

Cultivating Your Garden; An Exploration of Boredom  
and Distress in Voltaire's *Candide*

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## Introduction

Voltaire's *Candide* follows the story of Candide, a gentle man who goes through terrible trials and hardship, meanwhile trying to one day be reunited with his love Cunegonde. Pangloss, the philosopher, proclaims the teaching that they live in the "best of all possible worlds," despite the toils they encounter on their journey. Martin is the pessimist who believes man only lives in two natures: "convulsions of distress or the lethargy of boredom." This thesis investigates how human nature creates a choice between suffering or living in boredom, which is brought on by idleness. The old woman, Cunegonde's maid, offers a volatile interpretation on boredom:

But when they were not arguing, their boredom became so oppressive that one day the old woman was driven to say, "I'd like to know which is worse: to be raped a hundred times by Negro pirates, to have one buttock cut off, to run the gauntlet in the Bulgar army, to be whipped and hanged in an auto-da-fé, to be dissected, to be a galley slave—in short, to suffer all the miseries we've all gone through—or to stay here doing nothing."

"That's a hard question," said Candide (110)

The old woman's stance on boredom versus suffering is the main focus of this quote. After going through all of these horrific trials and misfortunes throughout *Candide*, instead of taking pleasure and enjoying a time at peace, the old woman expresses how she doesn't know what is worse, suffering through all of said trials, or being bored by doing nothing. Which ignites the question, what is actually worse? Human nature prompts a struggle within man to resist idleness, resulting in choosing to be desperately bored or to live in convulsions of distress. Are humans always going to be destined to live in "convulsions of distress or the lethargy of boredom," as Martin

responds? Being idle doesn't necessarily need to lead to negative outcomes; being idle could lead to leisure.

In order to explore the idea of idleness in *Candide*, first an interpretation of the text and a look at specific events that Candide goes through must be examined. A vital examination of the following will shed light on the relationship between idleness and human nature, especially Candide's reaction to Eldorado and why Candide decides to leave paradise, his trials to get his one true love Cunegonde, and the question of what it means to "cultivate the garden."

An analysis of the following terms must also be explored and defined<sup>1</sup>: idleness, leisure, and boredom. Analyzing how these terms have different meanings and impact each character differently is necessary as well. The meanings of these terms and the purpose of their use to Voltaire will also be analyzed, as well as any modern biases these terms have today. A clear understanding of these terms are necessary since they involve many different complexities, such as: various meanings, synonyms, different perspectives and experiences, which can change the meaning of the terms. Finally and ultimately what do these terms mean for human nature and how do they play out in our lives?

To reiterate again the goal of this thesis is to determine what these terms mean, what their relationships are to one another, and to try to discover whether or not humans would rather live in a state that causes them suffering as opposed to remaining in a state of boredom, and if so why?

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<sup>1</sup> To continue with the discussion of idleness, the accuracy of the French to English translation of *Candide* must first be accepted. In another translation the translator used the term idleness three times. Bair's translation uses idle once and boredom the other two times. Bair's translation of the French to English is correct and should be trusted, from the discretion of a world language professor at Saint Mary's College of California who, after looking at said passages with different terms, attested to the correct translation made by Bair in context with the sentence.

## Eldorado

Through Candide's quest to reunite with his love, Cunegonde, Candide stumbles upon Eldorado, a paradise. This experience provides a unique outlook on the themes of human nature, choice, optimism, boredom, idleness, and leisure. This analysis of Eldorado includes the history and character of the people who reside in this paradise and why Candide decides to leave a life of leisure.

When Candide stumbles into Eldorado he finds a land where “everything goes well.” There are many characteristics Eldorado possesses that make this society so much different from the rest of the world which also make this land the one where “everything goes well”. For example: gold has no value or importance in Eldorado, everyone agrees with each other, poor villages are fed for free by the government, there are no prisons, their society only gives thanks to God since they already have everything they need, the people are kind and intelligent. However, this is the former land of the Incas who, “rashly left to subjugate another part of the world and who were destroyed by the Spaniards.” The old man who received Candide and Cacambo goes on to say, “with the consent of the nation they ordained, no inhabitant of our little kingdom should ever leave it, and that's what has preserved our innocence and our happiness [ . . . ] the European nations have incredible lust for our pebbles and dirt, and would kill everyone of us for them” the Incas who left the life of leisure suffered the consequence of leaving, leading to extinction (63). The narrator doesn't express what precisely causes the remaining Incas to stay in Eldorado. Do these people simply appreciate what they have and are smart enough to realize that all they could ever need and what everyone searches for, is a reality in Eldorado? Or do they simply stay out from fear of suffering? By recognizing the actions of their ancestors, they seem

