

SHORT TAKES
lightly packaged ideas
June 10, 2007

by

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EXPERIENCE

Every body in the cosmos
shows some kind of impact damage.
Why shouldn't you?
Why shouldn't I?

VISION

I had a dream the other night
that Chomsky was insane
and the US was
really a loving nation.

It was such a peaceful dream
a wonderful dream really.

I woke up.

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Even if science were just the new religion— and much, for a lay person, does have to be taken with a certain degree of faith— it has by far the best stories, open-ended as they are, still developing, inclusive of our inputs rather than exclusive, and counting more on the future than the past.

WAR

The real purpose of war
is only to instruct humans
on the necessity of finding
other solutions to their problems.

DESCARTES NOT

Whether I think
I am
or not
I am.

FAITH IN GOD

It's one thing (even perhaps a fine thing) to make up stories but another thing altogether to forget we did that and start really believing them.

FREEDOM

Sometimes when you can do anything
you wind up not doing anything.

JUSTICE AND PRIVILEGE

Justice opposes privilege. Privilege opposes justice. You cannot seek one without abandoning utterly the other.

ICE CREAM AND PEOPLE

Why when it comes to ice cream do people think the more flavors there are the more exciting it is— the more it's a real treat— but when it comes to people they only want the one kind and they can get pretty irritated if there's anything else around to pick from?

LET US NOT LOSE CONFIDENCE

Because of my penchant for fast typing in my declining years I am either writing a book titled THE LAST EMPIRE or THE LOST UMPIRE and the devil of it is I can't remember which it is.

They both sound kind of cool, though

MAN IN JAIL

(the start of a not-yet-written Bernard Schlink story)

He had started by eliminating inaccuracies in his speech such as the 'yearning cliffs' or 'brooding olive-brown color' but once begun the process fractured exponentially into ever greater constraints until soon rather than sacrifice purity he became incapable of speech altogether. It was at this point that he attracted the attention— through a series of petty incidents— of the officials in his city. But let me explain:

NOSTALGIA

War war war war war war war war
amazing how people can feel nostalgic about anything
even hell on earth

NOVELS

I care about ideas. I don't care about the furniture.

OBSERVATION

There are a lot of non-jerks in the world.
They don't generally run things.

ONE MINUTE HISTORY FOR CONSERVATIVES

At its base, history is the study of the evolution of ideas, which underlie adaptive human behavior, over top of which is laid a map of events, which are the milestones by which we mark the journey— but they are not the route itself. And the line of the journey continues to the present and through it to the future and if you think it stopped at your birth and that adaptation ceased then or when you were young, what a bizarre coincidence that would be.

OUR OAKS

It's good to know where oak trees come from
their DNA we share
how they nourish themselves and us
but in the end it is being near them
that pleases me most.

STAIRS

Will we stop on the step labeled capitalism, or even democracy? What a sad reality it would be if this should prove to be the top step.

STILL AFTER FIFTY YEARS

Entering the unincorporated world of nature

of grey squirrels foxes crows deer
of rivers rocks trees fallen leaves

Standing at the river's edge imagining
Indians camped on the little island
past the ironwood bridge my brother and I made
to reach the campground with its occasional arrowhead
while the foam struggled with the rocks
that pierced the surface at my feet
in the clear low winter-level water
like myself clinging yet trying to get free

THE IDEA OF COSMOS

The great thing about an electron is not that it exists— the great thing is that it knows what to do (or to be more rigorous) that it is reliably, predictably susceptible.

THE LITTLE GREEN BOOK

There should be no war industry— neither should there be a peace industry. The only goal is justice— without which peace is impossible and war inevitable.

THE PROBLEM

Great intelligence confers no immunity from ignorance or psychosis— in fact it may make either more virulent.

THUNDER

Sometimes the simplest ideas are the most radical— like eliminating any legal basis for acts of war and enforcing individual rights and the rule of law at all times and making the crime of murder a crime always.

