

22. Food Fight

Bicyclists need a nutritious diet. The more you ride the hungrier you get. As a kid from a big family, Al was taught never to waste food; scenes of starving masses in Africa, Bangladesh, or India fortified one's hunger anxieties, overly compensated by pointless gluttony on routine gradoo. Lately he'd been in a mindloop about food biting back. Ever notice food has attitude? "Go ahead, eat me; you'll be sorry." Raw Habanero chilis, for example: Get its juice in your eye and it can blind you. Or certain mushrooms, hard to tell from common, harmless criminis, with toxins that kill in 7 seconds. Or Fugu, a blowfish which, if not clinically prepared by one of a handful of registered culinary masters, is instantly lethal. That's mean food, yet everyone gobbles these down in hungry enthusiasm without worries only to regret it later, if ever.

Food can hurt in so many ways. People can be allergic to honey, nuts, cheery oats, whatever. Imagine puffing up and strangling because you ate bread? Happens. Or losing your mind from rye mold ergotism. Volcano hot pizzas pulled out of 900°F ovens sear your tongue. Curries turn mouth into molten lava, eat stomach lining. Foods with protein cost a fortune, empty your bank account. Say you could only eat caviar or saffron or tenderloin; you'd go broke. For the World's poor, insects are a main protein source, but this crisis hadn't yet imposed itself on Americans. Achinback's consumerist approach to protein preference causes more harm than good. Who's getting rich on these fads? Carbohydrates—pasta, potatoes, rice, sugar, wheat—are cheap and plentiful, but produce too much estrogen; blimp you up and make you prone to heart attack or stroke, plus they're loaded with toxic anti-nutrients, which steal decades from life expectancies. Same thing, cheese, cream and whole milk with homogenized fats, not to mention disgusting blood and pus from badly handled, mechanically sucked udders. Nondairy transfats clog arteries. Fats and oils themselves—whether from animals, nuts, olives or other sources, the very things that make food aromatic and palatable—quickly turn putridly rancid. Fake oils, undisclosed in many preprocessed snacks, cause diarrhea and nausea. Excess fiber, dehydration. Can't eat prepared meats due to listeria contamination; drop that bologna. Fresh domestic meat, artery clogging saturated fats, and, if improperly cooked, carcinogens, not to diminish dangers of anthrax, just plain rotten, and terrible ecological impact of raising cattle. You'd be

better off eating grains they feed to livestock rather than flesh itself. Spices were highly prized in days before refrigeration to make rotten meat palatable. Peppercorns were once used as currency. Today spices are used in an offhand way to spark up blandness without any understanding of their powerful medicinal effects, except those from small white and red tins, long forgotten, likely to have become moldy or lost all potency. Even thoroughly cooked, pigs might still carry trichinosis; anyway, pigs live in filth, and have never been kosher. Chicken and eggs, salmonella. Shellfish, biotoxins. Snack foods, carcinogenic additives. Eggplant, potatoes and tomatoes, all in deadly nightshade family, poisonous to those with compromised immunities. Fruit, pesticides. Swordfish and tuna, cumulatively toxic mercury. Canned foods or garlic stored too long in oil, botulism. Beans, legumes, well, everyone knows what they do to air quality, plus fava beans become poisonous soon after cooked. Castor beans are a source of neurotoxins, as are many protein rich foods, particularly oysters and shrimp. Carbonated beverages, acids that may leach calcium from bones to cause osteoporosis and preservatives that cause cancer. Cake, Alzheimers. Salt, hypertension. Sugar, diabetes and tooth decay. At least artichokes warn you by their name. Leafy vegetables, like lettuce, causes blood to clot, can cause fatal embolisms. Soy leaves you angry, as if you're not angry enough. What about genetically modified, already banned in Europe? Who knows the future harm? You don't know what you're eating because they don't label produce by how it's produced or where it comes from. What's left? Even water is suspect: bottled at supposedly pure sources but really from tainted wells, or poorly treated from tap with e-coli and fecal bacteria, or treated with sulfur to which some are intolerant.

In these days of cost cutting and terrorist alarm, food could be their next target; all packers hire lately are foreign nationals, some illegal aliens, many of whom hate Americans. A Moslem may be baking your favorite Little Deathie snack with jihad in mind. Conspiracy theorists claim America's food supply is purposefully made to cause obesity and subjugate the masses. Forget terrorists, cosmetic industry creates products that must be used repeatedly once begun, almost like inoculating someone with a deadly virus which can only be combated with a daily antidote. Packaging was another worry. Any one in four insane citizens who surround you can adulterate products, easily opened, furtively tainted or tasted, then resealed. Actual cases were common, provocation for copycats. Even bottling and canning, good ways to seal against tampering, weren't foolproof, and lately preferred ease of opening to

hermetic sealing. Then there's a whole new dimension, chocolate tainted with the blood of human bondage, imports from plantations where human rights are unheard of, results of all that offshoring that seems so sanitary at great distances. How can anyone support this? You just don't know *what* you're putting in your mouth.

Food is out to get you, one way or another, destroy your body or soul. Can't live with it, can't live without. Heroin seems healthier by comparison. Should food be classed as a controlled substance, dolled out, and portion controlled by prescriptions at pharmacies? Nutrition is a delicate balancing act and only makes sense if your food is palatable. Spreading creamery butter on dry bread suppresses your gag response. Episcopalians dip their dust-dry host in sacramental wine. Some good sources of micronutrients taste just like dirt. Sometimes you can't extract any good without processing something bad. No way around it. If you stop eating you die sooner. "Yes" to food is "yes" to life.

