

**Banality of Human Pursuits: Entertainment, Addiction, Selfhood and Boredom in Select  
Novels of David Foster Wallace**

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**Degree of Master of Philosophy**

By

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## DECLARATION

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All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by him.

We recommend this thesis to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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**“Banality of Human Pursuits: Entertainment, Addiction, Selfhood and Boredom in  
Select Novels of David Foster Wallace”**

Submitted by **Asish Lepcha** under the supervision of Ms. Saswati Saha, Assistant Professor of the Department of English, School of Languages and Literature, Sikkim University.

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For Lachin and Mom

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## Chapter I

### **Introduction: Entertainment, Addiction, Selfhood and Boredom in the Novels of David**

#### **Foster Wallace**

In the 1980s, republicans Ronald Reagan & George Bush, were the Presidents of US when David Foster Wallace was trying his career as novelist. The very decade was a disastrous, decadent and innovative time in the history of United State. By the mid-80s, the introduction of cocaine turned youth into drug abuse which was a truly terrifying issue. In the province of Quebec, ongoing political unrest due to many differences between the dominant French population and the Anglophone minority, and the question of French speaking people's rights, in the predominantly [English](#)-speaking Canada was at its height in 1980, when local Governments (Quebec) called a public referendum on partial separation from the rest of Canada. The referendum ended with no side winning majority. The decade saw great socioeconomic change due to advances in technology and a worldwide move away from planned economies towards laissez-faire capitalism. Many economists had agreed that the changing global economic trends of the 1980s can be somewhat attributed to the policy of Reagan Govt, which, in the 1980s was a record setting era that produced more jobs and more economic expansion than any other time in U.S. history. As economic liberalization increased in the developed world, multiple multinational corporations associated with the manufacturing industry relocated in other parts of world. Reaganomics<sup>i</sup> advocated reduction in tax-rate to spur economic growth, deregulation and reduction in government spending. American attitudes towards drugs and alcoholic beverages had evolved considerably throughout the country's history in 80s &90s. The Hollywood cinema & TV industry had been very influential on American culture and to some extent in global culture through transmission of movies overseas. Television was a major mass media of the U.S. All

these conditions prevailing in the United States had a major impact on the philosophy and fictions of David Foster Wallace such as *Infinite Jest* & *The Pale King*. Thus, the selected novels for this research, *Infinite Jest* and *The Pale King*, contain the global as well as local issues of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Studying them seemed to be of paramount importance to understand the pros and cons of development and progress as we understand them today.

David Foster Wallace seemed worried about the influence of entertainment on the writing of fictions which can affect the aesthetic of fiction writing. Wallace, in the essay “E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction”, proposed that television has an ironic influence on fiction and urged literary authors to avoid TV’s shallow rebelliousness. He was concerned about the contemporary U.S. culture that was part and parcel of television. He even said in an interview that part of the allure of both drugs and entertainment is escape from problems and life. “The 1990s had been named the ‘Decade of the brain’ by the senior George Bush, a designation that was designed to draw the public’s attention to the benefits that could result from neuroscientific research.” (Burn, 50-51) Stephen J. Burn, in his book *David Foster Wallace’s Infinite Jest: A Reader’s Guide* writes,

Wallace’s account of the mechanical ‘perfectibility of man’, then, suggests *Infinite Jest’s* continuity with early American literature, [as well as global literature] but the immediate context of the materialist explanations of the self in the (his) novels draw on a more recent body of writing (Burn, 50).

Non-contentment and loneliness of consumerism pop culture cannot be ruled out in emerging economies in 21<sup>st</sup> century. One of the excess created by modern economy and development is boredom that people try to escape by indulging in pleasure pursuits. Literature, as in the novels of David Foster Wallace, examines and represents how loneliness manifests in our lives and how it is associated with a sense of unhappiness and dissatisfaction that paradoxically has come to suffocate developing capitalist economies. In spite, of all the



facilities provided by science and technology, desires are, by and large, being added every day. On one hand people are dying for food, cloth, shelter and education on the other, people are dying out of pleasure, work pressure, boredom, loneliness, entertainment, depression.

The prevailing social as well as economic conditions called for the kind of literature as was produced by Wallace as he writes, a “theatre of the human mind that’s deeply preoccupied with memory, but the central drama is the relationship between the machine-like body and the ghostly epiphenomenon of consciousness.” (Burn, 90) Thus, the moot question is the significance of relationship between entertainment, pleasure, addiction on one hand and boredom on the other. The research, therefore, has discussed the representation of problems which arises in the interfaces of entertainment, addiction, depression and boredom in the postmodern & (post) postmodern literature of David Foster Wallace vis-à-vis contemporary local cultures. Addiction to pleasure and leisure, depression due to pressure and opulence in every aspects of human lives and in their everyday lived experiences are leading individuals to become claustrophobic lonely and suicidal. This research concentrates on these side effects of life in a capitalist economy. Perpetual state of psychological poverty of human minds subdued by pride and prejudice of human nature is the starting point of analyses of the literatures selected. The dissertation will talk about banality of human pursuits in the contemporary world of globalization and technological advancement. How human pursuits lead to loneliness, boredom and depression and search for rehabilitation will also be investigated. The banalities, in spite of development in science and technology, economic growth and success, have engulfed human existence. The basic objectives of the study are physical isolation of people and breaking down of communal ties amongst people due to the effects of social networks, TV, internet, and artificial intelligence wherein, irony and ridicule are entertaining and effective to lead people to consumer popular culture. The dissertation also questions the life’s meaning and ultimate value of work and family. It has discussed the

culture of entertainment and how it gets associated with the concept of boredom in the modern world. Thus, *Infinite Jest* and *The Pale King* have become rational entities wherein, one can find effect of popular cultures. There is something unnervingly zealous about the way the novels address the perennial Wallace's concern of how to be a good person in a world full of aggravation, solipsism and distractions. Although *The Pale King* was written (1990s) after *Infinite Jest*, but its concerns are pervading still now, the symptoms of the social ailments with an increasingly selfish, hedonistic and confused global politics with its cancerous germs have been spreading ever since.

In working out the contrast between the novelist's function in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the novelist's function in the age of overloaded media, once again then, we have ambivalence in speaking about *Infinite Jest*, for Wallace exclaims: "God, if the book comes off as some kind of indictment of entertainment, then it fails." (Lipsky 80-81) Moreover, in his own essay on David Lynch, Wallace writes: "a commercial movie doesn't try to wake people up but rather to make their sleep so comfortable and their dreams so pleasant that they will fork over money to experience it" (Supposedly Fun Thing, 170). Wallace's concern about entertainment, addiction and boredom were not only the relevant issues in the late 1990s but they are very much significant even in present days.

P.B Shelley's (1821) maxim that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" probably marks the highpoint of the literary artist's confidence in the ability of literature to engage with and have an impact on the social world. One can think of *Infinite Jest* and *The Pale King* for such engagement and impact influencing epistemological and ontological human pursuits. Challenging our cultural values, raising consciousnesses, and occasionally transforming individual lives are few engagements that perhaps Wallace tried to impart through his novels. Thus, art's social role is to question, challenge, and re-imagine the ideological status quo. *Infinite Jest's* and *The Pale King's* philosophy in the vast sea of

modern literature exist as a movement to describe reality to its fullest extent. The exploration of contemporary reality and underlying structure of novels are some attempts to capture and represent the aims of this literary research.

Taking place at the fictional Enfield Tennis Academy and Ennet House in Enfield, Massachusetts as well as various areas of Tucson, Arizona, *Infinite Jest* is the grand intersection of characters and their parallel experiences of pleasure, addiction, internal-suffering, entertainment and their relationships with one another and ourselves. By exploring just a small fraction of Wallace's use of philosophy in his characterizations of his novels, the research gains valuable insight into how our choices shape our existence.

Everything in art is a formal question and so it is in *The Pale King*, where the task is, perhaps, not yet to definitively categorize the novel, but rather to prepare a blueprint for a larger and later critical project. *The Pale King* itself describes "the shapes of the worms incised in the overturned dung and baked all day until hardened...tiny vacant lines in rows and inset curls" and concludes with the instruction to "Read these".(6) This is, perhaps, an allegory for the reading process. At the same time the scene uncomfortably resembles a disinterment (of meanings): the worms' bodies emerging from the ground, the hungry crows waiting for the carrion. Much of the political argument in *The Pale King* is carefully grounded in contemporary economic policy. It is significant that writer's sense of the novels' contemporary relevance was shaped by a belief that the emergence of other media had redefined the role that fiction needed to play. The rise of cinema required the novel to redirect its focus and abandon relating certain stories that movies could treat more effectively.

Wallace's project in *Infinite Jest* was to return to a concern with sincerity not seen since modernism. However, movies entertainment has been a part of all cultures since modernism and entertainment is the storehouse of national values. Popular and Elite Culture treats popular culture and entertainment as synonyms. Popular culture refers to the beliefs and

practices and the objects through which they are organized, that are widely shared among masses. This includes folk beliefs, practices and objects rooted in local traditions, and mass beliefs, practices and objects generated in political and commercial centres. Another approach is about leisure as a dimension of life, in the context of the individual's other activities. Studies generally find leisure to be characterized by freedom & consciousness. Hence, one of the unifying mechanisms in the novels is Wallace's fascination with consciousness.

Reading, as a spiritual practice in Wallace's *The Pale King* and *Infinite Jest*, influences one's ethical life and mystics. So these novels have tried to restore lost faith in human beings. In the current state of religiously-influenced fictions, lost faith seems to have changed the literary landscape. In today's culture, there is hardly any consequence of religiously-influenced fictions on public life. After Postmodernism, the most important question is: what is the role of fiction? How has its role already changed the ways we live, and how will it continue to change the ways we live? And how is this constantly evolving relationship represented in our culture? Or are we trapped in solipsism that looks like the sin of pride? Instead of writing about religion, Wallace described more or less secular institutions- Alcoholics Anonymous, the I.R.S., a halfway house- when he wanted to show people in communion with something larger than themselves. In particular, the thesis responds to the question: how could *The Pale King* and *Infinite Jest* represent relationship of pleasure to boredom and then to spiritual rehabilitation? The novels, in both form and content, through its main findings of boredom and pleasure in routinized work, lack of intimacy and lack of spiritual practices shows alienation of human beings from society. Thus these are the prime concern of contemporary living at the turn of the twenty-first century and must be confronted and combated by all means. Alienation of the adult and youth of working class by religion, consumerism, entertainment and capitalism are also to be debated. The study also engages with *The Pale King* and *Infinite Jest* in terms of spiritual exercises and

longings by approaching the perspectives of (Post) Postmodern cultures. Obligation & practical living are the concerns of this paper's philosophy and have surfaced in some way or other. The basic ideas of existentialism have been used to analyse the subjects and themes of *The Pale King* and *Infinite Jest* for this research. The subjects have found their precise expressions vis-a'-vis 'existence' and its altered relation to 'essence.'

In the wake of post-war, the works of Kierkegaard, Sartre, and Camus, became the rage in the lack of spiritualism and in the isolation of the soul until loneliness and the identity crisis drove individuals into drugs' and entertainment's communities. People are left with only the pointless banal pursuits and the glib delusions of pleasure-prospects. People could not, to use Camus' term, escaped the Absurd; people could not, to speak more like Sartre, overcome their nothingness. Frustration became deeper with every passing day. This gets reflected in the very fact that men and women keep talking about their banal pursuits never reflecting on their existence. The writings of Sartre and Camus have dealt with existential crisis as the single most important problem for social alienation of mankind. This is also one of ways in which the novels of David Foster Wallace can be approached and analysed.

In spite of the contemporary relevance and increasing popularity of the novels, many readers, nevertheless, remain unsure of what to make of the novels such as *The Pale King* & *Infinite Jest*. The following analysis of these novels has aimed to modestly elaborate, the core of the texts, diverse thematic preoccupations, teeming scope and confusing narrative complexity, the hidden moral and, more importantly, author's major artistic project in general since Wallace mentioned that both his novels to be read and reread with serious care. Analysis has tried to engage with characters, plots, and storylines and illuminate deepest and most important ethical preoccupations of them starting with 'addiction experience'.

*Infinite Jest* is, simply, a book about the contemporary world and experience of loneliness and *The Pale King* is about bureaucratic tedium. The texts are about the peculiar

form of human suffering that derives from excess of human progress. They are about the complicated and enigmatic nature of addiction, work pressure, boredom and entertainment. In these veins, the research centrally examines how these loneliness and boredom manifest in our lives and are instrumental to the strange unobservant sense of unhappiness and dissatisfaction that paradoxically have come to suffocate our life amid historically unprecedented opportunities and enjoyment.

The dissertation has addressed the main cultural contradictions of our time and explored the ways people lived, experienced and suffered in their everyday life-emotionally, politically and culturally. It has also represented contemporary experiences of sufferings and explored the possibilities of countering and eventually overcoming the sufferings. The contextualized views on entertainment, pleasure, addiction and moral insights of the author, what's engaging about these works is their axiomatic presentations of hideously materialistic human beings who still have the capacity for joy, charity, genuine connections and for those things that doesn't have a value. Sartre's proposed view about the notion of absolute freedom and choice are reflected in this dissertation as irrespective of their capacities, human beings have an intrinsic desire to make themselves free. Nietzsche's warning, that "God is dead!", and Sartre's advice to men to face up the fact that they are responsible for and forge their own destinies by free choice, can be critically used to analyse Wallace's novels. The term 'boredom' has been used to describe the individual's basic, languid state of apathy, as well as the frantic attempts that he might undertake, 'out of pressure.' Implicitly and explicitly many characters, thus, in *Infinite Jest* can be seen as trying to dispel this boredom of their aesthetic existence through different forms of addiction, with disastrous existential consequences.

The stories about videophones, teleputers, computers and television-suffering-channels depicted in *Infinite Jest* and *The Pale King* project the extension of our gaze into every region of public and private life of contemporary world. That the 'internet,' by contrast,

foregrounds modes of communication that allow for a level of anonymity and invisibility cannot be ruled out from the face of popular culture. At the same time TV, on the one hand, the internet webs, on the other, are rapidly replacing print as the major information medium of the twenty-first century popular culture. *Infinite Jest*, in a post-millennial America, is imagined from the vantage point of the actual early nineties and *The Pale King* from the eighties. The actions in both the novels take place in a fully replete alternative reality that seems to have branched off from the reader's world and pursued in its own quirky, though plausible, path. *The Pale King's* actions have taken place in a carefully deconstructed historical past. In it one of the narrators describes the IRS (Internal Revenue Service) as a "parallel world, both connected to and independent of one, operating under its own physics and imperatives of cause." (86) Wallace has suggested that the six hours of TV-training undertaken daily by the average American "influences the whole psychology of one's relation to himself, his mirror, his loved ones, and a world of real people and real gazes." (E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction, 174) Other developments in information technology, as well as in scientific fields such as biology and genetics, permeate Wallace's fictions to such an extent that the liberal humanist cannot walk away from responsibility. However, they are now too readily defined as a manifesto for our generation of fictions. In fact, serious fictions should aggravate the sense of entrapment, loneliness and death in people by realising the chaos of the world. Wallace's fictions with moral impetus can argue that they might move people to come face-to-face with their isolation. Analysis of *Infinite Jest*, for instance, through its abundant use of internal focalization, when it comes to describing the terrifying helplessness of drug addicts, can lead to an understanding of an addicts' mind ( as in Ken Erdedy in *Infinite Jest*) suffering from paralyzing anxiety effect without drugs .

