

10. Twist a Topic

Participation in a community includes communicating, conversing, doing, preaching, reporting post mortem, soliciting, and supporting vitality of a bulletin board, not in any particular order. Club had arranged a way for members to publicly smear and spam each other. Al visited that list server, a daily stop even when nobody was paying attention and there weren't any significant contributions. It became a touchstone for random rosaries of inner feelings or lack of faith, testimonies to nothing in particular. He visited bike shops the same way, as if his presence might brighten up clientele. So often had he done so on his bike, the few times he came in dressed for business comments were made, "Thought you and your bike were inseparable!" People can be such 1-dimensional inchworms unable to identify people they know out of context or uniform. Bike chains with no half link or skip have 1/2" spacing between rollers, so you literally inch along with each revolution. Everyone gets somewhere eventually, predestined destinations.

You have to be damn special to stand out among hundreds of thousands of people to whom you're introduced. Who remembers anyone anyway? Only those who get under your skin out of hate or love make any impression. They define an *Internet troll* as someone who "sends messages hoping to entice other users into angry or fruitless responses". They espouse some indefensible viewpoint to suck you into a futile argument. This was never his intention, although substantiating any truth yields almost the same result. Everyone is already too stressed out to try on another perspective, as if a bad suit, even if his alternative would relieve their stress. Don't want lectures; can't be bothered, not enough time, too many bills to pay. Really, people don't want to talk about anything but themselves; they'd rather feather their own nest, hike their egos at your expense, puzzle out their own self image. Don't ask a monologist questions. Don't interrupt anyone on a roll. Never try to check psychic greed. Want to get a word in edgewise? How fast can you shout?

Collectively, forums are mental litter boxes, a twilight zone of axe grinders, bumbling incompetents, immature trolls, strange thinkers, and time wasters. Ask yourself, "Why am I here? Which category do I fit into?" No matter how carefully you proceed, you alienate many and violate all rigid dictums. Should someone pander to dolts or write however/whatever he/she wants? Give up integrity

to be popular or continue in an obscure personal style? Use only monosyllabic words any idiot gets or leave readers scratching their heads? Sometimes you just want to get important points across; poetry is useless then. Other times it doesn't matter, or it's clearly hopeless. If you've spent an entire career writing careful, sensible stuff, you might want to crawl into the unknown, probe edges, unearth your own real self even if imbecilic jerks bash you for it.

Saw so much of silent side roads their memories soon grew dim. That's why he felt compelled to post trip reports with a few key observations: Being outside on a sunny Sunday in late Fall, comfortable new pavement, dots of bright orange pumpkins lining dark furrows, nice hills for rolling out, red berries bursting from a gray woods. Hardly anyone ever paid attention to his blazing flashes, electrochemical bits and starts translated into strings of black specks—mere words—as if someone wanted to read them, as if a soul in bedlam screaming obscenities. Neither giant nor madman, you touch some nerve or turn off a crowd. They read their own experiences into whatever you write, take away little from what you say. Your words are only a soiled mirror to them. Meaningless to gather an audience. Anyone who'd read him seriously must be a nerd or nincompoop anyway. You must simply write and ignore groups where only betrayal lies. Impunity and purity nestle within. Beauty's an attitude, not a sanctioned pulchritude of neatly arranged molecules. That you are a leper or mental defective makes you no less of a person than a king or president, who, after all, are supposed to serve your best interests.

If board stagnated, he'd sometimes toss in a few hand grenades, rattle things up, urge others to ride, as the Mayo Clinic needled, through guilt or rationale. It became something of a bad habit, off and on, a personal weblog, real basis of this saga, terrific polemic better thought out and painstakingly put together, unlike hairballs generally coughed up on-line. One might call it metafiction seeking a midpoint between fact and fantasy. A novel only has value when it acts subversively to change behavior. Textbooks are only useful if they advance a discipline, instill imagination, or make readers think for themselves. Used to write into a diary, supplanted by email to friends, listserv entries to test reactions, then work on this book. Few out there seem to want to read anything unless they have to. Similarly, riding a bike, nothing but pedaling, consumes years you can never recover, probably not worth effort expended. Months could go by without much being said, then there'd be a flurry of postings, as many as 25 in a day in season: questions about club business, riders looking for

companions to share their misery, what one did and where one went. When you have nothing special happening in your life, banality fills the void. By retreating into banality, people don't have to concern themselves with what's truly important. Usually tried to honestly answer inquiries that he knew something about, dispelling myths, repeating things he heard and tried, retelling technical tidbits, or routing strangers through his turf. He felt it a way to reach out, show he cared, touch with positive impact. Maybe even substantiate for himself he was not so appallingly alone. Doing so raises neglected issues that someone needs to resolve.

On occasion his entries turned dark, delving into money, politics, religion and sex, inviting the hostility generally evoked by these topics. You can't hold an open forum without getting posts you might not like. Truth be told, there's nothing wrong with talking about them. Most art, music, and all novels somehow touch on them, so why not email? Just being among people implies politics. Just being aware demands metaphysics. People who deny them are dolts. They're essential realities to appreciate, discuss, master, or possibly submit to. A normal person can hardly go a day without considering them. Typical males daydream about sex once every 30 seconds. Salmon swim upstream thousands of miles for just a *chance* at mating. Indeed, sex acts with strangers should be carefully considered beforehand. Blind consumerism, exploitation, pollution, profit motives and waste are destroying the planet and smothering Earth Goddess who supports all life. After drawing sustenance, balance must be achieved by restoring resources. Politics is nothing more than how people act towards one another and deal with these things. Straying from nature is what causes all problems to begin with. Spirituality is a key to a complete human experience. Religions may be primitive, but at your core so are you. The spirit world is inescapable, hides inside as long as you breathe. Faith has been called the "highest form of human passion", while religions contradictorily denounce passion as some ultimate evil. Religions all teach basically the same thing: Bend to the inscrutable will of an unknown higher power, then obey man-made rules instead of natural instincts. Complying and hoping aren't going to save you. Any policy that favors rich over vast masses of a struggling majority is irrational, possibly psychotic, the worst immorality. How you breed, deal or worship is your own business; your choices are defended by United Nations' Bill of Human Rights. Can't bash someone else's and impose yours as better. You've learned nothing at all if you don't understand how everything is somehow interconnected. Bright and shiny arrive alongside slimy and sticky.

Why be squeamish? Any line of inquiry is admissible, but one must avoid actions that harm others, unless, obviously, it's to oppose those who'd do the same to you.

If you search for derivation of the very word *bicycle*, it leads directly to ancient politics. Superficially, it merely means 2 circles, 2 wheels. Circle goes back to ancient Greek, *kyklos*, a term used first by Polybius, then Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in turn to mean a succession of governments rotating through anarchy (no rule), aristocracy (demigods who wrest power in a vacuum), monarchy (tyrants who organize warlords), and finally democracy (rule by consensus). Transitions between were always marked with turmoil and violence where innocents suffered, so all felt this natural cycling was to be avoided. Stability as a constitutional democracy was optimal, and they believed this could be assured by several measures: Banish anyone who becomes too powerful, limit tenure of officers, maintain a large middle class, remove judges who accept bribes, and support education of the masses. If people learn laws they might keep them, of course. But unless most people can think for themselves, the policies of a democracy turn out the same as for a monarchy. Importantly, don't tolerate tinkering, because slight changes may result in a thorough unraveling of your constitutional fabric. As all Republicans know, the fast track of getting what you want is simply change unfavorable rules, preferably for nobody else but you. Giving leaders more power to protect you only makes powerful enemies of them. This wisdom from across 2 millennia remains just as valid today, ripped right from contemporary headlines. You don't need to ride a bicycle to realize that fairly sharing resources is consequential to everyone's survival.

When he chose to explore these relationships, he was inevitably criticized for being "all over the place", which irritated narrow minds because they couldn't easily pigeonhole him and summarily reject revelations that surfaced. Curiously, free thinkers mostly agree on all points they care about across wide gulfs. Conformists, all of whom fear the same reprisals, disagree, even within small groups, and so contentiously debate minutia. Isn't this opposite to labels they're given? Labels mislead; narrow focus distorts. Facts are disconnected details; truths address everything, flit from topic to topic like butterflies or Lolita, leave no stone unturned, overlook no one. By that measure, any search for truth would have to include a set as vast as a universe, loiter on only those things that fuel, interest or sustain you, and notice practically nothing of reality in full, merely a skewed macrocosm of what you've personally selected, because in this process you have to toss out all the lies

and half-truths you've ever been told. Anyway, it's open season on reality; everyone is taking shots at it. These days there aren't enough hours in a day for advertisers and spin doctors to tear it into pieces, well to remember when you're preparing to vote.

