

**“The only purpose of life is to avoid boredom”**

**Michael Winner**

People of experience maintain that it is very sensible to start from a principle. I grant them that and start with the principle that all men are boring.

‘Boring’ can describe a person who bores others as well as one who bores himself. Those who bore others are the plebeians, the mass. the endless train of humanity in general. Those who bore themselves are the elect. the nobility;

Idleness, it is usually said is a root of all evil. To prevent this evil one recommends work. However it is easy to see from the remedy as well as from the feared cause that this whole view is of very plebeian extraction. Idleness as such is by no means a root of evil; quite the contrary it is a truly divine way of life so long as one is not bored.

A beauty who neither sews nor spins nor irons nor reads nor makes music is happy in her idleness, for she is not bored.

I first saw this out of context translated as “A beautiful woman is never bored”

So far from idleness being the root of evil, rather it is the true good. The root of evil is boredom and that is what must be kept at bay. Idleness is not evil; indeed, one can say that any human who lacks appreciation of it proves he has not raised himself to the level of humanity

Yet in so far as people think it is characteristic of man to work, idleness and industry are properly opposed to each other. My own assumption is that it is characteristic of man to amuse himself;

This reminds me of Alexander Herzen saying “We believe that the aim of a child is its coming of age, because it does come of age; but the aim of a child is rather to play and enjoy himself, to be himself.”

My own departure from the general view is adequately expressed in the phrase ‘crop rotation’ This phrase might seem to contain an ambiguity, and in wanting to make it commodious enough to cover the general method, I should have to say that the the method of rotation consists in constantly changing the soil. That, however, is not the sense in which the farmer uses it. Still, i will adopt this use for a moment, so as to talk of that ‘crop rotation’ which depends on the unlimited infinity of change, on its extensive dimension.

This rotation is the vulgar, the inartistic method, and is based on an illusion. one is tired of living in the country, one moves to the city, one is tired of one’s native land, one travels abroad; one is ‘Tired of Europe’, one goes to America, and so on; finally, one indulges in a fantasy of endless travel from star to star. or the movement is different but still in extension. One is tired of dining of porcelain, one dines of silver; one tires of that one dines of gold; one burns half of Rome to get an idea of the conflagration at Troy. This method defeats itself it is the bad infinite.

The method I propose consists not in changing the soil but, as in the real rotation of crops, in changing the method of cultivation and type of grain. Here straightaway we have the principle of limitation, which is the only saving one in the world. The more you limit yourself the more resourceful you become. A prisoner in solitary confinement for life is the most resourceful, a spider can cause him much amusement.

Kierkegaard (Crop Rotation in Either/Or)

The two foes of human happiness are pain and boredom.

Life swings like a pendulum backwards and forward between pain and boredom.

Schopenhauer

boredom is characteristic of persons of rank whereas need characterizes the lives of the masses.

Why, at bottom, is it that art or works of art continues to endure?It is because most of those who possess leisure - and it is only for them that such an art exists - believe that without music, attendance at the theatre and picture galleries, without reading novels and poems, they will never get through the day. Nietzsche (Human all too Human Part 2 Para 175)

“the western Buddhist” meditative stance is arguably the most efficient way, for us to fully participate in the capitalist dynamic whilst maintaining the appearance of mental sanity. If Max Weber were alive today, he would definitely write a second supplementary, volume to his Protestant Ethic, entitled The Taoist Ethic and the Spirit of Global Capitalism.

On Belief – Slavoj Žižek

Man finds nothing so intolerable as to be in a state of complete rest, without passions , without occupation, without diversion, without effort. Then he fills his nullity, loneliness, inadequacy, dependence helplessness, emptiness. And at once there wells up from the depths of his soul boredom, gloom, depression, chagrin, resentment, despair.

Pascal §427

So I learned that even after a single day’s experience of the outside world a man could easily live a hundred years in prison. He’d have laid up enough memories never to be bored.

Albert Camus (L’Etranger p81)

“By his very success in inventing labour saving devices modern man has manufactured an abyss of boredom that only the privileged classes in earlier civilisations have ever fathomed.’

Lewis Mumford

Contemporary capitalism is prodigiously productive, but the imperative that drives it is not productivity. It is to keep boredom at bay. where affluence is the rule the chief threat is the loss of desire. With wants so quickly sated, the economy soon comes to depend on the manufacture of ever more exotic needs.

*John Gray in Straw Dogs p162-163*

Henry Ford didn't say as much but fully recognised the need to sell the fruits of mass production and disconcerted his fellow capitalists by saying that they should pay their workers as much as possible if they were to obtain the maximum benefit from the production line.

John Gray like me is a great fan of JG Ballard Who wrote about what he called "The emergence of a higher kind of boredom"

Half the goods we buy today are not much more than adult toys. The danger is that consumerism will need something close to fascism in order to keep growing.

