

# Ath·e·nae·um

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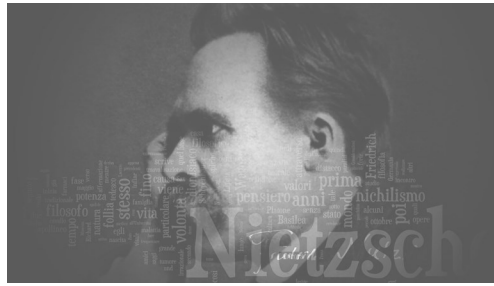
Happy  
New  
Year



JANUARY 2017

And those who were seen dancing  
were thought to be insane by those  
who could not hear the music.

-Friedrich Nietzsche



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## New Year's Contemplation



*Forbes* magazine prophesies that 80% of New Year's resolutions fail. "This year my hope is to lose weight, quit smoking, treat others more kindly, stop drinking, and..." the list goes on. "I really hope I can accomplish this," sounds out phonically across the country. "Do you know what my New Year's resolution is?" says the witty know-it-all. I answer for him, "To not have a New Year's resolution." And so goes the story for many of us. In a goal-driven, post-industrial, technology-obsessed culture, the goal is to always be self-improving, rather than self-reflecting. Here is where I am placing my first question mark.

Where exactly did we get the idea of a New Year's resolution from? Babylonians made promises to their gods at the start of each year that they would return borrowed objects and pay their debts. The Romans began each year by making promises to the god Janus, for whom the month of January is named. In the Medieval Era, knights took the peacock vow at the end of the Christmas season each

year to re-affirm their commitment to chivalry. Christian Jewish, and Islamic histories echo the concepts of seeking and offering forgiveness for one's wrongdoings committed over the year.

Leo Tolstoy, famous Russian writer, best known for his work *War and Peace* said, "Everyone I know wants to change the world, not one person I know wants to change themselves." Again, we make these said resolutions because of the reflection we see in the mirror. Often, our remorse, or regrets, define our resolution. Here is where I would like to pose a second question. What is this mirror of self-reflection or maybe even, who is this mirror?

Our behavior is often the effect of a cause that is hardly understood. Losing weight, quitting smoking, treating others more kindly, or drinking less is hardly going to make your life any better. Is life not more than food and the body not more than clothing? Should we not answer the question why? Maybe understanding one's desire is enough. Maybe desire satiated would heal every accusation in an instant. Once an illness is understood, the cure can be found. Silence laments, "To prune illness is only to accept it."

To conclude, I ask you this year to destroy both incarnations I spoke of in the beginning, uproot self-improvement and plant seeds of self-reflection. Ask yourself if the supposed behavior you wish to eliminate is the effect of a yet unidentified cause. Self-reflection will carry you much further and the statistics may reach, oh who believes in statistics anyway.

# Patron: Timothy Roe

“Patron” is a column in *Athenaeum* that focuses on someone connected to FCPL. This month I interviewed myself, “Seems a bit ego-centric, doesn’t it, Tim?” “Well, I tried to interview Prancer but she was too busy.” In reality, I didn’t want to burden anyone during this busy season, so you’re stuck with me.

## Who are you?

Good question, Tim. First, I guess I should unveil that I am the creator of *Athenaeum*. Questions, comments, complaints can be sent to my secretary. I am the Literacy Director at the FCPL. I am building *Learn: A Project* (see page 3, or stop in and ask). I have an English degree from IU Richmond with a concentration in Professional/Technical Writing and a minor in World Literature.

## Let’s talk library a moment. Are you a book, movie, or music fan? Tell us a little about what interests you.

I am almost a book. My said goal is to write the book that ends all books. I read incessantly. I like non-fiction works: history, philosophy, religion, mythos, language studies.

## What would someone not know about you that is of interest?

I study ancient Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and am consumed by an interest in Arabic. That I have read every English translation of the Quran, thus far, is probably unique.

## What is in your CD player right now?

What isn’t in my cd player right now? To be honest, I have recently have spent some time with rappers from Atlanta. Time is measured by them in a terrifying manner. I suppose to be more user friendly, Kings of Leon write well and I enjoy listening to them.

## Is there an author that has impacted you?

I have learned from everything I have read. I suppose if I had to answer who changed the way I understood reality: Lao Tzu, St. John the Theologian, the journals of Prophet Isaiah, Prophet Muhammed, or more palpably the philosophy of Jacques Ellul, Friedrich Nietzsche, or Farid ud-Din Attar .

## Do you have any artistic interests? How do you spend your time?

Goodness, I have an active mind and body. I worked as a stone mason for years. Stone masonry is magical to me. I tie Eastern Orthodox prayer ropes. I met a Ukranian woman in Seattle whose prayer rope nearly brought me to tears, so I learned how to tie them. My wife and I rescue greyhounds, which led to a small business where I sew martingale collars and sell them online at Etsy, *The Hare and The Hound*. I crochet simple scarves and sock hats. I sew patchwork quilts. I love to write. It is the meaning of life to me. Oh yeah, I also bind books and journals; I either Coptic stitch them from scratch, or loose sheets I tie using a Japanese stab binding method.

## My favorite question, Tim! If you had one superpower what would it be?

I have spent a lot of time studying the hagiographical works of the Eastern Orthodox. I have an interest in exorcism, healing, and resurrection. I think superpowers are tangible, but look different than our eyes have been hexed into believing.

## Is time travel possible?

I am convinced that it is possible, but I think it looks differently than what we assume. If Time is a person, of which I am convinced, the question is hermeneutic, rather than natural. We interpret life through the medium of our body rather than our energy. This seems to me the error in our understanding of time travel.

## Do you have any future goals or ambitions?

Hope drives my desire, but takes many different forms at different times. Currently hope is silent in me. I can do whatever I set my heart to, so I am not really anxious . I drink from the present quite heavily. I think anyone can do whatever they want; they are their only obstacle.



Batman and the Joker posing for literacy’s annual fundraiser. The event was re-branded *The Joker’s Ball*. Gordon Bohs passed the torch to me on January 1st of 2016.

“I love to write. It is the meaning of life to me,” says Timothy Roe, who interviewed himself for *Athenaeum* page *Patron* this month.