

Kratos

We are currently on a **giant rock, flying through space**, while orbiting around a ball of fire. Without the sun, we have no power. As a human being, I must acknowledge the power I feel when under the sun.

At the end of the day, it's because of the perfect distance between Earth and the sun that we are even here right now. When I consider the meaning of the universe, humanity, and our ultimate goal, perhaps it is to simply **reproduce, create, propagate, and evolve**. No matter how many technological advancements humanity makes, we will always be **biological beings first**. Perhaps the ultimate power that a human possesses is within our physiology, biology, or physical flesh. Maybe **our flesh is the technology...**

To Understand Life Is to Understand Light

Objective reality is in the light. He who masters light, masters the universe? When I consider the sun, as the ultimate source of power, and the reason why we are even here, breathing, thinking, and able to make art, I can't help but consider the **essence of light**, where it comes from, and why it's even here in the first place. Maybe all of the answers to our biggest questions are found in the light, and to understand light is to understand life.

Can Time Stand Still?

When I photograph, or paint with light, I feel as though I'm making pictures at the speed of light itself. At a fraction of a second, **I can freeze time forever.**

"I exist outside the passage of time."

When I'm walking, moving my physical body, and photographing, I'm merely existing now. Of course, we have a past, and future, but photography brings me closer to the moments that are ever fleeting. Maybe the **paths** that we take are critical to consider. I find that when I am walking around the streets on the grid, that curve, turn, and zigzag like a maze, time feels short, and passes at a rapid pace. However, when I go for extremely long walks along the river trail, which is essentially endless, time feels as though it stands still, and is extended longer.

Maybe photographers are like superheroes that can stop time. We exist outside of it.

I'm Going Super Saiyan

There truly is a difference between being in the light on the sunny side of the street and being on the shady side of the street. The temperature feels like night and day. When I'm in the shade, I might as well just put on a jacket. But when I'm in the sun, despite whether or not the temperature is cold, **my body heats up in a matter of minutes or even seconds.**

"At the end of each day, I've been sunbathing around the Schuylkill River Trail, by the dog park."

I have a nice view of the river, water flowing, and sunset directly penetrating my soul. I find that I have **so much abundant energy** stored up within my body all day when I spend the maximum time in the sun. There's something about **standing in the sun, absorbing its raw power, and turning it into physical energy** within your body like you're going Super Saiyan!

Ghouls and Goblins Prefer the Dark

Maybe **ghouls and goblins prefer the darkness**, the nighttime, and seek pleasure away from the sun. Just think about nightclubs, bars, and nightlife in general. Typically the people that are out, have a preference for this time of day. They have a preference for the **caves**, dwelling in the dungeon, or the bar, or the club. **Avoid people that prefer the dark and just focus on yourself.**

In this very short life of ours, perhaps it's wiser to focus on ourselves instead of others. I say, your immediate **family, friends, and yourself** are all that really matters. Ignore the noise, the drama, and the excess. **Keep your circle close, tighten it**, and don't worry about other people.

Focus on the Good and Beautiful

Going forward, **let's focus on the good, the beautiful**, and forget about the bad, and the ugly. It's very easy to find the ugly and the bad in this world through the news or social media. My theory is that **hate is fear**, and the news merely promotes hate, or fear. If you check the news too often, you might find yourself in a situation where you feel unsafe, scared, and want to spend the entire day in bed. I say, **embrace the world with the spirit of play**, find yourself in the park, looking at beautiful things, focusing on the good, and forgetting about the bad, the noise, and the distractions.

"I am reminded of the first time I ventured into a Palestinian refugee camp in East Jerusalem, Shu'fat."

I checked the news, Google, and images, to see what's going on in this place. I learned right away that this was not a good idea, because it was merely instilling fear in me, with nothing but doom and gloom, and preventing me from going for a visit. Alas, I mustered up the courage to pack my camera, forget everything I think I know, and headed over to East Jerusalem and entered through the gigantic wall looming around Shu'fat.

What amazed me was how welcoming my experience was overall. While I did have some pesky kid throw rocks at me and hit me, there were families that invited me into their homes, offered tea, food, and coffee. I ultimately wound up making one of the strongest photos of the separation barrier. While walking along the wall in what seemed like no man's land, a boy wound up throwing a baby stroller towards the wall, and while I watched him, I made a photograph. I even decided to climb to the top of the wall and stood proud and confidently as I conquered this location.

"It was in that moment that I learned that you must go into the world, the chaos, the unknown, without any preconceived notions of what you may find."

By disconnecting from the bad and the ugly, you will be delivered with the good, and the beautiful.

Why I Love the City

The **city provides me with just enough chaos and connection to reality** and society that keeps me in touch. I like being around other people, and thrive amongst urban life. Philadelphia is a perfect paradise for me because of its **gritty and raw nature**. While it is gritty and raw, there is also **beautiful nature trails and parks and historic architecture** that keeps me inspired and balanced between the ugly and beautiful.

