

REVIEWING OUR ACTS

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The ancient philosopher Pythagoras advised the student-members of his community:

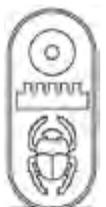
Never fall asleep after going to bed,
Until you have carefully considered
all your actions of the day:

Where have I gone amiss? What
have I done? What have I omitted
that I ought to have done?

Pythagoras's advice has much merit. Most of our daily activities consist of that which is essential, incidental, and inconsequential. It is obvious that the ideal activities should principally consist of the essential, that which is related to some purpose. In connection with each series of essential activities, there will be, of course, certain incidental ones. These latter

are more in the nature of preparation. The inconsequential are those acts that appear to have led nowhere. They are thoughtless and, in effect, have produced no worthy end, or have contributed only to our fatigue and irritation. These inconsequential acts waste energy and dissipate time.

Efficiency in living consists of organizing the day or the conscious hours so that they create intentional results. This type of planning need not be considered as dull and academic. By planned living one can designate time for recreation or relaxation or cultural improvement, as well as the necessary functions. When we do not prepare a program—mentally, at least—for each day, the fruits of that day become discouraging.



We seem to be, and perhaps are, both mentally and physically active and yet the essentials, the things needed to be accomplished, whether in work or play, become fewer and fewer. The inconsequential crowd the hours and finally one has the feeling of frustration. In fact, it is the unplanned day, the one that is not reviewed at night that most often causes anxiety and worry.

No matter how much we try to avoid facing the realities of our day's activities, we will, subjectively at least, have a realization of whether or not that day was worthwhile. If it was not what was expected, a sense of ill ease and restlessness develops that cannot be completely repressed. Worry and anxiety most often do not come from a frank appraisal of our circumstances but from trying to escape them.

In courageously reviewing a day and its problems, we often learn that a difficult situation has possibilities of improvement. This causes encouragement and is certainly a stimulation of morale. Further, an analysis of our affairs often isolates what we consider the distressing factor. It becomes focused in our mind. It has greater perspicuity. We can then more intelligently deal with it.

Duties Left Undone

How often we have heard someone say: "Everything seemed to go wrong today." Actually everything did not. An analysis and review would very often disclose the contributing factors to the day's failure, and all else would be shown to be either incidental or inconsequential. A review at night should more or less follow the sagacious words of Pythagoras. First, ask yourself what you had intended to achieve at the start of that day. If your work is

routine at your place of employment, what did you want to accomplish personally in the early morning hours or in the evening at home? Such would constitute your objective. To paraphrase Pythagoras, did you slip? What deeds or duty did you leave undone? Was the personal failure due to a wrong approach or perhaps to the interference of unanticipated events? Did you allow yourself to be diverted by inconsequential interests?

Anything is inconsequential if it is not related to the essential duty. It is true that there may be important interruptions, like the necessity of calling on a sick relative, which cause a postponement of our planned activities. All else, except such vital emergencies, even though they produce results themselves, are minor distractions.

Let us suppose one has, as the plan for a day or evening, the reading of a certain pamphlet containing information that could be well applied to the life of the individual. Such information would be considered essential. It might concern diet, the care of children, mixing a preservative paint, or many other things. At least in the mind of the individual it is essential. On the way to our favorite chair to do this essential reading, we observe that the handle on one of the inner doors of the room has become loose.

Instead of exercising our will and passing by this distraction, we allow ourselves to undertake the repair. In doing so, perhaps we encounter unexpected difficulties and eventually the whole evening is dissipated in this task. The door is repaired, that is true, and yet the act is inconsequential at the time. It was not necessary that the repair be made that



evening and it prevented the individual from achieving the first end in mind.

Three Efforts

It is the honest review of your daily activities that discloses these facts. Your mistakes, your wasted efforts, are glaringly revealed when “you have carefully considered all your actions of the day.” Seeking sleep immediately at night provides oblivion. It does not, however, correct the error of our ways. When once again we are conscious, we will know that we have failed, if we did, the day before and that is more irritating than if we had met the circumstances girded with understanding.

When a mistake is realized, it is natural that we should be discouraged. It has an effect on our morale. If, however, the essential that should have been accomplished was sufficiently desired,

it will still have considerable stimulus to encourage us to undertake it again. It is only when a mistake is made and we have no idea as to how it came about, that anxiety really develops. A review of what transpired before, at the time and after the mistake, lessens the possibility of its being a mystery. Further, once the nature of a mistake is known, we no longer dwell on it. We more often know that it lies within our province to avoid its happening again.

Trying to escape a review of the day's activities provides uncertainty that wrong things will not occur again. We feel helpless in our ignorance, and we worry as to future success. An intelligent survey of our acts is always to our advantage. Doubt and ignorance are the greatest causes of anxiety and worry, for they destroy self-confidence.

