

# radix

McGill's Student Spirituality Magazine



*gratitude*

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# editorial

*Ayman Oweida*

*Dear Radix readers,*

As we embrace the cold winter months and the stress of exams, finding gratitude can seem challenging.

There will be the odd day or two during the holiday season when some will reflect on their blessings and find gratitude in the company of their loved ones. But, finding gratitude during times of hardship can be difficult.

Our minds have enormous powers: to think, memorize, construct, solve and revolutionize. But, our minds can fail us, whether it pertains to academic exams, personal relationships, or life experiences. Yet when our minds fail us, our spirits shouldn't!

Our spirits should remain high and grateful.

There are many things to be grateful for, not the least of which are the air we breathe, the sun that lightens our day, the relationships we cherish and our very ability to read these words. Finding gratitude during times of hardship is a rewarding and uplifting experience. William Ward once said: Adversity causes some men to break; others to break records.

In this issue of Radix, we explore the theme of gratitude through a variety of submissions. Our ads section invites you to find events and activities that are tailored to your particular spiritual needs and desires.

As you flip through the pages of this issue of Radix, consider submitting your own work for publication. Indeed, writing, poetry, drawing and painting are effective ways for finding gratitude in our lives.

*Ayman Oweida*  
*Radix Co-Editor*

# Gratitude for Freedom and Intellect: An Egyptian's Perspective

*Bassem Toeama*

As I witnessed the unfolding of the democratic process through Montreal's municipal elections held on November 15th 2013, I couldn't help but sympathize with my family and friends in my home country, Egypt.

In a recent turn of events, a professor in the faculty of medicine of Cairo University, uttered obnoxious words of discrimination while lecturing her students on physiology. The professor humiliated the followers of the Muslim Brotherhood while expressing her extreme hatred towards them. Upon filing a complaint, the students realized that the vice-dean refused to take action against the professor who committed a clear act of hatred and discrimination. Although, many of the students do not belong to a particular political group, those who do have respectfully kept their opinions to themselves. Since then, many students have taken to the streets in protest of this incident and similar ones across Egyptian universities.

As a graduate from an Egyptian university, this incident allowed me to realize how immensely blessed I am at McGill. Egypt's primary education ranks last in the global competitiveness report. The quality of education in Egyptian universities is disastrous. Cairo University ranks 498 among the top 500 universities in the global rating according to URAP.

Freedom of thought and expression in Egyptian universities is absolutely forbidden. For a long time, Egypt has been a military state ruled by dictators. A drawback of democracy is expected with the current rule of Egypt by the Army General, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. There is no code of ethics in Egyptian universities. Undisclosed conflicts of interest and personal recommendations play a major role in assessing the academic competency of graduates in oral examinations. Indeed, what we take for granted as Canadian students is a far-fetched dream of Egyptian students.



*art by Charlotte Qin*

The hierarchy of education in Egypt needs revolutionary steps. The youth were the leaders of the Egyptian revolution of January 25th 2011 and they are the hope of the future. The elected cabinet has to focus on developing primary, secondary and higher education. The number of graduates must correlate with labour market trends. Research is the key to improve the education system. Research must be integrated in each and every step. Freedom of thought and expression is a basic right for students.

*Bassem is a PhD student in the department of experimental medicine at McGill University.*

# That Person in the Crowd

*Josee Di Sano*

I am grateful for the sun  
I am grateful for the moon  
I am grateful for my cup of tea  
In the afternoon

I am grateful for my mom  
I am grateful for my dad  
And all the ancestors that I had

I am grateful for my colleagues  
I am grateful for my friends  
I am grateful of the new people  
And my boyfriends

I am grateful for my job  
And all the students I have met  
That have brought me sunshine  
And all the happiness I could get

I am grateful for the wind  
I am grateful for the sea  
I am grateful for the curious  
That I see in thee

*Josee Di Sano is the Coordinator of the McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life (formerly called Chaplaincy). She volunteers to take care of challenged adults in her spare time.*

I am grateful for the old lady  
That I met on the bus  
That smiled at me and said  
Can we be friends? My son and me, just us?

