

49. Right Word, Right Time

Decisions inevitably come around. If you can't justify continuing what you're doing, you let it slide and do something else. This is just how it goes, no regrets. Every activity merits scrutiny. Take, for example, this book. Some might argue it wasn't worth paper and printing costs, or years to write, although nobody begrudges that you waste your own time as long as they don't have to pay for it. Think it's easy? All you have to do is, "Sit in front of a typewriter and open a vein." Did Al think he could stuff his head with facts that other people didn't know, then write a saleable books about it? People mostly already know what they need to. The best book you could ever have would be a personal directory with names and numbers of people upon whom you can rely for help. His rolldex was blank. 911 designated nothing.

One doesn't write a book as this. It's shaped like clay pots, each paragraph quickly spun, fired, and if flawed, broken and retried. Each starts with an idea, an ideal, a fragment to which substance sticks. Hated recording notes, then having to transcribe them. Handwriting was bad. Went to block printing after failure of cursive. Still couldn't read other people's script. Who invented this anyway? Couldn't read his own, sort out what was scribbled, or type fast enough to match speed of verbal dialog, but you can't lose insights just because you don't have a laptop handy. Far easier to think while typing; puts it closer to finished form. Handwritten notes languish for months or years and lose all currency. Every writer scribbles notes on scraps. Shredded many, had entire notebooks full of indecipherable black scrawl floating around somewhere, but did it matter? Finished or raw, included or not, both belong to a process of wringing out ideas. Once finally typed, you can never resist urge to keep adding more and more, until some boated monstrosity is produced that nobody wants and with which even you will never be satisfied.

Writers are sponges in every sense of the word, soak up conversations, phrases, and thoughts for a lifetime, then spilling it back out in a controlled way with an objective of profiting, even if that's nothing more than being a nonproductive parasite. They temporarily latch onto something, learn all its jargon, then, after something goes sour, start all over again, seize and select, shift and sort, to get where they want, like finding clean seams on roads amidst cracks, debris and mud. Mud has little value, just dirt, after all. This book's letters were so many grains of sand, numbering over

2 million, a small ashtray. Letters are like elements, words molecules. Sentences resemble materials and organisms. Paragraphs boards, bricks, plumbing and stones; 1,000 pages offer 1 per year for an entire millennium. Books are architecture; libraries, cities. Collectively, it's reality, a Universe unto itself. But Labann bicycling alone then recounting his experiences is boredom embodied.

Selecting *bike* as a book topic is as good as any, like tossing a dart at a map of the universe. If you write about everything, input comes at you from all angles. If you write about a narrow topic, you can barely progress with so little input. An omniscient perspective is an antidote to writer's block. Limits offer discipline, but who wants it? Wanted cosmological extension but couldn't put everything in, he conceded, and decided not to mine any external source material, except a dictionary for spellings, but as little as possible, unearth it all from direct experience, honed skills, inner dialogue, and personal memories. If he had looked up stuff, text would've grown to encompass all thought. You must pick your own limitations, such as only those memories which you yourself have experienced or moved you. Hearsay was unreliable, as are wicked encyclopedias compiled by axe grinders for imperial agendas. Too much.

This plan meant less precise details than generalities, but so what? Can't you remain general without being superficial? He could have readily plagiarized many other better writers, but what's the point? This way only those opinions resurfaced that affected him most profoundly. During any conversation or reading, beholders only absorb about 15%, anyway, never 100%. Nobody's that attentive. Blogs and email will always be popular. People dismiss impersonal books, prefer personal messages, scorn generalities, seek specifics, stuff they can use against you. What people appreciate is a fusion of elements, synthesis, not how it's done or what's used. A finished clay pot has utilitarian value—a boon, a poem or a prayer. But, for all his mudslinging, his neither proved useful nor a balm for his soul, just a reason to keep his kiln fired up for awhile on a slim hope for redemption.

In a society obsessed with constant change—always up for a new thrill—artists are chewed up, discovered much later than their creative period, leave scene before they've had a chance to blossom, and, in many cases, never get discovered. This results in mediocrity, which is why there's so much of it. Seem sensible to endure, explore entirely new modes of expression, and improve one's skills. Yet often an original vision gets diluted and muddied, madness to be heard softens, whatever made one so fascinating to begin with evaporates. To meet demands of marketplace, one has to be born

with talent, emerge quickly, grab whatever one can, and walk away. Without fiscal concerns, an artist could elevate indefinitely throughout a lifetime to some sublime level without precedent. But, given current precepts, they have to eat, and so direct efforts at pleasing widest patronage, dumb down for least common denominator, unless, like him, they somehow broke free and headed straight into brinksmanship and outrageousness.

