

Yo, God...

*"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have somewhat hastily concluded that it is the chief end of man here to "glorify God and enjoy him forever."*

H.D. Thoreau from *Walden*

The question is often posed: where, if anywhere, does art intersect literature, the created form with the created text? Or are they simply subsets of themselves, inextricably woven within the texture of paint, language, expression, earth and the artist themselves? Of course, there is no need to justify or extrapolate meaning; the truest validation of existence is found within the human heart when it finds its way to the somatic exterior and meaning is taken by the reader as viewer, the beholder as interpreter.

Perhaps there is no better example of this than cultural art created as a language of the spirit, the need for the human specie to communicate what they feel and they believe about their chosen form of spiritual medium.

And yet there are those whose form of religious expression is destructive not creative, painted blood red, not crimson. When the human condition exposes pallets of tragedy, rarely is the question asked of the artist as author—why? The same can be said of hopeful galleys rife with the message of peace; not why but how and not if but when. Great countries have failed to address these timeless queries of import. Great Spirits have shown their hand with fire and ice, and beauty beyond name.

And the lone artists stand whole and raw, with a brush in their hand and the answers in their heart. If only the grand committees and critics of the world would listen...

“The earth suffers for the sins of its people, for they have twisted the instructions of God, violated his laws and broken his everlasting covenant. A curse consumes the earth and all its inhabitants. They are left desolate destroyed by fire.”

Isaiah 24: 5-7

“But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears because they hear. I assure you many prophets have longed to hear what you have seen and heard. But they could not.”

Matthew 13: 16-17

“You may forewarn them of the day which is sure to come: when all are brought together: some in paradise and some in the blazing fire. We have revealed to you which enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus saying: Observe the faith and do not divide yourself into factions.”

From Counsel, The Koran

What prophet said that the love OF God and FOR God resides in a gap, the chasm made explicit by the sin of the other side? Did he write in both Arabic and English, the language of ancient lore? Did he forge the black knife that flew into the heart of civilization, thinking the two shiny middle fingers, fully erected and thick, were mirrored windows of all that stand cold naked and homeless in their bright September shadows? Do not think of me as a plate glass waiting for that blood-red brick.

You might not like who I am but I am all that I have. And if we go back far enough, are we all not brothers of color from the red loam of the Dark Continent, trying to make our way home?

Yes, there are big game hunters among us. Sometimes you are the game. Other times we are all plastic figures moved along a piece of cardboard by the twin heads of fear and ignorance. They wear the stars of generals and turbans and well-tailored suits. They smell of Ralph Loren and camel shit and factory smoke and always, always the sin of anonymity.

You got my six? I got yours.

1. What every man looks for in his life is his own salvation and the salvation of the people around him. Salvation begins with the discovery of exactly who you are, and if you're lucky, the discovery what your purpose on earth is. It continues with the fulfillment of your own innate, God given powers,

the love of others and the love of the Great Spirit that created you. You cannot possibly find this in yourself alone. You must find yourself and your salvation through others. You must find a way to connect.

2. Some times a man will rebel against himself. This rebellion is part of testing how far they will go in their suffering to find that true self. If he is to find that purpose without trouble, then he would then find no meaning to his existence. Viktor Frankl has said that suffering ceases to be at the point it finds and engages meaning.

3. We live in a perplexing and struggling race. It provokes us at many turns, reminding us that our life must have meaning. Yet still, that meaning escapes us and we run constantly towards the trouble in the knowledge that it will provide some clarity and we will live according to it. The process of living and growing is exactly that, the struggle to balance the struggle, to gain strength in it without letting it get the best of us. That edge is where we should define our existence.

4. Salvation is not merely a subjective psychological thing. Self- realization and spiritual awareness are equal parts objectivity, mysticism, faith and experiential foundation. The finding of ourselves in some supernatural spiritual order includes the sublimation that cross cultural deities are in and of themselves, a foundation of belief. Christ is Bhudda is God is Zeus is Allah is Shiva is Great Spirit is Lord. One can never accept him or herself completely unless they accept others unconditionally.

5. Lives and souls are not easily saved. But who gets to issue triage orders? The indemonstrable pull of cheating our own demise, however briefly, for the gain of worldly rewards is a powerful Babylonian pull indeed. Yet, the dichotomy of it all is what charges us; the opposing polarity balancing the common ground, if not the tightrope we all must walk, now, on this earth. The motion and the beauty of choice, these edges give life sharp rails and texture so profound that if you do stop and smell it, you won't want to be alive in any other moment.

6. We know that life is mostly a straight line, sometimes up sometimes down but rarely broken or looped back on itself. Somehow we are drawn to go upside down for a moment, by fire or my choice. Then we go back and connect the dots of our lives that got skipped; that paint by number set when we were momentarily distracted. I don't know for sure. But I like the idea of

having a second chance. And in that process, either in this life or the one hereafter, a funny thing happens and you see yourself in all the craziness happening all around you and your part on the stage is correct; all that wonderfully edible mayhem in you, living and breathing, dying and living, not in the shadows but in every sunrise and every sunset, howling at the high noon moon, painting a horizonless sky.

And you know it is no accident. We get to suck the marrow. But where did it come from. Yo, God...thanks.