content with their decision of staying in Eldorado. To even contemplate or question why anyone would want to leave seems absurd, however I could see how it may get boring living there if there is only ever peace. A place without conflict or struggle seems foreign but isn't that what humans strive towards? Perhaps since peace is all the people of Eldorado know, they have nothing else to compare it to and they are lucky enough to live in this best of all possible worlds. The people of Eldorado would be living in leisure not idleness. Leisure is more positive and these people are happy in their state.

After spending a month in Eldorado, the land where everything goes well, Candide is unhappy because he misses Cunegonde, driving him to decide to leave paradise:

Once again, my friend, I admit that there's no comparison between this country and the castle where I was born; but it's still true that Lady Cunegonde isn't here, and you must have some mistress in Europe too. If we stay here, we'll only be like everyone else, but if we go back to our world with no more than twelve sheep laden with stones from Eldorado, we'll be richer than all the kings of Europe put together, we'll have no more Inquisitors to fear, and we can easily rescue Lady Cunegonde. . . . So the two fortunate men decided to be fortunate no longer (66).

Driven by restlessness and the brute desire for the love of Cunegonde, not an admirable quality, Candide's nature chooses trials and tribulations rather than just staying in Eldorado and doing nothing. Cacambo was driven by the ambition to return home to brag and tell "impressive stories" about Eldorado. The king of Eldorado views Candide's decision as a foolish one. As he states, "it's a foolish thing to do, said the king. I know my country doesn't amount to much, but when a man is fairly well off somewhere, he ought to stay there" (66). The King expresses the

difficult journey ahead of Candide but Candide does not care because his love for Cunegonde is so great. For example, the narrator notes that, “Candide had no other desire and aim than to go and present his sheep to Lady Cunegonde” (67). Candide decides to leave because what he desires is not in Eldorado, Cunegonde. Candide states that if they stay they will be like everyone else, but by taking some riches and leaving they will lead a better life than the one they would have by staying in Eldorado. Candide’s mindset seems greedy, like that of the Incas who left Eldorado and were killed by the hands of the Spaniards. Even though Eldorado is the place where “everything goes right” it is still not enough for Candide after a month.

Why is Candide's possessiveness of Cunegonde enough to let him leave paradise? Eldorado is not enough for Candide but he is okay with taking from Eldorado to live a luxurious life, in a world where everything goes wrong. Maybe Candide was living in idleness and not leisure in Eldorado so he wasn't satisfied and that is a part of the reason why he left. Candide leaves Eldorado in hopes of being reunited with Cunegonde, the person he thought was the answer to his happiness but then he discovers differently. After leaving Eldorado, one hundred days pass and most of the sheep Candide is traveling with die, prompting Candide to have a new outlook on riches and virtue. Candide states, “how perishable are the riches of this world. There's nothing solid but virtue, and the happiness of seeing Lady Cunegonde again,” Candide’s new outlook on riches perishing provides insight into why Candide left Eldorado (68). There are few things in the world that are true and solid.

At this point Candide claims the only things worth fighting for are virtue and Cunegonde. But this is a contradictory statement because Candide’s view on virtue and Cunegonde are corrupt, which will be brought more into light later. Candide’s idea of virtue or his moral

standard is dependent on the acceptance of Pangloss's philosophy of optimism and believing the good in the world is greater than the bad. Candide does commit good acts - for instance, buying Cunegonde and the old woman's freedom later. Candide also keeps his promise to marry Cunegonde, which is honorable. Candide, however, is repulsed by Cunegonde when he sees her, and he no longer wishes to marry her. Candide's love is not pure, so it's not really worth fighting for.

