

Means To No End

A Title Signifying I'm Clearly I'm Going Through Something With An Abundance Of Time On My Hands, Do Enjoy Won't You.

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A brilliant mind I always count myself as fortunate to know recently took to Instagram Stories of all places to publish a think piece. Either a frustratingly innovative approach to the format or just a trick played on his followers to drastically up his story view count as you forget to hold your thumb down while reading each tile. Only RG himself knows for sure.

Anyway, his piece utilized his personal journey as a parent, the usage of morality in a special crop of kid books and a macro-political chasm taking place in current events all to magnificently bring together a perspective that spotlighted a notion I've been grappling with for several weeks, yet struggling to clarify.

We must focus more on the Means than grasp for Ends.

His core takeaway was there is a death of curiosity that has given life to a toxic need for answers. There being no depth of exploration without causation or accusation. The real spark for me was not only putting emphasis on the Means, but progressing the thought that we absolutely must have an End to nearly every Means we endeavor so that the Means are so diluted that we end up not learning anything at all. You follow? Me neither.

I'll continue exploring via his core theme of parenthood.

In my experience, we are often walking the line between admonished or admired for our deep engagement with our children or over emphasis in career in modern times. Outside feedback from all different directions and all types of sources saying 'let the kid be' 'don't wake a sleeping baby' or 'stop video surveillance-ing your kid, they're fine!' while also coming at us with phrases like 'I'm so impressed with how much time you spend together' while also saying ridiculous phrases like 'you should work less and spend more time with family'. It's whiplash as a result of changing generational dynamics as well as stark shifts brought forward by the pandemic.

Even as we are generally more engaged with our kids than previous generations (at least I'm told this), this engagement, like everything, has positives and negatives. We may play more with our kids, but we often engage in this play as a hack towards learning and development.

"Great for both you and your kiddo! Playing with these blocks will stimulate pre-frontal cortex development, motor skills and future UX/UI coding aptitude". Now I cannot attribute this quote, but I know damn well it's written in the Amazon product reviews somewhere.

Yes. I concede. Everything, literally everything, has value and contributes to who we become as humans. Development, like time, is relentless and ever-present. It's all a part of the great journey called life, but do we have to constantly optimize each bit of all aspects towards accomplishing goals, achieving an outcome, or viewing through the lens of cause and effect?

Goals are great. Goals give purpose. Goals allow for growth. Allow for joy and let us take our shirts off and slide on our knees towards a plastic flag in the corner of a field. Goals are dope. But as I believe the adage goes, 'you can have too much of a good thing'.

Goals in moderation my dear. Don't just enjoy the Means, make the Means, well, mean something. Allow fractures of the journey to bring about new avenues. Explore what's around you without agenda, without purpose.

Sounds nice. Self help guru gold right there. For real though, I'm oh so down right horrible at this.

I'm undoubtedly lucky in my own eyes. See my career is surrounded by the inexhaustible usage of the word 'culture'. The word becoming ubiquitous has had a side effect wherein the expectations of those 'in it' are to be all knowing. All the hobbies and interests people have actually falls into my purview of 'working knowledge'. Again, I consider myself lucky. The things I'm interested in are by and large associated with my professional life, but as such this comes with ever-present positives and negatives.

So reading newsletters, following certain accounts, listening to certain music, wearing certain brands, going to certain events, places, pop ups. All that ingestion of 'culture' is associated with work for me in tangible and intangible ways. So the things I do to entertain myself are often a means to an end. Even when I don't look for them to be. A life experience I have can be used at any point in my day as I build a creative strategy, ideate a campaign concept or pitch a brand something or another.

Therefore, I do not fall into the camp of practice what this piece preaches. I've been bad at this. Never doing much for just me, except maybe doing crosswords.

Yet even this obsession with crosswords is a means to an end.

When I was little my grandfather said he did crosswords to keep his mind sharp and though I cannot distinctly remember him saying these exact words, what I took away was 'at my age a lot of my friends stop remembering things, I have not'. Because I value my depth of memory as a core asset of my being, I've unwaveringly done crosswords at an exhaustive rate since then. Thousands upon thousands of them. I tell little lies to myself like 'oh they help relieve my anxiety', but that's ridiculous. Doing a Saturday New York Times Crossword is fucking stressful and once they began counting 'Streaks' it's become relentless pursuit that has created many sleepless nights.

However, there might be just one thing in my life that's all Means.

The only action I take that's divorced from any Ends is one I never talk about. For whatever reason, it's just for me. I'm a devout fan of the 2008-onward reboot of the BBC show *Doctor Who*. I've watched it all the way through likely 4-5 times and foresee that continuing again and again. It has a mechanic I'm enthralled by and the creators / writers over the years are incredibly thoughtful and skillful at it. Time travel is a hard enough mechanic by itself. We've seen movies stumble by glossing over or omitting serious paradoxes (paradoxi?). So to do a Time Travel concept across such a large span of (ahem) time, is glorious to me. A creative wonder. Not just to build a world, but to build a universe of worlds is fascinating. A creative endeavor worthy of praise and support.

Sure it's hokey, dated, and sometimes super weird. A few turds in the mix and some that are wildly confusing. They even built an episode off of a contest winning kids idea and still somehow connected it to the universe. It's not a watercooler show, I'm not a big message board or reddit guy, so it's really just me and The Doctor involved in this Means exploration. I don't wish I could speak about it more with people or want the show to teach me anything or give me value in any way. I simply enjoy the thing that keeps going and I go about my life. Not once has this knowledge been used to close a deal or create an ad campaign or impress a client. In my line of work, dated British Science Fiction isn't the gold mine of 'Cultural Relevance' to be unearthed.

Oh shit!

It strikes me now (literally just now) as I am writing, that the main character, The Doctor him/herself mirrors the 'All Means' ambition I speak of in this piece. The Doctor is undoubtedly All Means, No End. He/She regenerates seemingly endlessly (or at least for as long as The BBC keeps renewing the show). There is no grand goal, no blind ambition, just all journeys. At all times being fully present for each moment along the way. Taking in what is there and goosebumps-choose-your-adventuring it at each moment. There's no 'to accomplish this we must do this, this, this, and this'. Sure there are trials to be overcome and missions to partake, but as a whole, it's just a guy/girl gadding about the universe soaking in everything there is to see, hear, and experience; reacting to it in only the ways he/she knows how.

Honestly, I didn't know how I was gonna tie this piece up in a bow. I thought about ironically making a goal to have less goals. In all honesty, midway through the Crossword Puzzle section I thought "no one will know if I just scrap this right here". That's goal talk. That's a need for it to become or be for something. I'm glad I stayed focused on the Means. I just kept writing and found myself in a place where I understood myself a bit better and had a lotta fun along the way.

I may derive value from this at a later date, but that's just life. Our value is shaped by our experiences. What's important in the present is that I didn't start typing knowing where this was going to go. I was All Means, No End.

PS Someone already wrote [this](#), but better.