

II THE DESIRE TO EXCEED ONE'S PROGRAMME

Chapter II of "How to Live on Twenty-Four Hours a Day" introduces a dialogue around the perception of time and the universal desire to maximize daily living beyond the apparent constraints of a 24-hour day. The author starts by preemptively addressing a potential objection: the claim of an individual who feels adequately satisfied with how they utilize their time. This character, depicted with a hint of sarcasm, is someone who has apparently mastered the art of living within the daily temporal limit and still finds time for leisure and personal pursuits. The author expresses a longing to learn from such a person, acknowledging their existence yet noting the unfortunate reality of never having met them.

As the chapter progresses, it delves into the common sentiment of aspiration and the persistent unease that accompanies the swift passage of years. This restlessness, described as a skeleton at every feast of joy, is attributed to an ongoing sense of expectation, the continuous looking forward to future achievements. It's suggested that this inclination towards perpetual striving—despite life's obligations—is innate and varies in intensity among individuals.

Using the metaphor of a journey to Mecca, the author illustrates the distinction between unfulfilled aspiration and the torment of stagnation. The comparison conveys that the attempt, the act of setting out towards a goal, holds intrinsic value, contrasting sharply with the despair of those who never embark on their pursuit due to perceived time constraints.

Towards the end of the chapter, there's an exploration of the underlying cause of this universal restlessness: a deeply rooted desire to engage in endeavors beyond routine obligations, described as a call to something "outside their formal programme." This ambition is framed as a natural part of human evolution and a variant of the eternal quest for knowledge. The chapter closes by positing that genuine peace of the soul is attainable only through efforts to satisfy this profound and universal yearning for advancement beyond one's conventional duties.