

36. Measure of Shifting Sand

Suppose he could look it up, but Al didn't think any explanation would reveal truth of it. He found the whole idea of daylight savings *totally ridiculous*. Any idiot can see that any small electrical savings were far offset by confusion and waste caused by these shifts, which has so far eluded accountancy. Perhaps this was because it hasn't worked in favor of power utilities to do so, but not consumer. What about days when it's overcast? Was everyone supposed to leave lights off? They could have simply shifted a half hour and left it there. Urban myth says this practice was adopted so people could fit in 9 holes of golf after work. Society was literally railroaded into standardized time despite derision of press and opposition of farmers. Germany first adopted Daylight Savings Time so they could efficiently build infrastructure to wage World War I. Industrialists and shopkeepers pushed it into existence elsewhere for commercial gain. None of these justifications satisfy. When you work in a bunker, you don't know whether it's day or night anyway. Time shifts make you groggy which causes errors, such as plane crashes. DST creates no jobs, makes life more difficult, and results in costs that consumers and taxpayers pay. Now they want to shift this shift into November, which will mess up microchips which automatically make shift in October. Better to avoid clocks altogether. Only those racing to rape nature need a timepiece.

Why not just observe Greenwich Mean Time everywhere all the time? You might get up at midnight and go to bed at noon in your zone. So what? Are minds so feeble as to not to be able to adapt to such a puny concept? Going back and forth to Europe, these erratic time shifts really complicate things: cause accidents, require resetting watch for local time then hurrying to make and totally missing flights, worrying about dissimilar strategies among countries—who's DST this month and who's not? There's productivity loss due to tiredness, shipping delays, spoilage. Just apply GMT universally. If anything, it would get people to think globally.

A metric system of weights and measures and standard time is long past due in a shrinking World surveyed in chains of 66 feet that you can circle in less than 24 hours. There was no room for acres, cubits, fathoms, inches, knots, leagues, measuring chains, picas, or rhodialons—a term he coined for a purposefully ill defined area about the same size as nation's smallest state, Rhode Island—

all dimensions with metric equivalents. Phrases as “four score and seven” had fallen into disuse, but people don’t make a decisive change when there’s no apparent incentive, although European Union uses it against trading partners and won’t buy anything that isn’t metric, even barred literature that wasn’t. If people knew what it actually costs them in higher consumer prices and lower sales, then they’d begin to care. Some estimate DST ultimately costs hundreds of millions annually. Who profits from this? Changing would incur a 1-time expense, easily amortized in less than 2 years. Besides, websites available to entire World could quote with precision their hours of operation for, say, technical support, instead of inconveniencing majority who doesn’t yet know support is a local phenomena centered on Mumbai, India.

Time is the ultimate evil. No, greed, you say? Time is money, money is lust, lust is greed. So time *is* greed, logically, both the same yawning abyss into Hell. All misfortune comes from things not happening *at the moment* they should. “Why wasn’t I born earlier?” he asked. “Why didn’t I do this then?” Sorrows come from mistakes or omissions too late to correct. Death is only bad when it’s premature; some cultures present death as a reasonable alternative to abiding dishonorably or dragging out an inescapable end. Kevorkian made a cottage industry of easing terminal patients out with dignity. Given a choice, many would choose to cease to be, simply vanish, as long as process wasn’t unduly painful; just a pin prick, and all suffering vanishes. Time ceases for you. Or does it? Time is the cruelest dictator that ever existed or will. You think brutality will end after death? Ha! Your legacy awaits. If time exists only to ensure that everything doesn’t happen at once, it opposes connection, harmony, and unity. Time underlies chaos. Meanwhile, bills collect. Just being alive, they steal from you, tax you, totally decimate you. What stinks about taxes is you pay them and get little or nothing in return when those in office don’t represent your interests. He didn’t want to pay to wage illegal wars. No matter how little you ask for or require, outflow remains, like a meter that runs whether or not you’re using any electricity, even increases with steady inflation. \$5,000 used to buy a home, now doesn’t even pay for an elite bicycle after relentless inflation.

Legacy, what does it mean? Something left behind, possibly money, property or work of which your ancestors can take advantage. You are destined never to benefit personally beyond survival from all your efforts. Why should the next generation? Anyway, if you have a dozen kids, any legacy is spread pretty thin, hardly a

nest egg for them to get started. But modern medicine extends lives, so this transaction occurs so late in life as to preclude any beneficial effects. Heirs collect after retirement or join retired still living. If they haven't made it on their own by then, any bequest will be absorbed by creditors, estate assessments, and legal fees. Meanwhile, promised inheritances are dwindled by inflation, medical bills, nursing homes and other unforeseen costs. Waiting for a legacy is at best a dubious business.

