

This new urban life we are developing, after the American pattern, differs from the old one I knew in the significant fact that it is far more dependent on money. My parents spent about four pence on a tram and then went walking, probably every fine Saturday. These young people have to run a car, and that costs money, whereas it is very cheap to talk to your friends and give them a bite of supper at home, to attend political meetings, to search for wild flowers or look at birds. Many of the most satisfying things in life cost little or nothing. And our new way of living tempts us to overlook this important fact. Again, that old life was far more active than this new one. People did things themselves instead of allowing others to do everything for them. There is nothing essentially wrong with our new popular amusements, such as films and radio, both of which have done much to brighten people's lives. But they should be enjoyed actively and not passively, attended to eagerly and critically and not used as a kind of mild dope. Chesterton once observed shrewdly that there was a great difference between an eager man who wanted to read a book and a tired man who wanted a book to read. It is the difference between active and passive amusements. Now there is too much of this: "You can do it from your own armchair". This is all right for the elderly, but younger people should get out of their armchairs and do something more than turn on a switch... I distrust this passive drowsy crowd we are creating who can do nothing for themselves and will not have anything unless it is handed to them almost on a plate while they bury themselves in their armchairs... I dislike this insistence upon comfort and convenience before everything else.

J. B. Priestley