

37. Saving Face

Logic doesn't work with human emotions. Some people remain placid and pursue flawlessly dull lives. Some fly off handle without provocation and thereby create havoc. Some betray longtime allies on a whim. Others delight in mayhem. About the only thing predictable about humans is unpredictability. AI began to appreciate this, as it's uniquely interesting and unlike anything else, if potentially as deadly as anything in nature. Even storms can be predicted with some accuracy and don't suddenly disappear or reverse, like so called friends. You can try strategies for communicating, dating, reading body language, or selling and sometimes have success. More often you boorishly misinterpret signals, don't consider immaturity or senility, don't factor that someone's high on adrenaline, booze or narcotics, yet irrationally expect a normal exchange of ideas or information. You are guaranteed to appear a buffoon, become embarrassed, fumble clumsily, and get whatever you do together wrong. There's no reason to stop trying, not stay on course, or toss away any progress simply to save face. You'd have to be an obnoxious opportunist to be motivated by whatever favor you can cultivate for yourself among illuminati. Yet this attitude prevails as sensible logic.

If scenery on a ride is good, insights are few. Thinking is for those long lonely gray featureless stretches with few hills or intersections to occupy your mind, provoke decisions, and turn on your risk assessor subroutine. Only bozos and computers shut down when there's no input. It would be a boon to be able to shut down his inner dialogue for even an hour, which is sort of like what riding over 75 miles in a day does. All that giggling of gray matter and sugar depletion toward end of a ride makes you cranky as an infant, insensitive, uncaring. Some cyclists shut up. They're as quiet as activity itself, a soft mutter. Could they be thinking, "Why spoil it by turning the public on?" Then there are others who jabber incessantly. Can't get enough, even when they aren't riding, probably trying to build courage to go farther despite difficulties. Leisure activities probably assuage no psychological pang, other than channel mental activities into something less detrimental than planning combat, or scheming another inhuman act, or, shudder, writing.

To mollify muse, cowards opt for alcohol, depressants or sedatives. Amphetamines, caffeine and coke make muse dance like a tweaker at a rave. A lot of what passes for art comes out of both camps. Great art doesn't need either, just slowly producing by diligent effort over time and possibly more likely to achieve balance and clarity. Unless you're a terribly precocious youth, most of what you do from teens through mid-twenties isn't worth recording. Moms hang such stuff on refrigerator doors.

Whether you're a sports enthusiast—into consumerism of buying equipment, finding things that work, and racing with an extra edge—or an alternative transit fanatic—rather pedal than burn petro-fuel only to broil in gridlock—bicycling is pleasantly healthy. Besides fighting disease and acting as a mentally stimulating alternative to boring calisthenics, it saves time. “What?”, you ask, “How can slower translate into efficient?” Simply put, as Frank Lloyd Wright said, “Less is better where more is no good.” Motor propelled speed puts you at risk of early death, if not from collisions, from diseases caused by accumulated stress and physical inactivity. Doctors say stress of being stuck in traffic doubles your chance of heart attack and stroke. And to this add: By intimately knowing landscape from cycling you can avoid gridlock. He was never late no matter how he traveled by wriggling out from behind 5-mile long jams on interstate. No longer needed centralized advice, GPS gear, local maps, or trip-tickets, all of which distract and redirect nervous motorists onto narrow unfamiliar lanes he usually rode on. Those who didn't run him over sometimes asked him for directions, if they were smart, although neither google nor he was infallible.

What is life but time? Use moments wisely. Too few health gurus emphasize lower body tone. Nonagenarians don't complain of being unable to *powerlift* but not being able to *stand*. Ankles, calves, feet, hips, knees, thighs are crucial to geriatric health. Broken bones at that age often prove fatal. If you plan to go the distance, build them instead. Sure, work upper body, too, if looks are so important to you; if at a gym, bike to gym. However, a pie shaped torso isn't a prerequisite to health. Thanks to encouragement from two coworkers, both accomplished racers, he probably added several years to his life, good news for his family, not good for those who hated him and his undermining chatter. Doesn't bicycling bear words? Whole libraries are full of baseball books alone. As long as he was free, he'd speak his mind and tip over phony facades. He was in for the long haul, eating right and getting fresh air and sunshine to avoid illness. Image isn't solely important.