A better measure of a man's contribution to society should be total taxes paid rather than evaded. If governments were more efficient distributing revenues on worthy projects, then philanthropists wouldn't object to swelling public coffers. American presidents once borrowed money from tycoons to keep government running. Back then, government wasn't allowed to run up trillion dollar deficits through wasteful road construction and unjustified warfare. A personal fortune big enough to make loans that make a difference to an entire nation demands a responsibility to do so. Nowadays, nobody's that rich.

Parasites contribute nothing but slowly suck life from host over time. Parasites surround. Government levies taxes whether or not you have income. This is patently unfair, since avocation availability is a state's responsibility. It's a fault of state policy that there are fewer jobs than ever. Nature stands against you. Must policies follow suit? Things tend toward entropic decay no matter how carefully you preserve them. Dwellings rot, materials degrade, paint peels. Insurance collects premiums. Microbes spoil food. Charities renew appeals once you contribute. Novels but slowly appear based on a writer's concentration, typing skill, and will to stay awake to probe the depths of psyche, eyes closed, fingers caressing keys.

Liked to keep his fingernails groomed and short, 1 cm from arch to outside radius, not just to avoid keyboard hang ups but tearing delicate folds of flesh as well. Fingertips were among the tools of his trade. There's a famous story of two lumberjacks. Mike labored steadily, but Ike took breaks at intervals. Mike noticed that Ike's stack of wood was always bigger and wondered how that was possible. Ike explained, "I stop to sharpen my axe." Must keep your tools in peak condition to make good progress. What if your mind is your most important tool? Ignoring everything around you deadens not only your perceptual skills and strength to react, but makes you incapable of influencing policies that negate every effort you've taken to sharpen your axe. Your education is only as fruitful as how well it matches paradigm in place. Criminals are thriving. Seems the weed of crime is the only one bearing fruit lately.

Days come in thirds. Hard to juggle more than 3 balls. Too hard to conceive of a God as more than three parts. A third of each day is devoted to sleep, another industry, but what remains needs to be devoted to the 3 modes of thinking: art, science and spirituality. How you define them is up to you. Arts can include but certainly aren't limited to composing, crafts, dancing, knitting, music, painting, weaving, writing or zealously immersing yourself in expressions of them by other artists. Science is nothing more than gathering facts and testing them against constants, which can be applied toward anything including cooking, housecleaning, or theoretical physics. Spirituality is what you make of it: attending religious services, doing good deeds, donning sackcloth, lying prostrate in mud, participating in events, taking drugs, transcendental meditation, whatever it takes to get your mind to map unknown infinity. How you blend this triad is your business. Rastafarians inhale smoke of cannabis, ganja, qunubu, as has been done since Neolithic times, although it contains just as many carcinogens and toxins as tobacco.

Almost anything, especially bicycling, can be a prayer if done through love from a higher power, as in that ancient African saying, "When you pray, move your feet." Any divine goodness would want you to enjoy HIS creation, just as a gardener is gratified to share a garden at its peak glory. A contemporary spiritual sings, "As I ride my bike/with my safety helmet on.../it's not here or there or anywhere/But in speaking distance with God." Yes, play, pray, seek. You can't live without, just like you're ineffectual without rest, poor without industry, weak without sustenance. Natural sounds noble until you consider deadly bacteria, ocean's relentless cruelty, pestilent intrusions, and wild beasts hungry for protein and not particularly fussy from where it comes. You can't give yourself over to any single facet of physicality or mode of cognition. Life, like a 3-legged stool or trinity of a bicyclist between 2-wheels, only remains in balance by equal attention to all 3. Wait, if father, son and spirit were on a bicycle for three, who'd be steering? Silly... incorporeal beings don't need a bicycle to get around.

A single mosquito or spider can cause agony or death, conquer an organism a million times its size or weight. Mosquitoes are cowards, bite on back of neck or lower leg or wherever unlikely to get swatted. They are like thieves, note lack of vigilance, probe for weakness, or officers in clubs who hide what they're doing by never letting certain issues be aired. Does victory go to the most dedicated, powerful or swift? Combat strength of insects is in millions

of years of natural tools, numbers, selection, and successful instincts. Moreover, they are not endlessly at war, but momentarily fending off deterrents or finding sustenance. Bees don't want to sting, only to protect their hive, since to sting means to die. Diversity is a survival adaptation among humans, something to be encouraged, nurtured, protected. Being hopelessly different, so nonconformist as to preclude all exchange of information, may actually preserve species in some unknown way. But systems of men deliberately stuck in useless precepts—like applying antiquated measures or driving on wrong side of road—do nothing to create communities where diversity can coexist and save no lives. Individuality, modes of behavior, or personal ways of thinking don't matter as long as people can mesh adequately on things that do matter, such as but not limited to business regulation, medical practices, pandemic isolation, sanitation, transportation, time of day, and vaccine production. Of course, psychotics exist outside this normalcy and foster doubt. Repugnance for private preferences in leisure, religion or sexuality detracts from important discussions, like how to best apply trillions in tax revenue. Differences can be exploited as a basis of conflict from which someone profits.