Artists and songwriters somehow get the notion they might be loved. Singers not so supremely talented as to shape life experiences into sublime art might make an existing song their own through an exceptional performance. Artists take great risks by devoting their entire being to some narrow discipline. If they're extremely dedicated and lucky, a big payoff is well earned, but it's almost easier to win a lottery stacked times a trillion against. He couldn't imagine a world without his muse, one of the greatest singer/songwriters ever. Must be hellish to be her. Musicians never like their own stuff. Some artists she herself admires of are incredibly 2nd rate. She must be on an endless quest to find equals, but what a pleasurable preoccupation. M.I.A. was a keeper, Bollywood meets rap, English turned on its ear, meanings blurred within a poetic slur of text messaging and vocalise, "Money... makes me numb." Speed turns everything into an acronym, "RNB, TLC, TL;DR, XLR. Welcome to the Terror." Incurable, not stupid.

Putting music to words fills some psychic need for both listener and lyricist, although not all songs require them. Rap music broke down any need for either to show any virtuosity whatever, so it is wonderfully egalitarian; anyone can be a musician/poet mangling language to a click track or sample loop, but somehow also resembled his writing, a regurgitation of inner mindscape with little regard for conventions, discipline, feelings of individuals, or public opinion, just pouring forth filth in unexpected ways, not to move civilization forward or validate anyone's philosophies, pretty much why this manuscript fails. Words out of which doctrines and laws are made just don't mean much anymore. You can't throw a lifetime of revelations into a single book and expect to get away with it. Once this mudslide was released to World, nothing would ever be the same; if unemployed now, he may be so scandalized as to become unemployable, not necessarily an undesirable goal. The truth is not actionable. Does not mean it you won't be sued for speaking it. This is the chance every writer takes, to create one's own living purgatory, spin a funeral urn or survive another rejection. Writers have no choice but to write out what's burrowed within. Taking a cue from film directors, as a way to distance

himself from all that he had already reassigned all rights to Alan Smithee. Hope Smithee & Associates know what they're getting themselves into.

Only difference between poetry and rap is the pallet used. Stick to gutter references and it's cute but disposable. Apply an entire culture and you can create something timeless, something that persists, which gradually becomes a white elephant you can't get out of your head, shake off or toss out. Writer's block is, after all, aversion to pain. Writing is blood letting, like dialysis filtering out poisons. It's never easy, but completely doable if you adhere to 2 simple rules: 1. Find and report the truth. 2. Don't try to justify it. You can spend an entire life trying to define 1. Where many get blocked is 2. Meanwhile, tons of books plop off presses, all repeating same body of facts colored by personal impressions of it. Later, same pulp is recycled for more. Banal art is better: Can be carved up, quickly distributed, repackaged, sampled and whole new saleable derivatives created from it on CDs, DVDs and Internet . Churns an economic engine. Conversely, it can also be ignored altogether, a boon to both those who can't afford or don't want to listen. The worst thing on earth is a huge canon of information to which you must attend. Yet teachers like to focus on the worst OCD sufferer who has collected a prolific lifework, since there so much grist to mill. A really good work goes unnoticed or is dismissed as a fluke from a lazy wannabe and relegated to a dustbin of indifference. This drives out competition and leaves the field open for academic obsessives and drug driven dabblers. Meth is to intellectual pursuits as steroids is to sports. Natural enthusiasm, too difficult to feign, is deemed a vile sin.

If all is style, then you endlessly and vainly seek to differentiate yourself. It doesn't matter what you say only how you say it. You assure a legacy by spinning out apt phrases that people are likely to repeat. They hype amusements, products or services by making statements that are clearly false, "Every crime needs a gangster", or, "Greatest singer ever recorded." Advertising sounds as if idiots write it for morons who consume. Take away all artifice and what do you have? Indeed, much of what people have to say is banal or useless. Pearls of wisdom do get voiced, but not so that anyone might benefit from them amidst so much noise. And yet, and yet... sometimes just a mere statement at precisely the right time changes entire world, for example, "... that all men are free and endowed by their Creator with unalienable rights...", which wasn't even meant when uttered, as slavery was still in full force. But it was certainly the opening salvo in a fabulous, unprecedented his-

toric battle in which common people fought successfully to control their own futures. Once free, who wants to go back to subjugation and submission? Monarchy is history.

