

Beauty as the Foundational Axiom Underlying Copyright & The Constitution

45EPIC Poetry & Photography

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And as sure as Fine Art Nature Photography supports the Constitution and Copyright, the Constitution and Copyright must support Fine Art Nature Photography. AI systems must fairly compensate and credit artists, while always seeking their consent.

Homer: Tell me, O muse, of that ingenious hero who travelled far and wide.... Many cities did he visit, and many were the nations with whose manners and customs he was acquainted; moreover he suffered much by sea while trying to save his own life and bring his men safely home. . . –Homer describing the landscape photographer in Homer's *Odyssey*



Fine Art Landscape Photography exalts beauty as a foundational axiom of the world, as sure as the inciting incident in Homer's *Iliad*, and thus all Western Epic Poetry, was a beauty contest. The great poet Edna St. Vincent Maloy declared, "Euclid alone has looked on Beauty bare," and just as my photography honors Euclid and Nature in paying tribute to the Golden Ratio, so too did the Enlightenment Thinkers honor Euclid and Nature in the symmetry of the

Natural Law which is today expressed as “Equal Justice Under Law” in the Supreme Court’s Frieze, while the front of the Supreme Court’s architecture exalts a golden rectangle. So it is that every artist is naturally endowed with the right to own that which they create.

[the United States Congress shall have power] To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries.

Ansel Adams noted that photographs are more powerful than words, writing, “When words become unclear, I shall focus with photographs. When images become inadequate, I shall be content with silence.” Ansel’s sentiment parallels the spirit of the Tao, whose first tenet teaches that “those who understand the Tao do not speak of the Tao.” And so it is, that rather than writing about my photography, which must speak for itself, I will write about that which my photography serves—epic poetry. Not only does it behoove me to pay tribute to those who inspired me to pursue honor in science and art, but too, I have always felt that fine art landscape photography is best considered, seen, and exalted as epic poetry in the Homeric tradition. In translating Homer, the great poet Matthew Arnold noted, “For Homer is not only rapid in movement, simple in style, plain in language, natural in thought; he is also, and above all noble.” And to me, those poetic criteria present the primary elements of a great photograph—rapid, plain, simple, and above all *noble*.

The great Goethe declared, “Nowhere would anyone grant that science and poetry can be united. They forgot that science arose from poetry and failed to see that a change of times might beneficently reunite the two as friends, at a higher level and to mutual advantage.” Yes, as sure as “Homer schooled Greece,” I have ever seen poetry and physics united in the pursuit of Socratic Truth and Achillean Honor. During my Princeton days, I was fortunate to work with the late John Archibald Wheeler who quoted poetry throughout his physics lectures, books, and papers. The regal Wheeler had cowritten the seminal paper on nuclear fission with Niels Bohr, named the Black Hole, fathered quantum information theory and delayed-choice experiments, penned the foundational text on general relativity titled *Gravitation*, and he turned to Shakespeare’s *Tempest* to describe the “airy nothingness” of the quantum wavefunction in his seminal book *Quantum Theory and Measurement*:

*And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on,*

And so it is that I end this brief essay on poetry and photography with a scientific proof centered about that Dantean light beyond Plato’s Cave which illuminates all our photography.



Ansel Adams exalted in mythology, noting, “Myths and creeds are heroic struggles to comprehend the truth in the world,” and seen through this lens, photography becomes an heroic struggle to comprehend the beauty of the world. Dostoevsky stated, “Beauty will save the world,” thusly bequeathing all us humble photographers with a higher purpose, as the “call to adventure” to capture the sunset becomes the “call to honor”—to capture the archetypal, transcendent beauty of the sunset beyond the sunset—to offer irrefutable, immortal proof that beauty is a foundational axiom underlying all of entirety.

