

'Knowing yourself is enlightenment'



An interesting thought was proposed to me today while speaking with Stan Jacobson. He told me that I am not the stories of my past. This took me a moment to fully digest, but when it finally sunk in (a few hours later to be honest), it was enlightening, humbling, and all around beautiful.

My first thought was to a negative experience I have been thinking on lately. I thought, of course! I don't have to be a product of that because it's over! What I mean by this is that while yes, negative experiences may make us sad or angry, when they are over, to allow them to continue to make us sad or angry is to give that experience a power it shouldn't have. For example, when you are home but are thinking about work, you are still mentally at work, and you're not even

getting paid for it.

As I reflected on Mr. Jacobson's quote, however, I began to realize how powerful this though could really be, and had a particularly liberating approach to how we practice religion. To accept a religion simply because it is historically what you have always been does not seem a very valuable reason to commit to something.

Now, don't get me wrong. I am not saying to just reject religion because it's what you always have been (at least in this article). I am saying that with this type of self-awareness we can engage what we truly believe and be honest with ourselves without feeling guilty for changing our minds should we so wish to.

Donating ten minutes out of your day to yourself to truly reflect on what you believe and why gives a tremendous amount of wealth to your practice. It allows you to grow, and most importantly, adapt. When you learn to let the past go the present becomes much less constrained.

An example outside of the religious realm that Stan gave was to look at how a criminal sees himself. When a person is found to be a criminal at some point in their lives, they will hold on to that title and act accordingly. The problem is, when you are speaking with a criminal, unless they are committing a crime while conversing with you, in that very moment they are not being a criminal, which shows us that they are not a criminal, just that they have been.

Possibly the most liberating thing about this thought is that it allows a person to make a change if they want to. Whether it be a criminal to a non-criminal, an atheist to religion, or a religious to atheist, with this approach, when one is ready to make a change, they can.

Dented sounds much better than broken to a criminal. Dented can be fixed or changed. This incredible quote resembles that same metaphor. To absolve ourselves from the past gives us a much firmer grasp on the present, which in turn gives us a better chance of affecting our future.

A week in Europe with ORG 390

By Patrick Veilleux
Staff Writer

It has been almost two weeks since I took part in the ORG 390 Spring Break trip to Europe, during which a group of students and I were able to visit four different cities in the span of a week. It was a truly fantastic experience.

We started in Amsterdam on March 5. Still suffering from jet lag, we decided to start out bright and early at 4 a.m. Eastern Standard Time, which was about 10 a.m. there. Upon leaving the airport we drove into the heart of the city and began walking from there.

The mass transit system ran directly down the center of the streets, and it was remarkable to walk down the cobblestone streets and have a tram rush by. The Netherlands are of course, far more liberal in law and morality than the United States. Every few blocks there would be a marijuana cafe or an "adult" store. Among the Dutch this is hardly noteworthy, these American vices are mere pastimes in the Netherlands.

The cafes seem to serve primarily as tourist traps, if one wants to truly see the city, they must look elsewhere. The Anne Frank House is a fine example of this, Amsterdam was under Nazi

occupation less than a century ago. Realizations such as this were commonplace for me during the trip, that the places I was strolling through and snapping pictures of were saturated with history.

After two days we rode over to Brussels, Belgium; the home of waffles, the European Union, and delicious beer. Brussels was quite possibly the most beautiful city out of the four that we visited with white stone buildings and either dark cobblestones or granite tiles depending on where you were in the city. Statues throughout the city added to the view, most whereof soldiers from WWI, marks of patriotism amongst a proud people. The most distinctive part of the city was the Grand Place, a quarter of the size of Times Square.

Belgium is also home to delicious waffles, there were chunks of what I believe was sugar embedded in the dough, and the waffles themselves were small enough to eat with one hand. The only flaw of the city was an overwhelming homeless population. I felt that everywhere I looked there was a beggar. I gave money to a few people but on one occasion I was chastised by a restaurant owner for doing so.

It was interesting that even though the European Union has major buildings and institutions in

Belgium, the country doesn't have an official government. The former prime minister is running things until a new government is formed, but for the time being he unofficially runs the show. This is idea is a particularly foreign one to me and most Americans: a country that runs

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