

broke—but that is a different story.) Of course, with a cooler head I might have made a more rational calculation. I drive about 7,000 miles a year; the oil needs to be changed every 10,000 miles; and the cost per change is about \$75. Over three years, then, I would save about \$150, or about 0.5 percent of the purchase price of the car—not a good reason to base my decision on. It gets worse, though: now I have an Audi that is packed to the ceiling with action figures, a stroller, a bike, and other kids' paraphernalia. Oh, for a minivan.

THE CONCEPT OF zero also applies to time. Time spent on one activity, after all, is time taken away from another. So if we spend 45 minutes in a line waiting for our turn to get a FREE! taste of ice cream, or if we spend half an hour filling out a long form for a tiny rebate, there is something else that we are not doing with our time.

My favorite personal example is free-entrance day at a museum. Despite the fact that most museums are not very expensive, I find it much more appealing to satisfy my desire for art when the price is zero. Of course I am not alone in this desire. So on these days I usually find that the museum is overcrowded, the line is long, it is hard to see anything, and fighting the crowds around the museum and in the cafeteria is unpleasant. Do I realize that it is a mistake to go to a museum when it is free? You bet I do—but I go nevertheless.

ZERO MAY ALSO affect food purchases. Food manufacturers have to convey all kinds of information on the side of the box. They have to tell us about the calories, fat content, fiber, etc. Is it possible that the same attraction we have to zero