People think they can get all the exercise they need just working. Combining increasingly specific exercises or pharmaceuticals and working well, you will enhance body or mind somewhat faster. Working should be a good thing, gets worthwhile stuff done, puts food on your table. But it's not necessarily good for you. Lifting can be back breaking. Shoveling snow in cold air sometimes causes heart attacks. Chopping wood with sharp implements is prone to hacking off extremities. Construction workers, farmers and lumberjacks have high mortality rates. Office workers live longer, but their health stinks if you believe their constant complaints. Day long standing and manipulating tools are not aerobic and take a toll. Bicycling is both aerobic and low impact. Any added hormone highs and transportation alternatives are pure gravy. After long workouts, such as bicycling hard, when muscles have used up their energy, endorphin, akin to endogenous morphine, or possibly natural cannabinoids are triggered by hypothalamus and secreted by pituitary gland into bloodstream. This disinhibits dopamine, a neurochemical that modulates pain and satiation. A feeling of well being ensues, comparable to orgasm, just as effective in fighting depression as prescribing Soloft. One can become addicted, which is why you see riders and runners out in rain and snow, which is why bicycling books run overly long. Addicts usually steal your insured valuables to fence for junk rather than so much of your attention and time with junk.

Almost everything written on cycling is either from head of the pelaton or from monastic devotees with short commutes. *Pelaton* literally means balled up, sheltered, wrapped up tight. Nothing comes from either that you can use. Those who honk up hills over 20 mph are gifted anomalies, hearts twice as big as normal, thighs like tree trunks, zero body fat. Advice they give might as well be directed at space aliens. Avoid oxygen debt! Calcium and potassium infuse! Carbo load, drink cold, drink warm, protein replenish! Pedal evenly completing circles without stopping. Spin at high cadence with knees in. Shave weight. Stay trim. All this overwhelms after awhile. He just wanted to ride more and worry less. The only thing that seemed to work for him was going at whatever pace his broken body would go. Bonking and coasting along at 13 mph was fine; could enjoy surroundings, focus on the ecstasy of exertion, or zone into safe passage.

Unable to cross busy Broad Street after a hot 40 miler on his hybrid, he zigged in and out of double-parked cars on wrong side until even with Park's wheelchair curb, then eased into traffic slowed by red light to get on sidewalk. Professional advocates hired

by cities and nonprofits would call this “blowing through lights” and condemn him for it. He thought of it as “adapting to traffic planner neglect”. This walkway had more rollers than adjacent street, but it was shady under Olmstead’s mighty oaks and maples, sheltered from noonday exhaust, and he wouldn’t have to fret about being overtaken by mo-ves while climbing. Children were chasing a beach ball across grassy flats, and he swung wide around a few strollers, but otherwise he was away from it all, refreshed by cool breezes, always welcome when verging on collapse.

People kept telling him he looked marvelous. “What’s different about you?” Shedding 30% of body mass makes people take notice. Effort sculpts your body. At first it’s all legs. Began to notice that socks, no matter what size, no longer fit over his ankles and calves. Folding them down over themselves was the only way he could wear them at all. Calves had grown thick with a bulbous, heart-shaped definition. Thighs were becoming less oval and more rectangular in cross section, like railroad ties. Later, using other muscles to relieve legs, he felt a vertical, torso tightening with love handles melting away. Isotonic effort directed at specific muscles may give them definition but usually doesn’t decrease collected fat at that point, particularly midsection. What does work was simply losing weight overall, tapping into and whittling away fat reserves. Bicycling gently works whole body. Almost anyone can do it. Average bicyclists are paunchy. Better ones are lean and wiry, and the best compact, lanky, pinched, almost aerodynamic, like sharks. His wide shoulders hindered pedaling by resisting air, but he wasn’t ashamed not being able to keep up with sharks, whom he sometimes passed while they were repairing bikes abused by riding hard over poorly maintained pavement.

Insulated professionals often lapse into bad language, foul ways, and rudeness. Voltaire’s “a little candid obscenity” taken to an extreme is just disgusting, exposes mindless incompetence. While people expect such talk, they rather emulate that rare person who shows self control. There may be no obvious benefit, but there are subtle effects. When you must decide between a “better” sort and a “common” one, who do you think will win your confidence: a calm gentleman nicely attired or a tattooed freak with gutter mouth and pinwheel eyes? Yet a tie and white shirt doesn’t make a gentleman. Woody Allen quipped, “90% of success is showing up.” But remaining 10% comes from intangibles, like discipline, etiquette, neatness. People attend long lectures, buy billions of CDs and guidebooks, and pay fortunes to success gurus just to hear this simple nostrum. He counted all such expenditure a waste of money that gets poured

into cost of products, thus you pay extra unnecessarily for bikes and parts.

