

Heaven and Hell

What are the odds that the sun and the moon align when they are so far apart?

Honestly, today is just another day, but the eclipse has me thinking about life and what our existence means. Like the temporary eclipse that will only last a few hours, life is short, and transient in nature.

Maybe this world is a miracle after all. When I consider science, I believe it is our newfound religion. Just think, what are the odds that we are here right now, conscious, with the ability to speak, think, read, write, and make art? How is the sun located at the perfect distance from the earth?

Everything is connected and there is order to this chaos. **Perhaps we should forget everything that we think we know and recognize what makes life so great is the mysteries that are still left to uncover.**

Are we really just a small speck of stardust in the universe or are we divine beings created by God?

Gazing at Heaven

I spent over a year in Zambia, Africa as a Peace Corps volunteer. Living in a remote village is an experience unlike anything a city can offer. The problem with modern cities is that you cannot look up at the night sky and gaze at the stars because of the smog and pollution. During my evenings in the village, I would gaze up at the galaxy and stars above in the night sky, watching shooting stars and satellites moving.

Perhaps we generally lack imagination and curiosity in modern cities because of our lack of a connection to the universe. Cities are designed for cars and computers, and nature is pushed to the sidelines. We cannot look up at the night sky, and

simply wonder *why*...

Light VS Dark

One of the earliest video games I played as a child was Kingdom Hearts. In this game, you play as the character, Sora, meaning “sky” in Japanese. In the beginning of the game, you are collecting wood and a sail to create a raft to leave Destiny Island with your friends. Once the raft is complete and you’re ready to leave, darkness covers the island and the heartless arrive. A portal to darkness appears, and takes away Sora and his friend Riku. Riku chooses to join the darkness, becoming soulless, and a nobody. Sora, on the other hand, chooses to wield the keyblade, using light to fight against the darkness and find his way to Kingdom Hearts. Kingdom Hearts does not refer to a specific kingdom like a traditional country or realm but rather to the heart of all worlds and the source of all power and goodness. Perhaps like Sora, we should follow the light and seek this kingdom.

Hell and Damnation

Maybe hell is a concept that was introduced to keep everyone productive?

“Be a good and obedient slave worker bee, or else you face eternal damnation.” Personally, I don’t believe in this eternal torment. **You shouldn’t have to be threatened by hell in order to reach enlightenment.** Going forward, let us fear not of hell. Just assume you won’t respawn. Play the video game in hardcore mode!

My Critique of Christianity

I was born and raised Roman Catholic. I attended a Catholic school from grades pre-K to grade 8. I still consider my Catholic faith and do attend mass sometimes, but not every Sunday. This is seen as a mortal sin, as you are breaking the third commandment by not keeping the Sabbath.

Personally, I believe these rules and guidelines are to be interpreted by the individual. If I don't want to go to mass, I should not have to. If this will lead me to eternal damnation, then, so be it. My major critique of Christianity is that it seems to want everybody to go down the straight and narrow path. In my opinion, it becomes a bit too controlling over the individual.

Jesus as a Philosopher

Let us set the divinity of Christ aside, and consider the teachings of Jesus from a philosophical standpoint. I think that his teachings are wise, and the true path to enlightenment or wisdom. I believe that everything he said is worth considering.

I am reminded of my time spent in Jericho. I studied at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and would take the road from Jerusalem to Jericho every weekend to photograph. For six months I explored all of Israel and Palestine and wound up falling in love with this city of the moon, Jericho.

I returned for three months and lived with a Palestinian family. During this time, I encountered a young and ill-tempered man. This young man grabbed my camera and ripped the strap from my neck. **I did not react, but simply looked him in the eyes, and then turned the other cheek.** The nearby elders that saw this interaction occur disciplined the young man and came to my defense. I then knocked on my friend Mohammed's door to hang out as we normally did each day. Mohammed fixed my camera strap with tape, and I thanked him for his generosity and hospitality. I spent every day with this young man, Mohammed, and made many friends all throughout Jericho. There was only one situation that I came across with hostility, but because I turned the other cheek, no further problems escalated.

