Eager for the day

Every morning, I enjoy starting my day off, marching along the Schuylkill River Trail in Philadelphia, wearing a 40-pound plate carrier and barefoot shoes, marching in the darkness, eager for the sun to rise. I stand on the cliff behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art, looking out towards the horizon, the beautiful river flowing, connected to the source of life, water.

Life is suffering?

If life truly is suffering, and pain is something we can all feel at a human level, something we can all relate to, well, then maybe it is most wise for us to affirm this feeling. I believe that there is a correlation between pleasure and pain, and pain is an inevitable part of the human experience as we are flesh, gravity-bound creatures.

Thinking of this weight, with 40 pounds pressing down on my shoulders, my legs, my feet, providing a slight sensation of pain, there is also a feeling of pleasure associated with the muscles contracting, the hormones firing, and my metabolism moving. I feel joy and bliss when I conquer a day of being physical, as vitality and power, to me, fuel my lust for life.

There's that myth of Sisyphus, pushing his rock uphill. His fate was to inevitably be physically tortured, without ever reaching the top of the mountain. However, Sisyphus learned to affirm his fate and champion his inevitable fate in life, of pushing his rock uphill, endless suffering. What if we all, in this modern world, are too pushing our rocks uphill, and will never ever reach the top? Well then, why not affirm it?

Philadelphia

The name "Philadelphia" comes from the Greek words "philos" (meaning love or friendship) and "adelphos" (meaning brother).

William Penn named the city Philadelphia, which means "city of brotherly love." However, yesterday, walking through the streets, I saw nothing but disrespect amongst two different groups of brothers. Firstly, walking down Broad Street, I noticed three young teenagers on bicycles who hopped off their bikes and started to beat up a random homeless guy in the middle of the street, running him away from the scene. They chased him all the way to Chestnut Street, and it was pretty crazy to witness the lack of respect that these youth had for this homeless man.

Next up, after walking down Chestnut Street, I witnessed another group of teenagers who went up to these old head street performers, who play music every day on the corner, and stole their basket of tip money right from their feet. They ran down the street, and the men had to chase the kids just to get their money back. Seeing things like this on a daily basis in Philadelphia, you become desensitized to it all. Just two weeks ago, I witnessed young teens beating up a police officer, and then they were rightfully arrested.

While the name of our city may be the "City of Brotherly Love," our brothers love to start fights for no reason and cause chaos in the streets. I actually overheard the kids that were on the bikes saying that they have their "pop meter" up. I think they were referencing *Grand Theft Auto*, the video game, and basically treating real life that way.

Do video games influence the youth in a negative way? Maybe... I think that most media, movies, TV shows, and video games are just violent for violence's sake, and it is actually quite uninspiring in general. There is a lot of violence on TV and in video games, but I'm apprehensive to come to the conclusion that it directly affects the way that youth act in embodied reality. However, yesterday felt like a pretty evident example of it doing so.

The fall of Athens

I consider Athens and Philadelphia to be very similar as both are the birthplaces of democracy. Athens is the birthplace of democracy in the world, and Philadelphia is the birthplace of democracy in the western world, here in the United States. I find the history of Philadelphia to be very inspiring, considering the great generals,

leaders, and first president George Washington, who were living in this land. We have such a rich history in the United States generally, but Philadelphia, being the birthplace of democracy, makes me so proud to be an American.

When I consider what caused Athens to fall, I contemplate their military overextending, losing to Sparta, and being put into debt. To pay off their debt, Athens started to mint gold coins that were diluted in copper. Now, with their currency diluted with copper, their money depreciated in value. This depreciation in value led to the lack of vitality of the natural energy that binds a society together: money. If money is the glue that holds people together, civilizes a nation, and that money is now susceptible to a decrease in value, perhaps that decrease in value also leads to the decline of the entire civilization.

When I consider the current state of the United States of America, being a Generation Z member, born in 1996, 28 years old, it feels like there is no hope to ever acquire property or be able to afford a single-family home and support a family on a single income, generally. I think that this is something widespread and widely felt amongst my generation, and because of this, nihilism becomes the inevitable outlook on the future.

I believe that with the depreciation of the dollar in the United States, through the implementation of the Federal Reserve printing money to infinity, this will produce more consumers spending money for immediate pleasure rather than investing it for long-term gains. When you have a dollar that is depreciating each year, and costs inflating alongside it, with wages that can hardly sustain an individual to purchase food and pay for rent, and they are left with no money to save, then how will this cause the individual citizen to behave?

I believe that this will cause the individual citizen to behave hedonistically, going to the bar, drinking alcohol, smoking, doing drugs, watching TikTok, using social media, distracting themselves with Netflix and sports, gambling, casual sex, and not necessarily planning to have families or a future in general. My thought is that the current state of the economy in the United States has the potential to lead to the decline of civilization as we know it here in the US, considering a lot of remarks I hear from people my age saying that they do not want to have a family because they cannot afford it.

However, despite these circumstances, I think that the best outlook is to embrace the suffering. Thinking of Sisyphus pushing his rock, learning to affirm his fate of suffering, perhaps it is wise for us too, to affirm this fate. Let us say that there is no hope for our future, that we will never have the opportunity to retire or to acquire property—will you moan and complain and be defeated? Or will you rise to the occasion and continue pushing your rock uphill for all of eternity without a complaint?

Perhaps the only way for us moving forward is to embrace our inevitable fate of suffering and to learn to thrive in it. However, through this uphill battle, through moving onwards and upwards, we will find ourselves freedom.

Freedom?

When you consider freedom, perhaps you think of free will or the freedom of choice.

