Poetry, Law, & Poetry:
Some Notes Toward a Unified Theory

I. Poetry and law are both reports on human experience; reports from different angles with different means. Both are parts of the whole, but poetry is the larger part by far.

II. Poetry is knowledge when knowledge is understood as truth. Law is knowledge when knowledge is understood as power.

III. Poetry is the bridge to a place you know, but never recognized.

IV. Poetry connects the apparently disconnected, while law disconnects that which appears connected.

V. Poetry is your mother; law, your father.

VI. Poetry is rocking and muttering with a prayer shawl near the temple of words; looking for god in the common and not so common.

VII. While the essence of mercy is forgetting, the essence of poetry is remembering.

VIII. Poetry gives shelter to both the moment and eternity.

IX. Poetry is the craft and path that goes furthest. Yet, paradoxically, it knows that it cannot go all the way. And it is this recognition that provides both its consolation and its sting. Poetry cannot bring back the dead, but it must bring back the living.

X. Poetry wounds; law kills.

XI. Poetry is like basketball with its sweetness and transition; and like that lonely bird, too, with grace on the wing.

XII. Poetry cures disorder and the resulting order makes endurance, even celebration, possible.

XIII. Poetry is small, beautiful, organic, and ecologically sound. It is not governed by the laws of capitalism.

XIV. Poetry and law are both quite misleading at their core; the law for its misleading preciseness, poetry for its misleading imprecision. Their reality is fundamentally opposite. There is nothing more imprecise than law; nothing more precise than poetry.

XV. Poetry is the beatitudes; law, the ten commandments.

XVI. Poetry is a journey into words and forms that both makes and remakes experience. It is a compression that expands what it encounters into deeper meaning. A meaning bracketed by truth, beauty, and commitment. A meaning that becomes a living memory all over again.

XVII. Poetry gathers what has been scattered. Law scatters what has been gathered.

XVIII. Poetry compels us, both knowingly and unknowingly, to the sky above, the mud below.

XIX. Poetry is blood; law is water.

XX. Poetry is a gift to the erotic economy of the community. Law is a gift to the material economy. One brings union; the other, disunion.

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