

COLLOQUY

A CONVERSATION WITH GUTENBERG COLLEGE



Summer 2019

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Becoming a Subject

Ron Julian

The talk below was given at Gutenberg's commencement ceremony on June 14, 2019. Ron Julian has been a tutor at Gutenberg College since 1994. He is the author of *Righteous Sinners* and a co-author of *The Language of God: A Common-sense Approach to Understanding and Applying the Bible*.

Gutenberg graduates of 2019, thank you for asking me to speak to you today. Graduating from Gutenberg College is a big deal. You all know, and your tutors know, the hard work it has taken to get to this day. You have accomplished a great thing, and I congratulate you.

Many people might ask you whether a Gutenberg education has prepared you for real life. Of course, right off the bat, you know they have made a mistake. There is no such special category as “real life.” All life is real life, every moment of it. But you know what they are trying to ask you. Has your Gutenberg education prepared you for life after college? The correct answer is, “Of course.” How could it not? Your Gutenberg experience is *exactly like* all the rest of life. Like Gutenberg, life is educational, difficult, somewhat disorganized, and rewarding. In one sense, life after college is like life in college: the circumstances are different, but the challenges and opportunities will be just as abundant.

There is one thing about life after college, however, that may seem very different. For the last four years, the tutors of Gutenberg College have spent a lot of time telling you what to do. You have done things because we have asked you to do them. You have moved because we have given you assignments that set you in motion. But what is going to set you in motion after today? Many college graduates feel that question deeply. You are going to have to act, to move, to do something. But what is there to do? Peo-

ple tell me—you tell me—that your culture has bequeathed to your generation a terrible legacy: a crisis of agency. You need to act, to do, but what is worth doing? On what basis shall you act? What is going to set you in motion?

At times, it can seem that people are like particles in some big physics experiment, acted upon by external forces. Some things attract; other things repel. And this attraction and repulsion is what gets us moving, if we move at all. We are not so much actors; we are those who are acted upon. We are attracted to people who have made us feel good. In fact, we are attracted to anything that has given us good feelings that we want to feel again. We are repulsed by people who have made us feel bad. In fact, we are repulsed by anything that has given us bad feelings that we never want to feel again. This seems very reasonable—and very human. And yet, something is missing. Where has our agency gone? We are moving, but what has moved us?

You all know what the tutors of Gutenberg believe: the actions you are going to take in the coming years, both internally and externally, are truly significant. You are continuing on in the process of defining yourself. What inspires the motions of your soul? What will move you to act in the world? There is a certain philosopher that we read a lot at Gutenberg. I talk about this author all the time. I told myself that I would not mention him today in this talk. So, I won't. But if I were to mention him, I would point out what he sees as the highest calling for

every human being: we must become a subject.

What does that mean, becoming a subject? The idea starts with grammar. Every encounter you have in your life could be described in a sentence. You encounter a person. You encounter the Bible. You encounter an idea. You encounter Gutenberg College. And of course, the subject of each of these sentences is “you,” and the object is the thing you encounter. So, in one sense, “you” is always the subject. “You” are always the one encountering everything you encounter. But it is all too easy for you not to be the true subject of the sentences that describe your lives. You can fall into letting the real power, the real agency, lie with those things outside yourself, with the objects. Some objects push you away. Other objects pull you in. It is as if they are calling the shots, as if those things outside of you are making your choices. You move, but who is doing the moving? The task of your life is to become a true subject. You must personally, individually, subjectively decide what you are going to do in response to what you encounter. You must be the active agents of your lives.

This need for personal, subjective decision is something you have discussed a lot as Gutenberg students. And as Gutenberg students, you have experienced it. Education is not something that is done to you. Education is something that you do for yourself. When education is working as it should, your tutors are not some external force moving you in a certain direction. They are provocateurs, challenging you to appropriate the ideas you encounter. What is true of college is true of life after college. The challenge in front of you is to continue to become a subject. The challenge is to act, not just react, to act in your soul and act in the world.