The spontaneous data information in *The Pale King* and the free indirect knowledge bank in *Infinite Jest* constitute the central aesthetic and ethical allegory of this research.

'Read these' (*The Pale King*, 4); "So you then man what's your story? (*Infinite Jest*, 17):" are nothing but clarion call for readers to know the process of reading and it needs to be a series of small readerly compensations. The meditation on boredom and attention in exchange for the reader's actual boredom and attention is therefore reader's thousand fold call for immunity against boredom. Contemporary philosophers and bioethicists argue that life extension is bad for the individual. Life extension removes constraints, and thus it deprives life of meaning. Thus, purpose of this meaningless pursuit is to find meaning in human progresses. Those constrained agencies contribute to the meaningfulness of human life, but reject the objection to life in its current form. Even in an extended life, decision-making remains constrained, and many obstacles to the fulfillment of a human's goals are preserved. Longer lives are also presented with new challenges: for instance, it might be harder for lives to avoid chronic boredom, and sustain their motivation to act in the pursuit of lives' goals. As Kafka is reported to have said that the meaning of life is that it stops. Human beings as we know them are creatures whose lives are structured by that timetable and biological nature of lives require that they go through a life cycle that is characterised by the goods of sexuality, fertility and human relationships and ultimately death without enlightenment. The brevity of life contributes to its values and values always in scarcity. But we value our status as human beings. This status centres on our being humans - deliberating, evaluating, choosing and pretending to make what we see as a good life for ourselves. What is valuable in typical human individuals is intentional thinking, broadly conceived as the capacity to have beliefs, desires, and preferences and to act on them in order to achieve one's goals. Other goods that we value are self-consciousness and the powers of autonomy and reflection, and a rich emotional life which allows typical humans to develop complex and rewarding interpersonal relationships. Life's pursuit removes constraints and thus it deprives life of meaning and there is boredom of life.



Now since, boredom is the root of all evil, what can be more natural than the effort to overcome it. Our method does not consist in a change of our pursuit to overcome it, but resembles our previous foolish pursuit that is again banal. We never realize that the more you limit yourself, the more fertile you become in invention. A prisoner in solitary confinement for life becomes very inventive, and a spider may furnish him with much entertainment. One essential feature shared by all these men is their ardent individualism. Especially of systems, we are marked with dissatisfaction with their traditional philosophy as superficial, academic, and greed of goods. The strength of a man's virtue or spiritual capacity measured by his ordinary life is all we require to kill materialism, addiction and boredom. Depressed and sunk in spirit, melancholy and bad temper is the root of all malevolence. Here we have at once the principle of limitation, the only saving principle in the world. The question of ordinary human experience is the principal question of this modern 21st century. To reject addiction of pleasure is the quest for what is morally real and right. A tension between an excess of information and unexplainable selfhood is questionable now and then. In the face of a flood of external desire of input and output whether drugs, entertainment, or other easily obsessed-over stimulated goods, people are never tired of their greed but struggle in boredom and loneliness.

To identify the most fundamental signs such as interior selfhood and existence and to embark on external challenges such as beating addiction in a rehab centres, overtly seen in *Infinite Jest*, are consequences of all-pervasive boredom. *The Pale King's* characters constantly struggle to locate themselves in the face of an excess of material that they can be sure is not the self, which, in the late twentieth century, often takes the shape of data, information, entertainment, or some cross-section thereof. Information in *The Pale King* does not merely threaten to obscure humanity, as it did in *Infinite Jest*. *The Pale King's* characters possess an ambivalence in the face of these information avalanches that is at times healthy

and at other times consuming. Given Wallace's track record for thoroughly exploring paralyzing self-consciousness and its attendant despair, this research may not come as a surprise. It is an attempt to position *The Pale King* as a kind of technological prequel to *Infinite Jest*. Thus, the research then explores first Wallace's representation of entertainment in general, and second his representations of boredom.

In his short 1975 essay "Upon Leaving the Movie Theatre," Roland Barthes writes about the cinema in a manner strikingly reminiscent of the Entertainment in *Infinite Jest*. He compares the movie-going experience to hypnosis, and he describes the spectator as glued by the nose to the screen, "riveted to the representation". Essay and novel are both concerned with the question of how to "loosen the glue's grip", and both present film as conducive of sleep: Barthes writes of "spectators slipping into their seat as they slip into a bed, coat and feet on the seat in front of them. (Sayers, 2-3)

Entertainment is a kind of hypnosis that people cannot get rid of its addiction easily. In *Infinite Jest* film engulfs its viewers so much that they tend to forget everything, their existence, surrounding, their relationship with families, and their health. Ultimately they are left with surging desire and boredom that make them lose control over themselves. Contemporary popular culture is about pleasure and boredom but stripped of teleology. In particular, boredom and pleasure illuminate the nature of the technological forces that structure contemporary life. The drive for endless economic growth and technological innovation that characterizes much postmodern life is a product of boredom with the human condition and its worldly limitations.

In a February 1996 radio interview about *Infinite Jest* with Boston's WBUR, David Foster Wallace declared that, "I wanted to do something about America that was sad." As Stephen Burn declares in his *Reader's Guide*, which may in turn be related to this work:

my purpose has been to demonstrate in academic fashion that Wallace's fiction is the product of a layered aesthetic that reaches toward a richer, more polyphonic, register than many earlier readings have recognized. As criticism of Wallace's work has gathered pace since the millennium, much of it has circled obsessively around a relationship between irony, solipsism, and postmodernism... (Burn, 21).

It's like crossroads meeting of spectation, narcissism, obsessive thinking, addiction, boredom, loneliness, entertainment and tragedy, work pressure, that permeate *Infinite Jest* and *The Pale King*. As Burn contends:

The learning and scale of *Infinite Jest* offers an encyclopaedic distillation of the twentieth century, but the book strives to use its erudite allusions to span outward from the novel- to trace Wallace's genealogy as a writer, to remind the reader of human connection, and to dramatize the way reading shapes behaviour( Burn, 75).

The key scene to cross-reference here is the encyclopaedic distillation of the twentieth century and reminds the reader of human connection and to dramatize the way reading shapes behaviour of reader. Reader has been informed about the contradiction between sober minds and addicted minds, to avoid the confusion of myth created by popular culture and to take tasks to maintain human relationships. We can also read the fragmentation and enigmatic nature of the text as a psychedelic effect which speaks of joint distortion of relative contemporary innovation hence a major reason why dreams, memories, psychedelics, and their rational inexplicability are a constitutional part of *Infinite Jest*. This paper argues that the film conflates two of the *Infinite Jest's* principal concerns: the mounting centrality of popular culture and our culture's increasing susceptibility to addictive drugs. Our culture's

“increasing susceptibility to addictive drugs” is only an ancillary conclusion drawn from the film’s (Entertainment’s) symbolism.

## **Chapter II**

## **Obsession with Entertainment: Understanding the Concepts of Addiction, Pleasure and Loneliness in *Infinite Jest***

Our obsessions with popular culture and the dominant postmodern cultural attitudes of scepticism and the fixations with entertainment, loneliness, depression and anxiety are reflected in the novel *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace. S.J Burn in his book *David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest: A Reader's Guide* aptly states that all these significant issues get remoulded “by presenting television shows about television shows, and making the viewer watch shows about watching, television aims to delude viewers into thinking that they are intellectually critiquing spectation, rather than passively consuming”(Burn, 7). Entertainment has become primary theme of the *Infinite Jest*. The novel *Infinite Jest's* narrative takes place in future version of North America. The novel touches on many topics, including addiction, withdrawal, recovery, suicide, entertainment, Quebec separatism, national identity and tennis as a metaphysical activity.

In the novel's future world, North America is a united state comprising of the United States, Canada and Mexico, known as the Organization of North American Nations (O.N.A.N.). Companies purchase naming rights to each calendar year, for example;

The Year of the Depend Adult Undergarment, The Year of Dairy Products from the American Heartland, Year of the [Whopper](#), Year of the [Tucks](#) Medicated Pad, Year of Glad, Year of the Trial Size [Dove](#) Bar, Year of the [Perdue](#) Wonder chicken, Year of the Whisper Quiet [Maytag](#) Dishmaster etc (Wallace: 1996, 223).

Most of the story takes place in ‘The Year of the Depend Adult Undergarment’. The novel's main locations are the Enfield Tennis Academy, Ennet House Drug and Alcohol Recovery House. The plot partially revolves around the missing master copy of a film cartridge,

titled *Infinite Jest* and it is referred in the novel as ‘the samizdat’ or ‘the Entertainment’. The samizdat is so entertaining to its audience that they become lifeless, losing interest in all other aspects of life except endless viewings of the film. People who watch it would die happily, viewing it again and again and it happens to be the final work of film maker James Incandenza. The author has drawn parallelism between drugs addiction and entertainment in the novel. He has also talked about need and want vis-à-vis the novels. In one of his interviews, Wallace says:

Part of the allure of both drugs and entertainment is escape, yes, from my problems and my life and having to be stuck in here I can, you know, pretend I’m James Bond or pretend some, it just seems fine over the short haul, as a way of life, it does not work all that well, you know. Part of the book that have to do with drugs have mostly to do with this Halfway house where people who have been doing drugs for 10 years and stop and then sort of lose their minds because all of a sudden now they are starting to feel some other stuff (Edited version of the ZDFmediatek 2003 interview with DFW).

So Wallace opines that first one starts from little desire but gradually the desire turns out to be your need. One cannot stop or walk away from this latter need. This whole trap is made by corporate capitalist houses. This is how the capitalist economy is playing with concepts of want and need fusing the two where, human minds cannot discern one from the other. Initially one wants riches, after that s/he has idle time and so, in order to satisfy his/her boredom and pleasure s/he gets into the trap of the world of consumerism. Wallace associates substance and film with entertainment that provides engaging pleasure which might apparently seem passive but in reality actively engulfs human lives. An art work is not only aesthetic but intellectual too. It requires extra interpretive work to get extra enjoyment however entertainment does not require people’s extra efforts to get extra feelings. Besides,

the really hard and really scary thing was trying to make it fun enough so somebody would want to read it twice and also how to make it fun without having it be simplistic or get co-opted by the very principles of commercialism. Wallace explains the ambivalence where he finds himself stuck between an entertainment as commercialism and art demanding too much of the reader without sufficient reward. Both film and literature are subject to the entertainment and art continuum, and excess in either direction can be dangerous. Once again, speaking about *Infinite Jest*, Wallace exclaims “God, if the book comes off as some kind of indictment of entertainment, then it fails” (Lipsky 80-81). Wallace further goes on about art that:

I think what we need is seriously engaged art, that can teach again that we’re smart. And that there’s stuff that TV and movies-although they’re great at certain things-cannot give us. But that have to create the motivations for us to want to do the extra work, you know, to get these other kinds of art. And I think you can see it in the visual arts, I think you can see it in music. (Lipsky 71)

The point of any art is to engage human beings in their pursuits to the fullest with attention and concentration. However, movie or television entertainment is very smart as it does not entail people’s extra consciousness to enjoy it. They pay full attention and concentration being hooked up but without any function of their brain. There won’t be any expansion or innovation in the activity of human brain. Ultimately it makes brain dull and inactive sapping its energy.

This ‘seriously engaged art’ will, as long as it is sufficiently engaging to keep the reader’s attention, teach us not only that “we’re smart” (unlike TV, which teaches ‘the insidious..meta-lesson that you’re dumb’), but also that filmed

entertainment has different properties than other media. It therefore, also suggests that the ‘seriously engaged art’ would not itself be in the form of movies or television. What we see is relationship between books and television, and forces us to focus on the differences between TV and the novel though Wallace’s comparison with the visual arts and music, suggests that ‘seriously engaged art’ may not be the exclusive domain of literature (Sayers 4-5).

So it’s about the ethical balance between our reading and entertainment but human beings are more inclined towards only leisure and entertainment. It’s not about the difference between leisure and work but it’s about the ‘balance’ as Sayer also states that “Wallace’s calls for a balance between leisure and work, high and low culture, and reading and spectating are arguably even more relevant today than they were in 1996, and the hybrid conception of the text for which I have argued would provide support for these calls.” (Sayers 17)

From the day of birth till the day one dies, human mind’s function is to interpret popular cultural entertainment and pleasure producing virtual products without natural or inborn nourishment of its function. For entertainment has become a way of life so Stephen Bates and Anthony J. Ferri write, in *What’s Entertainment? Notes Toward a Definition*, that:

Entertainment has been a part of all cultures, from the Chauvet Cave paintings to the iPad. For Rothman, it is ‘the storehouse of national values’. Perhaps nowhere is that observation more apt than in the United States, a nation that Gabier terms a ‘republic of entertainment’. Zillmann goes so far as to predict that entertainment ‘will define, more than ever before, the civilizations to come’. Lieb observes that theorists have largely failed to explain ‘what entertainment is, what kind of functions it inherits, and how much further it



may expand'. Vorderer deems the academic response to entertainment 'astonishing, to the point of being incomprehensible'. We follow the example of Browne, who in 1972 published *Popular Culture: Notes Toward a Definition* where He wrote, 'Despite the obvious difficulty of arriving at a hard and fast definition of popular culture, it will probably be to our advantage-and a comfort to many who need one-to arrive at some viable though tentative understanding of how popular culture can be defined (Bates & Ferri 2-3).

Hence, entertainment has become a way of life in today's world. People indulge themselves in different sources of entertainment as in TV, social networks and internet, plus drugs, alcohol and other pleasure producing stuffs. People love entertainment and leisure for entertainment overlaps with leisure or vice versa. Moreover leisure is a state of mind. Pleasure and leisure define the quality of action that people perform but without considering how innovative the action is or how playful the performance is. Leisure has a social connection and is constructed in terms of class, gender or race. An individuals' personal sense of leisure and pleasure gets constructed by the social rubric. Leisure is also politically charged since its relationships with power affects leisure activities and pleasures people indulge in.

