

## Everything is in Motion

So I recently just finished reading *The Metaphysics* by Aristotle. Discussed in the book is this concept of the unmoved mover, a divine force that moves all things. The concept is straightforward: for something to be set in motion, there must be an ultimate cause or source behind it.

*Could this source be God?*

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## Flux

My current favorite philosopher is Heraclitus. I actually just recently went through an old notebook of mine from college from about 10 years ago, and I wrote about him in some of my notes as the “weeping philosopher.” I feel like I relate to this idea of being a weeping philosopher, as when you recognize the impermanent nature of life, it is quite a somber thought that looms over you each and every day. For instance, **before I go to sleep, I feel like it’s time to weep, because the day is now over, the darkness covers the sky, there’s no more light for me to be outside.** However, it’s more like a joyful weeping or feeling; I am simply so *overjoyed* with life, that I am eager to go to sleep just to wake up the next day.

When I wake up in the morning, with my eyes wide open, I’m just so eager to get out there into the world, to start my day. I think this is the superpower of photography, as my camera simply becomes this excuse for me to set my body in motion.

## You Cannot Make the Same Photograph Twice

When I stand on top of the cliffside behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art and gaze out towards the beautiful Schuylkill River and make a photograph, I affirm life through the click of the shutter. Through this life affirmation, I increase my

curiosity, simply wondering what the reality will manifest to be in the photograph. Despite viewing the same scene, the same vista, the same view every day, I will never make the same photograph twice. This abundance flows through me like the river flowing, full of energy, movement, and change.

## How to Flourish

The most profound takeaway that I've realized through living a hyper-Spartan, military-discipline, ascetic lifestyle for the past two years is that through increasing your vitality, everything becomes effortless. I think we try to optimize productivity too much in this modern world by being busy worker bees, but actually, if we focus our attention towards physicality, increased strength, and vitality, everything else just falls right into place. The obvious way to increase energy is through deep sleep, eating good meat, and lifting weights on repeat, every single day, with no excuses. I actually find that the more that I lift, or when I lift, or do something physical, my energy increases. For some days, when my energy feels low, if I actually just drop and do a set of push-ups, or squats, or any simple stretching, my energy goes from like 0 to 1000 right away. **I feel the stronger I become, the more free I feel. This feeling of freedom is through effortlessness.**

As a random sidenote, apparently slaves were not permitted to train in the gymnasium in ancient Rome... Only free men trained in the gym.

## Living Gloriously

I read through all the Friedrich Nietzsche this year, and this concept of the Übermensch is still on my mind. I feel as though we can all define what it means to be the Overman, the Superman, through embodying self-discipline, self-overcoming, self-conquering. I think the idea, at least for me as an artist, is very simple. **I try my best to deplete all of my creative energy from the moment I wake up until the moment I go to sleep.** Not only do I do this physically through walking, lifting, and being in motion all day, but also by writing, reading, or photographing. There's a variety of ways in which we can augment our thoughts, our lives, our art in this modern world given the technology that we currently have

with iPads, compact cameras, GoPro, and voice technology. Living gloriously is all about affirming life and suffering, despite how mundane, banal, or meaningless life may seem. You champion your everyday life through curiosity and courage.

## **Meet Me at the Eagle**

My curiosity led me to the Wanamaker Building sometime in the fall of 2022. I remembered that my grandmother worked in the building, in the beauty department, and was curious to check it out. I fell in love with the architecture immediately and spontaneously happened to be there at the time that the Wanamaker Organ played. There's a beautiful sculpture of an eagle at the center of this building, with the tall looming ceiling above, beautiful archways and columns, and the world's largest pipe organ that plays every day. Apparently, this is a meeting place, and after chatting with a nun who was there one day, she told me that all of the nuns would come here to meet up during their breaks from the convent or when they went to get lunch from the terminal or whatever.