Great minds have pondered lofty matters for time immemorial. Teens chatter about whatever sparks their interest, as if throwing themselves against a grindstone of cosmological uncertainty. With boundless energy they aren't deterred by what's wildly impractical until necessity forces them to give up whatever it is they seek in vain. Keynes claimed that "Words ought to be a little wild, for they are the assaults of thoughts on the unthinking." But aren't thoughts nothing more than random organic compounds in hypothalamus forming peptides which affect neural pathways in peculiar ways, breaking and making connections? With each advance in neurobiology's grasp of cerebral function, great truths seem no more than Faulkner's "sound and fury signifying nothing". Scientists who study these phenomena aren't ready to give up the idea that some invisible force guides these processes. Hypotheses get raised, new experiments tried, progress attained, and together these acts show a higher level of reason than otherwise found in animal kingdom. This better defines humanity than use of language, at best a flawed method, or use of tools, both of which can be managed after a fashion by great apes and lesser creatures.

Saw postings by agnostics who wouldn't tempt fate by breaking taboos. Yet they avoided religious topics. Political correctness and superstition both make less sense than organized religious doctrine. Superstitions are random explanations that individuals erroneously conclude. Doctrines are based on well discerned, widely held agreements. Religion plays a requisite part in most people's daily routine, so why not their bicycling regimen or email? A billion and a half Moslems make Islam their cornerstone of consciousness. In a World without order or justice, people find solace in prayer, even if it ensures no miracles. After all, you're not supposed to pray for stuff you want, but to pray that you'll have strength to do His Will, even die for your beliefs, or pray for someone else's benefit, not your own selfish purposes. Nobody's interested anymore in serving a higher authority. People expect leaders to serve them. In a madness to be free and independent, people lost sight of a crucial truth: They will never be either. Only by aligning opinions, cooperating with others, finding common ground, do people achieve positive outcomes. In a free society, members are only *free* to do what's responsible and treat others with respect. Self importance—not the same as individuality—

is a colorful but false illusion everyone wants to believe. Reality remains practically unchanged with or without you. Unless many benefit from your munificence, or suffer from your misdeeds, your death will go unnoticed.

If you don't care to make any sense, you can select among a number of religious notions. Take Islam. Students of Qur'an believe in fate. When it's your time to go, that's that. Moslems are stuck in a centuries old ego trip having once dominated a large part of the World as it was then known, spread through intimidation at sword point. Can you get along with anyone whose pride won't let them forget conquests of Turkish sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, or Saladin, or fiscal successes of modern Saudi monarchs? What was once not Moslem has mostly shifted to One God dogma, but hasn't yet made journey to a uniform religious doctrine for all. Men are too proud not to have mostly empty churches sit grandly on every street corner. Religions exclude more than include. Shouldn't religions offer a chance for an individual to interact with everyone or other believers at least? Do this but not that, honor others, show respect: Each sect argues semantics based on intolerance. To embrace any religion is to embrace them all. They are remarkably alike, despite what devotees claim. Being religious is just too damn easy: Never have to understand another's viewpoint, how things really work, nature's caprices, what makes people tick. Blindly comply and let angels sort it all out.

Perhaps another global war's best outcome will be to forever restrict organized religion, just as previous one did monarchy. Power coveting clerics have supplanted divine rulers. About the only authenticating experiences they've ever had revolves around inflicting harm and subjugation, which they're experts at. They know nothing of governance or science, and are eager to do away with both. Under an edict of no graven images, Islamic decoration confines itself to Arabic letters and stylized patterns, thereby condemned to millennia of herringbone and houndstooth. Books can be as abstract as Moslem art, not actually meaningless, but more symbolic than understandable. You can't prove that belief makes any difference, improves survivability, makes any sense. Don't try. This is its greatest strength. Religions fill cracks of intellect caused by doubt and dread, spackle for psychic partitions, tar over splits in otherwise smooth pavement. Vehemence of devotion only proves that men can't live without it, frightening fairy tales based on facts people can no longer encompass or even comprehend but dread down to their innermost core and thus cannot simply ignore. Virtue is an insatiable furnace. Devotion is

mind fuel, mental sustenance, a trigger of hope which drives man's creativity, innovation, unpredictability. Piety is a key piece if you want to complete your puzzle, but must you? It really is better to just live well with compassion and love and let your afterlife sort itself out. The Good Lord doesn't care what you intend, say, think, or ultimately how you act, but only what good you accomplish, and made all this impeccably clear by preaching it in action parables. Alone, you can hardly tie your own shoe, but together, beget a vibrant future with limitless potential, end hunger, explore universe, negotiate World peace, save planet from random asteroid strikes, solve perplexing problems. Gladiator Maximus said it right, "Stay together, and we survive." Those who struck out on their own in a turbulent arena were easily dispatched.

Don't care for no say in your future? Try Buddhism. Moslems differ from Buddhists, who hold the opposite philosophy to most Westerners, contempt for materialism, reverence of honesty, and self effacing acceptance. They believe in karma, sticky stuff like shellac that builds up from living decently and protects their inner self. Of course, if you don't reincarnate upward, bad karma will keep you in trouble, so you'll have to work a lot harder shoveling dung next time, maybe, roadkill then untouchable. But what if you are reincarnated backwards into animal forms? Could be a long, long journey into infinity. Now you know why there are so many more species of bacteria and cockroaches than angels and geniuses.

The walking grateful dead, warlocks and witches practice pagan rites, new age throwbacks to ever more primitive superstitions based on daily coincidences and misinterpretations; serves only ego for those too proud to prostrate themselves. Get some humility, why don't you? If there's a devil, then there's a god; why back the defined loser? Janes spend all their time avoiding harming lower life forms, unsuccessfully, but a great dodge for manual labor. Hinduism? Too many incarnations of divinity, including Ganesh, the elephant; similar to religions of ancient Rome and Greece, a plethora of gods who are never collectively appeased—come to think of it, a lot like earthly customers. Tends to negate proactive good. Any action at all, however perverse, can be dedicated to whichever god oversees it, and is thus justifiable. Zoroastrians? Too mysterious. Shinto? Too Japanese. Chance? Even confirmed agnostic Einstein had to agree, "God didn't play dice with the universe." Atheists are quick to repudiate the 6 known proofs of God's existence based on the illogic of logic, but, through the same doubts, can't say for sure God doesn't exist. The only two humans on record to have returned from death—Jesus and Lazarus—

confirmed God's existence, but where are they now when you most need a witness?

Listserv commentators gave themselves too much credit for deep religious feelings. Many were not only atheists but rabidly anti-religion. People think they're so smart. If Einstein, a definitely irreligious disaffiliated Jew, was unwilling to completely divorce from belief, citing Buddhism as closely aligned with his mystical bent, there must be a small, small voice under it all that whispers, "What if there *is* a tolerant God who allows you to sin yet expects in the end you repent or else?" You can't fix a failed life after it's over. You can't pray for yourself then, at least that's what they teach. Who knows? One thing of which you can be assured: Man doesn't know much, seldom gets anything right—medicine, prayer, survival, transportation, or work—so who are you going to listen to? Maybe that little voice? Say there are angels, guardians who preserve the righteous, and whisk away souls when they separate from a dead blob of body to a far better plane than this one. Too many coincidences and miracles evidence it. Unless this, what's the meaning of life? Would it be worth living? You can reliably wager that myths of an afterlife are based on some truth, even if you can't understand how it all works. Heaven is just like everything else in this universe, inexplicable.

Now, even if you were the smartest logician who ever lived, would you think you're smarter than Einstein? Or Jesus? Or Newton? Or Thomas Aquinas? Or those billions of believers over millennia? Nobody has ever had a complete understanding of all disciplines, only some small facet of one, it seems. An individual human mind is flawed and puny, some more than others. And yet, men collectively, on occasion, have risen together as teams to do remarkable things: built telescopes, rockets and robots to explore oceans of sea and space, driven plagues, polio and smallpox into submission, expanded capacity to grow life sustaining food, not only flew around the World but made doing so commonplace, played golf on another heavenly body, and resolved to remain free and amenable to such collaborations. Agreements definitely enable many ventures otherwise unattainable, space exploration, for example. By including lesser states in grand expeditions you might begin enfranchising them, and, if not guaranteeing loyalty, would be better than antagonizing, a step in the right direction. Abraham Lincoln asked, "Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends of them?"

Any confluence of ideas and muscle flows stronger afterwards. Long before he committed to following not just 2 streams,

but many into infinity, primed his mind to absorb countless unrelated facts so he could focus on any part and fill in its blanks. That's the problem studying only one discipline: blanks occupy connecting nodes to all possible dots on a topic, so any resulting picture becomes 1-dimensionally twisted, a murky shade of its ideal color. In any discussion, even the most narrowly defined, you can never get it all out in a blog, board post, or thousand page book. All life's details are beyond a mind's ability to envelop.

