

55. Heading Home

Bicycling is fine for a few, no many, miles. Then it gradually gets boring, tiring, uncomfortable, then just seems like time wasted. It's particularly gruesome when you've just finished a long ride and must go to church or some obligatory gathering when all you really want to do is crash and sleep. But you can't stop; not only are you physically addicted, you're totally seduced by its insidious rhythms and psychic release, just as for reading or writing, can't put it down, a page turner. People allude to sadomasochism, but that's not quite right. There's no sadism, unless you urge others to go beyond their comfort zones, as do saddle makers. And its masochism is overrated, more like mild bother abided for its benefits, akin to bellyaching about dieting. Legstrong's autobiography dubs it, "A sport of self abuse," but can't lotions and unguents be overused, too? In moderation, almost anything is tolerable. Excess heightens ill effects. Wrong saddle, and there's no right choice, pinches off blood vessels and nerves to your legs causing cramps and excruciating charley-horses. Feet get tender. Knees creak. Veins begin to shut down in trauma. If you're not careful, blood clots break off and float somewhere to cause damage or kill you. Plus sexual perversion, essential to S&M, is all but impossible with lower back strain and numb appendages.

Spanners may be bicyclists; many pierced metrosexuals hang back in shadows or round out pelaton, but one need not identify with them. Perverse people like anything perverse, over indulgence in extreme sport, food, odd clothing, not just kinky sex. Filling the background are all those demons, nobody you'd want to meet, personalities one can't mesh with, with schadenfreude for other people's pain, souls headed elsewhere. Facts be known, cycling isn't quite normal and recommending it slaps down the old nostrum, "Do unto others," which presupposes you'd avoid suffering yourself. Who seeks crucifixion except someone with a messianic complex? Any notion of nobly embracing pain denies the pleasure principle, harks back to Spartans and Stoics, rigors imposed on citizens by uncaring patriarchs. But everyone can handle some or not another child would be born or raised. Once you've biked long enough, atoms jiggling and mixing, aversion disappears and real metamorphosis commences, which leaves you a silent, spent specter, half human, half machine, as explained by clever policemen in Flann O'Brien's postmodern metafiction. To think you once thought bicycling was simple suddenly seems too simplistic a belief to you.

Bicycling makes you so miserable you question everything. Never an alpha, never better than beta, he chose it as a topic because it *was* common, deselected, lonesome, vulgar; through it he'd be forever grouped among supposed troublemakers and vandals. The seamy underbelly of bicycling culture is home to homosexuals, obsessives, pierced and tattooed individualists, risk taking messengers, and vagrant wraiths, not stodgy, straight stalwarts of society like him. Who champions anti-intellectuals, disenfranchised outsiders, ordinary men and women? Few read and none cares. His was a mission doomed to failure. You can't make money with a book like this. Sales, if any, would eventually result in lawsuits, so lawyer's fees will absorb profits. Formal publishing houses wouldn't touch it and print-on-demand self publishing websites demand writers avoid controversy of any kind. Fear of reprisals is why you never hear the truth, except in ephemeral blogs that quickly disappear.

What you've wrestled with so far is an exposé of everything, one man's take on entire World, perhaps simply a village idiot who can't see the emperor's new clothes. It's a self-acknowledged failure, since it's solitary, as obscure as a De Selby treatise footnoted by O'Brien. For every individual lucky to survive long enough, life's journey begins at infantile preoccupations, passes through stages of self aware, vaguely disturbed, gradually focused, intensely focused, reaches an epiphany, then dissolves again into aged dementia. Only the truly enlightened realize that these sprockets fall into place on a chain of wonderful interactions with other people of every age, color, creed, nationality, and preference. Hermits have denied their own life force. Misanthropes and money grabbers betray only themselves. Hens and roosters, many cackle, crow, preen and strut in defensive postures that drives off possible empathy. Despite all these complaints, he wouldn't trade human interaction for anything, not comfort, health, safety or sanity. In an overcrowded World, did he really have a choice?

The transparent sanctimony of his opinions begged an interesting question: Can reality ever be known by any individual? Mensa mentats with 200+ IQs probably hadn't considered half of what he said. How many even noticed that he mentioned every connotation of both bike and chain? Or that they're metaphors of freedom and responsibility? Everyone concentrates on exploiting nature. Nobody struggles with the nature of reality itself, how you accurately perceive its causes and effects, how you actually fit into it. Too tough to do? Millions of books didn't make a dent. Words don't satisfy. Only loving care given and received and hope it brings

mean anything. Takes so little to defuse hate and spread hope, just a couple of words, but what have you done to deserve any?