Anyways, I view this space as very divine. The eagle, to me, is a symbol of power, freedom, but also transcendence. I feel as though we all have the ability to zoom out like an eagle and view life from a third-person perspective. You recognize how connected everything is and your role within the cosmos, the universe, or whatever. I view the space as divine because, to me, the trifecta—the combination of architecture, music, and art—elevates the human experience to a new height, reaching for God, by quite literally defying gravity and working within the laws of physics to craft this gigantic structure, the Wanamaker Building, the organ, the sculpture, etc. The space is divine. The experience of listening to the organ by the eagle under the tall ceiling is a transcendent experience because the combination of these artistic mediums feel like you are reaching for God.

## **Gravity Bound**

Maybe freedom is the ultimate illusion...

You think of freedom as free will, the ability to decide whether you want to go left or right. However, when I'm walking along the Schuylkill River Trail, if I go left, I'll fall in the river and drown. If I go right, I'll get hit by a train on the train tracks. The only option I have is to move onward and upward. I think this is where freedom is found: through the elimination of all the choices, recognizing that we are bound by gravity, flesh creatures who bleed, who feel pain, joy, and sorrow. **I feel closest to God when I'm closest to the ground, to the Earth, with my hands in the dirt, my feet in the sand, my face in the sun.**

### **Transmute Anger**

I think I understand why people get so angry when they're stuck in traffic. You're trapped in the tiny quarters of this car, locked in on a grid, and if you're in bumper-to-bumper traffic, that's gotta be an absolute headache. I understand why people yell and scream and lash out. I actually think that, instead of completely suppressing anger, we should transmute it into creative pursuits or weightlifting. When you feel sad, turning that sadness, that suffering, into an act of creation, or into an act of life affirmation, is a much more useful approach than wallowing in bed, depressed all day. **I actually think that feeling sensations or emotions of anger and happiness and joy and sadness are vital to the human experience of what makes us human.** It's what makes life worth living, to be honest. When I feel anger, I like to channel that energy. If I feel sorrow, I like to revel in it, affirm it, and recognize that to feel is to be human. We're mortals, we're not gods, but we can strive to become god-like through the transmutation of our emotions into acts of creation.

### **Society is a Consumer-Driven Machine**

So it was recently Black Friday, the day where everyone shopped till they dropped. But I can't help but realize that most advertisements are geared towards women. Think about all of those beauty products, this entire industry, the millions or probably even billions of dollars that flow into this. A lot of these products are advertised towards people that feel as though they need them in order to augment their appearance and become more beautiful. I think the problem with this is it's actually a bit unethical, especially in realms like Instagram, where the ads are

targeted towards individuals' preferences and drive insecurity overall. Now we have all these lame masculinity trends towards grooming products, or stupid baseball hats, and this idea that to be a man you need to have a perfectly groomed beard, drive a cool car, or have a fancy watch. The good thing is that it's an option—you decide what you want to spend your money on. **I view spending money or consumption habits almost like a miniature vote. We vote every day, with our wallets and our time.** Maybe it's best that we all spend our time producing instead of consuming? But that's just my philosophy and the way that I would like to live my life going forward. Anyways, I'd rather give more than I take before I hit the grave.

### **Weakness is slavery**

When I think of weakness, I'm not only thinking physically, but emotionally or mentally. Think of lust, and succumbing to this urge. I think this is maybe one of the hardest battles that men must overcome as we get older. It's so easy to get lured in through lust. Because it's such a temptation in this modern world, to overcome lust, mental fortitude is a really important virtue to have as a man. I think when you have a weak mind, it's inevitable that you will become a slave to these urges, these temptations or habits that feed us pleasure.

Weak body, weak mind...

### **Fast food and microwavable meals?**

So I think with the fast-paced nature of modern life, always being on call, ready to check your email, listen for the pinging of the phone, productivity, etc., comes this neglect of the physical body. Or even better yet, a neglect of the physical world in general. As we advance technologically or digitally, we neglect the physicality of the outside, the real world. Yeah, it may seem like we're evolving with AI, artificial intelligence, ChatGPT, and all these digital things, but we've definitely lost the ability to create grand architecture, sculpture, and grand projects in the real world. Anyways, this is beside the point, I'm thinking about these HelloFresh meals, microwavable meals, or Snap programs. I did notice that the company Snap shut down, or just isn't around anymore, that was here in Philadelphia, selling these microwavable meals. What I noticed, however, is this business was operating

specifically during COVID. When I think of COVID, I remember working from home, being a busy bee. I quite literally had no time. You were always in a Zoom call, always being monitored, I had no time to even cook for myself. I would often get Chipotle, or some grub or nasty shit from the food courts nearby. I think this is a problem, though, as we prioritize work over our health. The more we neglect the real world, and real health, the worse the quality of our lives becomes.