Because of food abhorrence and rejection anxiety, women starve themselves. Out of neurosis and vanity, bulimics insatiably crave then barf up what deprived children are starving for. Anorexic models inspired weight loss fads, just another way to get into your pocket. Sedentary smoothing of human spirit works for government and insurance industry, both of whom manipulate every facet of their gamble on you, making sure you live long enough to pay into their scheme but not profit from it. Dangerous behaviors that lead to "Live fast and die young" don't work for them: too little income, too much outgo. Skeletal thinness is unappealing. Men generally prefer women with curves. They should be grateful for bovine growth hormones in milk, which manifests itself in bigger boobs, but with unknown consequences, perhaps more incidents of breast cancer, which had steadily increased. Gaining weight can be interpreted as a sign of good health and more than adequate nutrition. Fat reserves are a miracle of self-preservation, nature's way of maintaining a species for lean times coming. If you have excess weight, the cure is free, eat less than you work, take smaller portions, work out aerobically for long durations. Obesity was rampant, though, caused by modern convenience, oversized servings, resource waste, and zero will power, all of which will ultimately result in lean times and a lot of thinness for all.

Clinging to survival and endlessly moving, primitive huggers sought the highest energy nutrition, fats, as do bears with salmon, sucking up fat and tossing aside meat, while preparing for hibernation. Paleolithic diets consisted of berries, eggs, fats, flesh, fruits, infrequent honey, leaves, mushrooms, organ meats, and roots

except sweet and white potatoes. Of course, stone age man had a life expectancy of 30 short years, and ate whatever could be found to survive. This interested him since participating in Paleo-archeological digs, where he uncovered a hut door with hundreds of felsite and quartz tools and flakes. Your modern Neolithic diet adds vast quantities of beans, dairy, grains, salt and sugar, stuff with poisons that help them repel pests during storage. Grains are popular for their practicality. Though fattening and genetically foreign to original human physiology, they meant less foraging, gathering, hunting, and perilous nomadic moving, and more calories produced per acre. Lifespans on average are now much longer than then, more than twice. Some studies suggest that processing small amounts of poison might actually extend life by toughening your constitution, as if a mitradate, panacea, or universal vaccine. Today you're assailed daily by thousands of known carcinogens, many associated with fats in foods. If you fatten up, you have no endurance to forage, no energy for anything, especially risky activities.

Obesity? In the 2003 model year, carmakers achieved what they hadn't in nearly 30, broke the 2-ton threshold, 4021 pounds, for average vehicle weight. For 2004 they expected it to rise to 4066. This came despite advanced, lighter weight materials—aluminum, plastics, titanium—none of which were in use earlier, and all of which, by contrast, reduce a bicycle's weight. Crashworthiness is better for bigger mo-ves. People who live on farms or in snowy regions appreciate all-wheel drive. Underwriters and conservatives seem to like them, but not EPA or medical specialists, who categorically accuse vehicular emissions for triggering asthma and other respiratory disorders, as well as more dead or maimed passengers inside those smaller vehicles with which they collide. Conversely, vehicles with smaller footprints get in fewer accidents per capita, a situation from which it's harder to profit.

The first oversized passenger vehicle he remembered was a 70's Chevy Suburban driven by a morbidly obese coworker, Big Willie Johnson. Those who purchased them did so because they literally couldn't fit into normal cars, never mind Japanese subcompacts designed for ethnic diminutives. If it wasn't SUVs, it was 2-ton trucks or wide door Caddy Coupes. Given availability of spacious accommodations, people grow to fit them, as did families so as to occupy more rooms in rambling Victorian houses. An extra bedroom? Have another kid! Like rats, people spread to ravage whatever resources they find. Unlike vermin, humans have the capacity to understand why this isn't in their own best interest.

Meanwhile, they wantonly defoliate, devour and exterminate every other life-form around them. One could argue that their oversized RV or SUV could be used as an energy efficient mobile home. In touristy places like Venice, CA, people began parking overnight on streets rather than paying millions for beachfront condos. But chambers of congress can't allow that. There's been a rash of car-camping crackdowns across America, which smacks of another impingement on citizens' rights. Yet they've less right to complain than bicyclists, who are arrested as vagrants if they simply stop for a well earned nap anywhere.

Fatties are sensitive about their weight, feel as if they're discriminated against for something they have no control over. In fact, this is partially true, as victims of a conspiracy to make everything easier, escalate consumerism, and thereby empty wallets and pick pockets. He'd been in that business for half his career. It's never, "How can we treat customers better," but, "How can we maximize our profits." In answer come: aftermarket part unavailability, color shifts, model swapping, planned obsolescence, and such things marketers dream up to persuade new purchases from year to year. How could making something durable enough to last forever ever serve a carmaker's interests? Can't. Durability of business itself doesn't even seem to matter to executives who were looking to drain as much as possible from it and leave its ruins behind for their own Caribbean islands.

To maintain excess blubber you have to eat enormous portions and never move around under your own power, 2 conditions almost all girth challenged individuals can change for themselves. A military philosophy of "Take what you'll eat, eat what you take," while okay for young men and women in daily physical training, later becomes detrimental to sedentary adults. Just dieting doesn't work. Requires a balance between eating less and exercising more. Meals should take far longer to prepare than consume. If you get outside away from pantry and stove, remove temptations to eat, you'd think this would be fairly easy. Urban planning doesn't help, though, since it focuses on erecting fast food joints on every corner and speeding vehicles between them, presumably so you'll never be more than a minute from a fast, fat laden snack. As diner endorser Hunker Dines used to say, driving across the country is relatively safe, but not so eating across. Presumably after bouts of indigestion, Kerouac reduced on-the-road consumption to apple pie, allegedly "delicious and nutritious". After commuting to work, the next most frequent reason to drive is to shop, mostly for food.