Having now bashed all art forms, both major political parties, churches, hollow rituals, marriage, most charitable foundations, pampered pets, and paradigms of existence to which all people cling to with vehement prejudice, Al didn't expect a friend in the World. This was how it should be, since who tried to accommodate his uniqueness, befriend him, understand his viewpoints? No use asking for names of miscreants to accuse. You yourself are to blame, either directly or indirectly, everyone who embraces current, doomed paradigm. Misguided citizens, who figure they're getting ripped off by taxes paid for social programs, want to libel liberals and New Deal policies long since abandoned. You ought to incriminate current governors, lawmakers, ministers, presidents, and their wasteful practices, but ultimately yourselves for electing and not recalling these crooks and incompetents, for subrogating duties to begin with. In a democracy, your collective will is supposed to be in charge. You've already got a system that works, it just needs to be run at regular intervals. It is an *automobile*, which, despite its name, doesn't run all by itself, but requires constant course correcting, priming, primping and servicing. Like a car, you should be constantly reevaluating whether government is worth keeping. Instead you cower from complexity and hire specialists to fix what really isn't broken.

Everyone's privately suffers their own problems. To have a friend you must be a friend, but giving of yourself requires a receptive recipient. Not even couples get along well. At some point in a relationship you can let your hair down and terrify no more. Until then you cage your inner animal or make enemies. Had he been too quiet for too long? Never drew attention? Not enough of a squeaky wheel? Too often hoped, prayed, put God in the driver's seat, and went along for the ride? Too self reliant? Or was all this a fantasy? Had he chosen his career because he was cowardly and lazy? It did get him through his 30's and 40's, but playing it safe goes nowhere. Was it time to retreat again? Say anything, someone pays. Do you want to spend the rest of your life in a cage? If you don't confront a bully, bully makes policy. No, as long as he drew breath, he would challenge conventions and dare to dream of social evolution while all around civilization crumbles. Fun to ridicule, but with what do you replace traditions? Tear it all down, all you have is rubble.

You can't withdraw forever, because this itself will kill you. Ignoring nagging detractors and playing it safe, in 1836 Houston directed a persistent retreat from Mexico's well equipped

anti-insurrection force. Open ground would not favor Texans and their outnumbered, ragtag band. In the swamps of San Jacinto, Texas unexpectedly turned to fight and quickly cut down Santa Ana's entire army. Military tacticians appreciate how movement and place affect battle results. Never give up high ground or let yourself be maneuvered into or rashly submit to terms of combat for which you're not prepared. Do remember massacres at the Alamo and Goliad. Pick your battles, when and where, if you can. Gather strength in numbers. But prepare now, because a battle is surely coming your way in this escalating, ongoing class war.

At the moment, he was too tired to pull any more together, soaked up too much input, galling hypocrisies, pain, sunshine. After thinking about such issues for a lifetime, decided there simply were no solutions. This is how dying a thousand deaths reads. Had seen it all, turned over every stone. Never planned to live to 56 years old, 4 more than Bruno, 3 more than Descartes. Once you exceed double nickels in age or speed, you grow exponentially more dangerous with each additional increment. A writer lives amidst absurdity and imperfection, it's been said. A writer can be courageous, a hero beaten and bloody, clinging to a thread of hope, crawling to perform a last desperate selfless act, to prove the impossible really exists. But chasing truth just leads to alienation and madness. Bono asks, "How far you goin' to go before you lose your way back home?" He was fed up with this cycle: write, realize you're not quite right, get another idea that supersedes what's already written, strike out passages, start anew. You might achieve something incredible but nobody around you possesses intelligence to comprehend it. Or maybe everybody else has already deliberated on all this and risen above desperation; you're just a lone aberrant suffering for nothing. Was any reader worth his spending 10 years of his life doing so? One can only hope, and an unfinished mission does propel one onward, refocuses attention on something more worthwhile than suicide or TV. Because everything is connected, it's suspended in a jellylike goop, which makes it difficult to move around without destroying this supporting medium. It's delicate, slippery, and so requires intensive care. Why try at all?

The Dalai Lama identifies 3 roots of all conflict and unhappiness: Craving, Anger, and Delusion, CAD, curiously also an acronym for Computer Assisted Design, yet another source of unhappiness. Whenever you get mad, think CAD. Bicycling is a way to explore all 3 in intimate detail, wallow in them. Saddle time qualifies you to extrapolate anthropologically how these emotions affect all behaviors. May even turn a bicyclist into a cad, a faithless ma-

nipulator. Take suffering: People run away from it. Mild annoyances abound in cycling, so people avoid it. They crave comfort and get angry when it isn't served up bountifully and instantly. So, who's supposed to attend your every need and whim, fluff your pillow, put a chocolate mint on it? Slaves? Those who think they should be served like royalty are delusional. Do it yourself. Those in power got there by knowing how to profit from deluding people into anger and craving. If you're going to crave anything let it be an end to man's inhumanity. "When there is no place for justice and honesty... the weak are the first to suffer. The resentments resulting from such inequity ultimately affect everyone adversely." That's right, rudeness revisits rude and their offspring. It's the best reason of all to act civilly: Disrespect spreads like a plague. Brilliant observations, but, after all, Dalai Lama *is* the spiritual guide for a religion practiced by five million Tibetans and throngs of sympathizers, a steadfast arbiter despite exile, and, yes, theocrat who blends politics and religion. Nonthreatening, self-effacing theocrats are deemed okay. States never preside over what's innate, only drive it underground. You can deport the body but not the flame. A tenacious weed, truth resurfaces no matter how much concrete you pour over it.