Stand up for Yourself

While I believe this notion is generally wise, you should not allow yourself to succumb to eminent danger. You must react to each situation calmly, and confidently. More times than not, turning the other cheek is wise, but if you are in

danger, perhaps retaliation and bravery is necessary. **Consider Jesus at the temple with his whip when he cleansed the temple of money changers. He was a peacemaker, but was not afraid to show force as well.**

Going forward, let's follow the teachings of Jesus, use critical thinking, and consider wisdom from ancient texts like the Bible. Jesus' teachings are difficult to interpret as they are written through parables. Not everyone will actually follow the teachings of Jesus. His teachings are ideal, but not realistic to expect everybody to follow them. His teachings have created western civilization as we know it, but it is quickly disappearing.

Islam is Masculine

I spent two weeks sleeping on the floors of mosques all throughout Jericho, learning about Islam. I was alongside a group of young men and an Imam named Hirsham. We fasted during the day, prayed five times per day, and learned about the ways of Prophet Mohammed. There was a sense of brotherhood that I felt during my time praying in the mosque. Hirsham taught me a lot of wise things about how to eat, how to pray, how to sleep, and how to behave as a strong man.

From my experience, Islam felt very masculine, but Christianity seems feminine because of its passive and docile nature. In Islam, you submit to God, almost in a state of fear. While I do not believe this is necessary to be a strong man, it certainly puts things in check and gives you a reason to live a virtuous and masculine life.

God, Tribe, and Land

During my time as a peace core volunteer in Zambia, Africa, my paradigm shifted completely. You see, in the village, there is a hierarchy to the society. There is God, tribe, and land. Everybody has a roll to play in the village. There are distinct roles between men and women, girl, and boy. Everybody shares a common language under one tribe, and one church.

when I would wake up in the morning, I would see woman with firewood, on her head, and babies on her back. The men were building churches and homes. The boys were building bricks with the sand and mud. the girls were sweeping the floors and preparing food in the morning. everybody has a role to play in the village, and the hierarchy between God, tribe, and the land, keeps the society thriving.

Overpopulation and Poverty

I believe Christianity is really effective at creating families.

But now with the decline of Christianity, we face low reproduction, the death of the nuclear family, and less children being made.

When I observed the many families in the village, I realized how large they truly are. Many women in the village give birth to 5, 7, and even 10 children. I lived alongside families larger than anything I've ever seen in the United States, or anywhere in the west.

Part of me believes that the families were so large because of the belief in God. Many assume that African people are living in poverty because they lack modern amenities and technology. Perhaps we should redefine what true wealth means, and look at the family as the ultimate source of wealth. Maybe here in the west, we are poor in spirit, poor without family and tribe. If remote villages in Zambia are having big families, why can't we do the same in the United States?

War and Economy

China and Zambia have an interesting relationship. During my time spent in Zambia, I would visit the town in the city center to buy goods from Chinese shop owners. The Chinese in Zambia are building a series of roads all throughout the country, and also providing solar power to the remote villages. In my particular village, we had a

solar power plant that the Chinese built for the community. There was also a large milling machine that helped create more food and boosted their local economy through large scale production of the staple food, maize.

It's interesting to note how the Chinese are interacting with Zambia, opposed to how the United States military operates. Our military usually uses force to acquire a resource, such as oil in the Middle East. Whereas the Chinese are building roads, solar plants, and buildings while using their land to mine for resources.

This is just a curious thought I had in regards to military power, and these two giant forces, the United States, and China. My general thought is that maybe China is more wise with their approach as they are acquiring valuable materials from the mining operation that are important components for computer chips and various technologies, such as solar. Regardless, **I support the United States military, capitalism, and the things that make our country great. My thought is that maybe communism in China is a reaction to the industrial world that we formed here in the United States.**

Weapons of Mass Distraction

Maybe the true weapons of mass destruction are the phones, computers, TVs, and other distracting things. In this modern world, true luxury seems to be of the mind, and the time you spend alone without distractions. It's easy to distract yourself with all of these forms of entertainment that we have at our fingertips, but remaining laser focused is now a true luxury.

Industrial Revolution

When I observe modern cities, it seems that they are built for cars and computers. Perhaps notions of slavery have trickled into modern society, and has never truly disappeared. Now we are enslaved to the cage that is a cubicle or an office, under fluorescent lights, operating computers, sending emails, making phone calls, and moving data around. This way of life leaves us in the dark, in a cave, away from the outdoor world in the light. I believe that this modern way of working goes against our natural biology and how we are designed to live in nature.

