

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 57-61

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Bible and Constitution. Maybe my brain is tweaked from thinking about this, but why have a Bible and Constitution you don't use in times of distress? That is exactly when they should be used.

"The Middle East" means something in the context of *east* and *west*, the binary twins of *north* and *south*, but without a determination like the equator that neatly slices the two. The equator acts as a moderator between *north* and *south*; *east* and *west* have only the dateline, a human invention lacking the power of magnetic pull. It zigs and zags its way across the Pacific Ocean without completing the circle. Time lacks magnetism: geographically, it has no center.

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Wasted time. There is no wasted time. To say it is wasted is to moralize it, which is always after the time has expired.

Why did people believe the world was flat when the sun and moon were round? Or did they think it was flat and round? As Ezra Pound said, commentators create their own Eden.

We are mistaken in the belief that September 11th is like December 7th. The 7th was an attack by military people on military people. The 11th was an attack by civilians on civilians. The hijackers were civilians trained to be militant. They have more in common with, and we honestly learn more about their frame of mind, to see them as kamikaze pilots. Like the guy arrested in Minnesota, the kamikazes didn't care about landing the plane.

The individuals killed in the attacks of September 11th died real and symbolic deaths. I want to be clear here: I mean everyone, hijackers included. We may not understand, and too often we even mock their use of *jihad*, but it is a real and symbolically important act. Recall the towers came down, the Pentagon was pierced, and the White House and Capitol were under threat.

The 11th should be compared, as much as these comparisons function to frame our awareness, around the events of and after the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand. A Bosnian revolutionary assassinated the heir to the Austrian and Hungarian thrones and his wife Sophie. Today we would call him a terrorist. The events of 28 June 1914 would transform world politics. As they say, the world was never the same.

The Archduke's assassination set in motion the events and deaths of World War I. The crater in New York is the latest ground zero to drive nations. The loss of life was terrible, but it is the loss of symbolic security (the real and imagined) that makes many tremble. The loss of symbolic security numbs; it's in numbness we kill. The richest nation in the world bombing one of the poorest isn't a great victory ... it's a defeat.

We make a blunder if we let the enemy choose the grounds for war. Picking when to fight is more important than how. Our strength is time and technology, not the shedding of volunteer blood. There is no necessity for national bloodlust; it is certainly a possibility and throughout our history there's been a tendency (willingness) to shed blood (ours and others) for national survival and growth. Yet strength exhibits patience, as it has time on its side (think of Hud); time spent waiting is often better than hasty bomb dropping.

59

A common phrase. "Love the sinner, hate the sin," is a common phrase in America among Christians: the sin usually refers to homosexuality. This, of course, has always been a bit of a misnomer, but at least it offered some love. I suppose I dream of an America where that is the least amount of joy we can show to those who are "different." Difference doesn't have to involve sin. For example, those suffering and who want to try cannabis to ease their symptoms - difference doesn't necessitate sin. In fact, it is sinful to cause undo pain to another human being, isn't it?

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Nothing in everything. In being everything, God is also nothing - as the category "everything" has to include every-thing, and nothing is a thing. For the Is, this doesn't create a problem, as everything and nothing are in the same category - a thing, possible - just like 1 and -1.

61

Terrain. The Confederate General Robert E. Lee did not lose many battles. He didn't lose because he was brilliant at choosing on what grounds the battle would be waged, and thus controlled to the best that one can how the battle would be fought. But when fighting in enemy territory, near the towns of Sharpsburg in Maryland and Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, for example, he lost his edge. On his first venture, near Sharpsburg, he was only saved from defeat by a cornfield, a sunken road, and a bridge over Antietam stream that was used to hold off the Union army. Confederate General A.P. Hill's soldiers arrived as the sun was setting and saved Lee's army from destruction.

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