Judeo-Christianity has only one God, although for Christians a cryptic continuum of three parts, who lets you pick evil or good, your choice. Either build up credits for perpetual rewards or buy a ticket to eternal damnation. Grim choice, but at least it's yours, as if you were capable of choosing correctly. Choice is very overrated. Godless existentialists believe that everything is a sum of choices made, a sort of religion of liberation for a modern World, one that's too rooted in the physical and way off the metaphysical plane to satisfactorily explain ineffable phenomena. No atheists in foxholes—too busy killing fellow humans. Christian teaching subverted for violence rationalizes more. Practicing pantheists are greater in number than they know, too dumb to understand what this term means, being a quasi-religion in which God is diffuse throughout universe, a way of acknowledging mysteries without having to deal with them.

Pick whichever religion you want. Or accept all simultaneously. Theosophists did exactly that, combined all that rubbish of ages while claiming to do the opposite. They do all share same motifs, for example, a mystical white rider wielding a weapon. There's no legitimate exclusivity, as they all teach the same thing but vary on fine points so as to create us-them divergences which create conflicts and fill coffers and coffins. Notice how Brazilians blend African voodoo with Christianity, or Incas can't give up an occasional pagan rite. Can't ignore vengeful entities who rumble inside volcanoes or on mountaintops. Heretic after heretic tossed out articles of doctrine that didn't appeal to them. So make up your own; people died to give you this choice, an unalienable right. With freedom of religion, any arrangement is possible, although authorities won't necessarily acknowledge your practice for tax purposes, reserving this privilege to organized ones they wish to steer everyone into. The Church of What's Happening Now may be more a nonprofit society, like a bike club, than an organized religion. There's a major irony here: There are sects whose ministers as a hobby collect Rolls Royces on a nonprofit basis, while real private piety operates at an uncompensated loss.

Nez Perce Chief Joseph eloquently protested, "You might as well expect the rivers to run backwards as that any man who was born a free man should be contented when penned up and denied liberty to go where he pleases." Please, go, if you can; let your body and spirit soar, if allowed. Assumes rights no longer granted: border patrols, fenced ranges, immigration quotas, relegation to reservations, vigilante squads on patrol, visa denials. Suppose you can arrive at truths along many paths, but the sleep of reason does produce monsters. Society heads backward faster than forward. If you don't carefully think and choose, you have horrible luck and screw up lives around you. You can't just drift when innocents depend upon you. Being guided by superstitions is simply an extravagance for which someone else pays. Belief, metaphysics, philosophy: All are just ways to explain what the brain concocts and can't resolve. Doubt may well be the most mysterious and uniquely human form of cognition. Might as well make beliefs work in your best interests, a general departure from teachings of masters. Do you think you can run away from your duties as a human by blaming omnipotent otherworldly beings? Hell, no!

Your devotions may be fine for you. They need not be forced upon others. You can acquire cobwebs of ancient philosophies, or dedicate yourself to technologies that didn't exist 2,000 years ago. It's your choice, gladly granted by democracy. Conversely, others can't expect some devotee to shut up and never bring up what they, out of fear or guilt, never want to hear. It's not required that people agree at all on anything, it's just that both parties suffer when they don't. In a material World, such disagreements result in hunger, pestilence and strife. On a spiritual plane, the only downside is a lack of closeness, indistinct yearning, but obviously something tolerable, possibly preferable. Persian king Cyrus the Great didn't restrict religious expression, which helped promulgate the biggest religions still remaining. In the same location millennia later, ruling mullahs of modern day Iran have devolved human rights. Catholic Popes warn women against Muslim unions, which strip them of their free will. What's more, this interferes with gathering a tithing congregation. Such total disconnects caused by religious extremism have no place in this World. Makes progress impossible.

If you try to share your search, likely some red-faced antagonist will spit back, "Don't ever talk to me that way again!" He'd been accused of being a strong personality, a phrase best interpreted as, "In your face." When you dauntlessly treat strangers like you've known them forever because you're powerful enough to defend yourself, this delights or disturbs, and no doubt can be

channeled into magnanimity or become a menace. It was up to whomever he met to decide, leave it or lock on. He wasn't about to back off. Expended cash and effort trying to get people on bikes. Aerobic transit beats gym workouts, forces people to live better, kills two, three, four birds with one stone. He'd rather work on prevention than cures or dead birds. The "cure establishment" disappoints badly, received trillions in contributions over half a century, yet hasn't come up with anything definitive. Too often charitable contributions get diverted and misused. He wasn't at all averse to point out what's obvious. Improves focus on what each person can do for themselves.

Truth is the ultimate leveler. Constantly unmasking ugly aspects of living, sticking people's faces in its stench, inducing vomit—how was this supposed to gather fans? He couldn't say. Truth only seems cruel initially, but then you warm to it, come to appreciate what it can do for you. It raises alarms. Truth becomes that wake up call you need to react in an appropriate and timely manner, or a rallying point for action by the masses when too small a group exerts too much influence. People adore evil, he guessed. They rallied around Hitler, Mao, Mussolini, Reagan, Stalin, now Ben Gayden, great communicators, mesmerizing performers, all of whom tore up boundaries pursuing their own passions to spread lies and pain on a global stage under a banner of social righteousness. Once you put on Onibaba's samurai mask of deceit, you can't take it off. You become yourself the frightful evil by which you cynically tried to keep innocent instincts and raging hormones from doing what they've done for thousands of years, mate and procreate, instead of kill for you.

Grandiose visions map into a book formula that everyone gets: conflicts, conquests, denouements, a hero with 1,000 faces, all modeled on one exemplary life surrounded by camouflaged evils that had to be overcome. Must, as Satre suggests, morality be a tortured quest? Somehow his life didn't resemble this in the least. Modernity had changed this equation, turning it into a daily grind of banality and boredom, adding 20 more years to expectancy of the same, no climatic events, no distinguishable villains, no noble quests, and, of course, few love interests, only something happening to someone elsewhere while you battle feebly to survive.

Bored people are either lazy or oppressed. He easily became bored while shopping, standing in lines awaiting services in stores, toiling for someone else, or withstanding other forms of modern oppression. But he was cagey enough to bring along a cell phone, notepad, pencil or unread magazine with articles just long enough

to read while you wait. Sometimes that means a paperback if lines are intolerably long. Read all of Kafka's *The Trial* waiting at Registry of Motor Vehicles, art reflecting life. Boredom is a recent phenomena. Neolithic man was too busy trying to survive. While a Paleolithic diet was spare, it did include many organic sources discovered by careful observation of animals and birds and self experimentation. Must've been really interesting the first time they ate cannabis leaves or certain types of mushrooms, where shamanism came from, no doubt. It wasn't until industrialization that people didn't spend all their time experimenting with or fabricating clothing, food, shelter, shoes, sources of energy, and tools for themselves or those convalescing.

Some share the opinion of a forgivable Anatole France character, who advised, "They who possess the truth should take care how they spread it." Archie and club insiders who cower before monarchies had the temerity to suggest that truth didn't belong on their bulletin board. Usually that's a red flag of malfeasance. If not in a free forum, then where!? Couldn't see how discussing bicycling on a bicycling board was in any way inappropriate, particularly when it dragged in broadening perspectives beyond simply pedaling. Bicycling was directly connected with counterculture a generation ago. Swiss doctor Albert Hoffman, who discovered and took the world's first synthetic LSD dose, self experimentation, then went on a bicycle ride into unexplored psychedelia followed by millions of misguided youth. Links remain to an alternative subculture through piercing or tats, and similarity of word *bicycle* to *bisexual*, rumored to underscore Freddy Mercury's popular ditty, "Bicycle, bicycle, I want to ride my bicycle, where I like." Effeminate men and empowered women play musical saddles and role reversals. But mostly it had become a tight-assed sport for conservatives, whose new regime felt all remnants of hippie wit needed to be expunged. A few well-respected members agreed with him, which stunned Archie. Nobody was supposed to ask questions. Nobody likes someone different or smarter. Putting together brilliant insights will always be a dangerous, lonesome enterprise. He'd rather his insights were fraught with imprecision, highly debatable, and thus could be discredited by a majority and thus exonerate him like Galileo. But they seldom were, which made him unduly anxious.

If you speak an undeniable truth, henchmen show up to squelch it. This is easier to do than it sounds in Prosaic Nation, where a few dissidents are easily rounded up and silenced, while Silent Majority, impotent and paralyzed, stands by. "There'll be no more 'Aaaaarrrrgggg!' but you may feel a little sick." Tradeoffs.