The interconnection between entertainment and leisure is daily routine through which human being tries to find the escape but human being is in loop of vicious circle. Not only day dreaming is essence of leisure but has become state of mind. Most definitions talk of entertainment principally from the perspective of one being entertained. Regarding leisure studies, Bates and Ferri writes,

It is equally applicable to entertainment: Leisure is a phenomenon that is continually negotiated by people within constraints imposed by historical forces such as capitalism, cultural ideology, and politics, and is embedded in social contexts (e.g., race, class, age, gender, and ability/disability). Negotiation of roles and ‘appropriate’ choices may occur within social structures and status hierarchies from both the “top-down” (hegemony) and “bottom up” (resistance).... Leisure becomes an aspect of life through which people may be repressed or liberated, controlled or empowered. Motz elaborates on the point, observing that some scholars view popular culture as a set of “texts or artefacts”, whereas others view it as “a series of processes, practices, or performances”; the latter scholars see popular culture “in terms of communication among individuals or groups”. In the process-oriented approach, according to Motz, “texts are always evolving rather than static, and the audience as well as the creator of the text is involved in the creation of the meaning of the text”. In terms of entertainment, we might, for example, consider *Avatar* as a text whose meaning depends on the audience’s attitudes toward and experiences with warfare, native peoples, and the environment, attitudes and experiences that will vary by time and place. From another angle, one can see cultural power differentials lying behind the high culture/low culture distinction, with access to higher forms of art “limited by the high cost of participation, the necessity of higher education in order to appreciate the forms, the enforcement of certain types of audience behaviour, and the exclusion of those outside the dominant class from policy-making positions in cultural institutions (Bates & Ferri 10-11)

The criteria with which to identify entertainment and distinguish it from leisure, popular culture and other categories are always open to questions. Entertainment is difficult to define because everyone knows what it is, because it is a common-sense idea. The banality, in spite

of development in science and technology, economic growth and success, has engulfed human. The basic objective is to study the physical isolation of people and breaking down of communal ties amongst people due to the effects of social networks, TV, internet, and artificial intelligence wherein, cynicism and ridicule are entertaining and effective to lead people to consumer popular culture. These are global as well as local issues in 21<sup>st</sup> century; therefore, they seem to be of paramount importance to understand the pros and cons of development and progress of human beings. Addiction to pleasure and leisure, depression out of pressure and wealth in every aspects of human lives and in their everyday lived experiences are leading individuals to become claustrophobic lonely and suicidal. Perpetual state of psychological poverty of human minds subdued by pride and prejudice of human nature is the focal point of the novel of David Foster Wallace. In this direction, *Infinite Jest* and its critical interests, intervening in today's experience of suffering critically, engages with and places into question two of the defining forces of the 20th century: the crisis of culture and the rise of neo-liberalism and its robust cultural ideologies of individualism. Allure of the popular culture and its ironic scepticism and cynicism directly engage with our lives. In the world of data information human being are loaded with unending yoke of competition to memorise all the facts and figures which for Wallace is another potentially dangerous addiction, and our attempt to control data leads to larger "slippages in their (our) lives." (Burn 29) This, in fact, parallels the present mass data epoch and data analysis crisis that is visible in *Infinite Jest* and which lead to existential crisis due to bombardment of its effect that one can see in Hal (protagonist) when he says: " I'am in here. Three faces have resolved into place above summer-weight sportcoats and half-Windsors across a polished pine conference table shiny with the spidered light of an Arizona noon." (3)Therefore, Burn states that: "Although the book begins with a confident assertion of identity, and geographical and chorological placement, the mock precision of this description of Hal's location only serves to highlight the elusiveness of his identity." (Burn 46)

Besides identity crisis another concern of the book is of the stress be it mental or physical, which is menacing and affecting the present society through visual interfaces as in TV and computer of the popular culture: Thus apparently;

The answer, in a kind of trivalent nutshell, is: (1) emotional stress, (2) physical vanity, (3) a certain queer kind of self-obliterating logic in the micro-economics of consumer high-tech. It turned out that there was something terribly stressful about visual telephone interfaces that hadn't been stressful at all about voice-only interfaces. Videophone consumers seemed suddenly to realize that they'd been subject to an insidious but wholly marvellous delusion about conventional voice-only telephony. They would never notice it before, the delusion – it's like it was so emotionally complex that it could be countenanced only in the context of its loss. Good old traditional audio-only phone conversations allowed you to presume that the person on the other end was paying complete attention to you while also permitting you not to have to pay anything even close to complete attention to her (Wallace: 1996, 145-146).

The visual and virtual world thus bringing more real rifts amongst human beings as paying serious attention seems very worthless in the world of media information. Even the third world countries' population are victim of TV and Internet. A great deal of people don't come out of their comfort zone because their minds are wired in such away by entertainment culture that they have stopped thinking about their own interpersonal skills.

Even then, of course, the bulk of the U.S. consumers remained verifiably reluctant to leave home and teleputer and to interface personally, though this phenomenon's endurance can't be attributed to the videophony- fad per se, and anyway the new panagoraphobia served to open huge new entrepreneurial

teleputerized markets for home-shopping and –delivery, and didn't cause much industry concern (Wallace: 1996, 151).

Both the needs and wants of human beings are being virtually available within fraction of minutes at our door steps. There is no measure of culture in terms of socializing and consumption because measures are increasing day by day. Avril in the novel suffers from agoraphobia, a fear of open space. This leads to confinement to limited spaces and people turn more and more inward. Another trend is the run for perfection by each and every individual as we see through Hal (protagonist). Wallace, in all probability, wants to tell the mass that we can lose our own identity in the pursuit of perfection:

Hal Incandenza for a long time identified himself as a lexical prodigy who- though Avril had taken pains to let all three of her children know that her nonjudgmental love and pride depended in no way on achievement or performance or potential talent- had made his mother proud, plus a really good tennis player. Hal Incandenza is now being encouraged to identify himself as a late-blooming prodigy and possible genius at tennis who is on the verge of making every authority-figure in his world and beyond very proud indeed (Wallace: 1996, 155).

Thus the make-belief that you can become genius in the world of elite culture is dull satisfaction and seems very illogical in the insight of *Infinite Jest*. This in fact is now banal and depressing since individuals are on the verge of losing originality and experiences loneliness over and over again. Rather originality has become mockery of masses who are actually the prey of corporate houses.

Another problem that radiates through the novel is the highlights of 'existence precedes essence' that rules out the rationality of our understanding as is depicted in the following passage:

I was in my body. My body and I were one. My wood Wilson from my stack of wood Wilson in their trapezoid presses was a sentient expression of my arm, and I felt it singing, and my hand, and they were alive, my well-armed has was secretary of my mind, lithe and responsive and senza errori, because I knew myself as a body and was fully inside my little child's body out there, Jim, I was in my big right arm and scarless legs, safely ensconced, running here and there, my head pounding like a heart, sweat purred on every limb, running like a veldt-creature, leaping and frolicking, striking with maximum economy and minimum effort, my eyes on the ball and the corners both, I was two, three, a couple shots ahead of both me and the hapless canine client's kid, handing the dandy his pampered ass (Wallace: 1996, 165).

The essence, which is the by-product of existence as per Sartre, forges all of our so called identity, and as grandfather of Hal states "that my well-armed was secretary of my mind and because I knew myself as a body and was fully inside my little child's body out there" (165). Therefore, Wallace writes: "This is your body. They want you to know. You will have it with you always. On this issue there is no counsel; you must make your best guess. For myself, I do not expect ever really to know" (Wallace: 1996, 176).

The means of entertainment is alcoholism and drug addictions for which great deal of characters pursue their pleasure and leisure in the novel. Beginners cannot deny the pleasure and effects of alcohol and substance. They cannot deny anything but they simply would ask us to 'define alcoholic' (Wallace: 1996, 177). The pleasure of drug addiction makes individuals more into addiction. And this addiction leads one to increase his or her dose

constantly without any gaps and realization. When individual is high, s/he is not scared of losing identity but pleasure. But how long does the power of ecstasy-effect of drugs last. This myth of everlasting pleasure leads to banality is a kind of their spiritual look back in anger when they try to stop it but cannot because they are already hooked up in vicious cycle. As one of the characters, Alfonso, says:

I want understanding I have no denial I am drug addict. Me, I know that I am addicted since the period of before Miami. I am no trouble to stand up in the meetings and say I am Alfonso, I am drug addict, powerless. I'm knowing powerlessness since the period of Castro. But I cannot stop even since I know. This I have fear. Fear I do not stop when I admit I am Alfonso, powerless. How does to admit I am powerless make me stop what the thing is I am powerless to stop? My head it is crazy from this fearing of no power. I'm now hope for power, Mrs. Pat. I want to advice. Is hope of power the bad way for Alfonso as drug addict? (Wallace: 1996, 178)

Wallace considers alcoholism as a disease. Like a cold or a cancer. But he further tells that alcoholics would not ask anyone to pray for his cure from alcoholism. Individual who is addict/alcoholic has dismantled his life and career. If one wants to be cured then he has to undergo some long months of treatment for a disease as in rehab centre (like Ennet House in novel). That's why Wallace in *Infinite Jest* tells, implicitly, individual who is alcoholic as, degenerate person, who should contemplate his past, present and future when he is sober. As "am I in a sociohistorical era I don't know about? What exactly is the story here?" (Wallace: 1996, 180)

Another aspect is the effect of heavy use of drugs and substance in pursuit of happiness by the people of the contemporary world. It is because the common mass is so engrossed in their daily chores that they don't have time to introspect their daily routine as

they hardly get time to do it for some are running short of food and some are running short of time but by and large majority of people are running short of wisdom. Thus reader would be bound to figure out that Wallace is concerned about drug and alcohol offences that

over 60% of all persons arrested for drug and alcohol-related offences report being sexually abused as children, with two-thirds of the remaining 40% reporting that they cannot remember their childhoods in sufficient detail to report one way or the other on abuse”( Wallace: 1996, 201).

People’s lives have become thus so distasteful that they cannot ever think about making a change to their existing position, be it personal or professional. They don’t know that they don’t know about their need out of their daily professions. The effect of drugs, in the lives of people who are, in various professions, cannot be neglected as:

Some drug addicted prostitutes have a harder time giving up prostitution than they have giving up drugs, with their explanation involving the two habits’ very different directions of currency-flow. That there are just as many idioms for the female sex organ as there are for the male sex-organ. That a little-mentioned paradox of Substance addiction is: that once you are sufficiently enslaved by Substance to need to quit the Substance in order to save your life, the enslaving Substance has become so deeply important to you that you will all but lose your mind when it is taken away from you. Or that sometime after your Substance of choice has just been taken away from you in order to save your life, as you hunker down for required A.M and P.M. prayers, you will find yourself beginning to pray to be allowed literally to lose your mind, to be able to wrap your mind in an old newspaper or something and leave it in an alley to shift for itself, without you. (Wallace: 1996, 201)



Individual become slave to substance that one cannot escape from. That substance becomes so deeply important to them that they lose their mind when it is taken away from them. That individual is ready to lose his or her freedom and even life for the sake of substance addiction. This is the height of addiction be it alcohol, any product, or entertainment. A part of human being in this epoch is always looking for a way out or looking for pleasure to kill their boredom and in the process they end up abusing themselves. Individuals indulge in:

purposeful sleep-deprivation can also be an abusable escape. That gambling can be escape, too, and work, shopping, and shoplifting, and sex, and abstention, and masturbation, and food, and exercise, and meditation/prayer, and sitting so close to Ennet House's old D.E.C. TP cartridge-viewer that the screen fills your whole vision and the screen's static charge tickles your nose like a linty mitten. (Wallace: 1996, 202)

Perhaps, by indulging more in pursuit of desire and popular culture, people try to evade loneliness. The small, exclusive group alliance's gossip can be escape for some might but that's illusion. What happens when one is sober for sometimes:

That you can all of a sudden out of nowhere want to get high with your Substance so bad that you think you will surely die if you don't, and but can just sit there with your writhing in your lap and face wet with craving , can want to get high but instead just sit there, wanting to but not, if that makes sense, and if you can gut it out and not hit the Substance during the craving the craving will eventually pass, it will go away-at least for a while. That it is statistically easier for low -IQ people to kick an addiction than it is for high-IQ people. (Wallace: 1996, 202-203)

However, if one does not take substance when s/he is craving it then after a while it will pass away. When you don't get substance your mental activities will start working. For normal people though it requires effort to pay attention on such ignoble activities like indulging in substances. It might seem that concentrating becomes easier when one is high and with sobriety concentrating intently on anything becomes very hard work and:

that boring activities become, perversely, much less boring if you concentrate intently on them... That you will become way less concerned with what other people think of you when you realize how seldom they do. That there is such a thing as raw, unalloyed, agendaless kindness. That it is possible to fall asleep during an anxiety attack. (Wallace: 1996, 203)

So, being concerned about the effects of drugs/substance, Wallace is presenting a moral education for masses. It is a clarion-call for realization that addiction is a disease, a mental illness. Treatment in rehab centres is no easy task to overcome the experience of addiction for it is a disease. It's an affective disorder. One must undergo some kind of blinding 'epiphanic realization' (Wallace: 1996, 203) in order to get rid this disorder. Moreover, effect is so gruesome and bleak that "most Substance-addicted people are also addicted to thinking, meaning they have a compulsive and unhealthy relationship with their own thinking" (Wallace: 1996, 203).

Money is no solution to mental disorder that is crippling the modern generation. Money does not immunize people from suffering because their desire keeps on increasing and one ends up wanting for more every day. The people are tired of their daily routine. Ideas, which once appeared bright and alluring soon become stale and unappealing. Time make them realize their banal pursuits. There likes and dislikes inevitable fade over time. Their likes and dislikes are turned into a kind of nauseous show which in turn also affect their society.

Why is there rush for desire that one is ever ready to do anything to kill her/his desire that it keeps on moving up once it starts as little dose then it becomes not want but compulsive need be it addiction of TV or alcohol? What is the effect that we see of addiction? Suicidal tendency, of course, by the character Joelle van Dyne, as she has no emotion and feeling when she says, "I now have no accent except under stress. I am 1.7 meters tall and weighs 48kilograms. I occupy space and have mass. I breathe in and breathe out." (Wallace: 1996, 235) Therefore, 'Entertainment is blind' (Wallace: 1996, 237) says Wallace no matter how pleasurable they are because at the end the sense of original perception becomes blank. And this we see in all types of pleasure seeking entertainment like TV addiction, Alcohol addiction and Substance addiction. All that one finds is short term pleasure created by capitalist system to turn one in cycle of consumer popular culture.

Entertainment film created by Jim Incandenza is perfect example of entertainment's addiction that one cannot run away from but is hooked up so much so that one gets addicted unless s/he dies eventually.

Wallace seems to be concerned about the place of humanity in a world where there is only an increase in the desire for addiction and pleasure. All mankind seem to get drowned in a culture of entertainment and addictions just to be doomed. Moreover there exist an overflow of facts and information. For the world has become facts oriented planet and no one is worried about human values:

The back of the toilet is lightly sheened with condensation of unknown origin. These are facts. This room in this apartment is the sum of very many specifics facts and ideas. There is nothing more to it than that. Deliberately setting about to make her heart explode has assumed the status of just one of these facts. It was an idea but now is about to become a fact. The closer it comes to becoming concrete the more abstract it seems. Things get very abstracts. The

concrete room was the sum of abstract facts. Are facts abstract, or are they just abstract representations of concrete things? (Wallace: 1996, 239)

There is no human emotion as Wallace mentions through the character that 'his emotions emerge in terms of velocity. Intelligence as strategic focus' (Wallace: 1996, 263). For instance:

it's wholly unclear to Schacht, in novel, how Wayne feels about the U.S. or his citizenship-status. He figures Wayne figures it doesn't much matter: he is destined for the Show; he will be an all business entertainer, citizen of the world, everywhere undead, endorsing juice drinks and liniment ointment (Wallace: 1996, 263).