The fatter you grow, the more it costs to cart your carcass around. By simply rejecting this model outright, motorists would eventually be able to fit into much smaller vehicles and reduce escalating fuel jones of lead sleds. Soft flab is harder to keep warm, too, compared to lean muscle, which generates its own heat. Hypothetically, mankind may be entering an era of bodies so titanic that every waking hour is spent earning and paying food and fuel costs, total consumerism. Energy credits would eventually replace money as a means of exchange.

If you can't propel yourself by bike, you probably shouldn't drive yourself either. Just think of thousands of bike miles wrapped around your hips and waists. Some people could probably circle the planet by bike on water alone. Obesity is a disease, a pandemic to be pitied, not condemned. It must be accounted for in an urban landscape. Transportation planners ought to ensure public busses and subways are designed for waddling onto. Taxis ought to station themselves by suburban terminals to make the final connection between these conveyances and home. Going a short distance twice daily by vans with elevators to load them on could cost less than car ownership with no clambering, headaches, or super-sizing so fat drivers can fit behind steering wheels. Companies could provide shuttle service, park'n'locks to portals, for portly employees. This is what happens when business and industry literally shove consumerism down everyone's throat, a population that can no longer avail itself of choices manufacturers would prefer to supply.

Average fuel use in the late '80's was 22.1 mpg, but now had retreated to only 20.7. This consumption increase was directly attributable to bigger vehicles. You don't see station wagons anymore, since government increased fuel economy minimums for passenger vehicles, and wagons couldn't meet them. They were quickly replaced by minivans and SUVs, a new unregulated class, worst legacy of Iacocca. Regulations to protect you yield countermeasures to circumvent. Humdingers, for example, are totally exempt from crash test minimums, economy calculations, fuel and weight rules, and safety standards. Federal regulators acknowledge that giant vehicles lead to more fatalities. Does it never occur to them they can demarcate where these vehicles can be used, or limit choices, or legislate incentives for higher mpg alternatives? The current administration purposefully chose the opposite as a boon to campaign supporters. Relative fuel demand, size, and weight could all be legitimately surcharged. End users have already reassessed this equation. With per gallon prices over \$3.00, Forq's big

SUV sales in 2006 dropped 50% over previous year, and smaller Japanese rivals increased 200%. But by 2008, with a doubling of pump prices, sales of all mo-ves were finally in a tailspin.

Food is fuel that accomplishes work, too. Bicycles actually use some fossil fuels, if you consider those that go into delivering staples to stock shelves and producing food to feed cyclists. Eating meat is wasteful because more energy is required to raise herds than fruits, grains, and vegetables. Big Oil would rather use cellulose than grain for biofuel, corncobs instead of kernels, saying grain use competes with food, and have ramped up investment to capitalize. Antebellum South's landed gentry complained about keeping slaves alive for heavy labor on 2,000 calories per day. Lucky for them they had African huggers who could fish and hunt on their own, because slave owners surely couldn't handle what they expected from their help. Today, people eat snacks with more calories than this while sitting motionless at computers for hours between 6,000 calorie meals, then wonder why their scales don't report a weight indicated on ideal actuarial charts.

Snacking seems more important than ever. He began to believe it was because brains required ever more sugar to operate, 20% of daily intake, and folks spend more time processing mental stimulation than physically doing. Sucrose is brain fuel, as complex carbohydrates build glycogen, muscle fuel, and proteins and vitamins repair tissues seldom damaged from exertion. Poor children mix table sugar with water as an affordable beverage substitute. No wonder diabetes was increasing. Bombarded with information, spending increasingly more time at static than motile, sweets have become a staple. If you don't physically work, you only really need about 1,000 calories/day, a small fraction of what people recurrently consume. Dieting shuts down metabolism. Portion control must be paired with costly amphetamine use or free exercise, and only aerobics burn enough calories to make any difference. Today's extreme competitiveness of childhood sports on top of fears of being run down by motorists may sentence children to early graves, far more dangerous than learning to ride safely at school sponsored fairs and rodeos. Bicycling is a gentle discipline almost anyone can join in given devices to suit any capability or handicap and supportive infrastructure.

When it comes to eating, it's not just what but how. You can't just stuff your face. Eating too much, or anything that cause gastric reflux, for him pepperoni pizza, leads to Barrett's esophagus, where acid transforms cell lining, and in a small percentage of sufferers,

adenocarcinoma. This would match his Barrett's cerebrum, a mental condition you get from paying too close attention to Pink Floyd lyrics.

You don't extract value from wholesome ingredients unless they're properly combined. For example, calcium, good for losing undesirable fat and strengthening bones, readily available in dairy goods, becomes toxic and cannot be used this way without potassium, of which milk is deficient. Apples, bananas, figs, and other fruits must accompany. A breakfast of few tablespoons of nutty granola, a lot of fruit and nonfat yogurt is really what does a body good, a well balanced meal rich in nutrients, fluid and fiber, low in saturated fats, and not many calories or points. Butter, fatty but nutritious, can be used sparingly if whipped with an equal volume of sunflower oil, which works to emulsify saturated fats. Monounsaturated oil helps one absorb the good of vegetables, why no salad is complete without olive oil, also rich in Omega 3 fatty acids, and wine vinegar, which cuts greasy taste and provides anti-fungal, astringent, and blood thinning properties of wine without its alcohol. Alcohol makes a tolerable fuel for your car; you wouldn't drink gasoline. Some combinations that are good for you also taste great, like basil (antioxidants and blood scrub), garlic (cholesterol and pressure regulator), and tomatoes (lycopene source). Green tea seems to work, and doesn't stain your teeth as much as coffee.

