

On Wasting Time

A Convincing Essay

By Hyrum Hendrickson

“The industrial revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race.” So began Theodore John Kaczynski’s infamous 1995 manifesto. Kaczynski, a Doctor of Mathematics, had become so radical that he began to mail bombs to those whom he believed were furthering industrial innovation. His story is famous not only for the novel methods used to capture him, but for the enduring presence of his ideas in the modern intellectual landscape. It has become rather commonplace to condemn his actions while largely supporting his philosophy. This paper will take a position which existed prior to Kaczynski, yet which certainly aligns well with his beliefs. We will claim that modern culture has become far too focused on efficiency and that in consequence many have had immense difficulty in finding meaning in their lives.

The world is changing faster now than ever before. Recall that Orville and Wilbur Wright took their first flight a mere 65 years before Neil Armstrong took his first steps on the Moon. The rapid technological changes of the past centuries have spurred social change and instability on a scale rarely seen in human history. Modern culture has certainly improved in many respects. There are, however, some important changes that have caused a great deal of damage. Consider that clocks are now among the most common objects in the world. You have one on your phone, on your computer, perhaps on your wall, or even on your wrist. Time is tracked with incredible precision, and it’s treated quite like a currency. We are told to budget our time; to spend it well. In schools, the modern student is taught how to partition their day down to the minute. They are told to accomplish as many tasks as possible without *wasting their time*. This is problematic because human fulfilment and meaning are commonly left by the wayside in the modern world, replaced by an almost religious devotion to efficiency.

Walter Hagen was known to say “Don’t hurry, don’t worry. You’re only here for a short visit, so don’t forget to stop and smell the roses”. Hagen understood human nature. People are not robots. We need rest, we need silence, we need peace. Modern machines work all day and all night; many modern people do their best to follow suit. This is not healthy. Meaning and

fulfillment in human life does not come primarily from material success or achievement. Meaning and fulfillment come from relationships, personal growth, purpose, values, and a connection to the divine. Aristotle taught that the purpose of life is found in doing that which only you can do. He said that living the good life involves contemplation and meditation, it involves genuine friendships and connections.

These things may seem out of place on a calendar or a to-do list, yet they are what make people people. We are not made to complete task after task after task, we are made to live. That means taking time to decompress, time to rest, time to pray, time spent alone, time spent with friends, time ‘wasted’. A well made schedule is made with gaps. Include time for breaks. Make sure that we remember what makes us human. Work is not an end, work is a means to the end of life. Everyone can and should work daily, but they must remember that they work to provide themselves and others with time to spend elsewhere.

Modern culture mistakenly condemns *wasted time*. It is indeed, the time that we waste, that defines our life. We all have tasks that we should work to accomplish, but we should not treat these tasks as if they are what define us. Sometimes, it may be necessary to turn in an assignment late because a friend needs someone to talk to. This is not a failure, this is a recognition of what is most important. We invite all to take a nap. We invite all to talk to a friend. We invite all to watch the sun set. We invite all to stop and smell the roses. We invite all to waste time.