



Soren Kierkegaard, "Either/Or" (1843):

Of all ridiculous things the most ridiculous seems to me, to be busy — to be a man who is brisk about his food and his work.

The unhappy person is one who has his ideal, the content of his life, the fullness of his consciousness, the essence of his being, in some manner outside of himself. The unhappy man is always absent from himself, never present to himself. But one can be absent, obviously, either in the past or in the future. This adequately circumscribes the entire territory of the unhappy consciousness.





Herman Hesse, "On little Joys" (1905):

I believe what we lack is joy. The ardor that a heightened awareness imparts to life, the conception of life as a happy thing, as a festival... **But the high value put upon every minute of time, the idea of hurry-hurry as the most important objective of living, is unquestionably the most dangerous enemy of joy.**

[...]

Our ways of enjoying ourselves are hardly less irritating and nerve-racking than the pressure of our work. "As much as possible, as fast as possible" is the motto. And so there is more and more entertainment and less and less joy... This morbid pursuit of enjoyment [is] spurred on by constant dissatisfaction and yet perpetually satiated.

[...]

Let not the man who subscribes to a weekly theater series feel that he is losing something if he makes use of it only every other week. I guarantee: he will gain.

Let anyone who is accustomed to looking at a great many pictures in an exhibition try just once, if he is still capable of it, spending an hour or more in front of a single masterpiece and content himself with that for the day. He will be the gainer by it.

[...]

Our eyes, above all those misused, overstrained eyes of modern man, can be, if only we are willing, an inexhaustible source of pleasure. When I walk to work in the morning I see many workers who have just crawled sleepily out of bed, hurrying in both directions, shivering along the streets. Most of them walk fast and keep their eyes on the pavement, or at most on the clothes and faces of the passers-by. Heads up, dear friends!

[...]

A stretch of sky, a garden wall overhung by green branches, a strong horse, a handsome dog, a group of children, a beautiful face — why should we be willing to be robbed of all this? Whoever has acquired the knack can in the space of a block see precious things without losing a minute's time... All things have their vivid aspects, even the uninteresting or ugly; one must only want to see.

And with seeing come cheerfulness and love and poesy. The man who for the first time picks a small flower so that he can have it near him while he works has taken a step toward joy in life.



Josef Pieper, "Leisure. The basis of culture" (1948):

The opposite of acedia is not the industrious spirit of the daily effort to make a living, but rather **the cheerful affirmation by man of his own existence**, of the world as a whole, and of God — of Love, that is, from which arises that special freshness of action, which would never be confused by anyone [who has] any experience with the narrow activity of the "workaholic."

[...]

Leisure, then, is a condition of the soul — (and we must firmly keep this assumption, since leisure is not necessarily present in all the external things like "breaks," "time off," "weekend," "vacation," and so on — it is a condition of the soul) — leisure is precisely the counterpoise to the image for the "worker."

[...]

In leisure, there is ... something of the serenity of "not-being-able-to-grasp," of the recognition of the mysterious character of the world, and the confidence of blind faith, which can let things go as they will.

[...]

Against the exclusiveness of the paradigm of work as effort, leisure is the condition of considering things in a celebrating spirit. The inner joyfulness of the person who is celebrating belongs to the very core of what we mean by leisure... **Leisure is only possible in the assumption that man is not only in harmony with himself ... but also he is in agreement with the world and its meaning. Leisure lives on affirmation.** It is not the same as the absence of activity; it is not the same thing as quiet, or even as an inner quiet. It is rather like the stillness in the conversation of lovers, which is fed by their oneness.

[...]

This is why the ability to be "at leisure" is one of the basic powers of the human soul. Like the gift of contemplative self-immersion in Being, and the ability to uplift one's spirits in festivity, the power to be at leisure is the power to step beyond the working world and win contact with those superhuman, life-giving forces that can send us, renewed and alive again, into the busy world of work...