CAD sounds easy to give up until you consider what that entails: No more false notions of material possessions, privacy, righteous indignation over those who take more than their share, or self-sufficiency. You work so hard to get heard, then want to crawl under a rock of privacy? You'd have to depend upon and trust others. Nobody can survive on their own. If you dare believe a poet, Eluard said, "We'll not reach our goals one by one but in pairs." Things only work when people work together. So much for Social Darwinism of Reaganomics, where all resources flow into a single preordained pocket, and everyone else starves. Without love, life is a sad, slow march to death. With, it's an ecstatic, happy race. Sometimes you need a *time out* to reconsider your path.

By not welcoming the disaffected, you fortify their positions as outsiders, who rebel against you and spout what you think are obscenities you don't want to hear because you know they're right but don't care. You create assassins for yourself. Too cruel? One might question how this message is delivered, but not the truth in what's said. Cheaters never want you to look at things in any way but how they've rationalized their own behavior. Doctrines demand that you suspend logic and reason and unconsciously follow. Simple truths send people scrambling in a mad panic, holding their ears, shouting speaker down. That's how you can identify it. If most are

mildly amused, you can bet it's only what they've already agree on, no divine revelation. When you believe you're right and offend almost everyone, you're probably on the right track. There's no way to actually prove anything to yourself. Believing nothing, shutting up, and sparing others feelings will, however, stand you in good stead, if you crave security. If you expect to explore truth, you go alone amidst unknown dangers, run through crossfire without cover, walk a razor's edge. With only courage, determination and truth as weapons, you will surely bring down the powers that be or die trying. In a crazy World, one can chose any path; makes no difference, as that observant Cheshire Cat correctly advised. Many choose a quiet existence, fear being crucified by public opinion. Not noble, but practical, selfish. Gathering your thoughts is not so special. All that talk of seeking truths on mountain tops or through blood and tears is a smoke screen. *Truth* is so obvious people just can't believe it's that simple. Burroughs quipped correctly, "It's all in your head." Why get despondent over it? Just pick a philosophy, stick to it, and watch what happens. By grabbing onto something, you begin to notice anything that contradicts or supports, or, in other words, you become *alive and attentive*. Any foothold becomes a relativistic reference point past which input flows; it enables you to sort out what's meaningful. Good to be alive, a spiritual gift beyond anything material. Can't wait for revelations out of the blue. Got to be working on something.

The vast majority ride on tracks with blinders, neither deviating from their prescribed course or noticing spur lines, forget they have a choice that demands to be exercised. They are repaid with failure of democracy, rape and sellout of a nation, and ultimate rule by dictators. Americans are entitled to do nothing, even when it's their duty to participate, not only for society's sake, whole World's sake, but their very own. Psychic makeups constitute a vast set that includes artistic temperaments, emotional intelligence, ethereal enlightenment, and mathematical shrewdness. You can only drive what's already there. Society ought to value all genius no matter how it manifests itself. Artistic deviants (make no difference) get more notice than straight activists (upset apple carts). People with compulsions to bisect horses and mount under glass, create time dilation multi-montages, photograph naughty boys or shaved genitalia, or wrap shorelines with crystalline plastic are into private phantasms that are quickly forgotten upon awakening. Van Gogh departures require old souls with unique sensibilities and often involve mutilated ear lobes or worse. Garcia finger-picked a guitar as if it were a banjo and shot heroin. Hendrix played lefty and

upside down and popped pills like peanuts. Glorious Gonzo is gone from drink, drugs and suicide. Those who cultivate their own unique sensibilities are reviled, unappreciated, wind up isolated; they sever all supportive ties. The mad writhe in their own madness. A few lucky ones endure, enough to eke out a living. Don't mourn or praise them. Learn from them. You can't get into their trips, designed by and for them alone, and escape unscathed. It's a rabbit hole you're likely to fall down irrevocably if you're curious.

Silence, too, is fragile. While seeking enlightenment, only doing matters, forms a conceptual basis for change. For Tommy, pivotal experience that led to revelation was playing pinball. For him, it was riding a bicycle, 2-wheeled humiliation. With nothing better to do, a quarter of a million young men rode boxcars during Great Depression; many fell to their death or were murdered for their shoes, a priceless commodity to filthy vagrants who had to keep moving, mostly on foot. Clack and sway became their lonesome lullaby along an iron road that lead nowhere, thousands of miles around and back to whatever they ran away from, more deprivation and hunger at home. Their being out begging shamed a nation into action. FDR founded Civilian Conservation Corps and WPA, meager fortunes, but better than none, with desirable results of forests, parks, and sidewalks, better than a country totally defiled by just roads. It doesn't make any difference what experience is or was. Doing anything intently creates change, embarrasses those who are too cozy, rewires brain. If you're going to do something, it might just as well be something worthwhile. Help speed along a medical breakthroughs. Collect wild plants from future construction sites—as activists in Michigan were doing—and replant them along greenways. Every year he accumulated seeds from his garden's 100 species and scattered them along bikeways, but cities needed to prepare and designate beds for that to work well. Then he could urge other gardeners to copy this flitting about in parks to extend parklike settings, turn everywhere into a garden. You might latch onto whatever interests you and make yourself known to those who have similar interests.