But at this point we bump up against another legacy which your culture has bequeathed you: a crisis of confidence. Can you know what is true and worth pursuing? Even if you agree that you must be the active agents, the true subjects of your own lives, how can you know what you should choose? Can you have any confidence that moving in one direction is better than any other?

You all know that Gutenberg is a Christian college, and I myself am a

Christian. You know how your tutors would answer the question concerning what is true and worth pursuing. But we are not naive. There are so many hard questions concerning God and humans and the world. The Bible that I would point you to is often hard to understand, and people have argued about it throughout history. You have heard me say many times that I am not a skeptic, but given the challenges of knowing and choosing what is good, maybe I should be.

As I said before, I have set myself the goal of not referring to Gutenberg's favorite philosopher. If I were to do so, I would remind you what else he says about being a subject: You must become a subject because God is a subject. In fact, I would say that God is the subject above all subjects. He is the one who acts, above all others who act. He is the one who knows, above all others who know. He is the one who chooses, above all others who choose. In your struggle to know, to choose, to act, you are relating not to an elusive idea but to a person, a person who can make Himself known. God is willing and able to make Himself known to you.

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus makes one of the most profoundly encouraging statements ever made: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). There may be graduation speakers today who are telling graduates, "Go out boldly and knock on the door of opportunity, and it will be opened to you." That, of course, is not what I am saying. What I am saying is that God is a subject. God is the God who hears and who responds. God is the one on the other side of the door, and He opens it when you knock. If you truly become a subject, if you choose to move toward God, then God moves toward you. If you want to find Him, you cannot fail to do so.

In your Gutenberg education, you have seen how the knowledge of God has preoccupied Western intellectual thought. You have seen how many different answers have been given: God must be known; God can be known; God cannot be known; God is dead; Nothing can be known. It might seem that such an endless debate could never

be resolved. And if God were merely an idea, then we might despair of ever understanding that idea in any compelling way. But if God is a subject, then He can make Himself known. Sure, the Bible is filled with things difficult to understand. But I think one thing is clear from beginning to end. God intends to make Himself known, and He will make Himself known to whomever wishes to know Him. God seems to believe that the Bible is capable of getting through to us. And who am I to tell Him it can't? The Bible can get through to us because HE is capable of getting through to us. In this life, we will never be certain, but we can make progress toward a wisdom rooted in the knowledge of God. In your years as Gutenberg students, you have struggled—struggled with education, struggled with life—as you have made steps toward acquiring that wisdom. In your life after Gutenberg, you can continue to make that move toward wisdom, and I urge you to do it. All of your actions, the actions in your soul and your actions in the world, are either moving away from or toward that wisdom. That is why your lives, and how you choose to live them, are so significant.

In conclusion, well, I resolved *not* to refer to Gutenberg's favorite philosopher. If I were to refer to him, I would remind you that he said, "Purity of heart is to will one thing." He knows how difficult this is. And, as it happens, I know what his prayer would be for you. He would pray:

Father in heaven! What is a man without you! What is all that he knows, vast accumulation though it be, but a chipped fragment if he does not know you! What is all his striving, could it even encompass a world, but a half-finished work if he does not know you: You the One, who are one thing and who are all! So may you give to the intellect, wisdom to comprehend that one thing; to the heart, sincerity to receive this understanding; to the will, purity that wills only one thing. In prosperity may you grant perseverance to will one thing; amid distractions, collectedness to will one thing; in suffering, patience to will one thing. Oh, you that gives both the beginning and the completion, may you early, at the dawn of day, give to the

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SUMMER 2019 • VOLUME 1, NUMBER 4

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Cover Photograph Erin Greco (GC alumna, 2010)

Other Photography Greg Dunnan (Emily Dunnan); Erin Greco (graduates, Natalie Sheild, Preview Days, Residence Program); JoAnna James Photography (Sheild family); Robby Julian (Ron Julian); Natalie Sheild (spoons); Elizabeth Steeb (GC building); Stevi Saylor Photography (sandwich); Chris Swanson (scholars).

