members of a collective society.

Grades are excellent at showing academic intelligence. They are not so good at showing independence, social ability, or organisational skill. That is why universities want students to volunteer and engage in extracurricular activities. While the Ontario government's implementation of mandatory volunteer hours needs work,³ of more concern are the in-school clubs. Ideally, clubs should be spaces where students take risks, make decisions, and at times, fail.

At Laurel Heights, that space is stifled and controlled. Clubs require heavy oversight; all decisions are routed through staff sponsors and, in many cases, additional approval processes via the "student activities" office. While some supervision is of course necessary, the current structure leaves little room for genuine student ownership. When something goes wrong, responsibility falls on the

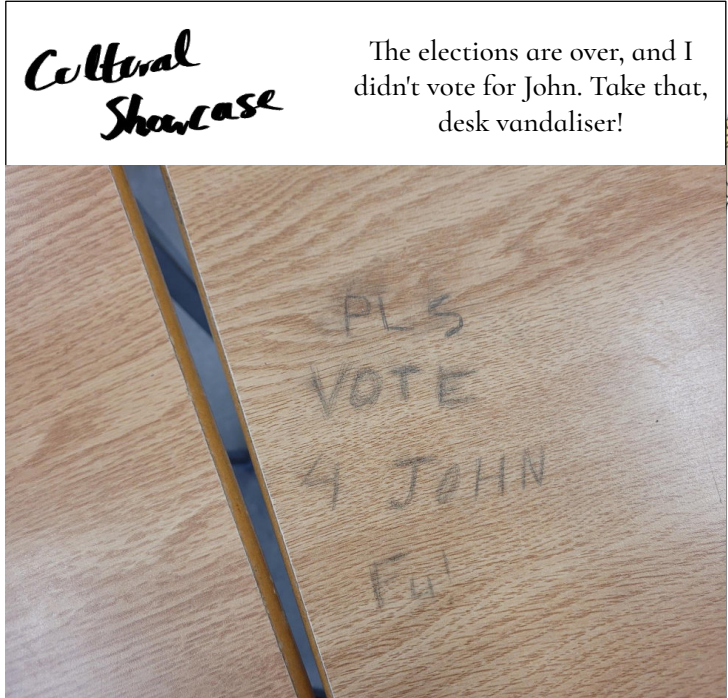
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staff sponsor, not the students themselves. This discourages risk-taking and stifles creativity. The only clubs that survive are the ones that are either engineered to be put on a University Application, or the ones that stay afloat due to unpaid sacrifices from staff. There are many examples of the former at this school, I'm sure you have an example in mind already. A good example of the latter is Drama Club & Council; which has succeeded as a drama club only because of the hours spent after school planning and creating spaces for students to be truly successful.

Excluding these outliers, students are guided at every step but rarely trusted to act independently. The issue is not that students are incapable. It is that they are not being given the chance to prove otherwise. The right to fail is a fundamental and inextricable part of education. Without it, schools risk producing a generation who can only meet expectations when the bar is lowered, and someone is holding their hand throughout the entire process.

Peek behind the door, Laurel Heights. Why should anyone trust the numbers that come from schools if current trends continue? Grades will matter less and less because the people who are meant to ensure that students are succeeding have become so focused on control. Students will enter the world without the experience of tasting defeat. That is a risk none of us should be willing to take.



The elections are over, and I didn't vote for John. Take that, desk vandaliser!

"We are most artistically caged"

www.TheGadfly.news

The Gadfly

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"Te occidere possunt sed te edere non possunt nefas est"

Hello there,

You might've noticed, perhaps, that this issue lacked a key Gadfly element: satire. If you didn't, I question your media literacy—ah, ever The Gadfly way: mock your readers. At least that didn't change, eh? But anyway, you might be wondering why we've decided to forgo the only thing that makes us special in any regard (satire, in case I was right about the media literacy thing).*

Well, the answer is both incredibly simple and belligerently complex: we wanted to.

Why? Partly to prove we're smart enough to write "complex" (serious) articles. Did you know most people think satire is really easy? "Oh, just make fun of something, yada yada yah." No, sir, satire is actually quite hard; do you know the difference between Juvenalian, Menippean, Horatian, and Lucilian satires? Didn't think so.**

It takes double the effort to write a good satire than it does to write some straight-faced news report or polemic. You have to understand with perfect clarity what you're talking about (My satire pieces often have dozens of sources—and in one case over a hundred—that you never see since we're "just satire"), then you often need to take a position you disagree with, and play the perfect monster. It's tiring, and it's hard. It requires mastery of voice, prose, and a level of critical thinking that isn't taught until university.

That's partly why we're so bad at it.

It turns out that choosing virtually the hardest medium to write well in was a bad idea, so this issue is almost a break from that. Plus, the school has out-satired us: they've introduced new draconian rules around posters, committed to plastering AI-generated clip art of our mascot around the school, and numerous other silly things. Somebody needs to be serious around here, and it surely isn't the school.