Everything is connected. When people stop cursing, drinking, smoking, and substance abusing, slowly absenteeism, inefficiency and waste disappear, profits grow, HMO premiums decline, Medicare costs decrease, so entire population benefits; it all starts with an individual doing what's right, impressing others to do the same, leading by example, taking initiative. Hopeless? Individuals who apply logic and try civility do get a better sense of purpose and increase self esteem. If you're not handsome, protected, rich or smart, good will is about all you can aim for. There comes a time some folks lose interest in amassing wealth, and they return their good fortune to community from which it came. Good will, if you dare define it, is a torrent of munificence and a wonderful motivator. Good manners cost nothing, but don't guarantee honesty either. You can't lose if you exploit what's obvious, package what people already know and need no reminders of, and smile all the while you're picking their pockets.

With so many appeals to your better self, you don't need another. What you need are ways to *save face*. Motivations might include envy, fear, flattery, guilt, and pandering to people's basest emotions. Do such means justify the end? Isn't process its own goal? Does it matter what harm you cause to achieve an end? Dance masters used to carry a long stick to strike ballerinas whose forms were less than flawless. Such sadists drove out many with talent. Innocents cannot be forsaken to a lifetime of collateral damage caused by deranged compulsives. Standards organization exist not so much to protect the public but to bar unsanctioned entry into business. Advocates are often those who force their lifestyle opinions on you while you read their namesake magazine.

As discontent as he'd been as group advocate, having to suck up to lackeys of philanthropists, he was at ease in his skin as an independent activist, like a knight errant in light flexible chain mail on a trusty steel steed, with a figurative lance and long sword comprised of thoughts compiled over a lifetime, contemplated upon, reedited into truths. Truth is a sword that cuts that Gordian Knot which can never be unraveled. Drafting this manuscript had been easier than later trying to edit and make sense of each chapter. Hard to stay awake, never mind alert, while applying grammar rules. Easier to slip into inner consciousness and skip outside World. Bicyclists must concentrate. Motorists find it hard to stay tuned in, why amphetamines and coffee are so revered. They acted cavalierly, drove carelessly, had to pull over.

He had been spread too thin, gotten too lazy and tired to save lives. Readers were supposed to pick up his threads and weave a new reality with paradoxes he raised, whereas for him it was just revisiting the same discrepancies for which he had no answers to begin with, desultory inquiries into things that hold momentary interest by following links suggested by someone who enjoyed something he'd never heard of before. Endorsements by those whose opinion you value can lead to interesting explorations totally beyond what you would've conceived yourself. Many a night, instead of vegging out on Internet searches or television shows, he forced himself to be creative and proactive, tap out a few lines at a time from bulging notebooks full of scribbles. In fact he had actually done what he'd set out to do, unloaded an entire lifetime of other peoples abuses upon him, but it didn't seem like any sort of accomplishment. There was no single resolution. All he could come up with was simple quartet: Act responsibly, remain alert, stay skeptical, work diligently.

For progress to occur, "What ifs?" must be sown into fields of every discipline. For Einstein, physics was a single passion among many. It seems others mattered then as now, although not only superficially. Art stimulates imagination. Dance aligns neural pathways. Sounds vibrate molecules in hitherto unknown ways. But saying, "Imagination is more important than knowledge," is imprecise. He could summon all sorts of frightful nightmares, but a truly original idea is the rarest thing in the universe. So how does viewing Paul Chan's minimalist projections result in forward progress, toss out aeons of style, unequivocally alter the fabric of existence? Who can say? Each individual expression matters somehow; it's not necessary to know why any more than why a defective mirror reflects yet distorts. Great physics, like great art, synthesizes experiences, makes threads coherent, gathers filaments into a bright bundle, fireflies in a jar. Art and science need no justification.