I am grateful for that smile  
That can make a stranger frown  
How I made a child laugh  
When I acted like a clown

So next time you're on the bus  
Or just walking down the street  
Don't forget to say hello  
You never know who you will meet

An old man that lives alone  
A mentally challenged charm  
An under privileged person  
Surely you can do no harm

So reach out to who you see  
The results will make you proud  
That you made a difference in their life  
Yes, that person in the crowd.

# Tapping into the Roots of our Education: the Walk of Life

*Victor Lam*

8:30am. Wake up. Coffee. Commute. Study. Class. Lunch. More class. Friends. Club event. Food. Procrastination. More Studying. Good night and see you tomorrow.

You are not alone.

Many students struggle with deliberately balancing their lifestyles, without compartmentalising their education into neat little blocks of time in their day.

This begs the question: How often do you express yourself in education? Do you define your education as a set of formalised experiences, neatly contained within the academic sphere of life? Are you juggling your education on top of your social and private spheres? Or, do you follow what you strive for and critically engage in learning in all aspects of life?

Let us start by defining education: The Latin root word for education is *educare*, which means ‘to bring up like children’, or nurture. How exactly does your education nurture you?

Education nurtures you about the world in which you live. It informs you. It intrigues you. It transforms you. It makes you passionate about what you learn.

If we confine this understanding of education to textbooks, mid-terms and classrooms, not only do we alienate ourselves from the everyday experiences, thoughts, and contemplations of ourselves in this world, we prevent ourselves from expressing who we truly are. Self-expression is an integral part of learning about yourself, others and the world.

*Victor Lam is a U3 Honours student in Arts and Science, completing his major in Sustainability, Science and Society, and minor in Philosophy.*



As American author Richard Louv puts it, “though we often see ourselves as separate from nature, humans are also part of that wildness.” But we can no longer see ourselves, and especially our education, as separate from nature.

“Many people know so much, but are blind to their surroundings.” Our academic disciplinary boundaries must first be dissolved. If education is the means by which we come to know this world, then it must necessarily encompass the ways in which we come to know all aspects of our lives, and especially how we relate to our Earth.

The Earth is our household, or *oikos* in Ancient Greek. *Oikos* is also the root of key words for economy, ecology and ecumenism: The worth of this household, its health and its relationships. To understand this household, we must re-discover these fundamental components. A fundamental part of our education in the 21st Century, is to be nurtured by our Earth. Nature is no longer foreign, but intimate: this is our household. But how do we make sense of this?

Nurturing cannot simply start in the classroom: it is only an intermediate learning environment. We must consciously discover this household, through education.

Our household is not homogeneous or static. Rocks, leaves, trees, squirrels, water, air, soil... and us, humans: Our household is always moving and full of life. We are more than the sum of our parts: By intentionally re-situating ourselves in our household, reflecting upon our education and disciplinary boundaries, we become more aware of the need for holistic education: The need to be nurtured by each other.

“I feel the love to learn again by embarking on this walk. I want to learn.”

Once you discover the freedom to choose what you learn, and the need to reciprocate this attitude of nurture with the household, you realize the value and potential of holistic education. You become grateful. You are no longer blinded by the illusions of the classroom education. You begin to acquaint yourself with the limits of formal education, and discover the unlimited possibilities in unstructured, creative, and holistic education that encompasses all disciplines of study. You begin to appreciate what your learning is worth, and make sense of what it truly means to you.



Here's an opportunity for you to try for yourself. This is an open invitation to you for the Walk of Life, a project launched by OIKOS McGill.

Every Wednesday afternoon, a group of curious learners gather together, and do just that. Through body work exercises, reflections of the sense of place, or conversations about their encounters with nature in their education, participants are encouraged to express themselves through a variety of channels. We adopt the oikos household model of Earth in approaching holistic education and opening channels for authentic expressions. Furthermore, we want to empower and cultivate in each participant a yearning and gratitude to reflect upon their own learning and to share this with others. We hope these fruitful conversations will be the centre of catalysing a holistic education paradigm, leading to transformation amongst all participants.