When you devote your life to considering reality, you're left with some odd feeling of omniscience. But, if you persist a little longer, you can see how it's made of a thin sheet of spun sugar, so brittle it falls into a zillion pieces at slightest touch, back into obscurity from which you summoned it. Square bubbles do not naturally form, do only under highly specific conditions and then only if hundreds of interrupting influences temporarily fail to intervene. Similarly, each nervous network performs for a while,

then it falls apart. Socrates didn't sprint to this conclusion, but carefully deduced it over time until it became an intolerable situation. Supreme commanders can't have someone so insightful freely questioning their legitimacy. Can't delve very deep if you want to discuss everything there is, just skim surface, stone skipping on ocean waves. Self awareness is a room with no doors or furniture, no dusty recesses left to explore, empty. To be really alive is to strive to get half as close to truth, to be moving in the right direction, at least, but never arrive. Today, that's something nearly everyone has forsaken. Everything good about humanity is founded on exploring. Causing confrontation, chasing darkness, or lamenting loss may address artistic or practical purposes, but not spiritual, which, while personal, concerns mutual well-being. Why do you think lazy morons join cults? Thinking for yourself is hard work.

The 5th dimensional being has gained an understanding of humanism, science, and spirituality, the 3 key modes of cognition, and integrated them into a balanced whole, no part of this intellectual trinity denied: each equally exalted, not fused, but elevated by effects one has upon others. Each causes evolutionary change, destroys then rebuilds the next. They're inherent in every sane human. Performing and visual arts are not just *nice to have*, they are essential to quality of life. Dances and songs are a celebration of being. Gospel music makes you feel good about your plight. Humor in music makes you laugh, releases endorphins for well-being. Frank Zappa and PDQ Bach remind you not to take yourself too seriously. Civilization depends on technological solutions to demanding problems of limited resources and energy needs. Science shouldn't serve to make money, a pointless enterprise, but to improve living conditions, just like art forms and religions. But science will never fully explain where mankind came from or where it's bound. Without spirituality, there's no hope your efforts will amount to anything of value. Any preoccupation on any mode at the expense of another races straight into an impasse, as does all specialization. Truth reigns supreme, but no uniform way of thinking can arrive at it. God may equal truth to you, should you chose to define it that way, but in that construct God gave you a an artistic bent, a brain, capacity for knowledge, and a sense of community, some of which will certainly remain mysterious.

Renaissance ideal called for an individual to combine all forms of inquiry: humanism, newly found science, obedience to god. While this ideal was pursued, look at what it produced: Circumnavigation of globe, contact with unknown civilizations, subsequent advancements on every front including new technologies.

It was not without catastrophes and horrors, massacres and mayhem, which are always more likely when reason is abandoned. Those who open their minds to beauty and truth can't be guilty of misery, slavery, strife, or whatever else stems directly from inhumanity. Quite the opposite. They're the only ones who keep mankind from destroying itself. Thus he revered efforts put in by any artist or scientist. Majority doesn't acknowledge art, music, or new directions, but they obviously pay costs for wars without protest.

Society and you filled this capacitor, so, once full, he zapped back an idea book to you, whether you want it or not. It's the book you wrote. Proud of it? You let history sweep all that's important under a rug; all he did was snatch rug away. It's full of the stuff that stuck, the sum of society's choices. Menninger speaks of "Talking it out" as a major coping device before a gradual disorganization leads to neurosis. You need to write a huge book to talk out all the crimes of society against you. A least an author can choose gentle catharsis over neurotic guilt that ends in serial murder.

All those gloomy poets you published, all your elevation of insanity as life-style, why not expect a profusion of more of the same? "You soon forget the tunes you play, because that is the part you throw away," sang Tom Waits, so true from an artist's viewpoint, scribble and toss off, but not for admirers', who live with constant reminders that surround. It was also Waits who sang, "Broken bicycles/Old busted chains.../all the things that you've given me/Will always stay/Broken, but I'll never throw them away." If prevailing negative attitudes were his only complaint, people would be justified in telling him to shut up. But they beget really bad behaviors: murder, rape, senseless violence against innocents, self loathing so intense it can only explode as suicide or terrorism. As long as people absorb hatred, perverted art forms and resentment will percolate up to the surface and prompt more of the same. Perhaps one in a billion will break the cycle.

He definitely meant to break it all down: civil disservice, charities, churches, corporations, education, family values, institutions, marriage, mercantile motivations, parasitic prose, production companies, and selling networks running over the same old ground with the same old fears. But sweep it all away? Start from scratch? Anarchists bend to bomb blasts and cannon fire, when they should enjoy dancing to sweet music. Enough with destroyers and terrorists—everything's already a mess—let gentle regenerators get busy. Better to build upon what works, preserve what's sensible. What would a people gradually devoid of all this become? Cheerful? Curious? Experimental? The fact that some humans are doggedly

optimistic says something about a basic survival instinct that tempers reason with blind faith. With global warming, there are already twice as many hurricanes and tornadoes; rainfall has shifted away from where its needed to where you can't grow. If farmers listened to long term weather reports, they'd never plant. Everyone would starve. A poor harvest is better than none. Deadly dangers and excruciating pain of pregnancy don't stop wives from conceiving children, even after first, second or too many, although some elect Caesarian section rather than absorb more pain. Don't need much to live well, only fuel for the body, mind and spirit is all. There is no panacea for what ails this World. There is only many small gestures of compassion, so many they level life's cruel scales.

