

Commonplace myths (that push my buttons)

Elaine Bougie Gilligan



Away - a dimension to which all trash is sent

- **There is such a place as “away”, as in “just throw it away.”**

Last time I checked, no one had invented a Star Trek transporter-like device that would magically beam a million tons of disposable floor wipes and plastic bubble packs to another universe. In a classic Sci-Fi short story, somebody did, but after a while the lifeforms on the receiving

end of the dirt found a way to zap it all back: *très* symbolic.

- **Nice girls and guys finish last.**

I’ve noticed, the most remarkably nice people I’ve known seem to be more satisfied with life than other people—less tangled up with blame and striving to

get their share. The very notions of “first” and “last” have many small delusions tied up in them, not the least being that life is a game or a competition, versus an opportunity to exist and take in experiences.



(Image: laurit.wordpress.com) Salt Flats near Salt Lake City Utah, where a long-haul trucker dozing at the wheel woke up, ten miles off-road. He was spotted by an attentive pilot.
p. 178 "Sleep Thieves, Coren.)

- **Sleep is a waste of time: “get a life” means get out of bed sooner and get into it later.**

Stanley Coren wrote a great book called *Sleep Thieves* which documents how Edison and other despisers

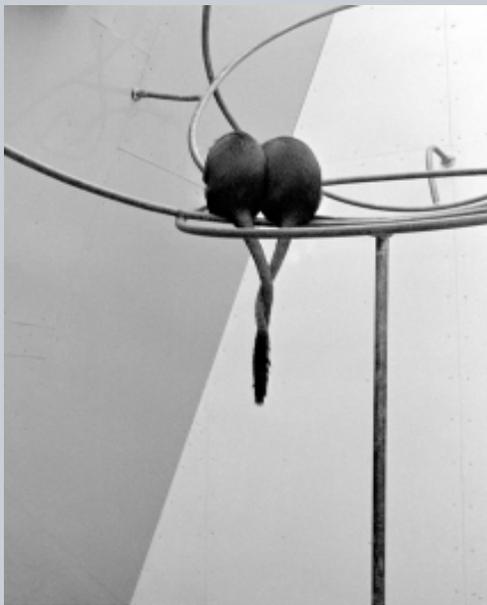
of the misunderstood activity known as slumber, deliberately set out to reduce sleep in our culture and succeeded, to everyone’s detriment. Edison, by the way, used to sneak naps to hide the fact his theories on sleep were over-illuminated.

- **North Americans and Europeans are rich, and everybody else is poor (and this is the way it ought to be.)**

By economists’ standards, this might be true. On some other scales of value, it might be stridently false. Why do people in developed countries need so many drugs and distractions (including the drug of self-congratulatory, other-despising religions?)



.../continued



- **Getting there faster is always a good idea.**

If you consider that everyone's ultimate destination is their death, is this really such a wise goal? Maybe we really can stop to let the pedestrians cross, pause the movie or the reading of the book, to

think about a passage that just made an impression. If there were no silences or spacing of the notes in music, if every note was played at once, what a clamorous, inhumane thing that would be.

- **Animals are inferior to us (and that justifies anything we wish to do to them.)**

Animals are certainly *different* from us, and we'd be a weird species if we did not feel more loyalty to our own kind than we do to others. Still, even if we take a self-interested approach to other earthly inhabitants, respect, curiosity and caring towards the other species that cohabit our world is more than justified by the

common biology and ecological interests we share. I love a quotation from Henry Beston's *The Outermost House*, given to me by the friends who first influenced my choice not to eat animals, as a gesture of respect. 🍴

"...We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of having taken form so far below ourselves. And therein we err, and greatly err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendour and travail of the earth...." _