Freedom exists under a thatched roof, and slavery is under the ivory tower of marble and gold.

All you really have to do is look at the architecture that is being built, and the buildings where these offices live. They look like giant beehives, filled with busy worker bees. The lack of natural sunlight, the processed junk food that Karen provides on the 16th floor for donut hour, and the time spent sitting down for an entire day, crushes the human spirit. We were programmed this way since early age in school when we were taught to sit down, shut up, and do our little tasks. *Maybe we were taught to be slaves since birth?*

I believe that in person office work should be made optional, and that these workers can choose whether or not they want to sit inside the office all day. If I was an office worker, I would be doing all of the work outside, with a laptop, under the sun, going for nature walks while taking my zoom calls. There is no need to be inside and operate these computers anymore with the advent of modern technology, such as the iPhone and iPad.

Another strange phenomenon is the love for hamster wheels. We love running on treadmills for exercise, sitting in the car, and living life on an endless loop that leads to nowhere.

Just think of the amount of traffic that is caused from people driving from the suburbs in their cars, filling the highways every morning and night. These cars are merely coming into the city to extract their piece of cheese, look at a screen, watch some YouTube videos, and then leave later in the evening. I personally do not own a car, and have no desire to. I find that sitting in traffic, in a car, is one of the most depressing forms of human existence, and the car itself winds up owning you with the amount of bills and insurance to pay that it comes along with.

We become chained to our wages, working for cooperations, and in return, become indebted to the system that we all agree upon participating in. **Maybe the best way to go forward is to live like we are in simulated poverty, and not seeking happiness or pleasure from the material possessions that these wages provide us with.**

One interesting realization I've had recently is that art and philosophy is for the bourgeois because there is more time to "waste." Maybe the most successful people in this day and age are simply wasting time, thinking, writing, and making art. Think of the surfer dudes that just chill on the beach, enjoying the waves, without a care in the world.

Dog Ownership

I've noticed that dog ownership is becoming more and more prevalent here in Philadelphia. It's almost as if every single man or woman has a dog attached to their leash. I see less and less children, babies, and families, but way more dogs.

Ever since I was a little boy, I've been afraid of dogs. Anytime I visited a house that had a dog, I would quickly run away, and was fearful. I never viewed dogs in this cute and cuddly way that a lot of people look at them. I've always seen them as beasts that we somehow decided to tame.

Think of Hercules conquering the three headed dogs that guarded Hades.

I am reminded of my time spent in Jericho and the way that the dogs were treated there. You see, dogs are used for much different purposes in different parts of the world. In Jericho, they are used for security. They are kept in cages and hardly fed, with muzzles on their mouths, bred to be an attack dog. I would often see dogs attached to metal chains, where they defend farmland and serve as an alarm system or security.

Prison VS Playground

I have a childlike spirit, and treat the world as my playground. Every morning when I wake up, my inner child is eager to come out and play.

Something peculiar happened last year around this time. I woke up in the morning, looked outside at the landscape of Philadelphia, and felt as though this world is just one big prison. I walked to the hallway to head outside, looked up at the vents that provide flow of air inside, covered in dirt and dust, and was thinking about how long I spent inside during the COVID-19 pandemic and how unhealthy that period of time was. Ever since this day, I've been treating the world as my playground, fueling my childlike spirit through the creation of art and new photographs. This helped me realize that we are in control of how we view the world. **You can either feel small and controlled, or large, and free as a bird.**

The Art of Subtraction

To become more free, perhaps we must get rid of more things from our lives. Some simple suggestions include,

- deleting your Instagram
- avoiding YouTube videos
- stop, watching TV shows
- no listening to the news
- no phone, no email, no texting

News Promotes Hate

Any time I get a glimpse of the news, it only ever promotes hate. The news is typically negative and always revolves around some sort of doom and gloom that lowers your spirit.

Another strange observation I have is that on television, the commercials are bombarded with pharmaceutical companies selling medicine. There's always a long line of disclaimers at the end of these commercials, explaining the side effects that can potentially lead to suicide, depression, anxiety, and other health issues. The amount of these commercials are unsettling, and certainly a telltale sign that the world is sick with disease and generally unwell.

