

now i have pain everywhere,
in my neck, shoulders, elbows, upper back,
lower back, knees, ankles, and toes,

and if you want to add a joke
about pains in the ass, why yes,
i'm convinced that training at the bench press
contributed to some nasty episodes
of hemorrhoids.

what i mainly gained was weight.

that's the danger of trusting
in people who think all poems rhyme,
and that all rhymes embody truth.

UNEXPECTED HONESTY IN HIGH PLACES

although in so many ways i have been
so much less of an academic than
i should have been, i have excelled in
one respect: i am the absolute paradigm
of the absent-minded professor.

so just the other day, rushing to deposit
a couple of checks at the atm, i
automatically pulled up next to the corner
mailbox and dropped the checks into it.

when i got to the bank
i couldn't figure out
why the checks weren't in my hand.
i scoured the parking lot
and virtually dismantled the car
and retraced my steps from
the car back to the house which i examined
with the closest thing i could find to
the proverbially fine-toothed comb.

later in the day the sad truth finally dawned:
now i was horrified not only at the possible loss
of the checks, but at the thought of
my signatures and so much personal information
floating around the oft-abused corridors
of the postal service. so i not only stopped
payment on the checks but called dozens
of officials of the bank and the u.s. mail.
no one could do much of anything except reassure me
and restrain themselves from telling me that i was
a blithering idiot.

five days later, quietly, routinely, and for nothing more than the price of a first-class stamp, the checks were returned to my door by our regular mailman.

LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVES AND CONSERVATIVE-LIBERALS

it seems to me a bit inconsistent that republicans do not trust in the goodness of human nature where the poor are concerned but do trust in the social responsibility of corporations.

democrats, of course, reverse the inconsistency.

BEYOND B.F. SKINNER

i'm watching a rented video of 'round midnight with some local writers in a midwest city and the young french guy has just kicked down the lock of the door of the hotel room in which the black parisian landlady has been keeping dexter gordon imprisoned for his own health, not to mention his earning power,

and someone says, "i don't understand the point of all this,"

and i say, "the point of the film is freedom and dignity, precisely those conditions that b.f. skinner says contemporary man must relinquish." well, contemporary man has pretty fucking well relinquished them. but this french kid is saying that the jazz man must be allowed his freedom and dignity, must be allowed to be a man, even if such freedom virtually assures his early self-destruction. it is what existentialism was always all about. it is what john stuart mill was about. it is what clockwork orange is about. it is what john milton and john locke and even jonathan fucking edwards were all about. it is what billie holiday was about and john coltrane and the bird and bud powell — it is simply what JAZZ has always been about. it is what FRANCE is supposed to be about and it is