Compared to the masses, he was an intuitive thinker, excessively inflicted with imagination, someone who extrapolated on small inferences. Having seen rackets from inside, remained suspicious of all intentions and questioned leaders on every level. Always, power corrupts. One may free oneself of dealing with details, but not one's overall responsibility. Unimportant authorities left unchecked become abusive dictators. Happens so often in Africa nobody cares. "Just following orders," can't be absolved anymore amidst stench of death. If it weren't for frank forums, people with issues would have no outlet and probably explode into fury fueled hate. On the other hand, people who are totally whacked out have a chance to spread their bile, infect normal people with their paranoia, take out their rage against the machine on you. Lashing out is not reaching out. Internet is the blind leading the blind, mass folly, something into which you often have to reintroduce sense. It's been that way ever since the subversion that is education. Too many can read and make up their minds for themselves for tyranny to get an easy foothold, unless they get lazy or too distracted, seduced by entertainment or misinformation in an Information Society. There's no use having a free press if nobody asks questions. Watch out!

Tax haters bristle at school costs that make up much of any town's budget. Some argue, "I don't have any kids," but forget they were once kids themselves and someone else paid for them. A decent educational system is an investment that pays everyone a dividend. Children become employable adults who fulfill useful roles and pay into Internal Revenue Service and Social Security to support future and previous generations. Expenses could be managed better by hiring more paraprofessionals and using more but smaller buildings. Greedy, selfish people still don't give a damn. They prefer ignorance, keeping people so low they can be easily exploited. Ignorance gets irritating. Knowing about things calms you, even if it's actions leveled against you, because then you can fight back or react appropriately. Republicans are too damn clever for their own good. Divest themselves of business with people and take on abstract financials, but don't realize that organizations with bodies and minds are the only ones with longevity and promise. What will they do when there's nobody left to borrow money, or buy annuities, bonds or stocks? They think they've already quizzed that one out: Import illegal aliens as slave labor or for state ESL money, because they send it wherever there are concentrations of migrant workers, who are then deported untaught once funding is pocketed.

While people avoid talking about faith and politics, that's what's needed right now. Even the most polarized parties break down and find common ground when forced to confront each other on a one-on-one human level. From distance springs all manner of misgivings; proximity creates chances to overcome hatred, prejudice, xenophobia. The less space the better in some cases. Lock opposing factions in a room until they come out hugging one other or sole survivor is left standing. Once this door opens, there's a whole new world to discover. Of course you're going to clan together to brave uncertainty, compare, dig deep into experience reserves to survive, discuss, explore, notice, question. Cults use this basic instinct against recruits, cram in a lot of nonsense and deprive their senses so they lose their balance and mutate into putty to mold. Truth is innate, requires no indoctrination or institutions; it's simple. Something true needs but a few words to state. Convoluting sentences might probe for it, but you can tell they're not there yet. Powers that be want to break your spirit, drill truth out of you, for as long as they can take advantage.

Who contributed to this bulletin board? Those quick to mock anything for the sake of argument (25% of posts). Reactionary idiots who know nothing but hang onto dead or dying paradigms (20%). Master baiters who stroke mania no matter what pain it inflicts (13%). The ill-informed asking questions and wasting your time instead of looking it up for themselves (12%). Lonely, desperate people you don't want to know who stir pot to see what bubbles up (11%). Self promoters who plagiarize content or cleverly toss in foreign phrases translated by Babblefish or urls of borderline interest to claim credit for themselves (6%). Salespeople, whether they're aware of it or not, offering products under a guise of begging for phony charities or infotainment (5%). Industry plants who create fears about bicycling to steer you back toward something profitable for them (3%). Sanctimonious authorities who slap down anyone who might question their motives (2%). Sexual predators (1.999%). Genuinely caring people (.001%), evidenced by the fact that hardly any posts would receive supportive replies.

He answered every email directed at him, but seldom in a way correspondent would expect. Emails for him became nothing more than carved words on a granite slab dropped into a sea of indifference, maybe someday discovered but by then covered by barnacles and worn down into illegibility, like Mediterranean amphoras. He was just discovering recordings done in the 1990's, a decade earlier, that were antidotes to the hate of rap and metal, but never became popular or never found their way onto radio dominated by agendas

and oldies. They weren't forced upon unsuspecting listeners, in fact, weren't too exciting, intentionally non-invasive, really calming and healing, like sleep, something nobody wanted. You can sleep plenty when you're dead. Don't need hyperbole, only honest portrayals of fairly diligent, quiet workers who stay out of trouble, the vast silent majority. Don't need catchy beats or guitars strumming in background, but they do make correspondence palatable, if not mask mania. Music should reflect society's attitude. Audiences aren't attracted by obscure content, but familiarity. Nevertheless, many verses validate conflicts that are forced upon you in so many ways. Only conflict matters to those who'd profit from it.

His revolt against club may have started when small-minded insider Collette insisted he attend club's annual meeting. He didn't plan to go, but last minute email persuaded him. Perhaps he was being considered for Volunteer of the Year, although he didn't dare expect, even if deserving. Turned out, Collette was merely legitimizing proceedings, almost as if when someone else won prize, it was to embarrass him. He hated being maneuvered and treated like a chump, having his dignity assaulted by people who thought they were cleverer. But then he'd give the benefit of doubt, go humble, let it go. Suppose they just needed bodies to fill seats. Votes were passed on only 5% of membership; quorums were required. Accountant's report suggested surpluses that would fill a war chest and specious expenditures that didn't add up. Wasn't this supposed to be a nonprofit?

Club's darling event, its cash cow, was a late Summer century ride. He didn't know why he should pay to ride a century when entrance fees didn't go to anything worthwhile. Club dues paid for other expenses, but they made it sound as if fees barely covered costs. Charities did this *and* raised a considerable surplus. If club had a legitimate nonprofit status, it could apply for grants; he actually applied for one and got it for them. Club did serve an important community function, encouraging bicycling, getting adults out to enjoy themselves in fresh air, promoting better health. This was the main thing, not this second-rate fund-raiser spoken of sanctimoniously in reverent whispers.

Paying to do century rides seemed silly. Could go out and do his own whenever he wanted to. Fund raising was a sham. Who knew what they did with surplus? Claimed there wasn't any. With \$45,000 in admissions, you can buy a lot of peanut butter. Workers were all volunteers. You don't need crossing guards on rides except when there are suddenly too many inexperienced bicyclists. Going with a group just adds torment with overly aggressive strang-

ers screaming in your ear as they pass. Never found such experiences rewarding, although some obviously did. It compared to group gifts organized by certain individuals, you know them, who bask in glory of giving without paying their share, even buy a big ticket item at a discount and pocket difference. Happened every day among churchgoers, office workers, siblings, and wherever a group doesn't have time to pick out a gift and enjoys someone doing it for them, even if organizer profits from it. To expose sharpies and deny them profits only serves to set them up in another caper elsewhere. Doing so you have to expend effort yourself, lop off your nose to spite your face, unless you decide buying off your charitable duty is simply foolish. The best gift, anyway, is your kind thoughts and personal attention, yourself not your money, although those who despise you want only the latter, of course.

In protest, he took his daughter on bikeway, visited a Greek festival for music and souvlaki, and won food clean fun by basking in another's ethnicity determined to remain intact through cooking and line dancing despite mainstream steamrolling. Unless you study ancient Greek and Roman culture, you know practically nothing about Western Civilization or how it was threatened by emperors and their constitution subverters. Better to provide a good example than support a dubious fundraiser. Suppose all clubs had to do something like it in order to bring in cash to underwrite club activities. Weren't dues enough? Did insiders and officers pay them? Or perhaps they didn't spend revenues wisely? He could only imagine to what horrible end these tens of thousands went. Backing political campaigns? Lining unknown pockets? Squandered on parties? Travel junkets? After all, it wasn't illegal; bylaws and non-profit status allowed club officers to be compensated. If money grabs are legal, these facts should be made plain, and elections should be guileless. Closed elections were another red flag.

When he heard Archie decided to give up presidency, he wondered if his bulletin board references had had an effect. Archie also announced a need to alter club's nonprofit status. Truth is good, after all. It need not be an indictment, neither belligerent nor militant, just a reminder. You don't need to yank tiller to tack, just reposition hand and alter course ever so slightly. Gentle ministrations work better than rough. Hard corrections crash boat into rocks, require massive rebuilding worth neither the effort nor time. Gentleness also worked on a micro-level with things as simple as stocking shelves or washing dishes. Thinking through an effort, working efficiently, then diligently putting everything in its proper place avoids waste from breakage and saves time, even if it initially

takes longer, since waste has to be earned back some other way. It's best to be in the moment. The moment is all you have. Future is unwritten. Past is immutable. In the moment you can swerve from time into a realm of limitless possibilities. Slow and steady are fine, are the way of all bureaucracy and ceremony. Mad dashes are deadly.