So people are money making object and entertainer instead of human beings. World is happy about it because it wants human beings to be money churners. This is how banality has cropped up in each and every aspect of human lives that we see for instance in a character of Don Gately:

so then at forty-six years of age I came here to learn to live by clichés, is what Day says to Charlotte Treat right after Randy Lenz asked what time it was, again, at 0825. 'To turn my will and life over to the care of clichés. One day at a time. Easy does it. First thing first. Courage is fear that has said its prayers. Ask for help. Thy will not mine be done. It works if you work it. Grow or go.'(Wallace: 1996, 270)

We are part of the system of banality/clichés where we are bound to live with, always, an attitude of gratitude that we do see for pleasure. For example:

A grateful drunk will never drink. I know the actual cliché is "A grateful heart will never drink," but since organs can't properly be said to imbibe and I'm

still afflicted with just enough self-will to decline to live by utter non sequiturs, as opposed to just good old clichés, I'm taking the liberty of light amendment. (Wallace: 1996, 271)

Human beings have forgotten about his existence that he says sometimes down the line 'I Didn't Know That I Didn't Know' (Wallace: 1996, 271) as a clichéd slogan of how his life has ended in this world and that he never realized he existed not for pleasure-entertainment but for self existence to build his essence. But 'that looks so shallow for a while and then all of sudden drops off and deepens like the lobster-waters off the North Shore'(Wallace: 1996, 271). Therefore, sometimes the inner being just weeps silently in shame and pain because he realizes that passage of time was not meant to be meaningful for him. He, perhaps, thinks that he missed the opportunity to make his life meaningful in the world of pleasure. After realization he tries to find out truth. And in process of finding truth he loses time and meaning so he cannot walk out and cannot steal his own values, therefore Wallace aptly pens down a problem here:

#### KEEP YOUR ANSWERS BRIEF AND GENDER NEUTRAL

##### ITEM 1

(1a) You are an individual who, is pathologically Kleptomaniacal. As a Kleptomaniac, you are pathologically driven to steal, steal, steal. You must steal.

(1b) But, you are also an individual who, is pathological agoraphobic. As an agoraphobic, you cannot so much as step off your front step of the porch of your home, without undergoing palpitations, drenching sweats, and feelings of impending doom. As an agoraphobic, you are driven to pathologically stay home and not leave. You cannot leave home.

(1c) But, from (1a) you are pathologically driven to go out and steal, steal, steal. But, from (1b) you are pathologically driven to not ever leave home. You live alone. Meaning there is no one else in your home to steal from. Meaning, you must go out, into the marketplace to satisfy your overwhelming compulsion to steal, steal, steal. But, such is your fear of the marketplace that you cannot under any circumstances, leave home. Whether your problem is true personal psychopathology, or merely marginalization by a political definition of 'psychopathology,' nevertheless, it a Double-Bind.

(1d) Thus, respond to the question of, what do you do? (Wallace: 1996, 308)

So what is the answer of the question? How do people realize that they are in trap? Human beings themselves need to think on it and resolve this riddle. Hence, we are in dilemma all the time we cannot make our own judgement for we are confused and depressed than afraid to cry out for own identity. We cannot identify what we want and what is our need but always our appetite for entertainment surges day by day. Wallace even tries to give solution for spectation, and says: "this is why choosing is everything. When I say to you choose with great care in loving" (Wallace: 1996, 318). Now a fact of such situations is that what will happen when people choose nothing for themselves? What will happen if they choose 'love' instead of goods? It would be even best if people do not let themselves die in entertainment. If they do not let their children die for the so- called perfect Entertainment. Why would people die for pleasure instead of the warmth of relationships? Only when people start realizing the reality of their existence and pay attention to their immediate surrounding then there would be hope and there would be survival for a much longer time of satisfaction and no fear of losing pleasure.

People are so deeply entrenched in pleasure that they are ready to sacrifice their warm homes, their loved women whom they leave at home and even their lives for material things

that they value more than their emotions and sentiments. So the whole society is dead. Their appetite for pleasure increases day by day until this appetite leads them to choose death by horrific means. People are killing themselves for:

danger of Entertainment so fine it will kill the viewer, if so-the exact way does not matter. The exact time of death and way of death, this no longer matters as long as the Entertainment exists. It is there, existing. The choice for death of the head by pleasure now exists, and your authorities know, or you would not be now trying to stop the pleasure (Wallace: 1996, 319).

Human beings are pursuing endless happiness. They let themselves forget the old things which made happy once upon a time. However, at present there is no happiness without freedom for there is no choice without personal freedom. It's not people who are dead inside but their realization is dead. Their beings are weak and contemptible in these hazards of dependency in corporate world without freedom. But how can they have absolute freedom when they are not free from temptation? Hence, Wallace puts forward some very pertinent questions:

How for the person to freely choose? How to choose any but a child's greedy there is no loving-filled father to guide, inform, teach the person how to choose? How is there freedom to choose if one does not learn how to choose? (Wallace: 1996, 320)

There is dire need of people to learn how to choose. Choose empathy to understand other's freedom in order to make own freedom independent of others. Thus the solution that can be authentic is nothing but of empathy that Wallace talks more or less in some lines in novel where "everybody in the audience is aiming for total empathy with the speaker; that way they will be able to receive the AA message he's here to carry. Empathy, in Boston AA (alcohol

anonymous),...” (Wallace: 1996, 345). So the way to understand each other is through empathy because to identify means to empathize. People have to listen to each other and they must sit up front to listen to other’s stories of decline and fall. People must surrender their fun of substances in order to have real fun of life. When someone is in addiction and wants to give up then he might have terrible daily hand-trembling need, dread, anxiety, irrational phobias, dim memories, trouble with authorities, headaches and seizures in the beginning but after overcoming it he/she will have real alpha and omega.

If people do not want to surrender their pleasure of substance then they will be in denial about “alcohol destroys slowly but thoroughly” (Wallace: 1996, 346). People get into strange condition as John L says- “When I was drunk I wanted to get sober and when I was sober I wanted to get drunk,’ ‘I lived that way for years, and I submit to you that’s not livin,... death-in-life’.” (Wallace: 1996, 346) Moreover, some of the unlimited effects of addiction that can be:

-then vocational ultimatums, unemployability, financial ruin, pancreatitis, overwhelming guilt, bloody vomiting, cirrhotic neuralgia, incontinence, neuropathy, nephritis, black depressions, searing pain, with the Substance affording increasingly brief periods of relief; then, finally, no relief available anywhere at all; finally it’s impossible to get high enough to freeze what you feel like, being this way; and now you hate the Substance, hate it, but you still find yourself unable to stop doing it, the substance, you find you finally want to stop more than anything on earth and it’s no fun doing it anymore and you can’t believe you ever liked doing it and but you still can’t stop, it’s like you’re totally fucking bats, its like there’s two yous; and when you’d sell your own dear Mum to stop and still, you find, can’t stop, then the last layer of jolly friendly mask comes off your old friend the Substance, its midnight now and



all masks come off, and you all of a sudden see the Substance as it really is, for the first time you see the Disease as it really is, really has been all this time, you look in the mirror at midnight and see what owns you, what's become what you are- (Wallace: 1996, 346-347)

When someone is drowned in substance for some years, then his/her own will and spirit will cease to be his/her own. Now s/he would be suffering from a disease wherein s/he does not have a will of the self. Wallace termed this disease 'Spider' in the novel and comes up with a sort of solution. He writes:

The Spider. You have to starve the Spider: you have to surrender your will. This is why most people will Come In and Hang In only after their own entangled will has just about killed them. You have to want to surrender your will to people who know how to Starve The Spider. You have to want to take the suggestions, want to abide by the traditions of anonymity, humility, surrender to Group conscience. If you don't obey, nobody will kick out. They won't have to. You'll end up kicking your- self out, if you steer by your own sick will. This is maybe why just about everybody in the White Flag Group tries so hard to so disgustingly humble, kind, helpful, tactful, cheerful, nonjudgmental, tidy, energetic, sanguine, modest, generous, fair, orderly, patient, tolerant, attentive, truthful. (Wallace: 1996, 357)

Another aspect is the world of celebrities is so perverse that nobody is depression-free as they care about short term fame however losing their long term happiness. Initially they enjoy the name and fame. They enjoy the gratification in the beginning but gradually they start losing the trust of others and as well of themselves. They cannot realize what they are burning for. After their success, they care only about their photographs whether that seem awkward or unflattering, or untrue. Their privacy is at stake since they become property of masses

(public). No matter how much they try to escape from entertainment world, their privacy is always being violated. The effect is so unpleasing that-

After the first photograph has been in a magazine, the famous men do not enjoy their photographs in magazines so much as they fear that their photographs will cease to appear in magazines. They are trapped, just as you are.' This is awful news (Wallace: 1996, 389).

The ad agencies of the popular culture have structured the culture and customs in such way to launch effective network campaigns for their products and services that were not previously saleable or profitable. Now people have no choice other than being trapped in their machination. The mass-entertainment has become inherently pro-active, consumer-driven one cannot figure out the hidden myth of it because, advertisements are now out in each and every digital gadgets and applications that they have become part of the cultures. Perhaps Wallace had visualized this as in 'entertainment cartridge' such as 'samizdat' film which had undermined the viewer's perspective and had inflicted the disease of watching zeal. Therefore, one can't generalize this issue at initial stance since the whole system is founded on individual's freedom to pursue individual desires. There is "High-quality entertainment for us. High value for the dollar of leisure and spectation in this age of information." (Wallace: 1996, 423)

Therefore, the slogan Wallace popularizes is very apt in the present society: "Maximize pleasure, minimize displeasure: result: what is good." (Wallace: 1996, 423) It is shocking that the best and good is each individual's attainment of maximum pleasure. That is all they want in this laissez faire society. However, an interesting fallacy one sees in the *Infinite Jest* that Wallace writes about: "The United States: a community of sacred individuals which reveres the sacredness of the individual choice. The individual's right to pursue his own vision of the best ratio of pleasure to pain: utterly sacrosanct. Defended with teeth and

bared claws all through our history.” (Wallace: 1996, 424) Individuals are entitled to their maximum pleasure so long as they don’t mess around with others. These attitudes have re-modified the culture of global village.

in our value system, anybody who derives an increase in pleasure from somebody else’s pain is a deviant, a sadistic sicko, and is thereby excluded from the community of everybody’s right to pursue their own best pleasure-to-pain ratio. Sickos deserve compassion and the best treatment feasible. But they are not part of the big picture (Wallace: 1996, 424-425).

This is a serious issue in the present society as there are many sick people around in pleasure-seeking world. It is important to know everything but not at the cost of another’s pain, for pleasure has end in itself. One’s pleasure should not be pain for others. Imagine there is a situation in which individual’s pain is merely the consequence of pleasure of third agent. This ruthless pleasure is not only harming one individual but whole system. Delayed gratification is fine as long as it does not harm oneself. A mind that calculates its long-term overall pleasure and decides to sacrifice intense craving of the moment to the long term sounds fine. Its called simply being a mature and adult instead of a childish and immature global citizen. A term of realization of this pandemic might be “Enlightened” (Wallace: 1996, 429). This is a call for every individuals say goodbye to ‘candy’ (Wallace: 1996, 429) [pleasure] because its taste is asking more candy. Even if people knew inside their mind that it will hurt their stomach and rot their little fangs they cannot stop indulging in its pursuit. In school of life one has to:

learn by his own experience how to learn to balance the short- and long-term pursuit of what he wants. He must be freely enlightened to self. This is the crux of the educational system you find so appalling. Not to teach what to desire. To teach how to be free. To teach how to make knowledgeable choices

about pleasure and delay and the kid's overall down-the-road maximal interests (Wallace: 1996, 429).

It's like metaphor when

this wise old whiskery fish swims up to three young fish and goes, 'morning, boys, how's the water?' and swims away; and the three young fish watch him swim away and look at each other and go, 'what the fuck is water?' and swim away (Wallace: 1996, 445).

Human beings are pretending in some way or other. They are limiting their logic and more dangerous is that some are confining themselves within the boundary of this logic for there is hardly any humanity left within them that would go beyond this boundary of logic. It's clear that craving for pleasure is so intense that there is a possibility in future that even medical science also would work to invent permanent pleasure giving machine. For instance:

What happened was that Olders and the Canadian neuroscientists happened to find, during all the trial and error, that firing certain electrodes in certain parts of the lobes gave the brain intense feeling of pleasure. Steeply looked back over his shoulder at Marathe. I mean we're talking about intense pleasure, Re'my. I'm remembering Olders called these little strips of stimulatable pleasure-tissue p-terminals. 'p' wishing to mean "the pleasure (Wallace: 1996, 471).

Human beings don't to have sought for temporary pleasure when there is permanent stimulus like pleasure-terminals being fixed in their brain and young people volunteering for fatal addiction to the electrical and electronics pleasure like virtual play station. It sounds most refined pleasure imaginable. "The neural distillate of, say, orgasm, religious, enlightenment, ecstatic drugs, shiatsu, a crackling fire on a winter night- the sum of all possible pleasures

refined into pure current and deliverable at the flip of a hand-held lever.” (Wallace: 1996, 473) Therefore it becomes a world where millions of young boys, girls and adults implanted with electrodes, all with electronic access to their own personal terminals, never leaving home, instead thumbing their personal stimulation levers over and over.

So for these matters, much of *Infinite Jest's* critical approaches are dedicated to decode misguided popular culture and worldviews. Through these there is an attack on ‘myth of ecstasy’ of entertainment and addiction that how they come to corrupt and redefine the content of foundational concepts such as freedom and contentment. In a way, these have become entrenched in the dominant worldviews of global culture at the 21<sup>st</sup> century, changing the relationships between the self, his personal desires and his community in complicated and perplexed ways. The present neoliberal society with self-gratification and media’s concept of values, satisfaction and achievement measuring them largely in terms of self-interest in fact is hollow. The different ways in which politicians, corporations, advertisers and the like come to manipulate the logic and rationality of human beings in the novel seem relatable. People had been conditioned to associate themselves with the rights to be entertained. These effects were also being experienced in far more insidious ways in our present cultures and it is unfolding in the day-to-day lives of individuals. The deadly effects of neo-liberalism are at the same time compounded by the rise of the popular culture industry playing irresponsible role, for example, by creating of new individuals’ needs and wants and mass production of extra products to satisfy this needs and wants. More importantly that these changes are seen as in redefining the individual’s attitudes, goals and personal relationship to her desires, sense of satisfaction and gratification. These are signal for readers for new ways of mediating their experiences which might otherwise appear unimportant. Need for self-realization can come to deeply influence how people understand the world and their individual desires and interests too. The fascination placed on personal gratification and self-improvement has taken hold of

people's way of thinking in a number of noticeable ways for human mind is ever addicted in enjoyment and pleasure. These have modified the conditions of people's life and all of the concerns of their everyday life and lost to "the hot narrow imperatives of the Entertainment-the needs, the desires, the fears, the multiform cravings of the individual appetitive will" (Wallace: 1996, 319).

Readers, after reading the novel, cannot walk away from attacking the historical changes that have debased traditional values of freedom, rationality and infantile fascinations for passive and easy gratification. One of the many fairly overt gestures the novel makes toward the degeneration, where one finds, in 'Subsidized Time', the sponsor with nominal rights over the years able to place their logo on the Statue of Liberty (Wallace: 1996, 367). Real liberty is actually lost in transit.

The ending of the novel reveals the various changes made by the new context of Alcohol Anonymous and the conditions it offers, wherein the character Gately is able to handle the distinct, abject struggles and insecurities that are part and parcel of being and importantly remaining sober and mature. To be self-conscious and free in the world after recovery from addiction is another way of life for Gately. The struggles that people meet day in and day out represent the nexus of pressures and pleasure demands. The infinite and pale obligations and frustrations people carry require the willingness and patience, as well as the mature ability to sacrifice one's own immediate and personal self-interest for them. Elsewhere, Wallace stresses this fact: that maturity involves an ongoing personal dedication and disciplined outlook, demanding immense work, self-sacrifice and vigilance if one wants to overcome this vicious cycle of entertainment's pleasure. People need to return emphatically to stay conscious and alive in the adult world. That means people must reject grand banality in order to be true to oneself. To educate oneself really is the job of a lifetime in order to be enlightened forever. Gately, thus begins his lifetime job with his recovery and

one can see that he is able, till the end, to completely embody a fully mature attitude, to be alive to the fullest. So being adult does not necessarily bring maturity of human beings but being human and able to survive in this tempting world so as to redefine future is maturity.