Layout Robby Julian

Proofreaders Bob Blanchard, Karen Peters, Walter Steeb

Colloquy [kol-uh-kwee] is published quarterly by Gutenberg College.



Gutenberg College offers an outstanding four-year liberal arts education in the Great Books tradition in an environment respectful of biblical Christianity.

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Gutenberg is supported primarily through individual, tax-exempt contributions.

Becoming a Subject

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young man the resolution to will one thing. As the day wanes, may you give to the old man a renewed remembrance of his first resolution, that the first may be like the last, the last like the first, in possession of a life that has willed only one thing. Alas, but this has indeed not come to pass. Something has come in between. The separation of sin lies in between. Each day, and day after day something is being placed in between: delay, blockage, interruption, delusion, corruption. So in this time of repentance may you give the courage once again to will one thing... Oh, you that gives both the beginning and the completion, give victory in the day of need so that what neither a man's burning wish nor his determined resolution may attain to, may be granted to him in the sorrowing of repentance: to will only one thing.

This is what our philosopher would pray for you. I can only add that this is my prayer for you as well. Thank you again for asking me to speak to you, and once again I congratulate you on your great accomplishment. 



Graduation Address

Emily Dunnan

The talk below was given at Gutenberg's commencement ceremony on June 14, 2019. Emily was Gutenberg's 2018 Søren Kierkegaard Scholar.

Several years ago, Tim McIntosh gave a commencement address comparing the journey of a Gutenberg student to a voyage at sea toward a distant and unknown harbor. Students gather at orientation, unsure of themselves and their shipmates. They embark on discussions and readings for which they have no context and little skill. But they continue anyway. After two years and a panel of two-year exams, the fog lifts and they see the horizon. They know the harbor they seek, and they seek it with focus and determination—until finally they arrive. Tonight is that arrival.

Vincent Van Gogh wrote, “The fishermen know that the sea is dangerous and the storm terrible, but they have never found these dangers sufficient reason for remaining ashore.”

The danger that students confront at Gutenberg is change. Striving, becoming, struggling. When I embarked as a freshman in 2015, I kind of knew what I was in for. But

Congratulations to the class of 2019!

David Robertson
Jonathan Heredia
Elyse Baker
Emily Dunnan
Audrey Barton
Madelin Woodrum



not really. I have changed drastically in the course of this voyage—in ways I could not have predicted. This personal arrival could not have happened without the tutors and classmates I have had working alongside me at Gutenberg.

“Arrival” at Gutenberg means a number of things. It means completing two years of Western Civilization, two years of Great Conversation, two years of Greek, two years of German, two years of writing, one year of Euclid, one year of sophomore math, one year of Aristotle, one year of the Gospel of John, one year of Kierkegaard, one year of hermeneutics, and one year of astronomy; *plus* one term each of Darwin, Einstein, quantum mechanics, statistics, philosophy of art, tin whistle, film, and music; *plus* over fifty German quizzes, twelve sets of finals, four two-year exams, three “different” theses, and a senior thesis defense. (If you only took one class at a time, that’s almost twenty years of work.)

Arrival means accomplishing this academic labor on top of the intense personal growth and struggle that this curriculum both produces and demands. Four years here have taught me that there is value in the struggle itself. To continue on in the face of despair requires great strength of heart.

The fishermen know that the sea is dangerous and the storm terrible, but they have never found these dangers sufficient reason for remaining ashore.

Now, no Gutenberger can use a quote like this in good conscience without considering whether she has taken it out of context. With my fine exegesis skills, courtesy of Ron Julian, I sense that this quote is not really about fishermen but is meant to be applied analogously to other life situations. The context confirms this.