It was the heroic Achilles in Homer’s *Iliad* (where the war was rooted in a beaty contest between the Goddesses!) who, in choosing death over dishonor, inspired Socrates’ courage in giving birth to modern philosophy, and thus, ultimately, science and technology. In choosing death over dishonor in *The Apology*, Socrates saluted Achilles who did not hesitate to return to battle and sacrifice his own life to avenge the death of his best friend Patroclus, as Socrates stated:

Had Achilles any thought of death and danger? For wherever a man's place is, whether the place which he has chosen or that in which he has been placed by

a commander, there he ought to remain in the hour of danger; he should not think of death or of anything, but of disgrace. —Socrates *Apology*

This Achillean courage—to speak truth regardless of the consequences—would later be shared by Copernicus, Bruno, and Galileo, as they birthed science alongside the heliocentric universe. Newton would echo the scientific code of honor which places Truth above all, writing “Plato is my friend, Aristotle is my friend, but my greatest friend is Truth.” So it is that a bit of Achilles exists in all our cameras and lenses which encompass optics, quantum mechanics, engineering, and classical physics. So it is that if we perceive the fourth dimension to be expanding in a spherically-symmetric manner at the velocity of light c , thusly giving rise to Huygens’ Principle as given by $dx_4/dt=ic$, we must say so, come hell or high water.



Socrates defines philosophy—the spiritual pursuit of wisdom—as an heroic *act* on a higher battlefield. And so it is with landscape photography—that when beauty—when honor, truth, wisdom, and glory—are at stake, we must endure and persevere against the cold, rain, snow, sleet, thunder, heat, exhaustion, wolves, bears, and that most formidable demon of doubt, so as to capture our subject’s ideal form—its transcendent, immortal apotheosis. If my

photography can someday inspire you to read (or re-read) the *Iliad* and Euclid's *Elements*, then I would consider it a success.

The legendary outdoorsman John Muir, who fathered the Sierra Club and National Parks system while inspiring Ansel Adams' conservationist soul, also saluted epic poetry, writing:

I remember as a great and sudden discovery that the poetry of the Bible, Shakespeare, and Milton was a source of inspiring, exhilarating, uplifting pleasure; and I became anxious to know all the poets, and saved up small sums to buy as many of their books as possible. Within three or four years I was the proud possessor of parts of Shakespeare's, Milton's, . . . and quite a number of others.



Milton's *Paradise Lost*, written in the epic Homeric tradition, calls upon us to pursue originality in our art, with Milton stating that his poem represents, "Things Unattempted Yet in Prose or Rhyme." Landscape photography is defined not so much by how far one traverses over land and sea, but how far one travels within, and so it is that my Jeep is graced with well-worn copies of the epics including *The Complete Works of John Muir*, wherein Muir invokes Milton's spiritual Paradise—the Garden of Eden—in battling for the preservation of Yosemite—a battle shared by every landscape photographer who plays their small role as a foot soldier capturing Yosemite's beauty, showcasing a natural sanctuary worth saving:

The battle we have fought, and are still fighting, for the forests is a part of the eternal conflict between right and wrong, and we cannot expect to see the end of it. . . . The fight for the Yosemite Park and other forest parks and reserves is by no means over. . . The smallest forest reserve, and the first I ever heard of,

was in the Garden of Eden; and though its boundaries were drawn by the Lord, and embraced only one tree, yet even so moderate a reserve as this was attacked. . . So we must count on watching and striving for these trees, and should always be glad to find anything so surely good and noble to strive for. – John Muir

Photography has the power to not only inspire, but to conserve. The beauty of Ansel Adam's photography bolstered the National Parks System, with his limited-edition book, *Sierra Nevada*, leading directly to the creation of Kings Canyon National Park. The conservation of environmental beauty is foundationally wed to the conservation of the very same great books and classics which inspired Socrates, Newton, and Muir; and my photography aims to exalt that classic beauty which inspires us to conserve our Edens—both natural and cultural.

Newton, who stated he stood upon the shoulders of giants to see further, was also inspired by the heroic tradition of truth-inspired rebellion, writing, “Plato is my friend; Aristotle is my friend, but my greatest friend is Truth.” Galileo encouraged us to follow our rebellious creative spark beyond the fashions and fads of our day, teaching, “In the sciences, the authority of thousands of opinions is not worth as much as one tiny spark of reason in an individual man.”

Achilles, Moses, Socrates, and Jesus—perhaps the definitive heroes of the West—all followed the divine spark of individualistic vision, which is also the hallmark of every true, enduring artist. They all stood upon the shoulders of giants high above Plato’s Cave, saw light which nobody had seen before, and spoke truth to power. And they, alongside Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton, all offer shoulders for us landscape photographers to stand upon, should we only brave the vast peaks of their poetry to see the grander vistas.



