

Gravity Bound

While we may be bound to gravity, let's try to go upwards. The insane audacity of Elon Musk, crafting rockets with his mission to explore Mars and the universe, is inspiring to me. However, we must remind ourselves that the laws of physics are real, and that simple things like gravity are what hold our feet to the ground and are what make us human, after all. I believe that gravity, and being low to the ground, actually is where you find yourself most close to God. When I was in the lowest elevated city in the world, Jericho, and put my face down onto the ground, submitting to God in a mosque, this was the first time I'd ever felt the presence of God. Perhaps to become closer to God, we must be low to the ground, like a child.

We Are Ascending Upwards

Once the caterpillar comes out of the cocoon and transforms into a butterfly, it cannot go back to that state, locked away in the cage. The butterfly is now free, with beautiful colors and patterns upon its wings, soaring freely into the sky. I think that a lot of people in this modern world live in a bubble, or inside of the cocoon. Just think of the way the individual in society subscribes to political ideology, whether left or right, Democrat or Republican, or even divides themselves based on their race, black or white, and even religion, Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. We like to put ourselves in boxes and subscribe to certain ideologies, ways of life, philosophies, and dogma, without even considering possibilities on the other side.

One thing I'm very grateful for is during my childhood, while I spent my youth in the suburbs surrounded by essentially 100% Caucasian children, in the summertime I would visit my grandmother's house in West Philadelphia, Overbrook, where I was the only Caucasian kid, surrounded by 100% African-Americans. I remember going to the poppy store, buying water ice, going to the block parties, playing video games, football in the grass, skateboarding, etc., without even considering the color of the skin of the children I was playing with. When you're a kid, you're not hardened by society, or the way in which we divide ourselves through such rudimentary means like color. When you're a kid, you simply see another kid, and you ask if they want to play, and you just go and do the thing. Now, when you're an

adult and you go through these different bureaucratic systems, you have to check boxes and let people know, yes, I am Caucasian, no, I am not Hispanic, yes, I am African-American, etc.

One strange thing I've noticed about photographers these days is, they specifically seek out photographing particular groups of people, or particular "color" of people, as the core theme of their projects. This is very strange. We divide ourselves, box ourselves in, without even thinking about it because it has become so normalized. Ultimately, I think this is a problem and will only get worse over time if we continue down this path of division.

Again, just think of a child, and the lack of preconceptions they have about other children. We should be more like children, more open, and pure. We should be more like a butterfly, with a variety of colors, patterns, shapes, and forms, flying upwards, to a new height, towards freedom from societal norms.

Man is Domesticated Like a Dog

Think of the way man is domesticated like a dog in this modern world, living in luxurious condos, boxed into an office with air conditioning, a cubicle, and seated in a big baby stroller, the automobile, every morning. Not only are we becoming pets, domesticated in these condos, but we're also suppressing our natural biological urge to reproduce, and instead of producing children, simply buy pets, like dogs, and treat them like our children inside of these boxes. I believe this way of life will have some negative side effects on man's evolution. A quick story from last year, while walking down Chestnut Street:

While I was practicing my street photography, chilling, strolling at a very leisurely pace, this extremely fast-moving man came up from behind me, brushed me on my shoulder, pushing me, telling me to

"Get the fuck out of my way!"

I remember calmly looking up and down at the man, asking him what his problem was, and as I looked at him, I noticed his weak and feeble frame, his very ugly facial hair, his white collar, and came to the conclusion that he most likely is some office worker who has no freedom or time. He started to press me some more, so I took my shirt off, flexing on him, and started responding extremely aggressively to him like an untamed dog or a wolf, and he ultimately wound up going his own way. What I found funny about this poor, poor man is that he is just a lost puppy, a domesticated dog, who probably has to take orders from a boss in an office, sitting down for the majority of the day, resulting in the weak physiological body upon his frame, that made it so easy for me to dominate him with my simple presence alone.

When man is domesticated, put into a cage, they will become like a bull, and act very aggressive on the streets, naturally. Because this man probably spends eight hours of his day in a very unnatural space, anger, uneasiness, and anxiety are the inevitable outcomes of this way of life. Men should not be put into a cage, or else they will become aggressive, like a bull, irritated, marching through the streets, pounding their way past people, without any care in the world. While I initially responded calmly, I don't tolerate bullshit from anybody, especially somebody who's going to punk me around both verbally and physically. I think we should just be more like the elephant, tall, intelligent, and strong, capable of taming the bull with our sheer presence alone.

