

# The Illusion of A Future

By Ben Bilyeu

There are some realities the human mind simply cannot conceptualize: “forever”, “non-existence,” a two dimensional physical object, etc. But perhaps the most impossible truth—the most impossible relevant truth – that one cannot accept is the fact that man does not have a future! Why? Because man is a mortal being! However it is impossible for one to possess good mental health without the assurance that one has “tomorrow” and immutable is the reality that a mortal entity does not have “tomorrow”. Why is it impossible for one to have good mental health without tomorrow? Because one does not live one’s life in “today.” Life is always lived—“tomorrow!”

All of life, the sum of the tireless and endless motion of humankind, to build, to destroy, to love, to hate, to possess, to discard – to dream, has its ultimate realization in “tomorrow”. Life is simplistically divided into the triad known as the “past”, the “present”, and the “future”. Yet how true it is that one never lives today; i.e., the present. One always lives one’s life in— “tomorrow”. Every student at the university, whether freshman or senior, though his body is anchored in the present, the mind, however, is far removed— in “tomorrow:” when the possession of that long sought after degree finally becomes a reality, when that achievement is

accomplished, when that day arrives, the present cannot be lived in. One second after acquiring one’s degree, it is back to the future. The mind is immediately catapulted to the future when one acquires that new job, when begins one’s career. But once achieved, is the present, then, a suitable abode for one’s life? Not a chance! While the body is shackled in the present, the mind, however, cannot, repeat— cannot— be so confined. One is already living in the future— tomorrow, when one marries—tomorrow, when one begins a family—tomorrow when the house of one’s dreams is finally built, tomorrow, then perhaps, one can live in the present? Impossible! Today—the present—is not habitable. Why? Because there’s that advanced degree one must finish, the book that must be written, the children that must get through college, etc.

**Why doesn’t anyone— why can’t anyone—live in the present? Because there is nothing in the present that is worth living for: everything that really makes life worth living— meaningful, is just out of reach—in tomorrow!\_\_And this is the dilemma!** When that long sought after treasure, that “I must have to live” is finally obtained, it immediately transforms, its value fades, and one’s attention is directed by yet, another fortune, this one

removed –in tomorrow. **The paradox of human existence is that no single thing in life, no possession, no accomplishment, no crusade, no conquest, no honor, is sufficient in itself. No thing (no sum of things) that this world has to offer is so encompassing, so self-absorbing, so life ore powering, that it, alone, can suffice as an end within itself** and engender completeness. No thing of today, no purchase, no treasure found, no doxology, can hold one completely. One must ever look to tomorrow, in fact, to an indefinite number of tomorrows, to an endless succession of victories, crusades, conquests, dreams, and hopes, to fill one’s life.

Why must man have tomorrow? Because he is chronically incomplete and he continually looks to tomorrow to find completeness. But no single thing, no sum of things that can be achieved today can make him complete. It is only an infinite number of things, which can only be found in an infinite number of tomorrows that makes life bearable, that gives him the illusion that he will finally become complete. Is it possible to sit down to a meal, and in that single meal eat sufficiently so that one will never have to eat again? Is it possible for one to breath deeply the oxygen that is so essential to one’s life, and in that one breath, breath sufficient oxygen needed for the rest of one’s days? Is it

possible that a husband can tell his wife “I love you” and infuse those three words with such a depth of affection that he will never have to affirm his love to her again? And so it is with every other thing in this life which man longs for, prays for, lies for, and wages war for, in his futile quest to become complete.

**The most disturbing truth the human mind will not accept is the fact that man does not have tomorrow.**

And by “tomorrow” is meant more than next week, more than next year—a lot more! But, man does not have a future, which contains an indefinite number of tomorrows. A student beginning her junior year learned that she has terminal cancer and has but three years to live. Would there be any meaning in her finishing her studies at the university? The answer is singular: “No”. Why? Because the purpose of the degree to help make her life complete, cannot be realized due to the mortality of the student. **Secular man will never be what he longs to be: complete. Because his mortality prevents him from seeing the tomorrows which finally-finally promise him completeness.** While it is impossible to deny the reality of death, as every single day brings the news of some tragedy from afar or close to home, of death on both a massive and an individual scale, it is of merit to note that for secular man, death is acknowledged, but only as an academic reality. That is,

death is a technical truism, but with no practical consequence, no realistic concerns. It is somebody else’s trauma. Death as a species-wide pandemic, as a tragedy on a cosmic scale, with staggering ramifications for the meaning of individual existence, is effectively premeditative, and with orchestration, denied. For denial is the only way that secular man can cope with his meaningless existence. The philosophical implications and the logical conclusions, that one is compelled to deduce from the fact that it is the manifest destiny of every person to die, are censored both by culture in general, and by academe in particular, as both present human life as if man was an immortal being. (Read the texts of the disciplines of psychology, sociology, philosophy and note the absence of exposition regarding the ultimate destiny of man.) **The conclusion that secular man will not acknowledge is the fact that by virtue of death, human life, for every person, is intrinsically absurd, and consequently meaningless.** All the pomp and circumstance given to the so-called progress of man: the advancement of science, medicine, and technology, is so much inane absurdity. Why? Because human existence is a precise analogy to life that once existed in the death camps of Auschwitz and Dachau, where the prisoners who refused to acknowledge the hopelessness of their state because of the gas chamber waiting for them, turned

inwardly in denial and lived a collective lie, denying their fate by making much adieu about the accomplishments made in the camp: the artwork in unit 12, the secret radio receiver made in unit 15, the fresh vegetables grown by the prisoners in unit 22 (a refreshing change from prison gruel), the book being written by the sage in unit 34, and the much needed school for the children in unit 59—a meaningless overture, as all were doomed!

Another student lacking but one semester to graduation learns that he is also afflicted with a malady, this too, fatal. He has but six decades to live. Should he finish his degree? Are you certain? © 2005

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