

~~To be a moral human being is to pay~~



To tell a story is to say: this is the important story. It is to reduce the spread and simultaneity of everything to something linear, a path.

To be a moral human being is to pay, be obliged to pay, certain kinds of attention.

When we make moral judgments, we are not just saying that this is better than that. Even more fundamentally, we are saying that this is more important than that. It is to order the overwhelming spread and simultaneity of everything, at the price of ignoring or turning our backs on most of what is happening in the world.

The nature of moral judgments depends on our capacity for paying attention — a capacity that, inevitably, has its limits but whose limits can be stretched.”

- Susan Sontag , *At the Same Time*

ART IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE

“When artistic objects are separated from both conditions of origin and operation in experience, a wall is built around them that renders almost opaque their general significance... Art is remitted to a separate realm, where it is cut off from that association with the materials and aims of every other form of human effort, undergoing, and achievement.

In order to understand the esthetic in its ultimate and approved forms, one must begin with it in the raw; in the events and scenes that hold the attentive eye and ear of man, arousing his interest and affording him enjoyment as he looks and listens: the sights that hold the crowd — the fire-engine rushing by; the machines excavating enormous holes in the earth; the human-fly climbing the steeple-side; the men perched high in air on girders, throwing and catching red-hot bolts. The sources of art in human experience will be learned by him who sees how the tense grace of the ball-player infects the onlooking crowd; who notes the delight of the housewife in tending her plants, and the intent interest of her goodman in tending the patch of green in front of the house; the zest of the spectator in poking the wood burning on the hearth and in watching the darting flames and crumbling coals.”

- John Dewey, *Art as Experience*

"I considered what it meant to be sixty-six. The same number as the original American highway, the celebrated Mother Road that George Maharis, as Buz Murdock, took as he tooled across the country in his Corvette, working on oil rigs and trawlers, breaking hearts and freeing junkies. Sixty-six, I thought, what the hell. I could feel my chronology mounting, snow approaching. I could feel the moon, but I could not see it. The sky was veiled with a heavy mist illuminated by the perpetual city lights. When I was a girl the night sky was a great map of constellations, a cornucopia spilling the crystalline dust of the Milky Way across its ebony expanse, layers of stars that I would deftly unfold in my mind. I noticed the threads on my dungarees straining across my protruding knees. I'm still the same person, I thought, with all my flaws intact, same old bony knees..."

I'M STILL THE SAME

-Patti Smith, t

A L I V E

“Strange as it may seem today to say, the aim of life is to live, and to live means to be aware, joyously, drunkenly, serenely, divinely aware. In this state of god-like awareness one sings; in this realm the world exists as poem. No why or wherefore, no direction, no goal, no striving, no evolving. Like the enigmatic Chinaman one is rapt by the everchanging spectacle of passing phenomena. This is the sublime, the a-moral state of the artist, he who lives only in the moment, the visionary moment of utter, far-seeing lucidity. Such clear icy sanity that it seems like madness. By the force and power of the artist's vision the static, synthetic whole which is called the world is destroyed. The artist gives back to us a vital, singing universe, alive in all its parts.”

-Henry Miller, *The Wisdom of the Heart*

Songwriters, both lyricists and melody writers, are often plagued with the thing most often known as writer's block. All writers are, writers of prose as well. I have found that the key to not being blocked is to not worry about it. Ever.

If you are sitting down and you feel that you want to write and nothing is coming, you get up and do something else. Then you come back again and try it again. But you do it in a relaxed manner. Trust that it will be there. If it ever was once and you've ever done it once, it will be back. It always comes back and the only thing that is a problem is when you get in your own way worrying about it. I almost never have worried about it. Because when it seemed to be a problem, when I seemed to be ... I don't even want to say 'blocked' because it seems like too strong a word. But when the channel wasn't open enough to let something through, I always went and did something else and never worried about it and it always opened up again"

- Carole King, *Singwriters on Songwriting* by Paul Zollo