### **Chapter III**

#### **Boredom as a Painful Reality: Conceptualizing Banality of Pursuits in *The Pale King***

*“Life owes you nothing; that suffering takes many forms; that no one will ever care for you as your mother did; that the human heart is chump.”(439)*

-David Foster Wallace (*The Pale King*)

“The underlying bureaucratic key is the ability to deal with boredom.” (Wallace: 2012, 440) Soren Kierkegaard insisted that “Boredom is the root of all evil.” (Thiele, 7) An investigation of the situations that leads to and experience of boredom in David Foster Wallace’s novel, *The Pale King* raises questions about banality, (pretentious/assumed) heroism and work pressure. In the contemporary society every individual seems to be caught in the vicious circle of attention seeking, boredom, the existence of man versus machine, being individual versus being part of larger taxpaying economy and being lone gun versus team player.

Boredom is not new concept and the human condition has always been menaced by it. Boredom is ingrained in the psyche of every human soul in all activity. It has been a burden equally borne by all. There is no easy way out from this colossal burden & monotony. Throughout ancient and modern world, the boredom has plagued the upper class economies of surplus power and surplus consumption. The ruling classes have always managed to find the time to be profoundly bored (Thiele, 4).

The boredom among such peoples is hardly demonstrated one can assume. In a way:

Deep boredom, it seems, is not the product of idleness per se but of a certain form of idleness. Deep boredom is the product of idleness that has lost its meaning, or rather idleness that has lost its capacity to generate meaning. In turn, deep boredom generates its own form of idleness. To be bored is to be paralyzed: emotionally, spiritually, and perhaps even physically. (Thiele, 4-5)



Boredom is stale and unprofitable to all human beings of this world. One can ruminate about it, but hardly bring oneself to act on it. The world is an enticing place but the inner world becomes incapable of stimulating interest as an impact of banal pursuit. In the world of work-pressure and rat race, individuals in order to progress lose all mirth in daily exercises. Hence a man delights nobody when he is bored. Time seems heavy and boring for man. He becomes unable to confront his fear and anxieties when psychically and physically bored. Man's emotional and spiritual paralysis comes from the repression of anxiety of boredom. To alleviate oneself from such a situation man seeks remedy but plunges more into superficial pursuit as he chooses addiction as a means to escape. "The desolation of deep boredom is characterized not simply by unfulfilled desire, but by the unfulfilled desire for desire." (Thiele 5) With its paralyzing power, boredom does often produce resignation and passivity. When a man becomes victim of boredom he is in need of spiritual and emotional regeneration. It's like anorexia in which all appetite for life gets lost for psychic bingeing. It produces a fast-paced anxiety. People affected by boredom pay dearly for his/her own existential plight. Thereof, consequences can be violent as a result of total inaction of man's being. Leslie Paul Thiele in his essay titled "Postmodernity and the Routinization of Novelty: Heidegger on Boredom and Technology" points out, "Out of boredom, Fyodor Dostoevsky remarks in his notes from Underground, people are brought to take delight in sticking pins in other people simply to observe the reaction. 'Boredom,' he wryly observes, 'leads to every possible kind of ingenuity'." (Thiele, 6) Boredom may turn the earth into disorder. The destructive potential of boredom is not new narrative. The extent of its influence is unprecedented and has achieved its notoriety only in modernity. The prevalence of boredom in the contemporary world is not history but future curse. It gradually emerged from near obscurity to centre stage. It was once a rare state of mind confined at least in upscale but has become the common property of the common masses as a result of everyday lived experiences in the modern world. For the rising bourgeoisie of this epoch, it is a subject of

constant fascination. Lord Byron poeticized boredom almost one and a half century ago in Don Juan that “Society is now one polish’d horde, / Formed of two mighty tribes, the Bores and Bored.”

The human life is a continuous oscillation between pain and boredom. The surge in leisure in the contemporary world due to science and technology gives a fertile soil for boredom to spread and the incapacity of the elites to find meaning in their leisure left them vulnerable to this monster. Present social networking world is an arena for the desire for achievement of illusive satisfactions resulting out of boredom and addiction. A deep boredom is a threatening consequence of becoming modern. The modern people become vulnerable to bouts of boredom because they fall prey to the insatiable desires for resources and products. Therefore, although various means that are readily available are employed to combat boredom, it has not achieved desired end.

The human struggle against boredom is subjective per se. Today, stimulation of desire has become powerful tool for corporations of consumer entertainment. Though arts can serve the purpose against boredom but art and scholarship are less effective means. For boredom has more power than religion and entertainment. A trendier means of deterrence against boredom today is conspicuous consumption of newly innovated gadgets. Being busy is a means by which everyday life evades question of existence. The great deal of activities of man is directed towards escaping from his anxious worldly boredom but his too much ride into the hustle and bustle of everyday work is leading him into dissolution instead of escape from tedium. Rather boredom has become product of such hustle and bustle of man’s life. Indeed, a continuous banal pursuit of man often becomes illusive practice against anxiety and depression. The inventions of man’s pursuit act as powerful fuel to ignite the addiction vis-a-vis boredom.

“Technology, for Heidegger, does not refer to the development of machines, tools, or skills but to the “enframing” of the world under the imperial mandate of efficient exploitation. Deep boredom evidences itself today as fast-paced enframing of the world.” (Thiele, 16) Men organize all available means of technology to evade anxiety in order to have calm in the face of the anarchy but this calm has no tranquillity. It is rather only aesthesia that actually narcotizes the anxiety in the face anarchy. In other words technological hyperactivity is actually suppressing the philosophic thought and reality. Fast developing modern technological activity is proved to be the most effective means of dissipating tedium amongst masses. It also allows man to bear the burden of boredom with a heightened sense of false excitement and temporary comfort. Advancement of technology is dominating the basic mood of human being. Thus boredom is the poison fruit of the technological age. It’s a shell-shock that paralyzes modern society in the face of utter meaninglessness. Pressure and boredom have become an appropriate reaction of the experience of a nihilistic world in which everything is permitted. Man’s life may induce forms of nihilistic behaviour to which this ghost of boredom begets more ghosts terrified by skepticism wherein faith is indeed scarce today. Therefore human individuality is becoming increasingly absent in the postmodern skeptic world.

Moreover, from consumerist’s perspective, technology is tremendously creative and its productive capacities have brought paradigmatic shift to boredom. Social networking, a result of modern technological advancement reveals a nihilistic loss of self. This generates disorder due to too much information without corrective measure in the over-production of goods and services. There is a lack of fulfilment of the emptiness of Being, in spite of the excess of products, and that is getting revealed in the mood of man, though production, consumption and unrelenting manipulation of popular mass media is taken as antidote.

The essence of technology is efficiency; its goal is to achieve mass production of energy, artifacts, knowledge, wealth, power and by and large pleasure with a minimum expenditure of resources. Modern technology is to accelerate the daily routines and functions. Thus, victory of humanity seems at stake, because force of demand and supply is so heightened in this era of desire for desires. The effect of technological innovation orients man to hostile force of competitive consumption. In fostering an antagonistic orientation to time, technology disrupts man's worldliness. It's apparent that no amount of technological advancement can satiate the existential hunger for desire, and boredom, in fact, conspires to ignore traditional innovations.

The man of today has less time for his own making and yet, he has free time for allurements. He must kill long periods of time by whiling them away through pastimes. Nothing appeals to him anymore, everything has as much or as little value as everything else, because boredom penetrates his existence to the core. For no technological equipment nor any of its achievements or aids, neither the powers of invention have capacity to sustain his growth and happiness in the core of his existence. Man's modern technological drive is symptom of his own complacent sickness. The constant flux of technological innovation replaces the task of discovering and caring for one another. There is always restless activity which excludes human from the world of spirit which could have impelled him to be on the move. Human being is tired of living in a country and moves to the city; tired of one's native land and travels abroad, finally indulges in a sentimental hope of endless journeying not burdened with the task of finding meaning in life.

To view and understand this boredom at length Wallace has a remarkable set of characters, in his novel *The Pale King*, who battle against the hulking, terrorizing demons of their ordinary lives, as accountants. Perhaps, to hint about boredom, David referred the novel as "tornadic" or having a "tornado feeling", writes Michael Pietch, editor of *The pale King*.

Metaphorically most of the non-chronological chapters of the novel have to do with daily life at the Regional Examination Centre (Tax returns centre), in order to decode the ideas of boredom. The novel has a series of setups for things to happen but nothing ever happens. Boredom is described as a 'play', said out by one of the narrators, with service ID number 917229047,(without name) of *The Pale King*, in which a man sits at desk, working silently, until the audience leaves, and it is at that point the play's action begins. So human beings have to overcome boredom to experience this meaningless life. Therefore, book makes man experience how is to be bored. "It is the key to modern life. If you are immune to boredom", Wallace asserts in chapter 44, "there is literally nothing you cannot accomplish." (Wallace:2012, 440) The connection between technology and boredom undermines the human task of discovering a home in the world. This contemporary lust for technological innovation is the whirlwind which defines profound boredom in present society. The condition of being bored, as a fundamental mood of human being has become pervasive and dominant in the present time.

The study of boredom offer much dynamic insight and experience of post-modernity through *The Pale King*. The drive for endless economic growth and technological innovation that characterizes post-modern life is a product of boredom. To connect the reader, there are human condition and worldly limitations in the banality of Sylvanshine, one of the characters, whose pursuits parallels the subject matter of every individual of present epoch. Being a part of larger taxpaying economy is the concern of the globalized capitalist nations. To beat the boredom often million daily lives are totted up, audited and accounted in tax paying system in *The Pale King*. In real world too people fight a never-ending war against their own boredom in each and every aspect of their lives. Despite being incomplete and sometimes incomprehensible, *The Pale King's* reading is experience of findings depression, 'loneliness (474),' and the tedium of daily life with depth and poignancy.

Wallace's noted in his 2005 commencement speech at [Kenyon College](#), in which he encouraged his audience to be "*conscious and aware enough to choose what you pay attention to and to choose how you construct meaning from experience*".(published on 9 November 2015, 'This is Water' People & Blogs, Standard YouTube Licence) The hectic, chaotic reality and conflicted ever-mutating thoughts of the characters of the novel unwind the tangled webs of words about pleasure and pressure and reflect on the thought pattern of people of the present age. The cyclical element, like the unending struggle of Sisyphus, forms a key part in the lives' of characters in *The Pale King*. The 'Internal Revenue Service returns' never stop, there will always be another. The cyclical narrative is contrasted to the notion of progress. It is this repetition that leads to boredom. The never-ending slog as a resistance to capitalism, and being a free-agent as a way of rebelling against the system, is a lie sold by corporations who convince the world that rebellion against the soulless inhumanity of corporate life will consist in "buying the things." (Wallace:2012, 147) Resistance does not consist in linearity; it is a repetitious circle of boredom.

*The Pale King* is about mental dispossession, basically the kind evolving from an economy demanding that millions of people perform excessively boring, repetitive jobs for the economic good. There is something upsettingly zealous and of perennial concern of how to be nice person in a world full of aggravation, solipsism, distraction and cynicism. Its concerns are new and everything wrong with an increasingly selfish and confused global politics whose cancerous ailments have been spreading ever since. The *Pale King's* boredom isn't just chemical depression or work despair, it is humans' reaction. Thus, this chapter overtly highlights the meaning and consequences of all pervasive boredom and questions human existence in the present society. *The Pale King*, in a different time space continuum talks about the incessant fight that human beings indulge in; a never-ending war against the urgency of human's boredom. Human insight is squeezed between the trivial and

the daily lies. The idea of boredom as a tool of anti-state, and it stands as anarchy. Hence, it is found that plot does not evolve in the novel. Boredom is found as man's daily secular sin, perhaps even as an original sin, in metaphysical state inseparable from his daily condition. This work is full of secrets. It is for readers. Besides, it is found that Wallace aimed between the impulse and the actions are spinal nerves and fast-twisted tissue. It is not a life of the mind it is about the mind that minds human minds. And to use words to rope in and somehow subdue the staggering, multifarious, inharmonious predicament about contemporary life.

The story in *The Pale King* comes in a long first-person narrative in which IRS agent relates the born again moment in which he accepted that a life of auditing could provide the central core of meaning in his life. He has led a lost life, marked by drugs, alcohol and a general tone of irresponsibility, when he stumbles in his tax accounting profession and class. He gradually proceeds from esoteric matters of debits and credits to a full-blown sermon on the deep inner meaning of the accounting profession. Hence, its philosophy is applicable equally to any number of other jobs in capitalist economies. The truth of boredom is,

enduring tedium over real time in an enclosed space is what real courage is. Such endurance is, as it happens, the distillate of heroism in today's world. Heroism mean true heroism, not as one might know it from film or the tales of childhood. It is a theatre to welcome the world of reality where there is no audience, no applause, no admiration, no one to see one another. It receives no ovation, entertains no one. No one queues up to see it and no one is interested (Wallace:2012, 231).

That is enlightenment getting victory against boredom.

In the notes, Wallace remarks that “§13 *Primed* is one of the IRS words for putting examiners in a state where they pay maximum attention to returns.” (Wallace:2012, 542) IRS uses ‘priming’ word to make its rote examiners able to cope with extreme boredom. *The Pale King* is a primer; it primes people to resist the homogeneity of the present, their constant quest for consumption and satisfaction, to immerse themselves in boredom. To do things no matter how boring they are, because the product is better, more powerful, is a lie fed by the real world. People live in a time of instant communication and consumption, where information passes in a steady stream, with barely a moment to pause. Time has become a homogenous mass of tiny satisfactions. It enacts the possibility of a different way of being. To evade doubts of men in the age of capitalism, the two most honest measurements of any society’s real priorities are: time and money. People, as money churning machines consider time equivalent to money. They hardly have time for others and drown themselves more and more into the superficial world of gadgets only to sideline the topic of boredom. A certain shame and embarrassment pervades people’s addiction to diversion and avoidance of boredom. The everyday confused flow of information in which boredom is enacted upon people in a meaningful way such that they experience it as their dream is changed. Hence, “sometimes,” writes Wallace, what’s important is dull. Sometimes it’s work. Sometimes the important things aren’t works of art for your entertainment.”

*The Pale King’s* world is circumscribed by world’s flatness, with the traffic problems of small towns adjusting to business hubs in great detail, along with the post-work rush to drink or tenseness of new employee on a precious break overeagerly trying to ingratiate him with old employees. “What was now called *stress* used to be called *tension* or *pressure*. Pressure was now more like something you put on someone else, as in high-pressure salesmen (Wallace:2012, 10)”. The frenzy surrounding of inflation indexes has configured the stress-related pinched nerve in human’s neck and upper back which enforced unnatural



deathlike claw on his/her concentration. "It was true: The entire ball game, in terms of both the exam and life, was what you gave attention to vs. What you willed yourself to not." (Wallace:2012, 14) So cure for this dullness is "another effective concentration device was to summon into one's mind a soothing and low-pressure outdoor scene, either imagined or from memory to have a calming and centering effect on the involuntary nervous system." (Wallace:2012, 14)

Stress resulting from boredom is produced by high-tech modern world but with fake solution:

Knowing that internal stress could cause failure on the exam merely set up internal stress about the prospect of internal stress. There must be some other way to deal with the knowledge of the disastrous consequences fear and stress could bring about. Some answer or trick of the will: the ability not to think about it...Surely fear is a type of stress. Tedium is like stress but its own Category of Woe. (Wallace:2012, 16-17)

Stress and pressure is so dangerous while trying to kill boredom unnaturally, in the case of a supervisor, at the IRS's regional complex in Lake James township, people try to determine why no one noticed that one of their employees, Frederick Blumquist, had been sitting dead at his desk for four days before anyone asked if he was feeling all right. This is perfect example of effect of boredom. He quietly passed away at his desk, but nobody noticed until late Saturday evening when an office cleaner asked how the examiner could still be working in an office with all the lights off (Wallace:2012, 29-30). He acted as perfect machine to do away with tedium of work and used to be always the first guy in each morning and the last to leave at night from his office. So focused and diligent, so no one can find it unusual. People are always absorbed in work that it's hard to reveal their own suffering. Ironically, people are agents of tedium yoke wherein, they cannot figure out its measures. In other words, it is also

supposed to function as a portrait of a bureaucracy and arguably the enormous internal struggle and soul-searching race.