What he believed in was a beautiful balance. He stood smack dab in the middle of everything; not artistic, spiritual or technical enough to garner any cult following, just like almost everyone else, but his vision was completely unobstructed. Obviously, taking about oneself constantly is excessive. Focusing on only good points is phoniness. It's politically correct to disregard character flaws and focus on situations, "Not the criminal but the crime is to blame." That doesn't help anyone, only serves observers, preserves their schemes. They say, "Don't bother to complain; nobody listens and you feel worse afterwards." Wrong! Complaint is the beginning of productive growth. Swear complaints against criminals, by all means, if you dare. Shared pain is as beautiful as shared joy, as long as it's not all pain and no joy. Compliments and encouragement are wonderful motivators. Some exalt their pain as a badge of honor. You can pick up facts amidst rants. But writing was something you do instead of doing. He was done with that. Bless those who do right things. Don't have to complain about them, fewer words, no headaches, no massive effort to sort it all out postmortem.

When poor transactions occur, the only thing you can do is cause a spectacle or speak of it to many others. Say at a market, when without warning they change policy to exclude a coupon or charge extra for something without properly marking it. Weigh consequences of coupons: return too little, support a corrupt system that overcharges everyone so a few get a tiny discount, waste time. Do you think someone in Minnesota actually makes a living counting them? Makes no sense whatever. During years he used them, became obese buying 2 for 1 at a discount. Why not complain about high prices and end coupons? What businesses fear most is a loss of revenue. Your correspondence to home office is patronizingly acknowledged, glad you didn't make your issue public. They really don't appreciate you making a scene, picketing

store, spreading word, whatever disrupts their trap. If you aren't satisfied, it becomes your duty as a citizen and right of democracy to warn others not to make same mistakes.

His dad demonstrably complained once, got up and demanded to get off a flight already beginning to taxi. Attendant tried to calm, dissuade. "What's the problem? We all have preflight jitters. Please take your seat." Dad demanded to see pilot, said plane was in peril. Now, ordinarily, this wouldn't get you anywhere, except dad was also a pilot and had noticed hydraulic fluid pouring from wing, which he dutifully, unabashedly pointed out to captain, who said, "Sorry. There was no panel indication. You are entirely right. Good thing you were seated here." Plane returned to terminal. Dad was given a standing ovation by other grateful, teary-eyed passengers. Nice etiquette would've killed everybody given these circumstances. Doesn't mean you should bitch about trivialities, just pick your issues. You are the senses—ears, eyes, hands, nose—of society. Reminds you of Dud's bid to hand over American ports to Dubai and make it impossible for you to protect yourselves. If you put Join McCheese in, they'll get 'er done, go the last few steps to final sellout to foreign interests.

Good leaders are only slightly ahead of followers, thankful for their proximity to life. With bad officials, differences aren't honored and distance is increased. What's the 1st sign of a dictatorship? Elevate conformity. Dictators stand truly alone: disrespected, feared, friendless. Rarely do they reflect on this to gain insight. Mythically, a story is repeated of 3 letters that Stalin gave Krushchev. The 1st was enigmatically marked, to paraphrase, "Open only in a national emergency," 2nd, "Open only in an international crisis," and 3rd, "When all else fails!" An emergency arose, and Krushchev recalled Stalin's letters. Nikita opened 1st to find simple advice, "Blame everything on me." Krushchev did and it proved practical. In an international crisis, Nikita reached for 2nd letter. The panacea? "Blame everything on me." Again, success. When a situation recommended 3rd letter be opened, the message correctly predicted its gravity and grimly suggested, "Prepare 3 letters." Truly alone: totally the wrong approach. Who says brutal, murderous dictators have no sense of humor? But who believes anecdotes and rumors?

Humor deflects momentary horror. But the arrogant sorely lack a capacity for self-deprecation. Leaders are humble, dictators are not. Dictators grab; leaders give. Leaders honor, cherish and encourage diversity. Therein lies the difference. Diversity spawned a whole genre of arts and film immersed in confusion, which breeds fear and uncertainty. But absolute confidence also brings conflict.

Emotional responses may run through a range from fear to love, but mostly they're somewhere in between, delightfully infatuated for a moment, mildly amused, vaguely repulsed. You assuredly may engage in such lukewarm emotionality without being put in a straightjacket, shot up with anti-psychotics, or slapped with a restraining order.