Van Gogh wrote many letters to his brother, who was supporting him at the time. Van Gogh was poor and in love. He wanted to marry a prostitute whom he had saved—along with her child—from the streets. Van Gogh tells his brother that both he and his intended are familiar with poverty, its advantages and disadvantages. To underscore that point, Van Gogh writes,

Despite poverty, we'll take the chance. The fishermen know that the sea is dangerous and the storm terrible, but they have never found these dangers sufficient reason for remaining ashore. They leave that wisdom to those to whom it appeals. When the storm comes—when night falls—what's worse: the danger or the fear of danger? Give me reality, the danger itself.

Those on the shore stay there for fear of danger, while the fishermen engage the danger itself—or go out in spite of it. This is less a statement of the fishermen’s bravery than of their desire to dwell in the shadow of the ultimate. They disregard the storm for the sake of doing what they were made to do.

The dangers confronting Gutenberg students are, many of them, merely the growing pains of adulthood, which will be experienced by all our peers at some point. But I think Gutenberg allows us to encounter these dangers earlier, to strive with them, to pass through them, and to continue doing what we were made for.

Gutenberg has equipped us to go through our lives as thinkers. All the alumni I’ve met live their lives thoughtfully. Everyday life routinely raises questions like these: What is man? How does communication work? What is my responsibility to my neighbor? Life poses these questions to everyone, but you have to choose to interact with them. I have consistently seen Gutenbergers making that choice. This is significant to me because it proves that what we just spent four years doing does not have to go away and, in fact, probably will not. We were made for thought and action, truth and wisdom. And there are no better, lasting examples of that life than these tutors.

I have seen the changes caused in my classmates by the dangers and challenges each one has faced. I’m so proud of my class for sticking with it through the terrible storms. There have been many rough days and dark clouds. But we have never found these dangers sufficient reason for remaining ashore. Thank you for not remaining ashore.



And thank you all for coming to celebrate with us tonight.

Scholarship Recipients



Congratulations to **Trisha Yeager**, recipient of this year’s Søren Kierkegaard Scholar Award, and **Jordan Whiting**, recipient of this year’s David W. Crabtree Presidential Scholarship.

The **Søren Kierkegaard Scholar Award** is given to a student who has shown initiative and interest in pursuing a clear direction or path upon graduation from Gutenberg College and who is an outstanding representative of the ethos of the college, having displayed diligence and an interest in the type of inward purity of heart espoused by Kierkegaard.

The **David W. Crabtree Presidential Scholarship** is given to an established Gutenberg student who exhibits those qualities that exemplify the kind of student for whom Gutenberg was designed. This scholarship goes to that student whom the tutors deem to have taken the content of the curriculum most profoundly to heart. Such a student takes seriously the issues raised, thinks about them, and allows the truth to change the way he or she thinks about life and how to live.

Trisha and Jordan will be seniors in the 2019-2020 school year. All of us at Gutenberg College are proud of their accomplishments.



How Gutenberg Has Helped Me in Business

Natalie Sheild

Natalie graduated from Gutenberg College in 2011 and now has a thriving business in the food industry. She lives in Eugene with her husband, Joe, and son, Zeke.

When I first decided to go to Gutenberg, I liked reading and thinking but found the idea of choosing a “career path” overwhelming. I figured that I would find my calling eventually, but in the meantime, I would learn how to think well and convey those thoughts articulately. I am so thankful I took this route.

When I think about how Gutenberg has helped me professionally, Gutenberg’s kitchen is an easy place to start. I was always drawn to the joy of that room. So much would happen there. And then in my senior year, I became one of the cooks for the Residence Program. The cooks before me were always sharing their love of food and allowing me to help while at the same time discussing my very difficult transition into adulthood. While the relationship with my family was rocky, I received true care and compassion from these women. It gave me hope that I, too, could one day be free, happy, and have something to give back.

When Gutenberg offered me the position as cook, I could not have been more

thrilled. It was a beautiful year, and I learned so much about cooking, budgeting, allergen awareness, and portioning. The next year, Gutenberg’s then house “mom,” Gabe Cadell, connected me with the owner of a chef-service provider, and I cooked for a Christian residential community near Gutenberg. Over the next several years, I worked at a local grocery store and then returned to work for the chef-service provider, this time working as a sorority chef in Corvallis, Oregon.

