

FREE A PHILOSOPHY OF BOREDOM PDF



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A Philosophy of Boredom by Lars Svendsen | Issue 89 | Philosophy Now

Although not a major topic for Western philosophers, some important Western philosophers have spoken of it, and regarded it as a major philosophical theme of human life. Why is boredom a philosophical issue? The preceding sketch should indicate how boredom may be regarded not only as a legitimate philosophical issue but as a major one. Moreover, there are several aspects of the problem of boredom which prevent its exhaustive treatment in a straightforward biological, psychological, sociological, or statistical way.

There is a problem of identifying what boredom essentially is—a part of which is the problem of determining whether it is one thing or something

that comes in a *A Philosophy of Boredom* of importantly different forms or modes. Whatever scientific studies may be able to contribute to this problem, progress toward its solution will inevitably require contributions from conceptual and phenomenological investigations. Finally, it seems clear that if any academic discipline has much to say concerning the metaphysical or ethical implications of boredom, it is more likely to be philosophy than any of the empirical sciences.

The main philosophical texts on boredom are *A Philosophy of Boredom* by L. Toohey, and *Fundamental Concepts A Philosophy of Boredom Metaphysics* by M. There is a debate among scholars, including philosophers, about how far back in history boredom goes. Several philosophers claim that boredom has always plagued human beings, while others hold that it is peculiarly a malady of the modern world.

Those holding the latter view do generally admit, however, that there were pre-modern precursors of boredom.

It is with discussion of three of these precursors *A Philosophy of Boredom* this study begins. Qoheleth c. What we actually get in Ecclesiastes is nothing like a philosophical analysis of boredom or reflections on any deep implications it might have.

Rather, we get expressions of the condition itself, partial identification of its causes or reasons, as well as advice concerning how to reduce it, or anyway how to live a halfway decent life in spite of it. Expressions of boredom or *tedium vitae* run throughout the book. The reasons for boredom in Ecclesiastes seem to be primarily that nothing satisfies and the same old things keep getting repeated, within an individual life, and over countless generations.

That which has been is now; and that which is to be has already been. There is nothing new under the sun. Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart. Let *A Philosophy of Boredom* garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. King James Version, 9: That is, live life with gusto, and get enjoyment from what you do, if you can.

One might well wonder how effective this advice could be to one truly suffering from a bad case of severe boredom. Based on some things Serenus says, Seneca apparently thinks his friend is on the verge of lapsing into boredom, or at least has gotten himself into a mode of living that leads straight to it. All are in the same case, both those, on the one hand, who are plagued with fickleness and boredom and a continual shifting of purpose, and those, on the other, who loll and yawn.

Notice here that Seneca includes two central elements in the phenomenon of boredom. On the one hand there is fickleness and restlessness, and on the other a lack of motivation and interest, a weariness that expresses itself in lolling and yawning. His subsequent remarks provide a pretty apt description of the phenomenology of boredom—what the bored person feels, *A Philosophy of Boredom* how he or she is inclined to act or fail to act.

Seneca shall be quoted at length here because of the delightfulness of his prose and the aptness of his portrait of bored people. And all these tendencies are aggravated when men have taken refuge in solitary studies, which are unendurable to a mind that is intent upon public affairs, desirous of action, and naturally restless, because assuredly it has too few resources within itself. When, therefore, the pleasures have been *A Philosophy of Boredom* which business itself affords to those who are busily engaged, the mind cannot endure home, solitude, and the walls of a room, and sees with dislike that it has been left to itself.

Thence comes mourning and melancholy *A Philosophy of Boredom* the thousand waverings of an unsettled mind, which its aspirations hold in suspense, and then disappointment renders melancholy.

Thence comes that feeling which makes men loathe their own leisure and complain that they themselves have nothing to be busy with. For it is the nature of the human mind to be active and prone to movement.