Where is the good education system to solve this monster? Is there business education? Or moral education? For education also has moral hypocrisy such as, it is:

congratulating itself on its diversity and the leftist piety of its politics while in reality going about the business of preparing elite kids to enter elite professions and make a great deal of money, thus increasing the pool of prosperous alumni donors. Without anyone ever discussing it or even allowing themselves to be aware of it, the college was a veritable temple of Mammon.

(Wallace:2012, 77-78)

Wallace writes that even the ideas of the present education system teach its pupils “greed is good.” (Wallace:2012, 78) “Plus, of course, to explain what we are even doing is white-collar jobs at an elite culture of boredom. Naive people are, more or less by definition, unaware that they’re naive.” (Wallace:2012, 79) To be ignorant has not become boon but bizarre practices of current education. Hence, the paradox of banality, in terms of education, is that it actually requires a lot of care and hard work to lead successful life, since the original pursuit is no more generating organic lust for life but suicidal tendency. Perhaps, present bureaucracy would define it well because “administration characterized by diffusion of authority and adherence to inflexible rules of operation, an administrative system in which the need or desire to follow complex procedures impedes effective action.” (Wallace:2012, 82)

Now the point is why the administrative job is dull and even artificial intelligence is so frightening, for that matter: “In fact, it was frightening; it was a little like watching an enormous machine come to consciousness and start trying to think and feel like a real human. The terror of current films like *Terminator* and *Blade Runner* was based around just on this

premise....” (Wallace:2012, 82) If individual wants to know and determine the whole philosophy of the essence of human life: goodness and charity have become now hearsay. Thus, effects on people are “boredom, opacity, user-unfriendliness.”(Wallace:2012, 84) They have become human’s highest levels of crises and they’re stuck in struggle between traditional and conservatives, social justice and civic virtue, progressive versus pragmatic just to have efficiency and maximum return on the investment. The result is pleasure from investment to kill the deep boredom. The real reason is, why citizens are not aware of the conflicts of whole subject of money making machination of boredom, they are dull. “Massively, spectacularly dull.”(Wallace:2012, 85) Considering from the laymen perspective of the advantages of dull, arcane, the mind-numbingly complexity help to insulate public protest and political opposition against boredom. However, “the abstruse dullness is actually a much more effective shield that is secrecy.”(Wallace:2012, 85) Hence, it is a plan of the system of modern democracies say:

Sensitive issues of governance can be made sufficiently dull and arcane, there will be no need for officials to hide or dissemble, because no one not directly involved will pay enough attention to cause trouble. No one will pay attention because no one will be interested, because, more or less a *‘priori’*, of these issues’ monumental dullness. (Wallace:2012, 86)

The really interesting question is why dullness proves to be such a powerful impediment to attention. Why we recoil from the dull. Maybe it’s because dullness is intrinsically painfully; maybe that’s where phrase like ‘deadly dull’ or ‘excruciatingly dull’ come from. But there might be more to it. Maybe dullness is associated with psychic pain because something that’s dull or opaque fails to provide enough stimulation to distract people from some other, deeper type of pain that is always there, (Wallace:2012, 87)

Therefore, surely something must lie behind in these dull or tedious places and now also TVs, iPods, cell phones silence the dullness to divert people's mind. Dullness is not dormant, for anytime it can wake up, so the system always works against it. Man really "believes that today's so-called 'information society' is just about information. Everyone knows it's about something else, way down." (Wallace:2012, 87) The truth is that; the system both connected to and independent of this information is operating under the aegis of people to make more information of boredom with surging appetite for more infotainment.

Including bureaucracy too in this system, Wallace writes, "The bureaucracy (too) is not a closed system; it is this that makes it (boredom) a world instead of a thing." (Wallace:2012, 88) The simple need could have simplified working classes' rule of desire. But present epoch of information is leading human beings into "Chronic paraplegia, Temporary paraplegia, Temporary paralysis agitans, Paracatonic fugues, Formication, Intracranial edema ...etc..." (Wallace:2012, 89) All these disorders are damning humans into fear of death, but, Wallace answers human's doubt by stating that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself."(Wallace:2012, 97) Thus, one thing that a man really has to fear is fear of the fear, of course endless hall of mirrors of fear here and elsewhere. Experience of fear is at every level, as Wallace puts it; Even "high school became a daily torment, even as his grades improved even more, due to the increased reading and studying he did because it was only when he was in private and totally absorbed and concentrating on something else that he was ok."(Wallace:2012, 98) Due to fear of boredom the lifeblood of human heart is not circulating smoothly, for people are beaming in front an empty inaudible bureaucracy and government.

Down the line, to be true-to-life's play sometimes, bureaucrats, like accountants in *The Pale King*, give people wrathful idea of their own life. A rote examiner (character in *The Pale King*) is poring over 1040s attachments and sitting whole day turning hundreds and thousands of pages just to make few dollar notes for his family, believing that he is doing

great work instead of yearning for leisure. There is a clock behind each individual to notice time but sitting at their desk for the longest of time employees get bored and restless, and finally start leaving, whispering to themselves how boring and terrible the task is. This is a real world of task. And say “except I could never decide on the action, if there was any, if it’s a realistic play (task).” (Wallace:2012, 108) It is a moth at the arc of lights, that’s keeps on passing every human individual. “The attractiveness of this to the free-market conservatives of the current administration should be understandable. This, after all, is an era of business deregulation” (Wallace:2012, 115) wherein set of boredom and its mechanism work against regulation. Pressure of regulation cannot accomplish its overarching goal but spreads more infotainment. And as a result the whole system looks for “increased revenue, reduced noncompliance and reduction of the gap.” (Wallace:2012, 116) This continues on and on because: “The thing here is that the returns never stop. There’s always a next one to do. You never really finish.” (Wallace:2012, 117)

Circle of tedium is either “*Twilight Zone* or *Outer Limits*” (Wallace:2012, 118). The experience is like a claustrophobic guy who gets worse and worse in a mental asylum, and in the asylum people put him in isolation in a tiny little room with a drain in the floor, a room the size of a closet, which one can see would be the worst thing possible for claustrophobic, hence, he’s damned, he’s screaming and trying to beat his unconscious against the wall of the room, as long as he’s in that little room, he is screaming, because the whole problem is that he’s claustrophobic and this is for him a living example of slack of ridiculous living hell. He is bound by protocol which cannot cure him but kills him unless he stops being afraid (Wallace:2012, 117-118, story narrated by an employee code 951876833). Same way people who are trap in vicious cycle of boredom is with the episode called ““Rules and Procedures,” and none of us ever forgot it.” (Wallace:2012, 118) When tedium persists then, as per Wallace “it is as if one’s concentration becomes stuck the way an auto’s wheels can be stuck in the

snow, turning rapidly without going forward, although it looks like intent concentration.” (Wallace:2012, 118) Men feel desperate about the information and job and it does not matter how many recreational breaks individual take in his/her life.

Rationality does not lie in just expecting and doing tiresome jobs. Rationality is taking responsibilities and discarding the claim for rights and privileges. “Citizens should not abdicate their civic responsibilities to the government and expect the government, in effect, to legislate morality.”( Wallace:2012, 132) As citizens humans cede more and more of their autonomy, but if the government take away the citizens’ freedom to cede their autonomy then it is humans actually losing their autonomy:

It’s a paradox. Citizens are constitutionally empowered to choose to default and leave the decisions to corporations and to a government...Corporations are getting better and better at seducing us into thinking the way they think-of profits as the *telos* and responsibility as something to be enshrined in symbol and evaded in reality. Cleverness as opposed to wisdom. Wanting and having instead of thinking and making. We cannot stop it. I suspect what’ll happen is that there will be some sort of disaster-depression, hyperinflation-and then it’ll be Showtime: We’ll either wake up or retake our freedom or we’ll fall apart utterly. Like Rome-conqueror of its own people. (Wallace:2012, 132)

But the point is psychological. Of course people want all; of course they want to keep every dime they make. They sort of have a duty towards the others but themselves sometimes acts as person “who waits till everybody is asleep and then eats all the food.” (Wallace:2012, 133) But Wallace painfully points out that this is age of decline of humanity and rise of hedonism.

People lack therefore humanity since they are self-oriented even though they are citizens of their particular nation. Their state has power and that is coming from individuals’

social contract. “For really the first time in a modern nation, those in power set up a system where the citizens’ power over their own government was to be matter of substance and not mere symbolism.” (Wallace:2012, 136) This is age “we elect what we deserve.” (Wallace:2012, 136) If leaders and government are venal and weak it’s because citizens are so. “Inverting the Founding Fathers’ device of ceding political power to the people instead of the government is no more there in the present age.” (Wallace:2012, 137) “It has something to do with liberal individualism, and something to do with the Constitution’s overestimate of individual character, and it has something to do with consumer capitalism.” (Wallace:2012, 137) Since:

We’ve changed the way we think of ourselves as citizens. We don’t think of ourselves as citizens in the old sense of being small parts of something larger and infinitely more important to which we have serious responsibilities. We do still think of ourselves as citizens in the sense of being beneficiaries—we’re actually conscious of our rights as citizens and nation’s responsibilities to us and ensuring we get our share of the pie. (Wallace:2012, 138)

Therefore, people have to decide “on a personal level that it’s all right to abdicate ‘their’ individual responsibility to the common good instead of their individual self-interested business and struggle to gratify their various appetites.” (Wallace:2012, 138) “Corporations are machines for producing profit; that’s what they’re ingeniously designed to do. It’s ridiculous to ascribe civic obligations or moral responsibilities to corporation.” (Wallace:2012, 138) Because

the workers’ obligations are to the executives, and the executives’ obligation are to the CEO, and CEO’s obligation is to the Board of Directors, and Board’s obligation is to the stockholders, who are also the same customers the corporation will screw over at the very earliest opportunity in the name of

profit, which profits are distributed as dividends to the very stockholders-slash-customers. (Wallace:2012, 138)

“Corporations aren’t citizens or neighbours or parents. They can’t vote or serve in combat. They don’t learn the Pledge of Allegiance. They don’t have souls. They’re revenue machines.” (Wallace:2012, 139) The problem is people, who as “individual citizens have adopted a corporate attitude now.” (Wallace:2012, 139) The increasing violence of films correlated with a rise in violent-crime statistics “weren’t merely suggestive but actually demonstrated conclusively that the increasing number of graphically violent films like *Clockwork Orange* or *The Godfather* or *The Exorcist* had a causal correlation with the real-world’s rates of mayhem.” (Wallace:2012, 139) Is it all because of boredom? Or “this whole conversation is dull.” (Wallace:2012, 140) It’s likely that citizens expect the government to be the parent that takes away their dangerous toy, toy dangerous to others as well. They don’t think of themselves as *personally* responsible however. Though citizens know their duty but they as “individual going and buying a ticket for *The Exorcist* is what adds to the demand that keeps the corporate machines coming out with more and more violent movies to satisfy the demand.” (Wallace:2012, 140-141) “Because corporations got in the game and turned all the genuine principles and aspirations and ideology into a set fashions and attitudes they made Rebellion fashions pose instead of a real impetus.” (Wallace:2012, 142) So attitudes of “man’s civic sense gets revealed in the starkest sorts of terms.” (Wallace:2012, 143) “This is a kind of ghastly irony, if you (people) think about it, since a form of government engineered to produce equality makes its citizens so individualistic and self-absorbed they end up as solipsists, navel-gazers.” (Wallace:2012, 143) If people think the corporations are evil and it’s the government’s job to make them moral, they’re deflecting their own responsibility to civics. The citizen’s nature to be like a leaf that doesn’t believe in the tree but it’s part of, and in a depressing way that their tacit hypocrisy “will keep buying big gas-guzzlers that kill trees



and tickets for films until the govt passes a law, but when the govt does pass a law citizens will bitch about govt and getting the govt off their back.” (Wallace:2012, 143) “People’s attitude is that they don’t want hue and cry in their backyard. Even if someone gets stabbed by their houses up and down the block hear screaming, nobody even sets foot outside. Not get involved.” (Wallace:2012, 144) We’re:

in now is some transition in the economy and society between the age of industrial democracy and the stage that comes after, where what industrial democracy was about was production and the economy depended on constantly increasing production and the democracy’s big tension was between industry’s needs for policies that abetted production and citizens’ needs to both benefit from all the production and still have their basic rights and interest protected from industry’s simpleminded emphasis on production and profits. (Wallace:2012, 144-145)

“Maybe it’s existential so the citizen’s deep fear (Wallace:2012, 145),” about smallness, insignificance and mortality that they all spend all their time on them not thinking directly being tiny and at the mercy of large forces and that time is always passing and that every day they’ve lost one more day that will never come back and their childhoods are over and their adolescence and the vigour of youth over and soon their adulthood, that everything they see around them “all the time is decaying & passing, it’s all passing away.” (Wallace:2012, 145)

May be its time for people to questions:

“These’ll last what-a hundred years? two hundred? - and they’ll crumble, and the grass and insects our decomposition will go to feed will die, and their offspring, or if we’re cremated the trees that are nourished by our windblown ash will die or get cut down and decay, and our urn will decay, and before may be three or four generations it will be like we never existed, not only will we

have passed away but it will be like we were never here.” (Wallace:2012, 145)

“Everything is on slow fire, and we’re all less than a million breaths away from an oblivion or bring ourselves to even try to imagine, in fact, probably that’s why our manic obsession with production, produce, impact the world, contribute, shape things, to help distract us from how little and totally insignificant and temporary we are.” (Wallace:2012, 146) “Now this is depressing instead of just boring. The post-production capitalist has something to do with the death of civics. But so does fear of smallness and death and everything being on fire.” (Wallace:2012, 146) “This emphasis on man as the individual and on the rights and entitlements of the individual instead of the responsibilities of the individual.” (Wallace:2012, 146)

“The marketing corporations are in the creation of desire and need to feed all the manic production, by way of seducing the individual and flattering all the little psychic delusion with which we deflect the horror of personal smallness and transience, enabling the delusion that the individual is the centre of the universe...” (Wallace:2012, 146)

