

A Life of Otium

*How can we design a life of maximal physicality, and **NOT** productivity?*

Chopping Trees

Yesterday, I was chopping a tree down at work. It was extremely rewarding, using a saw for the first time, hacking at these big logs, and taming a wild tree that seemed to have not been taken care of for at least a decade. I weeded the entire land, took all of the vines and ivy that were strangling the branches out, got up on a ladder, shaped the tree, elevated it, and made it look extremely beautiful. I was thinking about Minecraft, and in the beginning of the game, you immediately start punching trees so that you can get wood and make tools. It made me think about why it's such a good game and the fact that it's all about building, creating, and doing things in an open world. There's a reason why it's the number one most sold game of all time. Minecraft was always my favorite video game. I could spend hours and hours grinding and playing this game. The reason being, there is just endless terrain to explore, dungeons to conquer, and things to craft and create. Time would pass by in the blink of an eye, and you could wind up spending eight hours a day playing this game without even realizing that the day just passed by. This is how I felt yesterday, as I worked diligently through physicality, physical labor, for eight hours. We could just live real life like Minecraft, or a video game, where we have the ability to terraform, to transform things, to create anew.

What is Your Vocation?

Of course, photography is my number one vocation, my calling, my purpose in life. However, maybe my new goal is to become the greatest horticulturist the city of Philadelphia has ever seen. I find great joy in horticulture—tending plants, landscaping, gardening, chopping trees, clearing land, watering, pruning, and shaping bushes and trees. While I was volunteering on a kibbutz in Israel, I worked

as a gardener and seriously enjoyed it. Using my body in the real world provides me with a sense of purpose that I cannot find in modern cities. Perhaps the best way to live life in a modern city is to find work that requires you to be physical, standing upright, in an open space where you can walk all day, stand all day, and actually do things with your physical body. Physical labor actually seems to be the most virtuous path for a man in the city, and I know for a fact that I personally cannot just sit down for eight hours in Zoom calls, working from home, or in an office, taking orders. To me, physical labor is merely physical pleasure or leisure. When you're filled with vitality and power, physical labor is actually extremely easy and leisurely. I find that while working an office job could technically be an "easier" path, there are fewer headaches with physical labor. I don't need a phone, to be constantly on call, or to check my email, etc. I can simply show up and get straight to work in solitude, working on projects that actually bring meaning to life. To me, anything that's happening in a digital world is quite meaningless. I don't find joy at all in sitting at a computer anymore. Maybe if they allowed you to play Minecraft in these offices for work, it would actually be fun, but unfortunately, this is not the case, so I must play Minecraft in real life, haha. Most office jobs are like playing RuneScape, just tapping, tapping, tapping, grinding, grinding, grinding—so boring.

Choose Otium

In classical antiquity, in ancient Greece and Rome, *otium* was a period of leisure, the opposite of *negotium*, which refers to work or business. For instance, I've actually worked on the Joe Biden campaign, in politics, both as a field organizer in 2020 and as a photojournalist for the DNC in 2016. What I've realized after these experiences is that I could not continue down that path. The greatest thing about me is that I'm very adaptable, able to organize people, gather volunteers, speak publicly, be political, and work within various capacities. I'm great with strangers, other people, working in teams, etc., but I prefer peace and solitude. I've decided to just choose *otium*, the path of least resistance. I do not desire a life of stress, of constant pressure, deadlines, and having to be on call. I'd rather sacrifice a higher salary for more freedom. I do not need prestige, awards, applause, or any sense of social obligation, social status, or reputation in my life. I do not need or seek fame or fortune. I choose the simple path, one that aligns with nature, spirituality, philosophical reflection, and physical leisure. This is why I've decided to opt out of

negotium, to opt out of modern life, societal norms, or ideas of what success looks like. I've purposely chosen perpetual *otium* and encourage you to consider how to maximize *otium* in your life.

Public Transportation

One thing that I seriously do not desire in life is to own a car. The city of Philadelphia is the greatest city in the United States of America because it is so walkable. You can literally cover the entire city in a day by foot, making this the greatest environment for street photography. The fact that I don't need a car is so liberating. A car just winds up owning you, and these possessions tie you down. If anything, it's just more of a headache—to get it out of the parking spot, to fill it up with gas, to pay for insurance, etc. To sit in traffic seems to be the ultimate nightmare. I even decided to stop riding my bike to work because of how dangerous it is. Even these other bikers are the problem. One time, I was waiting at a red light, and a biker wanted to pass through the red light, disobeying the traffic laws. As I sat there on my bike, he flipped me off with the middle finger, calling me an asshole. I just stood there, waiting for the light to turn green. I had multiple flat tires because of all the glass everywhere, and it just became more of a problem than a solution to transportation for me. Since taking the bus, my life has become 10 times easier and even more productive in terms of my photography. I have a perfect view of the skyline every single morning, giving me the ability to make a perfect landscape photo out of my window of the city, which never ceases to put a smile on my face. Not to mention, the bus gets me exactly where I need to be and picks me up right outside of my house. It's just so easy, convenient, and reminds me why I seriously do not need a car. The other great thing about the bus is that I can stand, chat with locals, and be around other people in the physical flesh. I just like observing people in general. For instance, yesterday, while I was on the bus, this really big guy who needs an electric wheelchair to get around kept bumping into the button that tells the bus to stop. It just kept going off over and over again and was kind of funny. The bus driver had to stop and told him to move his chair over a bit. As this was happening, the man behind me sighed loudly because his phone was ringing. It always cracks me up how people sigh, moan, and groan when they get a phone call. He had a bag of chips in his hand beside him, munching as he

spoke, talking in a muffled voice, basically shouting at the top of his lungs. You couldn't even understand a single word he was saying because of the amount of chips in his mouth as he chewed. Maybe modern society is becoming like the real-life *Wall-E* movie? These small observations and things I see are just hilarious to me, and another reason why I love the bus, haha.

