

Why We Seriously Need Frivolity

PETER VENMANS

Since winning the Socrates Cup in 2023 for his book *Hospitality*, author Peter Venmans has become known for his accessible and engaging essays on a wide range of philosophical themes. His books often revolve around the linguistic and philosophical analysis of a concept that fundamentally characterises our time – usually because the concept has ‘disappeared’. Because we no longer reflect on it. Because we conveniently reduce its meaning to a one-dimensional interpretation. Or because we take the virtue it represents too much for granted.

Venmans approaches such concepts eclectically and from a historical perspective, always managing to draw a line to the present. In doing so, he casts new light on familiar ideas. His latest book, *‘Frivolity’*, is no exception.

‘Frivolity’ begins with an analysis of the word ‘frivolous’ in Dutch, French, and English. According to Venmans, frivolity carries a largely negative connotation in all three languages as a result of two philosophical currents that have strongly shaped Western modernity: Puritanism and Rationalism. Both are forms of purity thinking that cast suspicion on anything frivolous. He sees the same tendency emerging in what he calls eco-alarmism, woke thinking, and the postmodern frivolity system of Peter Sloterdijk.

The charm of this book lies in its meandering journey through the history of ideas and culture, unafraid to wander down the occasional dead-end path.

DE STANDAARD

In contrast, Venmans turns to the actual experience of frivolity: at sixty, he learned to dance salsa, and in surrendering to something as innocent as dancing, he discovered the joy of thoughtlessness. With playful insight, Peter Venmans shows that we seriously need frivolity.



AUTHOR



Peter Venmans (b. 1963) is a philosopher and expert on Spain who has made a point of publishing very readable books about philosophy and society. His earlier essays include ‘The Discovery of the World. On Hannah Arendt’ (2005), ‘On the Purpose of Usefulness’ (2008), ‘The Third Part of the Soul. On Thymos’ (2011) and ‘Amor Mundi’ (2006). His work has won him several awards and been translated into Spanish.

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