Writing carefully crafted aphorisms might have worked for Pascal, but it isn't a good career move. Takes forever to get something salable into print. Since a teen he compiled material from his own observations, hastily jotted down in blank flipbooks as fragments occurred to him. Many books are strictly a rehash, as if an author picks a topic, then collects all existing references to cite throughout as supporting arguments; there might be 1 original idea somewhere within, a baby step augmenting a historical thread, but nothing more. He was looking for a quantum scientific leap in ethical relations in a post-communistic era, totally atypical thinking. He'd had it with allusions (puff), delusions (denial), illusions (sick), or visions of grandeur (false). Not only did he not care if there wasn't supporting evidence, he couldn't be bothered seeking any, convinced none would be found. Any ability to discover a pertinent hypothesis was innate in all humans by simply interacting among them and observing carefully. He might harvest the "Hell yes!" recognition of fellow cyclists and the "What the f***?!" confusion of everyone else. He'd reread whatever he wrote and ask himself, "Who is this madman with a surreal commentary of expanded road use?" Other writers were better than him at engaging a broad base. It didn't matter. He'd engage his own supporters, however few. Individuals are at their most effective in their own sphere of influence. Might be a set of one or turn into a collective.

Research proves memoirs can be worthwhile, plenty of supporting arguments. According to utilitarian ideals, every book should be didactic, pedagogical, perhaps a compendium or textbook providing self help. As art, readers expect completely new perspectives and distinct differentiation, "Take me where I've never been." Information is a large but finite set, further limited by choice of subject and commentator's ability to grasp it. Unless you are on a specific quest to precisely capture something ineffable and unique, you probably won't succeed, produce nothing but nutty aphorisms and nonsense. But only readers, the customers, should judge. Will they read it? Think it's useful? Find consolation in it? Rather, does it annoy or go unread? Share mania not talent? More importantly, does it make a difference in their lives? Authors can't answer these questions, only their readers can.

In *Lean Thinking*, pundits Bones and Fatback urge, "...rethink value from the perspective of the customer." Experts in fields of commerce and manufacturing, they realize that, "only the customer

can say what's valuable and what's not." For them, value in an industrial company can be found in 3 activity streams: 1) Solve problems for customers—They describe this as the “process where a concept becomes a useful product.” 2) Manage information—This activity, accepts orders and requests from customers, processes them, promises delivery or restores control. 3) Transform raw materials into products—This has always been a manufacturer's customary role, but not enough to succeed when 1 and 2 are ignored. Companies must curb waste in all 3 streams; whatever can be ransomed can be returned to the customer as value. Most companies recognize this and are busy trying to become *lean and mean*. But these pundits go on to criticize those who are just plain *mean*. You can't downsize your workforce and skim profits from suppliers. Rather, you must get lean by improving quality and value, and thereby continually expanding. You have to always ask yourself, “What else can I do to hold my community together?” This is a far cry from what Ruskin noted, “There is hardly anything in the World that some man cannot make a little worse and sell a little cheaper.” John would be astonished a century later at the extent to which manufacturers offshore all value producing processes to cheap labor and poor treatment, a fad that can't be furthered indefinitely without some unforeseen catastrophe.

Bones and Fatback also speak of improving efficiency, what they call *flow*. They suggest you deconstruct departments to work in batches and make everyone responsible for quality. For example, have people who make components install them into working subassemblies, hold them accountable for success of that component. They also talk of *pull*, which arranges things so customers can instantly draw out what they want from your firm as needed. Along with 1) specifying value, 2) identifying value streams, 3) facilitating flow, and 4) accommodating pull, there's another principle in lean thinking, 5) perfection. Perfection would occur when careers, duties, functions are redefined so it's in everyone's best interest to contribute to value creation. Theoretically, by attending all 5 principles you arrive at a true team spirit and rejuvenate relations with customers and stakeholders. Corporations that serve survive. This is exactly what you'd do yourself if self-employed and thus beholden only to clients. Any need to point this out is due to an aberration in corporate group behavior. Normal individuals are motivated by a desire to dominate, harvest fruits, and reap rewards. In a group, however, eagerness is looked down upon as either disagreeably inept or viciously ambitious. All Western industrial workers are psychologically predisposed to not participate, do the

least, and feign cynicism. To achieve and be pleased by it is considered bizarre, practically insane. Capitalists can never admit admiration for a rival.

