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Gadgets and Gizmos

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Abstract: As part of the *National Collegiate Honors Council's* (2022) collection of essays about the value of honors to its graduates (1967–2019), the author reflects on the personal and professional impacts of the honors experience.

Keywords: higher education—honors programs & colleges; philosophy of education; Rogers State University (OK)—Honors Program

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Life in honors largely took place in a lounge on the first floor of the Liberal Arts building. Students congregated after, before, and in-between classes, discussing life, school, love, food, and all things in between. Discussions veered into decisions—courses, graduate school, love, and food. That is to say, through its organization, location, and design honors, examined life fastidiously and fatuously. Honors provided community and guidance. It also introduced us to ideas, books, movies, and people that otherwise would have been absent from our educations. Many of the books have faded from my memory, but the people and ideas continue to populate my life.

Honors set schedules for its first-year students; otherwise, I was unlikely to have been in Phil 2001: Values and Ethics. Despite my physical presence, I did not eagerly examine or wakefully participate when exposed to the Socratic method in Values and Ethics at the early hour of 9:00am. Notwithstanding the sun-height induced limitations on my abilities, I knew the value and inversely appreciated the ethics of SparkNotes. I muddled my way through, blithely speaking with certitude regarding Socrates's, Plato's, Mill's, and Kant's ideas concerning the good life, as informed, of course, by close readings of the aforementioned notes and various blogs. Per my readings,

these great minds' ideas lined up neatly with mine; they shared my values and my ethics. I muddled through, assured in my rightness, but no closer to figuring out what the good life was.

It would be poetic to recount how I answered the final essay on the “unexamined life,” to explain what I got wrong and—much more importantly—all the ways I was correct, to reveal exactly what the good life is, and that I had figured it out by the end of the semester; however, I am not poetic, and the lesson, like long division and the importance of the active voice, took a number of years to penetrate. I also do not know what I wrote or what the good life is. As a different philosopher once suggested, paraphrased by a team of corporately employed writers: “I wanna be where the people are; I wanna see, wanna see them dancing” (*The Little Mermaid*, 1989). A close enough answer, I say.

The question of what the good life is has stayed with me for the past ten years, as I graduated, entered and finished law school, got married, moved. That is not to say I have an answer—I do not. Nonetheless, the questions themselves—is this the good life? will this bring me/us closer to living the good life?—serve as decision-making guides. Equipped with a guide star, I have a barometer with which to gauge decisions. The answers are sometimes simple, but mostly, like with that final essay question, it is the act of consideration that makes all the difference.

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