Rather than assemble foods to suit their nutritional needs, eaters simply choose meat and potatoes, erroneously expecting them to contain every mineral and vitamin. For sure, meat is nutrient rich, packed with hard to find proteins, but, unless organic, can also be loaded with dyes, hormones and other unwholesome ingredients. No meat is more succulent than the superfluous chain muscle cooks trim away for themselves, grind up for great hamburgers, while preparing a tenderloin for roasting or turning into filet mignons. Prime tenderloin is the rarest cut of beef, only 1/2% of all beef sold. It might be the most dangerous, too, stuck close to spine, bearing no weight, doing no work, like paunch of a bicyclist. Slurping up blood and sucking at udders means to absorb mad cow disease, neurochemicals and prions which you ingest at unknown peril.

It's not just how or what you eat, but also where. Anybody going abroad to strange lands, unaccustomed to local microorganisms and practices, is likely to get sick, Montezuma's revenge, turista. Dysentery lurks in seemingly innocuous ice cubes and

washed fruit. Cuisine in Germany is greasy, rich and starchy all at once, sits like a blob in pit of your stomach. Perhaps a massive amount of beer was supposed to dissolve it, as this is their general practice, morning, noon and night, all meals consisting of beer and fatty sausages, whiter than he was used to, or somber black with clotted blood. Not unlike pub fare in England, little more than potatoes supplemented with a bit of fatty protein and a drab garnish to accompany a few pints. Neither country had any idea how to brew a decent cup of coffee.

Food to Italians is a religion, with all attendant ceremony and pomp, steeped in unfamiliar protocols and symbols. Eating out is an adventure, a visit to someone's personal fiefdom, a tiny duchy where rules are a proprietor's prerogative. After a day at his company's factory in Turin, he spent an evening with Nicolino, who graciously acquiesced to host at his suggestion. Americans think of all Italian food as the regional cuisine of Sicily. Piemontese cuisine is a cross between Bolognese and French nouvelle, really a unique departure. Having made a loose arrangement to dine, he was getting a little concerned; 8:00 PM had come and gone and no host. He was about to retreat the relative refuge of hotel food when Nicolino finally arrived. In Northern Italy it's customary to eat about 9:00 PM, and restaurants rarely opened earlier than 8:30. Together they ducked around corner into a long dark alley and made their way on foot through a dim piazza and quietly along a narrow side street amidst gray angular facades of stone and stucco.

"Whose nickel are we eating on?" He asked Nicolino, wondering how he'd manage deciphering the mysteries of lire and expense reporting in a year before euros. They passed but didn't stop at a brightly lit trattoria that seemed pleasant enough. After about 9 blocks they came to more formidable San Francesco. Nicolino quickly poked into its double doors, gripping both door knobs and closing so head disappeared within, then, just as quickly, popped out with a pronouncement, "No bene." This had him wondering, "Mobsters? Ptomaine? Red brigade?" Retraced their steps to first place, where they entered instead. It was small but bustling, a local favorite.

The major domo directed a team to set a table, done quickly with a flourish, in china, glassware, silver and spotless linens, and they were summarily seated with an unctuous wave of one arm, other draped in a pristine white tea towel right out of a cinema stereotype. Would have been complete with "Non Dimentica" or "Volare" as a background song, but, instead, knots of diners yakked away in phrases he couldn't understand with his 300 entry,

hastily studied vocabulary, except a few words here and there. A beachball shaped matron, cellulite rippling below folds of flowing skirt, sawed away with an actual backsaw at a big, dark mound of bread. She pulled up a handful of hunks, waddled over, and dropped it onto center of their table, no basket, explanations, or expression, almost rudely. Nicolino looked across inquisitively at his distress. In answer, he ventured a guess, "What this says is, 'This table is clean enough to eat off of,' literally, no?" Typical Italian bravado. "Bene, you get it," grinned Nicolino. It was somewhat intuitive, more about circus than bread.

Trying to read menu, he was lost. Despite considerable experience devouring Italian cuisine, he could hardly identify anything. Understood Antipasti, Pasti, Zuppa, Dolce: It's how they assemble their meals, in courses. Knew what braceola was (thinly flattened beef), cruda (uncooked but cured). They discussed *vitello tonnato* with much confusion over a small green condiment, which turned out to be capers. Couldn't make up his mind. Nicolino ordered both antipasti for him, questioned his skipping pasta, and laughed when he ordered "d'aqua minerale con gasso". "Are you sure you like gas?" "Si." This impressed because it's what they drink themselves, schooled from birth to properly hydrate and replace trace elements. He ordered insalata and vino, a Dolcetto Pudangno, estate bottled nearby. Their bread is, remarkably, twice baked until almost dry, crust dark and crisp, how it's preferred there. Ordered scallopine marsala. Nicolino wished him, "Buon appetito!" another custom that was hard to get used to, as well discussions over each course, as if post mortems, at least something in common for sake of conversation. He recalled how he used to say *grace*, and still did on special occasions, but people seldom did this anymore. How many gobble food and not reflect on all those hands that lovingly grew, processed, delivered, and cooked it for them, indeed, all those who'd gone before and laid a foundation for this instance to occur? Without reflection, any act was diminished in his mind. They drained wine bottle and ordered dolce. Nicolino chose finely cut fruit and convinced him to order something, perhaps a gelato limone with vodka sauce. "How do you like it?" "Divino." Nicolino confronted waiter over dryness of their grappa, "Seccissimo?" "Si, signore!" debating over degree and semantics of its desiccation. They both had one, quite strong and not particularly pleasant, made from dregs of wine, gasoline with undertones of turpentine, an acquired taste at best. Nicolino complained that it wasn't as dry as argued. Stuff practically evaporated upon pouring. How dry is dry? Bill squared, they departed, half stewed then swallowed by a