Anything worth acting upon was better than sitting around by yourself getting angry. Better if there's some pressure valve. Of course, self expression perturbs otherwise calm bystanders, ticks off the folly of multitudes, mob behavior. Opinions voiced have a way of inciting belligerence, disenfranchisement, or hurt feeling. Saying nothing leads to dawdling and decline, lack of participation, relative safety. Yet posting was a fine catharsis. "Let her cry, if it eases all her pain," Hootie sang. Compared it to call-in radio shows: a boon to mental health? Even developed his own rant scale, 3 paragraphs or more to qualify. Readers only complain when it's not what they want to read. He began to precede his missives with warnings for the politically squeamish as if a plot spoiler. Or artfully wove in dangerous perspectives amongst innocuous babble.

Bulletin board comments could include anything from edicts by authorities to inane drabble. Who expects expert advice for free? So called experts are only those who are adequately adept dubbed so by self-proclaimed arbiters since they bolster each other's self-serving specializations. "Ex-spurts" more often resemble "has-been drips under pressure" than proficient practitioners. They're threatened by any simple explanation which undermines their obfuscation. Had heard, "There's definitely no logic to human behavior", but only if you're behind walls erected to disguise real intentions. Had to dig deeper if you really wanted to know anyone. If anything, he would always be a mover and a shaker, undermining ramparts, never a follower. Only the lead dog in a sled team has a view unobstructed by asses.

Central to his rants was how a bicycle can be better than a car depending upon circumstances. Bicycles had a definite role in any transportation scheme, but even those who are testily vocal for cyclist rights seldom use bikes to commute, in all, less than 10% of miles they ride. While he didn't really care what people did, he adopted Cassandra's role, made accurate predictions everyone ignored. Not only would nobody be able to drive soon with ever increasing intensification, he argued they should do something about it, and fully expected none to take him seriously. It was only one way to agitate an alternative viewpoint, to engage in dialogue, to provoke critical thinking. Yet motorists continue to stew in

gridlock for hours, when a decent bike and a little training would actually alleviate their stress. Employers could encourage workers to commute by bike by supplying secure storage, shower facilities, and situational flex-time for the healthy behavior and mental alertness it brings. But, of course, they don't, since corporations exist to serve director greed. They hardly tolerate workers at all, would prefer robots if they weren't more expensive to buy and operate. Your health is of no interest to them; don't ever take a sick day unless you want to climb their list of those next to be laid off.

Fearless bicycling could help society ease out of chronic pollution, travel snarl, and unhealthy lifestyles. Holders of commercial licenses would appreciate bicyclists giving commuting a try. To get certified jitney and truck drivers had to attend and pass defensive driving classes, where they learned the meaning of "give right-of-way" and "maintain an escape option", and mastered hand signals, among other things. Many local drivers didn't anymore since only 35% of adults in his state were able to read above 6th grade level. Those who could twisted logic to suit their programs. "Talk is cheap," as long as it doesn't supplant doing what's needed, as it too often does.

Simple semaphore of hand signals would be of some use if anyone knew how to use them or what they meant. Motorists won't flick a switch for you, never mind master obsolete arm gestures and roll down always closed windows. *Left hand extended* indicates left turn. *Hand down*, stop. *Hand up*, right turn. Not so complicated after all. Bicyclists also have other gestures, like a courtesy flip to other cyclists also responsibly wearing helmets, or friendly wave to motorists who don't run them over. Cyclists usually hugging the right margin, use right hand to warn of road hazards, which can be seen by following cyclists but not motorists. *Right hand circling* means anything bad below: glass, grates, potholes, sand, sunken pipes. *Thumb up* tells other considerate bicyclists asking why you're stopped that you're okay. They point a V of 2 fingers at eyes then some sight worth noting. Along with an audible "car back", "clear", which indicates an intersection has no traffic, and "passing left", this was all they needed. Forget *middle finger salutes*. In general, bicyclists are far more courteous to all other road users than motorists are to other motorists.

For bicyclists, out in the lane on better pavement is entirely permissible. He rode in lane and passed on left, just like motorists, according to law. Motorists always react in shocked disbelief, although at least on their left they can see you, as opposed to that omnipresent blind spot on right. Since he always used a rear view

mirror himself, he added another gesture, a *long pull forward* with an extended left arm; means, "I see you; pass at will." It's a contract between rider and trailing driver. Bicyclists always have a better view forward, can hear better, and can relay that nobody's coming, worth noting as another set of ears, eyes, and harbingers of things to come. Wouldn't want to contribute to a head-on collision; might be legally liable. Also, promises you'll not swerve as motorist passes. You must be prepared to stop to honor your pass signal. He usually stopped pedaling to show he was earnest. Not compulsory, since motorists must wait where lanes weren't wide enough, maybe this was too much commitment for some riders, but many drivers appreciated and waved back approvingly. Those who blasted horns or flew past within inches were just halfwits, as well as flagrant scofflaws in 6 states where they had laws against passing cyclists within 3 feet.

When necessary, also showed a *stop signal* with added meaning "Don't pass yet". He saved many impatient driver lives that way, some of whom seemed quite grateful. There should be a bumper sticker, "I brake for bicyclists". No disrespect to furry animal activists, shouldn't humans try to save human lives? Politicians encourage biking to work, yet there's neither the appropriate motorist awareness nor enabling infrastructure. People would let themselves be overrun by wild beasts rather than give a neighbor a break, dump millions into 9/11 relief for a few thousand survivors rather than donate a dime or a sack of seed to feed entire nations dying of famine. People are suckers for instant celebrity causes, but lose sight of long term suffering. This World can no longer tolerate the black rider of drought, gluttony, unfair trade and want with which he could identify, prophetic black third horseman holding a device of balance, scales of judgment.

What's wrong with speaking without guile? Not profitable? Is the true mark of cleverness how rich you become? Everyone presumes they're more clever than the next, until they're bankrupt or exposed. In a society of borrowers all vying for bigger tabs, the bigger a personal bankruptcy, the bigger its badge of honor. Stasis is restored when sensible lenders shut off such idiots. Amazingly, they never say no to major offenders, whose defaults are hundreds of times worse than typical losers. Banks cherish risky corporate borrowing, and businesses remain unprofitable because of debt maintenance. States float bonds, nothing more than loans secured by future tax revenues, to lay pavement which needs complete restoration well before bond is paid off. This hole they dig gets deeper and deeper, and money you think is being used for public

projects dribbles into private offshore accounts. Forget U.S. Savings Bonds—government is already \$9 trillion in debt and likely to default if it stays on current course.

America's roadways exists for all vehicles, motored or motorless. It's the law. Without a sharing protocol, perils abound for both. Bicyclists are perfectly entitled to use all unbanned streets. Bicyclists may legally cross over to middle of road to make left turns, occupy space directly in the travel lane (not the gutter), ride two abreast, and weave. Motorists are only entitled to *remain under control* and give way to all they encounter. From behind a windshield and over handlebars, there's an appearance of danger, but how much? At 12 mph, bicyclists represent little threat to themselves or others. USDOT statistics prove few per incident fatalities, only 0.05%, among a low percentage of serious injuries, almost always a motorist's fault. About the only times bicyclists are at fault are when they go against traffic or wrong way on one-way streets, ignore traffic controls, or use banned roads such as interstate highways. Yet, traffic controls were initiated to control *motorized* traffic hurtling along with dangerous momentum, not cyclists and pedestrians.

Bicycling only seems dicey to those who don't know how to ride. Biking regularly might even be safer than sitting home watching TV. Taking a shower is statistically riskier. Paceliners racing for sport approach danger zone. Still, the fastest bicyclists seldom exceed speed limits on flat. In 90 years of Le Tour de France, as of its Centennial year, 2004, among a hundred thousand of the World's fastest self-propelled athletes taking biggest risks one can while cycling, with plenty of spills and thrills, only three deaths occurred; alcohol and/or drugs were implicated, as usual.

Motorists should never exceed unposted 25 mph limit or pass on single lane secondaries. What makes them so impatient? They break laws, constantly, in willful disregard. Where's the skill in that? It's disheartening. Shows they can't adapt their behavior to suit conditions, a sign of mental deficiency. No amount of education, public service announcements, or torture can decelerate them, keep them in driving lanes, or make them behave sensibly. Education isn't what will get the job done. What should be done? Raise standards for obtaining licenses, revoke more often, sue automakers and their lobbyists who've taken control of how roadways are designed and exclude, and urge beginners to bike before attempting to motor, since it's the best way to train for operating properly. Driving is a privilege to be earned. Bicycling is an unalienable right. One might condemn motoring itself, a bizarre, unnatural

act hardly anyone has mastered. When sent through cone mazes, practically nobody can avoid knocking some down. A few states rightly require everyone to pass this basic test. Most don't because they rely on multiple revenues extracted from motorists. Government mandated safety devices increase survivability of inevitable accidents, not avoid them. With gridlock, escape options are few. Weaving causes more accidents. Nobody cares if you are killed or maimed. Driving just isn't fun or safe anymore. Bicycling is.

