

Lust for Light

The Ultimate Source of Power

I have a lust for light, an appreciation for the simple things, such as the sun. I find the sun to be the ultimate source of power. Perhaps our bodies are like batteries, and the sun is the ultimate charger. Fueling myself with curiosity in the morning, watching the sunrise peer above the horizon, I'm reminded that this world is open and endless to explore.

Destroy the Garden

Fiat Lux, let there be light.

In Genesis, in the Old Testament, God creates light as His first creation. This light casts over the darkness and puts order to the chaos. When Adam and Eve were created from dust and placed within the Garden of Eden, they took the fruit from the forbidden tree of knowledge. With their newfound knowledge of good and evil, God banishes them from the garden, guarding the entrance with flaming swords.

In ancient Greek mythology, Prometheus was the creator of humanity and formed people with clay. He is also famous for stealing fire from the gods on Mount Olympus and giving it to the people. This act of defiance allowed humans to develop technology, art, and civilization.

Perhaps we can create anew through the act of destruction. You have to make a mess first in order to clean up.

The knowledge of good and evil introduces concepts of shame. While Adam and Eve were both naked, they had no idea what shame was—just pure innocence and naivety.

During the time of Noah, when he was drunk under his tent, his son covered his body with a blanket, looking the other way as he felt shame for his father's nakedness. Perhaps in this moment, societal norms, human behavior, concepts of shame, modesty, and respect changed forever.

While the innocence of Adam and Eve represents a pure state of being, it will never be possible to return to. However, as an artist, I am reminded to embrace my childlike curiosity and channel my everyday life through the spirit of play.

By walking through nature barefoot, I am reminded that I too was born into this world without shoes.

Walking barefoot can be dangerous, but maybe danger and courage are the ultimate sources of freedom. I am reminded of George Washington on horseback, a revolutionary hero leading America to sovereignty and prosperity. He sought freedom through acting with courage—a revolutionary, a hero, an intrepid and dangerous man.

Perhaps to be free is to be like a child or a bird: singing, dancing, but also dangerous. Children are often rebellious and do not always play by the rules. I am reminded of my time as a child, exploring the woods, sharpening spears with sticks, building bridges with stones, and forging my own paths in the unknown. As an artist, we articulate the unknown and find peace among the chaos.

Children are the most free in this world as they have no concept of societal norms or knowledge of good and evil. Children are carefree, naive, innocent, but also dangerous. Going forward, we too should strive to be like big kids—joyous, but fearless and courageous.

Harness Power

When I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia, I remember a time I spent at a fish pond late at night. Along this swampy pond, it was very dark, and I only had a small headlamp to guide me in the darkness. I could hardly see anything, and a storm began to brew. I saw lightning strike and large, dark, looming clouds over the horizon. I quickly made my way home, began bathing with a bucket and cup, and

then walked barefoot into my living room—and was struck by lightning. The lightning struck the ground, traveled through my feet, up my leg, and I felt pain in my core. The next morning, I walked through the village and saw that many houses were destroyed. I even spoke with others who were in pain and had also felt the shock of the lightning.

Benjamin Franklin, one of America's greatest founding fathers and inventors, created the lightning rod. After his experiments with a kite and key, harnessing the power of electricity during a lightning storm, he discovered the use of newfound technology.

Inventors like Benjamin Franklin pioneer ideas that impact humanity for centuries.

Think of Leonardo da Vinci and his studies of anatomy. His inventions or ideas may never have been completed, but they certainly left an impact on the future of humanity. We too should strive to be more like these individuals—creating, tinkering, and innovating new ways to impact humanity.

The Apex of Beauty

I believe architecture and sculpture are the apex of beauty. I am currently gazing at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, standing in front of its looming columns, intricate detail, color, and sheer physical grandeur. There are statues of Greek gods, such as Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, along the top of the structure.

Architecture and sculpture are the apex of beauty because they elevate the human spirit to new heights. I am reminded of my time in Florence, gazing at sculptures of Hercules and Achilles. These Greek demigods are depicted larger than life, and their sheer size alone forces you to look up at them. The nature of architecture and sculpture—being larger than life, created by defying gravity through physical labor and attention to detail—transcends the world and leaves you in awe. Sometimes when I look at buildings like the Philadelphia Museum of Art or City Hall, it amazes me that human beings can even achieve these things.

