

# Acedia & the Affliction of Restlessness

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rest



# What Is Acedia?

- Noted by the early church
- “The Noonday Demon”





# What Is Acedia?

- Often spoken of as sloth.
- This does not capture the fullness of the problem.
- Hatred of place, of life and of the work God has given.





. . . the contrary of acedia is not the spirit of work in the sense of the work of every day, of earning one's living; it is man's happy and cheerful affirmation of his own being, his acquiescence in the world and in God—which is to say love. Love that certainly brings a particular freshness and readiness to work along with it, but that no one with the least experience could conceivably confuse with the tense activity of the fanatical "worker."

**Pieper, Josef.** Leisure: The Basis of Culture (p. 45). Ignatius Press. Kindle Edition.



# What Is Acedia?

"So, acedia wields both the sword of sleep that fells the couch potato and the sword of busyness that dispatches the workaholic."

Brandon Dahm, "Correcting Acedia through Wonder and Gratitude"



“Acedia is the resistance to the demands of love.”

Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung



# Friendship with God

It is the very forgoing of friendship with God—which is the fulfillment of the transcendent dignity and calling of the human person—and the embrace of the self-indulgent deception that there never was and never will be friendship with God, that there never was and never will be a transcendent calling and dignity of the human person. Nothing matters much, because the one thing that really matters, God's love and friendship, does not exist and therefore cannot be attained.

**Hütter, Reinhard.** Pornography and Acedia. First Things Press. Kindle Edition.



# The Effects of Acedia

**Proverbs 25:20** LXX

Like a moth in clothing or a  
worm in wood, sorrow gnaws at  
the human heart.

For a moth-eaten garment no longer has any value or good use, and likewise worm-eaten wood deserves to be consigned to the flames rather than to be used for furnishing even an insignificant building. In the same way, then, the soul that is eaten away and devoured by sadness is certainly useless for that priestly garment . . .

**Cassian 2000**, Institutes, Book 10, chps. IX, III



# The Effects of Acedia

All the work, relationships, and activities given to a person become empty of meaning because of acedia.

Nothing satisfies. Not the diversions we attend to, or the flurries of activity that punctuate our day.



# Spotting Acedia

Here is why acedia is so difficult to identify: this vice does not attempt to replace our human telos, which is to love and serve God, with some secondary good like sex, possessions, or food. It does not inordinately prefer a particular good at all; rather, it says 'no' to a difficult and demanding good.

**Huff, Heather Hughes.** 2013. An Unconditional Surrender: Evelyn Waugh on Acedia. *Christian Reflection Acedia*: 45–55.



# Spotting Acedia

- Scrolling your phone instead of meeting a deadline
- Taking on extra work projects so as to avoid a necessary task you do not enjoy (but you don't enjoy the diversion either)
- Abandoning your career because you feel like it.
- Keeping busy with work because your teenage children don't like you anymore



# Spotting Acedia

- Biting sarcasm
- Neglected relationships, health, property...
- Despair and despondency



# Spotting Acedia

Acedia creates a void that we try to fill with transient rushes of pleasure—primarily venereal pleasure—to ward off the ennui of life bereft of its very center. But the simulacra that promise the rushes of pleasure we seek betray us. They cannot fill the void created by the loss of our transcendent calling to the love and friendship of God. Rather, they only increase the craving to fill the void we cannot fill, breeding compulsion and intensifying spiritual apathy, thereby encouraging acedia's most dangerous shoot to spring forth: despair.

**Hütter, Reinhard.** Pornography and Acedia. First Things Press. Kindle Edition.



# Spotting Acedia

Rather than inflame, acedia “freezes the soul and the heart in a cold indifference to the dignity of others and oneself.”

**Reinhard Hutter**, Acedia and Pornography



# Spotting Acedia

## Complicating factors and situations

- The body/health
- Depression





# Remedies



## 1 Thessalonians 4:11–12

. . . and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.



# Remedies

Stay in your “cell”  
or  
“live quietly”

The battle will be  
fought with patience  
and perseverance.





# Remedies

“mind your own affairs”

Acedia is a disease of attention.



# Remedies

“work with your hands”





If we can keep a vice from the nourishment it needs by performing activities of contrary traits, including the construals of the trait, then the vice will diminish until it erodes away. Like weeds and crops, vices and virtues compete for the same nutrients, which are our varied activity. If we cannot directly pull the weeds, then we can nourish the crops and starve the weeds out.

**Brandon Dahm**, Correcting Acedia through Wonder and Gratitude



# Remedies

"Gratitude as a virtue is then the disposition to gratefully construe things at the right times for the right reasons."



# Remedies

- The clarity death brings.
- There is an end coming. Live in reverse.
- “Why are you never discouraged?”  
“Because I expect to die every day.”



# Remedies

- Cultivating awe and wonder
- Directing your attention
  - Colossians 3:2
  - Philippians 4:8