

THESES ON POETRY – © Pascual Delgado
(Originally written on December 3rd 1997, revised on December 18th 2015.)

1. Poetry is **not** prose.
 - 1.1 Poetry is **not** essay, treatise, novel, short story, etc.
 - 1.2 Therefore Poetry is not bound by the strictures and rules of syntax, grammar and logic.
2. Poetry is **not** any other of the Fine Arts (i.e., not painting, not music, not theatre, not sculpture, not photography, etc.) although it may be colourful, lyrical, dramatic, etc.
3. A poem is **not** a pamphlet: Poetry is **not** propaganda –although it may be controversial.
4. Poetry is **not** prosaic, pedestrian or ordinary –although it may be popular.
 - 4.1 This means that Poetry does not seek the lowest common denominator, rather the highest standards of quality and excellence. In this sense, Poetry cannot help but be slightly elitist.
5. Poetry is **not** a word game, though it **may** be puzzling.
 - 5.1. Poetry may be formally aleatoric, if the content is honest.
6. Poetry is **not** easy or facile –though it may be whimsical or light-hearted.
7. Poetry is **not** cavalier –though it may be audacious.
8. Poetry is **not** self-promotional, self-serving or self-indulgent –though it may be very personal.
9. Poetry is **not** a fashion statement.
10. Poetry is **not** logorrhoea.
11. Poetry is **not** ornamental, decorative, pretty or cute.
12. Poetry does **not** plagiarize.
 - 12.1 Poetry may be formally derivative, as long as the content is authentic.
13. Poetry is **not** preachy –though it may be mystical or metaphysical.
 - 13.1 **Great Poetry** is **oracular**.
14. Poetry is **not** transparent –rather opaque and translucent (though it may be **Clear**.)
15. Poetry **IS**, in spite of the poet.
16. Poetry is radically honest, even to the point of self-immolation.
17. Poetry is therapeutic, cathartic, healing.
18. Poetry is multidimensional, multi-layered, deep, thick.
19. Poetry aims at **Beauty**.
20. A poem is a whole, made up of wholes (like a living organism.)
 - 20.1 Therefore, a poem should be centered, balanced, complete in itself –though not static, rigid, closed or calcified.
 - 20.2 Therefore, a poem should be concise and geodesic –avoiding redundancy and unnecessary baggage (See Occam’s Razor.)
 - 20.3 Every line and every stanza of a poem should aim at completeness. (Be Zen.)
21. **Great Poetry** is universal and timeless as to content.
22. Formally, Poetry is rooted in the language and culture(s) of the poet.
 - 22.1 As we progress towards a global culture, Thesis #22 will tend to be less and less true.
23. Poetry is refined, majestic, exalted; without being pompous.
 - 23.1 Therefore Poetry is **not** crude, vulgar, loud, petty or superficial. Avoid noise.
24. Poetry moves slowly and ceremoniously –though not ponderously.
25. In decadent times, Poetry **must** aim at transcending the poetics of its own epoch, if it aims at being **Great Poetry**.
26. None of the above theses are dogmatic or prescriptive, **except for me**.