You can expect our usual goofy selves next issue; this seriousness is probably a one-time thing. We need something to keep us busy, since the curriculum surely isn't going to do that (says the grade 11 student who doesn't know how to do long division or the definition of an adjective).

If any silliness managed to embed itself in this issue, I offer both my deepest apologies and most sincere condolences; the team & I are so "irony-poisoned" that we are basically incapable of taking anything truly seriously at this point.

Ha lol,



* Hemingway could've made this introductory paragraph 3 words if he was still alive

** If you do, why are you reading this paper??**

*** Look at me, adding footnotes to my 1 page informal letter, and adding footnotes to my footnotes; really pulling a David Foster Wallace, aren't I? Coincidentally and entirely unrelated to this footnote, I'm reading Infinite Jest rn; get flexed on.

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"The Gadfly is a absurdist's gesamtkunstwerk "



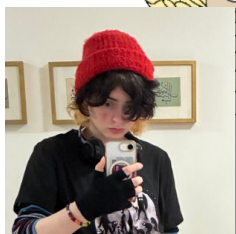
MATEO GRGIĆ – Co-Founder, Writer, Steering Committee, Editor, Layout, Finances, Website

Mateo Grgić is a grade 11 student at Laurel Heights Secondary School. He was born & raised in Waterloo, Ontario. He co-founded 'The Backcast', a failed school newspaper with his friend Hassan Ahmed, which eventually got shut down for being too funny. Never ones to give up, they then started a new, legally distinct newspaper: The Gadfly. His favourite colour is neon green. He spends his free time reading, cycling, and browsing the Arch Linux Wiki.



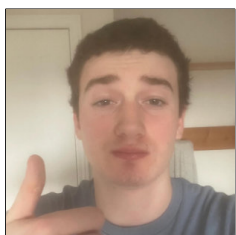
HASSAN AHMED – Co-Founder, Writer, Steering Committee, Secretary, Senior Ad Maker

Hassan Ahmed is a co-founder of The Gadfly, and an aspiring New York Times Bestselling Author. Born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, he was deported for being too funny. He moved to the land that provided the most promise and opportunity for a young journalist; suburban Waterloo. With only 3 incidents involving the police, Hassan discovered one day that anyone can start a news publication if they tried hard enough, and here we are.



LIANNE ELKADRI – Co-Founder, Writer, Steering Committee, Unpaid Artist, Holder of the Secret Knowledge

Lianne Elkadri is a journalist for the Gadfly, while also dedicating a significant amount of her time to thinking about what to do with her free time. She also never knows what to put in "about the author" sections, despite this being the first time she has had to write one. She enjoys music, collecting vinyl records, the colour red, space, turtles, physics, and geometry.



OSKAR DENEAU – Writer

Oskar Deneau, is an investigator of sorts; he spends his time pursuing things he likely can't achieve. Once hailed as leader and king by his subjects, he was recently overthrown, and has landed a job here at The Gadfly. He is said to be a nuisance at many social gatherings and is reportedly banned from most parking lots. In his free time he enjoys art, music, tea, and selling your data online.



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“The object of life is to make sure you die a weird death. To make sure that, however it finds you, it finds you under very weird circumstances”

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15. Fig. 3. [The 3 co-founders of The Gadfly—the only remaining protesters—after the rest left to go eat cake. We’d been outside for over 2 hours in the rain at this point, and we were quite cold & wet], photograph by Mateo Grgic; March 11, 2026



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Notes - LHSS Claims to Promote Responsible AI Use: Evidence Suggests Otherwise

1. Crucially, the charge is not a legal violation, but an ethical one. AI rules apply to students only, and staff can permit AI use if they deem it necessary. If this was a violation of board rules, it would be embarrassing to the board and The Record would have scooped up the story. Since the only victims are students, the story is left to papers like ours. Bringing up student guidelines on AI use only exists to highlight the double standard. I cannot prove it, but there is little doubt in my mind that adults who aren’t in the computer science department know how to use AI responsibly. This is not to say that staff are inferior or that they shouldn’t use AI, but that they do not hold any special privilege over the students they supervise.
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7. I choose the term ethical dishonesty to highlight that educators should avoid AI as a rule. There may be this or that scenario which invites temptation, and it may even be morally beneficial to use AI in a certain context. Yet to measure the worth of every single action and compare it to the moral value of having AI substitute a human or any other object would be exhausting. The very ethical rules that endow modern teachers with value in our society—facilitating the intellectual, social, and overall development of the next generation, leading by example and creating a functional space fit for human exercise, and ensuring the safety of children when parents are away, among others—when accepted as a necessary postulate, necessarily dissuade the use of AI—a tool that cannot socialise, cannot relate to human experience, and has no physical form. If teachers believe in the uninhibited use of AI, they believe in their own obsolescence. To ignore such a contradiction is dishonest.