There are many societal influences in art and media.

Carmakers themselves glorify excessive speed as if a good thing. Speed suggests prosperity, since "time is money". NASCAR, to cars as Le Tour is to bicycles, gives a false impression of safety, spectacular smashups in which hardly anyone dies due to special devices unavailable to civilians: 5-point harnesses, absence of glass, break-away panels, and form-fit seats. Five generations of drivers now use roads, the most since 1950's big expansion. Not only are there more drivers than ever, they're taking more trips. Too much of America's economy depends upon motorized personal transportation. This has delayed development of other technologies in agriculture, mass transport, medicine, and unrelated manufacturing. One might argue cons and pros but not that a broad base of industrial diversity prevents economic recession.

It takes more wisdom to bike than drive. Anyone can get a license: blind, boorish, or illiterate. Disrespectful dullards just point and negligently go. With cruise control, cars practically drive themselves. More than one driver after a crash admitted they thought that's what "cruise control" meant. Drivers brush hair, drink beer, listen and reply to talk radio, masturbate, pick noses, read, smoke, snooze, stow gear, and transact tomfoolery too absurd and gross to list—anything to distract themselves from the mindlessness of confined linear movement. Much of this may be illegal, but laws are seldom enforced. Isolation behind a dashboard soon becomes frustration, then hostility. Fatal collisions claim more young adults than any other cause. Speed combined with disrespect, ignorance, inhumanity and substance abuse kills—not if but when.

Despite statutory entitlement to travel lanes, bicyclists are mostly respectful and timid. They dally right, and give way with a smile. They'd better. No test required—it's do or die. They think ahead. For benefit of motorists they consolidate trips, plan routes, study maps beforehand to get familiar with their communities, wear brightly colored clothing. They may weave sometimes from exertion, but they're seldom distracted. It's nearly impossible to do anything astride a saddle but balance, pay attention and pedal.

Occasionally, cyclists do run traffic signals. How else can they cross roads with speeding signal breakers? Particularly worrisome are those oddly controlled intersections that feed car after car from all directions. See an opportunity, carefully go. They also find themselves on the wrong side of road sometimes, mostly through poor road design without breaks in guardrails, islands, and other such barriers. Stop signs? Why stop at all? Creep up on them, practically stopped anyway, then go if clear—better than motorists. He notified local authorities that cars never slowed for STOP sign outside his house; they're too busy speeding past SLOW CHILDREN sign. They could give out 100 tickets a day, if they didn't hate to give out tickets, as suggested in a local public service announcement. Easier to run a PSA than arrest offenders.

To suck up to club officers, listserv contributors rummage Internet for references to bad bicyclist behavior. One posted a rare picture from Germany that showed a cyclist crashing into a lightpost, and touted it as a "reason not to ride on sidewalks". Crime scene investigators might offer a better explanation, but after his software enhanced study, believed it revealed that this was not a sidewalk per se, but a typical case of European bikeway design. What else would a blue painted bike symbol and white lines bounding a narrow lane be for other than bikes? Based on shadows, with clear visibility forward, no sun in eyes, it seemed unlikely that rider would have picked a line into a pole unless plastered; Dutch and Germans do drink beer for breakfast. Since bikeway angled across a road heavily striped with an obvious crosswalk, it rather appeared bicyclist was crossing legally when struck by a car, which didn't stop until already into crosswalk. Bicyclist was driven off course into pole, an opinion he directed to contributor off-line. No point in humiliating someone in public. There was no response. Could have easily countered with any of countless pictures of auto wrecks under a heading "reason not to drive... anywhere".

Why shouldn't bicyclists assert their right to all roads? They pay for them in federal, local and state taxes. Pavement is wrecked not by bicyclists, but by damaging rainfall and rampaging motorists, particularly truckers, some of whom contribute little or nothing locally. As always, those who complain the loudest pay the least. Bicyclists have to dodge linear cracks, potholes, sand, and sundry hazards to which they did not contribute. Besides being conspicuously unfair, this takes patience and skill. While he still preferred roadbeds, wasn't at all squeamish about biking across dirt or grass or on sidewalks. Motorists and transportation planners who cater to them often ignore bicyclists, who then have no choice

but to ride on walkways. Hardly any suburbanites walk anyway, and slow moving cyclists mix better with pedestrians than do speeding motor vehicles. Over five thousand are killed by motorists every year nationwide, almost 8 times the number of bicyclists.

There are distinct breeds of bicyclists: newbies, novices, *real* enthusiasts, and weekend sportsters. Daily riders try to gain road acceptance and urge bicycling etiquette. They don't want fellow riders killed, maimed or prohibited from asphalt altogether. Some sportsters have an attitude, "Me first at all costs," which extends into everything they do, bicycling and driving. They elbow other cyclists out of their way, hurry around creating mayhem, then retreat into SUVs to cut motorists off, too, a pity. They leave cities for country lanes, where they break laws, hog roads, then go home, and get away with it. They don't care about pacts clubs make with towns, who could curtail cycling, disrupt events, and disappoint thousands of other cyclists. Sportsters obviously don't ride every day in cities, where they'd never get away with such recklessness. Not all jerks are confined to luxury sedans and SUVs. One joker endorsed sometimes breaking laws for convenience, safety, or thrill of it. Worse offenders drive vans with handicap plates, have a hateful attitude because they're crippled and you're not. Every group has more than its share.

On the other hand, why should towns react to the unfounded complaints of a few slightly inconvenienced motorists? Bicyclists have 1,000 times more to complain about. In this dysfunctional, auto-dominated society, bicyclists hardly matter, even though $\geq 30\%$ who drive also ride bikes. Misguided insiders call for bicyclists to be better educated in the fine points of catering to motorists. Whose interests does that serve? Screw them. Had contemplated carrying a church key to scrap paint off those who buzzed him. Since motorists selectively obey laws, to compel bicyclists to do so is simply hypocrisy. The national bike cartel makes an enormous group—supposedly fifty-seven million—feel feeble and powerless by never addressing what's important.

Little is done to maintain road shoulders: They leave pavement to degrade, misalign storm grates are so slots run parallel to street and trap skinny tires, and seldom sweep. Shoulders are important, not as a place to ride but to shun vehicles driven poorly. Even when they patch roads, only travel lanes get attention. Articles published by Cripple-A, who you know are in cahoots with carmakers, acknowledge that breakdown lanes present dangers of debris and vehicles overtaking from behind. If you don't expect to maintain a road, post signs that say, "Pass at your own risk".

Otherwise pour tar in the crevices before water erodes them any further, and repave or restripe as often as required, not every quarter century.

Worse, bridges, highways, intersections and tunnels are built without decent alternatives as if to deliberately ban bicycling. Comparable impediments to motoring wouldn't be tolerated. You're riding along then find you can't go any further, although cars can. No, you have to wait until tomorrow for a bus to traverse ban or pedal 75 miles in a different direction around it. Barriers like fences, guardrails or jersey slabs that surround shopping centers force bicyclists into motor flow, when a simple gap would allow them to enter and escape parking lots. Fire codes demand multiple exits from buildings, yet you'd think they'd let bicyclists sneak off into adjacent districts, where likely they live if bicycling there. Can't mall designers conceive of patrons coming by bike? No road should suddenly end and force you to turn around and retrace, unless, of course, you're at land's end on a island or peninsula. Putting in stop signs and traffic controls at every intersection to benefit commerce at area stores only makes passersby find ways to avoid them. Planners react by adding speed bumps, cutting off side streets, designating one-way traffic, installing curbs and strips with hooks that flatten tires of cars driven in direction they don't want, vain attempts to exert authority that majority doesn't heed. Eventually, everyone avoids these towns altogether. Meanwhile, bike zealots are trying to build a critical mass of civil disobedience to force change. Almost nobody gets into government, operates from within, sponsors bills, or takes out lawsuits against discriminatory actions of motoring lobbyists and transportation departments. As a political platform, bike advocacy gathers little voter support. Pleading gets you nowhere. Pedaling gets you somewhere, at least.

Bike zealots who ride slowly wherever they want and stay calm survive. Some he knew have long gray beards. They disengage from cars by taking practically empty side streets. Anyway, it's just terrible slogging along with lung clogging diesel soot and noxious tailpipe emissions, teary eyed and throat sore; they'll do anything to avoid. Bicyclists don't fancy functioning as cave canaries, dying to warn miners that air is too foul to breathe.