forbidding city of reckless motorists, where he strolled arcades, witnessed several collisions, and yanked his companion from jaws of death before safely returning to hotel. All part of the local color, he was sure.

Eating resembles bicycling in traffic. If you do, do it in as informed a way as possible, safely assessing risks to avoid mishaps. It needn't be a coin toss. If you stop, eating or pedaling, you die. Riskiest of all was ingesting anything handled by other bicyclists. Club dinners, postride feeds, and organized cookouts always involved some food improperly cooked or unsuitably stored. Proteins can't sit in a lukewarm cooler for 6 hours while riders get their spins in. He was always sick after these indiscretions, sometimes for a few days, sometimes for weeks. Dysentery curtails trip plans, if not keeping you out of circulation altogether. Restaurants run profitably using unskilled labor paid less than scale; you shouldn't expect such employees to be educated on finer points of aseptic practices. Bacteria may be everywhere, but biotoxins, hepatitis, and viral infections were not to be taken lightly. Maintaining a healthy immune system was imperative, but that can't overcome poisoning. After rides he stuck with packaged health bars, rewashed whole fruits, salty chips, sealed drinks, and such things unlikely to upset, except for stickers convenient for seller alone that deface fruit when peeled off, or get swallowed, if you're not careful.

On medical advice, he settled into a balanced daily diet high in fiber and proteins including fish and fowl, fresh fruit, garlic, juice cut 50%, nuts, olive oil and vinegar, plain water, salads with green leafy and numerous other vegetables, seeds, and whole grains only, sparingly, particularly corn and oatmeal. Properly prepared eggplant, mushrooms and tofu make meaty substitutes. Water added to juice or milk hydrates and slims. Avoided empty carbohydrates, ice cream, meat. Cattlemen and dairy farmers didn't want to hear this. Why should they care? Charge more and raise less. Average Americans each eat 250 pounds of red meat every year, far more than him, 5 times what's necessary. A Paleolithic diet was meager, but so were his actual needs. Gimmick with garlic is cleaning it, and cooks make you think you need a special press. False. Peel off a few cloves, turn pointy side down, and crush them under sole of your palm. Its thin skin readily loosens; peel it away from white flesh. Use a paring knife to trim off any dark spots and root end, then slice it thinly sideways across its grain. This leaves a nicely minced pile. Never store it in this condition. Use it immediately, cooked in sauces or stews or raw in salads. It has many magical

properties: acts as an antibiotic, binds food flavors in a dish, unclogs arteries in your body.

Simple explanations demystify, although some find them condescending or counter to their profit schemes, vilify you as a know-it-all or show-off. Because of what he chose to do, his weight gradually diminished, a bloated spider shedding its shell, like a heavy heart disgorging observations, gathered then abandoned, a small cairn of stones of disputed origin left for sensitive romantics to contemplate and thoughtless rest to ignore. After all, this was his chief talent: absorbing, digesting, passing it along, forgetting, repeating. Where did he learn to be a complete consumer? Taking notes in class, he'd ace tests, then clear mind for next, just what teachers wanted. Was this honorable, normal, virtuous? What does man spill in this process? Do they follow righteous ways and forego evil? How is humanity served? Should one ask such questions?

Education is an institution ripe for overhaul. Taxpayers don't much care how it's done as long as it cost little. Parents hope for a better future for their progeny, but what do they know? They are all victims of the same ordeal and can't see beyond it. Illich would have deschooled society altogether. Kids are poorly indoctrinated in pointless knowledge they never use. Educators ignore such critically important skills as avoiding sexually transmitted diseases, driving safely, eating healthily, and working gentle exercise into their lifestyle. Their goal may be to broaden minds, but to what end? So they harbor hopes only to be dashed by cruel realities and spiraling downsizing and offshoring? Unfortunately, most teens are rebellious slackers and too many are drug abusers, extortionists, seekers of an easy way out, victimizers. Giving in to them is encouraged. Fighting back makes national headlines. So, as expected, high schools wallow in wrong subjects instead of wellness training. Forming teams is especially important in those formative years; otherwise, you fill prisons with criminals, a waste of life, or worse, stuff body bags, as in Columbine.

Dancing, drawing, singing and sports are swell after-school elective activities, but not mandatory for survival. Those 3R's upon which democracy depends have become politically incorrect: too difficult to master thus unpopular. He would have definitely spent more time studying mathematics, if he knew then that it was a language to communicate internationally without cultural barriers. Math is exquisite this way. A quadratic equation is the same everywhere; graphs convey the same meaning. If math could capture emotions and longings, it would have already replaced all language.

Alas, that which serves only logic has proven inadequate to deal with the fullness of human experience. This can only mean there's so much more that can't be dealt with logically.