### **Modern life is stressful?**

Stress leads to imbalance or deregulated hormones. High cortisol, firing through the masses. Mass neurosis? Are people anxious? Why do I see the same person smoking the same cigarette every single day at the same location outside of the same office? Is this a denial of life? Is this somebody who wants to die faster? Does it even matter? All I know is, it's all a response or a reaction to the way that we live our lives. Maybe we don't enjoy our lives anymore? I don't think that most people like their jobs, and I don't blame them, because why would you if you're stuck at a computer all day doing tedious tasks?

### **Primal living**

*Could you survive without checking your email or your text messages?*

This question becomes an existential, modern dilemma, where the emails and messages we receive are like our lifeline. They give us opportunities for jobs, meetings that we must attend in order to receive our salaries, our money, to then carry out our daily chores or lives. It all becomes quite humorous to me, that we are so reliant on this technology to the point where it disconnects us entirely from what it means to be a human, a self-autonomous, free, individual. I like the idea of returning to nature through primal force or primal living. I'll just talk about my personal experience.

During the pandemic, I was working as a field organizer for the Democratic Party during the Biden campaign. When I look back at this time, it's all a blur. It was the most "productive" I was ever in my entire life. Not having a single time to think or live for myself. It was a disaster frankly. You just had to keep cranking those

numbers, dialing the phone, sending emails, attending meetings, etc. All damn day. What bothered me the most is that it's all happening within the digital realm, on the Internet, and I never attended an in-person meeting once in my entire year of working on the campaign.

Now, I work as a horticulturalist, in a park, and spend most of my day in solitude, landscaping, pruning plants, deadheading, shaping bushes, chopping down trees, raking leaves, and planting things. It's the complete night-and-day difference from the work I did previously to the work I do now. I absolutely love it, though, and it resonates with who I am and how I align as a human in this world in general. I remember being peace corps volunteer and loved working on the farms as an aquaculture promotion specialist in Zambia. I also volunteered on a kibbutz in Israel. I loved working as a landscaper in the gardens there. I just know that I have this warrior spirit within me, that likes to exert myself physically throughout the day. I need to be moving, I need to be making things, I need my hands in the dirt, and I wanna feel like I'm actually making a change within the physical world around me. I think this is what's missing with modernity and the way that we work now, as everything is in the digital realm. I prefer the physical realm, the real world, and making a difference there, no matter how small it may seem.

### **What do I really need?**

I just need a piece of meat and a place to sleep... What I've learned through living in simulated poverty, by fasting, not eating breakfast or lunch, walking barefoot, is that I really don't need much from the material world around me. I get it, you need money to buy food, pay for rent, or have a place to sleep, but these things are base level. What I need, what I crave, is my lust for adventure, and creativity. I was always an explorer and a creative person from a very young age. I grew up with the Wissahickon Forest in my backyard, where I would build teepees with sticks, build bridges with stones, climb trees, swing from vines, sharpen spears, and attempt to hunt deer, and ride bikes through the dirt trails. I remember setting up little toy figures—gladiators, Crusaders—in intricate scenes, giving dialogue, and creating stories through play. I loved writing little comic strips, and making books when I was in the first grade.

I think that inner creative, childlike spirit is what I need the most. I need curiosity because that's what fuels my lust for life itself and sets my body in motion. Through photographing, and walking, and observing life in all its intricate detail, I exist outside the passage of time. After all, maybe I can't live forever, but I can at least make a photograph...

Curiosity wakes me up in the morning. Curiosity is what drives me to step onto the frontlines of life. I don't need anything from this world. I need curiosity. **Without curiosity, I am nothing.**