

## What is Verity? By Gabriel Hughes

So I was asked recently “What is Verity?” and I realized that while I have gotten up here and said what philosophy Verity follows, what I’d like Verity to become, and more egregiously, what Verity isn’t, I’ve rarely if ever come up here and said what Verity IS.

Certainly I have spoke to you individually and explained it well enough that many people who come to Sacred Journey have decided that Verity is their path as well. But to those who I have not explained it to, to those who have only received such scraps as I remember to include when I am up here once a month, I apologize. And I will attempt to remedy this oversight now. For those who already are Veritan, at least I can try to be interesting enough to keep you awake.

So “What is Verity?” I talk about these six Gods: Builder, Healer, Nurturer, Trickster, Death, and Destroyer. And I tell you that they encompass all of humanity’s faiths and pantheons. But actively what does that mean? And who are these Gods anyway, how do I, or you, talk to them. And what do they want? I’ll be trying to answer these questions.

Verity means truth. The words are synonyms and I chose that word to name this faith because I want to show you all and any who will listen that truth doesn’t have to be hidden, it doesn’t have to be mysterious or hard to explain. It doesn’t have to be earned or uncovered. The truth IS and it is all around us all the time, we’ve just been taught to ignore it, to believe that the obvious truth must be only part of a greater and more complete one. So we dig and dig and all while the truth is sitting there staring us in the face.

That’s why I try to come up here and speak for it. Because I see so much suffering, so much self doubt, so much hate and bigotry, all because the truth is so easy to understand that most people don’t stop long enough to try. And we’ve been told to ignore the simple truth for so long that we have to change our way of thinking just to see it.

So we as Veritans believe in those six Gods. We give them the love and respect that any loving parent is due. But what if the child does not know their parents, doesn’t see all the small little things they do every day to teach and help the child? And what if the child does not see the parent in themselves, doesn’t know how to

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see it. I personally think that's where a lot of atheism comes from, an inability to see the divine nature inside oneself.

But then who are these Gods? Who are Builder, Healer, Nurturer, Trickster, Death, and Destroyer? You don't know these names if you aren't a Veritan. They almost sound plain, like they are too simple to be the divine beings which deserve the love we give to cultural depictions.

See? There's that simple truth thing. "Oh that's not complete enough so..." and you wonder on by and subconsciously make your gods in their image. Because here's the real secret of Verity, right here in the middle of things, plain and simple. I don't need to convince you to worship the Veritan Gods, because you already do. No matter what name you invoke, what face you imagine, what tradition you practice, the Six are right there, standing just beyond where you're willing to look, smiling on you as you tell them you love them using different names.

Not convinced? I know that tradition is very important to some of you, that what I'm saying could make it seem like I am belittling your beliefs, which is not what I am trying to do. I love each of you and would never intentionally insult those things you hold dear. But I have a longer explanation which may help.

In the world I see art and science are almost synonymous. Things of beauty and wonder are made to show we can, we strive daily to fill our lives with wonder and time is given to create just the same as time is given to eat or sleep. Businesses are given tax breaks for employing creators to make things of real beauty, from stained glass storefronts to hand painted murals on every surface. Casual beauty to make the Romans feel plain, Monuments to make the Egyptians feel stark and bare, visual wonder to make the most decadent noble of the renaissance feel like a pauper, and all of it everywhere, not hidden away in collections or in museums. So much that the collection of it seems excessive.

School programs to teach children how to create things of beauty or to create useful things so that they can look upon their spaces covered in things they have made with their own hands and be proud.

How does that image make you feel? Do you feel that deep yearning pull towards it? A "Yes, that is true" feeling. Congratulations, that is Builder you feel. You

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already knew him and he's always there, hold on to that feeling and you can be inspired to make the world a more beautiful place.

Or, how about this one. Culture should be concerned with helping all of us achieve all we can, that things like food or medicine should not define our abilities, that only our will and imagination should be the boundaries of our abilities.

That public works focused upon the wellness of all are more important than another billboard or stadium, and when even one of us is held back due to lack we are all of us damaged. Communality of responsibility and Equality of opportunity should be the rule of the land.

We are communal creatures, incomplete without the cultures, communities, tribes, we surround ourselves with. Our Responsibilities to those communities are responsibilities to ourselves. We should aim to work so that each of us is raised up so that none of us can ever fall so low again.

Does that speak to you? Does a world where your loneliness is treated along with your aches and pains, being equal in need, sing in you? Does your heart yearn for the opportunity you know you were only denied by birth, or lack of resources? Do you know that the way things are can not be the best we can accomplish, that we can always do better? That's Healer, calling you to do what must be done.

Does part of you feel incomplete without a connection to the natural world? That feeling that you are still part of the natural cycle of life. If you have ever gone out to put your feet in the grass or sat gazing at the beauty of nature as the sun set, you have probably felt that feeling. Many in our community regularly commune with Gaia, or the Goddess, or The Mother in this way.

That feeling as a cool breeze off a lake caresses your face, the smell of flowers in spring, the glow within yourself as you think of those you love, the feeling of your loved ones around you as you experience life together.