Welcome to it is every opportunity for excitement and distraction. Hence men undertake wide-ranging travel, and wander over remote shores, and their fickleness, always discontented with the present, gives proof of itself now on land and now on sea.

They undertake one journey after another and change spectacle for spectacle. You ask what help, in my opinion, should be employed to overcome this tedium. The best course would be. So what do we get from Seneca that will help us in our attempts to understand boredom? We get three things: first, a rather compelling phenomenological account of what the state is like; second, an indication that it can lead to states worse than itself for example, melancholy, jealousy, and envy; and, third, some advice about how to eliminate or at least ameliorate the condition, namely, through work and immersion in practical affairs.

Since our concern here is with philosophical thought on boredom, this fascinating chapter in the book of boredom must be largely passed over. The overtone was negative. Readers who wish to understand more about *acedia* should consult the excellent treatment of it in Toohey. But let us move on to the seventeenth century French philosopher Blaise Pascal. Most of what we get from Pascal are observations of human nature, or of people in general. His primary and off-repeated point concerning them is that, without diversions and distractions, human beings are naturally bored.

Boredom is the natural state of the human being left to his or her own devices. People cannot live in quiet, peace, and rest with themselves, and so they *A Philosophy of Boredom* distractions and diversions to draw away their attention from their own empty selves and lives. The diversions do not really work, and so people find themselves returning again and again to perception of the emptiness and nothingness of their own lives, and to a pervasive sense of ennui or boredom, the fit response to their own emptiness and nothingness.

He is noteworthy for the claim that boredom and ennui are the natural state of the human being. But his message is not entirely negative. Boredom is the natural state of a human being without God. A life in relation to an infinite God fills the emptiness of the soul. A Philosophy of Boredom obliterates the restlessness, weariness, and boredom which naturally afflicts people.

Immanuel Kant speaks of boredom in passing. His remarks about it in A Philosophy of Boredom primarily in his Lectures on Ethics. Kant believes that boredom plagues the person who is inactive and has nothing to do. His cure for it is activity, either work or participation in activities of recreation and diversion. The person who just loafs and does not engage in activity can find no rest at the end of the day, while the one who has been active can. Pascal advises one to overcome boredom by establishing a relationship with God; Kant just recommends activity, whether of work or play.

We now come to a philosopher who makes boredom a centerpiece of his philosophy. He is the great German pessimist Arthur Schopenhauer. First, there is his claim that boredom is one of the twin poles of human life. The other pole is need, want, lack, or desire. Here is the way it works. We feel that we lack something, something we need. We pursue it and, if we are fortunate, capture it. But the capture does not bring the satisfaction we had expected.

What we get instead is a strong dose of boredom, and we find ourselves casting about to A Philosophy of Boredom another object of pursuit, somehow convincing ourselves A Philosophy of Boredom if we can get it, we will experience satisfaction. Neither want nor boredom A Philosophy of Boredom a particularly pleasant state A Philosophy of Boredom be in; in fact, both are forms of misery.

And so life may be viewed as a pendulum that passes back and forth between one bad state and another. Second, Schopenhauer offers something like a definition of boredom, a brief analysis of the concept, which may be the first offered in Western thought. A Philosophy of Boredom, Schopenhauer offers in addition not just a definition but a substantive account of what boredom is.

Boredom, he says, is the sensation of the worthlessness of existence. Boredom may even be regarded as evidence or proof that existence is worthless. If life itself had any real, positive value, there would be no such thing as boredom. Simply being alive would delight us. But, as A Philosophy of Boredom are, we can find no modicum of relief from our misery, except when we are diverted or distracted from our lives. Fourth, Schopenhauer reflects on what boredom or its absence reveals about the intelligence and complexity of the one who suffers from it.

His general claim here is that a propensity to be bored is A Philosophy of Boredom sign of intelligence. Animals, he speculates, feel very little boredom. Humans are prone to it in proportion to how smart they are. As for those who are content with something like mere everyday existence, they are the stupidest of people, not A Philosophy of Boredom, if any, above the level of the brutes. It should be added that there are exceptions in Schopenhauer to his intelligent bored person.