Disease and Social Contagion

When I hear the word disease, (dis-ease) I simply interpret this, as being unwell, or uneasy. I believe that many people suffer from metabolic diseases, such as obesity and diabetes, but I'm mostly curious about the social effects people have on each other.

Like diseases spread from one person to another, social contagion, is something that spreads as well. If somebody is negative, has nothing good to say, slouching, complaining, gossiping, and moping around, we must not let their thoughts and actions penetrate us. I believe we must remain undisturbed by other people, harden ourselves like a rock, become less emotional, and reactionary to the way other people behave to avoid becoming uneasy or diseased.

Just think of protesters that gather on the street. One person checks social media and hears the bad news, spreads this news with their friends, and everybody heads out with anger and hatred in their hearts. **We are becoming controlled and emotional through social media, the news, and television.** Disconnecting from these sources of information are vital for remaining healthy and easy going.

Left vs Right

Let us go beyond the binary. Politics divide us more than bring us together. It does not matter if you lean left, right, or identify with the Democrats or Republicans, it's all so dividing.

In the video game, Halo, you could choose either the red or blue team. I remember in free for all mode, you could choose the color of your armor. Maybe it's best to paint our armor the color purple, and find ourselves at a middle ground.

I believe we should become more critical with what we identify with, and avoid group think.

The USA is Supreme

Consider the United States of America like the Roman Empire. We are certainly the most dominating force in the world, with our extensive military and bases all throughout the globe. I take great pride in being an American, as I was raised saying the pledge of allegiance to the American flag every morning before school started.

I believe having pride in our nation is critical for a flourishing society. Nowadays it seems like being a proud American is a negative thing amongst my peers. All you have to do is read the scratchings on the walls where graffiti artists exclaim terrible things about the police, and our nation.

The great thing about the United States of America is that it is founded upon immigrants. I'm reminded of my Italian heritage, and the ancestors that come before me who entered this country through Ellis Island. My great great grandfather left his children in an Italian orphanage that Saint Cabrini made in Philadelphia. He then went back to Italy, and brought his wife along with him to find a new home in the United States. From there, he had a big family, and supported his family through physical labor jobs like construction.

My great pride in being American comes from the fact that we can go from nothing to something.

Heritage and Lineage

I grew up visiting Italy during Easter as a young boy. My cousins live in Caserta, surrounded by farmland, just outside of Napoli. For Pasqua, or Easter, we attended a small church that was filled to the brim. It was so jam packed and hot inside of this church, that a young girl fainted and fell right beside me. The preacher would allow my brother and I to carry a basket full of holy water, and hand the bottles out to the people in the church. I actually remember one year, my grandmother took one of the bottles of holy water after mass, and instantly began drinking it because she thought it was there for people to consume, given that it is so hot inside the church! This is a hilarious memory that I hold onto, and find the tradition of my Italian upbringing to be close to my heart.

After mass, all of the children would be given gigantic chocolate Easter eggs. We would use hammers to smash open the eggs upon the dinner table. Everybody enjoys the chocolate feast, and within the eggs is a toy for the children to play with.

Although I am a dual citizen between Italy and the United States, **I am proud to be an Italian American and live in the American Empire.**

Pride and Strength

I believe ego and narcissism is misconstrued. Why is it seen as vain to find pride in my physical body? I believe that we should look at ourselves in the mirror, and love what we see. I take pride in being strong and crafting my body like an ancient Greek demigod. Finding pride and confidence in yourself is wise because **with courage, strength, and confidence, anything is possible.**

Empathy and Homelessness

My grandmother was a devout Catholic. She attended mass every single day, and was the most charitable and generous person I've ever known. Every Christmas, she would take me and my brother into Love Park and Philadelphia to feed the homeless. We would pack lunches and walk around with brown bags, every Christmas.

