

from The Source

By Noah Eli Gordon

On the stage they call it presence. Some actors have it, and some haven't. Certainly a good talker is also a good leader, an act of pacification that represents the most important event in the history of the Source — every department of life now showing symptoms of revolutionary change. I can here give only the general conclusions at which I have arrived, with a few facts in illustration, but which, I hope, in most cases will suffice. It will be difficult. So long as this conception is retained, the difficulty is not relieved by calling it an occasion. Homer did this for the Greeks, Virgil for the Augustan age, and Shakespeare for the English. The Source heralds the benefits that accrue from unlocking the gates of reason and ignores the abominations.

The ridiculous and amazing mistake people make is to believe they use words in relation to it. Even the war itself, the grossest fact of our recent history, shrinks in the wake of the Source, which finds its expression without falling into sentimentality, confident that, if a complete meaning does not result, at least the shadow of a mood will.

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I think the Source believes firmly that meaningful action depends on careful thought. Neil Armstrong takes a picture of Buzz Aldrin on the moon. Bees nest in mud. The Source sits atop an alp as if it were a throne. I record it here. Others memorize a pattern and work with it, whereas the Source understands a pattern and works against it. Like a nutritive substance surrounding a growing embryo, the Source feeds upon its enclosure. My point is its

incompleteness. A certain number of characteristics can be fixed on immediately because for the most part they follow naturally from it. Various sources force us to assume that the so-called earliest Source leaves no trace but an elaboration. It was simple for it to give unpleasant orders, yet one can no longer simply speculate or reason about the Source, for the very framework within which traditional speculation and reasoning proceeds has been shaken to its foundation.

Clearly one does the Source the greatest service by quoting as much as space allows. So much so that from one day to the next, while outside the weather remains consistent in its uncertainties, we might begin to build within it a storm.

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Those involved with the Source since Romanticism have looked to the poetics of death and textual dismemberment for the authority to outline once glorious but now perverted sourcelessness. I watch until it's just a little blur in the distance, blending in with everything else. Though we come from different places, we've all tried breaking up with our pasts. However, thanks to the negligence of everyone who sought in the Source a social message, a soul, a numinous substance, most examples exemplify nothing but a transfer to the prison's psychiatric ward, where no actual treatment occurs.

If it were true that before me now is an unopened volume on the Source and the odor of boiling cabbage coming from the kitchen, then I wouldn't have to claim cultural acceleration is such that we frequently assume the Source is able to destroy our appreciation of the present. At this stage of my studies, I don't feel a wild-hearted enthusiasm that the end of summer might bring an expected fall. For the Source, a weather-beaten sail is willingly bent to shore. But have I thus lost it willfully? Are our flowers merely flowers?

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The Source celebrates both prostitution and the life of letters. It is a touch sado-masochistic because it suffers a sense of its own belatedness, hates fussing with nature, and would like the world to be all weeds. Some think it the forerunner of what may be the international style of the coming decade, because it is secretive but hides nothing, requires an all-inclusive symbolism to determine its interpretations, while paying little attention to the complexity of mixed reverie and memory.

And now I will show you how it happened to be in the heart of an art movement of which the outside world at that time knew nothing. They were like well managed horses, and could tell when to stop or turn. They said things we felt were true, things like: "When I came to you out of all that dust and heat and toil, I positively smelt violets." They kept up a constant fire of introducing each other. They thought every instrument would perform its work best if it were made to serve not many purposes but one. It was out of this that they first seized the right to create values and to coin names for those values.

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Do you want to pick up the thread of the Source? Does nothing else matter to you? So the subject of responsibility, of obligation and commitment, opens into a set of questions having to do with the difference between doing a thing wrongly or badly and not doing the thing at all.

The Source pulls along a man in an orator's mask. Within him, there is a bullet lodged so deep and harmless and near the bone, cutting for it would be a shame. The only real, great change I've ever happened to witness was sitting with its chin on its knees and its arms tight around its shins a

part of the Source without its meaning. It arrived late as usual, why you already had a spoon in your hand. When I have to be, I can be devious.

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Here we are at the height of descriptive intimacy. The Source, like a Roman shirt stitched from the scraps of various sources, keeping us warm. Its image is a representation of representations, not of suspect reality.

The words of the Source seem, when I use them, to have a specific reference to what I'm talking about, outside of their sphere of influence, and so I do use them.

I use them to say things like:

“After a limb is lost, pain remains a clichéd metaphor pillaged from cultures in which its function was opaque to the outsider.”

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There is much to be said for draping a human voice across town like a gossamer, almost invisible garment from a nearby pig-house, where there had not been room to stand. The appearance of a messenger at the front door is full of horrific implications, at once a desert and a paradise, rich in secret hidden rose gardens, gardens inaccessible, but to which the Source leads us ever back, one day or the other, aflame with a concentrated fire, like a gift from a man one meant to make war on. A hanging bird's nest in December. The hoof beat of horses. A dense bank of cloud brought to sit in the front parlor.

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It should be added, without delay, to anticipate misconception, that the white ruffles of the roses gave promise of being labored through and marked with red pencil. I feel that by dwelling on some trick of speech I should be able to give them a significance peculiar to themselves. We know that we come from the Source, and that we shall return a thought to the down-to-earth sexuality implied by such a relationship a temporary and tenuous indulgence, the Source-centered version of the five-petaled flower on the previous page. No thing, on the contrary, could be less magnificent than the picture of this radical position: to move from *this* to *that*.