Currently, we are conducting an underground walk of McGill, exploring McGill's built environment, and its intellectual foundations. We hope your participation and feedback will help shape the future of OIKOS McGill and the Walk of Life! We are also looking for animators for the walk; if you are interested in coming aboard the core team, please let us know!

Meeting Location: by the donor tree, lobby of McLennan Library

When: Every Wednesday, 4pm (the walk takes about 1 hour)

Contact information: Victor or Neil at [oikosmcgill@gmail.com](mailto:oikosmcgill@gmail.com)

For more information, please visit <http://oikosmcgill.wix.com/whatiseducationfor> or find us on Facebook at <http://facebook.com/groups/oikosmcgill/>.

*Victor Lam is a U3 Honours student in Arts and Science, completing his major in Sustainability, Science and Society, and minor in Philosophy.*



*art by Charlotte Qin*

# Untitled

*Sarah Bell*

people aren't meant to be shot at turning brother  
against brother  
people aren't meant to hit one another  
to leave each other battered and bruised  
people aren't meant to walk around with broken  
hearts  
and to see nothing but pain  
people aren't meant to be forced to speak another  
language  
people aren't meant to be taken away from their  
mothers, their fathers  
people aren't meant to be missing  
to be murdered  
to be taken advantage of  
to be stripped of all that they know  
to be reduced to a shell  
so how do we undo the pain that has been wrought  
upon these people  
perhaps let's start with  
people were meant to be connected to one another,  
to the earth  
and to their people  
to speak in their native tongue  
to sing songs that have been passed on and on from  
mothers to daughters and fathers to sons

# Ripped at the seams am I

*Sarah Bell*

Ripped at the seams am I  
Torn apart at the side  
You are the tailor  
You mend me up  
Stitch by stitch  
Line by line  
Piece by Piece  
Block by Block

Tailored at the seams am I  
You know me better than I know myself  
My fears, my loves, my desires  
Hidden at the seams am I  
I take pride in being a mystery  
But God this is not what you taught  
To know someone is to be able to love  
Blessed are the honest  
Blessed are those who share in life with one  
another





# Joy in Ecclesiastes

*Gabriel Feng*

If you have ever read the book of Ecclesiastes from the Bible you may find it depressing. The Preacher, as he is called, finds all things vain. He finds that wisdom or knowledge in itself is vain, possessions are vain and work too is vain. Indeed, he finds little for which to live. However, the author notes that there is still joy to be found. It is said that everyone should enjoy food, drink, and work (Ecc 3:12-13, Ecc 5:18). It is also said that people should enjoy their power, possessions and wealth (Ecc 5: 19-20). The seventh chapter of the book states something similar: We are meant to be joyful in prosperity (Ecc. 7:14). Concerning food, drink, possessions and relationships, Ecclesiastes 9:7-9 repeats this message: “Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that He has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.” Each of these verses contains similar motifs. These themes can find their origins in the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Going back to Genesis is useful when looking for the origin of certain Judeo-Christian concepts. In Genesis, man was created and placed in the garden to work (Genesis 2:15). Man was also commanded to eat (Genesis 2:16). Lastly, Adam and Eve were given clothing or personal artifacts by God (Genesis 3:21). Looking back at Ecclesiastes, the things that make us happy should be simple. We should enjoy work, possessions and the relationships in our lives. This may seem obvious or redundant, but we may often look too hard for joy and gratitude. As the Preacher says, “Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity” (Ecc. 11:10). Indeed, perhaps we simply need to stop and enjoy our lives, as they are right now.

Note: All quotes and verse references were taken from the (English Standard Version) ESV translation.

# Adventure

*Victor Lam*

Stop it, I hush myself.  
Step outside the McGill bubble.  
Try it. Open the door,  
And embark on the adventure.

Be still. Be still.

Hear.  
The wind whispers wondrously  
Yellow leaves dance and  
trees sway forth.  
Chirps, quacks, rustles fill the void.  
I awake and  
Hidden treasures surround me.