As Candide enters Surinam he hears a story of a slave, prompting him to abandon Pangloss's philosophy or mania of optimism (69). When the two arrive in Surinam, the Spanish captain refuses to take them to Buenos Aire, prompting Candide to develop a new plan. Candide sends Cacambo on a mission to offer riches to the governor in exchange for Cunegonde. This was the safest way to get to Cunegonde because Cacambo is more resourceful and trustworthy than Candide, they will then meet in Venice. Once Cacambo leaves, Candide tries to pay for passage to Venice, but Candide ends up getting robbed of a lot of money, causing him to find a new way to get to Venice. Candide searches for a man in the province, to take passage to Bordeaux with him, in exchange for money and food. Candide finds Martin, who is the most unfortunate, honest, and most deserving of pity, man in the province (73).

During his interviews Candide then has a revelation that Eldorado is the best of all possible worlds, but he doesn't seem to regret leaving. Candide says, "if all goes well, it's in Eldorado, not in the rest of the world" (71). On the journey to find Cunegonde Candide crosses France to get to Venice and points out how nowhere else compares to Eldorado. Candide states, "after spending a month in Eldorado, a man has no interest in seeing anything else on earth, except Lady Cunegonde" (75). When Martin and Candide arrive in France, Candide falls ill and

is robbed by physicians. Candide recovers and ends up getting robbed again by some strangers he meets and gambles with, causing him to make another comparison to Eldorado. Candide says, “this isn't the way travelers are treated in Eldorado” (85). Finally in Venice, where Candide was to meet Cacambo and Cunegonde, Candide, exasperated and defeated after not being able to find them, again reminisces about Eldorado:

Cunegonde must be dead, and the only thing left for me is to die too. Oh, it would have been better to stay in the paradise of Eldorado, instead of coming back to this devilish Europe. How right you are, my dear Martin! Life is nothing but illusions and calamities! [...] Till now I've met nothing but unfortunate people in all the inhabitable world except Eldorado (88).

This quote solidifies how Cunegonde seems to be the driving force of why Candide leaves Eldorado, because if Cunegonde was dead Candide would rather have stayed in Eldorado. Candide agrees with Martin's view that life is full of calamities and the only people who are fortunate are those in Eldorado.

There isn't a description of what Candide and Cacambo did in their month in Eldorado, so it is impossible to determine what state Candide is living in there. But, one thing Candide says is if they stay in Eldorado “they'll be like everyone else, but if they leave they'll have riches and be reunited with loved ones” (66). The prospect of leaving and gaining these two desires in a corrupt world is more appealing to Candide than staying in Eldorado. At the time, paradise wasn't as desirable as love. After leaving Eldorado, Candide expresses how much better Eldorado is than the rest of the world, but the only thing that is missing in Eldorado is Cunegonde. Despite not being sure what state Candide was living in in Eldorado, it seems that

the natives of the land are content with their way of life; they have everything they need and do not desire anything outside of Eldorado; they are happy, innocent, agree with one another, and are safe. The narrator says, “The land here was cultivated for pleasure as well as from necessity; everywhere the useful had been made pleasant” (59). The natives can’t be living in idleness or boredom because everything is positive in Eldorado, so if there is unoccupied time the natives must be participating at leisure. If the people of Eldorado thought they were participating in a vice of idleness or something was wrong with themselves participating in leisure they would ask God for a solution. But they don't, they simply give thanks to God because they are content with their life and believe they have everything they need and don't need anything more.

Moving forward with the quest to find Cunegonde, Candide and Martin meet more people and face more misfortunes. They finally find Cacambo, who is now a slave to a dethroned prince. Cacambo tells Candide the unfortunate fate that has happened to Cunegonde: she's a slave and has grown ugly. Cacambo says, “what’s even sadder is that she's lost her beauty and become horribly ugly” (102). Candide responds that he is an honorable man and his duty is to love Cunegonde no matter if she is beautiful or ugly (102). Despite it being a pity that Cunegonde is so ugly, Candide continues to pursue his actions to be reunited with Cunegonde. Once Candide is finally reunited with his love he, as well as Cunegonde's brother, are repulsed by how Cunegonde looks. Although Candide no longer yearned for her, he still bought her freedom, prompting Cunegonde to remind Candide of his promise to marry her. Candide kept his promise. However, when Cunegonde’s brother would not let Candide marry his sister, Candide was fueled by spite to marry Cunegonde even though he didn’t really want to anymore. The narrator says, “at the bottom of his heart, Candide had no desire to marry Cunegonde. But the