Raised in Ohio, I first fell in love with the mythology of the West through the films of John Ford and Sergio Leone including *The Searchers* and *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*. These directors were also inspired by Homer, with Leone declaring, “By far the greatest writer of Westerns was Homer, for he wrote fabulous stories about the feats of individual heroes — Achilles, Ajax, and Agamemnon.” Their beautiful cinematography—Leone’s and Ford’s epic landscapes—caught my eye and beckoned my spirit. I wanted to see those grand, mythological vistas for myself, and grasp and exalt their soul in art.

Landscape photography allows us to become the cinematographers of our own fine art films, venturing forth into strange, new lands, engaging in showdowns with the elements, sailing between the Scylla of staying out too late and the Charybdis of getting up far before dawn for weeks on end, seizing the treasure guarded by the weather’s fierce, fickle dragons, and, if we’re lucky, returning on home with the elixir of a print or two to share with all.



In perhaps my favorite Leone film, *A Fistful of Dollars*, Clint Eastwood is told by the rifle-wielding antagonist that when a man with a rifle meets a man with a pistol (Eastwood's .45 Revolver), the man with a pistol is a dead man, as the rifle is more powerful and accurate. At the end of the masterful film, when they face off in the Homeric showdown first celebrated in the *Odyssey* whence Odysseus rids his home of the false suitors, it comes down to who can load their gun faster, and thus Eastwood wins. It's not always the biggest camera or large format 8x10 film system which wins the day, but it might be the nimbler, quicker, medium-format GFX100 which can better capture a fleeting twenty-shot panorama of a breaking winter-storm sunset. And so the 45 in 45EPIC, saluting the nimble, lone-cowboy philosophy of the 45 Revolver. For we landscape photographers are drawn on out towards the frontier by those very same forces which have ever called the lone cowboy to break away from the pack, to ride against the wind, to voyage further out in thought and deed, and to stake our claim to a unique piece of art.



The Colt .45 Revolver was known as a great leveler of power in the West, and it was dubbed the “Peacemaker.” Art is also great leveler, as a billion dollars won’t make anyone more creative, nor their photography more eternal, nor their poetry one whit truer. Einstein noted, “Money only appeals to selfishness and always tempts its owners irresistibly to abuse it. Can anyone imagine Moses, Jesus, or Gandhi armed with the money-bags of Carnegie?” Steve Jobs, who promoted the artist Johnny Ives to an unprecedented position in the hierarchy of a tech company, stated, “Innovation has nothing to do with how many R&D dollars you have. When Apple came up with the Mac, IBM was spending at least 100 times more on R&D. It’s not about money.” The artistic soul will overcome all obstacles in setting itself free for all eternity—take a camera away from a photographer, and they will become a poet—deconstruct academia and publishing, and the poet will become an indie photographer and scientist—replace physics with string theory, and the physicist will become an artist and sculptor. For the artist must set their soul free for all eternity and will use any and all tools to do so.

Sergio Leone agreed with Dante and Aristotle who both deemed Homer to be the “master poet,” as did Goethe and Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson commissioned the two-year, 8,000-mile Lewis and Clark expedition exploring the American West long before influencers would pull up into the paved parking lots of Yellowstone to create Bison NFTs with their iPhones while photalkgraphers captured footage for clickbait web-hosting advertisements. And Jefferson