Even at the end of every mass, the preacher always announces that the church will be gathering to feed the homeless. Maybe this is embedded within Christian morals, but frankly, I believe we must look beyond this sense of empathy for the homeless, or the seemingly oppressed. **I believe we must go beyond morals.**

Last year, I was approached by a homeless man as I was entering a shop. He wanted to charge his phone, and asked if I would buy him a charger. As I checked out from the store, I saw some chargers on the wall. I grabbed one, purchased it, and gave it to the homeless man. Soon after, he was moaning and complaining to

me, that I did not get him the charger with a longer cord, and disrespected me. Ever since this day, I just ignore homeless people, and don't feel the overwhelming sense of empathy anymore.

What is Luxury?

Real luxury is time. Time working on your art, time spent with your family, time in nature, time alone, time in contemplation, reading, writing, thinking, and weightlifting. **Real luxury is what modern society deems to be “wasting time.”**

Embrace the Mundane

There's something uniquely special to this human existence, and it comes in forms that are oftentimes overlooked. The visual, auditory, and sensual experiences that we have in our everyday, mundane lives, are some of this life's greatest gifts. Listen to the sounds of the birds, look at the beautiful trees, and feel the sensation of the breeze and the sun kissing your skin.

Return to Nature

I find a deep connection to the natural world around me. I'm blessed to live in Philadelphia, where we have numerous parks, green spaces, woodlands, and trails. I find myself walking along these nature paths every morning, reminding myself of the connection between me and nature.

When is the last time you touched grass?

I think of the cows and the grass that they eat, the insects that lurk around in the grass, eating the plants. I then have the privilege to visit the Costco business center, purchase grass fed beef, and fill my belly with energy. **Without nature,**

humans would not be here. We must remind ourselves how we are connected to the natural world, and not get too lost in the digital world through technology.

Redefine Success

Would I take 1,000,000 per year if I was forced to sit inside the Comcast tower at a computer from 9-5pm everyday?

No.

Modern notions of success are boring at best. How many Lamborghinis can you buy? How much bigger can your house be? How many things can you acquire? How much larger can the closet be? Perhaps real success comes from within, and has nothing to do with this external material world.

Will you choose material success or knowledge and power?

I'm reminded of the scene from Spy Kids Juni and his sister Carmen are exploring a cave. In this cave, there are many jewels, diamonds, and treasure. He was warned not to take any of the treasure, as it would activate the skeletons. Alas, he decided to take a piece of the treasure, and was met with retaliation from the skeletons. His sister was taken away, and he was left fighting in the dungeon, as the skeletons could never die and would keep attacking him. Perhaps it is wise to not be enticed by these treasures and seek real wealth through our health and our physical bodies.

Instead of buying the loser Lamborghini, make your body into these luxury items.

Real wealth is strong health.

Fear and Courage

Think of the street as the ultimate arena. To practice street photography, you must go forward without fear and fill yourself with courage. It's my belief that strong street photographers will make strong photographs. Forget about basic notions of what makes a photograph "good" or "bad" and consider strength and weakness more.

Certainly the stronger photographer will have more courage to make more photographs and throw himself onto the frontlines of life. A weak photographer will be shy, and on the sidelines of life shooting with a telephoto lens.

Photography has nothing to do with skill. Photography requires fearlessness, courage, and curiosity.

Life as a Video Game

Going forward, I like to treat my life like a video game. Video games are meant to be fun and enjoyed. I want to enjoy my life, and adopting this philosophical approach is my interesting way forward.

Let's be like the hero character, upgrade our armor, increase our stats, strength, charisma, and become the best versions of ourselves. Level up each day through weightlifting, adventure, and interacting with other players. Like in video games, the world is open for us to conquer and explore. Treat your city this way, and recognize that there are infinite paths that you can take.

Treat yourself like a Greek sculpture of Achilles. Become the hero, the sculpture, and the sculptor.

Thoughts on Sports

There's word on the street that a 76ers basketball arena will be built at the fashion District mall on Market Street here in Philadelphia. People are worried that it will interfere with Chinatown that is just nearby, but I don't believe they will be as effected as people make it out to be. I understand the concern, but what we should be more concerned about is why we have such fascination for sports in general.

Firstly, we already have areas in South Philadelphia. Secondly, why do these areas fill up with people drinking beer, gambling, and screaming for their favorite team? My general thought is, it's better to actually play the sport itself, then sit on a couch, and watch people play on your TV. To me it's similar to the Colosseum in Rome, merely a distraction, bread and circuses.