baron's extreme arrogance determined him to go through with the marriage, and Cunegonde was pressing him so strongly that he could not have taken back his word" (109). It seems that Candide's love for Cunegonde left when he saw that she was no longer beautiful. Readers are led into a paradox for Candide's happiness. This paradox or self contradiction arises when Candide believes he will be happy when he is reunited with Cunegonde but once he is reunited he is not happy. Candide's driving force to withstand all of his calamities and leave paradise is his shallow love for Cunegonde, and when Candide finally gets Cunegonde he is again suffering misfortunes, his happiness was dependent on Cunegonde and now Candide has remained unsatisfied:

It would be natural to assume that Candide, now married to his mistress after so many disasters, and living with the philosopher Pangloss, the philosopher Martin, the prudent Cacambo and the old woman, and having brought back so many diamonds from the land of the ancient Incas, would lead the most pleasant life in the world. But he had been so cheated by the Jews that he had nothing left but his little farm. His wife, growing uglier every day, became shrewish and unbearable (110)

Did Candide do this to himself, does Candide make himself suffer? Candide's choices were all contingent on Cunegonde. Could Candide have been unconsciously choosing the path of the most suffering? Candide's love before was not necessarily a lie. Candide thought he loved Cunegonde and thought that love was solid. Perhaps his love went away or it really wasn't true love. But, there was a mistake made, either in Candide's goal or within Candide's nature. Human nature tells us to go back and forth to resist idleness or maybe even leisure. As Martin says, "Are humans always going to be destined to live in "convulsions of distress or the lethargy

of boredom,” was this struggle between the two states what drove Candide to pick the path of suffering since he was repressing boredom?

### **Character Viewpoints of the Terms and Human Nature**

The examples of Eldorado and the rollercoaster of Candide and Cunegonde’s relationship are examples of consequences that occur when man tries to live in leisure and or decides to reject idleness. An analysis of these terms' meanings to each character will now be conducted to provide a greater examination of why human nature causes men to choose between boredom or the convulsions of distress. There are three specific quotes that speak on the effects of boredom and distress spoken by the Old Woman, Martin, and Pangloss. Two other quotes by random characters Candide encounters on his quest will also shed light on idleness' effect on human nature.

#### **The Old Woman**

Beginning with the old woman’s quote and the question which inspired this thesis:

But when they were not arguing, their boredom became so oppressive that one day the old woman was driven to say, “I'd like to know which is worse: to be raped a hundred times by Negro pirates, to have one buttock cut off, to run the gauntlet in the Bulgar army, to be whipped and hanged in an auto-da-fé, to be dissected, to be a galley slave—in short, to suffer all the miseries we've all gone through—or to stay here doing nothing.”

(110)

After going through all of these trials and misfortunes instead of taking pleasure and enjoying a time at peace, the old woman expresses how she doesn’t know what’s worse. Suffering through all of these trials, or being bored doing nothing. They are not at leisure because they are not

taking

enjoyment in this pastime, they are not enjoying their free time as they please instead they are idle leading to their oppressive boredom.

As a reaction to the old woman the rest of the characters provide their opinion:

These remarks gave rise to new reflections. Martin concluded that man was born to live in either the “convulsions of distress or the lethargy of boredom.” Candide did not agree, but he affirmed nothing. Pangloss admitted that he had always suffered horribly, but, having once maintained that all was for the best, he still maintained it, without believing it (110).

What Martin says is true, they all did live either in “convulsions of distress or lethargy of boredom.” From the very beginning, at the end of chapter one, Candide gets thrown out of the castle because he’s spotted kissing Cunegonde, leading to all of the misfortunes that befall him. Candide claims that living in the castle was an ‘earthly paradise’, however he was still living in convulsions of distress because he was in love with Cunegonde and couldn’t have her, he didn’t know who his parents were and he was looked down upon since he was not a baron. Convulsions of distress can vary. They can be something that lives with you consistently that creates emotional distress or simply physical distress, which are both that Candide and the character's face throughout *Candide*. However, if man is destined to live in the “lethargy of boredom or the convulsions of distress” then when is man supposed to live in peace? Even if men were to cultivate their garden for the rest of their lives, it would get boring after a while unless they were participating in the act as leisure. If the garden doesn’t produce any fruit then man is living in the

convulsions of distress if the goal is to produce fruit instead of just cultivating the garden. Perhaps man is supposed to accept that they will constantly live in this in between state.