Rainy days, off hours, and when clear in Winter, bike paths make bangup commute routes or outlets from city to country, pretty quiet except on holidays, prime time, and warm weekends. From any viewpoint, everyone should appreciate the convenience, health benefits, and refuge urban bike paths represent, not as a panacea from motorists or prison for cyclists, but a way to unsnarl

both where congestion is worst. Those who've bumped into or nearly missed each other on paths turn out to be those riding recklessly when conditions didn't warrant. Neither can one always drive with pedal to the metal. One must modify behavior to suit conditions, pay attention, slow down, or try another venue, as do dirt bikers on empty multitrack trails. Less trail use also makes them dangerous, places for predators to prowl.

Americans are too lenient of wrongdoers and lack concern for victims. Vehicle exhaust is to cyclists as secondhand smoke is to waitresses. How many are being debilitated by it? Worth a class action suit? Cyclists feel compelled to ride where air is breathable and traffic is light. He carefully scoped out routes beforehand. Stuck to main streets where crowds keep in check crack-heads, who hang around liquor stores and other places that foster bad habits. Was always surprised on Winter mornings to see hookers in heavy overcoats working corners. Apparently it's never too cold or early for selling sex. Preferred suburbs, at least where roads weren't already converted to speedways around malls. Nice countryside can be too far to ride to unless you drive part way. Is there anything wrong with that? Hours astride a saddle are virtually nonpolluting and better amusement than almost anything else involving motility. Sailing is nice, but it costs 100 times more and entails seasickness and sharks. Kayaking, skiing, skin diving, skydiving, and ultra-light flying, while not much more expensive, are far riskier.

He'd stick to bicycling. Even if he ramped up his skill and stamina by climbing hills, pumping iron, and pushing limits of human endurance, he'd never ride with pelaton. Tour leaders are unique physical specimens akin to Babe Ruth, Mohammed Ali and all those gifted with some genetic adaptation or indomitable will that lets them win where others can't. You grasp the spectacle better if you participate at least once in your life. Those who have appreciate how super athletes find their niche and perform better than anyone else. Boating, bowling, driving, golf, skiing, and tennis can also be forms of recreation. Turn anything into a competition and you can wager on it while swilling beer. How much money can be lost to bookies while squatting across from a boob tube? A relative lack of loss explains the myopia of bicycling's detractors. Video slots represent sport to them. Sad, really. Across this nation with fifty-seven million taking 3.3 billion trips, cycling for sport had only just begun, even though motorists still outnumbered them by 3 to 1. Abroad, velodrome races have been bet on for over a century. The small type may someday be reserved for baseball, football, and hockey, sports in which fewer fans spectate every year. Almost

everyone can run, too. Does this rule out Olympics? No, just the opposite; the more adept people become in a sport, the more likely they'll attempt to gauge their ability. Didn't seem right that bicycling is not a Summer Olympic event, but UCI already holds prestigious egalitarian contests to which anyone capable was invited to compete, unlike Olympics. But these contests were more about sponsorship, strategy and teamwork than an individual's raw ability on a closed track.

In Europe, where fuel is expensive by comparison, many pedal instead of pour petrol through machines. But not everywhere. You don't see anyone bicycling or walking in Stuttgart or Turin, motor cities. There they totally scorn America's obsession with safety. For them fast and fatal are fashionable, caused by some cultural oddity or death wish or lack of insurance influence. Motorists buzz pedestrians off streets back onto sidewalks to ensure roadway domination. Turin's economy is in a tailspin, too. Maybe they should learn to share—local knowledge, joys of living and let living, resources, roads. Sticking together is more rewarding than being first into an empty parking lot. But if you bounce off walls all day from 6 cups of espresso, a calm demeanor just doesn't occur, unless you also shoot heroin, but then you don't give a damn about anyone.

Gasoline will soon be \$50 per gallon for many reasons: arrogant attitudes, business deregulation, dwindling supply, and foolish consumption. "You're using up my gas," he grumbled. Although he only used a few hundred gallons per year, greedy humming hogs used thousands without the least thought of whom they deprive. Higher fuel prices might make people rethink clean, efficient, innovative models already being marketed. Carmakers developed them only because smoggy California laws forced them to. Why not bike for short distances, drive a smaller vehicle when possible, plan your trips, reduce nature's defilement, tread lightly? Couldn't possibly upset economy, actually adds beneficial diversity. He sometimes carried a bike with him, parked miles away from his destination, then rode in. Bosses don't care if you can't find a parking spot nearby. Take whatever tactic works for you.

Even with low fuel prices, deflation was spreading. This had more to do with a bad administration, corporate malfeasance not indicted, exclusivity, and too few holding too much wealth. It's what opportunists feel they must do to win. You can't blame them if you yourself accept their premise, "Claw your way to the top." They advise individuals who want to succeed to amass enough wealth to retire rich, pay themselves first through saving 20% of earnings, and put aside capitol instead of spending. This only

makes institutions and privateers richer and takes money out of circulation where it helps public. Trumpy Card claims, “You’ve got to want it to succeed,” in a trawl for apprentices to validate a high profile lifestyle, like a devil looking for disciples. If, instead, individuals got together and rewrote the paradigm, they wouldn’t have to amass wealth at all, a foolish use of anyone’s time. The paradigm’s sole purpose is to put distance between classes.

People condemn a good idea if they don’t like whoever suggests it. This leaves World in one big mess. They admired broad smiling Reagan, bought into “trickle down”, now there’s no more middle class, and Reagan’s buddies hold 90% of all assets. This is very wrong, can no longer be supported, and need not be. For a quick fix, tax the hell out of them! Lucky capitalists should anty up, pay more of public burden, support everyone else. If you want bigger rewards, carry more cargo. They bribe legislators to let them do less yet make more. Nowadays, those most restrained are the least rewarded. Bears and bulls may profit from barter of pork bellies but public bears all the burden behind it.

All this stemmed from that smoldering cinder from Yorba Linda, Nixon, who somehow managed to blow a bought election, but later got even, until they finally forced him out in disgrace. It only takes a spark to start a forest fire of bribes, criminal behavior, dirty deals, executive felonies, payoffs, secret surveillance, and so forth. Ambitions for power turn people into fools, madmen, murderers. Nixon’s simple Simon said, “Trash the Social Contract”, and organized the biggest slam against the middle class since the gilded age of robber barons. Yorba Linda remains nestled beneath the Chino Hills with its barren miles of earthen and paved bike paths and chronic epidemic of stolen cars. Hills and mayhem are here to stay, but not infrastructure itself or you, both constantly undergoing change that began with expensive engineering and got constructed through devious dealings, nepotism and patronage.

There *is* enough to go around, it’s just that it doesn’t *go around*. Those culpable have legions of spin doctors to repel censure. They’d have you believe that rabid terrorists hate freedoms, when it’s rampant capitalism that got and keeps them ranting. Brinksmen take chances that could end many lives; panic creates dangerous times for everyone. He never vehemently disliked anyone personally, only what they did wrong, although the two could sometimes be inseparable. This administration’s policies have failed, plans weren’t working, too many good workers lost their paychecks, thus America’s promise was waning. Meanwhile many other nations designated as developing are really dying. This is just what’s

happening now. Raped enough, time to cut your losses and take another direction, not that it will necessarily be a better one, admittedly a dangerous idea. He worried whether saying so was too radical, when it was probably not radical enough. What people need is to find a new, visionary leader, not one who's so intent on beating boogeymen, getting rich, or pandering to those who already are. Leaders who don't serve your interests aren't worth keeping, supporting, voting into office.

FDR, from old money himself, figured that one out, and they vilified him. But The Dealer calculated correctly. They have no power in a democracy, not enough of them. You only have to gain support of the masses by making their lives better. The current administration keeps tossing around landmines: abortion, core family values, gay rights, immigration. None of these are real issues, all personal preferences, randomly rotated like starship force field frequencies to keep you segregated and vulnerable. You don't need arguments from a minority who dominates the majority, mirrors, or smoke. Survival never gets addressed. Just like them, he didn't care a fig about any of these detours. What he cared about is more wage earners supporting their families. Places where the majority are middleclass, like Iceland, have energetic economies. Let the rest sort itself out on a private front.

Fuel prices levy fees on middleclass wage earners and people trying to earn a living, which are then squandered like so many lottery proceeds. Gasoline prices have doubled in less than 5 years, which has tremendously cut profits for small business owners and increased living costs for all. If Feds, who take in \$trillions annually, don't spend .00001% of budget to tempt people out for healthy recreation on bike paths, they give it away to corporations, foreign powers and HMO's, or they prosecute illegal wars at a cost of \$billions per week. Corporations have become the new aristocracy, with bishops, kings, knights and you, a pawn rooked.