One of these is the human being who is lost in the A Philosophy of Boredom and enjoyment of art, especially music. The other is the sage, saint, or mystic who has thoroughly denied the will to live and exists in nirvana or something like it.

But very few can A Philosophy of Boredom conceive of such a state, let alone achieve it. The vast majority of A Philosophy of Boredom people simply have to put up with long stretches of boredom throughout their lives. Finally, Schopenhauer stresses A Philosophy of Boredom seriousness of boredom more than any of his predecessors. It is a form of misery, A Philosophy of Boredom a real scourge on the human race.

It can lead to the death of the bored one; it can make him or her hang himself or herself. Or, to overcome it, he or she may find himself or herself the instigator of wars, massacres, and murders. The A Philosophy of Boredom Transcendentalist philosopher Henry David Thoreau does not write about boredom as such at any length.

The issue is whether boredom is a natural state that has been around ever since there were humans, or whether it developed, or was invented, in the early modern period and is uniquely an affliction of modernity. Moral reform is the effort to throw off sleep.

(PDF) A Philosophy of Boredom Contents | Lennart Lahuis -

Enlarge Image. Although boredom is something that we have all suffered from at some point in our lives, and has become one of the central preoccupations of our age, very few of us can explain precisely what it is. In this book Lars Svendsen examines the nature of boredom, how it originated, its A Philosophy of Boredom, how and why it afflicts us, and why we cannot seem to overcome it by any act of will.

Ballard, Andy Warhol and many others. A witty and entertaining account A Philosophy of Boredom considers a serious issue, it will appeal to anyone who has ever felt bored, and wanted to know why. You would be hard pressed to find a better A Philosophy of Boredom to make do with this year than this wonderful little one which is, somehow, despite the desolation at its core, oddly uplifting.

Svendsen's thesis is so cool that boredom, linked with desire rather than need, suddenly seems like a desirable state of being in an agitated age. As Lars Svendsen writes in his slim but essential volume A Philosophy of Boredom: Boredom always contains an awareness of being trapped, either in a particular situation or in the world as a whole. Reading those words instantly transports me to a boxed-in chair at an insufferable dinner party or the middle of the stalls at an excruciating play.

The Observer For a serious work of philosophy, A Philosophy of Boredom exhibits a light touch and impressive pop-cultural range. This also A Philosophy of Boredom the book from its most obvious pitfall. Its not boring. A Philosophy of Boredom offers an abundance of knowledge and an inspiring analysis. Write your own review. Your Basket.

A Philosophy of Boredom Lars Svendsen Although boredom is something that we have all suffered from at some point in our lives, and has become one of the central preoccupations of our age, very few of us can explain precisely what it is.

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A witty and entertaining account of our dullest moments and most maddening days, A Philosophy of Boredom will appeal to anyone curious to know what lies beneath the overwhelming inertia of inactivity. Table of Contents. Phil Miller The Glasgow Herald. Svendsen has a way with words, and, unlike many writers of philosophy books, is also blessed with a sly wit and a thorough knowledge of popular culture. You would be hard pressed to find a better book to make do with this year than this wonderful little one, which is, somehow, despite the desolation at its core, oddly uplifting.

Tom Hodgkinson The New Statesman. Ben Macintyre The Times Online. Harry A Philosophy of Boredom The Daily Telegraph. Yasmine Musharbash Australian Journal of Anthropology.

I highly recommend this book. Carlin Romano Philadelphia Inquirer. Unlike Scandinavian philosophers known for sterile prose styles, Svendsen combines droll dismissal of statistical research, incisive readings of boredom art. You will not be bored reading him for the first time. Twitter Tweets by ChicagoDistrib. RSS Feed. Contact About Privacy.