To give, let go, surrender is to love. He tried to unfold his love, but nobody returned any. Artists demand attention, will not just shrink into background. Sometimes subdued mood instrumentals are better than listening to intense lyricism. By season he preferred certain artists, Winters with a cup of cocoa and ice princess, Summers with a crowing cherry, stand up in Spring with reggae wailers. Music manifests a strange familiarity despite distances of space and time, plucks artists at a certain ripeness, stores them for later consumption, like cryogenics, frozen in fleeting fame, an echo of a certain moment in time. Rather feckless and non-instructive to buy a *best of* CD. Where were you when artist was eager to please, growing, struggling, and totally vital? What did you miss? Art need not be pretty. Some superficially ugly art is brittle like shards of flint, deep, thought provoking, with a beauty that grows on you. He wouldn't give 2¢ for a pretty face fronting an empty mind. Unbeautiful people have to try a lot harder to break through or get any recognition at all. Some songs don't make best compilations, but say a lot more about the person, not the artist. It's totally possible for you to pay a clerk who used to be in band on CD you've just bought. People of minor fame float among general populations never having become rich after signing bad contracts, now doing as mundane a daily drudge as anyone, bottling plants and fish canneries, jamming on weekends, possibly.

Björk once said, "Sometimes after a long time you end up back where you started." You do reach a peak and then descend back along path you took. Like Alexandra in Monk's opera *Atlas*, you return to origins but you're somehow different, more accepting of a prosaic life-style, Marco Polo in Venice. Origins never change, you grow strange. He recalled a tranquil title, "You can never go home". Didn't want to go back to childhood haunts, cubicle, old neighborhood, or perpetual sea: no memories worth reliving.

The next great frontier is not land, sea, or space, all probed by man already, at least superficially. No, it's sociological: agreeing on civil treatment for all people, focusing on what works best for entire World going forward, forgetting this stupid game of getting ahead at another's expense, losing attitudes of national identity, racial purity or superiority, overthrowing monarchs and tyrants.

Most important is getting over the notion that this seems horribly naïve. People asked him, “Where are you coming from?” Better they worry “Where are you going to?” Social injustice threatens entire society. If great powers simply began serving interests of all, not just themselves, all would be better off. Terrorism would subside. Unlike CEOs, most people aren’t looking for a handout, are satisfied with what they have, worried that whatever system is in place will ultimately fail them, but not frightened. They have some kind of *faith* in others with aligning goals, as if there were many of like minds out there. This is unprofitable. Only *conflict*, extremism, and faithlessness are profitable. Those who would defraud you create fears that lead to conflict in news, politics, religions, talk, even art—death metal, punk and rap—any unrealistic violent fantasy. Negative vibrations that permeate all culture result in pessimism, war nerves. Therefore, Hitler did achieve something, made World worse to live in back then and right now. But this is a new century, a new millennium. Only the piper at the gates of dawn can choose the tune. Everyone else has to pay. It’s up to mankind to look forward, put all that behind, revel in the fact that a new age has dawned. Time to be transformed, become globally involved, shed your skin, work in unison.

Here’s a unique stance: *don’t support* that which you can’t believe in. The single biggest power on this planet is people who stick together. They can decide for themselves what they’ll tolerate, then *boycott* anything that’s too controlling, extreme, manipulative or threatening. Majority of people can coexist without prejudice. They can’t be taken advantage of if they understand their collective power. The operant part of this is *caring* about public’s needs. Then everyone could ride a bicycle without fear. If that’s what it would take, bicycling must be an unreal expectation.

As links in a chain, cornerstones of life—science, self-exploration, and spirituality—come around regularly at frequent intervals. Juggling each, he’d never bow to power mad theocrats or theocentric humanism. He didn’t see life as otherworldly centric at all, but instead an internal homeostasis of here-now influx and outgo, each element possessing value, none dominant. Simply put, afterlife depends on how you act before, what you let in, what you put out, what you want now. Humanity made massive mistakes basing leadership on divine rights, giving church too much power, as well as trying to toss out all spirituality under communism. Any time you deny any 1 of these 3, no good comes of it. Each offsets the other in a mindscape. One must choose to apply a technology with complete insight and full exploration of ethical implications.

Doesn't lead to snap decisions, but considerate, diligent choices. You atone forever for what you botch in haste. Lives spin out of control when analytic principles are ignored, or humble introspection is suspended, or ugly greed leads to master-slave relationships where one perceives they are doing all the work while another lives easy off profits. One might not mind heavy lifting, but not when beneficiaries are standing around grumbling impatiently, unwilling to contribute. Working excessively steals from time spent conversing, dallying in gardens, welcoming fruits of another's labor offered in films, poetry, performing and visual arts, rounding out one's sense of connection with mankind. If anything, his book was an attempt to reinstate this ethic into the mix, demonstrate it's importance, get rest of World to socialize beyond deadly self-absorption, go out and play nicely. Building a better sandbox beats killing each other. "Touch me, but stop when I say."