Breathe,  
Wonder orchestrates itself in the unseen.  
Inside,  
too miraculous to count,  
Work, rhythm, and sound ripple  
And beat with every breath.  
Every inch of my body and soul  
Thirst for this spring of life.





Look,  
I roll open my eyes,  
And glance at oceans of blue.  
How far, How wide.  
What am I worth, on this Earth?  
What is of worth, surrounding me?  
Who am I?

I see creation,  
And creation  
I am.

I give and receive.  
I see goodness. I see renewal.  
I am reminded.  
I am made,  
An image that reflects Your glory.  
This is Your world,  
The Sustainer.

This is my Father's world.

*Victor Lam is a U3 Honours student in Arts and Science, completing his major in Sustainability, Science and Society, and minor in Philosophy.*

# Untitled

*Daniel Cinelli*

You know that I know I speak in tongues

That the English language bends with my brain

It used to be purposeful, intent

But the fluidity propagates itself and I find myself flowing with the current

Waves unknowingly berating my existence

*Daniel Cinelli is a U3 student in Anatomy and Cell Biology with a Minor in World Religions. He enjoys writing as well as struggling with abstract philosophical concepts. He is planning on going to Med School next year, something he is very excited about.*



Forget not those who helped us through  
in overcoming static friction;  
for without, the ball would not be rolling  
as soon, nor would it speed  
with the velocity it has now,

accelerating up its hill serendipitously  
with its overburden removed.

We must thank for that.

We must thank too that force within,  
and it's-not-so-ready-to-let-us-quit-once-  
we've-already-begun, reminding  
us warmly of all the work we had placed  
just to move towards the final product.

How complex,  
how interconnected is this system  
of mutual reciprocation, that waves  
construct into waves, energy sums  
with energy--

# Thank you

*Ethan Yang*

Together they streak past hurdles  
once thought impossible, while  
bringing destruction to one another,  
fireworks, isn't it?

We focus on its glorious sparks and  
magnificent flares. We ignore the minerals  
stuffed, cellulose wrapped,  
and the smoke that smogs the night.

Have you already forgotten Sisyphus?

With the push up that hill,  
come that roll down the knoll.

With the birth of a star,  
came the death of one too.

And with the start of our love  
meant the end of our care.

Sometimes the expected comes so unexpectedly;  
when it does, remember to smile to welcome it.

# classifieds

Meditation in the Quaker Tradition!  
November 7th 2013 at 5pm in the  
Chaplaincy area (Brown Building  
Suite 2100).

For more information contact David  
Summerhays:  
david.summerhays@mail.mcgill.ca

“My Neighbour’s Faith”!

McGill Chaplaincy regularly visits  
Montreal’s diverse places of worship.  
This year, the series is joint with Con-  
cordia Multifaith Chaplaincy “Sacred  
Sites Visits.”

The tentative schedule is:

October 24:  
Muslim Al-Madinah Centre, 12:00-  
2:30.

Registration required. Email laura.  
gallo@concordia.ca

December:  
Christian Christmas Carol Service.  
Contact chaplaincy@mcgill.ca

January:  
Universalist Unitarian (near Vendome  
metro).  
Email chaplaincy@mcgill.ca

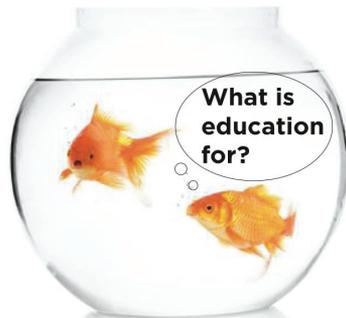
February:  
Quaker Meeting (Westmount).  
Contact chaplaincy@mcgill.ca for  
more info.

The Radical Christian Students’ As-  
sociation has a free vegan meal every  
Thursday at 6pm at Presbyterian Col-  
lege (corner of University and Milton)  
at their worship/discussion meetings.

## WALK OF LIFE OIKOS McGill

Weekly walks through  
underground McGill

4pm each Wednesday  
from the lobby of  
McLennan-Redpath library.



from McGill Ecumenical Chaplaincy  
(McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life)

Free: students, staff and faculty all welcome.

