

What did I do today? I still have not finished my essay, did not have enough time to do the laundry, forgot to call my friend. I should have gone to bed earlier, so that I would have woken up earlier and gotten more done.

Even when I go hiking or swim in the sea, I wonder whether I have spent enough time at the beach to justify paying for the bus ticket.

At the end of the day, I tend to evaluate my day in terms of how productive I was. This often translates into neoliberal ideals of efficiency and time management and—since I study at university—scientific output. Then, of course, what I do is always evaluated against what other people do. How far along are they with their essays and readings? *"Wait, they finished everything and also got to go to the beach—I really have to learn to work faster, more efficiently. What grades did they eventually get?"*

Can you relate? If so, know that this mentality, or relationship to time and time management, is perhaps not as obvious as it may seem.

Indeed, for people in the Middle Ages, time used to belong only to God. People lived within a more vague, uncertain, and non-unified notion of time, characterized by overlapping "durations" rather than a single linear stream (McLuhan, 1962). Decisions to work, eat, rest, or pray were made in line with circadian or agrarian rhythms and the changing seasons. During this era, manual labor was often viewed through the lens of active and contemplative stages of a perfect life, where the "Martha" (active) stage was seen as the necessary state of a soul living in time and space (White, 1969). It was enough to have sufficient food and clothing to sustain the family, in line with an economy of modest needs.

For people in the seventeenth century, time became more divided, objectified, and controlled. This era was marked by a new passion for exact measurement and quantification that began to dominate all speculative inquiry (Nef, 1958). Where church bells were rung by ropes, Christiaan Huygens helped develop mathematical clocks, which allowed for

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the introduction of "certain hours" that had mathematical precision (McLuhan, 1964). These mechanical clocks regulated both time and behaviour, introducing a supposed "correct time" for activities such as work and prayer. Time is thus no longer something that is merely lived, but also something that is produced and controlled.

This shift can be further understood in terms of discipline and management, as described by Michel Foucault (1977). Indeed, as mechanical clocks introduced time schedules, work rhythms, and controlled daily routines, they dictated not just what people did, but also when and for how long. The clocks thus not only functioned to measure time, but also to discipline people.

In a way, time got reinvented, as well as revalued. Time increasingly became viewed as a scarce resource. You had to use your time on earth wisely, and idly wasting time increasingly came to be viewed as a sin, while saving time became a sign of virtue or even spiritual grace (Noble, 1997). Mechanical clocks—perhaps like many, if not all technologies—encourage us to become more efficient, productive, and sometimes competitive. In doing

so, the world and the human being him or herself are reduced to a "standing-reserve" (*Bestand*), a resource to be ordered and enhanced for maximum yield (Heidegger, 1977). After all, those who manage their time well are seen as contributing more to the common good than their supposedly "lazy" counterparts, who, in earlier centuries, were even compared to animals for their lack of time-discipline. Time management thus becomes tied to production, as well as to ideas of success, morality, and even personal value. What to do?

The courses at the Angelicum offered ways to help us articulate the "unsaid, the formerly unsayable", so that possibilities for solutions became more apparent (Pippin, 1995). With regard to time management, the course *The Challenges of Modern Technology* discussed Heidegger's concept of *Gelassenheit* ("releasement"). He proposed an alternative way of relating to time, which ultimately could also change your relationship to others as well as yourself (Heidegger, 1966).

We can say both "yes" and "no" to technology. We can say "yes" by using the clock to manage our time, even to the extent of instrumentalizing

ourselves towards achieving a certain goal. We can colour-code our schedules, time ourselves when studying for an exam, and optimise our routines. That said, we can also try to simultaneously say "no" to technology (Heidegger, 1966). These actions require becoming aware of the moments in which we instrumentalize ourselves—moments of "calculative" or "technological thinking" where everything is reduced to a "standing-reserve" (*Bestand*) to be ordered and enhanced for maximum yield (Heidegger, 1977). This awareness allows for a different attitude: a form of temporary distance from the unspoken requirement to instrumentalize ourselves. This distance, the temporary letting go of technological thinking, creates space for different ways of interacting with the world.

Instead of continuously trying to optimize how we manage our time, we can engage in "marginal practices"—we spend time with people not to network but to build friendship. We go for a walk to enjoy nature rather than to become more productive, and we sleep or rest not because it will improve tomorrow's performance, but because these activities carry meaning in themselves (Dreyfus, 1995). Precisely in these moments, it becomes clear that not everything has to be reduced to efficiency or control.

These moments of leisure and connection temporarily replace the technological thinking that has come to dominate our lives. They may be moments in which we place our trust in God again, reflecting a pre-modern understanding where time belonged only to God (White, 1962). In such moments, we treat ourselves and others more like an end in themselves than a means to an end. We accept that we will never have ultimate control, acknowledging that history is an ontological dispensation beyond human control (Heidegger, 1977).

Even though I still cannot—and perhaps do not want to—say "no" to technological thinking completely, I still try to manage my time efficiently. How else would I navigate today's world? The mere realization of having the possibility to say "no" already sets you free (Heidegger, 1966). It is already a way of acknowledging that I am a human being with a social nature, in need of connection, fun, rest, and pleasure—

qualities that are specifically human and transcend mere biological or technical processes. I feel more comfortable saying "no", without feeling that it says something negative about myself.

While this is not a definitive solution, but rather a moment of "releasement" (Heidegger, 1966), it is a welcome, temporary interruption of the dominant framework through which I usually evaluate my day. Life happens, and I am becoming more accepting that I have to surrender control, rather than continuously trying to control myself or the situation. Those moments in which I decide to continue sleeping after my alarm goes off, go for a walk instead of trying—and failing—to work on my essay, or play football with friends instead of studying for an exam, should perhaps not simply be read as failures to control myself or the situation. In terms of the "saving power of insignificant things," these activities constitute what Dreyfus (1995) describes as "marginal practices"—actions that are inherently meaningful precisely because they are not efficient. They also remind me of who I really am, and what I need or desire most.

This leads me to one final lesson: the "perfect" decision does not exist. Perhaps all I can do, whether in evaluating my day or my semester, is to accept and embrace the complexity of life, knowing that I am limited. As happy as I am with my life, I will still make mistakes. Perhaps the ancient Greeks were right: wisdom is gained through suffering (*pathei mathos*), an insight often lost in the linear, "typographic" logic of modernity (McLuhan, 1962). I do not need to—nor can I—construct a plastic narrative in which I am always "good", preventing conflict and, therefore, suffering. By always trying to control myself or the situations I find myself in, by trying to escape every small problem, am I not falling into the trap of "calculative thinking" and trying to escape life itself (Heidegger, 1966)?

Perhaps, then, the question is no longer "What did I do today?", essentially checking whether I had a productive day, but rather: What did I learn? Who did I connect with? What am I grateful for? This shift represents a move toward "meditative thinking", which keeps our essential nature alive by allowing us to experience the world without the constant

need to "use" it (Heidegger, 1966). The best approach to life is perhaps—at least sometimes—to simply dive in head first, not because everything will work out, but because life is meant to be lived rather than controlled. This aligns with the idea that the ultimate value of our tools and knowledge is not just to extend our power, but to give us the means to "assume responsibility for our actions" in an unpredictable world (Dumouchel, 1995). As Father Benedict's homily during the final Mass invited us to do: thoughts, doubts, regrets? Leave them at the altar.

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