In many contexts lean thinking applies to private individuals as well as social relationships. Books can be written by lone individuals, and often are. Few things touch all 3 value streams as a book. It's an idea forum, manages information, and transforms thoughts into a product: bytes in files or ink on paper. How it's assembled and organized influences *flow* and *pull*. But shouldn't it also serve a higher purpose? Many only promote an author's or publisher's agendas or profit motives. Few actually change World, as did Dickens. Heightening people's compassion, Charles vilified pecuniary orphanages, petty institutions, prisons and workhouses, where fellow men and smell of poverty were exiled out of mind and sight. Was it intentional cultural reshaping? Or only a way to assuage guilt from helplessly and tacitly witnessing constant inhumanity? You do *nothing* at your own peril.

Books can have grave impacts on society. But an author who thinks any book he/she writes might save the World is a witless zealot. Worthwhile books only mirror what already exists. As if accursed, writers write because they must; readers read because they're curious and seek validation. Nobody reads Descartes or Dickens anymore. Promoting sweeping advancements in mankind's thinking used to be easier when there was less published material to get your hands on. Now you have to sort through tons of garbage to find a single reliable fact. A single typo damns worthwhile work to oblivion. Perfection is a chimera, an illusion, impossible within groups of human beings defined by error. Commuters driven by consumerist demons are so impatient to get to shops or work they'll run over anybody or anything in their way. He watched a tall tractor trailer snatch a pigeon from sky, which bounced writhing in agony off a van to be run over with feathered and fluid finality by a passenger car. Scenes of roadkill made him nauseous enough to suspend motoring altogether.

Ramping an issue up and down is a well worn publicist's trick. Practically any minor misdeed—bad hygiene, slow skanking, victimless misdemeanor—can be categorized as aligned with something widely abhorred, like cannibalism, genocide, or Nazism. Small failings can be argued to lead to capital offenses. If you condemn based on potential misdeeds, there would never be enough jail cells. Only those without sin can cross this line. Better to simply remind people; gently steer ships away from rocks. Conquering waste, corporate sin, requires persuading fellow employees

to agree on a mission or vision and what constitutes acceptable behavior. Bosses rush to concoct 6 word slogans and force them down employees' throats, when instead workers need to decide this for themselves, what to do despite entrenched misapprehension. Unless you can get workers to accept ownership of processes they perform, no amount of coaching will succeed. Since this seldom happens, executives generally aren't worth money they're paid. That *social justice* formula that pegs executive salaries to no more than 7 *times the least paid employee* is far too generous. Sure courage, education and skill merit higher pay, but not so much that entire organization declines and generates least number of opportunities.

Business analysts look for *tall poles*, that is, issues that make up 80% of a problem. Items which make up most of your costs are where to find waste. Yet it's always tempting to pick some small, visible process, get rid of it, and claim credit for a cost avoidance. Why not instead look at huge expenses? Break them down and take countermeasures. Takes courage, discipline, imagination, 3 things in short supply. It's not easy evaluating multimillion dollar processes or wornout practices used forever. When you make sweeping changes that affect many people, your popularity plummets. Too often people stay employed because of popularity. It takes no effort to tolerate good looks and a pleasant *les affaires* manner. It's burdensome to keep an open mind, negotiate coalitions among combatants, smooth relations. Managers rather attend to business of business, serving clients. You can only hope that everyone has the same priorities. Survival comes before style; individual needs come next to last, just ahead of perks and salaries for spendthrift executives. This is exactly the opposite of what now exists across industry practically everywhere including China's party bosses and their information gathering (spying) junkets.

Lean thinking pinpoints what makes any process wasteful: obliviousness. Without communication along supply chain, nothing gets accomplished, wheels spin. In client-server relationships, if either doesn't care enough to ask what the other does, this results in unnecessary work. Your supplier might go overboard trying to please you when a much simpler effort could suffice. Preparing for a *worst case scenario*, they're compelled to roll all costs into final product, a proverbial \$600 toilet seat. On the other hand, if their efforts don't please, they're forced to redo them, which compounds waste for them and diminishes value of relationship. Either way, open dialogue is always the cure. Whenever service has been too slow, haven't you gone somewhere else? Corrective actions, like employing temps for peak times and opening another register, tell

customers they come first. Indifference to their needs makes customers reconsider going there and seek somewhere else to shop. Why give competitors any advantage?