At an exhibition, they place a sign beside each installation to help interpret its substance, development process, medium or significance, not much more than an amateurish attempt to meld appearance into mindscape. He found himself reluctant to read them, as they seemed to diminish directly experiencing a piece, while vague suggestions inherent in work should suffice. But some people can't deal with phenomena without words, more moved by chips than carefully formed sculpture that remains, sparks than whoever created them. Sad to see patrons staring at placards instead of pieces. Art is the sum of constraints, influences, person, materials, techniques and times in which piece was executed.

National Endowment only funds art education not artists themselves. Good, they must think, to have lots of artists without commissions, materials or opportunities starving in rat infested lofts and mills. Words can diminish or heighten or integrally be part of art itself or not. Take Calder's and Gerola's kinetic sculptures. Abstract outdoor sculptures stand between architecture and nature, buildings and gardens, as signposts in the road between artifice and primitive, instinct and reason, organic and technological, where men have been and where they're headed as a species. As such, they are wonderful reminders of both horizons and origins, celebrate folly and hope, form monuments to deeds and dreams in a twilight zone of allusions. Isn't steel representing ideas better than weapons mowing down innocents? Sculpture is high art, but practically nobody can afford it; money must be pooled by corporations, institutions, or public sector, then too many voices spoil visions while commissioners choose garbage by good old boys rather than submissions of merit by artists of renown who refuse to pay kickbacks.

For an exhibition, "Utopia, Utopia", Tom Hirschorn had someone who spoke English as a 2nd language concoct a bunch of pseudo-truths with an intention of spray painting them as graffiti, then cutting them up and randomly plastering them in, presumably so whoever experiences this militaristic piece makes their own sense of these word fragments, superimposes their own prejudices. New artforms might as well use words, which have lost all meaning anyway. Does Tom's choice of English over French or German betray a Swiss bias? Too evocative of WWII atrocities? Or does it indict contemporary American and British militarism?

In its arrogance, USA set a quota for medals at 2004 Olympics, 100 total. Of course, it met its quota. They give out 1,000 medals, so there are numerous shots at 10%. An illusion of American dominance is thus preserved. What America does with this perception he hadn't a clue. It certainly wasn't for better foreign relations. To avoid making yourself a target of hatred and jealousy seems more practical. Only by bowing your head do you not get it knocked off from behind. Language can be used as a barrier to understanding, a crutch or subversion, just like camouflage, neither an effective means to distort spatial perception nor way for prey to dodge predator. Camouflage doesn't guarantee protection any more than words convey meaning. Unprincipled leaders and World wreckers hide behind complex laws. Jenny Holzer casts a bright light with epigrams. Yet to mention individuals elevates their importance, sometimes unnecessarily. Who you cite says more

about you than them. If all you ever mention are empty headed starlets and pop celebrities, you're probably just as moronic.

Recently deceased, Salvador Dali was unique, spoke directly from subconscious, trusted intuition over logic; his craftsmanship was, of course, spectacular. As a medium within with to reveal himself, painting was to Dali as poetry to was ee cummings, a way to crawl into your mind and create a ubiquitous presence. Dada unreality is central to peDALIng. Why surrealism? It's all about casting off shackles of conventionality, exposing control freaks and extremists for what they are, bureaucrats, hypocrites, parasites, those in charge of endowments and state art councils who got their jobs because of nepotism or worse, hate art and artists, never appreciate either, and receive orders from dictators. Worse, after years of indecision while hanging onto their seats, when they're finally fired for incompetence or wrong political affiliation, they use their peerless resumes to go higher up the gatekeeping chain elsewhere and do even more harm. Had they only accepted Arnold Shicklegruber's 3rd rate canvases, Europe would have been spared WWII. Just who are they protecting with their gates? They try to argue their logic and belittle your holistic approach to understanding. You'd do better to trust Bruñel's and Dali's wild-eyed bicyclist in *Un Chien Andalou*, whose palm full of ants and sexual menace are merely suggestions, not edicts or laws, although comparatively more potent. Never forget, public awareness raised by artists of outrage is all that stands between tyranny and you. Until he intuited this, paintings never meant much to him, things to hang on otherwise boringly bare walls. To an activist, all subversive art appealed and merited attention. Unlike a seascape, nonrepresentational pieces ask questions, engage observers in silent dialog, instantly raise intelligence, provoke positive interaction, but being right or smart isn't much of a priority these days with buffoons acting as figureheads of corrupt administrations.