Didn't mankind overthrow all monarchies on Bastille Day? A vicious few rise to top and take more than their share. Knock them down many rungs. Workers should never envy or look up to or respect them, unless what they do is truly selfless. Only by constant reevaluation of those in power can you remain safe. You can't start cooking then walk away from the stove. A car can give you power, but you can't let it drive itself.

Old Glory flew over his home, since he understood what it stands for: hope, purity, sacrifice, virtues in short supply amidst corporate greed and loss of faith. Capitalism isn't behind this nation's greatness, it's a cancer on society. It's discriminatory, elitist,

and explicitly anti-American. In 1941, before Roosevelt adopted the 4 freedoms, USA was a puny power. Read your history. Unregulated robber barons behaved unconscionably, drove this nation into a 10-year depression, gave labor unions a motive to form. Where was this elusive trickle down back then? Never happened. Everyone now expects freedom of 1) religion and 2) speech, from 3) fear and 4) want, ideals worth fighting for. Because of this people of all colors, creeds and origins found common ground, overcame oppression, stood shoulder to shoulder, and united to create a Gross National Product the likes of which the World had never seen. Cooperation, promises, tolerance, unselfish advancement of scientific frontiers, and a vibrant system of accomplishment and rewards were the keys to America's greatness. Resorting to treason and torture—mental and physical—is making it falter. A donkey won't go without a carrot on a stick. Freedoms are, after all, free, the cheapest carrot of all, just an attitude available to anyone, dearly earned but easily distributed. The part about it that wasn't free was defeating tyranny that would take it away. Anyone could see that dictators in the guise of CEOs and elected officials with their for-hire hate-mongers were on track toward restoring tyranny. By now, everyone should be on to their game: "Create unfounded panic that force issues in our favor." People's worries about natural disasters now rate less than their apprehension over inappropriate government response to one, or misgivings of speaking up to correct their messes. This is so Gilliam's *Brazil*, an exact replica of the real nightmare that is today's information society.

Freedom of speech wasn't granted just for frank discussions about health and sex, but also to preserve citizens "*anywhere in the world*" from fears of tyranny. Isn't *want* a form of tyranny? And what limits are there to spirituality? If your religion believes that nonbelievers should be killed or made to suffer, or slaves should be sacrificed to appease angry gods, isn't that tyranny, too? These issues are totally interlinked. These 4 freedoms should imply freedom in all respects, not only to choose organized doctrines of worship, but to devise one's own, and to not be held hostage when religion creeps into governmental decisions; not only to expect leaders to serve, but never to suffer economic reprisals for not voting for them. ATF agents and revenueurs mercilessly hunt down cult members, polygamists, Rastafarians and tax evaders whether or not religious observance plays a part. You can't claim to support constitutional rights for unilateral benefit. They must include everyone equally: foreigners, green card workers, illegal aliens, members of different races, nation's own tax paying citizens.

Affirmative action must be available for everyone, even those already privileged; the problem with this lies in narrow codes used, which, of course, already favor privileged candidates. Hiring criteria can't be built around white Anglo-Saxons. Forget "jobs for the needy", just think "jobs". Why would privileged want them with so many doors already open to them? A disturbing new trend was housewives of CEOs and successful artists entering workplace to regain a sense of connection with real people, as a hobby, displacing those who really need work. Just swell. Ivory towers not good enough? Perhaps this will open their eyes to suffering, but mostly they'll do a half-ass job on their own schedule, become desensitized to its horrors, and overlook the worst tyranny of all, having to be there day after day as if a prisoner for the sin of not being nobly born. You will not appreciate anything just like someone else. Trying to connect based on satisfaction will more likely result in bickering and partisanship. On the other hand, should you be thrown together out of desperation, fight side by side against tyranny, you will likely bond for a lifetime. Choices between undesirable positions are not what should be forced upon you.

In a *zero sum game*, one wins and everyone else loses. Ever wonder who coined this phrase? Wasn't Sartre, he tried to recall, but Jean Paul harped about a related one, *bad faith*. Women, according to Sartre, were infamous for interacting with cold hearts, indifferent warmth, saying anything to conceal their true feelings or intentions. Sartre was accused of chauvinism and misogyny. But he'd accuse most people, men and women, for dishonestly doing the same. Sure, men take what they want, but women might die if a moment's decision turns unmerciful. Sex for them is not as simple. Those in zero sum mode work the same way. They'd have you trade your life and everything else for things you think you need, like appliances, cars, recreations. A Humdinger, while not specifically bad, just a big lump of metal and plastic, exemplifies this mentality. When just a few have everything, they become targets of the have-nots, and rightly so. How else can Americans ensure freedom from want? Only by taking it away from hogs, neutralizing their effect, and redistributing to the needy. Capitalism might still work if those who excel at success were taxed commensurately. But hogs resist, preferring to spend it on body guards, lawyers and spin doctors rather than giving a little back to those they made it from. They'd never expose themselves to risks of being *out there* on a bike.

Was it so naughty to probe people's grasp on reality? He saw weblogs as unfinished novels and stories by correspondents who give up before they've gotten far, pathetic piles of Post-it notes under which the most important one was buried. Instead, he was looking for a way of becoming a living novel, maybe through purposeful living. There were enough differences of opinion about basic facts that hardly anything definitive could ever be said. Bulletin board posts were his experiment with an *open book*, one that could be amended by participants, but it turned out to be a messy, unfruitful process which few figured out, less an engaging serial novel than a set of cruel putdowns. In a society intent on instantly gratifying itself, serial novels were as well liked as serial killers or serial rapists. Respondents are mean spirited because, anonymously on-line, they can be. Carmella warned him against "looking for love in all the wrong places". But aren't those into which love desperately needs to be brought? For a deeper understanding, one must search without encouragement, even neglect bodily needs, learn what a body can do, not eat, not sleep, probe limits of deprivation and exertion. How can people who haven't say they've lived? To paraphrase Legstrong's comment about a *bike* and the Tour de France, "It's not about the '*book*', it's a metaphor for life, a test."

If readers thought he was increasingly outrageous, that was fine, as it should be. It was only because they never considered his perspective. Screw self censorship to get along nicely; gets you nowhere. They needed to get at least 3-dimensional, off a ledger page and out in this World. Most people's reality is an artificial construct that can be dashed to pieces in one fell stroke. It's like a bridge that fails; nobody bothered to examine its underpinings, what held the whole thing up, and suddenly down it goes. He thought it prudent to poke around and head off disasters, preventive maintenance. There's a phrase, *loose cannon*, which ostensibly means someone who rushes around causing more harm than good. More often it's a label bad bridge tenders give to independent safety inspectors. Those who know they ain't doing what they ought to often belittle sensible critics who makes trouble for them. It should be the other way around. Whoever manages needs to be watched with continuous close scrutiny. Micromanage the managers, not visa versa. He favored flat business models where groups are self regulating, where all members have a say and results flow from mutual agreement. Does a lot to minimize tyranny. The same holds true for CEOs, politicians, union organizers and whoever else sets up above people to supposedly represent but surreptitiously suppresses them.

These days, you always oversimplify if you categorize things into less than 7 billion categories of life experience. Yet World's population is divided into four groups. The *truly ignorant* who never ask, *chasers* who merely ask but not do, *doers* who've obtained answers for themselves, at least they think they have, and spout all sorts of lies, and the *truly wise* who really know but say nothing. Among individuals, these categories commingle, push ignorant to ask and wise to relent, which preserves causality, group dynamics and personal growth. Only 4-dimensional minds reside and interact in all categories at will, free to admit wonder, arouse themselves, openly communicate, withdraw gracefully. Those who are thus aware see the illogic and unpredictability of human interaction. They seek to simplify. Nothing much makes sense in this World except kindness and service to those you love. Easy to settle on either. They're efficiently simple.

Grant that this topic has been twisted and let it go. An alert cyclist gains a unique awareness of just about everything, all being connected anyway. Listserv readers who don't understand artistic, political, religious and scientific underpinnings just don't get it. Jokes are lost on them, words wasted. For someone to sit down and explain it all would take pointless effort, like this monologue. It's up to those who want to be hip to experience and learn. Or not. No one cares. Somehow a safe blanket of dumb chic had descended. Even if they dumb everything down, there's an upside. Makes this book look like a ponderous philosophical treatise when it's merely an idiot's babble. Maybe it was mad-cow disease, some mutant virus, or way too much information, but most people don't want to spend any time thinking, would rather occupy their time on activities that required none, like golfing or intently bicycling for sporadic hours among similarly intractable louts.