WE WOULD

An ant crawling over my foot has no idea that foot is part of a system that includes a head with eyes that can see it crawling— it is simply a matter of the limitations of scale and the computing power of the ant's central processor. And if later he crawls over my face that won't help him put it together either— again scale and complexity issues— and he will have forgotten my foot by then, in any case.

Then why should we, who wrest an elegant few rules of the cosmos from what is nearest, have any idea what it means or for what purpose it serves or just whose idea it is, anyway? Would we not also have scale and computing limitations of our own?

WINNING IS FOR LOSERS

The evolutionary struggle for human beings living in the present is to evolve an international system that superficially may seem anti-evolutionary— but is in fact merely an extension of it to new realms and new forms. It means bringing voluntary association and selective cooperation to the forefront of rights assignments in order to replace competition (with its attendant intimidation and coercion) with something more benevolent.

It is the force of ideas that will prevail, and the free exchange of ideas is the only way forward— evolutionarily speaking.

WITCHING

Hope is like witching for water. We all want the water and even if secretly we suspect witching ridiculous, most will go ahead and do it anyway 'just in case'.

PREACHING WAR

Preaching any war of any description for any purpose intended to make peace is doomed by definition— war is not peace. The UN has already fashioned an international bill of human rights more than fifty years ago. It needs the ability to enforce these rights not only between nations but internally within nations without regard to custom or status either historical or by reason of power and wealth.

AND THE BLAME GOES TO...

The truly stupid have never been to blame for anything. It's the clever but ignorant that do most of the damage.

DEAR MR. BUSH

Who will disarm America, Mr. Bush? America is arms. From the smallest pearl-handled silver handgun in purse or glovebox or under pillow to sniper rifles automatic weapons electric chairs and on, all the way up to Bush's armada and armamentarium including chemical biological and massive and sophisticated nuclear weapons with advanced delivery systems at the ready, America more than any nation in history is addicted to arms. Ask anywhere— except in America itself. Fed on the rhetoric of a 'peace-loving people' by the likes of Cheney Rumsfeldt Bush and many many others who preach war to make peace, America exceeds Orwell's best efforts at describing hypocrisy and absurdity.

But elsewhere people have not been fooled. The thrust of America's well-known economic policy of domination around the globe is only typical of the institutions and sadly, even of the populace, who call themselves 'peace-loving freedom-loving citizens of the greatest nation on earth'.

The war on terrorism (an idea), the war on 'rogue nations' brought to us by the same people who brought us the war on drugs among others— I tell you war is a stupid idea, even a stupid metaphor. It is what religion including Christianity and Judaism was supposed to prevent.

Addicted to arms, afraid of the free exchange of ideas, what a bunch of cowards. We need a detox facility the size of earth. Good luck disarming America, Mr. Bush. Nelson Mandela had it right— it is job number one for this little orb.

Sincerely (I don't say it facetiously),
HS

DEFINITIONS (FROM AN AMERICAN DICTIONARY)

TERRORISM: The use of terrorizing methods.

TERRORIZE: To dominate or coerce by intimidation.

(Does this sound like American foreign policy?)

FAITH: Belief which is not based on proof.

Words are wonderful.

TO AMERICAN PARENTS

War violence coercion intimidation destruction murder— are these words you would put in a kids' book? What will you tell your children? Will you inculcate them with fear of others? With enemies? Will you tell them we are all brothers?

GENIUS

Genius we can do without. Clarity would be nice, though.

DEMOCRACIES

Peace should never be the goal of any movement among the people of the world. The goal is always only justice, though justice— truly egalitarian disinterested reciprocal justice— always

and inevitably presages enduring peace and is in fact the only road to it.

THE ENEMY

Ignorance and greed and domination are the enemies of liberty as privilege is the enemy of justice.

MY WORK

I have no idea what it is that I do or where it fits in in the field of fiction and barely any interest in trying to think about it— but I know how to do it and I have thought about that and have ideas about that.

ONE MEN (TO IGNATIEFF)

There is a great monism beneath the surface of pluralism that will be reached when each individual is equally valued by the other and symbols of status have been vacated and left abandoned with the nostalgic group identities that prolonged their sad corrupted and dangerous existence.