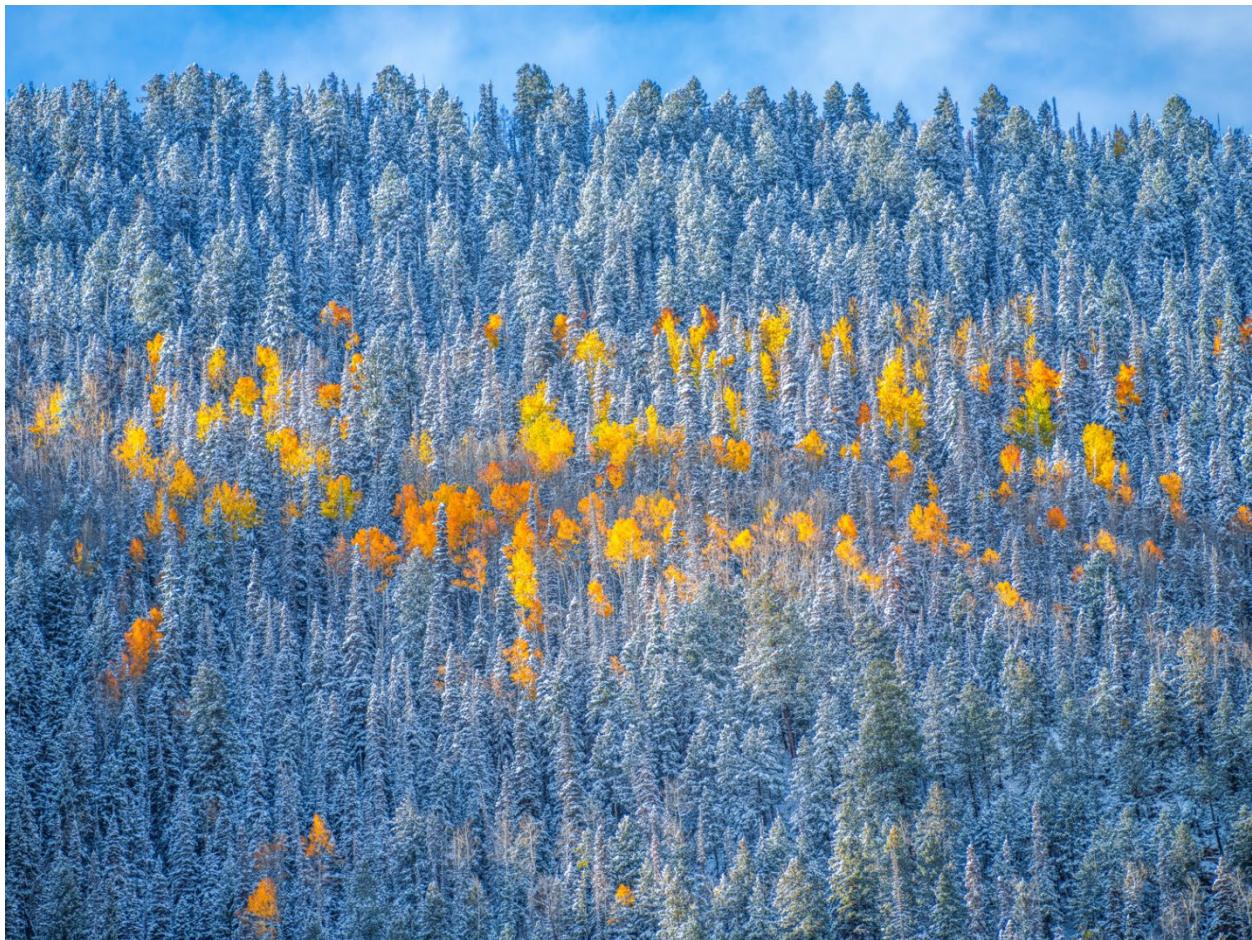
stated, “As we advance in life... they all fall off, one by one, until we are left with Virgil and Homer, and perhaps Homer alone.”



Given our brief time upon this earth, where shall we invest our immortal souls? How might we come to live forever on in story, like Achilles? Which is a better vessel for sailing out towards eternity—NFTs, or epic poetry? Is not immortal art the greatest hedge against inflation, and is that not why Dante placed the counterfeitors in hell, in the same level assigned to those who committed crimes against art and artists? So it is I taught a class on Art and Entrepreneurship in which we read Dante’s *Inferno* and Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, alongside the legendary founder of the Vanguard Group Jack Bogle’s *Battle for the Soul of Capitalism*. Bogle wrote:

“This chapter is based on a lecture I presented to Pepperdine University (CA) students, at the request of Professor Elliot McGucken, as part of his course, “Artistic Entrepreneurship and Technology 101.” “Dr. E” relies heavily upon such classics as Homer’s *Odyssey* and Dante’s *Inferno*, and honors me by including with these classics my own *The Battle for the Soul of Capitalism*. --*Don’t Count on It!* (p. 436). Wiley.

The great poet Edna St. Vincent Malay declared, “*Euclid alone has looked on Beauty bare,*” and so it is that my photography honors Euclid. There is no escaping the fact that landscape photography exalts geometry via points, lines, circles, and rectangles, and so we might as well seek out that higher, golden geometry celebrated throughout classical art. Our camera’s sensors are rectangular, our lenses are circular, and light travels in straight lines while propagating as spherically-symmetric wavefronts, thusly cementing the basic elements of geometry at the center and circumference of photography. Like the beautiful human form, a good photograph has a solid geometrical skeleton, and like the human skeleton, the arrangement of the elements will benefit from adopting the golden ratio exalted throughout Euclid’s *Elements*, the human form, and enduring art alike.