Should I go left, or should I go right?

What if our only option is onwards and upwards? Will you move or stay still and stagnant? I choose to move and find this to be the only way to find yourself truly free of both the mind and the body.

Freedom is the elimination of choice. Love your fate, love your suffering, love your highs, your lows, the ups, the downs, the pleasure, and the pain. Revel in laughter, sadness, and anger. Learn to affirm the inevitable fate of the human being, being our ultimate decline and death. Only then can we truly be free.

Poverty

I remember watching *Ready Player One* on a flight—I think the flight I took to Mumbai, India. Essentially, the whole movie exists in the metaverse and virtual reality. However, the young men and people who partake in these virtual reality games are living in poverty in real life, in tin shacks stacked on top of each other,

essentially in slums. However, they had the novel experience of utilizing technology to escape their physical embodied reality through an alternate universe in virtual reality. This game that they played gave them the hope and opportunity to acquire fortune, fame, and monetary gain by winning the game.

Essentially, the video game that they all sucked their bodies into during their everyday, shitty lives was the only sense of hope that they had to ever be free. I find this movie to be a very interesting metaphor for our current modern life here in the United States, and the world generally. The more that we advance technologically, through implementing new novel gizmos and digital advancements, the more we become distracted and negligent of our physical world around us.

Just think of the time you spend on a bus or walking through the streets, and how many people are sucked into their phones. When I stand on the bus each morning and observe the people, they are all distracting themselves with TikTok or dating apps and just mind-numbing entertainment and distractions, generally. If the entire mass population becomes completely distracted through these digital and nefarious means, then I believe this can lead to the ultimate decline of our minds and ourselves through technology.

What the hell are we going to do with the physical world in the future? Are we all going to strap into some virtual world and neglect our physical lives? Are we going to fully work from home, do Zoom calls, and live in digital spaces, or will we return to the physical, to real-life community? I see a divide going forward; I see a divide in the future of this current state of things, where there will be those who become tech-digital slaves or serfs, and then there will be the free men, the Spartans, who march the streets in the physical world.

There will be a decline, a death of community that we currently live through, and a replacement of fake, phony actors in digital worlds, inventing an inevitable revival, a new renaissance, of physical communities, a separation between the wheat and the chaff.

I think of my time as a Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia, Africa, and how the boys played soccer without shoes on. I tried to join them, removing my shoes, and played one game with the boys. I wanted to see what it was like to play without

shoes, and needless to say, I had to soak my feet for a week as they became blistered and battered.

What I learned was the reason they play without shoes is because they simply cannot afford to have two pairs. They can only afford to have their school shoes and only get a second pair of shoes when they get to high school. Because of this, they cannot ruin their school shoes and play barefoot. Every morning, I would wake up, gathering buckets of water from a well, boiling it, putting it through a gravity filter, just to have clean drinking water.

Here in the United States, I have clean water from a tap, and I'm so grateful for the simple amenities that modern cities provide here in the United States.

Sports?

This past weekend, I walked down South Street and arrived at a location where a television screen was displayed outside for masses to gather, drinking outside of a bar, watching the Philadelphia Phillies play baseball. The only thing that came to my mind was this quote from *1984* by George Orwell:

> *"Sport, beer, and above all, gambling, filled up the horizon of their minds. To keep them in control was not difficult."*

Personally, I never understood those that enjoy watching sports. To me, watching sports makes no sense, and I would much rather go and play the thing itself. I grew up playing baseball, and frankly, hated it, because it is so slow-paced and boring. You sit in the outfield, waiting for somebody to swing a bat, and the ball goes flying, and you catch it in your glove. A lot of the people that play baseball are fat, and don't even need to be that athletic to be honest.

Think of Babe Ruth, wasn't he just a big fat guy, who could swing really hard? Anyways, observing the people gathered at this TV screen was like watching moths gathered at a lamp post. One strange thing I observed about the people gathered was the fashion trends—wearing really ugly mustaches, flannel shirts, and trucker hats? This seems to be the new trend, to have a mustache and a hat. I even noticed

this one guy, screaming bloody murder, because someone caught the ball in his glove, riveting, and spilling the beer all over some guy that was sitting in front of him.

People become insane just watching the screen, reacting so emotionally to something that they attach such value to, that has little to no meaning. You're watching sports players while indulging in poison and shitty junk food like pretzels and snacks, getting fat, drunk, and belligerent, as you watch some boring sport of people who can swing a bat, use a glove, and get paid millions of dollars for it. To me, sports is the silliest modern-day phenomenon, and Philadelphia fans are absolutely insane.

I believe they react so aggressively, belligerently, and insanely, because they invest money into these sports games by gambling. I even spoke to a janitor on the street who works for SEPTA, and he was talking about his wages that he makes, and what to do with money, and he says that he just invests it through sports gambling on those apps or whatever on the phone?

Modern day success

To me, yearning for each day is a sign of success in this modern world. I'm just so eager to catch the sunrise, and mourn for every sunset. While I understand the importance of sleep, I hate it because I'm not awake. I simply love life, embracing the physical nature of the outdoors, and find meaning in my everyday life. I feel like this is what modern-day success looks like—simply eager to start each day, filled with vitality and power to do so.

The ultimate sign of success has nothing to do with this material, modern world, rather a mindset shift of how you perceive things. Finding meaning in your everyday life is the ultimate sign of success. By waking up each day, just so excited to get started, I feel like I've reached paradise, or my personal idea of what success means. I say, if you're ready to get the day going, if you're yearning for the sunrise, despite how you feel, and all of the external circumstances, good or bad, consider yourself successful.