

INTRODUCTION:

We are all guilty of giving too much time and thought on the most trivial of matters, diverting ourselves from doing what we deem to be more important or meaningful. Whether triviality means a lack of seriousness, importance, complexity or value, and whatever our particular vices are within the realm of triviality, we are all deeply susceptible to it. To pander to this predisposition, there is no shortage of fatuity in modern life that boosts our superficiality, vanity and passivity, while deflating our sense of profundity, curiosity and patience.

Amidst the ever-swelling storm surge of the trivial on the coast of contemporary culture, we are incessantly fooled into desiring insatiable material needs. We constantly want something faster, better or flashier and feel entitled to it, which can be easily observed in our petulant behaviours when instant gratification is denied; especially in this heavily digitalised age where a few minutes of shaky Wi-Fi connection—often signalled by a slowly rotating circle—can push us over the edge in a disproportionate outrage. What in truth is a minuscule inconvenience in these labour-shy times can seem overwhelmingly debilitating. After many decades of it, our spoilt demand for ostentatious and ephemeral cultural artefacts is ever increasing, while growing continuously intolerant of anything serious and profound.

Paradoxically, we have long dismissed the notion of being frivolous, simple or light-hearted as something beneath our intellectual and moral treatment, whilst eagerly producing and consuming plentiful of it. What then is the lure of these derided qualities we find ourselves unable to forego? Do they offer any significance or value other than mere amusement or to passively while away our time? We experience cognitive dissonance when indulging in such inane distractions. While we enjoy ourselves, we also experience a sense of guilt for engaging in such trifling matters—hence the term, *guilty* pleasure. We feel we're only allowed small, prescribed doses of it, like a little treat or a controlled amount of medication. However, this small treat we sheepishly indulge in can act as a pocket of respite from our regimented daily order—the societal pressure to be complying, respectful and serious—from which we gain a great pleasure.

As Wilde suggested, perhaps there is a point in treating trivial things in life seriously by investing our time in understanding the importance of what we brush off as unworthy. One shouldn't be too quick to marginalise what is traditionally deemed trivial, since anything that subverts and ridicules the principal systems, practises levity rather critically. Also, it's not possible to be humorous in a serious context with no serious and sincere intention. Triviality can provide us with great relish and comfort. People, ideas and movements, that disrupt the status quo, even if it were simply by trivialising our orderly ways, may just vitalise our complaisant and complacent ways.

In this essay, I will attempt to demonstrate the importance of being trivial, starting with the core definition of the term itself. I will discuss, with further explication of its meaning within the context of contemporary life, how it has come to be associated with high and low culture, the initial attempt to maintain the division between the dichotomy and the eventual weakening of the divide. Moreover, through the 'spirit of pop', 'camp sensibility' and 'carnival sense of the world', I will attempt to show how treating serious matters with *critical levity* can be rather illuminating and even of great significance and value in understanding the human condition.