



Astonish Yourself: 101 Experiments in the Philosophy of Everyday Life

By Roger-Pol Droit

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Philosopher and *Le Monde* columnist Droit's strange and delightful little volume explores some of the biggest questions in philosophy with exercises instead of terminology-laden tracts, by encouraging readers to discover the ways in which small or familiar acts—fasting, prowling, playing, telling a stranger she's beautiful—can become "the starting point for that astonishment which gives rise to philosophy." Each of the 101 exercises is carefully, even lovingly explained, with duration, necessary props and intended effect listed first. Exercise #31, for example, instructs readers to "Watch dust in the sun": it should take about 15 minutes, a room and sunlight are needed, and its effect is "reassuring." When a ray of sunlight enters a dark room, an "invisible world" of sparkling dust reveals itself—a symbol of the "stratum of existence that is both invisible and present" always. There are other worlds within ours, Droit reminds us, worlds that we might be able to see with only a metaphoric readjustment of shutters. There are exercises to calm, to disorient, to humanize, to displace; for instance, listening to shortwave radio at night, Droit writes, will help readers realize that "perpetually around you, woven into the air...are these hundreds of voices murmuring, in dozens of unknown or unrecognizable languages, of which you know nothing, expect that they spread an obscure and changing human crust, unendingly, over everything." Already a bestseller in Europe, this volume should appeal to anyone who has ever asked questions about perception or identity, or wanted a new way to see the world and the self.

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About the Author

Roger Pol-Droit was born in Paris in 1949 and is a philosopher, a researcher at the Centre de la Recherche Scientifique, and a columnist for the French daily newspaper *Le Monde*.

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