When you're venomous, you get less email to answer. He had made it his policy that he'd answer all email but solicit little. It is an essential part of being human to answer someone, but you have to draw a line. Sometimes answering occupied entire days. If people wore out their privilege, he'd ramp up his bile and run them off. Or return curt replies. Let them pay for therapy elsewhere or retreat into tranquilizers. One needs survival strategies. Likewise, he wished people would honestly reply, "Tell me more", or "Too much detail", or "Try to remember to exclude me from all future discussions," rather than filter out or trash his email unread. Why ask a question if you don't want to know its answer? Conversation should be give and take, repeat what's said, then introduce a new idea. People don't know this anymore, talk but not align or convince, only hear their own voice and waste your time. You instantly know they don't respect you. Wasn't his time valuable? He had had intense distractions enough to fill decades and wanted to avoid medications, which deprive you of potency and make you stupid.

He once longed to extend time indefinitely. Doesn't everyone want to live forever? Alchemists and hermetics sought the philosopher's stone, not just to learn how to turn base metals into gold for endless wealth, but also to discover secrets of eternal life.

A neat package, living long and prospering well, it was, especially in times of pestilence and plague. While exploring this mania, they built a solid foundation for modern science: anatomy, astronomy, biology, chemistry, medicine, physics, physiology, and psychology. One must never disavow mania since it may produce important by-products. After centuries of development, they have, in actuality, doubled human life expectancy in industrialized countries—78 years in USA versus 66 worldwide, not counting abortions and miscarriages— and found ways to transform metals. Now people breed more, despoil more, multiply their negative impact, waste twice as many resources over a lifetime. Conceivably, a better plan is to live fast, die young, and leave a good looking corpse, as did the *blues jays*—James Dean, Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix, and Janis Joplin—who left unique contributions for fools to be amazed by in fullness of their humdrum extended existence. Unless tapped into some wonderful mystery that makes life incredibly livable, who'd want to live forever? And yet one's absorbing struggles are over all too quickly. Those with hope in an eternal afterlife can contemplate Milton's lines, "We shall for ever sit, Triumphant over Death, and Chance, and thee, O Time." The good die young because the bad, insured against everything, never take any chances, never touch humanity, never wallow in the filth of work.

After all is done and said, insights of poets may be just as important as those of scientists. Aren't poets struggling to express ineffable phenomena? Mankind lived without mechanization or vaccines until these last 100 years and thrived. They built vast cities, created regulations and standards, and dominated world solely upon human power. Science holds great promise, but only if mankind can afford technology's dramatic costs and planetary impact. Whether there's any afterlife or not, people collectively are somewhat in control of their fate. If they pollute beyond Earth's ability to heal, aren't they trading descendants' future for ephemeral convenience? Recalled Pardot Kynes, ecologist of Arrakis gone native, in Herbert's *Dune*, probably the first book to bring up terraforming, that is, manmade modifications that affect entire planet. Global climate change shows it's not science fiction.

As Einstein predicted, at hypersonic speeds time itself dilates, atomic clocks in orbit lose time versus earthbound counterparts, life lengthens, if imperceptibly. There are 2 concepts of time: 1st, absolute passage, an Aristotelian constant, ticking of atomic clocks; 2nd, arrow of Zeno, Bergson's duration, infinitely divisible seconds, logical expansion, mutable time, relativity. As Albert put it, "When you're courting a beauty, time is too short; when you're holding a

hot cinder, time is too long.” Pedaling alone, time extended for him, like vocalise in Stockhausen’s tone poem “Two Couples”, if only for moments, since it took longer to get anywhere, it created an expanse with needed to be filled. Other cyclists claimed there’s some auto-hypnosis to it, convincing yourself that worldly worries don’t affect you, leaving your brain at home while out for an uplifting spin, but he knew better. Nature abhors a vacuum. In a passing moment of silence people yearn for another distraction. Some constantly have to be entertained to keep from dwelling on bitter horrors of their existence, an existence they chose at the expense of those who serve them.