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I steal this hook from the classic and seminal work by anthropologist Samuel Noah Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*. Sumer is the earliest recorded civilisation, and the transition from nomadic tribes to an established settlement was of interest to me. Through further edits and revisions, the section on Sumer was removed, but I still think it important to acknowledge the work as a starting point.
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9. I steal the term “Illiberal democracy” from Zakaria, Fareed. *The rise of illiberal democracy*. New York: Foreign Affairs, 1997.
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13. The distinction is a little more complicated than I let on. According to the dominant strand of Shia'ism in Iran, there are only 12 Imams; the twelfth Imam has yet to appear. Crucially, the Ayatollah does not claim to be an Imam. The concept of the Imam itself is more sacred in Shia Islam than the title of Pope in Catholicism.
14. The decline of Tudeh was a long process, with both the Shah and the Ayatollah banning and persecuting the party. Despite this, Tudeh maintained a high level of popular support through both regimes.
15. This point is stolen completely from Ervand Abrahamian and his work, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. The argument rests on the premise that The Shah, continuing the work started by Tudeh of industrialising the Iranian economy, redefined how Iran's social classes interacted with each other. A broad middle class was created as living standards increased and markets opened. This group would become the backbone of the liberal movement. The lower, working class—robbed of the benefits awarded to them by the ousted socialist government—saw their living conditions diminish. On top of Tudeh's broad popularity with the masses, the working class was largely supportive of the socialists. Along with economic development, very limited political changes liberalised Iranian society to the dismay of traditionalists. The conditions created a militant liberal, socialist, and islamist movement that now demanded an acceleration in political development; they wanted democracy.
16. Abrahamian, Ervand. “Conclusion.” In *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 536. Princeton University Press, 2022.
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18. The Guardian Council is responsible for vetting candidates who stand in the presidential elections to ensure they are in line with the Revolution & the mission of the constitution. They perform a similar, though admittedly more provocative role to the supreme court in limiting unconstitutional candidates. In recent years however, The Council has taken a more narrow view of what policies are in line; reformist candidates are effectively barred from running.
19. The focus of this article focuses on Iran 1979 onward. But I mention the coup that reinstalled the Shah to highlight what interventionism has done to Iran. In the post-war period, Iran was a growing democracy and its elected parliament would appoint Mohammad Mosaddegh as Prime Minister. The chief concern of the Mosaddegh premiership was the nationalisation of the Anglo-Persian oil company. The British instituted a blockade and began work with the United States to secure the vast oil fields; the democratic elements of the government ended in a coup that eventually led to the Shah taking full power once again. This regression happened to serve the British & Americans, at the expense of the Iranian people.
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21. I will not elaborate.
22. Though historically *On Liberty* was attributed to John Stuart Mill alone, recent scholarship suggests that his wife may have written many passages of the book. At the very least, her ideas shaped the philosophy to a notable degree. Both ought to be attributed.
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26. Measuring which democracy is better or worse would only muddy the thesis-at-hand, which is why I aimed to stay as neutral as possible in the actual text. Still, I do want to note that the logic I’ve established in this article still means that the Canadian democracy is more democratic than the Iranian one. Canadians are able to democratically control much more of their society than Iranians. The right to peaceful assembly in particular (though not always respected) opens the way for popular struggle in Canada, which Iran does not have.
27. This is a rather Platonic view. Democracies tend to be destabilising forces, and the issue of mob rule (or tyranny of the majority) has plagued democratic experiments like the United States. The route taken in the US, and in many other democracies, was to limit what democracies could do; they would provide democracy to the things they believed mattered most and discarded things they believed did not. This is why only men who owned property had the right to vote. As democratic rule stabilised and the authority of the President was respected, society was able to shift into a more democratic state (though always carrying the scar of that initial hierarchy)
28. Abrahamian, Ervand. “The Historical Background.” Essay. In *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 50–92. Princeton University Press, 2022.
29. The best democracy—or at least a better democracy than what we have now—would be one that leaves as little to the base as possible. It would be an unfiltered democracy. I am not completely sure what that would be, but I have always hated when books critique and fail to provide a solution; I will do my best to provide a brief solution here. I do not believe a democracy without a base would last very long. Either from internal division or more likely from external exploitation, that democracy would collapse. I believe that the things democracy should not be able to touch are the things that protect the most people. Much like the early American state, I fear that it would have to be semi-dictatorial before developing into a proper democratic state. Most importantly, it would need to have mechanisms like the freedom to assemble to ensure that things may move from the base to the democratic realm.

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The Gadfly

Unreliable Narrators Since 470 BCE

“You don't love someone because they're perfect, you love them in spite of the fact that they're not”

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