“Because the minute it became not just an attitude but a fashionable one, that’s when the corporations and their advertisers can step in and start reinforcing it and seducing people with it into buying the things the corporations are producing.” (Wallace:2012, 147) “It starts talking about the customer’s psyche being in bondage to conformity and the way to break out of the conformity is not to do certain things but to buy certain things.” (Wallace:2012, 147) “Eventually one couldn’t handle the boredom of the jobs, which were all unbelievably boring and meaningless.” (Wallace:2012, 157) In more humanistic terms, we are connected to ‘loss’ of ourselves in the world of boredom. Continuing without pause, drudgery but often tedious. Perhaps, even brave, worthy, fitting, sweet, romantic, chivalric, heroic hasn’t just have effect

totally boring. Here is a truth: Because “true heroism is minute, hours, weeks, year upon year of the quiet, precise, judicious exercise of probity and care- with no one there to see or cheer.” (Wallace:2012, 232) “True heroism is *a priori* incompatible with audience or applause or even the bare notice of the common run of man. In fact, the less conventionally heroic or exciting or adverting or even interesting or engaging a labor appears to be, the greater it’s potential as an arena for actual heroism.” (Wallace:2012, 232) “To retain detail from within the teeming wormball of data and rule and exception that constitutes real-world heroism.” (Wallace:2012, 233) The truth put plainly, starkly, and boringly is bitter. To give oneself to the care of others’ money-this is effacement, perdurance, sacrifice, honor, doughtiness, valor. Learn it now or later-the world has no time. Routine, repetition, tedium, monotony, ephemeracy, inconsequence, abstraction, disorder, boredom, angst, ennui-these are true hero’s (human) enemies, and make no mistake, they are fearsome indeed (Wallace:2012, 233). “Yesterday’s society’s heroes generated facts. For this is what society is-an agglomeration of facts for boredom.” (Wallace:2012, 234) “Motivated too late or at the last minute chance to renounce nihilism and make a meaningful real-world choice, life is not independent of boredom.” (Wallace:2012, 239) How boring life is for everything is dark & :

Dream: I saw rows of foreshortened faces over which faint emotions played like the light of distant fire. The placid hopelessness of adulthood. The complex regret. One or two, the most alive, looked better in an objectless way. Many others looked blanked as the faces on coins. At the edges were office workers bustling at the endless small tasks involved in mailing, filing, sorting, their faces blankly avid, filled with the mindless energy you see in bugs, weeds, birds. The dream seemed to take hours, but when I’d come awake Superman’s arms (the clock was a gift) would be in the same position as the last time I looked. This dream was my psyche teaching me about boredom. I

think I was very often bored as a child, but boredom is not what I knew it as—what I knew was that I worried a lot. I was a fretful, nervous, anxious, worried boy. These were my parent’s words, and they became mine. (Wallace:2012, 255)

Therefore, for Wallace, “all bureaucracies are microcosms of the world.” (Wallace:2012, 556) Human beings can experience whole world of horror shows of boredom within the false belief that they are citizens of the world. As such the world is comprised of two kinds of people: devourers and food. Abstract people versus men of action. (Wallace:2012, 556) So, worldly life is horrific and boring. It is a large, grinding, impersonal machines that is, rigidly literal and rule-bound and just dumb. “This is because sitting and concentrating on just one task for an extended length of time is, as a practical matter, impossible.” (Wallace:2012, 293) “But felt frustrated and embarrassed about how much reading and writing time we actually wasted, about how much we sort of blinked in and out while trying to absorb or convey large amounts of information. To put it bluntly, we had felt ashamed about how easily we got bored when trying to concentrate.”( Wallace:2012, 294) To understand that the problem with stillness and concentration was more or less universal and would not be solved just by rising about their status or attaining a better position: “We had no opportunity to realize that fidgeting, distraction and frequent contrived breaks were more or less universal traits of boredom.” (Wallace:2012, 295) Wallace writes about heart wrenching account of accountants which can allude to the state of boredom of mankind in general. He writes about how they have to slog through paper works and auditing, characters only keep on examining and auditing that “‘Irrelevant’ Chris Fogle turns a page. Howard Cardwell turns a page. Ken Wax turns a page. Matt Redgate turns a page. ‘Groovy’ Bruce Channing attaches a form to a file. ....” (Wallace:2012, 312) Characters keep on turning pages for hours and hours in a job that is horribly boring and creepy. Ghosts of depression and boredom haunt people’s

life in day in and day out. People are afraid of people for they have lost human's attributes. Their hallucination is so real that they stop feeling and understanding their peers and become more and more introvert and they fail to feel their peers' problems. Hence

Examiners' phantoms are not the same as real ghosts. *Phantom* refers to a particular kind of hallucination that can afflict rote examiners at a certain threshold of concentrated boredom. Or rather say the strain of trying to remain alert and punctilious in the face of extreme boredom can reach levels at which certain types of hallucination routinely occur (Wallace:2012, 342).

The common misapprehension is that a messy desk (of employees) is a sign of a hard worker who is bored. Wallace wants to get over the idea that our function here is to collect and process as much information as possible also is boring. A messy desk is information without value. Individuals think their hard works pay a lot in terms of dollar and knowledge. They are bored for their silences are noticeable since they are stuck with idea that more information begets more money. However, their money has stolen their normalcy even if they are left with lots of information as "Sylvanshine had data on his father's liver enzymes and rate of cortical atrophy, but he didn't know what these data mean (Wallace:2012, 343).

Forget the idea that information is good. Only certain information is good. Certain as in some, not as in a hundred percent confirmed. Files will constitute a plethora of information. People's job, in a sense, with each file is to separate the valuable, pertinent information from the pointless information. And that requires criteria and procedure. It's a procedure for processing information so we are all data processor (Wallace:2012, 342)

It is common idea that information that produces knowledge is good. For Wallace, it is now time that one should get rid of the layman's idea that more the information the better it

is: “Information per se is really just a measure of disorder for boredom.” (Wallace:2012, 344)

Now the point is to process and reduce the information that has made human brain loaded with artificial IQ in order get rid of horror of boredom. According to Wallace, people can feel so relaxed and unafraid once they are done away with drowsy information. In order to have a peaceful life, Wallace says, people must disconnect from banal and boring human pursuit and instead connect with human beings around them. Hence Wallace suggest people to “avoid the temptation to think that we always need more information. Because it’s expensive to human’s tedium pursuit.” (Wallace:2012, 345) It is a plague to be averted at all costs because; everything else is boring and banal in the end. Killing time by embracing technology is vanity. Technology as a means of escape is popular illusion. Thus, for Wallace contemporary humanity is bored with the enigma of the concept of escaping boredom.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Conclusion: A Reflection on the Philosophies**

The basic research questions of this dissertation emerge from the way Wallace problematises the issue of human ethics, morality and the banality of human pursuits in the contemporary world in *The Pale King* and *Infinite Jest*. The effects of popular cultures’ vast compounded catastrophe such as addiction, depression, loneliness, unchecked mechanization, split

personality, identity crisis, desire, self-consciousness, boredom and solipsism have become unsolved issues which, Wallace points out, needs holistic attention. The solution of these issues' are to embrace freedom rejecting passivity, be conscious of banality of human pursuits, be aware of how we ought not to live, know how to choose consciously, differentiate between pleasure and leisure, and be enlightened about boredom. The make-believe world of the entertainment industry that is being defined largely in objective terms but involves irresistible external stimuli that provides temporary pleasure to masses, is the point from where this dissertation takes up. The film *Infinite Jest*, in the novel with the same name, embodies the ironic-aesthetic attitude and entraps its viewers in an infinite, self-obsessed desire for entertainment, noncommittal pleasure and, in the end, proves to be fatal. This entertainment, thus, is vulnerable generally to passive audience but with active pleasure and to distinguish it from pleasure and addiction masses, Wallace points out, must be conscious enough in the age scepticism. This research has highlighted how through the act of reading Wallace has tried to restore the magical glow and humanness of fictions as against the lure of repetitive and consuming products of the world of entertainment. The novels *Infinite Jest* and *The Pale King* shows that the darkness of addiction, be it entertainment and infotainment, have snatched away the consciousness of human minds and have abruptly transformed the idiosyncrasies of human interaction into boredom. Human beings become more and more incapable to communicate and therefore the author tries to draw the readers' attention to the importance of interacting with their inner self as much as with others by presenting characters like Hal in the novel *Infinite Jest*.

The research has also tried to locate how Wallace, through his novels, defines the awareness the present workaholic generation of how they situate themselves within the chaotic world since, unlike Hal they should not allow themselves to become a Body-for-others though their senses are surrounded by world of temptations. By delving into the

philosophy behind Hal and Sylvanshine's existence, readers of Wallace will be able to understand the magic of humanity and human's consciousness in the face of darkness and tediousness. The discourse that entraps human beings in the present world is full of false promises and hopes of infinite achievements. Wallace is trying to state that it is incredible to embrace freedom by rejecting passivity and by negating the machination of entertainment world. So this research tries to find out how these novels can be seen as explicit instructions to be forthright and sincere to combat negation percolating from the discourse of pleasure and the haunting entertainment world. What results from it is leisure, pleasure, addiction, entertainment, boredom and alienation.

This dissertation sees Wallace's novels as a means of awakening the present generation about enormous amounts of discrete bits of information and the real kind of intellectual adventure in finding ways to find larger patterns and meanings in human pursuits. The novels, as this dissertation has highlighted, puts forth the idea that pleasure without work is a destructive force in the society of entertainment and with the temptation of entertainment freedom comes with a cost. The meanings that one makes out of bureaucratic lives (such as accountants) and lives dedicated to sports (such as tennis) are not dull and disciplined, in fact, these professions require concentration and dedication and these ideals are vital descriptions albeit metaphorical in the novels *The Pale King's* and *Infinite Jest* .

Another aspect of this research is looking at the paradigm of consciousness that gets manipulated in the world of fake competition and rat race. This conception of consciousness is more precisely explored thus in this dissertation through *The Pale King*. It is seen that the mind is divided between the narrow corridor of consciousness and the adaptive unconscious. Sylvanshine describes Bondurant's character in *The Pale King* thought patterns as "tornadic"<sup>ii</sup> (51) and this thought is overloaded by the multifarious information that makes up peoples' mental lives too much conscious. Now the function of the brain and nervous system is to



protect people from mass, useless and irrelevant knowledge of this era. It's only a small and special selection that has to be retained for practical usefulness and relevance. What comes out from both novels is the kind of consciousness which will help people to stay alive. In another point it is found that the mental processes that are affective in the operation of our perceptual and motor systems are largely outside of awareness.

An important aspect of this research is to show through the study of the novels how machine and artificial intelligence which stands as a more accurate model for contemporary lives as the driving force for any nation's economy and have made people fully consciousness of their participation. However, the general masses are ignorant and blind about the realities of their government economic policies. Moreover, it is apparent from this dissertation that the power of science and technology on individual sensation are profound with grief or excitement which weaves extraordinary sensations into our knowledge of the self and the world. And in a way sensation makes us seem normal, ordinary, even expected but addicted to technological innovations. This experience of addiction blinds innocent masses to the persistence of the past wisdom, but keeping them focussed only on false expectation. As such the research has focused on 'attention' that everyone is bothered about, unconsciously in the pandemic of boredom best characterized in *The Pale King*.

While boredom engulfs people's life in the time described by Wallace, time as a concept is also dealt with in relation to the span of human attention and concentration. While Chris Fogle (character in *The Pale King*) feels as if he is "trapped in the present" (154), in spite of attention he pays to past through present experience is sign of boredom this dissertation tries to represent. That is, the research analysis focuses on a timeframe that replaces the shiny present with a deeper submerged signs of the past that coexist with our contemporary fascinations of addiction to pleasure. There is so much wrong with the contemporary world therefore, the utility of fiction is so paramount to decode the hidden

wrongs. It is found that human beings are fundamentally blinded to their own personalities by these wrongs so much that they only can assess more accurately the other people's characters. Our natural instinct, motivation, self-reports and self-esteem in terms of our actions is lost in the addiction of pleasure and unreliable predictions of entertainment. Only if people become conscious of their true existence then it will equip us them to lead a life free of decadence and this consciousness will help them to explore 'why humans did' what they did.

This dissertation focuses on the concept of addiction and the loss of human agency. The person who does not really choose and act is in danger of submission to decadent agents of life, be it addiction, loneliness and sentiment. Thereby this dissertation emphasized on the importance of certain notions Wallace attributes to addiction recovery that are also described by Kierkegaard as crucial to overcoming the ironic-aesthetic attitude and its problematic effects. The focus towards the ethical recovery is described in *Infinite Jest* is the need of the hour and overcoming problems such as addiction and boredom require a continual reaffirmation of choice, of commitment to the reality. In fact, the ethical reflections are complex, contradictory and real challenge for humans. More specifically *Infinite Jest* describes difficult aspects of contemporary existence and also offers a portrayal of a possible solution, a commitment to positivity, something that is valued or affirmed again. Both novels depict the time's darkness and illuminate the possibilities for being alive and being a real human being. The ethical attitude is a breakthrough, a leap forward, for it does not mean simply ignoring the difficulties of contemporary existence, but living with these and finding meaning nonetheless. As the century ends it becomes apparent that the former age of anxiety has given way to the age of boredom. Even the idea of the death of God has become all too familiar with people losing hope. The postmodern world has become boring and uninteresting. People are dependant over the technological forces that increasingly regulate the world and time. There is always craze for responding to the intense external stimuli of

entertainment to achieve the same level of pleasure, complacency, or relief. Thus, there is unavoidable accelerating level of consumptions because people consume their boredom away with acquisitions and distractions. The ecological repercussions of this overconsumption are evident. This precisely can be called the modern disease of decadence. As the entertainment intensifies, the danger arises that the human condition itself will become too dull, too lacking in innovation to sustain interest. Like many other modern technological innovations, computers were originally hailed as devices that would lift the burden of labour from the human beings, allowing it the leisure to discover its full potential but now it has become instrument of execution. Now technological potential alone is not capable of sustaining our interest against boredom. Now human condition is experienced as insufficiently up-to-date to hold the attention against banality. The problems that “need” to be solved by technology today are themselves largely the creations and the side-effects of earlier technological innovations. The real problem, in any case, is not how we define technology but how technology comes to define us. The postmodern proliferation of boredom may signal its contemporary condition whereas, mood of boredom would be revealed as humanity’s final condition. The technologies undermine the human capacity to discover a home in the world but boredom might function contrary to hard earned time of human capacity. The boredom is a universal phenomenon in the present age.

This dissertation focuses on a balance between reading and spectating as is evident from Wallace’s novels. Balance of disciplines that are propounded by smart, well-educated people, who are good spectators in the age of boredom, generated the power of entertainment and mechanization as a kind of boneheaded explanation associated with intelligence. The smart people get brainwashed into making their stuff more complicated than it needs to be. So insular communities where membership is partly based on intelligence, proficiency and being able to speak the language of the discipline by presenting one’s own qualifications for

inclusion in the group becomes meaningless and innocent masses are left out. Very often it stems from insecurity of people who feel that unless they can mimic the particular jargon and lifestyles of their peers, they and their ideas won't be taken seriously hence, they can never realize how banal their pursuits are. The culture of consumer technology has become so entrenched to create a society of style without substance, of language without meaning, of cynicism without belief, of virtual communities without human connection, of rebellion without change. Therefore, parts of metaphysical and ethical findings are not able to address the banality of human pursuits.