We think we have choice, but everything is compulsory. We have to keep buying or we fail as citizens. Consumerism creates high unconscious needs that only fascism can satisfy. If anything fascism is the form that consumerism takes when it opts for elective madness

He (the führer figure) hasn't arrived yet. He'll appear, though, walking out of some shopping mall or retail park. Messiahs always emerge from the desert. Everybody will be waiting for him, and he'll seize his chance.

*JG Ballard (In Kingdom Come)*

Nature is unfair ? So much the better, inequality is the only bearable thing, the monotony of equality can only lead us to boredom.

*Francis Picabia*

To let understanding stop at what cannot be understood is a high attainment. Those who cannot do it will be destroyed on the lathe of heaven.

*Chuang Tse*

The dispute between those who believe that the world was created by God and those think it came into being of its own accord deals with phenomena that go beyond our reason and experience. Much more real is the line separating those who doubt being as it is granted to man (no matter how or by whom) from those that accept it without reservation. Behind all the European faiths, religious and political, we find the first chapter of Genesis, which tells us that the world was created properly, that human existence is good, and that we are therefore entitled to multiply. Let us call this basic faith a categorical agreement with being.

*Milan Kundera (The Unbearable Lightness of Being) 6/5 p241*

He who fortifies himself completely against boredom fortifies himself against himself too. He will never drink the most powerful elixir from his own innermost spring.

*Wanderer and his Shadow §200*

You had to hand it to human beings. They had one of the strangest powers in the universe. No other species anywhere in the world had invented boredom. Perhaps it was boredom, not intelligence, that had propelled them up the evolutionary ladder.

*Terry Pratchett (Death in Thief of Time)*

Boredom as a modern Issue

Boredom as a problem for the elite

I think that we are all familiar to a greater or lesser degree with situational boredom but can we take 'existential boredom' seriously.

The role of Art as a cure for Boredom

Is an egalitarian society essentially boring

Do women suffer from boredom as much as men?

Heidegger and overcoming boredom

Evolutionary advantages of Boredom

Here the English are, on the whole a paradigmatic nation. One seldom encounters a born talent for indolence, one never meets it in nature; indolence belongs to the world of the spirit. Occasionally you meet an English traveller, however who is an incarnation of this talent,.....No other nation but the English produces such natural curiosities,

*Kierkegaard in Crop Rotation p231*

Loneliness is the deal. Loneliness is the last great taboo. If we don't accept loneliness, then capitalism wins hands down. Because capitalism is all about trying to convince people that you can distract yourself, that you can make it better. And it ain't true.

*Tilda Swinton*

We are alone. We cannot know and we cannot be known

*Beckett- (Proust p 74)*

*Either we speak and act for ourselves- in which case speech and action are distorted and emptied of their meaning by an intelligence that is not ours, or else we speak and act for others- in which case we speak and act a lie.*

*Beckett- (Proust p 66)*

The world (*says Krisna in the Bhagavad-gita*) has no meaning. It is only a play that God acts with himself.

*from 'A Philosophy of Boredom' Lars Svendsen of Bergen uni.*

"Boredom," Svendsen insists, "is not a question of idleness but of meaning" (Svendsen 34).

Human beings are addicted to meaning. We all have a great problem: Our lives must have some sort of content. We cannot bear to live our lives without some sort of content that we can see as constituting a meaning. Meaninglessness is boring. And boredom can be described metaphorically as a meaning withdrawal. Boredom can be understood as a discomfort, which communicates that the need for meaning is not being satisfied. In order to remove this discomfort, we attack the symptoms rather than the disease itself, and search for all sorts of meaning surrogates. Svendsen (30)

Svenden says that a philosopher must from time to time address the big questions and Boredom is one of the big questions.

*The big questions, he says, are not necessarily the eternal questions, for boredom has only been a central cultural phenomenon for a couple of centuries....Boredom stands out as being a typical phenomenon of modernity. On the whole precursors were restricted to small groups, such as the nobility and clergy, whereas the boredom of modernity is wide-ranging in its effect and can be said to be a relevant phenomenon today for practically everyone in the western world*

Nothing is more human than the readiness to kill and die in order to secure a meaning in life.

*John Gray (Black Mass p186)*

Ballard's fictional achievement is to have communicated a vision of what fulfilment might mean in a time of nihilism. And who would argue that ours is not a time of nihilism and that Ballard is not the ideal chronicler of our disturbed modernity?

Review in *The Observer*

that strange melancholy which oftentimes will haunt the inhabitants of democratic countries in the midst of their abundance, and that disgust at life which sometimes seizes upon them in the midst of calm and easy circumstances

*De Tocqueville -Book 2. Chapter 13( End of)*

For, apart from any other consideration, the high standard of life we enjoy in England depends on our keeping a tight hold on the Empire, particularly the tropical portions of it such as India and Africa. Under the capitalist system, in order that England may live in comparative comfort, a hundred million Indians must live on the verge of starvation - an evil state of affairs, but you acquiesce in it every time step into a taxi or eat a plate of strawberries and cream. The alternative is to throw the empire overboard and reduce England to a cold and unimportant little island where we should all have to work very hard and live mainly on herrings and potatoes.

*George Orwell ( Wigan Pier p197)*