Biggest problem with religion are oppressors who use spirituality as a way to stifle your wonder in a World that was created for all to enjoy. You know them; they prophecize damnation and doom. They think Evil and Good are a given, thus conflict is unavoidable. Perhaps not. What you might abhor someone else applauds. But that doesn't negate this premise. What does is the fact that ire can arise in the most moral person, who then takes a course of retribution against innocents. The lives of prophets and saints varied between self-denying asceticism and total absorption with World. The recommended way is to embrace World, live in joyful communion with humanity, nature, and spirit, worry about nothing. Embracing suffering can be a way to experience World in ever higher contrast. Just as certain people prefer to be pierced or spanked to sensitize nerve endings, others crawl through mud, deprive themselves, fast, endure hazings, overtraining, physical and verbal abuse, or torture to ready themselves in vain attempts at reaching increasing levels of superiority before more maiming and murder commence. At least they are alert and it's okay when it serves a greater good, as if anyone can define what that means.

Finding fault with everything? No just hierarchies hidden within institutions. Trouble with tradition is it long outlasts its purpose. Kosher taboos may have once protected, but now they have good refrigeration and sanitation. Religions once gave you a reason to hang on, now instead there are real causes, serious purposes, and wonderful adventures to fulfill any spiritual itch. Besides, life is so short, why should anyone limit their experiences to hollow spirituality with an unseen, seemingly uncaring god? God isn't there to protect you, you have to protect yourself. God isn't

there to give you what you want, you have to earn that yourself. If God expects your worship, does He worship you back? Where's the partnership? That's just not how it works. You don't do good because you want to curry favor with the Great Silent One, you do it to create good will, to expand your own mind, to expose parasites, to help the needy, to level playing field, to make World a better place. Mental and physical reasons abound without a meta-physical basis. You can be good because good makes more sense than a real or self imposed prison cell.

A righteous person defuses conflict, interacts with entire World, seeks win-win situations, stays compassionate, honest, selfless, withholds judgement, always impaired, especially his. That's what you should strive for, not rewards, not wealth. Be very suspicious of anyone who tries to shore up an argument based on God's Will. Who knows what that is? Who dares to speak for an omniscient being? And if they do, is what they're saying even the slightest bit intelligent or righteous as here defined? Better be prepared to answer tough questions. Alert and tingling with love, the ultimate joy, is certainly worth all your devotion. In creation myths He created a fantastic garden with every delight for you but you spoiled all that. How? Craving, delusion, greed, and the unnecessary anger they bring. Do not be afraid to hope for happiness. If there's a merciful God, that's what He always wanted for you. To those who pursue happiness for all She is not silent. Futility is no cause to give up hope. The hope most people wouldn't persist forever in being thoughtless jerks kept him alive.

There, it's said. Don't think ill of it. Few may be called to be martyrs or saints, but several billions are not. Everybody *is* charged with happiness and hope. Unnecessary pain, poverty, sickness and suffering can be prevented. Most people want that; a people undivided can accomplish what individuals can't imagine. He wouldn't act as an exiting moviegoer who spoils surprise for those arriving. The biggest surprises were yet to come, and they all consisted of achieving incredible things together with others. Isn't it time to make use of seven billion potential participants in a mission of global importance? Universal approval on only a few important issues could achieve unimaginable results. It's truly in your hands.

What's the meaning of life? Sort of a stupid question. It is what it is. You fight to survive, push to higher levels, struggle to ensure it's worth living. It's a bucket brigade that doses destructive fires with constructive passions. He knew he'd die soon from 1 of 3 leading causes of death—cancer, cardiovascular disease or traffic crash—only a matter of time. If Death can claim Princess Di in

World's safest vehicle, what chance does anyone have? So he'd fight, roar against, work to overcome causes. By the time most critics are middle-aged, they can't muster any more enthusiasm for worthy causes or resentment for follies. They can only pass this mantle to another generation, a generation that actually has a chance of achieving what all previous generations couldn't, global consciousness, mutual sustainability.

Bicycling, you expend so much effort and time you begin to believe you ought to be paid for it somehow, become a messenger, get a tax break, join police bike force, or write a book. Since nobody stops or warns them, cyclists spew millions of pages of repetitive paragraphs or songs, almost all about the same stuff: extolling its virtues, maintaining, racing, touring, yadda, yadda. They partake of physical activity, put it down on paper, seldom seek out expressions of precisely the same thing, which already festoon bookshelves and CD racks. Pleasures have all been said. Only the downside and ugly associations left out by marketers and proselytizers needed to be mentioned for a balanced viewpoint, and so he did.

For now, the road beckoned. It's a long lonesome ride by bicycle across continents, rivers, mountain ranges, a grail quest for a knight errant. Barred from interstates, it's the actual road Jack and Neal traveled, and later droned on and on about in book after book hypnotized by spell of tires clicking and humming across notches at regular intervals, like the clack of railroad tracks or keys clicking on a typewriter. It's a road without comforts of family and home, no soft chair, no word processor. It's a better road than Lewis and Clark traversed 2 centuries earlier and wrote about infecting others with wanderlust, but just as solitary and suicidal, maybe moreso. Getting away from home barely a few dozen miles was as much a grand adventure as crossing a continent, identical exposures and touch of ennui as an open road. But, at least you bed down well and need not wash your shorts in a gas station sink every night, unless that's your bliss. Any on-the-road yarn that includes bigger challenges, that point-of-no-return dread, adds drama, and may sell more copies, but is no more heroic. Going where no man ever has, well, that's another story altogether, something you practically have to visit another planet to do.

