

## How the Cult of Efficiency Erodes Our Humanity, Redefines the Meaning of Life, and Steals the Joy from Everyday Moments



Technology has made our lives more convenient, faster, and seemingly simpler. It helps us work, communicate, navigate cities, and solve everyday problems. But is this constant pursuit of efficiency really worth the price we pay? That price is our ability to be present, to truly perceive the world around us, and to feel something real.

One of the greatest pleasures of my day is my morning metro ride to work. During rush hour in Kyiv, the train cars are packed. People stand pressed tightly against one another; I can barely move my arms, let alone take out a laptop and start working. And yet, in that moment, I feel that my responsibilities can wait. For those 40 minutes, I am alone with myself. It is time without stress and without guilt. I simply read and let my thoughts drift freely. Yes, the train is not the most comfortable way to get around. Sometimes there is an unpleasant smell, and sometimes it is delayed because of the weather. But when I step off at my station, I am always in a better mood. Even if Uber were free and cut my commute in half, I would still choose the train.

Efficiency, of course, would strongly disagree with my choice. Its logic insists that faster is always better, that instant means perfect. To live optimally, we are told, is to

eliminate effort altogether. Buy something in one click and pick it up on the way home. Write dozens of emails with a single ChatGPT prompt. Meet people through dating apps. Forget grocery shopping and cooking—delivery services will take care of everything. Purchases happen instantly, without hesitation. The “buy now” button erases the final seconds of doubt, and within moments we can spend our entire savings.

We live in an era of instant decisions. Speed, convenience, and optimization have become the default. Technology has seeped into every aspect of our lives. I am used to this digital world myself, and my iPhone seems to know me better than I know myself: it suggests routes, reminds me who I message most often, and even advises me to turn on “Do Not Disturb.” ChatGPT gradually trains us to think like machines—not through reflection, but through quick answers and minimal effort. Anything that cannot be automated begins to feel unnecessary. People who still write emails themselves seem almost eccentric. It is simply easier to live by algorithmic prompts.

Yet in this relentless chase for efficiency, we lose something essential. Digital days feel like films without a plot. They leave no trace in memory. Eight hours at a computer is work. A few clicks in Uber is the ride home. A few clicks in Bolt Food is dinner. And that’s it. Nothing more. On the surface, everything seems to be in place, but it is precisely these automated routines that sometimes drain life of its substance.

For a long time, I believed that struggling with technology was a problem only older generations faced. I thought I had grown up with gadgets and would be immune to this feeling. But then something shifted my perspective: buttons disappeared from elevators. In modern office buildings, I have often felt completely lost. The touchscreen doesn’t work without an access card. The desired floor doesn’t appear because I’m standing by the wrong elevator—and there can be dozens of them. Technology does not always simplify life; quite often, it complicates it. And this isn’t about being more comfortable with the analog world. The real issue is our obsession with optimizing what already works. Human presence, attention, and involvement are increasingly treated as expendable.

No, I don’t believe humans are meant to live at this pace. For most of history, life was slow. People simply lived. Time was not measured in minutes, deadlines did not exist, and productivity lists were unheard of. Life was understood as a natural flow of events. Today’s fixation on efficiency destroys the simple joys we once valued. Small rituals disappear—the moments of hesitation before a purchase, the habit of taking a longer route home through a park. We lose the feeling of knowing every street in our neighborhood. We lose the slow stages of connection, when love and friendship grow gradually rather than instantly.

These moments matter. They are what allow us to truly live, not just exist in a constant race against time. A meaningful life requires time, patience, and effort.

Sometimes the slower path leads to the most profound discoveries. And sometimes, we simply need to stop and look around to understand that real happiness cannot be found in instant results or automated solutions.