Educators hope for diversity and synergies. Whenever these terms crop up, businesses fail. Perhaps it would be better to train each child in some specific task they can master over several years: baker, cooper, entrepreneur, plumber, shoe maker, stone cutter. Guilds weren't such a bad thing, really. Gave people direction, a simple skill, a preordained course, a structured life, ways to hold the wealthy hostage. Perhaps this is a better reading of Renaissance history. Employment today means endless change and short careers unless you remake yourself every few years. When they've burnt you out, they cast you aside, just like any broken tool, like a 20-year-old mo-ve. Some machinery they'll recondition for extended use, while the ideal machine, a human being, they won't bother to retrain despite clear cut loyalty and complete corporate assimilation. Insects take this 1 step further: cannibalize members not needed, suck their marrow dry, use their exoskeletons to build nest structures.

Food is a subject worthy of study. There's a channel on cable television devoted to deviant ways of preparing it: ethnic variations, industrial secrets, proper techniques, quick meals, regional specialties, timed competitions. Colleges have sprung up to teach preparing and serving. They even teach how to buy ingredients, heft and thump fruit, poke and prod meat, sniff for spoilage. Everyone needs food, no way to lose. Housewives spend more time nowadays watching something being cooked than actually cooking, a vicarious transference, energy used up paying attention rather than doing. More learning goes on when people actually do. Cooking is a language that requires constant repetition to come across. Boil some water, why don't you?

If only people knew more about nutrition. Everything's still sketchy, despite what dieticians would have you think. What about macrobiotic diets? Or vegan? Fanatics extol organics, but in some cases there's absolutely no difference between commercial and specialty produce: Thin skin berries and fruit, certainly, for difficulty ridding them of pesticides, but not bananas or oranges, which you can easily peel. Food produced in Asia for export bypasses all regulatory oversight. When the World Health Organization did a study to boost basic nutrition among African bushmen, incidents of malaria proportionately *increased*. Seems before study their blood was so deficient in Vitamin E, mosquitoes didn't bother to bite. To go in and investigate is to alter. Pre-Columbian Americans lived

normal lifespans until Europeans brought diseases, then populations were decimated. Although lifespan was only 40 years or so, 9 out of 10 died in this viral conquest. Explains native fears and hostilities. Inuits can survive on blubber, pure fat, need its concentrated energy just to stay warm. Navahos subsisted on 2,000 calories a day of whole grains supplemented by occasional fish and meat, South Sea Islanders on fish and fruit, and Worldwide infants on fatty, non-pasteurized, unhomogenized mother's milk until weaned. Why emphasize food and fitness at all? The oldest living humans, when polled, ate bland, specific foods, grains and yogurt and avoided toiling too hard. They were akin to zoo specimens, never having to do for themselves, practically housebound pets, spared from dangers. Overly hard work is just as bad as none.

Generalized nonsense guides human omnivores to eat 5 small servings of fruits and vegetables daily. Why not 1 vitamin pill and some fiber weekly? How do they know that balancing a diet works? What's their evidence? At what frequency should ingredients be combined or varied? His experiments combining ingredients weren't always successful. Canned zucchini and ground beef together looks and tastes just like dog food. Clearly some foodstuffs must be kept separate. You can't eat all things good for you every day, not always available. Does every meal have to have the right amounts of antioxidants, bioflavonoids, carbs, fats, fiber, proteins, minerals, vitamins? Some once in a while seems to suffice despite food pyramids and recommended daily allowances. Could be the key is in what to avoid, like acids in soft drinks that deplete bones of calcium and snackfood trans fats that clog arteries. Anything you overdo or underdo would seem bad, but what about moderation itself? Augustine said, "All things in moderation," but people thoroughly maligned this saintly advice, which meant, "Don't go overboard," not, "Indulge in every folly." On the other hand, if you never know temptation, how do you arrive at, "All things"? Minor mistakes don't make for incorrigible felons.

Statistically, obesity does equate to a shorter life span, but only chronic obesity. Blimping on occasion then losing has been shown to be quite normal and seemingly healthier. Adult gorillas, a genetically related great ape, eat 40 pounds of veggies a day and lounge around mostly, yet that's entirely natural for them. Maybe humans don't eat enough. Fattening up is a survival mechanism. Eating heartily increases brain size. People take whatever they can get, use up whatever they got. They exploit all resources they encounter. People feed off other people. The Lusiads of de Camões moan, "I will weep for my sad fate that has buried me in such a hard

passion.” Just going to happen anyway, since there’s no laws against, and so little self control, the ultimate excuse for every inhuman act.

Opinions are meaningless. Everybody has them, latches onto what’s unfounded, unscientific. One radio ignoramus claimed you don’t get sick from viruses, you get sick from catching a chill. Evidence against is overwhelming: airborne contagion, germ warfare, localization of Ebola, lower mortality rates from scrubbing before operations, pandemics. Not politically correct to blame sick people for spreading disease, is it? No, hosts who carry viruses infect others, not weather changes. Yet opinions based on facts become science. You pay attention to your doctor’s opinion because you believe it’s based on facts. You take medicines prescribed by someone who knows practically nothing about human physiology. Your basic assumption is wrong. Your doctor does what insurance companies say and pushes pills for pharmaceutical companies. Somehow you survive, and believe doctor has treated you successfully. This makes only slightly more sense than believing “stepping on a crack breaks your mother’s back.” It’s more superstition than science. Herbs, fluids and rest have historically been about as effective, although when disease is acute, acute medicines may be in order. People listen to commercials for their facts, and stir chocolate into milk until uniform, not sensibly avoid both altogether.