Nevertheless, roads hold allure, are the proper path for any seeker. As Wordsworth posed, "Who doth not love to follow with his eye/The windings of a public way?/...the lonely roads/Were open schools in which I daily read/With most delight the passions of mankind,/Whether by words, looks, sighs, or tears, revealed;/There saw into the depth of human souls,/Souls that appear to have no

depth at all/To careless eyes.../ There I heard,/From mouths of men
obscure and lowly, truths/Replete with honour; sounds in unison/
With loftiest promises of good and fair." Internet is a fair place to
exchange ideas, but devoid of pain, poison, stink or warmth, which
are crucial elements of truth among chain gangs of unwashed
workers along the roadside. Whoever is not out among fellow
humans, toiling together for a better future, is simply not alive. But
that doesn't ensure rewards. How can you be confident? Confi-
dence was okay when a man braved trials of nature without allies.
With so many more people all dependent upon each other, you can
only be alert, hopeful, labor toward cooperation, never expect any.

Restless, he conceived a plan. Sell his few belongings, buy a
camper, and use remaining proceeds for a future trip supplemented
by washing dishes for dinners or wrangling speaking engagements
for fuel and supplies in each area he'd visit. After having exhausted
all local roads, he imagined such a trip, 50 weeks, 50 states, 50 miles
each, 50 cubed, sort of. Leave New England in January, arrive in
Florida in Spring, California by midyear (DJ at SF's annual Bicycle
Music Festival?), Northern tier throughout Summer, Chicago by
September, clean up Central Midwest by November and a few New
England States as well as Hawaii in December. In a year, despite his
infirmities, he could easily bike these 2500 miles and drive 7500
miles between, day labor, do laundry, learn good routes from local
clubs, and record experiences for his next book, as if another book
wouldn't kill him to write, maybe mere rebuttals to smug dismissals
or retractions for things misrepresented in this. Falls into category,
Things to Do Before You Die, a list growing faster than time allotted.
Just to ride in a circle or stand momentarily in every country or on
every continent would be a delightful challenge. He put out a call
for any supply ship leaving for Antarctica upon which he could
work for round trip passage. People want fools to go on mad
quests, wish they could do it themselves; says something about
their desire to live *vitally* that so many don't seem to experience
under conditions to which they submit, as if it weren't possible.

Could he survive such a trip? Might one tempt fate given
enough karma on deposit? Road took the best of them: Abraham,
Janis, Jim, Jimi, John, Martin, Robert, the King. No, better wide
awake on the move greeting life, than static amidst nameless same-
ness, dead forever in silent oblivion. There's time enough to behave
like an ant on patrol gleaning selflessly for a cooperative, but never
enough to be a stubborn parasite sitting alone. Without another
project afoot, he felt like a drained capacitor, all experiential energy
that filled vessel now spent and nothing left worth preserving.

Needed to be somehow recharged from nature, take new voltage into his bones.

Batteries can't just be tossed into a landfill; they are toxic and must be recycled. Society's follies were toxic to souls. He recycled them into this book riddled with obscure allusions, puckish humor, self loathing, soul seeking, and twisted contradictions. Without knowing whether you'd miss most of its insights and mirth, its only possible good would be to get you puzzling about this mess called life. Shouldn't you have expected someone to come along and sweep? Isn't it all what most are thinking anyway? Should readers expect ego stroking? Should authors totally efface themselves? You are too arrogant if you expect your book to have any positive effect. Too humble undermines reader confidence. Either party can only hope to connect, find middle ground, level a stable balance. What do readers bring to the table, anyway? Without a payday, seems a rather lopsided arrangement to an author. His thousands of embedded rhymes should be expected rhetoric, tirade of a Baptist preacher. All this may have raged like a hurricane, threatened to overturn the vast ocean liner of civilization, but didn't, splashed as harmlessly as a ripple in a kiddie pool. If nobody cares much what poets think or write, it doesn't matter. All he knew was he wished nobody any ill, even those who treated him badly, especially them, since spirituality is found through suffering. They too shall suffer, assuredly, but not at his hands. No one can enforce conformity, morality, reciprocity, sensibility. You can only be yourself, hope others don't hate you for it, and let others do likewise. After much seeking he had found *forgiveness*, which comes as rain which you can't do without, what all those who create their own adventures "lost upon the road to peace" that Waits described finally discover.

The final leg of any trip is the most satisfying. Having begun hungry, you learn how to survive on new experiences, with more just over the next crest. Youth are into self gratification. Fulfilled, they expand beyond self, extend throughout entire species, procreate, protect progeny. Truly, home is straight out, the journey itself, an ideal never reached but a impetus upheld through the cooperation of strangers met and passed, or never met at all but enjoyed their having gone before you, their contributions having enriched all lives. Be a graceful traveler; pave every road you tread with good will. Quiet mass love soooo transcends any torrid affair of only two.