## **Martin**

In order to take a closer look at Martin's response it is necessary to view what shapes Martin's view and leads him to the conclusion of battling between 'lethargy of boredom or the convulsions of distress. Candide meets Martin by searching for the most unfortunate man that deserves pity. Voltaire portrays Martin's opinions the most throughout the text. Despite Candide living by the philosophy Pangloss taught him, Voltaire is communicating through Martin. Ultimately Martin is described as having nothing to hope for. Candide and Martin have several philosophical conversations with one another while looking for Cunegonde. Martin believes the devil meddles too greatly in the world and after observing the world Martin believes: "God has abandoned it to some malevolent being - with the exception of Eldorado" (73). In contrast to Pangloss's view of optimism, Martin is pessimistic of the world and mostly sees evil in man. Martin believes the purpose of why the earth was formed was to drive man mad (75). However, when the subject of free will is presented, Voltaire always leaves ellipses after the character begins to answer, not allowing the thought to finish. An example is when Candide asks Martin if he believes men have always slaughtered one another, Martin replies with hawks have not changed their character so why would men, Candide explains the difference between hawks and men is free will, but Candide's thought is interrupted (75). Later, when everything continues to go wrong for Candide, Candide asks what kind of world this is, prompting Martin to answer 'something insane and abominable (86). Candide tries to believe in Pangloss' philosophy of

everything happens for a reason and for the best of all possible worlds. Candide's belief in this philosophy is reaffirmed when he continues to be reunited with other unlikely characters he never thought he'd see again, like his red sheep and Pacquette, then it is also possible he will find Cunegonde. Martin hopes that Cunegonde will make Candide happy but he doubts she will. This causes Candide to call Martin a bitter man, Martin owing his bitterness to living (92).

### **Three Smaller Characters**

Voltaire includes three other characters that align with Martin's pessimistic views, furthering the belief that this is the opinion Voltaire truly holds. When in France, the man of good taste expresses to Candide that he disagrees with Pangloss' philosophy because everything seems to be going wrong. The Frenchman says, "when people are in rather good spirits and seem to get along with each other fairly well, the rest of the time is spent in senseless quarrels . . . it's an endless war" (82). In Venice Candide says he has heard of a man who has never known sorrow or trouble. Martin is suspicious and says he wants to see such a 'rare specimen' (92). Signor Pococurante greeted them with great courtesy but little enthusiasm. Candide compliments the two serving girls but Pococurante talks about how they are pleasant but starting to bore him. Pococurante has a painting by Raphael and says he bought them out of vanity but he doesn't like them at all. Pococurante had a delightful concerto performed before dinner and he expresses how the concerto also bores him to after half an hour. Pococurante says Homer puts him to sleep and bores him as well as other great authors including Virgil and Milton. Nothing pleases Pococurante and Candide thinks this is astonishing since he was brought up to never judge anything for himself (95). Once Candide and Martin leave the Venetian nobleman Pococurante,

Candide believes the nobleman is the happiest man because the nobleman is above everything he owns (97). Martin expresses the opposite, that the nobleman is disgusted with everything he owns. The two go back and forth about pleasure: pleasure in criticizing everything and being aware of defects where other men see something beautiful (97). They both conclude however that there is no pleasure in having no pleasure. The third character that aligns with Martin's view is the Turkish man at the end of the *Candide*, the Turkishman says, "I have only twenty acres of land," replied the Turk, "which my children and I cultivate. Our work keeps us free of three great evils: boredom, vice and poverty" (112).

