

Personal Statement 2

The past few years have seen what I believe to be a new era of politics. There is a growing disjuncture between the ruling elite and the people that they rule, and the objectives of both parties. This is seen particularly through the consequences of globalisation and economic inequality, and the people's rejection of the neoliberal economic doctrine that has prevailed in the last half century. There is a desire to break the status quo, and fix a capitalist system recently described by Justin Welby as "broken".

Economics provides one way of exploring this issue, and having read "The Spirit Level", I was intrigued by the damning implications of economic inequality. I subsequently entered the RES essay competition, in which I explored the effect of inequality on Western societies. My economic interest also spanned to behavioural economics, which began after inviting Professor Gary Abrahams of Exeter University to the school's Economics Society. This led me to read Daniel Kahneman's "Thinking, Fast and Slow". From this I was able to draw my own conclusions about the promise of this discipline, and the influence governments and corporations may have over voters and consumers.

I applied my growing interest to my Extended Project, which focused on the economic impacts of Brexit. I found Roger Bootle's "The Trouble with Europe" convincing in its debate about our membership, but I could not ignore evidence from other sources for remain. Having formed my own conclusions about this, I was motivated to test these hypotheses and gain an insight into the workings of Brexit when attending a talk by Labour MP Ben Bradshaw. During this I questioned him on the factors behind the Brexit vote, and also on the economic sustainability of the NHS. I quickly realised that tackling these issues would be greatly aided by an understanding of politics. To this end, I immerse myself daily in discussion podcasts such as Brexitcast, The Economist Radio and In Our Time. I took particular interest in the qualities that make up a good leader, and the importance of image and oration in politics. Attending a talk by the Managing Director of ComRes taught me about the personal qualities that voters valued, and this analysis was then tested when I attended Prime Minister's Questions. Inspired, I have since attended Model United Nations conferences, where I developed my ability to argue and reason with large audiences, and have been recognised with distinguished delegate awards.

The importance of these two disciplines in analysing the problems of the world today is clear, but I have gained deeper understanding of these problems through studying history. Reading "Utopia for Realists", I was fascinated by historical attempts of individuals and governments to instigate 'utopian' systems for societies. These include the economic and social successes of giving 'free money' to the homeless, and a basic income bill. This again made me question the failings of the neoliberal free market philosophy, while highlighting the breadth of PPE as an area of study. Even when practising one of my hobbies, Spanish, I engage with topics within its scope. I relish applying my interest to the themes and issues of other cultures, for example when discussing the declining political and economic situation in Venezuela with my Spanish tutor. Personal philosophy underlies political belief, which in turn dictates economic decision making, illustrating the relationship between the three disciplines.

This fascinating relationship sparked my desire to read PPE at university, and I have since been captivated by philosophy itself. Warburton's "Philosophy: The Classics" was a helpful introduction and good critique to many great works of philosophy. Subsequently, I was inspired to further research Utilitarianism, and I marvel at its prevalence in modern political theory and literature. I look forward to combining my interest in these areas to engage with the biggest issues facing us today.