

The Public Square for April 2026

Attention Citizens!

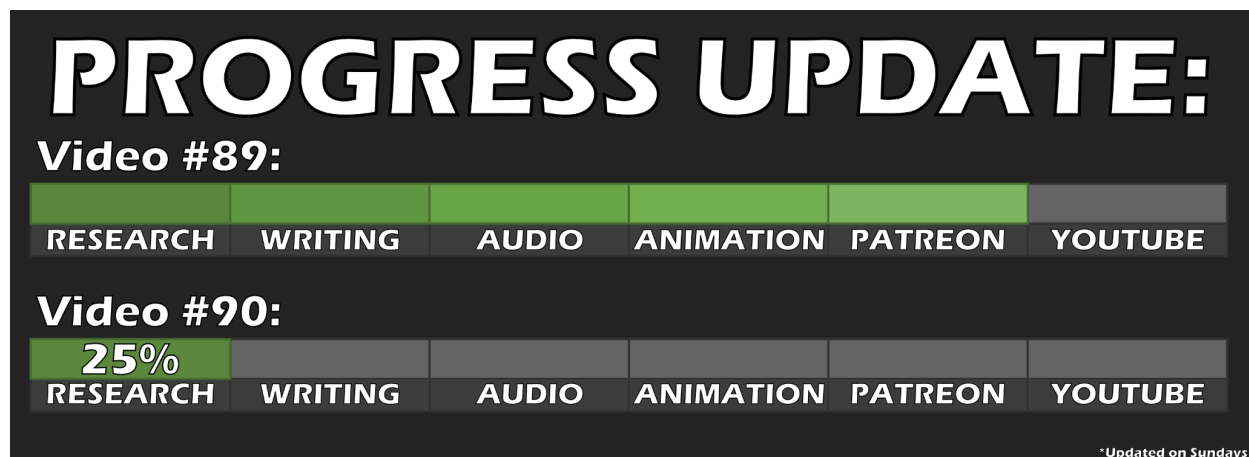
The most recent video on “The City” is scheduled to go public on YouTube on April 18th. Mark the date!

Currently getting ready to officially start writing the next video. I did a bunch of research for this video more than a year ago, so I have many, many pages of handwritten notes that are kinda in no order whatsoever. Kinda just organized like, “here’s a list of interesting things.” So as soon as I’m done writing this newsletter, the job for today is to go through all of those notes and figure out what I have. Because right now I honestly can’t remember.

So for the public we’re calling that “Research - 25% done.”

More honestly it’s like, “Research - TRYING TO DECIPHER THE SCRIBBLINGS OF A MADMAN (it’s me)”

Will have to do a bunch more research, but I won’t really know how much until later this month.



Books I’ve Recently Enjoyed:

- **Imperialism: A Study (1906), by J. A. Hobson**
 - Trying to get myself back into a 19th century mindset. Decided to read a pre-World War 1 critique of British imperialism. Several things stood out in this book.

Hobson explains how the military cost of maintaining the Empire ballooned EXPONENTIALLY over the century. By 1906, the only reason the Empire hadn't imploded yet is that Britain was able to dump an unlimited amount of money into it. They were just holding on with their fingertips. The full extent of their financial problems even before the World War was kinda new to me. Britain was soooooo rich, but they squandered all of it maintaining the Empire. Probably shouldn't have done that.

Throughout the 19th century politicians tried to argue that they HAD to have an Empire in order to facilitate British trade. Hobson tries to dismantle this argument. He shows that when an area was first colonized, trade with Britain was high, but over time the amount of trade with Britain becomes less and less until it's totally normalized with the natural geography of the area. He argues that for countries like Canada or Australia in 1906, whether or not they are in the British Empire makes no difference at all when it comes to trade. This was the subject of a ROBUST political debate at the time, the British Unionists were inventing all kinds of wild schemes in order to keep the British Empire going, but Hobson was arguing that all of their claims regarding trade are nonsense. Trade is dictated by geography and commerce, not by Empire.

Interesting!

- **Principles of Maritime Strategy (1911), by Julian Corbett**

- Still trying to get myself back in a 19th century mentality. Book about pre-World War 1 British naval theory.

Corbett had one idea that kinda changed my thinking. He argues that there's no such thing as CONTROLLING A SEA, he says we should banish that concept from our brains, it's a widespread truism that gets people into all sorts of problems. He argues that the best that we can hope for is CONTESTING A SEA, which can be done in many different ways, even from a position of relative weakness.

The easiest way to explain the difference would be... controlling an area means that 90% of enemy ships are denied access to the area. Contesting an area means that 10% of enemy ships are denied access to the area. Controlling a key strategic areas is foolish, it's damned near impossible, and it requires an immense amount of resources. Plus, it invites big climactic battles to which the outcome is uncertain. Threatening to contest key strategic areas is much less risky, it allows a

navy to hold back and be more conservative, more opportunistic, and it can be done without bankrupting the country. A navy can even contest an area by simply keeping their ships in port. The threat alone is enough to contest nearby seas.

I was reading this book when the United States went to war with Iran. Every time I heard the phrase “control the Strait of Hormuz,” I thought to myself, “more like contest the Strait of Hormuz.” Controlling it, going after 90% of shipping, is almost impossible. Contesting it, going after 10% or even 1% of shipping, is cheap and easy, almost impossible to stop. Food for thought.

Films I’ve Recently Enjoyed:

- **The Irishman (2019)**

- Recently went on an unexpected Scorsese kick. I remembered liking **The Irishman (2019)** a lot when it came out, but I was surprised when rewatching it that it might be a masterpiece.

People at the time were really put off by the visual effects used to de-age the actors, it dominated all of the dialogue about the movie. To that I would say... grow up. Who cares. Visual effects are just an expensive way of saying “pretend that Robert DeNiro is a 35 year old truck driver.” Okay, I’m pretending, I don’t really care how good the visual effects are. Put a sign around his neck that says “35 years old,” it makes no difference to me.

People were also really put off over how long it was. 3.5 hours. To that I would also say... grow up. I agree that it’s long, but people really need to get a grip. It’s art.

“Did you like the painting?”

“Yes, but it was too big.”

“...but you liked it?”

“Yes, but I usually like paintings that are much smaller than that.”

“Maybe the artist made the painting unusually big for a reason?”

[not listening] “...it must have been very expensive to paint.”

Spent the majority of the movie shifting between “wow, this is a masterpiece” and “I can’t believe people made fun of this movie, everyone needs to grow up.”

- **The Last Temptation of Christ (1988)**
 - EASTER TRADITION, PERFECT MOVIE, LOL.
- **Bringing Out the Dead (1999)**
 - This was the only Scorsese movie I had never seen before, decided to finally fill in that blind spot. Nicholas Cage is a paramedic who is ON DRUGS and NOT OKAY and OCCASIONALLY EXPERIENCING THE SUPERNATURAL. I fully expected this movie to be bad, but it’s not, it’s excellent. Lots of interesting stuff going on, the paramedics are often framed to look like angels, there’s religious symbolism everywhere, the ambulance driving sequences are actually insane, lots to like.

Music I’ve Recently Enjoyed:

- **Woodland (2024), by Gillian Welch & David Rawlings**
 - I’ve grown to really love this most recent album from Gillian Welch, without even really thinking about it I keep coming back and listening to it over and over and over.

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