At first, being a cook was easy. I learned fun little lessons along the way that seemed very disconnected from the work I did to get my degree at Gutenberg. (Knife skills and Kierkegaard are existentially different, right?) Eventually, however, it became apparent that something was setting me apart in my field. Whether it was the ability to hear and communicate through difficult conversations, analyze and execute a technically difficult event, or find a way to listen to everyone in a sorority and come to an amenable solution—the skills I had learned at Gutenberg started emerging.

No, I was not dealing daily with Nietzsche’s profound impact on the Western world, but all that I had learned through every discussion at Gutenberg—that there can be arguments for multiple perspectives, that people are complex and worthwhile even when you disagree, that knowing where we come from gives us a greater understanding of who we are—started to come alive in my profession.

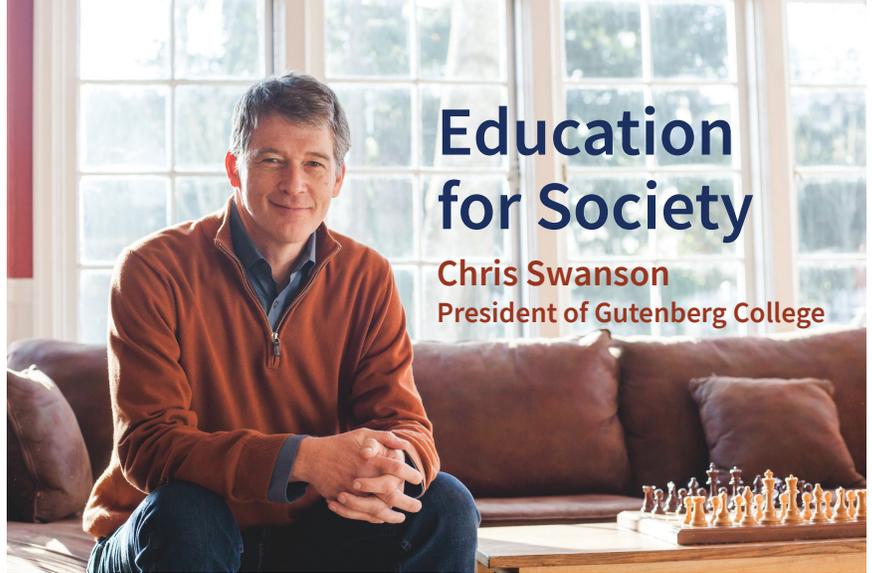
As a restaurateur and chef, I often find myself discussing on a large scale (like I did in every Gutenberg class) with people of many backgrounds, cultures, ideologies, and affiliations—both on my staff and among my clients. Being able to understand where people are coming from and then to communicate my perspective and position in return is an indispensable and critical part of my work. Whether helping a disgruntled customer and trying to get to the bottom of his dissatisfaction, or listening to a bride talk about her perfect day and building a menu that fits all her needs, or being able to create a safe and friendly work environment for every person on my team—the constant vigilance of seeking “authorial” intent and the truth of (sometimes very convoluted) situations and thinking about them critically is a daily practice of exegesis for me.

During my time at the sorority, I started a family. Becoming a wife and a mother was a special time. We moved back to Eugene in the summer of 2014, and while looking for work, I came across a potential idea: start my own catering company. So, I started booking events. I had no idea of the infrastructure needed to start a business, but I knew I could read and research well, so I threw myself into it! Next thing I knew, the company I had built—Sheild Catering—was growing. After only four months in business, my husband, Joe, quit his job and started helping me. There were many ups and downs that year, but my confidence that I could research and acquire knowledge was my rock.

It became obvious that this vocation was what I was meant to do. It fit like a glove. A year later, we added a restaurant concept to allow us to maintain a better staff. After polling the community, we decided to go with a “Germanish” concept, and thanks to those years of Ger-

man at Gutenberg, I knew quite a bit about the culture and language. Thus Pig & Turnip was born.