A LOWER LIFE FORM

The media pundits are not thinkers— really they are cheerleaders juggling verbal pompoms and trailing a little razzmatazz fading in their wake.

FUNDAMENTALISTS

I know you are trying. I just don't understand why you care about what you care about.

LIFE

Life is the most delicate and difficult manifestation in the material universe and needs to be guarded the most carefully.

GREAT IDEAS

I mean to keep alive the only two great founding American ideals— the egalitarian society and the primacy of individual rights— both of which died in America before I was born, if they had even ever lived on the ground, which I doubt.

FRIEND

Like most
you're nicer
when you
want something

CORPORATIONS

There is a difference between getting along with others and going along with others.

THE BOOK OF DISQUIET

(this exquisite consciousness)

All the little Pessoaas
in the cafés
sipping their privacy

WORDS

Some people are confused by the word 'war' as they are confused by 'love' or 'freedom' or 'liberty' or 'democracy'. We need to be careful how we name things. The media penchant for accepting government sloganeering is regrettable. Things should be named for clarity, to communicate unequivocally the underlying truth of actions. We need Americans, especially,

to understand the truth of its government's intentions before the lies and obfuscations lead to a real war that nobody's government will be able to name their way out of.

LYRIC FOR BUDGE

We're a freedomloving peaceloving people
We export fifty percent of the world's arms
Our military budget is over fifty percent of the world's military budget
If there weren't fear and conflict in the world
our economy would be in the toilet

Yes we're a freedomloving peaceloving people
And we're willing to kill you to prove it

ABOUT A REAL UN

If the US wants to dominate the whole world then the whole world should elect the US president.

Better we should have a real UN.

TIME LIKE BLOOD

It's your life running out.

WHERE ONCE AT TEN

Where once at ten I felt alone when asking my mother why they executed people who killed in peacetime and gave them medals during war, now I hear my views commonly espoused in one form or another in the media.

Her answer, by the way: 'You're too young to understand.'

RIGHTS AND CRIMES

Not only all rights are individual rights, all crimes are crimes of individuals— violations of others rights— whether the individual purports to be acting alone or as an agent for a government or any other group. It is the individual that is ultimately responsible for his own actions. This includes soldiers in a so-called time of war as well as CEOs and presidents who declare them and generals who order them.

VULTURES, OUR BETTERS

People don't need to be killed— they die anyway.

A LITTLE PATIENCE, PLEASE

What is this human love of killing? We kill everything we can get our hands on— especially each other— while bleating platitudes about human rights and love of animals. We could take a lesson from our friends the vultures, clearly our betters in this instance, compared to us so patient, so polite.

DARTH VADER

America (the dark invader) invades others to bring them freedom— but wouldn't freedom start with freedom from invasion?

FOR MR. CHENEY

To want power is to want power over others.

FOR AMERICANS, FROM AMERICANS

I see how much blood and treasure America is spending to make the world safe for Americans— I also see how ineffective it is. It would take a lot less of both and be of much more lasting benefit to them and us all if they spent a little to make the world safe from Americans.

Or just doing nothing for a change would seem a miracle of enlightenment, at least to the rest of us.

TOUCHSTONE

Lately the phrase 'least harm model' has been applied to dealing with drug addicts and drugs in general here in Canada and it is fine to see a principle replace a rule— it's always fine to see that—intelligence enshrined above order in any context— it is what the world needs always.

But more than that, it has revealed to me my own touchstone. The test of least harm cuts more clearly than even the old golden rule in judging the merit of ideas, opinions held and especially, actions taken.

CHARLIE McCARTHY

I hear a British minister (a woman, by the way— so much for the women saving us from our manly madness) saying that we will have to wait for the duly elected Iraqi government to dictate to us just when the troops should begin leaving.

Isn't that more than a little like Edgar Bergen waiting for Charlie McCarthy to tell him what to do?

ANARCHON

Elites are by nature anti-egalitarian. Leaders by definition are elites. Only anarchy is defensible ultimately, but one could be leaderless— even lawless— and still be on pretty good terms with others if reciprocity was broadened to include all mankind.