Why go to the Colosseum and watch the gladiators fight against the Lions? Go and find your own beast to slay.

Sunlight is Power, Food is Energy

I have been thinking about the difference between power and energy. Maybe the human body is like a battery that needs to be charged. Perhaps the sunlight is the source of this power that charges our battery. I consider food as energy because of the way it interacts with our physiology on the cellular level. The food fuels my cells, muscles, and ultimately gives me the energy I need through protein and vitamins to keep pushing with strength.

Maybe cholesterol is like a natural steroid, and the more of it that we consume, the more power that we have. Naturally increasing testosterone through the consumption of red meat seems like a wise way forward if you are looking for more power. I find that the more meat I eat, the more sunlight I absorb, the better sleep I get, and the more power I have the next day.

Physics and Technology

Maybe the only thing holding us down is gravity itself.

When I consider the innovations of Elon Musk, such as SpaceX and Tesla, it's clear he has an exceptional ability to harness and apply technological and physical principles in groundbreaking ways. His work not only aligns with the laws of physics but also pushes the boundaries of how we utilize these principles to create advanced, sustainable technologies.

Perhaps in our lifetime, we will see humanity reach Mars and become interplanetary. I have no desire to go to Mars, but I'm happy to know that there is another human out there that has the desire to use technology to expand humanity and our consciousness throughout the universe. I believe the automation of his electric Tesla vehicles will change how we view transportation forever. I think optimistically about these innovations, and believe that the only thing stopping us from reaching new heights is physics. Humanity is limitless and there is infinite possibility!

Sunglasses, AirPods and Antisocial Behavior

It seems as though we have a preference for the indoors. Because of this, when we go outside, we often wear sunglasses. I believe that this is bad for our health in the long run, as it is essentially training our eyes and tricking them to think that we are still inside. Maybe this is why you see people with such pale skin and why people get sunburnt so easily.

One weird realization I had is that people still wear sunglasses even on cloudy days when it is not necessary whatsoever. People have a tendency to cover their faces, hiding their identities, and living in an antisocial manner. Maybe a lot of people are insecure, and simply do not want to be viewed or perceived by others.

I find that the use of sunglasses is very similar to AirPods in public. When people block out the sounds of the world around them, listening to music, it is as if they're playing a soundtrack to their own personal movie. Especially after Covid, people have trouble making eye contact, even when I hold the door open for others or stand on an elevator. People don't want to look at you in the face anymore, and antisocial behavior is becoming more apparent with sunglasses and technology.

I think this is why virtual reality and the new Apple Vision Pro is bad. It just promotes people to spend more time inside, sitting down, not engaging with society.

Choose Your Own Adventure

I believe that we should follow our passion and choose our own adventure in this life that we live. My personal passion is photography. I live and breathe for the creation of new photographs. **Photography is my life's mission, my vocation, or my calling.**

We hold the ultimate decision of what we want to focus our efforts towards while we are alive. Personally, I believe that there's no greater gift that humanity can leave behind than more children and new art.

For me, photography is the greatest form of art as it is accessible and open for all. The camera becomes a key that unlocks the doors to new experiences, places, and people that you otherwise would never meet. Treat the camera as a passport, choose your adventure, and explore the open world.

Create Your Own Epic Greek Poem

Let's disconnect from modernity and look back into the ancient world for inspiration to create new photographs. Consider the Iliad and the Odyssey by Homer and how these two incredible Greek epic poems have stood the test of time for thousands of years.

Photography is a visual language, like poetry. The photographs tell stories that no words can describe. Like these epic poems that have stood the test of time, we too, can create our own legacy. Perhaps we cannot live forever, but we can make photographs.

Thoughts on Aesthetics

The ideal aesthetic that I would like to evoke through my photography is the sublime. Sublime is something that's hard to describe in words. I know that when I go to an elevated space, look out at the horizon, and can see beyond the trees, the river, and the clouds, I feel this overwhelming sensation of beauty, wonder, and awe. This feeling becomes sublime, something that's beyond beauty itself. One practical way I've been harnessing this aesthetic is through the use of high contrast black-and-white and creating darker visuals through the aesthetics built into my camera's JPEG file.