<http://www.oikosmcgill.wix.com/whatiseducationfor>



Radix is looking for Volunteers Like what you see?

Believe in student creativity, and inter-faith collaboration?

Help us do it better! We can always use help in marketing, web-development, research, distribution and much more! Email us to join the community. [radix@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:radix@mail.mcgill.ca)

Stay connected with Chaplaincy Services on twitter [@SpiritualMcGill](https://twitter.com/SpiritualMcGill)

or like McGill Chaplaincy on Facebook.

Zen meditation

Every Friday morning at 8:30. Zen monk, Myokyo offers guided Zen practice in the Birks chapel (3520 University Street, 2nd floor).

Ancient Wisdom Lies At Your Feet

It's free! Just bring yourself.

Try walking meditation using a labyrinth on campus.

Every Tuesday afternoon from noon to 5 pm.

Labyrinth will be set up on lower campus (by the James McGill statue), weather permitting and will move indoors in the Winter months.

For more information visit: [Labyrinth-McGill](https://www.facebook.com/Labyrinth-McGill) on Facebook.

“Hello Body”

A free bioenergetic exercise class offered by ecumenical chaplain, Neil Whitehouse. Every Tuesday morning from 9:30am to 10:30 am, in the Brown Building (suite 5001). Wear stretchy clothing. Get back into your body and out of your frazzled mind! [www.facebook.com/mcgillhellobody](https://www.facebook.com/mcgillhellobody)

*FREE ADS FOR SPIRITUAL & SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUPS!*

### Oikos Education Walk

Offered by Chaplaincy services every Wednesday afternoon at 4pm.

This contemplative walk guides students both inward to their goals and aspirations and outward to their tangible environment. This walk helps students answer the question, "What is Education For?"

### Newman Centre: Soup and Bagel Program

The Newman Centre's Soup and Bagel Program provides home-made soup and fresh Montreal-style bagels every weekday for a suggested donation of \$3.50. All are welcome.

3484 Peel Street. [newmancentre@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:newmancentre@mail.mcgill.ca) / [www.newmancentre.org](http://www.newmancentre.org)

### The Rabbit Hole Café

Food for Thought's vegan collective, cooking up vegan lunches every Friday at 1:00 p.m. Drop by, pay a toonie, enjoy the company and eat up! All proceeds go towards maintaining this Yellow Door program (3625 Aylmer).

### McGill Student Parents' Network

The MSPN provides support to McGill students who are parents. Regularly we offer free of charge to McGill students: in-home babysitting, support group meetings, study sessions for parents with babysitting for children. Interested families should contact the MSPN.

There is a weekly student meeting for Russian Orthodox and Ukrainian Orthodox Christian Students. They also have monastery visits, picnics, and movie nights. Contact the Orthodox chaplain, Father Ihor for details: [ikutash@gmail.com](mailto:ikutash@gmail.com).

### The Muslim Students Association of McGill

We aim to provide spiritual, social & educational services. We offer weekly study circles, free Islamic educational materials, Ramadan services, lectures/conferences, and a wonderful library called House of Wisdom. We also have many community events to serve others (ex. Project Downtown), as well as exciting social events (ex. ski trips, cultural dinner nights, MSA Frosh, and so much more!) Come drop by & say hi to us in our office (Shatner building, room B09.)

iF? group (Interfaith Forum) is a student group that meets for weekly dialogue Monday afternoons at 4pm at the Diocesan College ("Dio") 3475 University Street. They "strive toward an inclusive future where dialogue is the main tool in finding common understanding."

The Jewish community at McGill is hoppin', thanks in part to Ben Vago, the Rabbi and Jewish Educator at Hillel Montreal, and Shmuly Weiss, the Rabbi of Chabad! Visit [www.hillel.ca](http://www.hillel.ca) and [www.chabadmcgill.com](http://www.chabadmcgill.com) for information on shabbat meals, holiday celebrations, educational programming, and fun social activities!