THE TIMES

Any declaration such as a 'time of war' should have no legal basis or in any way affect the rights of individuals. If you kill me I will still be just a portrait of a dead person regardless of the frame.

PARADOX

The paradox is that living in the moment has to be planned for.

THE METAPHYSICS OF SCALE

To a writer the size of things— the scale of them— is different than to normal individuals. This Space Pen which looks so small perhaps to you seems huge to me. In fact the usual writer is small enough to hide entirely in the shadow it casts. So when I occasionally say I feel like someone has stolen my pen that is no small thing, believe me!

CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY

In his room off the kitchen my brother Peter had brought home Les Miserables and Cry, The Beloved Country from highschool. I loved that title with its comma in it (as I later loved Look Homeward, Angel). I picked it up and took it upstairs and read it. It was the first book I ever liked. I was twelve. I read it again lately. I still like it.

STARTING FROM WESTON

I started as a hostile dissident moralist loner non-joiner outsider and continued for a long time. When I was young I wanted my father to love me for that but the best he could do was

to love me anyway. In the end that was the best I could do for him too.

And in the end that was enough.

SORROW

Structurally, within each of us, sorrow like consciousness is a global not atomistic property of mind. It requires a whole experienced being and implicit in it is the idea of a connective history (memory).

MY NEIGHBOR

There is a lone Spruce Grouse just across the creek west of my place. How he ever arrived there, by what force of nature he veered from his course I can't say, but he's been hooting for company these past fifteen years, apparently not realizing that there is only one of his kind anywhere for many many miles around.

Sometimes I think about that.

TRAINING A MILLION PEOPLE TO MURDER

I think there must be some protective device in the mind of most people that allows the compartmentalisation of thoughts, but this may have the unfortunate ancillary consequence of making cross-pollination impossible.

How else can one explain that in a society whose ethic includes the commandment 'thou shalt not kill' over a million people can be trained in techniques of intentional killing and then be held up as especially patriotic and worthy citizens whose efforts are blessed by the various clergy as they go off to violate the one important commandment they all lay claim to?

And how else can one explain the inability of the citizenry to notice that everywhere on the planet their soldiers can be found is either an oilfield or pipeline or proposed field or pipeline route?

May one seek to provide a little modest linkage?

FOR KIM AND LLOYD AND US ALL

You can work long and hard to get some accomplishment or thing you need but in the end it is a simple act of kindness that brings the most joy— an act that in essence takes only an instant— the moment you decide to adopt a little newborn baby named Amelia.

ART IN PHOTOGRAPHY

I could offer a way of understanding what I value in photographic art. I think there are photographs of something beautiful and there are beautiful photographs of something.
I prefer the latter.

But really, it's not very hard shooting pictures, nature leaves so many drawings and paintings strewn all over the planet. You could say earth is a sculpture plastered all over with beautiful markings, just waiting for the light and us to notice them.

ON FORM

POETS used to be locked in a box labelled ACCEPTABLE FORMS. they broke the lid right off that box 150 years ago and the ones that wanted scampered out to run in all sorts of crazy directions— not all of them but enough that the others knew the lid was gone. the realists among the leftbehind knew it was gone forever.

NOVELISTS have been nervously fidgeting while the public and the publishers try almost halfheartedly to keep what little is left of their lid on their box. it's time to forget it. i claim for myself nothing poets havent long ago claimed and for the same reasons and will settle for not a barleycorn less.

PRIME

People all want things to get better but they don't want anything to change.

SEPARATION AGREEMENT

SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE was good in its time and is still good, but in our time we need to separate the state from the new religions — corporations.

THE TRANSPARENCY OF TRUTH

some men do reprehensible things. these they try to legitimate by attaching them to a cause larger than themselves — but it is a fraud — there is nothing larger than themselves.

IT'S NOT ABOUT THE FRAME (IT'S THE CONTENT)

"Any declaration such as a 'time of war' should have no legal basis or in any way affect the rights of individuals. If you kill me I will still be just a portrait of a dead person regardless of the frame."

EACH ALONE

There is no intermediary between you-the-individual and the truth of your actions.

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