Another philosophical and aesthetic way of approaching photography is embracing the transient nature of life, or Wabi Sabi. Wabi Sabi photography is interesting because it unlocks infinite potential for you to create something from nothing using the mundane world around you. Find beauty in decay, and imperfection. You're not perfect, I'm not perfect, and life is certainly not perfect. **Let's embrace imperfection and find beauty in it.**

Spartan Street Photography

I believe in this notion of conquering the streets. Whether I'm in my hometown or traveling to a new place, perhaps we should approach the world like a Spartan. I'm not just a photographer, I'm a warrior.

I wield the camera as a sword, strike through the heart of chaos, revealing the soul of the street, and create visual order and harmony through the spontaneity of every day life.

When I make a strong photograph in a new location, I feel like Julius Caesar, conquering the world. **Veni, vidi, vici.** Photography requires bravery and courage similar to that of the Spartan ideals.

The Spartan boys would undergo an Agoge training to become warriors. During this training, they would do everything while barefoot. One interesting lifestyle choice that I've made for the past year is wearing barefoot shoes. I actually believe that the use of these shoes helps me slow down, feeling the sensation of the street, seeing everything in slow motion like I'm Neo in the matrix.

Street photography becomes this Zen-like meditative practice of recognizing the patterns in both nature and human behavior. **When you walk slow, and let life flow, towards you, you become in tune with the rhythm, and the beat of the street.** While I'm photographing, I exist outside the passage of time, and only exist in the present moment.

Articulate the Unknown

Photography is both a physical and visual pleasure.

The ultimate goal of any artist, and especially in photography, is to articulate the unknown. We put order to the chaos, and the multifaceted complexities of life. **I need chaos and destruction in order to rebuild and create anew again.**

I thrive in the streets of a city. The crowd and the people that dance upon the street corners become actors upon my stage. I am not only the conductor of this drama, but the active participant in it. I'm fully engaged as I embrace my life affirming practice of photographing.

Follow the Light

Photography is painting with light. Let us harness the power of the sun and create beautiful works of art. My thought is that physical life is happiness. This means, when I'm moving my body, under the sunlight, walking through the world, and

making photographs, I experience a sensation of bliss. When in doubt, just follow the light.

Sunlight is happiness. Photography is bliss.

Change the World

In order to change the world, we must change ourselves. I believe that we must elevate beyond negativity. Going forward, let's spread as much kindness as possible through small acts of joy such as smiling, greeting your neighbors, and complementing others. This means no more complaining or gossiping and talking about others. Let's shine as bright as we possibly can, and be a positive force for good.

Maybe it is wise for us to become more selfish, focus on empowering ourselves and becoming stronger in order to become more selfless and abundant. Even if your thoughts, photographs, artwork, etc. changes the perspective of at least one other individual, it's all worth it in the end.

Go Beyond the Horizon

Start each day from an elevated space with a clear view. When I look out beyond the horizon from an elevated view, I feel like I can conquer the world. It's almost as if the signal between me and the universe is much more clear and connected. When I start my day off with a nature walk, and a view of the woodlands, river, and natural world, I feel like I can transcend and become a creator of my own world.

Memento Mori

What do you truly care about?

When I wake up in the morning, I remind myself that I must die. It is an inevitable, biological function of the human being, that we all must embrace in time. But perhaps it is wise to spend our time while we are alive doing the things that we genuinely feel passionate about. Just imagine each day like it is your last. **If you knew that you were going to die in your sleep this evening, what would you do, and more importantly, what would you not do?**

Onward

Ultimately, the Eclipse today was underwhelming. It just got a bit dark for a short period of time, people wore funny sunglasses, and life moves on.

However meaningless life can sometimes seem, we must give our individual lives meaning. Art and photography fuels me with so much meaning. Photography wakes me up each morning with my eyes wide open, filled with curiosity, ready to conquer the day.

I have found my purpose in life that keeps me pushing my rock uphill and onward. Even if I never reach the top of the hill, I know that I will love the process and the journey either way. I am completely detached from the outcome and deeply in love with the process itself.

From here, I look onward. It is time to transcend and find myself at the eternal return to creativity each and every day until the day I die, with a camera in my hand.

Dante Sisofo | April 8, 2024