In a World full of advertising, coercion, half-truths, reputations, and spin, truth becomes whatever anyone wants it to be. In a real life example, a man and wife formed their own faith, then starved their baby to death based on a edict from God that only they could hear. How could that be? Reality must be the same everywhere for everyone, otherwise there’s no science and nothing works. All this convinces there’s not much time for anything but serious actions or words. No time for behaving foolishly or talking falsely. Innocents need protection. Life’s too short. Society’s needs are too great. Advice to “Lighten up!” is only useful if it means lose your addiction to automotive convenience, fattening carbohydrates or jovial irrationality which most people prefer to reason. Bad cheer might cause stress, but twisted excuses will kill you quicker.

People seize alternative ways of seeing things, even controversy. They can’t help but refute what you say. Nowadays, there’s nothing worth refuting: all is empty banality, fragmented personal perspectives, inexperienced opinions. Particularly odious was Newt Gooseberry, a local food whore on AM radio, who devoted every broadcast to promoting the shabby establishments of second rate sponsors, putting callers on the spot, and seeming smugly sancti-

monious about it. Banality is the bulk fiber of a mental diet, tasteless filler that increases stool size, nothing more. It's a string of layman humiliations, threadbare cliches, and trigger issues that purports to tell truths but provides a cruel form of amusement. This constitutes much of what people take in, but it doesn't build muscle or have any vitamin value, empty psychic calories. Some people can't handle energy packed fuel, or hardy proteins, or rational arguments. They should curtail their consumption, do what their moms tell them, never call radio shows.

On days he knew that he was neither riding nor working, he'd *fast*: eat no solid food but sip plenty of water or unsweetened tea. If you ingest nothing solid for 24 hours, your intestines and skin have a chance to heal. You feel oddly quiet. You urinate freely without fiber drawing liquids into digestion. Anyway, one needs to flush kidneys every so often, clears toxins. Fasting gradually shrinks stomach's capacity, safer than gastric bypass surgery. If every American voluntarily did so 1 day a week, above and beyond its health benefits there'd be at least a 14% reduction in landfill waste. Think of how much society and you would save in a year, as well as entire support network of fuel and labor. The only question is what this might do to productivity; he surmised not much, since those who take amphetamines don't eat, snooze little, and work like banshees. For people working at computers who hardly move around, fasting is not only doable but gets them to realize that overeating is tiresome, produces nothing but guilt and heart disease, and they're not slaves to conventions or habits or supermarket ads, although any mass migration from *buy 1 get 1 free* to sensible abstinence will likely result in an initial rise in prices. Knoshing is done because there's nothing better to do. Any worthwhile mission fills this void. After a fast, even bland oatmeal has flavor; you appreciate it more. You do need fiber and fuel, though, so fasting can only be done short term. Otherwise, metabolism shuts down.

Want to do something really worthwhile? Use your discipline to conduct and document a directed dietary regimen across a wide population. Can't study ethnic groups, as Italians or Japanese, because genetic uniformity skews results. All those he personally knew who lived into their 90's were overweight and had never worked out. But there are no 300 pound, 70-year-old gluttons; all sins of excess prematurely kill. A generation ago, enhanced sanitation, food surplus, good handling, government inspection and widespread inoculations seemed to have made Americans just about the healthiest and smartest people in World, but this enviable accomplishment seems to be reversing. If a large diverse

population would agree to strict diets apportioned by overall weight and a set amount of aerobics over a lifetime, then researchers compared them with a test group, dieticians could finally say something definitive. Otherwise, what do dieticians know for sure? They haven't yet figured out binge eating. Couldn't cause be a body's lack of some specific nutrient absent in available food choices? People probably overeat trying to satisfy a particular craving, when a specific mineral or vitamin might make hunger subside. Scientists already define obesity as a form of malnutrition.

Then there are seasonal fluctuations. He'd always gain weight in Winter with all its celebratory food impossible to avoid. High carb root vegetables become abundant in Fall to fatten you up for deprivations of Winter. Then he'd trim down in Spring and Summer, so it was a wash. Can't let rainy or snowy inconvenience stop you. It becomes a matter of life or death to maintain your regimen. Since ramping up on bicycling, he stayed within a weight range for several years after losing quite a bit at first. Sure, everyone gets hungry from riding, only natural. When you ride you eat hearty and wholesome; when you don't ride you eat more, usually candies, cookies and other pointy pills that just make you fatter and hungrier without filling you up. Never liked sugary candy, anyway. Not all that tasty, unlike sugars added to chocolate or coffee. If you go for sweet treats on rides, they quickly raise your blood sugar, which then plummets further and makes you even hungrier. Better to take a health bar, which balances sweets with carbs and proteins, so it sticks with you longer. Eat half a bar 1/3 into ride, reserve other half in case of bonking, when glycogen in muscles nears depletion. They taste like dirt anyway, so you're not inclined to overeat. Buy whenever they're on sale, and thereby avoid paying a premium at convenience stores during rides. Trail mix is also be good, though tough to juggle, or fruit, an apple or banana, not as fattening. You can't drink enough water or eat enough vegetables, practically calorie free. They feed horses apples, carrots and oats, don't they? If you want horsepower, eat like a horse.

Can one be too healthy? Aggressive tendencies may get out of control with additional testosterone. Who needs more ambition, sex and violence? World already can't feed its populations, and there aren't enough income producing opportunities to go around. Of literature, stacks are groaning under the weight of novels knocked off by drunks and perverts half as healthy as those not compelled to squander time on such folly. If there's any truth in popular sayings, he heard an example to think about. "People who

are great eaters and great lovers are seldom great at anything else.” Hmm... Perhaps it *isn't worth* being great at anything else. You can't imagine what goes on while writers of lurid literature dream up their fantasies. Then readers go out and try them out by cruelly using unsuspecting acquaintances.

