

Joel Bettridge : From Presocratic Blues

Editor:

Senator Pericles's motion on the floor yesterday was right on it. Why do we need to call one number for city streets and another number for roads even just a few meters outside the town limits to report potholes? How do you know which street is under which jurisdiction when the town limits have never officially been established? Why can't we call one number to report all potholes and have the information channeled to the appropriate government entity? And please, no study to figure out who to take reports down from city and country residence.

Whatever happened to preventive maintenance anyhow? We deserve better! We need results and accountability for our taxes. It amazes me how people in this city can request large enterprises to open here when our thoroughfares are such an eyesore. The road leading up the hill is disgusting, and the top is enough to jar your teeth out; along with that the neighborhood at the bottom is filled with the vacant establishments that used to support this city, buildings that I am sure I don't need to remind you are at this point gutted or heaps of rubble. Our city needs to clean itself up in every respect.

Sincerely,

Archelaus

Dear Sir

Threats and accusations will do you little good. The racket coming from your backyard at such uncivilized hours was of an order of magnitude even unrecordable on Charles F. Richter's and Beno Gutenberg's scale of energy measurement, and as such only the Blessed Virgin could bear it with grace. And so, while I am not the one who poisoned your dog, I am glad it's dead.

Heraclitus

Dear Priestess

Enclosed you will find a check for one thousand handfuls of grain. It is for the building fund. Your vision for the new temple is to be commended. Number, you have understood, has two proper kinds, odd and even, and a third from both mixed together, the even-odd. Would that the godly and the godly-by-way-of-what-they-think-of-as-earthly-things understood this as you do. For the entirely ungodly it does not matter. But Nature in the world-order was fitted together out of substances which are unlimited and out of substances which are limiting, and it will take some time for people to sort it out in ways that will not lead them to want to do harm to each other. For now please keep my gift anonymous as our countrymen are unable to know the difference between these differences, and most who come to me think I am a godless man and it would not be good for my pocketbook or professional standing if this got out. I don't really need the tax break anyway.

Philolaus

Joel Bettridge teaches at the University of Redlands, and he is currently editing a collection of essays on Ronald Johnson for the National Poetry Foundation's *Life and Work* series. He has poems and essays in recent or forthcoming issues of the *Colorado Review*, *Jacket*, *Pom²*, *QUE*, *Sagetrieb*, *Chicago Review* and *Mandorla*.