Psychology has already begun to map an unknown universe of metaphorical reality as diverse and rich as what billions of people agree is solidly palpable. The fact it's intangible makes it no less real. After hundreds of paintings Dali provided a slight glimpse of this limitless realm frightening only in its strangeness. Within it each symbol has a personal meaning depending on cultural background of perceiver. So it's different in everyone's dreams, and thus is 7 billion times as diverse as concrete reality. Its artifacts aren't feathers or shells or stones but actions of men and women and their effects on physical world, for better or worse. Bicycles, castles, computers, gardens, great walls, networks, pyramids, sculp-

ture, skyscrapers among other things didn't exist without human intervention, but were developed to answer needs upon ideals conceived by human minds. Nature's signature wonders seem scruffy by comparison. Even so, many minds are illuminated by this wonderful scruffiness, which need not be duplicated. True art is a synthesis of man's imagination and nature.

As a creature on Earth, just staying alive seems priority enough. When he disciplined his mind, his body became soft, mushy, overtired. What causes this drain? It calms you to play an instrument or read a book. Does your normal alertness get lost when you apply logic? It's almost as if you're hypnotizing yourself to absorb facts; later these facts escape your ability to recall, or do they? Perhaps they're just driven into subconscious and reoccur as surreal phantasms or tormented sentences.

Live theatre appealed less to him than films. Live theatre is like focusing on only acting and not all cinematic dimensions: editing, locations, music, sound, special effects. Fuels an actors ego, but does it benefit attendees? Many think that theatre died along with vaudeville. Can be like warm-up drills rather than performances, as if watching rehearsals. Plays don't require huge budgets, so they're accessible, egalitarian and potentially useful to subversives. Ballet, musical theatre, and opera are above plays, because they add an important dimension: dance, music and/or poetry. Among these, opera, perhaps music's highest form, relies on something totally amazing, a carefully honed voice, an instrument its stars carry around with them to cherish and treasure as long as it lasts. Whenever a diva merely speaks, it stirs your innermost core with a delicious level of intensity. Some argue that movies are too sensation rich to be grasped or that many are poorly produced, sacrifice important values in acting, directing and sound, only to churn out another cash snare. But the same can be said of any artistic medium.

A 3rd of every day is shut-eye, another 3rd is industry, but the final 3rd must constitute play and research. If you don't spend a 3rd of your discretionary time among art, your soul atrophies. Those who spend most of their waking hours working are inhuman robots, self convicted prisoners. Many chores don't even fulfill your exploratory/scientific minimum daily requirement, never mind ethical religious needs. Otherwise, your life is out of balance, and, one might argue, not worth living. One doesn't live to chose among play, pray, sleep or work, but to fulfill the mystery of being through all of them collectively. Unless on this course, how do you derive meaning? It's no wonder you're unhappy.

Flirting with politics, pandering to public opinions, swimming in maelstroms of artistic impressions and sentiments may put you on a track for widespread recognition, but does it help you grope through that darkest forest barring mankind from truth? Can find your soul is so empty, you fill this silence with anything from raging tears to transcendent joy. Isn't it your business to fill yourself with right intentions, fortify yourself with goodness? Self improvement of the right sort may lead to world improvement. Get off you duff and do good stuff! After enduring much derision for doing so, he asked, "Why don't *you* straighten up instead of *me*?" Criticism need not be as complete and withering as this book when a recipient understands. It's just that intended recipients don't get it even when censure is straightforward. Might as well not bother complaining. Don't have to take anyone's advice or directions, only have to be loud enough yourself to advertise it to potential soul mates, like a birdsong at dusk.

Suddenly he realized there are many ways to interact and practically all result in the same inhumanity. Neither evil schemes nor good intentions seem to make the slightest difference how someone behaves back. You have no control over anyone else, only yourself. Doesn't matter if you abandon, accuse, admire from a distance, adore, advise, befriend, caress, cherish, defend, embrace, employ, emulate, enslave, fawn over, goof off, hold at arm's length, insult, jilt, judge, kick, like, love, mentor, nurture, persecute, piss off, play with, probe, process, prosecute, provoke, serve, snub, suck up, tease, treat as equal, violate, or work nicely alongside others, some interaction is better than none. As if a game, you can fit 6 different ways to interact on each side of a die, and with another die pinpoint choice among them, 36 in all, then toss together to decide how you'll treat anyone you meet. Makes almost as much sense of how it's done now, fairly random based on unexamined prejudices. At least then you can blame fate rather than your own stupidity.