The urge for sex is so strong it exceeds one's ability to find a partner and gratify it. Autoeroticism is probably more a norm than people admit, especially in an era of sexually transmitted diseases. But society looks down upon those who indulge. Once they control how you squirt, they'll also want to control how you bleed, cry, drool, excrete, hurl, sneeze, spew, spit, and sweat. No gland or secretion will be above suspicion. You can't profess liberty and regulate everything people do. Why not let nature regulate itself? Swapping saliva with a stranger is only fun the first few times. Kisses become something you only want to share with those beloved, sex only with intimates. Only through constant denial do men begin to seek other partners. Affairs and intimacy are nobody's business but those involved. Churches can only advise on these issues, neither condemn nor indict, powerless to weed out bad actors, including pederast priests. When State gets involved with a woman's choice, you can bet an end of freedom is near, just as it already is in China. Rape? What's bad about it is its hostile assault, mental cruelty, potential for pregnancy, and transmission of disease, not so much its sexual component. Food has undergone a similar reorientation, a guilty pleasure to enjoy alone, to watch being prepared late at night on television so no one sees what you're doing. Like sex, food is a drug, so addictive man can never get enough. Those who indulge wear its effects as if a scarlet letter that marks them as weak willed targets for derision, scams, and spam. Mere curiosity will deluge your inbox with embarrassment.

Had to rethink this eating thing. There must be a way of satisfying your hunger by eating well, and, concurrently, maintaining low body weight. For sure, it's in your choice of food stuffs, portion sizes, and their preparation. Chinese stir fry is pretty good when it doesn't use too much fat, satisfies for a while, but doesn't stick with you. This is why rice is such an important foodstuff, increases estrogen, elevates mood, fuels muscles with glycogen, might even be a reason that Eastern philosophies differ from Western. Chinese takeout food packaging is often ecologically sound. Containers they use are cardboard made from a renewable source, wood pulp—some handles are metal, but need not be—

and break down in a landfill, yet could be recycled, if people unfolded and washed. Utensils are usually bamboo, along with wood pulp bags and napkins. Stir fry is generally minimally processed, tasty and wholesome. Fast food chains have a lot to learn with their boxes and cups made of horrid Styrofoam, which presents little chance for recycling; drink covers and utensils are throwaway polystyrene, petroleum based plastic. Their unimaginative, bland food is high in both fat and salt and seldom fresh. Stir frying is a way to balance nutrients, infuse interest, overcome blandness. Beans? Rice paste? Sprouts? Tofu? Falafels of chick peas do have flavor that frying heightens, although deep frying adds a lot of unnecessary calories. Indians add lots of spice to enhance their curries and ragouts. Ayurvedics prepare food to stimulate all 6 taste centers—astrigent, bitter, pungent, salty, sour, sweet—thereby attaining sattva by balancing nutrition with sensory appeal. Flavorful vegetables in combinations might do it. But which ones? Who knew you can cook veggies with fruit juice to enhance flavor? A bit of chutney in a salad makes a low carb, satisfying meal. One could invent a whole new scientific system of cooking previously unimagined if provided with all nutritional facts and foodstuffs as yet unknown, which might even include insects. In highlands of Papua on special occasions, natives feast on sago palm maggots as if a delicacy; few of them survive to middle age, however.

One truth is plain: Prevention is far better than cures. Evidence suggests antioxidants overcome effects of free radicals that accelerate aging and may lead to cancer. People who do aerobics need more antioxidants than those who don't. Doesn't this imply that exercise must go hand in hand with eating right? Both are intertwined. If you're going to sit around, should you be eating any high potency foods at all? Certain trace minerals and natural compounds appear to boost immunity. In cases of accident, a healthier patient recovers sooner. Yet mental attitude has almost as much to do with physiology. A recent Nobel Laureate discovered simple dietary supplements that may prevent arthritis and heart disease. They will not market them, it's said, because so much money is made treating both. Wards are so jammed they can't save anyone, roll patients from ICU out into corridors to die. Once admitted, you can't leave your loved one's side to eat or sleep without risking an uncalled for operation or procedure. Novice doctors will do a potentially fatal spinal tap just to assuage their diagnostic curiosity. He personally witnessed all this; definitely happens all the time.

What does anyone know of illness and the mind? Niacin and other B vitamins appear to directly improve brain chemistry for substance abusers and schizophrenics. Vitamins could result in another form of addiction, suffering withdrawal when bottle's empty, and extremely large doses, as recommended by diet gurus and health nuts, can actually be toxic. Now they're arguing about sunshine, with ultraviolet in moderate doses a good source of Vitamin D, which counteracts too much calcium in diet. Skin cancer dangers are far fewer than hard to detect internal cancers, which kill over 500,000 each year. Bicyclists get their share of sunshine, unlike motorists, except perhaps those in convertibles.

Clearly there's much yet to learn. Human bodies are chemical factories and food their raw materials. People know more about manufacturing useless products than maintaining bodily equilibrium. Pundits preach how man should spend more time on spirituality than food since you're going to die soon anyway. Your quality of life is of no interest to them, your suffering a vein to mine. If there's really a fight it's to get researchers to form some reasonable scientific basis for diet versus activity and kick charlatans and quacks into history's gutter.