Always being ready to supply the same service, anytime, is a consistency that customers favor. Consistency isn't solely a comfort, it's a foundation for sanity amidst chaos. A book may offer consistency. Besides, isn't it always better to know what's really going on? You don't expect to hear actual facts on television, do you? Always being there, bearing a message, binding far flung groups into a common mission: this is what communication is all about. An advertising maxim says, "Success depends on the right words at the right time." You make a sale when suitability meets receptivity... cool drinks on a hot day. So, look around you. Was there ever a better time to dispel rumors, find facts, prod participation, raise questions, stimulate democratic thinking, or venerate those who get involved for mutually beneficial results? Right words, right time.

Encouragement is essential to any enterprise. Without it, hardly anyone achieves a thing: Children aren't inspired to practice skills or try something new, employees are convinced that their company doesn't value their efforts, and organizations suspend vital activities because they think nobody cares. Majority of adults give up riding bikes as transportation because there's no infrastructure for it. Those who suffer from a lack of self esteem appreciate being noticed once in a while. Egomaniacs go berserk with slightest reassurance. Shouldn't rile them up, yet can't ignore meek souls either. Balance may be in constructive criticism, something everyone should feel free to give and take. With none, he became immoderate, no longer able to stick to some humdrum routine. Without a spark of solace, everyone withdraws into a shell of indifference and self-interest.

Too bad people find it so baffling to solicit encouragement, a learned behavior. Competitive society foolishly chooses not to when someone's success is to everyone's advantage. Often those with whom you interact would rather hurt you, simply relish rush of testosterone fueled anger they get from it. At the same time, people forget to praise those who serve them. Never skip an chance to show appreciation or voice your displeasure, because, either way, you're helping those who'll be sharing with you to improve. It's the most direct way of attaining a win-win situation. A company benefits from your opinions and everyone who follows you including you benefits from better transactions, at least in theory. Instead it has a tendency of turning ugly, customers

bickering among themselves when stuck in long lines created by failed business policies.

There's a book that allegedly compiled stuff from a senior's shoebox. What a story! Was obviously said to generate legitimacy and sales for a work by someone who had no qualifications whatever, as if you needed any if you speak truly. This author's old man probably carnally cohabits with thirty-year-old blonde bimbo twins in Miami, drinks like a fish, and hasn't had an inspiration since Truman Administration. But does it matter? Good ideas also come from children, deposed dictators, idiot savants, and mental patients. Industry pundits spout, "If candidates don't talk about innovative solutions to energy woes now, we'll be here a year from now saying same thing." If your lucky, that's all. Just talk? Oil is over. No, you need to cut the umbilical cord of Saudi oil pipelines and self propel, not begin a dialogue about something already unworkable. Here's an entire book full of talk to ignore. There's no dearth of good ideas, only good proponents. No idea is ever bad, only intent of presenter, its application, and lack of follow-through. Einstein's intent was to seek a brand new truth, a field theory, a way to understand physical World better. Albert was horrified when they used pure physics to create weapons of mass destruction. Given power, evil wields it evilly. It's not the fault of free will, giver, or power itself, but participant's choice. Impatient, irresponsible, lazy choices yield horrible consequences. Period.

You know what the wrong word at the wrong time does. It disrupts complicated procedures and messes up carefully laid plans. One would disturb Renaissance workmen who were powering capstans only under penalty of death. Some people can't stand distraction, like golfers stroking a ball. He was topping off his boiler when interrupted by a phone call from holiday well-wishers. Next morning, of course, basement was flooded. Spent Christmas Eve wet vacuuming up decades of dust mixed with overnight slop. Crappy Holidays! Not the first or last time that's happened. Reminded him of roaming around J-Mart with its discount Santa at 11th hour seeking redemption from all his other misdeeds: caps left off toothpaste, never making enough money, standing in someone's way, such character flaws for which nobody could ever atone. Just after Coleridge awoke from an opium stupor, he began wildly writing his masterpiece, "Xanadu". Sam dreamt up canto after canto of fantastic verse, and couldn't pen them fast enough. Just then a mysterious stranger came to call. After much yakking over tea, visitor left, along with Xanadu vision. Who's to say entire poem wouldn't have been drivel, although its remnant was sublime.