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The big bang began a universe characterized by the Source and populated through someone's anonymous, invisible labor. Could it thus be true that the matter and energy of which it is composed is also an example of order arising from the Source? It is the difference between the salamander groping through mud, thick, vulnerable, and clumsy, and the slender, firm, agile, and graceful lizard. The shadow cast by the idea of illumination. A tree, a mountain, a house, the cry of a bird or some accident of a body. The categorical rigidity imposed on us by reflection.

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The fleeting sex function pulling off its shirt and painting its body and face with mud.

Is there any subject better worth thought and consideration?

Tempting to assume that the goal of the Source is not simply one of perception or destination but of the dates of birth and death written on the chalkboard. A patch of yellow violets startled into attention. That's another reason. It's the beginning of a pleasant and profitable business for us, mostly through the acceptance of new thresholds of shame.

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Some years ago, I wrote a book called *Novel Pictorial Noise*, in which I endeavored to some extent to describe snow drifting in too small a space for the operation of the divine, and to tabulate as far as I could images streaked with rain or dew, giving instances which had been observed in the course of my investigations in connection with the Source. For the moment I shall try to put the matter before you from another point of view, and those who wish may supplement the information by reading that book as well. What a piece of powerful machinery is to the hand that operates it, such will the perception of the idea of physical and ethereal space be to the thought which generates its form. Let me put it baldly, a new deal of the old cards reopens the polemic on its back in schoolyard gravel being pounded to a bloody pulp. Nevertheless, it's destined to do great things.

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Are these merely suggestions for speech plans?

Extensive paraphrasings of outside sources?

The more questions you respond to with a *yes*, the more likely the first sight of a hostile encampment in a country disused to war no longer looks so disheartening to our newly enlisted soldier.

A doe runs out of the woods and darts up a highway embankment, and the illusion thenceforward is that we are observers at the scene itself. Characters are not made of concrete. Before we turn to the technical implications of this fact, let us look, briefly, at a few deep-rooted oak trees. A few deep-rooted oak trees. An unlikely place to become an inventor.

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In every desire to know there is a drop of the Source.

Some spiritual essence of innocence directing itself into pipe music carried to the front of the lecture theater sounds a vehement opposition to undernourishment. It tips its head back and laughs, careful not to jostle the baby in its arms.

Whenever we emit speech we build houses rather than fires. In order to test this hypothesis, imagine the ash tree on the hill, an activity which has no bodily basis at all. It is nevertheless conceivable. Without providing the reasoning process, the Source suggests somewhat pointedly the individual strands that go into its making.

Whatever is is.

On the other hand, this impression increases the curious and confusing refusal to believe in meaning, which is itself meaningful.

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Making noises that resemble getting up at dawn every day to milk the cow ensures success in agriculture. Can a creative impulse bring you closer to intoxication? It is difficult to concentrate on a ballet during the great debate between determinism and free will. I once heard someone say that people write poetry to find a child carrying one of his mother's sewing needles and playing a soundless piano. It is, if you will, a part of what makes the Source so radically subversive, sufficiently rich enough to stitch our experiences of loneliness, maturation, and love into an illuminating concerto.

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Must we be willing to admit that our version of the Source needs constant revision if it is to remain valid? The question is formal, meditative, and, quite frankly, a bit old fashioned. Confusion is stayed, but from a distance. At last comes the serene light of a triumphant resolution. César Abraham Vallejo Mendoza and Hilda Doolittle prominently enter into it. I have to admit to myself that I face an emptiness, a white sense of nonwhiteness. This development of an acute physical self-consciousness, one of the major stages on the way to the Source, tongues the sweep of time with the knowledge of death. The alternative of further fragmentation.

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Today we are coming full circle: the claims that daily living makes on us are so real, so immediate, and so urgent that a life in the Source seems beyond our capabilities. This is what I've tried to show in my work. I would perhaps not

have dared to undertake the task so early if I had not learned that some people were already spreading the rumor that I had completed it. At no time is there the faintest suggestion that the Source exempts us from intrinsically understanding the mystery of our own masculinity. A falling roof tile can change our plans as quickly as a tornado translates numerous Greek texts on prayer into Russian. The Source has nothing to do with Surrealism.

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Put on the crown, curl up inside your warm little hollow tree and dream about spring. When you reflect long and hard on such commands, the moral implications are stunning. I think it would do us good to try and hypothesize about possible ways that such things actually function. They do not communicate clear-cut messages, nor do they merely depict reality. When I walk out through the gate, they turn their headlights on, perhaps to let me know they're there or perhaps just to get a better look at me.

This was a scene I was to see and experience countless times, every night, regularly, at nine, at twelve, at three. Only the crickets chirped, and the trees behind them rustled at war with the peace of the world.

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It is the bright day that brings forth an unaccustomed part of the theater, a rehearsal of your own life, terrible in its vividness, as if demonstrating in the air the shape and extent of the corners of the earth in which dreaded consequences press equally on all sides. How can you put them together and obtain something that resembles an anecdote about another way of saying *butterfly*?