Five years after I went into business, we now have a staff of thirty-five across five restaurant concepts: Sheild Catering, Pig & Turnip, Sheild Café, and Dazzle Dough at Public House in Springfield, Oregon; and Pretzel Joe's in Cottage Grove, Oregon. The original two concepts—Sheild Catering and Pig & Turnip—are thriving, while the other three at less than a year old are all growing well. I spend my free time painting, drawing, and keeping a little patio garden, and I continue to “read” many books via audible while I work in the kitchen. My knowledge is always expanding, and I am so thankful that Gutenberg encouraged me to embrace a life of knowledge, truth, and analysis. I would not be the woman I am today without it.



Education for Society

Chris Swanson
President of Gutenberg College

In the Spring 2019 issue of *Colloquy*, I wrote about the business of education from the perspective of the university and college. In this issue, I want to explore education from the perspective of society as a whole. What do we need from our educational system? Examining this question provides a deeper insight into higher education today.

We live in a highly bureaucratic and technical world that requires highly trained technicians. We need managers, insurance adjusters, accountants, programmers, and medical professionals, just to name a few. Without these technicians and bureaucrats, maintaining the level of organization necessary for the smooth operation of the economy would be impossible.

Furthermore, our economy is inextricably bound to technological innovation. The competitive struggle for resources that used to manifest as military conflict between kings and lords is now played out between states and corporations as a struggle for advanced technology. A highly competent and scientifically trained workforce is an absolute necessity in such a milieu. Creative scientists and researchers lead to new products and greater efficiency—hence the emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) disciplines.

Given these needs, society now sees a primary function of its educational system to be the training of human capital to serve the technical society. How can a sufficiently prepared workforce be maintained? Our educational system has responded by creating a sophisticated system of credentialing that depends on examinations of expertise. Credentials—whether they be degrees, “bar exams,” or other certificates—regulate the competency of technicians. The educational system also regulates the supply of technicians in order to keep salary levels high. The most obvious example of this is the American Medical Association (AMA), which carefully controls the supply of physicians through medical school numbers.¹

A second important function of the educational system is to maintain the cultural myths associated with progress and economic efficiency. The labor force needs to be convinced not only that the path to success passes through the college degree but that success is defined in accordance with economic well-being. While many other forces also maintain these myths, the educational system certainly plays a starring role.

The net result is an educational system destructive to mankind. Human beings are corralled into an increasingly alienating society for the sake of efficiency. Work loses its meaning since the worker is disconnected from any beneficial result of his labor. Communities and thoughtful reflection are replaced by entertainment and money-making. Ultimately, the educational system serves the social and economic system rather than the students who attend.

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¹ Shikha, Dalmia. “The Evil-Mongering of The American Medical Association.” *Forbes.com*. <https://www.forbes.com/2009/08/25/american-medical-association-opinions-columnists-shikha-dalmia.html#5ace538542f2>. (Accessed July 15, 2019.)



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Education for Society

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Our system of higher education arose from a tradition reflecting very different societal values from those of today, a tradition that tried to foster mature and independent individuals through the study of the best of Western thought. Now, however, traditional education and the values that fostered it are colliding with our technological world and its overwhelming social forces, and traditional education is losing. This collision is seen clearly in the many pronouncements of the “uselessness of the liberal arts.” More generally, educational offerings are measured against the stick of practical economic benefit. We are not taught to write so that we can think well; we are taught to write so that we can prepare a good report.

Given the enormous inertia in our technological and economic society, higher education, for the majority, will no doubt fully transform into a credentialing process over time. What we must consider, however, is whether what is gained outweighs what is lost.



Residence Program

gutenberg.edu/rp

Apply for Fall 2019.

Gutenberg's Residence Program also welcomes young adults who attend other colleges or work in the community and who want to participate in Gutenberg community activities.



**Application Deadline
for Fall 2019:
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