And not only ought we study Euclid and the golden ratio to better our compositions, but we ought study Euclid to better our world. For Locke’s Natural Law, which lead to Jefferson’s axiomatic, “self-evident-truth” that all men are created equal, and Lincoln’s “proposition” stating the same, were all inspired by Euclid’s beautiful, most natural, methods of proof and demonstration. Euclid represents the highest form of that Achillean, Socratic, *heroic* honor—the riches gained upon the battlefields of logic, reason, and Natural Law—the bare Truth that is

Beauty and the bare Beauty that is Truth. By simple, Euclidean logic, we have the Natural Right to create that which we wish and own what we create. Ansel Adams exalts the artist's *Declaration of Independence* with, "No man has the right to dictate what other men should perceive, create or produce, but all should be encouraged to reveal themselves, their perceptions and emotions, and to build confidence in the creative spirit."



Ansel Adams taught that, "Landscape photography is the supreme test of the photographer - and often the supreme disappointment." Nature photography is perhaps the most athletic of all art forms, demanding a deep knowledge of not only the outdoors' range of extremes—from Death Valley's heat, floods, and dust storms, to blinding Yellowstone blizzards, to the customs and behaviors Grizzly Bears in Glacier—but of our body's limitations in the wild. It teaches us to humble ourselves before those same forces of nature which bestow our photography with bounteous beauty, for the Grizzly is beautiful by their noble formidability. We oft find ourselves in places where one seemingly small event—one wrong path, one wrong step, one small slip, one mistaken reading of the surf and tides, or one flat tire—can cause things to go sideways fast.



Nature photography requires us to become weathermen and astronomers, outdoorsmen and hunters, endurance athletes and sprinters with fifty-pound packs, all in the service of beauty. As artists we become the lone fighter in the arena, and like tennis players who are forbidden from interacting with their coaches during a match, we must make the thousand-thousand decisions which go into a final photograph on our own. And that is why we love it, for by forcing us to act on our own, photography forces us to find and liberate our deeper selves upon the lone cowboy's frontier—it forces us to find ourselves and examine ourselves, and as Socrates noted, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Like the boxer conserving their energy, we

must learn to recognize which journeys are worth jabs, and which photographs are worth full swings, for the day's time and light is limited, as is our life's.

When a king found that working his way through Euclid's *Elements* was difficult, he asked Euclid if there was an easier way to master it, whence Euclid informed him that "there is no royal road to geometry." Like geometry, there is no royal road to success in landscape photography. There is no substitute for hard, grueling work, day-in and day-out spanning all four seasons, both physically and mentally. We only find the perfect, transcendent sunset at a particular location by scaling the mountain of the dozens of average sunsets, for no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven. And we only learn to move beyond sunsets and see the glory of the dusk and blue hour after conquering sunsets. There are no shortcuts, and that is what makes photographic art so valuable.



And so it is that the nobler angels of our spirits are drawn towards the august dignity of art—"not the dignity of kings and robes," as Herman Melville notes in *Moby Dick*, "but that abounding dignity which has no robed investiture." Echoing the Lockean, Euclidean ideal that all are created equal upon art's level playing-field, Melville writes:

That immaculate manliness we feel within ourselves, so far within us, that it remains intact though all the outer character seem gone; bleeds with keenest anguish at the undraped spectacle of a valor-ruined man. Nor can piety itself, at

such a shameful sight, completely stifle her upbraidings against the permitting stars. But this august dignity I treat of, is not the dignity of kings and robes, but that abounding dignity which has no robed investiture. Thou shalt see it shining in the arm that wields a pick or drives a spike; that democratic dignity which, on all hands, radiates without end from God; Himself! The great God absolute! The centre and circumference of all democracy! His omnipresence, our divine equality! . . . Thou who didst clothe with doubly hammered leaves of finest gold, the stumped and paupered arm of old Cervantes; Thou who didst pick up Andrew Jackson from the pebbles; who didst hurl him upon a war-horse; who didst thunder him higher than a throne! Thou who, in all Thy mighty, earthly marchings, ever cullest Thy selectest champions from the kingly commons; bear me out in it, O God!



