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How I Lived My Life

My three life goals are to learn, to create and to help others. These goals are determine whether a particular endeavor is worth time or not.

I'm finding, as I get older, I have to a tendency to want every action to have an immediate, tangible payoff. If I go to class and learn material that will not be tested, for instance, I'm inclined to think my time would have been better spent elsewhere for that hour. I have also had many frustrating times in which I've worked very hard on a particular idea for a project, then realized I need to do a large part of it over. In cases like this, it's easy to become frustrated and long for those lost minutes, fantasizing about how else I could've used them. However, I've come to the conclusion that if the experience helps me learn, it was worth my time. Non-tested material may not be applicable to the class I'm taking, but may help me in my general career, or allow me simply to be a better human being. A programming idea that does not come to fruition has given me experience--I now know a path not to take in the future, and have most likely learned something about the language with which I am working.

My need to create, both for myself and for others, I believe comes from the human desire to have an impact on the world. The effort of creating something new, of contributing something to the body of work made by mankind is a deep-rooted desire that I suspect many of us experience. It comes from wanting to be more than oneself. I have spontaneous ideas in my head all the time, but if they stay there, there is no witness, no other human who is aware of their existence. Creating, whether it be a program, a paper, or a work of art, is the way we communicate ourselves to others our thoughts and experience. Through creating and perceiving others' creations, humans weave a web that connects us together.

My last goal: to help others. As with learning experiences, it can sometimes be difficult to see how taking the time to help someone else, rather than oneself, is beneficial. There have been moments I've thought that I simply don't have time to help a classmate with material they should have learned on their own, and besides, what do I owe to them? But this isn't the kind of person I want to be. When we help each other, we are able to build something greater than if we all acted in self-interest. In the short term, I've taken a job that allows me to directly help others--I am a proctor and answer students' questions for a beginning programming class. In the long term, I hope to use my career for the good of other people. I've chosen computer science because of its vast power to affect the lives of people. I hope that this class will help me (and others) to use this power for the best of everyone.

When I am old and reflecting on my life, I hope that I can say my choices for my actions have consistently been guided by these goals, and that my accomplishments are in line with them.