The Turkish man is implying that if one does not keep their hands busy then three great evils will arise: boredom, vice and poverty. Implying that boredom is an evil gives boredom a negative connotation and something man should not partake in. If boredom is a result of idleness, then idleness must also be an evil. The act of cultivating the land is merely an outlet to keep busy and not remain idle. The cultivation itself isn't necessarily what keeps men from the evils mentioned. However, when looking at the reason why the Turk lives this way, what is shown is that perhaps cultivating the garden is the true way of handling idleness. The Turkishman says, "I assume in general those who take part in public affairs sometimes perish miserably, and that they deserve it; but I never pay attention to what goes on in Constantinople. I content myself with sending the fruits of my garden there to be sold" (112). By not worrying about affairs in the outside world and merely on oneself well being is reminiscent of Eldorado and how that town stays in their own bubble leading to their happy life, they are content with what they have and don't seek what they don't need (112). There's something about cultivating the garden that seems significant. The Turk's words have a great effect on Candide, "Candide deeply pondered the

Turks' remarks. He said to Pangloss and Martin, "That good old man seems to have made himself a much better life than the six kings we had the honor of eating super with" (112). This is what inspires Candide to also cultivate his garden.

The three men, the Frenchman, the Venetian, and the Turkishman, are men that Candide believes are intelligent and successful so they are worth listening to. However, the first one disagrees with Pangloss's philosophy which is a blow to Candide. The second one has everything and is unhappy, he is not biding his time leisurely. Both these men have views that align with Martin's. The third man encompasses Eldorado without actually being in Eldorado. The Frenchman believes man is always in endless war with one another, similar to Martin's view of 'living in convulsions of distress'. On the other hand the Venetian has everything and is bored, aligning with Martin's view of living in, 'the lethargy of boredom.' The Turkishman gives hope to Candide that in order to avoid the two unfavorable states of boredom or suffering, one leisurely tends to the cultivation of their garden.

### **Pangloss**

An alternative view on the old woman's question is Pangloss's philosophy which is his response to the question. Pangloss' belief of pre-established harmony is that everything was made for the best purpose (16). In the beginning of *Candide* Pangloss is discussing this philosophy with an officer of the Inquisition. The officer brings up the fact that if all is for the best the original sin wouldn't exist, there would be no fall of man or curse. Pangloss counters this by expressing how the fall of man is necessary for the best of all possible worlds to occur. The officer brings up free will and Pangloss only gets a few words out on the subject of free will until he is interrupted. Pangloss begins to say, "Freedom can subsist with absolute necessity, for it was

necessary that we be free; for, after all. A determined will -" (27). As stated previously when free will is explicitly brought up Voltaire does not give a direct answer on the subject. Back to the philosophy, to suffer all the miseries is necessary because it is the best of all possible worlds, the act of suffering or being bored and doing nothing is not up to man but up to God. Either act is in line with the universe and pre-established. What makes Pangloss's philosophy believable is that Candide did end up getting everything he desired. Candide just didn't end up happy with what he thought he wanted. In terms of everything working out for the best, Candide was reunited with everyone he thought he had lost and no one he wanted dead ended up dying. Somehow everyone ended up all together.

However, this philosophy and answer contradicts what Pangloss says to Candide after visiting the Turkish man: "You're right," said Pangloss; "because when man was put into the Garden of Eden, he was put there 'to dress it and to keep it,' that is to work; which proves that man was not born to be idle" (113). If man is not supposed to be idle then it must be better to suffer than to do nothing, which was the old woman's question. In this point of view man was not born to be at rest. Pangloss's idea of work involves taking care and maintaining the garden. Man is destined to be at work. There is a contradiction within man. Man desires to be at rest or desires a break from all of the hard work they have to do, even the hard work of life. But, when reflecting on what the old woman said about which is worse, doing nothing or suffering, here lays the next contradiction: once man rests and isn't working they are also unhappy and expresses the desire to instead go through miserable trials to avoid boredom. Pangloss's statement then alludes to whether or not cultivating the garden is the solution to this contradiction. Is the only way to solve the back and forth of idleness and suffering, to be busy

working in the garden? What does it really mean to cultivate the garden? Is the repulsion of a state of peace a part of everything that happens for the best in comparison to Pangloss's philosophy of optimism? Is fate and human nature intertwined in this way?

To be bored is an evil according to the Turkish man and to resist this evil is to cultivate a garden. Man was not born to be idle according to Pangloss and the Bible. Man battles between 'lethargy of boredom and the convulsions of distress according to Martin. Candide believes all that is left is to cultivate their garden. Candide also agrees with Martin's notion that man only lives in two states, "convulsions of distress or the lethargy of boredom". The narrator says, "One day something happened which confirmed Martin in his detestable views, made Candide waver more than ever, and disconcerted Pangloss" (111). Candide never really seems to have any answers throughout the text, as stated previously Candide was brought up to never judge anything for himself (95). Candide's main role is trying to get the love of his life Cunegonde. Candide believes in Pangloss's philosophy and tries to defend it against Martin's philosophy, but Candide always comes short in those arguments. Candide simply adopts the opinion or philosophy he agrees the most with, leading to the cultivation of the garden and accepting this farm life.