There is a sculpture at the entrance of the Philadelphia Museum of Art that shows Prometheus strangling a vulture. While Zeus condemned him to have his liver eaten by the vulture, Prometheus overcame the savage beast, symbolizing resistance and defiance against oppression.

When a wolf hunts its prey, it eats the liver first. Liver is one of the most nutrient-dense foods that we can consume.

In the story of Rome's foundation, Remus and Romulus are raised by the she-wolf, La Lupa. La Lupa suckled the brothers, giving them strength, raising them in the wild, and making them a formidable force to become the founders of Rome.

Maybe we should strive to become like a wolf—a savage, a beast, a formidable and intrepid force—and consume more liver.

What is funny about wolves is how we have domesticated them, making dogs our personal slaves. We put dogs on a leash; some people cook for them, put shoes on them, or place them in baby carriages. We treat dogs like our children these days. It is actually quite strange. When I walk through a city like Philadelphia, I see fewer children and more dogs. Maybe our population is generally in decline, and it becomes apparent when you open your eyes and walk around any modern city.

Transcendence

When I spent my time in Zambia, I noticed that most households had around ten children. Everybody has a role to play in a village or tribe. Every morning, women come home with babies on their backs and firewood on their heads. The men are building homes and churches. The boys are building bricks with sand and mud. The girls are sweeping the floors and preparing food for the day. There is a hierarchy in society that I believe promotes human thriving. There is God, tribe, and land.

At the center of every village, there is a church. In the church, there is an altar. The altar is a place for sacrifice, where we remind ourselves of the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross. We break bread and share this among the tribe. Typically, in a church, there are biblical paintings, stained glass, grand architecture, and artwork that inspires humanity to strive for new heights. When you stand in the center of a

basilica in Rome and look up toward the dome, there is typically a picture of God. Surrounded by angels, this artwork uplifts the human spirit to a transcendent height.

When you listen to modern music, it is practically noise and nonsense at this point. The lyrics are mostly degenerate, the beat is lowly, and it drags the spirit downward, not upward. I believe that music and art shape our culture as we know it. Because of this, I make an effort to avoid consuming most music these days. If I want to listen to music, I return to the Wanamaker Organ here in Philadelphia, on Market Street, inside Macy's, or the Wanamaker building. This is the world's largest playing pipe organ, sounding every single day except Sunday, at noon and 5:30. I think it is a much more fulfilling experience to take time out of the day—in the middle of the day or in the evening before bed—to enjoy a free show, to elevate your spirit, looking up at a grand building with a high ceiling, and listen to an artist playing some of the most beautiful music I have ever heard in my life. It fuels me with positivity, vitality, and inspires me to move onward and upward.

Is man permitted to strive to become a demigod? Personally, I would like to strive for new heights that a human may seemingly not be able to achieve.

War and Technology

I remember walking through Rittenhouse Square Park here in Philadelphia and watching as a hawk swooped down and ate a baby bird in mid-flight. All that was left of the scene were a few feathers fluttering to the ground. This reminds me that nature is violent, and we too, as human beings, go through endless conflict.

When I was a child, I remember playing *Halo*, *Halo 2*, and *Halo 3*. It is a first-person shooter game that takes place in space, in a sci-fi universe. It is hyper-competitive, where there are two teams: red versus blue. In this modern world of division, where we identify with different political parties—left, right, red, blue—I see a middle ground within the color purple. This is my favorite color to wear, as it is bright, flamboyant, and expresses my joyous and childlike spirit.

When I was a freshman in high school, we read the book *Ender's Game*. In the book, the boys are stationed on a spaceship, where they fight in a simulated battle using technology similar to video games, which ends up being a real war. The boys win the war in the end, unknowingly, as they thought the simulation was simply practice for the real battle.

The lack of human connection and physicality in war makes it almost absurd these days. Maybe we should return to the simulated space—think of video games like *Halo* or *Call of Duty*—and settle our disputes this way, without human casualties. There is no more glory to be had on a battlefield. There are no horses to ride into the front lines. If there is no more glory to be had in warfare, where can men go to conquer? While the lust for battle is within me, I do not wish to participate in these newfound war games. Maybe the world of art and photography is open and fair game to dominate.