

is not a permanent sanctuary, and Sundays are an institution. Thus, in principle, during those beautiful hours of free time everyone would have

The office is no one, however, who has no leisure time at all. The office their heads remains eternally distant for them.

extraordinary, radical boredom that might be able to reunite them with until eventually they no longer know where their head is, and the unhappy types, are pushed deeper and deeper into the hustle and bustle, less boring than those who do their business by inclination. The latter, Nevertheless, people whose duties occasionally make them yawn may be- expresses a dissatisfaction that would immediately disappear if an occu- since it neither kills people nor awakens them to new life, but merely vulgar boredom of daily drudgery is not actually what is at issue here, ering oneself an ethical being dispels every type of boredom. Yet the- satisfaction. It would be exaggerated to claim that the pride in consid- well for their occupation and at least affords them a certain moral? more tolerable, they have invented a work ethic that provides a moral? earn enough for the bare necessities. To make this tiresome obligation pursue a livelihood on which they expend all their energies, simply to Most people, of course, do not have much leisure time. They

without a goal, neither here nor there. so bustling world, would necessarily compel them to tarry<sup>1</sup> for a while. For their self has vanished—the self whose presence, particularly in this certainly just as boring as those who never get around to being bored. People today who still have time for boredom and yet are not bored are

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## Boredom



the opportunity to rouse himself into real boredom. But although one wants to do nothing, things are done to one: the world makes sure that one does not find oneself. And even if one perhaps isn't interested in it, the world itself is much too interested for one to find the peace and quiet necessary to be as thoroughly bored with the world as it ultimately deserves.



In the evening one saunters through the streets, replete with an unfulfillment from which a fullness could sprout. Illuminated words glide by on the rooftops, and already one is banished from one's own emptiness into the alien *advertisement*. One's body takes root in the asphalt, and, together with the enlightening revelations of the illuminations, one's spirit—which is no longer one's own—roams ceaselessly out of the night and into the night. If only it were allowed to disappear! But, like Pegasus prancing on a carousel, this spirit must run in circles and may never tire of praising to high heaven the glory of a liqueur and the merits of the best five-cent cigarette. Some sort of magic spurs that spirit relentlessly amid the thousand electric bulbs, out of which it constitutes and reconstitutes itself into glittering sentences.

Should the spirit by chance return at some point, it soon takes its leave in order to allow itself to be cranked away in various guises in a *movie theater*. It squats as a fake Chinaman in a fake opium den, transforms itself into a trained dog that performs ludicrously clever tricks to please a film diva, gathers up into a storm amid towering mountain peaks, and turns into both a circus artist and a lion at the same time. How could it resist these metamorphoses? The posters swoop into the empty space that the spirit itself would not mind pervading; they drag it in front of the silver screen, which is as barren as an emptied-out palazzo. And once the images begin to emerge one after another, there is nothing left in the world besides their evanescence. One forgets oneself in the process of gawking, and the huge dark hole is animated with the illusion of a life that belongs to no one and exhausts everyone.

*Radio* likewise vaporizes beings, even before they have intercepted a single spark.<sup>3</sup> Since many people feel compelled to broadcast, one finds oneself in a state of permanent receptivity,<sup>4</sup> constantly pregnant



As one is enduring this species of antennal fate, the five continents are drawing ever closer. In truth, it is not we who extend ourselves out toward them; rather, it is their cultures that appropriate us in their boundless imperialism. It is as if one were having one of those dreams provoked by an empty stomach: a tiny ball rolls toward you from very far away, expands into a close-up, and finally roars right over you. You can neither stop it nor escape it, but lie there chained, a helpless little doll swept away by the giant colossus in whose ambit it expires. Flight is impossible. Should the Chinese imbrogio be tactfully disambigled, one is sure to be harried by an American boxing match: the Occident remains omnipresent, whether one acknowledges it or not. All the world-historical events on this planet—not only the current ones but also past events, whose love of life knows no shame—have only one desire: to set up a rendezvous wherever they suppose us to be present. But the masters are not to be found in their quarters. They've gone on a trip and cannot be located, having long since ceded the empty chambers to the "surprise party" that occupies the rooms, pretending to be the masters.

the unreasonable requests to get rid of this gramophonic mimicry. and the waiters (who are listening to it themselves) indignantly refuse and the speaker effaces every trace of private existence. The announcement it blares forth dominate the space of the concert intermissions, like a porcupine and become aware of one's insignificance, an imposing is the hunted. Even in the café, where one wants to roll up into a ball hounds, and soon no one can tell anymore who is the hunter and who according to their own preference; they are badgered by the news souls were wandering about far away. But these souls are not wandering personal boredom. Silent and lifeless, people sit side by side as if their potentially objective boredom, do not even grant one's modest right to becomes a playground for worldwide noises that, regardless of their own fostering cultivated conversation (which certainly can be a bore), one and entwine themselves around heads all by themselves; and instead of with London, the Eiffel Tower, and Berlin. Who would want to resist the invitation of those dainty headphones? They gleam in living rooms





But what if one refuses to allow oneself to be chased away? Then boredom becomes the only proper occupation, since it provides a kind of guarantee that one is, so to speak, still in control of one's own existence. If one were never bored, one would presumably not really be present at all and would thus be merely one more object of boredom, as was claimed at the outset. One would light up on the rooftops or spool by as a filmstrip. But if indeed one is present, one would have no choice but to be bored by the ubiquitous abstract racket that does not allow one to exist, and, at the same time, to find oneself boring for existing in it.

On a sunny afternoon when everyone is outside, one would do best to hang about in the train station or, better yet, stay at home, draw the curtains, and surrender oneself to one's boredom on the sofa. Shrouded in *tristezza*, one flirts with ideas that even become quite respectable in the process, and one considers various projects that, for no reason, pretend to be serious. Eventually one becomes content to do nothing more than be with oneself, without knowing what one actually should be doing—sympathetically touched by the mere glass grasshopper on the tabletop that cannot jump because it is made of glass and by the silliness of a little cactus plant that thinks nothing of its own whimsicality. Frivolous, like these decorative creations, one harbors only an inner restlessness without a goal, a longing that is pushed aside, and a weariness with that which exists without really being.

If, however, one has the patience, the sort of patience specific to legitimate boredom, then one experiences a kind of bliss that is almost unearthly. A landscape appears in which colorful peacocks strut about, and images of people suffused with soul come into view. And look—your own soul is likewise swelling, and in ecstasy you name what you have always lacked: the great *passion*. Were this passion—which shimmers like a comet—to descend, were it to envelop you, the others, and the world—oh, then boredom would come to an end, and everything that exists would be . . .

Yet people remain distant images, and the great passion fizzles out on the horizon. And in the boredom that refuses to abate, one hatches bagatelles that are as boring as this one.