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What is “wasted” time?

Koichi Mikami

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I was thrown into a situation where all of my university courses needed to be done online. Just like many other university lecturers, I had to make videos for classes every week. At one point, we were told to divide them up into short and categorized segments for students’ ease. I also heard that some students speeded them up when they watched. There are probably students now who wish they could fast-forward the real-life 90-minute lectures just as they did with the videos then.

This experience reaffirmed my sense that scientific development has a profound effect on our sense of time. There have been times

when I see my kids watching videos on the Internet over and over, replaying their favorite parts or skipping over sections, and that made me a bit worried. It’s so unlike my childhood when we were always thinking about our favorite TV programs waiting for the special time of the week that they were broadcasted. If you missed it for any reason, it was just gone. To them, however, the control they have must be the natural thing in the world. Yet, seen by anyone who knows another way of life, it’s easy to realize just how much our perception of time has changed.

I’m not saying that this type of change is necessarily a bad thing. In fact, I can easily imagine that there are a lot of people who would say it’s good since people can use their time more efficiently. I don’t deny their arguments off the top of my head. However, “being efficient” is premised on the idea of “eliminating waste.” That’s why I want people

to reflect on what they assume to be “wasteful” in such thinking. Even if something is not necessary at this very moment, isn’t it possible that when you think about it in the longer term, or look back at it one day, you’ll actually find it valuable? Also, like my previous example, isn’t there a possibility that “wasted” time actually help you appreciate the thing you’ve been waiting for all the more?

When we follow discussions on science and technology, we frequently see “improvement on efficiency” and “optimization” mentioned as their goals. However, there are many instances where this is an assertion based on a particular value system and that may deprive us from experiencing the true richness of our life. Perhaps, if using our time well did not just mean getting rid of “waste” but meant finding the value in the midst of such waste, our lives can be much richer than mere optimal ways of life.

理工学 Information

KLL-ONE: Student Business Contest

The Keio Leading-edge Laboratory of Science and Technology (KLL) actively creates startups, invests, and provides support to students and faculty in the Faculty of Science and Technology during the early stages of their initiatives so that they can implement and circulate their ideas in society. KLL provides “short-term intensive support” for those who are creating new business ventures so that the educational resources and research findings obtained within the Faculty of Science and Technology will “be able to come to fruition in the future as startups.”

KLL-ONE is an inter-student business competition organized by KLL to discover and foster student entrepreneurs. The event has been held annually in December since 2019 and allows students to give presentations on their research within the KEIO TECHNO-MALL. In 2022, six different teams participated. KLL provided support for participants as they put the final touches on their presentations. At the event, they pitched their business plans to a large audience, revealing their strategies and ideas on how to solve social issues.



KLL-ONE:
<https://sites.google.com/view/kllincubation>
 You can also check out past contests!
 (Website written in Japanese)

Editor’s postscript

This feature has introduced Associate Professor Kochi Mikami and his research on science and technology studies. We hope that these collections of articles prove useful to a wide readership.

Associate Professor Mikami began working in the Faculty of Science and Technology’s Department of Foreign Languages and Liberal Arts in April 2019. While it was less than a year later that the COVID-19 pandemic began, he said that he is excited about the future projects that will be made possible through further collaboration with researchers in the Faculty of Science and Technology. We look forward to how Associate Professor Mikami brings about his envisioned “co-creative” workplace here at the Faculty of Science and Technology, where scientific and technological progress also produces results in the humanities and social sciences.

(Yurina Tomohisa)

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