### **Some Conclusions**

This analysis of the ideas of distress and boredom and how they relate to human nature in view of the characters' points of view gives new insight into the predicament of choosing between boredom or the convulsions of distress. By circling back to previously mentioned points, a greater interpretation of this topic will now be made and concluded.

First, a brief definition and explanation of important terms. Idle means to not be engaged in work, or to not be doing anything. Boredom is an emotion; it makes one feel worn out of a course of action because they lack interest in their current activity. Leisure is when someone has time at their disposal or they are granted time because they are free from their other jobs; they are at their own ease and convenience.

There are three foundations of idleness. When participating in no act the person is idle. Someone can participate in idleness in three ways: they can let this free time turn into boredom, they can be at peace and take leisure in this time, or they can do something that causes distress. When a person is not doing anything they are idle. When they are idle two things can occur: they can be bored or they can be in leisure. Boredom means, they are tired of doing nothing. When they are at leisure, they view this time of doing nothing as a time at their disposal to do as they please; they see this opportunity of free time as a freedom.

As previously stated, boredom arises from idleness. To prevent being in a state of idleness, one might live in convulsions of distress. When someone is not in this state, they live in the lethargy of boredom. Is living in boredom bad? In terms of the Turkish view, yes, it is an evil. No one wants to live in boredom; it's oppressive. The goal is to live in leisure and live in a peaceful state.

Perhaps this state of peace is achieved through cultivating the garden. However, this struggle between the two states is further impacted by modern connotations and cultural influences on leisure. In American culture Americans are taught to work all the time. If you are not working you're seen as lazy and unproductive. The only acceptable time to enjoy life is when

you are retired; then you are allowed to live in leisure. In other cultures, meditation or a time designated for self reflection is ordinary; being provided time to go on holiday is a norm.

Now that a clearer view of the terms and their impact on human nature has been established, tying together this clarity with events that transpired in *Candide* will now be discussed. The only exception of this choice between living in, “convulsions of distress or the lethargy of boredom,” in *Candide* is Eldorado. As stated before, Eldorado is a paradise, it's the land where everything goes well. There is no suffering in Eldorado. However, there are examples of what has happened to the Incas who left Eldorado out of greed and or left because they also fell into this human consequence of living in either convulsions of distress or boredom. But the example of the Incas showed how the people of Eldorado didn't need to leave or be subject to this harsh consequence. The people of Eldorado live peacefully and in harmony. Eldorado could be described as the Garden of Eden, an earthly paradise. The narrator says, “The land here was cultivated for pleasure as well as from necessity; everywhere the useful had been made pleasant” (59). The reaction to work is positive. The cultivation of the land was necessary but instead of viewing the job as something they don't want to do but are forced to, they view the job as something fun and pleasurable to do. The cultivation of the land wasn't created through boredom, but instead is pleasurable and leisurely. Eldorado and the Turkish man show how there is a way to avoid falling in these two states. For *Candide* we see how this internal struggle plays out.

As discussed earlier, despite finding earthly paradise, *Candide* decided to leave Eldorado in order to find Cunegonde. Revealing something corrupt in human nature, the choice between, “the lethargy of boredom or the convulsions of distress.” *Candide* allowed himself to feed into

his desire and greed. By allowing himself to be consumed by these vices he does not let his better judgment influence his decision to stay and live a happy life in Eldorado. The difference between Candide and the citizens of Eldorado are their experiences. Candide has faced so much misfortune and has suffered great trials. This is the nature Candide is familiar with. Candide is familiar with suffering but Candide also has a specific idea of what a good life means, taught by this corrupt society, to live in competition with one another and appear better than the majority of people. Candide wants to have a beautiful Cunegonde as a wife, be intelligent, philosophize, and have a lot of money. Candide can not necessarily have a lot of money in Eldorado. The people of Eldorado don't even see gold as a currency, its dirt to them. Candide's desire for Cunegonde is shallow. These are all the reasons why Candide was not ready to live in leisure in Eldorado and why he continued to be trapped in the nature between "the lethargy of boredom and the convulsions of distress".