Ultimately, a life of walking, standing, and moving is my goal, and the bus helps me achieve this. I find so much more freedom without a car and have actually never owned a car in my entire life. I can only count maybe 5 to 10 times that I've ever driven a vehicle in my life, and honestly, I wouldn't mind keeping it that way. If I ever really need a car in a pinch, I can always just call an Uber, like it's real-life GTA, baby.

Why Eat?

Eating food is for suckers?

This is the craziest thought yet—where food is a scam, merely poison, and not something worth consuming throughout the day. Just think about it, most of the food in the center of a grocery store is just processed junk. I see these advertisements all the time for Amazon, prepackaged meals, or these microwavable meals that are prepackaged and perfectly made for you to pop into a microwave. They're all centered around the idea that we no longer have time to make food, because we are too busy at work, being productive, to the point where we can no longer focus on our health?

This is the denial of our physical bodies, the denial of our pursuit of productivity, such a slave mentality, and it makes absolutely no sense to me. Packaged meal plans and convenient food options are all such a hunk of junk. Start fasting, eat more meat, get good sleep, and you'll realize that you seriously don't need any of these things. It's so consumerism-driven to the point where we are the ultimate consumers, just eating and munching our ways through life, snacking throughout

the day like squirrels. Think like a lion, feasting on the kill and then chilling out, filled with vitality and power. Let's be more like lions and less like the hyena or the squirrel that eats the scraps.

Be Playful

When you're on the street practicing street photography, be more playful. Say hi to strangers more, smile more, and spark up conversations with security guards. What I've realized is that these dudes who are always outside always have a smile on their faces—they're just enjoying the day, outside, in the fresh air. Also, get to know the local musicians that play outside. Shout out to Rome, always in the tunnel of City Hall. When you get to know the people in the streets, you feel more connected to your city and have less pressure when it comes to street photography.

Creative Flow State

Our goal is to photograph as much as humanly possible.

The solution: a compact, digital camera that can fit in your front right pocket. This means, no matter where you are—whether at work, running errands, or making a dedicated effort to practice street photography—you always have the ability to create something. What this does for you is it puts you in an abundant flow state of creativity. I believe you can only achieve this flow state when you have your tool in your pocket at all times. When you're always ready with a camera, the world becomes your canvas, and there's endless potential to create. Whether you're working physically or creating visually, the act of creating, doing, and making is what brings life meaning. Enjoy. Enter the flow state of creativity, and fuel your lust for life.

How to Enter a State of Rausch?

So, you want to become intoxicated, in a state of frenzy, or ecstasy?

Let's get drunk off life itself, without the need for any external stimuli such as drugs or alcohol. The real drug is black espresso that I prepare in the evening—four shots to be exact—leaving them in my fridge overnight so that when I wake up, the first thing I do is slam all four shots and head outside my door. This puts me in a frenzy, an ecstatic state, where I treat the coffee like a creative stimulant, so that I can write these fun blog posts and film silly videos with my GoPro. Ultimately, I believe that you can become drunk off of life itself, through basking in the sunlight, being physical, working out, and running off of that adrenaline high.

Increase Your Energy

The fastest way to increase your energy is to drop to the ground right here, right now, and do 10 to 25 push-ups. When I do a set of push-ups, or any physical exercise, I feel alive, and I can feel my energy increase instantaneously. The endorphins and adrenaline that rush through your body when committing to physical exercise are unlike anything else you can experience in this world. To increase your energy is extremely simple—just don't sit down. The second I sit down, I feel my muscles relax, my body shut down, and I begin to yawn. However, if I hit the gym, do some push-ups, pull-ups, or random pistol squats throughout the day, I increase my energy and recognize that being physical is the fastest way to increase your energy—not sitting down and thinking about it. The sun, fresh air, and deep sleep are all vital. Stop using your phone, and just to damn bed. Raw energy is built in bed and through sleep—at least eight hours. I also recommend doing a morning walk right away as a great way to start the day, specifically on a nature path if you can choose one. Strap on a 40-pound weight vest from Rogue, and simultaneously walk while training your body. This is my newest training routine, simply walking with a weighted vest, and I honestly find this to be the best. As a street photographer, having strong legs and a strong posture is essential to stand upright and walk endlessly throughout the entire day. However, if I do feel the need to rest and recharge my energy, I've found that taking a 15-minute nap, randomly out in a grass patch under a tree, is the quickest way to boost my energy and

actually works. Your body is the battery—make sure it's fully charged, and by the end of the day, your battery should be at one percent, fully depleted, ready for deep sleep.

Everything Is Effortless

When you're full of vitality, everything becomes effortless. Even the hardest physical labor becomes leisure. Just enjoy yourself, stop trying so hard, and stop subscribing to notions of "discipline" that I believe actually become more of a slave mentality. You shouldn't have to remain disciplined. You should move through life with strife, but without effort, because you're just so full of power and energy. Let's think more critically about how we can align ourselves with nature more and become the most vital, most alive, most powerful versions of ourselves. With this power will flow our creativity through photography. Let's become one percent more curious and courageous each day. These are the goals!

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