

The Book of the Is: A book on bridges (2013)

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"Don't ask'em what it was, tell'em what it is."

Phish

Excerpt from *Aphorisms on value: Book 2*

Aphorisms number 64-5, 73-4, and 79-80

64

This isn't Phish tour! On "Phish tour" means you follow the band awhile, city to city, venue to venue, and take in the scene – hang with other freaks, so to speak, and experience that. Some people stay on tour a week, some a summer, some a year, and even a few lifers. On Phish tour, things can take a carefree attitude. When you get home from such a trip, it can take a while to adapt back to things. At home, you can put the experiences into your own frame – into your Is, so to speak. It's not like your experience will be my experience. In a group of particulars that may be the case – similar stories told differently – but in the whole, there's no resolution, nothing to resolve.

Some people like to stay on tour – that means that is how they live and organize their Is. That is also part of our Is, just a different way of saying how things are. Nietzsche said that with the loss of God and a move toward constitutionalism, he said constitutional governments were signs of compromise and that they transformed as well. He said that without God as a guarantor of value: *"justice must become greater in everyone, and the violent instinct weaker."*

65

Keanna Mattox. It's hard to lose someone. Keanna was a student of mine at Holy Trinity High School in Chicago. She was killed by gunfire; the headline in the Metro section of the Chicago Tribune said, "Party shooting kills girl, 15." She was pronounced dead at 6:35 a.m. in Stroger Hospital as reported by a Cook County medical examiner.

Keanna, "Keke" to her friends, was at the proverbial wrong place at the wrong time. Her wrong place was outside a party where a gun was present, and her wrong time was 12:52 a.m., 21 August 2004. This was during the end of her summer vacation, that time between her ninth and tenth grades. She was shot in the abdomen and lived less than six hours. The paper reported things I already knew. Her friends told the reporter that she had a great sense of humor and style and she always made a bad situation better. She was like that.

Justice must become greater in everyone, and the violent instinct weaker.

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73

Some will say it's inconvenient. Inconvenience is not a reason to abrogate a constitution. Who said it wouldn't be inconvenient? The writers knew it would be: that's why on 8

August 1787, they inserted the words “*shall not exceed*” before “*one Representative for every forty Thousand.*” They knew we would be dealing with factionalism: one wonders if the president, as executive and commander-in-chief, could unilaterally declare war if the House had 10,000 members. He (or she) could go on the latest hot medium – radio for Roosevelt – and address the nation and ask Congress to declare war; one can’t do it unilaterally, at least not constitutionally. Think of that: we haven’t declared war since Roosevelt. If a president can declare war, as this one has, then we no longer live under a constitutional government. If that is the truth, that the war-making power has shifted to the fewest (the president), well, that’s *an unconstitutional “rule of law.”* Hmm . . .

74

Ratification and statehood. The year 1889 was a good year for ratification of the Constitution in order to join the United States, as four new states entered the Union: North Dakota and South Dakota, which share the titles of 39th and 40th, Montana the 41st and Washington 42nd. The next year wasn’t so bad either: in 1890 we added two more – Idaho and Wyoming. It was also in 1890 that the Census Bureau declared the frontier to be closed.

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79

Monothinking. If you think there is a one, you are thinking in a mono way. That is human and can be observed using our senses. Thinking that there is a one is not of itself good or bad, as always, it is in the impact, in what we do with it. One God, one messiah, one Constitution, one body – none in their essence is good or bad – it depends on what we do with the thinking that matters.

80

Crows. Apollo, the Greek god of prophecy and keeper of the Delphic Oracle (when he wasn’t sharing it with Dionysus), had a favorite group of birds. The story of the crow is one of change, for before one crow brought bad news to Apollo, all crows were white. (One wonders why the god of prophecy would need to be told anything?) The crow tells Apollo the truth – his lover, Coronis, a human, had slept with another human. For that, out of anger, Apollo not only turned this one crow black, but all crows.

The crow also played a mythical role in America’s aboriginal customs – even the role of a deity, a god itself. The Shawnee have a story called *Why Crow is Black*, and it talks of how the original crow was white and that it came to be black by . . .

Ah yes, once again . . . the telling of familiar yet different stories.

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