Maybe Philly is just gritty enough and just beautiful enough to have the **perfect balance and harmony** that keeps me creatively thriving.

Demokratia

Today is the **primary election** here in the state of Pennsylvania, and I am reminded of what it means to be a citizen of the United States of America and partake in **democracy**.

The word “democracy” comes from the ancient Greek word “**demokratia**.” This term is a combination of “demos” meaning “people” and “kratos” meaning “**power**” or “rule.” Thus, democracy translates to “rule by the people” or “the power of the people.” This concept originated in ancient Greece, specifically in Athens around the 5th century BCE, where it was developed as a form of government in which all eligible citizens participated directly in making decisions.

While we, the people, the citizens, have the opportunity to use our voice and vote for particular candidates in office, my thought is that **we cast a vote every single day** as individuals, disregarding politics. We have the choice to vote for who we want, say what is on our mind, associate with particular people, think certain things, do what we please, consume what we want, and purchase what we desire.

Maybe what makes the individual powerful is within the decisions that you choose not to make. There's power within subtraction, and through removing more, you become an empowered individual.

Freedom Is a Choice

You can choose to **purchase a car**, gasoline, insurance, and deal with all costs associated with owning a vehicle. Or, you can choose to **use public transportation, ride a bike, or even just walk**. You can go to the grocery store and buy eggs, or you could **buy some chickens and raise your own**. You can buy sugary cereal, or **grass-fed beef**. You can send your kids to public school, private school, or even just **teach your kids at home**. You can buy the latest fashion or choose to **make your own clothes**. You can own a home and pay for a mortgage or choose to rent an apartment.

"Perhaps the value of things is merely determined by what the person next to you will purchase it for."

Maybe the only problem with democracy is **democracy itself**. It's the decisions that people make that ultimately determine the outcome of our nation.

Confidence

Confidence is not just having your chest open, shoulders back, and head up. Confidence is **being good at something**, and knowing it. When I consider confidence, I consider my skills and talent as a photographer. I know what my capabilities are, but I continuously push my limits, and know that I am forever an amateur—**learning and advancing my craft each day**. However, once you figure out that you're good at something, you no longer need any approval or feedback from others, especially other photographers.

"I just don't care anymore. If you're not good at something that I value and respect, I simply don't care what you think."

You can't use any life hacks or tricks to make yourself confident. **You actually have to own it, know it, and be it.** Confidence is actually being **good at something, being physically strong, and dangerous.**

How to Win

Maybe whoever runs the most laps around the track wins... When I consider photography, and its physical nature, I'm reminded that you must be in **movement, embracing motion, and walking**, in order to make anything. Because of this, I believe the one who walks the most will **see the most**, and ultimately, **photograph the most.**

My thought is, **whoever makes the most pictures, wins.** I do not care whether your photos are good or bad, I care whether or not you are **filled with curiosity and courage** at the forefront. It is there that you will make strong work, and it's inevitable that with your insatiable lust for life, you'll make more photos.

I'm Really on the Streets

Honestly, I'm really out here. I'm really on the streets. I be about this shit. I really fucking love photographing, embracing chaos, and the bustling nature of urban life.

No Shame

Could you imagine being the **first human being to look into the reflection of the river and perceive yourself?** Perhaps this is where notions of shame come from—our perception of ourselves, naked, and alone.

In the story of Noah, there's a moment that shows he wasn't perfect. After the flood, Noah planted a vineyard, made wine, and got drunk in his tent. While he was drunk, he ended up naked. One of his sons, Ham, saw him like this and told his brothers. But instead of laughing or making fun, his other two sons, Shem and

Japheth, took a blanket, walked in backwards, and covered Noah without seeing him naked. **This shows how they respected their father despite his mistake.** It's a reminder that everyone has moments they aren't proud of, and how important it is to handle others' mistakes with kindness.

My thought is that **shame is bad.** We should have **no shame**, and embrace our authentic self. Nobody is perfect, and we should embrace this imperfect human nature.

Also, **why are people so boring?** Everything seems so sterile, bleak, boring, and same same. Everyone goes along with the program, following the same guidelines and social norms, without thinking freely or openly. I feel like there's a lack of expression in the modern world. **It seems crazy to laugh loud, be proud, smile, and be a gay or jolly fellow.** Maybe shame is what holds us back from self-expression.

What Is Your Purpose?

Maybe my ultimate purpose is to **connect with life more.** I become closer to life through photography. I find that by photographing, I'm able to have a **dialogue with the world**, asking questions with each photograph I make. I'm simply wondering, why? What even is my purpose, the purpose, the point of it all? I don't think anybody really knows, but perhaps through **exploration, curiosity, and the creation of new art**, we can find the answers.