Photography is literally defined as “light writing.” And so it is that we photographers would do well to consider the simple beauty of light, for that luminous miracle with which we most closely work, and even take for granted, marks the very opening of John Muir’s copy of the Bible itself—*“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.”* As a physicist, not a day passes in the field where I am not cognizant of the beautiful fact that photons of light surf the expanding fourth dimension at the rate of c —the velocity of light. Like a surfer on a wave, the photons

remain stationary relative to the propagating wave, and as the fourth dimension expands at the rate of c , the photon appears to be propagating at the rate of c . Below please find my humble proof of this concept, which unifies phenomena in relativity and quantum mechanics in a common, underlying reality.

Newton's *Principia* gave birth to modern physics via simple, geometrical proofs in the tradition of Euclid's *Elements* which also informed the works of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo. My own proof (found at the end of this essay) regarding the foundational nature of the epic light which fathers all photographs, stands upon the shoulders of these giants, also adopting the honorable Euclidean form as the best way to celebrate physical reason. For such are the things I contemplate in the field, and such are the reasons I turned towards nature in photography and life, with Einstein advising, "Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better." Galileo teaches us to look beyond the blackboards of the physics department, and towards the starry skies, "The greatness and the glory of God shine forth marvelously in all His works, and is to be read above all in the open book of the heavens." And that is where I found $dx_4/dt=ic$ —via simple, logical thought lead by observation.



Galileo encourages us to rejoice in reason, noting, "I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with senses, reason, and intellect had intended us to forgo

their use and by some other means to give us knowledge which we can attain by them,” while Hamlet agrees with, “*Sure, he that made us with such large discourse/ Looking before and after/ gave us not/ That capability and godlike reason/ To fust in us unused.*” And Dante concurs, “You were not made to live like brute beasts, but to pursue virtue and knowledge.” And please note, dear reader, that Hamlet and Dante salute the power and beauty of reason from two of the greatest poems ever written, just as sure as Socrates saluted the courage of Achilles in Homer’s *Iliad*.

And so it is that virtue must be the higher goal of fine art landscape photography—to celebrate Light by pursuing arete (excellence) in art, thusly establishing beauty as a foundational axiom of the world. For Socrates courageously gave his life to remind us that there is no higher good—no greater fount of lasting wealth—than the pursuit of virtue—of truth and beauty in art—a statement that he is to this day yet willing to die for many times over, even as his spirit is exiled and deconstructed a thousand thousand times:

I tell you that virtue is not given by money, but that from virtue come money and every other good of man, public as well as private. This is my teaching. . . either acquit me or not; but whatever you do, know that I shall never alter my ways, not even if I have to die many times.

And so it is that like Achilles and Socrates, we pursue our art and science for honor, for glory, for epic, immortal story. Such is the power of poetry, mythology, and philosophy, to exalt Light’s elemental, simple, eternal truths, and remind our souls of their existence deep within.

Newton advises us, “‘Tis much better to do a little with certainty and leave the rest for others that come after than to explain all things by conjecture without making sure of any one thing,” and in this spirit, I present The McGucken Principle:

Principle: The fourth dimension is expanding at the rate of c relative to the three spatial dimensions.

Proof:

1. The magnitude of the velocity of every object through the four dimensions of spacetime is c .
 2. The faster an object moves through the three spatial dimensions, the slower it moves through the fourth dimension.
 3. As an object’s velocity approaches c through the three spatial dimensions, its velocity through the fourth dimension must approach zero.
 4. Ergo light remains stationary in the fourth dimension x_4 .
 5. Thus photons of light track and trace the movement and character of x_4 .
 6. As light is a spherically-symmetric, probabilistic wavefront expanding at c , x_4 expands at the rate of c in a spherically-symmetric manner, distributing locality into nonlocality.
- QED

Proof #2: Einstein/Minkowski wrote $x_4 = ict$, ergo $dx_4/dt = ic$.

So it is that light surfs the surface of an expanding sphere, echoing Dante's vision of Paradiso as a fount of light surrounded by concentric spheres, high above Plato's Cave.



In celebrating Euclid and Nature in Art, we Nature Photographers are celebrating the Lockean Natural Rights recognized by the Constitution. And as sure as Fine Art Nature Photography supports the Constitution and Copyright, the Constitution and Copyright must support Fine Art Nature Photography. AI systems must fairly compensate and credit artists, while always seeking their consent.