Stay Cheerful

Don't depend on any external stimuli for happiness. You should never have to depend on another person, thing, or experience to feel cheerful. The simple pleasures, such as walking, sunlight, and clean water, are enough to keep me smiling throughout the day. I find that when you're turning yourself into the strongest version of yourself, the best that you can possibly be, striving for excellence, it is inevitable that you will be cheerful. I find that cheerfulness is needed right now, and something that we should find from within. I think man is very simple, and just seeks peace and tranquility, despite the way that we thrive in chaos. Personally, all I really need is an open space, the sun on my face, and some meat in my fridge for the evening, to be happy. I think happiness, cheerfulness, derives from the will to power. Cheerfulness is a physiological effect of your muscles contracting, hormones releasing, and the feeling of conquering yourself.

When you wake up in the morning, stand right up, and don't sit or lay down until the end of the day, when it's time to go to sleep. When you've drained all of your physiological power and energy from your body throughout the entirety of the day, you will feel unstoppable, you will be cheerful, and you will be happy. If you do not possess the physiological power to stand and walk all day, with the need to take breaks, sit down, etc., you will feel defeated. To be cheerful, simply continue marching onwards every day.

My Famous Perimeter Walk

One of my favorite walks to do in the city of Philadelphia is to start from the Philadelphia Museum of Art, by the Schuylkill River Trail, walking the entirety of the city, from river to river, all the way to the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, the Delaware River, and everywhere in between. I walk along the perimeter of the city, the outskirts, where there is no real street activity, that you would typically experience in the center of town. This is my happy place, my route that brings me the most joy. I love walking along the outskirts of my city, alone, in solitude, and thriving in the spaces in between. As a photographer, can you thrive in solitude, on the perimeter, the outskirts, away from the hustle and bustle? Can you find something in silence, where there is seemingly nothing?

Just Watch and Listen

When I start my day off in nature, enjoying the sounds of the birds, and the insects humming, I watch the river flow along the Schuylkill. Similarly, on a busy street corner, as I walk along the curb, I listen to the chatter of strangers and watch human behavior. Something strange that I have observed is our enslavement to technology, and the number of people that just walk to and fro, with their heads completely down, staring at their phones, AirPods plugged in, sunglasses on, moving at such fast paces, like they have no time to just walk for the sake of walking. When you walk on the streets with your camera, slow down, and walk 75% slower than everybody else around you. I think this is a fun way to live outside of the matrix, where you feel like you are Neo, slowing time down, watching life move

by you in a frenzy, while you are simply calm, observing, and listening. Is it just me, or are the people on the streets becoming like The Walking Dead, zombies? Even when I take the bus, and I observe the media patterns of other people, and the things that they consume, it's extremely alarming. I'll watch somebody go from viewing a TikTok, to then scrolling to a separate app, that resembles gambling, to tap, tap, tap, and watch a bunch of colors appear, or whatever occurs during these strange video games, and then go straight back to texting, then to YouTube, then to TikTok once again, and then finally, back to the gambling app. Our media patterns are alarming, and the way that we interact with technology in public spaces becomes a good indicator of where the human condition is heading in modern society.

Sometimes I look into the vehicles when I'm waiting for the bus, and see how people just can't get off their phones, vaping, consuming, snacking, without their hands on the wheel or paying attention to the road. We have zero focus, and perhaps are running on high cortisol, stress, because of the lack of time, and enslavement to emails and constant communication.

One funny, and unorthodox, thought I had about these people that are hypnotized by their devices is that the Zambians in the village I lived in during my Peace Corps service would probably think that they are possessed by some sort of witchcraft. In the village, they believe in witchcraft, magical crocodiles, and that witches are even responsible for the deaths of children. Honestly, people do seem kind of possessed.

Never Stop Evolving

To change is happiness. However, change can be both positive and negative. We can either evolve or stay in the cocoon. Like a snake, we must shed our skin and create anew. We must break free from the cocoon and fly like a butterfly. If you consider evolution this way, would you rather stay in the cage of a zoo, or roam freely like a lion?

The ultimate way to continuously evolve each day is to just go back to being a child. Unburden yourself, unhardened yourself from society, and this modern world. Return to the childlike state of being, playful, cheerful, and open to new experiences, thoughts, and philosophy. Never stop changing your mind, and always find something new, through the creation of new art, thoughts, or even interactions with other people. Don't limit yourself, or bind yourself to one way of doing things. Don't chain yourself to any belief or any ideology. Do you remember when you were a kid, and you would climb trees, jump off of things, pretending like you could fly, like a superhero?

We may be bound to gravity, but it's time for us to fly like a big kid with a cape on.