Candide begins to get out of the struggle between two states when he discovers happiness does not lay with Cunegonde. Candide consciously put himself in situations of suffering for the desire of attaining Cunegonde. If Candide reflected on how false his love was he could have prevented his suffering. The point Voltaire is making is not about love, it's about this false philosophy that everything happens for the best of all possible worlds. Voltaire is poking fun at people believing this optimism when they go through harsh misfortunes. But, if Candide truly believed in divine harmony then he would not have been chasing Cunegonde, he would've waited for the universe to reunite them. Candide could have even found a new perspective and claimed that his search for Cunegonde brought him to Eldorado and Candide could have stayed in Eldorado. But Candide does neither of these things because he is repressing boredom. The

philosophy of optimism and the unconscious fight between boredom and distress in Candide's nature is causes him to pick the path of suffering. Candide's nature justified his suffering through the goal of attaining Cunegonde, and he feels okay with this suffering based on the philosophy of optimism that everything happens for the best. All the while, he is repressing boredom, because human nature would rather suffer than be bored, based on the old woman and Martin's point of view. But when Candide reunites with Cunegonde and is unhappy, the Turkishman's words inspire Candide to cultivate his own garden and in turn releases him from the two states.

This idea of the struggle between living in "convulsions of distress or the lethargy of boredom," is not only present in *Candide* but today as well. When I'm working a lot all I think about is resting, all I desire is to rest. But, once I get my desire, when I have rested enough and continue to be idle, I feel bored. I then no longer want to be at rest or at least bored. But, getting out of my boredom isn't a simple task either. I will not be satisfied with just doing anything. I do not want to be bored so much that I will commit some action that may lead to my suffering, so I no longer have to participate in boredom. There is something appealing and exciting about being released from boredom. However, why is the act of causing self suffering more appealing than taking this time in idleness to participate in leisure instead? Or even better, why is seeing the chance to be at leisure not the first instinct when one has free time and is idle? This is apparent in *Candide*. Candide gets kicked out of the castle and tries to find something to do with himself, because humans resist idleness as Pangloss says. While looking for what to do he goes to war, flees war, and then many other misfortunes befall him. Candide finds Cunegonde, loses her, and spends the majority of the story trying to be reunited with her. Voltaire creates all these misfortunes and absurdities to make fun of the philosophy that this is the best of all possible

worlds. But, Candide takes part in these calamities, and then stumbles on Eldorado. Candide rests from these misfortunes for a month and then decides that he is ready to go find Cunegonde again. Instead of staying in Eldorado, where there is only pleasure and no suffering, Candide doesn't choose to stay in this leisurely place. However, when granted the opportunity at the end of the story, Candide decides to cultivate his garden. There is neither suffering nor boredom in cultivation. Cultivating the garden is a leisurely pastime. This pastime cannot be forced upon man. Candide may have felt trapped in Eldorado and felt his being there forced because he stumbled upon it on his quest to find Cunegonde. Candide's goal and idea of what the best of all possible worlds included Cunegonde. Cunegonde was not in Eldorado and staying there would have been a trap, something forced. Candide was wrong about his love for Cunegonde. But, the cultivation of the garden is something other characters turn to, for instance the Turkishman and the people of Eldorado.

Man did not start to toil until they disobeyed God and were punished. So, work didn't become hard work until it was a punishment. Before, the cultivation of the garden was just recreation. Does man struggle with this balance because in the beginning men were meant to till the garden as just something to do, for leisure, and after man disobeyed they have this internal struggle between being bored or living in distress? The people of Eldorado cultivate the land for pleasure as well as for necessity but it's pleasure; it's not something the society is trying to escape from.

What does it mean to "cultivate the garden?" How does someone even begin to cultivate their garden? Perhaps the garden is a greater metaphor. One way is to fill your time with something that you enjoy and will keep you entertained, something pure and good: for instance

taking care of something like a garden. When chasing a corrupt object to fill time, true happiness will not be achieved.

Work Cited

Bair, L., and Voltaire. *Candide*. Bantam Books, 1959.