But also that feeling that we should work to live, not live to work. The grasping for the times between stress and anxiety and work where you can sit and just be alive. The knowledge that something is lost if we simply distract ourselves rather than listen to our hopes and dreams. That is Nurturer, and she calls on you to love yourself too, to take care of what really matters in life.

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However not all of life is love and joy. Some things must be faced head on, looked in the eye. Have you ever felt that knowledge that whether you liked it or not something would have to change? The knowledge that life was not going to give you what you deserved until you made it. I'm sure you can think of a hundred times when no matter what you did to avoid a choice, to hide from it or to block it out, a choice eventually had to be made.

That feeling when you're awake at night knowing you hate the coming day, that feeling when you fear to reach out to someone or something you want. That voice in the back of your mind which brings to light every lie you tell yourself, highlights every time when you could make the choice you truly want if only you were stronger, or braver, or believed in yourself.

And when you've made those choices, when you've leapt and let the chips fall where they may, that satisfaction in knowing that even if the choice was wrong, it was still yours to make. The joy of knowing that you are more than just a robot, more than just a cog in the machine, you are a human being and your life is yours to live. The heart of the dreamer which whispers always "What's next? What is just beyond that horizon? What adventure is in store?"

I hardly think I need to tell each of you that this voice is Trickster. He is the one so many of us know best, because to be here in this space, to have said "I am more than the faith I was raised in, I am more than the labels which have defined me, I am me" is to have at least listened to him once. He is the one I so often see in the twinkle in the eye of those who I speak to of him, and in that twinkle I see every great passion and choice which made each of you the people who sit here today.

But no choice would be worth a thing without the understanding of cost. If you are a mother or love a wild soul I know you have feared for those you love, have felt the twinge of "What if."

Are they alright? What if they get hurt? What if they never come home? And the hole which forms at the thought of that person ceases to be in your life, to go beyond the veil, to go where you can no longer protect or guide them. It comes with loving, it comes with opening oneself up to another enough to know that their life truly matters to you.

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And each of us hopes to be loved in that way as well. We all want those who stand beside us to love and value us, to hold our lives as sacred and want us to be around. That desire to be seen as holding value by another, that desire to give to another all that truly is “You” and know they will cherish it and treat it gently. That I think is one of the most human hopes, and the most human fear is to lose it.

But each of us will one day die. We will each hopefully leave those who love us and go beyond that border into a land where there is only one to guide us. Each of us will walk our road and face ourselves with our only companion being she who has always walked beside us saying “Be careful, don’t take life for granted because it won’t last forever”

That voice is Death. She reminds us to cherish life, to love those around us truly and deeply because one day they will be gone. She tells us to try to live a life worth telling of, because we will all have a long road to walk with her, and at the very least we should have a lot of stories to tell. She is in bitter tears and the choking laughter remembering the times that have past. In many ways she is the embodiment of remembrance, but in that remembrance we can see the ways which we can move forward into a tomorrow that is made better by the lessons we have learned.

And finally, something I know each of us has struggled with. That feeling like no matter what you do, no matter how hard you try or how much energy you put into something, sometimes everything just falls apart. If you’re a passionate person there have likely been times when you spent time, potentially even years, trying to fix the unfixable or prop up something or someone only to watch everything collapse the second you stopped paying direct attention. It can be one of the most tiring and disheartening experiences to know that no matter what happens this thing will not thrive, may not even continue, unless you give it your sole and undivided attention. And then one day, you know you can’t anymore. Something shifts and you accept the truth that the only healthy thing for you is to let go.

This is not an easy lesson. It’s one that I know if you’ve gone through you’ve fought against, and that’s a very human thing to do and not a failure on your part. The choice to wipe away the old, to let go of that attachment which bound you to

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something unhealthy, is something which humans have struggled with for thousands of years.

But there is one benefit, one silver lining for every hard decision. At the end of the day, when you have taken that step and cleared away all the clutter, made the choice to move on, you are moving into a world where you have limitless possibilities. And in that moment you know Destroyer. He's a quiet one, quieter than the rest, but if you can be quiet too you can hear him tell you "things will be better, if you stop holding on to suffering" And then what do you do? After you've let go of all the things holding you back? You go back to Builder and start again, create something new, and realize the world is still full of beauty and potential.

These ideas individually are nothing new, a large part of what I teach is that they can be partially found in every religion in the world. We believe that all religions are reaching for the same divinity after all, inspired by the same Gods, and our sameness is what shows that we are one species, all brothers and sisters in faith, and worthy of love and respect regardless of the religion or creed we individually hold to. These feelings are what make us reach to the Gods who inspire us or help us to be the best we can be, to make the world better, to help our fellow humans, to love all life, to take life as it comes, to value it, and to never hold to any part of it so dearly that we refuse to live. That is who the Gods are, and they always teach these things. Like I said, right there in the middle, I don't need to convince you to worship these Gods, you already do. The only difference between any faith and Verity is the knowledge that you can't separate these lessons, that the Gods must be taken as they are, and not how we wish them to be.