A book is a visitor you can set aside without insult for decades until you're ready to receive. Too bad meanwhile author dies of want.

Individuals and organizations try to control talk to abridge what you hear, cause less confusion, keep you from flying off half-cocked into mayhem. Engineers never want to tell marketing department anything lest they make life difficult for themselves. Sales doesn't want accounting to know too much about how they spend. Politicians never bring up problems with Medicare or Social Security lest senior voters vote otherwise. Caregivers calm patients with Lawrence Welk and other innocuous age specific distractions. It's all censorship, goes on daily, will never stop. *Displaced* is how almost everyone who uses streets feels, physically pushed to the edge, when it should be a graceful, inviting dance.

A phone call is no substitute for in-person contact. So why do people spend so much time on cells? Whenever he called anybody, line was busy. Nobody ever shuts up, or ties up lines using dial up accounts. Get off the phone! Communication companies dip deep into your dollars and offer practically nothing in return, just validate your alienation and needy attempts to reach out. They stay up nights trying to figure new ways to swindle you: roaming charges, toll calls across ever closer borders, and unforeseen fees for insignificant convenience. You can literally be billed a surcharge for phoning someone you can see and yell at impolitely.

A ringing phone is so full of portent or tragedy. When a phone rings during lovemaking, coitus interruptus, or someone imposes during an orgasmic part of song, it's a shock to system that leads to neuroses. Will callee answer in time, make contact, or will caller suffer much by not getting through? Or will callee? Say it's your boss checking up on you, making sure you're where you belong at a given moment, as if a secret service agent protecting President. Say, if you don't pick up you're fired or someone might die or you miss your chance of a lifetime. What if it's simply a wrong number? Good to be able to screen calls with an answering machine. The acutely impatient concern themselves with time management, how much they allocate to hearing you, how much they spend sucking up to someone who they falsely believe can do them some good. A lot of successes had to do with being fixed in space after racing through it, screaming to certain coordinates only to sit and wait. This fly and stay must be made as productive as possible, like rehearsing lines or sales pitch or touching up a presentation. There's not a moment that can't be full, if only attending your own inner dialogue, prioritizing, planning, sorting through problems. Does anyone simply sit and wait unperturbed until called?

Are there still people on this planet thus wired? Post-advertising majority is either alertly processing present input, planning for tomorrow, or reliving past. Who knows what crucial logic is disturbed and forever forfeit because of trivial bells ringing? Pavlov's dogs salivated at bells because of behavior modification. Tele-marketers are probably destroying planet and jeopardizing future.

He could go on at great length (unnecessarily) on how media had deleteriously affected most people's rational thinking centers. The primary ambition of advertising and films is to suspend logic. Many commercials trying to pawn off questionable products and supplements (Garlicue, McGlobe Beer, etc.) show sensible people also biking, thus acknowledging its benefits while raising credibility by association. Nutritionists all say the plant sources you grow yourself are superior to bottled. It is illogical to infer that a big Vexus with V-8 power or an enormous diesel locomotive are environmentally conscious and *green machines*, as touted. Increasing energy efficiency of gas-fired water heaters is more environmentally friendly, as it could be installed in many homes and reduce emissions, although going from 80 to 90% efficiency doesn't comply with Kyoto Protocol ideals or recoup its investment during homeowner's lifetime. Electric water heaters would eliminate local emissions, while electricity could be generated by clean, inexhaustible, renewable sources—hydroelectric, geothermal, tidal, wind—and not burn fossil fuels at all. What good is something only slightly cleaner if they don't supplant all those dirtier? With legislation that immediately suspended sale of dirty vehicles in favor of hybrids, to mostly replace them would still take about 20 years. Focus should be on a total break—bale gas burners instead of electrics. Legislation to encourage bicycling would immediately reduce greenhouse gases, supplant miles driven by miles biked.