The dissertation also considers the ethical implication of the emergence of entertainment culture as is reflected the novels of David Foster Wallace. They are objective needs and demands of the present world. Objects are mute demands, and man is nothing in himself but the passive obedience to these demands. Human beings are simply trying to be object of pleasure since they lack ethical pursuits. Ethical pursuit teaches us that we are the source of values, values are not objective and so we are not objectives. Men lack a sense of freedom that will make them realize that they themselves are the sources of their own values and that they have a choice to reject passive obedience to demands and needs of boredom. Once we realize that we are the source of values we can choose freedom itself as our ultimate value. Perhaps, then we will stop making value judgement and how boring the banality of human pursuits is. In the process of trying to reach new and higher goal we shall realize our journey. From this point of view, ethics becomes a matter of enlightened self-interest. Ethical implications provide us what we really want. This is why turning our back to the ideal and value of freedom shall always end up providing boredom in the pursuit of pleasure and we get trapped in corporate and advertisement world.

This research has tried to show how *Infinite Jest* and *The Pale King* critique the idea of multinational-interdependent world which have been glorifying the pristine notion of

globalization and investment. It is now idea of null and void, investment without return. They, therefore, are also a prism to find objective correlatives between boredom and entertainment. It is an experience of dislocation, to describe how globalization works not just as a distant political theory but as something that affects our hearts and minds. They differentiate the hard-edged, abstract qualities of globalization from the aspects of the sublime aesthetic. The glow of cyber-world & social media have been seen as radiant and seductive but implicitly paying homage to zero-oneness (disunity) of the world, leaving billions without any value for their own existence. This research on Wallace's novel makes us rethink our stance and positions as ironic point of intersection between the ghost of boredom and the machine wherein, machine is taking away people's jobs and ghost of boredom is giving people chronic depression. So its intellectual agenda takes us from alternative sources to effective and authentic milieu wherein, every individual is free to question their pursuits.

Another representation of these texts are un-fractured consciousness, rather something like a phenomenological awareness of the fluid processes involved in the creation and destruction of meaning in the world. It is this awareness of idea of local and global, the sense of the relationship between the human and inhuman, between place and placelessness mankind is becoming emotionless and meaningless. The idea of the corporate houses that differentiates between products of different brands is creating more appetite for products. The new worlds of cyber and global media which seeks to open new debate about the abstract grids of information & technology where human emotion and identity are in crises are presented in this dissertation. Ill effects and many versions of technological progress have shown more complex version of contemporary life that opens up crevices in the monolithic structures of corporate world and confronts the question of personal authenticity within a global framework of displacement and confusion. This research narrative thus reveals the machination of the dynamics of globalization and corporate capitalism. It has subtly recorded

how the mass media impacts upon and interferes with the lives of global citizens. The research articulates the ways in which the human consciousness responds to the environment by harnessing the self-centred nature of being to cope with the ever changing wider world. It focuses on the civics-debate (in *The Pale King*) as it describes paying taxes as similar to being stranded on a lifeboat, whereby “you have a duty to the others in the boat. A duty to yourself not to be the sort of person who waits till everybody is asleep and then eats all the food.” (Wallace:2012, 131) It is found that the novels are quintessential parodies of Hollywood depictions, corporate culture and television program. More specifically it is an exhortation & reviews of public account. The research has given the key definition of “heroism,” which it defines as “enduring tedium over real time in a confined space.” (Wallace:2012, 229) It is to underscore true “heroism,” as “moral equivalent of war,...” (Wallace:2012, 229) The research has also described the dull discussion of IRS agent’s profession which Wallace refers to throughout the novel as “The Service” for a reification of martial virtues minus the bloodshed of actual war, values author outlines as “intrepidity, contempt of softness, surrender of private interest, obedience to command.” (Wallace:2012, 108) Taking the dismal context of political discourse the dissertation also has highlighted other side of the economic policy of right wing world. Consistent acknowledgement of the side effects of internet and entertainment has been cogently articulated here. Author’s ideas like estrangement, defamiliarization and difficulty are the best answers to the private questions such as what is the effect of social media in the present era? It is found that substance addiction and narcotic qualities of contemporary lives have ruined the social fabric and family relationship.

The research has tried to point out how Wallace’s philosophy suggested that too much awareness, particularly self-awareness has allowed people to be less responsible than ever. The undreamed the ubiquity of television, the voraciousness of crony capitalism, the triumph

of therapeutic discourse, and philosophy's demotion into a rhetoric of boredom have doomed humankind. The unusual aspect of repetitive strains of popular culture is making people addictive. Thus Wallace's philosophy, pointing towards the degrading impact of commercial culture, tries to make inferences about larger social and political contexts. The philosophy's temporal dimensions are repressions of human emotion and acting as machine man without feeling instead of being sentimental beings. It has highlighted a radically condensed history of the post-industrial world which engages the depressed person, advertising agents and naive hordes who have become the victims of the theory that 'empire (government) takes its way'. The paper stresses the important narratives of some characters that are fine with the dead end of boredom to survive their livelihood. It clarifies the author's insights that the world outside his books is always the reader's interior. It is found that sincerity and authenticity depend upon a kind of ethical undecidability in people's actions that opens up a space for readers to inhabit and challenge the unethical, most modern and postmodern lifestyles. It is a kind of call "to wake the reader up to stuff that the reader's been aware of all the time." (Lipsky 41) It is to know highly original style of our own. To this effect, in *Infinite Jest* the narrative recounts of Don Gately's understanding of the process of recovery in AA<sup>iii</sup> (*Infinite Jest* 350-51) is the best example for contemporary drugs and substance addicts. The research shows how Wallace's narrative thrusts on addiction from early recovery to a mechanical form of obedience for substance time and time again. This creates an opportunity for the reader, like the addict, to choose whether or not to embrace this "paradoxical logic whereby a surrender of volition leads to freedom. Moreover, experience of recovering in AA." (Wallace:1996, 211) hence, is a question of foregrounding the ethical appeal that Wallace himself contends for reader/ common folks. It is also a way of investigating the position of an addict ("don't compare, identify" is one of AA's slogans in *Infinite Jest*), and of letting the reader experience through complicated structures and the importance of empathy that plays a very vital role even today to solve issues of unwanted minority. The explorations of

issues such as embodiment and identity in two texts (*The Pale King & Infinite Jest*) are headway to ethical appeal in order to overcome boredom. The paper's philosophical output is a key to understanding of present political concerns for corporate world and its victim. On the other hand this understanding also offers a choice of spiritual ethics as a central call for citizens who are being sceptic about corporate world. It has emphasized specifically some sort of weird ambient sameness in different kinds of human relationships due to paradigm shift of entertainment world. Changing the reader's emotions outside the reading experience helped basically dead society to live not just in past but present to understand the current social evils. Vigorous exercise of corporate power and dominance seems unconcerned for world to extract wealth from humble and innocent one by bringing confusion about the accuracy, authenticity and tightness of ethical arguments. The radical conservatism and liberalism of traditional pop cultures have made familiar and milder 'doubts' of people's unfamiliar. It is found that unattributed quality of dialogues in entertainment world with polished quality of global corporate has divided the positions of traditional liberal/conservative or left/right into binaries.

§19 of *The Pale King* can be the depiction of open conversation about global politics and intellectual history. It is revealed through that "attitudes about paying taxes seem like one of the places where a man's civic sense gets revealed in the starkest sorts of terms" (141). The exploration of *The Pale King* and *Infinite Jest* thus reveal the views of government and corporate world and their relevance in the late twentieth and 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is observed that sense of honour and moral fabric of past were unfortunately not matched by the present generations who followed them in order to evade the pressure of crony capitalist world. Leaders of past believed in rationality, persons of privilege, literacy, education and moral sophistication [which] would be able to emulate, to make judicious and self-disciplined decisions for the good of the nation and not just advance their own interests" (134) however,



present generation has become unfortunately 'Lost generation'. Wallace, as this research points out has sarcastically responded to an imaginative and ingenious rationalization of racism and male chauvinism. For it is seen that present hypocrisy is preaching equal human dignity while torture his slaves and looting the innocent masses. The question this research seems to be exploring through the novels is why such hypocrisy and cynicism pervade our assessments of contemporary cultures? If the ideals of the fore fathers can be so easily dismissed on the grounds of their less ideal behaviour, then where are present generations to receive their moral education from? The question against moral education has become all the more pressing because of the fake social egalitarianism propounded by crony capitalist have achieved more cherished values. In *Infinite Jest* Wallace was concerned to ask how technological developments should alter our political commitments and in *The Pale King* it is the rise of the corporation from front and centre places the ideas of citizenship which is under crushing pressure and boredom. Ideas of corporate world have become increasingly prominent in terms of taking the political consensus and the advertisement to allure hordes into consensus for their own repression. In the early twenty-first century with an era of neoliberal capitalism, this research now places the key transitional moment of contemporary society to dystopian and lost world as is best summarized by Wallace in this paragraph:

I think Stuart's tracing the move from the production-model of American democracy to something more like a consumption-model, where corporate production depends on a team approach whereas being a customer is a solo venture. That we're turning into consuming citizens rather than producing citizens (Wallace:2012, 146).

Though we may not live long enough to witness the full onset of emotional and mental crisis but the economic and sociological ideas underpinning the philosophy of modern life as expressed by Wallace is unfortunately threatening the corporate hubs. Moreover, about the

discourse of political and corporate ideas, the research has displayed a palpable discomfort with understanding the problem only in narrow terms as it's probably being irreducibly political substance. There is therefore, no bottom line, no master discourse, whether logic, culture or politics: there are instead a plurality of questions to address the problem of boredom and addiction. Hence, research on Wallace's philosophy gives rise to questions that can haunt our existence in this world: what has gone wrong with our contemporary society? And in *The Pale King* too, it has found ambitious question: what can we do to make it better?

This research also alludes to how Wallace suggests something important for our twenty-first-century world, a world that now, more than ever, requires some fresh thinking. This present world features a more or less self-contained plethora of scenes and set pieces of novels' plot to shape our fresh thinking. The research freely thus admits the novels' central stories which do not have a clear ending but it declares the issues such as boredom and pressure are really deepened into our society. What is most remarkable about *The Pale King*, is to confirm, how rich it is. And that *Infinite Jest* does not proceed in a linear fashion, is to prohibit the readers from forgetting that heavily mediated data and addiction of pleasure do not teach about value of real full human relationship. It is found, in *Infinite Jest*, that our culture is like "a geometrical figure that can be subdivided into an infinite number of identical geometrical figures" (183) and in *The Pale King*, the plot as a series of set-ups for stuff happening, but nothing actually happens is a metaphor for our bored society. Although *The Pale King* never reaches a conclusion per se as it is an incomplete novel and although for readers it is not possible to figure out what the structure of the novel would have been, if it was not published posthumously but "paying attention, boredom, and machines vs people at performing aimless jobs" (545) are the deep realities of contemporary society that it has conveyed successful. It is to pay attention to what is in front of us without hope for the traditional resolution of suspense or disclosure of secrets, but must locate meaning and

fulfilment amid the mind-numbing tedium banal pursuit of human. All of these might explain why *Infinite Jest* and *The Pale King*'s discussions about the pleasure and leisure are bleak and boring. Paranoia, addiction to entertainment, convoluted ideas of civic responsibility, taxation and addiction to substance are the workings of boredom. The research has laid out the complex and ambiguous ways in which Wallace dramatize the conflict between humans and machines, and between organisms and data. Further Wallace addresses the few ways in which he sets up an empathetic relationship between author, reader and text. *The Pale King* and *Infinite Jest*, disclose the co-existence and overlapping of incompatible continual negotiation among addiction pleasure, entertainment pleasure and boredom leisure.

Above all, a lucid and rigorous analysis of *The Pale King* tells that paying attention can be a part-solution of boredom. Spiritual & mental sloth and boredom is presented as an individual affliction in the novel. We can see this in pop culture's appropriation of (post)postmodern world and generations to come. The novel emphasizes the inherent risk about the oversimplification of human's daily task by machine and suggests to fights it at all costs to resist boredom. That being said, Wallace's work hence is deeply engaged in ethics and morality to combat boredom. Given the nature of findings, boredom and ennui are not expansive enough to adequately describe the way we perceive contemporary culture. However, it is found that boredom has compounded catastrophe in our society such as addiction, collapsing ecologies, death, loneliness, unchecked mechanization, suicides and the like. Further the investigation of *The Pale King* has shown the mystical influences on Wallace's narrative to shape a different approach to living such as alienating from contemporary society while engaging an optimistic and hopeful spiritual belief. While it is found that Wallace's novels are living communities in themselves; his major novel, especially the unfinished *The Pale King*, only point toward community and its limits. This gestural movement is important and deserving of attention for seeing the limits of human pursuits.

One of the main emphases of this thesis is on individual's spiritual experience of boredom. To acknowledge and investigate this individual's spiritual experience of boredom to great effect, one must neglect some characteristics of living such as 'fun' and 'dishonesty'. Lasting influence of boredom on our potentiality, personal choices and actions can ruin us that's why Wallace says 'if you immune to boredom there is nothing you cannot accomplish'. Emphasis on individualism and pragmatic approaches to experience of boredom allows us to remain strong, pertinent, and seemingly more aware of the issues at hand in the twenty-first century. Endless desire and living in a world with more wants force people out of comfortable niches in which people whether believers or non-believers face some challenge from surroundings and are pushed on to the horrific death like that of Frederic Blumquist (character in *The Pale King*)(29). This world thus has become a place in which people's spiritual pattern depends more on personal decisions that chase them one way or another to the point of boredom. However, what distinguishes contemporary decision from the early nineteenth century is that today's decision of individual has become mass phenomenon, not something restricted to an educated, elite class but is influenced by a range of network such as social media. This perspective has changed the ideas of individualized spirituality and communal modes of social organization but of understanding global village where nothing is personal and private. While this demands attention with critical approach that entirely neglects society's current concerns but collective actions and practices with core values to understand menace of pleasure and boredom. This effort sounds inherently individualistic, and general mass may treat individual stories in holistic manner but without ideal solution. So there is always risk of failing our society. Importantly, it is found that (Post) Postmodern practices of ethics are paramount concern and very essential. Rather than being focused on postmodern metafictional loops of interiority, it's our responsibility to put ourselves into investigation. Wallace's novels tries to make the readers realize that a self is something we just have but the journey to become 'a human being' is one that lasts as long as we live: "The horrific struggle

to establish a human self results in a self whose humanity is inseparable from that horrific struggle. Our endless and impossible journey toward home is in fact our home.” (Wallace:1996, 294) That the “journey toward home is in fact our home,” that we are always in the process of becoming ourselves and will not ever just “have” selves to be aware of banality of our pursuits. This research has therefore concentrated on crises of ethics, identity, and morality in the age of boredom that seeks attention of honesty, sincerity and authenticity. This dissertation has approached larger questions without straight answers but critical investigation into contemporary life in the context of these two novels will provide many more variations, suggestions, insights and relationships, perhaps, to readers or scholars. This analysis, at least have been able to explain that both *The Pale King* and *Infinite Jest* make serious attempts to record attributes of the real world hooked onto the virtual. In fact we can learn more about ourselves with further intimacy when we compare our own consciousness with the author’s and deduce the boundaries of our unconscious as well. This process arguably equips us to lead a less wasted life and create a distanced view of our mind that help us realizes the illusiveness of our banal pursuits.

i Like Modinomics,(Narendra Modi) or abenomics (Shinzo Abe) for economic policy of particular leaders.

ii In the editor's note Michael Pietsch writes that David referred to the novel as "tornadic" by which he meant "tornado feeling" or pieces of stories being hurled at the readers at high speed. Wallace grew up in Illinois where his childhood was marked by experience of many tornados which therefore impacted his mind and his narrative technique.

iii AA or Alcoholics Anonymous which a process of rehabilitate drug and substance addicts.

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