

The Importance of Taking the Time to Think

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Lately, there has been a sudden influx of information in our midst. The primary sources of entertainment and information today have greatly increased in number and greatly decreased in terms of duration. For instance, the thirty-second clips that are shown on the household app, Tiktok, are boundless - journeying to a vast sea of information and ending up “doomscrolling” just seem inevitable. Harvard Health states that doomscrolling is a term often used to describe a phenomenon when droves of negative content are continuously consumed, which has significant repercussions on the human brain. These occurrences in our age cannot be simply dismissed nor shrugged off as just another phenomenon, for out of these events, rises the million-dollar question: is this not detrimental to the making of proper judgements as humans?

The prolific philosopher Pascal once stated that humans are “thinking reeds”. This metaphor contrasts the weakness of humans in the order of nature, and the greatness of their existence as the only beings who are capable of thought. Nowadays, it can be said that the doomscrolling, overflowing ads, and short-form content are befuddling our ability to form thoughts.

Our brains are confused by the sheer number of options to choose from, and the obligatory stress that comes with the impending deadline of having to choose.

I remember, more than a decade ago; time after time, it took me a little more time to decide things, like choosing one flavor out of six when handed a bunch of drinks. People around me would chide me for being slow; they would say to me, “do it faster, choose faster, move faster!” I was not given the time to think my choices through. Behavioral Economics points this out as

what is known as the “Jam Problem”- when people are given too many options to choose from, they get confused. Their next choice after being rushed to make a decision, however, is to yield their autonomy over their thinking, which is to entrust that decision to someone else, whether it be God, fortune, or a person of a higher power.

The failure resulting from not being given enough time to think and entrusting the ultimatum of choice to someone else is portrayed in a famous Japanese *rakugo*, a traditional comedic folktale. The *Rakugo Tokisoba* takes place in a soba restaurant with the characters being the customers and the vendor. One customer orders one soba. During the payment process of counting the coins, the customer asks the vendor the time, and starts to count the money from there, which allows him to get away with paying less than the actual amount. The vendor was confused by having to balance the process of counting the coins with that of informing the time and entrusted the ultimatum of whether the correct amount was being paid to the customer; thus, they were unable to receive the correct payment. Were they not rushed to make the decision, they would have realized the fraudulent act of the customer. The customers in this case are the major social media companies, and the soba vendors are us. The customers can be compared to the mass producing and consuming society, and the soba vendors can be compared to all of us, right here.

It must be clarified that the problem does not lie within the companies. It lies within the minuscule time we are granted to deliberate our choices, and that we yield our choice to others. Nevertheless, we do have the power to modify our lives to secure the time to think our decisions through. The philosopher Pyrrhon mentions the importance of epoché, which is the temporary suspension of judgement. This moment that is needed to not place judgement right away is crucial when making decisions that can be as simple as choosing a flavor of tea to having a multitude of factors that need to be considered before the final decree is made. This is why epoché, followed by careful deliberation, needs to exist in our decision making.

I believe the time for deliberation at the crossroads can be beneficial in many aspects, to avoid being caught in temptations and schemes. One aspect is that we may be able to have more confidence in our decisions and accept the complications that come with those. The thinking reed has to carefully think to form its thoughts through, after all. Now, what steps will you take in order to allocate the time to think?

出典

【Webページ】

Maureen Salamon (Harvard Medical School) 「Doomscrolling Dangers」
〈<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/doomscrolling-dangers>〉
(最終アクセス2025年11月23日)

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(小学館) 「【パスカルの名言】「人間は考える葦である」とは？意外と知らない“名言の続き”も紹介！」
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