Riding brought an ecstasy of revelation, levitation, meditations outside space and time, a supplicant shifting from knee to knee in prayer. He breathed as he had learned in yoga classes, stretched and sustained poses gently released. Cycling can be a transcendent experience. Time stops for the instant an hourglass is inverted. During a lifetime, sessions of biking were those inversions. He might even live a little longer in better health, but without much prosperity, that is, of course, if he paid attention to what he was doing. If you leave mind out of thinking you have meditation. Chants without lyrics or structure form trances which supposed to heal, although all evidence is anecdotal or, perhaps, coincidental. Dupes will pay someone to induce such states. Healing occurs on its own, anyway, if you give the body a chance. Or you could eat less meat and more fruit. There was plenty to occupy your mind while riding: cracks, debris, deliberate and inconsiderate obstacles, fiendish beasts, ice, mo-ves, sand, spills, suffering and, as always, vicious inhumanity. Psychologists say people become addicted to a status quo because they never dreamt better. But he had dreamt wonderful things and never achieved them. Dreaming is a present activity that can be very pleasant, but does it affect your future? It’s bad science to ascribe causality to effective dreams.

He pictured himself pedaling impressively well, Lawrence’s rocking horse winner, whose intensity altered life in subtle yet powerful ways. Reviving from his trance, nothing seemed changed at all. Or had he become incapable of perceiving any change he had affected? Reveries are all good and well on a bikepath free from vehicles, where you can dance entranced relatively safely, but not totally. More than once he had come upon a big stone tumbled onto path. Such an obstacle might be a daytime surprise, but could prove deadly at night, invisible after twilight, a third degree at-

tempt at homicide. Perpetrators were seldom caught or detained, if so simply let go with a warning. If they did the same on an interstate highway, as a minimum they'd be charged with malicious mischief, possibly sentenced to jail. Gangs hang squarely in path so as to impede and threaten. If you slow, stop or turn, others bear down upon you with a vengeance. Only crimes against motorists matter. Crimes against bicyclists don't. Another interpretation could be that when people avoid motoring there are fewer criminals, less strain on prisons, and more gentle calmness in general. Taking scissors to an operator's license is akin to neutering a pet.

Unlike motorists, bicyclists greet each other, a kind word, a small wave. "See that man, he's all alone/Looks so happy but he's far from home/Ring my bell, smile at him" on Tomorrow's "White Bicycle". To others, biking doesn't count, unless cyclists in rap-ture—supercomputers on wheels with trillions of oxygen primed circuits focused on non-linear synthetic logic—are warping physical existence by bending space-time like a *Dune* 7th stage Guild Navigator. Bicyclists might be reshaping destiny, if they could only perceive and prove it to themselves. Bicycling constitutes proven neurotherapy that curtails daydreaming theta waves and elevates concentrating, zonelike beta waves. Before you laugh incredulously, consider this: Einstein conceived of relativity while riding a bike. Nash intuited unprecedented economic theories. While not all bicyclists are Nobel Laureates, who's to say where change might come from and what it will consist of?

Sport Wisely Chosen

Ideas arrive while pedaling a bike
in quiet moments let fragments drift
or mull what Aristotle explained,
"The gods, too, are fond of a joke."

Long tours clarify. When something like
steep grade with no gear left to downshift
into, dismount, as frailty complained,
"These gods are *too* fond of a joke!"

Why flesh, blood, bone? Must I ever psyche
myself up to push mass through space, lift
leaden feet with feeble will constrained
by modernity's all too soft yoke?

Fight back, attack asphalt, fly warlike,
find, ingest, digest, greedily grift,
hoard. Reason, too works this way. What's gained?
Delicate order, then you croak?

Yet revelations which oddly strike
oxygen pumped brains later just sift,
slip like sands of time, never regained.
Noble notions dissipate like smoke.

Thoughts can change this World, not unlike
Einstein's particles of light, a gift,
through spokes, swirling, relativity retained.
What new peril on route awoke?

Good most folks strenuous work dislike,
only crank their bikes for thrift,
sport wisely chosen so health's maintained,
epiphanies by it do not evoke.

Beautiful minds may function alike,
riding rings, figure eights, minds adrift
or on chaos psychotically strained
to find some earth shattering stroke.

Might scattering sentiments spike
though dark musings of mercy bereft?
Neutral truth may never be contained.
Only inhumanity can you uncloak.

Greet fellow cyclists along the pike,
Rouse, distract their calculations swift.
Return life to thoughts abstractly trained,
or, else, fate unwound, all goes broke.

Sure, face looks placid as a clock, rider harmless, slowly cruising along, nowhere to stash a stolen television, unlikely a bank robber, felon, looter or mugger. But something is definitely happening although you don't know what it is, someone becoming a lone deep thought think tank plotting change. Minds don't stand

down and submissively accept everything dished out. More like mosquitoes, people home in, jostle among themselves, reach decisions, then act upon them. If not massive revolutions today, maybe later, maybe never, but seldom in your favor. Mistreatment ultimately dominates all thinking: What to do about it? Who should be punished? How to restore equilibrium? Nothing goes unnoticed and left unforgiven forever. Expect a backlash.

