

Do or Die, Die!

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A Roman moralist once described it as “the highest injustice to prefer life” over “what makes life worth living.” To keep on living despite the fact that you are deprived of everything having intrinsic value (i.e. what you wouldn’t sell) simply signified a lack of honor.

When was the last time I did something worth doing for its own sake? What I do for free is not always something I want to do but something that “may lead to something.” The rat race is omnipresent; it is a system where you always do something for the sake of something else. And if this “something else” doesn’t happen, it was all in vain—or rather: you didn’t do anything at all, but blank time still passed. That’s why you want compensation in order to do something, and now you’re lost: what you want from now on is not life but compensation for (not) living. And people today are happy to say that what they do is their profession. Even artists: they are so proud of being professional. It makes me cry.

Still in the seventeenth century, actions completed for mere compensation were described as slavery by Spinoza: unfree peoples’ irrational actions. At the end of the eighteenth century, this was the perception of work: what is boring and meaningless in-and-of-itself and what no one would choose to do

if not for profit or compensation. In our time, everything in my life revolves around compensation. It's a strange world where you end up asking for possible compensation for your life up until now. It's no wonder Christian parties received a boost during neoliberalism! Society will not compensate you, ever—only religion is equipped to do that.

So as to handle this desperate situation, is there an alternative to parody and excess? Could you, for example, substitute one standard (for when something is considered done) with another? To not accept it as done, but to re-do it again, one last time, then one more time? “Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished”—the beginning of Samuel Beckett's one-act play *Endgame*. Beginning and end united, like an autotelic activity, still leading to something else, but for nothing—a different mode of correlation between means and end. You can always change the rules while playing the same game, or play a different game but by the same rules. A new goal is always possible, or new motive, new desire, new standard for when something is finished, other than those you're compensated for reaching.

A fictionalization, parody, exaggeration, withdrawal; drop out, be absent-minded and ideal, think instead of doing *stuff*. Or do too much, spam the world, work with 'noise art' aesthetics to produce visual and cognitive noise which interferes with the established (and thus power invested) forms of production and circulation of images and ideas.¹ In any case, you'll disturb the means-to-an-end life and may create unpredictable effects on sensibility and thought.

¹ Joseph Nechvatal, *Immersion Into Noise* (Ann Arbor, MI : Open Humanities Press, 2011).

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In order to qualify as a living being, perhaps one must ask oneself—ask in wonder, stupefied: why do anything at all? Try to answer this question with reference to your motives and desires, not to the consequences. Why do you have something going on? And if compensation is part of your answer, of every answer you come up with: *just die*.