If you spout off wrong words then realize you've severely disrupted something important, you might shrug it off, "So what! Forget about it." Or you might be consumed with remorse, a terrible emotion that leads to many more wrong words: all that explaining to do, rationales to assuage guilt, brush backlash under rug, or deflect discredit. It's a time honored business practice to say nothing that might make one appear liable or vulnerable, pin one down, or suggest a promise. When companies use any words, legal disclaimers uniformly follow. Terrible to ask someone to answer many requests or perform many tasks without common decency of writing them down. Only the rarest of people can remember more than 3 items for duration of time required to do something about them, for example, a waitress who remembers all orders of a party

of six without writing them down, then flawlessly distributes dinners to everyone. This is merely an amusing trick of mnemonics, which you can easily foil by switching seats or hats or changing appearances, as swapping a colored scarf. Retention with instant recall is an aberration, something you'd expect of autistic savant rainmen, not average intellects.

The Triplets of Belleville required no words to impart its cartoon plotline. Where it ventured into a few words and formulas, it fared poorly compared to its graphic expressions, such as hunting frogs with dynamite. There's language in gestures and images. French are enamored of pantomime, a cultural oddity and ironic silence for a nation whose language was once a universal medium. Conquerors' coin becomes everyone's coin in their realm, as does their mode of expression. Roman, French, and English empires respectively proceeded each from historic antecedent. English today has more words than any other language, millions derived from all other languages, but mainly French. France has nothing to be ashamed of, but seems to have as an attitude, "If not our language, none." Petty arrogance. English was being supplanted by Spanish in States where increasingly they speak it at work, since the least paid workers weren't expected to learn English anymore. A conversational grasp of Chinese, English, French and Spanish would stand you in good stead if you wanted to travel unhampered by tongues around globe.

His long shadow in bright dawn sun on a westbound wall reminded him of frog legs: articulated, built for powerful leap and twitch reflex. How French came to be called frogs probably had something to do with fact they ate frogs. Not much meat on those slimy bones. French were widely disparaged for their anarchic inconformity, artsy-fartsy-ness, elitism, socialism, superficial laziness, and want of resolve in matters of defense. Perhaps they long since learned the correct lesson that prosecuting policies for Christian emperors did nothing for soldiers or their families, and, in the end, just bred deprivation and strife. Under Napoleon, French conquered most of Europe, the biggest empire by conquest in modern times. No wonder they inherited war weariness and wishes for change, and resorted to eating frogs. They host the most prestigious race in bicycling, Le Tour, and pitiless brevets thousands of miles long, like being voluntarily tied to a "Whipping Post", a song into which Duane and Greg Allman slip a slight reprise of French ditty "Frere Jacques", and it all seems to make sense. Before you volunteer to die, ask yourself who'll benefit most from your sacrifice, "Are they worth it?" If not, eat well, make love not war, race bikes, suffer under your own terms, and work your own angles.

What below par people rashly disparage is an obviously highly evolved culture, a mental leap toward mankind's future. Nits sang, "Leave my bed, bike in head. Is this the real world? Am I alive?" Unless you decide for yourself, no. Are you still sleeping?

People lives aren't much more complicated than that of a frog. They collect food, eat, leap hither, mate, rest and vanish—simple creatures. So what has so-called evolutionary superiority done to make humans better? It's a mental trick that makes people feel superior and separate their lives from a frog's. Really, a frog's swamp through a frog's perspective would be incredibly alien and dangerous for humans, who couldn't hope to cope. Frogs instinctively know how to navigate their realm. There's something wrong with a brain that is so inept as to forget both its prehistoric underpinnings and risks inherent in leaving water, but, oh, that sunny rock, what a high! Or how important it is to gather food from natural sources. People have more to learn from frogs than frogs have from them.

Right words at wrong times go unnoticed, Cassandra's lament, part of the general futility of prophecy. Wrong words at right time misdirect and result directly in destruction and waste, but they are typically what you receive when you ask out of necessity. About the only way to ensure success is prepare yourself to be adept in any situation, be a fearlessly competent quick study, quiz things out for yourself. Nothing prepares you for this. Not educational system, good upbringing, or innate intelligence. World is too complicated, too many people at cross purposes, too much contempt for life and murderous intent. There are throngs of very, very bad people you never want to encounter who'll kill or maim for petty gain, but they are still a small minority. You aren't born with a technical manual to guide you safely. On your own you have to acquire people reading skills, figure out logistics, improvise on broken plans, and make snap decisions that work. You're forced to be alert, eliminate potential for screw-ups, stick to a mission. It's all too much. Books are only limited views of a grand scheme, each some tiny hamlet on an obscure edge of a twilight zone. But, if you happen to be visiting this hamlet, a travel guide would be nice, if it's up to date.

